

## **Introduction**

### **Novels**

[Shadow on the Hearth \(1951\)](#)  
[Gunner Cade \(with C.M. Kornbluth\) \(1952\)](#)  
[Outpost Mars \(with C.M. Kornbluth\) \(1952\)](#)  
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### **Short Fiction**

*Rain Check* (1946)  
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[Death Is the Penalty](#) (1949)  
*Barrier of Dread* (1950)  
[Survival Ship](#) (1951)  
*Woman's Work Is Never Done!* (1951)  
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*Hero's Way* (1952)  
[So Proudly We Hail](#) (1953)  
[A Big Man with the Girls](#) (1953) with Frederik Pohl [as by Judith Merrill and James MacCreigh ]  
[A Little Knowledge](#) (1953)  
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[Dead Center](#) (1954)  
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[The Lonely](#) (1963)  
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### **Non-Fiction**

[Merril, Judith and Pohl-Weary, Emily - Better to Have Loved - The Life of Judith Merrill](#)

### **Essays**

*Bibliography (Beyond Human Ken)* (1952)  
*Preface (Beyond Human Ken)* (1952)

*Bibliography (Beyond the Barriers of Space and Time) (1954)*  
*Editor's Preface (1954)*  
*The Year's S-F, Summation and Honorable Mentions (1956)*  
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[\*The Year's S-F, Summation and Honorable Mentions \(1959\)\*](#)  
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*Honorable Mentions (1961)*  
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*Introduction (England Swings SF) (1968)*  
*Introduction (Once and Future Tales from the Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction) (1968)*  
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*Fritz Leiber (profile) (1969)*  
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*Memoir and Appreciation (1980)*  
[\*Memoir \(1980\)\*](#)  
[\*The Contributors \(1985\)\*](#)  
[\*Afterword: We Have Met the Alien \(And It Is Us\) \(1985\)\*](#)  
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*Better to Have Loved: From a Memoir-in-Progress (1993)*  
*Judith Merrill: A Retrospective (obituary) (1998) with Allan Weiss*  
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[\*Editorial Comments - 4th Annual World's Best SF\*](#)  
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[Merril, Judith - Editorial Comments - 7th Annual Worlds Best](#)  
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[Merril, Judith - Editorial Comments - SF - The Best of the Best](#)

## Introduction

At last, Volume 4 of the Lost Masters series. This volume contains the (nearly) complete works of Judith Merrill, along with her (auto)biography. There are 5 short stories missing (which, by the way, are all available in print in Homecalling: The Complete Short Fiction of Judith Merrill. If you have a copy of this book, or your library does, drop me an email at gorgon776@yahoo.com, and let me know).

Some of her non-fiction essays are here, all genre related.

Enjoy.

## That Only A Mother

Margaret reached over to the other side of the bed where Hank should have been. Her hand patted the empty pillow, and then she came altogether awake, wondering that the old habit should remain after so many months. She tried to curl up, cat-style, to hoard her own warmth, found she couldn't do it any more, and climbed out of bed with a pleased awareness of her increasingly clumsy bulkiness.

Morning motions were automatic. On the way through the kitchenette, she pressed the button that would start breakfast cooking—the doctor had said to eat as much breakfast as she could—and tore the paper out of the facsimile machine. She folded the long sheet carefully to the "National News" section, and propped it on the bathroom shelf to scan while she brushed her teeth.

No accidents. No direct hits. At least none that had been officially released for publication. *Now, Maggie, don't get started on that. No accidents. No hits. Take the nice newspaper's word for it.*

The three clear chimes from the kitchen announced that breakfast was ready. She set a bright napkin and cheerful colored dishes on the table in a futile attempt to appeal to a faulty morning appetite. Then, when there was nothing more to prepare, she went for the mail, allowing herself the full pleasure of prolonged anticipation, because today there would *surely* be a letter.

There was. There were. Two bills and a worried note from her mother:

"Darling, why didn't you write and tell me sooner? I'm thrilled, of course, but, well one hates to mention these things, but are you *certain* the doctor was right? Hank's been around all that uranium or thorium or whatever it is all these years, and I know you say he's a designer, not a technician, and he doesn't get near anything that might be dangerous, but you know he used to, back at Oak Ridge. Don't you think, of course, I'm just being a foolish old woman, and I don't want you to get upset. You know much more about it than I do, and I'm sure your doctor was right. He *should* know..."

Margaret made a face over the excellent coffee, and caught herself refolding the paper to the medical news.

*Stop it, Maggie, stop it! The radiologist said Hank's job couldn't have exposed him. And the bombed area we drove past...No, no. Stop it, now! Read the social notes or the recipes, Maggie girl.*

A well-known geneticist, in the medical news, said that it was possible to tell with absolute certainty, at five months, whether the child would be normal, or at least whether the mutation was likely to produce anything freakish. The worst cases, at any rate, could be prevented. Minor mutations, of course, displacements in facial features, or changes in brain structure could not be detected. And there had been some cases recently, of normal embryos with atrophied limbs that did not develop beyond the seventh or eighth month. But, the doctor concluded cheerfully, the *worst* cases could now be predicted and prevented.

*"Predicted and prevented." We predicted it, didn't we? Hank and the others, they predicted it. But we didn't prevent it. We could have stopped if in '46 and '47. Now...*

Margaret decided against the breakfast. Coffee had been enough for her in the morning for ten years; it would have to do for today. She buttoned herself into interminable folds of material that, the salesgirl had assured her, was the *only* comfortable thing to wear during the last few months. With a surge of pure pleasure, the letter and newspaper forgotten, she realized she was on the next to the last button. It wouldn't be long now.

The city in the early morning had always been a special kind of excitement for her. Last night it had rained, and the sidewalks were still damp-gray instead of dusty. The air smelled the fresher, to a city-bred woman, for the occasional pungency of acrid factory smoke. She walked the six blocks to work, watching the lights go out in the all-night hamburger joints, where the plate-glass walls were already catching the sun, and the lights go on in the dim interiors of cigar stores and dry-cleaning establishments.

The office was in a new Government building. In the elevator, on the way up, she felt, as always, like a frankfurter roll in the ascending half of an old-style rotary toasting machine. She abandoned the air-foam cushioning gratefully at the fourteenth floor, and settled down behind her desk, at the rear of a long row of identical desks.

Each morning the pile of papers that greeted her was a little higher. These were, as everyone knew, the decisive months. The war might be won or lost on these calculations as well as any others. The manpower office had switched her here when her old expeditor's job got to be too strenuous. The computer was easy to operate, and the work was absorbing, if not as exciting as the old job. But you didn't just stop working these days. Everyone who could do anything at all was needed.

And—she remembered the interview with the psychologist—*I'm probably the unstable type. Wonder what sort of neurosis I'd get sitting home reading that sensational paper...*

She plunged into the work without pursuing the thought.

February 18

Hank darling,

Just a note—from the hospital, no less. I had a dizzy spell at work, and the doctor took it to heart. Blessed if I know what I'll do with myself lying in bed for weeks, just waiting—but Dr. Boyer seems to think it may not be so long.

There are too many newspapers around here. More infanticides all the time, and they can't seem to get a jury to convict any of them. It's the fathers who do it. Lucky thing you're not around, in case—

Oh, darling, that wasn't a very *funny* joke, was it? Write as often as you can, will you? I have too much time to think. But there really isn't anything wrong, and nothing to worry about.

Write often, and remember I love you.

Maggie.

SPECIAL SERVICE TELEGRAM

February 21, 1953

22:04 LK37G

From: Tech. Lieut. H. Marvell X47-016 GCNY

To: Mrs. H. Marvell Women's Hospital, New York City

**HAD DOCTOR'S GRAM STOP WILL ARRIVE FOUR OH TEN STOP SHORT  
LEAVE STOP YOU DID [IT] MAGGIE STOP LOVE HANK**

February 25

Hank dear,

So you didn't see the baby either? You'd think a place this size would at least have visiplates on the incubators, so the fathers could get a look, even if the poor benighted mommas can't. They tell me I won't see her for another week, or maybe more—but of course, mother always warned me if I didn't slow my pace, I'd probably even have my babies too fast. Why must she *always* be right?

Did you meet that battle-ax of a nurse they put on her? I imagine they save her for people who've

already had theirs, and don't let her get too near the prospectives—but a woman like that simply shouldn't be allowed in a maternity ward. She's obsessed with mutations, can't seem to talk about anything else. Oh, well, *ours* is all right, even if it was in an unholy hurry.

I'm tired. They warned me not to sit up too soon, but I *had* to write you. All my love, darling,  
Maggie.

February 29

Darling,

I finally got to see her? It's all true, what they say about new babies and the face that only a mother could love—but it's all there darling, eyes, ears, and noses— no, only one—all in the right places. We're so *lucky*, Hank...

I'm afraid I've been a rambunctious patient. I kept telling that hatchet-faced female with the mutation mania that I wanted to *see* the baby. Finally the doctor came in to "explain" everything to me, and talked a lot of nonsense, most of which I'm sure no one could have understood, any more than I did. The only thing I got out of it was that she didn't actually *have* to stay in the incubator; they just thought it was "wiser."

I think I got a little hysterical at that point. Guess I was more worried than I was willing to admit, but I threw a small fit about it. The whole business wound up with one of those hushed medical conferences outside the door, and finally the Woman in White said: "Well, we might as well. Maybe it'll work out better that way."

I'd heard about the way doctors and nurses in these places develop a God complex, and believe me, it is as true figuratively as it is literally that a mother hasn't a leg to stand on around here.

I *am* awfully weak, still. I'll write again soon. Love,  
Maggie.

March 8

Dearest Hank,

Well the nurse was wrong if she told you that. She's an idiot anyhow. It's a girl. It's easier to tell with babies than with cats, and I *know*. How about Henrietta?

I'm home again, and busier than a betatron. They got *everything* mixed up at the hospital, and I had to teach myself how to bathe her and do just about everything else. She's getting prettier, too. When can you get a leave, a *real* leave?

Love,  
Maggie.

May 26

Hank dear,

You should see her now—and you shall. I'm sending along a reel of color movie. My mother sent her those nighties with drawstrings all over. I put one on, and right now she looks like a snow-white potato sack with that beautiful, beautiful flower-face blooming on top. Is that *me* talking? Am I a doting mother? But wait till you see her!

July 10

Believe it or not, as you like, but your daughter can talk, and I don't mean baby talk. Alice discovered it— she's a dental assistant in the WACs, you know—and when she heard the baby giving out what I thought was a string of gibberish, she said the kid knew words and sentences, but couldn't say them clearly because she has no teeth yet. I'm taking her to a speech specialist.

September 13

We have a prodigy for real! Now that all her front teeth are in, her speech is perfectly clear and—a new talent now—she can sing! I mean really carry a tune! At seven months! Darling, my world would be perfect if you could only get home.

November 19

At last. The little goon was so busy being clever, it took her all this time to learn to crawl. The doctor says development in these cases is always erratic...

SPECIAL SERVICE TELEGRAM

December 1, 1953

08:47 LKS9F

From: Tech. Lieut. H. Marvell X47-016 GCNY

To: Mrs. H. Marvell

Apt. K-17

504 E. 19 St., N;Y. N.Y.

**LEAVE STARTS TOMORROW WEEK'S STOP WILL ARRIVE AIRPORT TEN OH FIVE STOP DON'T MEET ME STOP LOVE LOVE LOVE HANK**

Margaret let the water run out of the bathinette until only a few inches were left, and then loosed her hold on the wriggling baby.

"I think it was better when you were retarded, young woman," she informed her daughter happily. "You *can't* crawl in a bathinette, you know."

"Then why can't I go in the bathtub?" Margaret was used to her child's volubility by now, but every now and then it caught her unawares. She swooped the resistant mass of pink flesh into a towel, and began to rub.

"Because you're too little, and your head is very soft, and bathtubs are very hard."

"Oh. Then when can I go in the bathtub?"

"When the outside of your head is as hard as the inside, brainchild." She reached toward a pile of fresh clothing. "I cannot understand," she added, pinning a square of cloth through the nightgown, "why a child of your intelligence can't learn to keep a diaper on the way other babies do. They've been used for centuries, you know, with perfectly satisfactory results."

The child disdained to reply; she had heard it too often.

She waited patiently until she had been tucked, clean and sweet-smelling, into a white-painted crib. Then she favored her mother with a smile that inevitably made Margaret think of the first golden edge of the sun bursting into a rosy pre-dawn. She remembered Hank's reaction to the color pictures of his beautiful daughter, and with the thought, realized how late it was.

"Go to sleep puss. When you wake up, you know, your *Daddy* will be here."

"Why?" asked the four-year-old mind, waging a losing battle to keep the ten-month-old body awake.

Margaret went into the kitchenette and set the timer for the roast. She examined the table, and got her clothes from the closet, new dress, new shoes, new slip, new everything, bought weeks before and saved for the day Hank's telegram came. She stopped to pull a paper from the facsimile, and, with clothes and news, went into the bathroom, and lowered herself gingerly into the steaming luxury of a scented tub.

She glanced through the paper with indifferent interest. Today at least there was no need to read the national news. There was an article by a geneticist. The same geneticist. Mutations, he said, were increasing disproportionately. It was too soon for recessives; even the first mutants, born near Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1946 and 1947 were not old enough yet to breed. *But my baby's all right*. Apparently, there was some degree of free radiation from atomic explosions causing the trouble. *My*

*baby's fine. Precocious, but normal.* If more attention had been paid to the first Japanese mutations, he said...

There was that little notice in the paper in the spring of '47. *That was when Hank quit at Oak Ridge.* "Only two or three per cent of those guilty of infanticide are being caught and punished in Japan today." *But my baby's all right.*

She was dressed, combed, and ready, to the last light brush-on of lip paste, when the door chime sounded. She dashed for the door, and heard, for the first time in eighteen months, the almost-forgotten sound of a key turning in the lock before the chime had quite died away.

"Hank!"

"Maggie!"

And then there was nothing to say. So many days, so many months, of small news piling up, so many things to tell him, and now she just stood there, staring at a khaki uniform and a stranger's pale face. She traced the features with the finger of memory. The same high-bridged nose, wide-set eyes, fine feathery brows; the same long jaw, the hair a little farther back now on the high forehead, the same tilted curve to his mouth. Pale of course, he'd been underground all this time. And strange—stranger because of lost familiarity than any newcomer's face could be.

She had time to think all that before his hand reached out to touch her, and spanned the gap of eighteen months. Now, again, there was nothing to say, because there was no need. They were together, and for the moment that was enough.

"Where's the baby?"

"Sleeping. She'll be up any minute."

No urgency. Their voices were as casual as though it were a daily exchange, as though war and separation did not exist. Margaret picked up the coat he'd thrown on the chair near the door, and hung it carefully in the hall closet. She went to check the roast, leaving him to wander through the rooms by himself, remembering and coming back. She found him, finally, standing over the baby's crib.

She couldn't see his face, but she had no need to.

"I think we can wake her just this once." Margaret pulled the covers down, and lifted the white bundle from the bed. Sleepy lids pulled back heavily from smoky brown eyes.

"Hello." Hank's voice was tentative.

"Hello." The baby's assurance was more pronounced.

He had heard about it, of course, but that wasn't the same as hearing it. He turned eagerly to Margaret. "She really can—?"

"Of course she can, darling. But what's more important, she can even do nice normal things like other babies do, even stupid ones. Watch her crawl!" Margaret set the baby [on the edge of the bed.]

For a moment young Henrietta lay and eyed her parents dubiously.

"Crawl?" she asked.

"That's the idea. Your Daddy is new around here, you know. He wants to see you show off."

"Then put me on my tummy."

"Oh, of course." Margaret obligingly rolled the baby over.

"What's the matter?" Hank's voice was still casual, but an undercurrent in it began to charge the air of the room. "I thought they turned over first."

"This baby," Margaret would not notice the tension, "*This* baby does things when she wants to."

This baby's father watched with softening eyes while the head advanced and the body hunched up propelling itself across the bed.

"Why the little rascal," he burst into relieved laughter. "She looks like one of those potato-sack racers they used to have on picnics. Got her arms pulled out of the sleeves already." He reached over and grabbed the knot at the bottom of the long nightie.

"I'll do it, darling." Margaret tried to get there first.

"Don't be silly, Maggie. This may be *your* first baby, but *I* had five kid brothers." He laughed her away, and reached with his other hand for the string that closed one sleeve. He opened the sleeve bow, and groped for an arm.

"The way you wriggle," he addressed his child sternly, as his hand touched a moving knob of flesh at the shoulder, "anyone might think you are a worm, using your tummy to crawl on, instead of your hands and feet."

Margaret stood and watched, smiling. "Wait till you hear her sing, darling—"

His right hand traveled down from the shoulder to where he thought an arm would be, traveled down, and straight down, over firm small muscles that writhed in an attempt to move against the pressure of his hand. He let his fingers drift up again to the shoulder. With infinite, care, he opened the knot at the bottom of the nightgown. His wife was standing by the bed, saying: "She can do 'Jingle Bells,' and—"

His left hand felt along the soft knitted fabric of the gown, up towards the diaper that folded, flat and smooth, across the bottom end of his child...No wrinkles. No kicking. *No...*

"Maggie." He tried to pull his hands from the neat fold in the diaper, from the wriggling body.

"Maggie." His throat was dry; words came hard, low and grating. He spoke very slowly, thinking the sound at each word to make himself say it. His head was spinning, but he had to *know* before he let it go. "Maggie, why didn't you tell me?"

"Tell you what, darling?" Margaret's poise was the immemorial patience of woman confronted with man's childish impetuosity. Her sudden laugh sounded fantastically easy and natural in that room; it was all clear to her now.

"Is she wet? I didn't know."

*She didn't know.* His hands, beyond control, ran up and down the soft-skinned baby body, the sinuous, limbless body. *Oh God, dear God*—his head shook and his muscles contracted, in a bitter spasm of hysteria. His fingers tightened on his child—*Oh God, she didn't know...*

## Death Is The Penalty

You come to a twisting path in the still shade of the giant trees, through random patches of green and brown coolness. A last sudden turn delivers you into the clearing, and waves of heat shimmer before you. The sun's rays are too white, the little stream impossibly blue. Squinting, your eyes seek relief and find it.

By the side of the stream, the two black figures have made an island of quiet for themselves. The area inside the unrepaired old fence is filled with the calm inwardness of their tender cold embrace.

The guide will stop here and wait, until everyone is in the clearing, until each face has turned questioningly toward the dark mystery. And when he speaks, the guide's voice will be quiet. Under the great trees he shouted, but in the presence of the lovers, a man does not speak too loudly.

"The permanents here," the guide will tell his crowd of sightseers, "are a memorial to the Boundaries." Over to the left, high above even the giant trees, a Boundary rises white in the sun. Nobody looks at it; all eyes are on the black figures in the clearing. But it is there, always there, a thing no one ever forgets completely.

"The incident," he says, still quietly, "was the last of many that resulted finally in the erection of the Boundaries. The permanents were left here, guarded by a fence for the visitor's safety, instead of being disposed of in the usual fashion. They are safe now, so you may examine them as closely as you like. The names of these two were David Carman and Janice Block ..."

". . . David wandered down the path between the trees, his thoughts on the stream ahead, remembering its brilliant blueness; his body, hot and sticky, even in the shade, remembering the tingle of the water. It was a long walk from the lodge — but worth it when you got here. He came out in the clearing, and immediately disappointment struck at him. On the bank there was a book and a robe. From somewhere around the curve splashing sounded. He had wanted to be alone.

He walked over slowly, and stood over the swimmer's possessions on the shore. Then he saw the book, recognized it, and smiled a little.

He stripped off his own robe, and entered the water noisily, deliberately, to let the earlier swimmer



know he was there. And in a moment, a brown arm flashed around the bend, cleaving through the bright blue. And then they met, for the first time.

It was a girl. A girl with brown limbs glistening from the fresh water, and bright brown hair tumbling in loose waves out of her bathing cap. A girl in a yellow bathing suit. A girl with a diffident, uneven-toothed smile and snapping brown eyes, lashes wet still from the water. They both stood up, facing each other in the water, and the magic must have hit them both at once, because neither one spoke a word.

They stood, a few feet apart, and then he laughed aloud, in delight, and she began to laugh, too. They both turned and walked up to the shore. He treasured the seconds, the feel of water pulling against his legs, the shore waiting ahead, the girl walking near him, the water pulling at her the same way, the shore looking the same to her. They sat down where she had left her robe, and he pulled cigarettes out of the pocket of his own. He handed her the pack, took one himself, and they smoked quietly, companionably.

She leaned back resting on one elbow, watching the man's face as he dragged deep on the cigarette. He was thin, tall and too thin, and when he sucked in the smoke, the concavities of his cheeks became deep hollows. His hair was tousled, sandy-colored, and she wondered about his eyes, shadowed under the bony brow-ridge. He was altogether a bony man, his cheek-bones standing out in sharp relief from the long planes of his face, his jaw a stubborn angular challenge to the world, his long lean hands thin enough to reveal the fine structure of tiny bones and veins. She watched him, quietly, not wanting to talk, to find out something that might spoil it, just thinking, "This is how it is. This is how it hits you, and some day, the man is the right one, and you stay hit."

He took the cigarette out of his mouth, held it in front of him watching the blue smoke turn white in the hot air, and disappear, and she knew he would speak. Desperately, she willed him not to.

*Let him not say anything wrong. Please, please, let him not spoil it. Let him sit quiet for me to look at and pretend with.*

"What do you think of his theory on the correlations on mass and individual reactions?"

She had been so afraid for him to speak that she didn't really hear the words at first. "His?" she said, stupidly.

"Mercken's." His voice was impatient. He turned toward her slowly, and she saw a shadow of disappointment fall over his face. "I saw the book," he said, now politely. "I thought it was yours — *Psychology of The Mass* —

Intelligence came into her eyes, and she saw the smile return in answer to his face. "It *is* mine," she said, breathless now. This was *too* much, too good. "You don't mean," she rushed on, not answering him, "it's your field, too? You..."

"Of course!" He was impatient again. "How far are you. . ."

She let herself breathe again. She stopped wondering and willing anything. She let go, and they were talking. She never remembered afterwards what they talked about that first half-hour. Some of it was psychology, and some of it themselves. Some of it was the woods, the trees and the sun and the brook. But when she began to think clearly again, she knew his name was David, and she was talking shop — again. She stopped, abashed.

"You have your own worries," she said. "I can handle my own job — I guess," then, because she wanted to tell him, she rushed on to explain. Maybe she'd been saying stupid things, and it was important to explain. She was telling him how she had worried about his talking, how she had been afraid whatever he said would spoil the wonderful minute. She could say that without worry; she knew he'd felt it, too. And then how impossibly perfect it was when he did begin to talk. He listened gravely. He didn't say anything; he nodded but in the nod she saw he knew about all the years, and all about the men who were just a little silly, a little juvenile, who came running when she smiled, but backed off in fright when she talked.

He listened, and nodded, and understood, and then as soon as she was done, he said, "I've been thinking about that problem of yours. We've been using inferentials on our work. Have you tried applying them to the quiz-reactions, to test ..."

"Inferentials?" she broke in, puzzled.

He took a stick, sketched the math of it quickly in the sand, and she watched with delight, as the

simplicity and beauty of it emerged.

He moved the stick rapidly, wiped out what he had and started again. "You take the first four symbols... "

And then he stopped. "Janice," he said quickly, very low, and a deathly stillness fell, "Janice, where did you say you worked?"

"I didn't." She was sober. She didn't know, she didn't want to know, but she *did* know, even before she answered him. "California Open Labs," she said, letting each word fall flat to the ground, letting it ring with its leaden weight as it fell. There had had to be something; she'd known there would be something; so this was it. "You're at the Restricted Lodge?" It was a question as she said it, but it needed no answer. She knew.

Without looking at him, she stood up. "I'll try to forget it," she said, watching the shadows of the treetops on the ground, "I'll try not to let it —" She stopped. "You better go now," she said. Then she pulled the bathing cap down hard over her ears, and dashed for the water.

She ran, but he was faster than she. He caught her by the shoulders, roughly, before she got to the bank, swung her around, and waited till she lifted her eyes to his. His mouth opened but there was no word in it. There was nothing he could say. So instead of speaking, he pulled her close, and she was floating away from facts up into a world he brought her with the pressure of his lips.

He let her go slowly, and they sat down again, both of them shaken, too much moved to look at each other, or touch each other.

They tried.

They didn't ask any more questions, and they made no plans. It was the last time they would see each other — only it wasn't. Each of them came back alone, again and again, to the brook in the woods, came and sat alone and thought of how it might have been. And the day came, as it had to, when, rounding the twisting path through the trees, they were face to face again.

They stood without moving, and took no step toward each other. Then from both of them came a curious sigh, an exhalation as if each had held his breath too long. He reached out an arm, slowly, as if to make certain that this time his mind was not playing tricks. The shining brown hair, the sparkling brown eyes — this time they were real. His hands touched her shoulder, lightly, seeking, and then not so lightly, and they were wrapped in each other's arms, alone in a pounding beating universe, a private world of safety and companionship.

It could have been a minute or an hour, when, finally, he said, "Janice, I think I love you. It's crazy and it shouldn't have happened, but I love you."

Then she turned and met his eyes once more. "I love you, David." She heard the melody in her own voice, and wondered how it could sound that way when the world was crashing around her ears.

"There's nothing we can do, is there?" she said facing it, putting it in words, the fact, for both of them.

"Nothing," he said.

The words were right. The words were true, but the music was wrong. Wrong because it was happy. Because all the truths in the world couldn't pull them apart now.

They walked back to the brook, arms entwined like children, and sat on the edge of the bright blue water for the rest of the afternoon, savoring each other's presence, talking only a little.

Still they made no plans. Not even an agreement — but after that they met every week. They met and sat there close by the edge of the brook, almost afraid to talk for fear of the things that might pass from him to her, but still not able to stay away altogether.

But it went on, and after a while the first fear slipped away. They were still cautious. They talked about themselves, their hopes, their dreams, anything but work. Once they thought they had found a safe subject. Something he had worked on that had since been released for Open research, and was now a problem in her hands. But that led them dangerously close to the borderline — the things he knew, that she could not. So they shied away, and talked again about themselves.

For Janice it was the first time. She knew he had understood from the beginning, so she poured out to him now all the lonely years. She told him how the exams in Secondary had just barely passed her by for Restricted work, how she was left among men who were pleasant, friendly, good at their work. But

always, when she met someone, he stayed a little while, then went away. She was too good — too smart, too quick. A man doesn't want a woman who is greater than he is.

Janice had subjected them, one by one, to the hot inquiring searchlight of her intellect, probed at their minds, and, when she was not herself discarded, she had discarded them, each in turn. Because a woman doesn't want a man who is less than she is.

After a while, they all knew she was cold, that she somehow had missed the secret of soft womanliness — and then she was alone. Until David.

Now something had happened, the hot intensity of the searchlight had diffused as the sun did when you left the clearing for the woods. She had found a man, the man; she had stopped picking and judging and weighing, and she was learning to be still, to watch, to lean back. There was also, obscurely, a new vitality to her, and though she had never been beautiful, a kind of beauty. She worked well, too. The inquiring light played now sharply only on her work, and the job gained from it, as her personality gained from the gentle radiance it reflected. And it did not seem to impede her efficiency that she would stop sometimes for a moment to think of the warm spot in the clearing, of David, and of the sheltered loneliness of their love.

Clinically, she was curious about the happiness they had gathered from the total impossibility of their being together. Objectively, she knew it could not last, but resolutely, she shut her mind, as he was doing, to what the end must be.

Each week she went to the brook and sat, talking a little, close by David's side, telling him her secrets, listening to his. Each time she came back renewed in a daze of happiness. But each time, also, she came back troubled, aware of the consciousness that she had shut out, knowing things could not go on as they were, not forever. Some day there would have to be resolution — or an end.

The day came, of course, as it had to come, when they met, and suddenly let loose on each other the growing misery of the weeks, the unhappiness they had each hidden even from themselves. It was noon when they met. They talked, and she sobbed a little, on the bank of the stream, until the sun was half-way down in the sky. And by that time they knew what they had known at the start. There was no way, no possible way, that they could ever have more than what they had now — and even that much was too dangerous.

For Janice there was a new realization. "But I'm not risking a thing, David," she said. "It's all you. *You're* the only one who'll be punished. If I were — but I'm not. So they won't do a thing to me, when they — if —"

"When was closer, Jenny." He smiled, a very tired smile, that did nothing to relieve the drawn tension of his lean face. "You were right the first time. They *will* find out if we keep this up. Shall we stop?"

Abruptly, she stood up. "Yes," she said. "Yes, we will stop. This isn't worth it. Not worth what they'd do. . . "

Seated at her feet, he heard the words, and knew how completely right they were. It would be harder to stop, harder all the time. And as long as they continued, there were only two things that could happen. The best was a lifetime of this, years and years of secret meetings at the brook. His mind tricked him into a grin as he wondered what they'd do if it rained? He jumped to his feet, still grinning.

"I'll carry you off," he said. "I'll take you in my arms and run over the edge of the world and hide you there. I'll make a club and bow to catch your food — and manufacture a movie machine to keep you amused. We'll have a huge arsenal of b-bombs, and never let any one near. We'll ...

She stopped him, a firm hand pressed over his mouth. The old joke was no good now. Tears stood still in her eyes, waiting to move, as she tried to match his smile.

"No, darling, no, you won't. We shouldn't even talk about it, because if we do, some day we might try it. And there's no hiding place. Not in this world. There's no hiding place at all."

He took the hand that was pressed over his mouth, held it in both his own, and let his kiss fall into the container of the cupped palm, let it linger there, and then let the hand drop, nerveless, to her side. His arms went about her swiftly, needing her close for warmth, for support — and they never heard the footsteps.

"In the name of Security!"

Long habit sent them whirling apart. Lifelong conditioning put them both alertly at attention. And only in full view of the Security officer and his three assistants did either of them realize that they were on the wrong side of the Law, that they could not this time prepare to aid an officer of the State in the adjustment of Security. They were themselves a menace to all that held the nation safe.

The officer drew a warrant from his pocket, while a deputy held the gun on them steadily. "In the name of Security," he read, now, "David Carman, and Janice Block are hereby accused of infringement of Special Rule No. 107 of the Regulations as amended in the year 2074 A.D. That under these covenants, and in view of the necessity for preventing any possible leakage of information, it shall be especially forbidden to Restricted officers in the service of the State to engage in social intercourse in any shape, or form, or manner, with scientists in the Open fields, who shall in any way be capable of understanding, or retaining, or utilizing, any part of the Restricted information held by such Officers."

He stopped, dramatically. "You know the regulations, Mr. Carman?"

"Yes." What else could he say?

"Miss Block, you have been aware of the risk you were taking? You knew the occupation of this man?"

"Yes!"

"And you had informed him of your occupation?"

There *was* a way out. "No!" she shouted. "No, no, no!" She heard her own voice, thin and screaming. "No, I never told him. I wanted to see him, so I never ..."

David's hands on her shoulders stopped her. "It's no use, Jan." His voice was absurdly quiet, relaxed. "I investigated you. I had to, you see. I put through a query, saying I read your paper, the one you did last fall. I thought you should be reconsidered for Restricted, on the basis of the work you had done. I thought . . . well, it doesn't matter now, does it?"

They stood quiet, and the Security Officer read on. They knew what was coming. " . . . paper by Miss Block contained mathematical equations suspiciously similar to work in progress in the California Restricted Laboratories." Jan glanced up sharply, taken by surprise. But she had never used — and then of course she knew, her mind had tricked her. David had never finished showing her, but the hint was enough. She found a different way to the same result — a result her own background would never have found for her. So she had betrayed them, betrayed them while she worked, while she was happy, while she thought about coming here to this brook to see David again.

Again he took her hand, and pressed it. Just a little, but the little was enough. He knew, too, how it had happened, and he didn't blame her. She could let him die, not blaming her, and could she live — live the rest of her life — not blaming herself?

She wanted to laugh, to laugh, and laugh, but she knew better. Her own training warned her, held her. There might still be a chance, somehow, and she couldn't throw it away.

". . . David Carman is hereby indicted for treason, and Janice Block is commended to the care of a Refreshment Home until such time as the memories of this incident may have passed from her."

Janice's breath caught, whistled in through her teeth. Amnesiac shock, then! She was to lose David, lose him in the flesh, and let them wipe out his memory as well. No, *no*, NO!

"Are you prepared to accompany us, Mr. Carman?"

The formal words, the expected question. *No!* They couldn't take him. *No!* She wouldn't lose him! *No!*

She heard him breathe in deeply, saw his mouth open to form the word of acceptance. She reached out, clutched his arm with her own hand.

"No!" she screamed. "David, no! If they want to kill you, they'll have to kill both of us! You can't . . . you can't . . .!"

He had turned and his arms were around, disregarding the officers. He held her against him, without passion or strain, held her like a child, and waited till she was calm.

"I must, Jan. I have to." Again the awful quiet, complete resignation.

"I love you, Jan. You're the only woman I ever loved." He turned to the officers, and it was *they* who had trouble meeting his eye. "I'm ready," he said, and he took his arms from the girl.

"No." She wasn't screaming now. She was quiet, too. His touch, his arms about her, had given her that. She had to be quiet, or he wouldn't understand.

"David," she pleaded, "don't leave me. Don't go away and send me back to my loneliness. Stay with me." She nodded toward the pistol the man held. "Stay with me forever. David, *I want it that way.*"

He turned from the men and faced her, searched her eyes. He took one step closer to her. Then, as they had in the water, they smiled at each other, and he put his arms out to her again.

"Officer!" she cried giddily. "Officer, can't you see? This man is resisting arrest!"

"They never knew," the guard will tell you, "when the immobilizer hit them. At that time," he will go on, "atomics were not well enough developed to make blast-pistols safe. The transmutation pistol was always used when Security officers had to display force in public.

"Ordinarily the permanents so created were safely dumped, to prevent radioactive effects. But it was directly resultant on this case that the force-boundaries" — all eyes wandered a little to the left — "were erected, to divide the social territories of the Restricted officers. So these two were left here as a memorial for visitors to the park."

There is much more to see, but you walk away thinking, and do not listen. You are wondering about the old days, when things were wild and free — before Civilization, before the Boundaries — before even Security.

## DAUGHTERS OF EARTH

### I

MARTHA BEGAT JOAN, and Joan begat Ariadne. Ariadne lived and died at home on Pluto, but her daughter, Emma, took the long trip out to a distant planet of an alien sun.

Emma begat Leah, and Leah begat Carla, who was the first to make her bridal voyage through sub-space, a long journey faster than the speed of light itself.

Six women in direct descent—some brave, some beautiful, some brilliant: smug or simple, wilful or compliant, all different, all daughters of Earth, though half of them never set foot on the Old Planet.

This story could have started anywhere. It began with un-spoken prayer, before there were words, when an unnamed man and woman looked upward to a point of distant light, and won-dered. Started again with a pointing pyramid; once more with the naming of a constellation; and once again with the casting of a horoscope.

One of its beginnings was in the squalid centuries of churchly darkness, when Brahe and Bruno, Kepler, Copernicus, and Galileo ripped off the veils of godly ignorance so men could see the stars again. Then in another age of madness, a scant two centuries ago, it began with the pioneer cranks, Goddard and Tsiolkovsky, and the compulsive evangelism of Ley and Gernsback and Clarke. It is beginning again now, here on Uller. But in this narrative, it starts with Martha:

Martha was born on Earth, in the worst of the black decades of the 20th century, in the year 1941. She lived out her time, and died of miserable old age at less than eighty years at home on Earth. Once in her life, she went to the Moon.

She had two children. Her son, Richard, was a good and dutiful young man, a loving son, and a sober husband when he married. He watched his mother age and weaken with worry and fear after the Pluto expedition left, and could never bring himself to hurt her again as his sister had done.

Joan was the one who got away.

### II

*centure easegone manlookttuthe stahzanprade eeee maythem hizgozzenn izz gahandenno  
thawthen izzgole...*

'It's—beautiful!'

Martha nodded automatically, but she heard the catch in the boy's voice, the sudden sharp inhalation of awe and envy, and she shivered and reached for his hand.

Beautiful, yes: beautiful, brazen, deadly, and triumphant. Martha stared at the wickedly gleaming flanks of the great rocket resting majestically on its bed of steel, and hated it with all the stored and unspent venom of her life.

She had not planned to come. She had produced a headache, claimed illness, ignored the amused understanding in her husband's eyes.

Even more, she dreaded having Richard go. But his father voiced one rarely-used impatient word, and she knew there was no arguing about the boy.

In the end she had to do it too: go and be witness at disaster for herself. The three of them took their places in the Moon rocket—suddenly safe-seeming and familiar—and now they stood together in the shadow of that rocket's monstrous spawn, under the clear plastic skin of Moondome.

*rodwee havetrav uldsoslo lee beyewere eeyanway stfulmen*

zzz...

The silvery span of runway that would send it off *today* stretched out of sight up the crater wall, the diminishing curve beyond the bloated belly already lost in the distance, it was made to mule. Cameras ground steadily; TV commentators, perched on platforms stilted high like lifeguard chairs, filled in a chattering counterpoint against the drone from the loudspeakers of the well-worn words that had launched the first Moondome expedition, how long back?

Sixteen years? Impossible. Much longer. How many children had painfully memorized those tired words since? But here was George, listening as though he'd never heard a word of it before, and Richard between them, his face shimmering with reflections of some private glory, and the adolescent fervour of his voice—"It's *beautiful!*"—drawing a baritone-to-tremolo screech across the hypnosoporific of the loudspeakers' drone.

She shivered. 'Yes, dear, it is,' and took his hand, held it too tightly and had to feel him pull away. A camera pointed at them and she tried to fix her face to look the way the commentator would be saying all these mothers here today were feeling.

She looked for the first time at the woman next to her and caught an echo of her own effort at transformation. All around her, she saw with gratitude and dismay, were the faint strained lines at lips and eyes, the same tensed fingers grasping for a hand, or just at air.

Back on Earth, perhaps among the millions crowded around TV sets, there could be honest pride and pleasure at this spec-tacle. But here—?

The cameras stopped roaming, and a man stood up on the raised central dais.

'The President of United Earth,' the speakers boomed sepulchrally.

An instant's hush, then:

'Today we are sending forth two hundred of our sons and daughters to the last outpost of the solar world—the far room from which we hope they may open an exit to the vistas of space itself. Before they go, it is proper that we pause ...'

She stopped listening. The words were different, but it was still the same. No doubt the children would have to memorize this one too.

*Did they feel this way?*

It was a frightening, and then a cooling thought. There was no other way they could have felt, the other mothers who watched that first Moondome rocket leaving Earth.

'... for their children's children, who will reach to the unknown stars.' Silence. That was the end, then.

The silence was broken by the rolling syllables of the two hundred names, as each straight neat white uniform went up to take the hand of the President, and complete the ritual. Then it was over and Joan was standing before her: her daughter, a stranger behind a mask of glory. Seven months ago—seven short and stormy months—a schoolgirl still. Now—what did the President say?—an emissary to the

farthest new frontiers.'

Martha reached out a hand, but George was before her, folding the slender girl in a wide embrace, laughing proudly into her eyes, chucking her inane under the chin. Then Richard, still too young not to spurn sentimentality, shaking Joan's hand, suffering her kiss on his forehead, saying thickly : 'You show 'em, sis!'

It was her turn now. Martha leaned forward, coolly kissed the smiling face above the white jacket, and felt the untamed tears press up behind her eyes.

'Joan,' she cried wildly. 'Joan, baby, aren't you *afraid*?'

What a *stupid* thing to say! She wiped hastily at her eyes, and saw that the shine in Joan's eyes was moisture, too.

Joan took her mother's hands, and held them tight.

'I'm petrified,' she said, slowly, gravely, and very low. No one else heard it. Then she turned with her brave smile to Alex, standing at her side.

'Pluto or bust!' she giggled.

Martha kissed Alex, and George shook his hand. Then the two of them went off, in their white uniforms, to join the other couples, all in line.

Martha felt proud.

(Parenthesis to Carla : i)

Josetown, Uller, 3/9/52

Dear Carla...

Forgive me my somewhat dramatic opening. Both the sections that preceded this were written years ago, at rather widely separated times and of course the one about Martha's farewell to Joan involved a good bit of imaginative assumption—though less of it than you may think at this point.

Frankly, I hesitated for some time before I decided it was proper to include such bits in what is primarily intended to be an informational account. But information is not to be confused with statistics, and when I found myself uncertain, later, whether it was all right to include these explanatory asides, I made up my mind that if I were to write the story at all, it would have to be done my own way, with whatever idiosyncratic eccentricities, or godlike presumptions of comprehension might be involved.

As you already know if you are reading this, I am putting this together for you as a sort of good-bye present for your trip. There is little you will be able to take with you, and when you leave, there will be no way to foresee the likelihood of our ever meeting again: even if your trip is entirely successful and you return from it safely, we both know how uncertain the time-transformation equations are. You may be back, twenty years older, five minutes after you leave; more probably, it may be many years after my own death that you return—perhaps only a year or two older than you are now.

But however we learn to juggle our bodies through space *or* time, we live our lives on a subjective time scale. Thus, though I was born in 2026, and the *Newhope* landed on Uller in 2091, I was then, roughly, 27 years old—including two subjective years, overall, for the trip. And although the sixty-one years I have lived here would be counted as closer to sixty-seven on Earth, or on Pluto, I think that the body—and I *know* that the mind—pays more attention to the rhythm of planetary seasons, the alternations of heat and cold and radiation intensities, than to the ticking of some cosmic metronome counting off whatever Abso-lute Time might be. So I call myself 88 years old—and I digress, but not as far as it may seem.

I said, for instance, that Martha died 'of miserable old age' at less than eighty, and this would seem to contradict my talk of seasons-and-subjectivity here. I am not exactly senile, and can look forward to another forty years, in all likelihood, of moderately useful life. We do learn something as we go along: a hundred years before Martha's time (indeed, even at her time, on some parts of Earth) few people lived to see sixty. (You, at twenty-eight, would have been entering middle-age.) Yet the essential *rhythms* of their lives were remarkably similar to our own. The advances of biophysics have enlarged our scope: we

have more time for learning and living both; but we have correspondingly more to learn and live. We still progress through adolescence and education (which once ended at 14, then 18, 21, 25...) to youth, marriage, procreation, maturity, middle age, senescence and death. And in a similar way, I think, there are certain rhythms of human history which recur in (widening, perhaps enriched, but increasingly discernible) moderately predictable patterns of motion and emotion both.

A recognition of this sort of rhythm is implicit, I think, in the joke that would not go away, which finally made the official name of the—ship?—in which you will depart *The Ark* (for *Archaic*?). In any case, this story is, on its most basic levels, an exposition of such rhythms: among them is the curious business of the generations, and their alternations: at least it was that thought (or rationale) that finally permitted me to indulge myself with my dramatic opening.

On an equally important, though more superficial, level, my purpose in putting this together is to provide you with—this is embarrassing—a ‘heritage’. I had something of this sort from Joan Thurman, and found it valuable; whether this will be equally so for you, I do not know. I do know I have only two months left in which to put this together and that is little enough for an inexperienced storyteller like myself. (And glory-be! there *is* something I am inexperienced at. Many things, actually—but the writing of this is the first reminder I have had in a while. It feels *good* to be doing something new and difficult.)

My parenthesis seems to be full of parentheses. Well, I never was what you’d call a straight-line thinker: the side-trails are often more productive, anyhow ...

And there I go again. What I set out to tell you here, Carla, is that this story was lived over many years, and written over a shorter period, but still a long one. There are the odd bits (like the one about Martha preceding this) which I did a long time ago, as a sort of ‘therapy-writing’ and kept, till now, to myself. Other parts, like what follows here, are adapted from Joan Thurman’s papers. Some parts are new. And then there is this matter of rhythms again

Some things in life remain vivid in minute detail till the day you die; others are of interest only as background. Some things are very personal and immediate, no matter how remote in time; others seem almost to be happening to another person, even as they occur. Thus, you will find this narrative full of sudden changes of pace and style. I find, for instance, that it is almost impossible in some sections to write about myself as ‘Emma’ in the third person; and other places equally difficult to say ‘I’ and ‘me’, but I do not think you will have too much trouble following.

### III

I WAS BORN on Pluto, in the Earth-year 2026, and I grew up there. I was twenty-two years old when we boarded the *Newhope* to come to Uller. But that was such a long time ago, and so much has happened since, that the words themselves have lost all personal meaning to me. They are statistics. I am Emma Tarbell now, and have been for many years. My home is on Uller. A little girl named Emma Malook grew up on Pluto. Her mother’s name was Ariadne, and her father’s name was Bob. Her grandmother, Joan Thurman, was a famous pioneer, one of the first-ship colonists.

In the normal course of events, Joan would have taken her degree that spring, and gone to work as a biophysicist until she found a husband. The prospect appalled her. Nineteen months earlier she’d started the accelerated studies, without mentioning it at home; her mother thought she was busy with the usual run of extra-curricular self-expression at school. She’d had a year of avid learning before she passed the prelims, and was ready for advanced special training. That meant a different school, and the beginning of the psych conferences and background inquiries. She had to tell her family then.

The school was too near home for her to live in the already crowded dorms. She had to stick it out at home for six months of battle and persuasion, sleepless nights and stormy mornings. And all the time studying to be done.

She wasn’t the only one. Even the dorm residents got it; letters and telegrams and phone calls, and frantic unannounced visitations. Two thousand of them entered final training together; less than seven hundred lasted the full six months, and most of those who left did so of their own accord.



Joan stuck it out, and she met Alex, and added to her fears and doubts: if one of them was chosen, and not the other...?

Cautiously, they held back from commitments till the end. And then, in spite of any heaven or earth Martha could move, the decision was made. Joan had her one last month on Earth of joy and triumph: graduation, marriage, four weeks of honeymoon and fame; the planning, the packing, the round of farewells.

Now with her hand in Alex's, she followed the others, all in their gleaming white uniforms, up the ramp to the airlock, and into the third of a waiting line of moon buggies. Ten buggies, ten passengers to each, two trips apiece, and the gaping hole in the side of the giant rocket had swallowed them all.

The rocket was not really large, not from the inside. So much fuel, so much freight, so many passengers; the proportions were flexible only within narrow limits. Each couple passed through the airlock hand in hand, and edged along the corridor, crabwise, to their own cubicle.

Inside, they stripped off the white snowy uniforms, folded them neatly, and piled them in the doorway for collection. Stripped to the skin, they checked their equipment for the last time, and settled themselves side by side, in the grooves and contours carefully moulded to their bodies.

In perfect drilled co-ordination, almost ritualistically, they closed down the compartmented upper sections, starting at the feet, and leaned across each other to latch the complex fasten-ings. When they were enclosed up to the armpits, they laid their heads into the fitted hollow facing each other at one-quarter -view, and strapped down the forehead bands and chin pads. Alex pushed the button that brought down the glassine air-dome over their upper bodies, and both of them set to work testing the supplier tubes and nozzles inside, making certain for one last extra time, that everything reached as far as it should. Then, in perfect unison, as if this too were part of the ritual they had learned, each one extended a hand for a last touch; grasped and held tight, and let loose in haste.

Someone came down the hall—they could still see through the open doorway—collecting the uniforms to be dumped before take-off.

They wriggled their arms down into the cushioned spaces along their sides; later, the arms could be freed again, to manipulate the supplier tubes, but during acceleration, every part of the body was enwombed, protected from shock and pressure, cold and heat, nauseous fear and killing radiations.

A gong went off inside the head-dome; that meant they were sealed in now. The loudspeaker began to tick off seconds. Frantically, foolishly, Joan tried to move her hips, suddenly certain that a necessary opening in the nest had been misplaced. She never remembered to feel glorious. There was a rending blast of soundless vibration, and a pushing, squeezing pain within the flesh, and brief relief about the placing of the opening, before the blackout came.

## IV

### PLUTO, PLANET OF MYSTERY

.. frozen dark wastes, forever uninhabitable to man? Or will our pioneering sons and daughters find a new world to live upon? No one can foretell what they will find. Our best astronomers are in dispute. Our largest and most piercing telescopes give us daily—or nightly—new information, which only contradicts the hypotheses of the night before ...

`We literally do not know, even today—and it is now three quarters of a century since Clyde Tombaugh confirmed the existence of the planet—what the size, the mass, or the true temperature of Pluto are ... whether it has a frozen atmosphere or none ... what composes its dark surface ... or whether it is a native of our solar system at all!'

The newspapers and broadcasters of the time speculated loudly on the likelihood that the bright remote planet was a visitor from the stars, a wandering planet caught at the very fringe of the sun's gravitation, or even a watchful outpost of some alien race, a conscious visitant, swinging in distant orbit around this star against the day when men propelled themselves beyond the boundaries of their own

system.

They even mentioned, but less often, the great likelihood that the confusing data on the planet merely meant it was composed entirely of very heavy metals. Uranium, for instance ...

But for the far-sighted, for the world planners, the politicians and promoters who had made the trip possible, the near-certainty of heavy metals was second only to one other goal: a starship.

The basic design of the *Newhope* was even then under government lock and key, a full forty years before the first step was taken in its construction. The fuel was in development. Astronomers, sociologists, metallurgists, psychologists, thousands of technicians and researchers on Earth and Mars and the Moon were tackling the thousand and one problems of development. And the entire line of work hinged on one combination: there had to be a source of heavy metals near the building site: and the building site had to be at the outer edges of the System.

But Pluto was on the way *out*: a step to the stars.

They lived in the rocket at first; it was specially designed for that. The fuel tanks had been built for conversion to living quarters, because nobody knew for sure when they set out whether they'd ever be able to live on the surface. So they swung the ship into a steady orbit around the planet, and got to work on conversion. The designs were good; it was only a short time before the living quarters were set up, and they could turn their attention to their new world.

What they found is by now so obvious and so familiar it is hard to conceive of the excitement of the discovery to *them*. But the simple discoveries of that first month could never have been made from Earth, or from Mars. For years astronomers had puzzled over the discrepancy between Pluto's reflective powers and its otherwise extrapolated size and mass. There had never been a valid planetary theory to account for its unique inclination to the ecliptic or the eccentricities of its orbit. Two years of observation by the Ganymede Expedition had added barely enough to what was already known to weigh the balance in favour the completion of Project Pluto.

But from the vantage point of an orbit around the planet itself, the facts became self-evident. A whole new theory of planetary formation come into being almost overnight—and with it the final justification for the construction of the *Newhope*. There was no longer any doubt that other planetary systems existed; and in a surprisingly short time, the techniques for determining the nature of such planets were worked out as well.

Three months after arrival, the Pluto colonists began ferrying down the material for construction of a dome. Altogether, they lived in the rocket for thirteen Earth-months, before their surface settlement was habitable. But long before that, every one of them had at one time or another been down to the planet, and mining operations had begun.

Message rockets carried the progress reports back to Earth, and financial gears shifted everywhere. The government of the world poured all its power into the energizing of space-travel industries. A new ship was built in a tenth the time the first had taken, and a crew of three piloted urgently-needed supplies to the colonists.

Still, it was a one-way trip. Still, and for years to come, the supply rockets were designed for dismantling on arrival. Every part of a rocket-ship, after all, has an equivalent use on the ground; by building the ships themselves out of needed materials, the effective cargo space could be quadrupled.

From the beginning, every plan was made with one objective in view: the starhop. Nobody knew at first where the ship would go; no one understood *why* it had to go. But go it must, and Pluto was a waystation.

Joan Thurman died young; she was barely sixty-seven when the accumulated strains of the early Pluto years wore her out: at that, she outlasted all but three of her fellow-passengers on that first Pluto rocket; and she outlived her husband, Alex, by 28 years.

Alex Thurman died in '06 in the Dome Collapse at what was to have been Threetown. Joan had been working before that on the theory for open-air cities; but it was after the crash that she turned her whole being to a concentrated effort. The result was TAP: the Thurman Atmosphere Process. Or that was *one* of the results.

When Alex died, Joan had three small children: Ariadne was ten years old, one of the very first Pluto babies; just exactly old enough to be able to take on most of the care of Thomas and John who were four and three respectively.

Adne was born into pioneer hardship and pioneer cheerfulness. Then at the age of ten, the cheerfulness abruptly departed. Her father's seemingly indestructible strength betrayed her; her mother's watchful care was turned elsewhere. From the premature beginnings of her adolescence through its duration, she was effectively mother and housekeeper and wielder of authority to two growing vigorous boys.

When she was nineteen the first 'passenger ships' were established between Pluto and Earth—round-trip transports—and a new kind of colonist began to arrive. The Malooks, who landed in '17, were typical and Robert, their son-and-heir, was Ariadne's romantic ideal. When she was twenty they were married, despite everything that was done in either family to avert the expected disaster. For her, it was paradise ... for a while. She read Bob's Earth-microfilms, and learned to imitate his Earth-accent. She never had to do a day's hard work from that time on, and still she had the handling of a charming irresponsible boy-child—as well as his money—until he grew up.

Bob was a year younger, you see ... and till he did grow up, he loved having Adne's sweetly feminine domination exerted on his behalf. She showed him how to spend his money, how to live comfortably under dome conditions, how to adapt his Earth-education to Pluto's circumstances.

The disaster Joan and the Malooks had anticipated did not occur. Adne and Bob simply drifted apart, eventually after a few assertive acts on his part and several unpleasant quarrels. My birth may have precipitated things somewhat: they had managed well enough for ten years before colonial social pressures pushed Ariadne into pregnancy. Perhaps, once I was born, she found an infant daughter more interesting than a full-grown son. I don't know. I knew surprisingly little about either of them at the time; it is only in retrospect—in parallel perhaps I should say—that I understand Ariadne at all. (If there had been any relatives on hand when Leah was growing up, I expect they'd have said she 'took after' her grandmother.)

As for Bob, I hardly knew him at all until after they separated, when I was five or six; after that, he took me out on holidays and excursions, and he was beyond a doubt the most charming, exciting, fascinating man who ever lived—until I got old enough to be awkward for him. I never knew for sure, but I think he was some sort of professional gambler, or high-class con man, later on.

One way and another, I can see why Joe Prell looked good to Ariadne after Bob. I was nine, then.

## V

JOE PRELL WAS a brash newcomer, as social standing went on Pluto: a passenger, not a pioneer. But he was energetic and smart. Two years after he landed, he and Ariadne were married.

It made very little difference to Em at first. If anything she was happier after the divorce, because when she saw Bob, she had him all to herself. Anyhow, Joan was still alive then; her death, a year later, was a more serious matter.

By that time, though, Emma had begun to find a life of her own. She already knew that she wanted to be a doctor. She had learned chemistry and biology from her grandmother as easily and inevitably as she'd learned to eat with a spoon or later, to do a picture puzzle. She was still too young to start specializing in school, but she had Joan's library to work with. Joan's personal effects came to Emma, too, but the box of papers and letter-tapes didn't begin to interest her till much later. She spent most of her time, the next few years, bent over a micro-reader unrolling reel after reel of fascinating fact and speculation, absorbing all of it, and understanding little; just letting it accumulate in her mind for later use.

Adne disapproved. She thought Emma should play more, and spend more time with other children. But Adne was too busy to disapprove very forcibly. Joe Prell was not a tyrannical man; he was a demanding one. And somewhere in there the twins came along: two baby sisters called Teenie and Tess. Emma was briefly interested in the phenomena of birth and baby-care, but her 'coldblooded' and 'unnatural' experimental attitudes succeeded in horrifying Ariadne so thoroughly that she returned without

much regret, and no further restraint, to the library.

By that time, too, Pluto was becoming a pleasant place to live. The first open-air city, built on the TAP principles, was completed when Emma was fourteen. Of course, only the richest people could afford it. The Prells could. Joe was a man who knew how to make the most out of a growing planet.

His financial operations were typical of his personality: he had a finger in real estate, and a finger in transport, but of course the big thing on Pluto was mining, and he had the other eight fingers firmly clamped into that.

Until they started building the *Newhope*. Or really, when they started talking seriously about it. Prell wised up fast. He let the real estate go and cut down on mining, and wound up with Pluto Transport neatly tied up in a bundle just right for his left hand. From that time on, Prell's right hand sold his left everything that was needed to build the starship Prell was publicly promoting.

It was a really big deal to him. To Emma it was a dream, a goal, the meaning of everything. Joe didn't understand any part of the significance of that ship ... but with his uncanny feel for such things, he was right in the middle of all the important projects. He was in on the actual construction job; he knew about the new designs, and the fuel specs ... knew at least as much as Emma did, or most of the others actually in the expedition. But he and Emma had very different notions of what that fuel meant, and they argued about it right up to the last minute.

Or, rather, she argued. Joe Prell never argued with anybody. If he couldn't find a basis for agreement, he just turned the discussion into a joke.

Nothing could have been better calculated to infuriate Emma. She was twenty-four then, and very intense. Life was exciting, but more than that, life was terribly *important*. (As indeed it is, Carla; though I think you now see—or feel—the importance more clearly than I.) Prell wouldn't—couldn't—understand that; he never understood why anyone was willing to make the trip at all ... to take a dangerous voyage to a distant unknown star!

Oh, he *could* see part of it: the challenge, the adventure. These are common enough stimuli, and the response to them not so different in nature from his own kind of adventurousness. It wasn't just wealth and power Joe was after; it was the getting of them, and he played the game as an artist. Patiently, over and over again (quite clearly feeling his responsibility *in loco*) he explained to Emma, and later to Ken, how little chance there was that the ship would ever reach Uller ... how the voyagers were almost certainly doomed from the start ... and how many other ways there were for restless, bright young people to satisfy their craving for excitement.

Emma sputtered and stammered trying to make him understand, but she succeeded only in making herself ludicrous. Actually, she didn't believe any more than he did that the ship had much chance of getting here. There were so *many* hazards, so many unknown factors; it was almost certain that somewhere in the plans some vital defence, some basic need, had been overlooked.

But the Project itself was important, whatever happened to those who were engaged in it. Just *building* the starship was what mattered: new problems to conquer, new knowledge to gain, new skills to acquire. And beyond that, the dream itself: 'Centuries gone, man looked to the stars and prayed ... He made them his gods, then his garden of thought, then his goals ...'

Emma quoted the speech of a long-dead man, and thought Joe Prell would understand. She even brought him, hesitantly, Joan Thurman's diary to read; that, if anything, should have made him understand.

Prell was amazed, but unconvinced. He expressed at some length, and with considerable wit, his astonishment that the girl who wrote that diary could later have done the painstaking practical work that developed TAP. He couldn't see that all of it was part of the same dream.

He listened a little more respectfully when Ken tried to explain. Curiously enough, the two men got along. Prell liked Tarbell, and Ken at least could understand the other man. (I think, too, Joe was much impressed by Ken's audacity in marrying me; it had been firmly concluded at home some time before that I was doomed to single bliss. Too direct, too determined, too intellectual, too *strong*; no man would feel up to it, said Ariadne, and her husband agreed.) Ken spoke more calmly than Emma had, with fewer words, and much less argument, but what he said amounted to the same thing, and Joe Prell couldn't see it. He was too busy making money.

And he made it. He made enough, among other things, to fulfil Ariadne's greatest dream: before she died, she had her trip to Earth; she saw the sights and institutions and museums, made all the tourist stops, brought home souvenirs enough to keep her content for her remaining years.

But before that, she saw her daughter Emma off for Uller.

Ariadne was present when the tender took off from Pluto Port to deliver the lambs to the slaughter, carry them off to the starship that had hovered for months like a giant moon around the planet.

'It's ... beautiful,' someone standing beside her said, looking up, and Ariadne nodded automatically. It *was* beautiful; the most beautiful, most dangerous, most triumphant enemy she'd ever known, and she hated it with all the stored-up passion of her life.

'Emma!' she cried involuntarily in her farewell, 'Emmy, aren't you *afraid*?'

I tried to look at her, to let her look *into* me, but there was as unexpected veil of moisture on my eyes.

'I'm scared stiff,' I said, and it was true, and then I smiled to let her know it didn't matter.

Then Ken had come up from somewhere, and was right beside me: He hadn't heard; at least I hoped he hadn't. I flashed the same smile up at him, and looked away quickly, blinking the tear-mist out of my eyes, and trying to send a wordless warning to my mother. If she said anything now ...

She didn't have a chance.

'Come on, kid,' Ken said. 'They're waiting.' He took my hand in one of his while he was still shaking hands with Joe Prell, and I blew a last kiss each to Tess and Teenie; then we turned and ran to the tender. I can remember being very conscious of our importance at the moment, how we must look to all the people there: two tall slim citizens of the universe, shining symbols of glamour and excitement.

Then we were in the tender, the whole bunch of us on our way up to the giant ship. All the familiar faces looked just a bit more formal and self-conscious than usual, in spite of being jammed into the inadequate space, and doubled up on the seats.

Somewhere in a corner, a group started singing, but no one else took it up, and it faded out. There wasn't much talk. We just sat there two by two ... men and women, boys and girls really—and tried to visualize what lay ahead.

Somewhere out there, beyond the spatial comprehension of a system-bound being, was a star. They called it Beta Hydri; and a group of strange men in a learned university said it had a planet. They called the planet Uller, and credited it with mass and gravity and atmosphere tolerable to humans.

They could be wrong, of course. In thirty years of star-searching from the Pluto Observatory, it was the only one so credited. The professors weren't sure, but...

But someone had to go find out, and we were lucky. Out of the thousands upon thousands who applied for the privilege, we had been chosen. And even before we knew we were both to go, we'd found and chosen each other. We weren't cautious and careful the way Joan and Alex had been ... the way most of the others in training were. The first time we met, we knew how it *had to* be for us. And though we worried, sometimes, that one of us would be picked, and the other left behind, it never seemed very likely; it just wouldn't *happen* that way.

But now we had chosen and been chosen in turn, and we had come to the end of the choosing.

When we left the tender, we knew what to do. We'd all done it dozens of times before in practice drill. We filed behind the couple in front to the ice trays, and took our places, lying down. We got our shots. When the crane lowered us into the hold, we still had our hands firmly intertwined. I know I shivered once, and thought I felt a tremor in Ken's hand and ...

## VI

AND WOKE UP slowly, still shivering, tingling in her toes and fingertips and nose and ears, as her body warmed. Her hand was still in Ken's, and he was grinning at her.

'We made it, kid.'

'So far,' she said.

Somebody handed her a bowl of soup. That seemed outlandish, for some reason, and then she realized why. They weren't back on Pluto now; they were in space ... far out ... how far? Her hand shook, and the spoon with it, spilling hot soup on her leg, and there was no reason after all why they shouldn't have soup on a spaceship. How far?

She managed to get a spoonful to her mouth, and became curious. Somebody had given it to her; who? She looked up.

Thad Levine was leaning over her, slipping a tray under the bowl for balance. He looked anxious. Em remembered him, and now consciously remembered everything.

'Where's Sally?' she asked, and found her voice sounded nor-mal.

'Instrument check,' Thad said. The phrase was meaningful within seconds after she heard it, and then, as if a key had been turned in her mind, a whole set of meaning and concepts fell into place, and she was oriented.

Thad was looking down at her, smiling. 'Feels funny, doesn't it?' he said. 'Coming out, I mean.' Of course; he'd been through it all already.

'A lot better than it felt going down!' Ken said explosively.

Em nodded. 'Only I didn't really feel anything then,' she said, 'Did you? I was just...'

'Scared!' Ken picked up promptly on her hesitation. 'You and me, and all the rest of 'em too, baby.'

'The freeze is too fast for you to feel...' Thad started mechanically, and grinned and let it drop. They'd all heard it over and over, said it to each other again and again, during the months of training. They'd had their practice-freeze periods, and come out to reassure each other once more. 'It's too fast to feel anything.' The phrase was drummed into all of them before they went aboard for the last time. They all knew it.

But *cold* was not the only way it might make you feel; they all knew that by now. *Scared* was a feeling, too.

In training, you went into a room, and lay down in the tray, and you came to again in the same room, with the same people stand-ing around, just a few hours, or even minutes, later. This time ..

This time, they'd all gone under *not* knowing: not knowing whether they'd ever come out of it alive ... whether their bodies could withstand year after year of frozen suspension, instead of the brief testing period ... whether they'd wake up in the ship, or wind up as floating particles in space, or smashed on the surface of some unknown planet.

The Tarbells, Em and Ken, were just about half-way down the list, their shift of duty was timed for the twenty-fourth year of the voyage. And no one knew for sure that day they left whether the ship would really still be on its way in a quarter of a century.

Sally came in, bustling a little, as always. She was so familiar, she made Em realize for the first time how long it was. *On Pluto we'd be past forty now!*

'Em!' Sally rushed over to kiss her, and Ken must have realized at the same time Emma did that they'd hardly touched each other.

'Hey, she's *mine*,' he said. And with his arms around her, everything was perfectly normal again.

(Parenthesis to Carla: ii)

27/9/52 It is a curious phenomenon of the human mind—or at least of mine—that past pain is painless in recall, but pleasure past and lost is excruciating to remember. I have found that for the purposes of telling this story I can readily undergo Recall Process for almost any desired period. The 'Pluto Planet of Mystery' article came up intact from a batch of Joan Thurman's papers that I looked at more than a hundred years ago. And I went back to remember what Joe Prell looked like, and how he laughed at me. That didn't hurt in memory: it made me angry, both at his stupidity and at his unkindness, but it didn't hurt.

Carla, I tried to do Recall on the eighteen months I spent in space with Ken, and with the four other couples who at one time or other were shift-partners. I know it was the *happiest* time I ever spent, but the one little part I remembered in detail, the section you have already read, was so packed with poignant

pleasure that it almost stopped this work entirely.

I shall not attempt again to recall my days and nights with Ken. As much as I remember, through a rosy blur, is all I feel competent to talk of. It took years after his death to adjust to the loss. I do not know that I could make that adjustment again, and will not subject myself to it.

As for the details of the trip ... they are interesting, but I'm afraid they're all laid over with the sentimental mist that emanates from my happiness. It must have been vastly uncomfortable in the tiny cubicle we had as home. Certainly, we fought claustrophobia every minute of the time. We worked very hard, I know, and we were never quite without fear.

The starship *Newhope* had accommodation for five hundred passengers in the deep freeze, but only six in the living quarters. Three tiny cubicles surrounded three beds, and the walls were lined with overarm storage space.

The ship had been carefully designed to be run in routine circumstances by a crew of six, and a cautious and foresighted psychologist had arranged for overlapping shifts. When we woke up, the Levines were ending their shift: it was their last night out. We shared the first six months with Ray and Veda Toglio, and the Gorevitches. Six months later, another couple replaced the Toelios and six months after that it rotated again. Shift-change nights were big events. Later, the new couple would read the Log, and catch up on everything, but that first night everything would come out in a jumble of incident and anecdote, gossip and laughter: the no-doubt grossly exaggerated story of the error Jommy Bacon made three shifts back, before the Levines came out ... a joke written into the log by Tom Kielty, fourteen years ago, but still fresh and funny ... the harrowing account of a meeting with a comet in the third year out.

It is difficult to picture the situation. Next month you are going to a planet infinitely farther away than Uller was from Earth, and yet you know with great exactness what you will find there. We had no such instruments in our day as now exist. All we knew when we set out was that this star appeared to have planets composed of terrestrial elements in quantities and proportions similar to those of the habitable solar planets.

We did not know whether we would find a place with breathable atmosphere, or bearable gravity, or water, or ... or whether we'd find a planet at all. When our shift ended, and we went back into the freeze, it would be with almost as much uncertainty as the first time.

There was nothing to be certain of except the difficulties we had yet to face: if everything else worked out, if we completed the trip, and found a suitable planet, we would still be presented with almost insuperable obstacles. It was atomic fuel, after all, that made the starhop possible; it also made unthinkable any such doubling in space as had been designed for the Pluto ship. Our fuel tanks would be too hot for human habitation twenty years after we landed.

We weren't going to be able to live in an orbit; we were going to have to land and establish ourselves—wherever we were going—as quickly as we could.

## VII

I DIDN'T GET out of the ship at all in the first thirty-six hours. There were twelve of us medics specially trained for the job of defrosting, and we had equipment to do only three couples at a time. Three medics to a unit, we worked over the humming machinery and the still bodies, testing, checking, adjusting, and checking again. You don't save seconds when the use of a limb or the functioning of an organ is involved.

Every delicate part of the human beings we worked over had to receive the same minute attentions: quick-thaw, circulator, oiler, hydrator ... and then, when they began to come out of it, some familiar face to watch over them, to say the right things, to bring food at the right time.

But that part wasn't our job. Jose Cabrini was in charge in the awakening room. They came into our section frozen and motionless; they went out thawed, still motionless. It was weird and unreal and disheartening. We kept doing it because it was the thing to do, six hours on, three hours off to catnap in one of the cubicles, and back again to the waxen-stiff shapes of human bodies.

Ken was outside all that time. He was in the first batch of defrosts: a construction expert, he was also a third-generation Marsman. He was born in Taptown on Mars—the first TAP settlement—and had grown up under primitive open-air frontier conditions: a big-chested hawk-nosed man, wiry-muscled, steel-boned and almost literally leather-skinned. All the Marsmen we had were sent out in the first groups.

There were fifteen men altogether in his construction gang. In haste and near-total silence, still orienting to consciousness, they ate their bowls of fortified soup, drew their tools from Supply, and filed into the air space between the flimsy backwall of the tanks and the alomalloy sheets of the inner hull.

There was just space enough to stand and work while they pried the first plates loose. After that, they had more space: another twelve inches to the mid-plates.

Here they could begin to see space damage, the dents and warps of imploding matter from outside—even an occasional rent in the metal fabric.

Five of the big plates to make a shelter. Each one went a little more quickly. In twenty minutes they were ready to go Outside. They knew it was safe. Other people were Out there already.

But each of them had lived through eighteen months of that voyage, consciously: eighteen months of smooth plates under-foot and glowing indirect lighting, of cramped quarters enclosed by walls, and cutting corners to save space—eighteen months closed in *from* Space ...

They stood in the lock, and hesitated. Eyes met, and looked away.

Then somebody said:

`What the hell are we waiting for?'

`Sure, let's go out and take a walk.'

`Come on out, the air is fine,' someone else said shrilly.

Ken was Mars-born, and tough; he couldn't remember ever feeling this way before. He noticed it was an Earther who finally laid hand on the lever to open the door.

They left the plates in the lock while they got their footing on the terrain, and blinked back the light of the sun.

Some of the others were cold, but Ken had chased sand devils on Mars at to below. He let the strange sun hit his head, drew the strange breath into his lungs, and exultation exploded inside him.

He wanted to shout; he wanted to run; he wanted to kiss the ground beneath his feet, embrace the man next to him. He wanted to get Emma and pull her out of the ship. He turned to the others.

`Come on!' he shouted. `Let's go!'

They dragged the heavy plates over the ground to a spot already marked out, and started building.

It was almost too easy.

Everything went according to schedule. The plans for re-use of the inner plates turned out to be sound. The temporary shelters were up and ready for use before the sun went down, and by the next day they were even moderately comfortable inside. Every bit of material that had gone into the construction of the starship, save the fuel areas and the outer hull, had been designed to serve a double purpose, and almost every design was satisfactory and practicable.

Oh, it wasn't easy in terms of work. Every man and woman of the five hundred worked till they dropped, those first two days. It wasn't just construction and renovation. There was an infinite amount of testing and retesting to be done, checking and rechecking. Round-the-clock shifts were stationed in the labs and at the instruments, for the accumulation of data about the new planet, its star and system, its chemistry and geology and biology.

And through all the furious activity, data continued to accumulate. Almost-continuous broadcasts over the loudspeaker system relayed information to workers in and out of ship.

We heard the story of the landing: how the crew had tested the planets, one by one, with routine spectroscopy and boomer-rocket samplers: the tenth at a distance vastly greater than Pluto's from the sun; the eighth, fifth, fourth (the missing ones were on the other side of the sun); and each time found rock-ribbed wastes, without air, without warmth, without hope of hospitality.



The third could have been made habitable, if necessary. To create an atmosphere is possible, when you have a base from which to work. But to have moved out of our ship into domes would have been difficult. We didn't have to. The second planet was Uller.

To those of us who were still in ship, the reports were probably more impressive than to those outside. If you could *see* the earth and feel it underfoot, if you were actually *breathing* the air, and lifting and carrying against the pull of gravity, the facts and figures wouldn't mean so much.

To me, each new item of information was overwhelming. Atmosphere almost Earth-normal (closer than Mars'; as good as the best open-air city on Pluto).

Gravity almost Earth-normal (closer than any other *solar* planet).

Temperature outside, 8 degrees C. at the equator, where we'd landed. (Warmer than Mars; infinitely warmer than Pluto. *Liveable!*)

First chemical analyses showed a scarcity of calcium, a scarcity of chlorine, an abundance of silicon.

Water: *drinkable!*

That floored me completely. To travel across the void, to an unknown planet, and find good drinking water! Well, not really *good*: the water here is actually a dilute solution of what we used to call 'water glass' back on Pluto. It didn't *taste* right, but it wasn't harmful. (And in the early days in Josetown I got used to the taste, too. We didn't take the trouble to Precipitate it half the time.)

Uller was simply, unbelievably, Earthlike. With the single exception of the silicon change in chemistry, it might almost have been Earth.

These things are easy to remember and record. Speeches and announcements, and the impact of thoughts and words ... but I find it almost impossible to visualize again the way Uller looked to me when I first saw it. It all seems natural and familiar now; I know how strange and beautiful and frightening it was then, but I cannot quite place what was strange, or what was terrifying, or what seemed so lovely. What was a foreign place has become home.

And if I could remember clearly, how could I describe it to people who have grown here?

I can only describe it as it looked to Emma, who grew up on Pluto, when it was her turn at last to stand with a group of medics in the airlock, and hesitate.

Sound, sight, smell, sensation ... a whole new world, a strange world, a fairyland fantasy world of gem-encrusted trees and opalescent plants, of granular smooth ground laid out in shimmering changeable striae of colour ...

And all of it the stranger for the incredibly Earth-like sunset. She'd seen that sunset thirty times on Earth, and marvelled every time. Here it was again, the same in every way, except for the sparkling reflections it struck from the impossible tree-trunks and flowers.

Around it all the smell of growing things, subtly familiar, tangy, hard to identify, but undeniably the scent of life.

The double row of aluminosilicate structures looked dull and ugly in this stage-setting of iridescence.

And it was cool ... cold even, but that didn't matter.

*Where's Ken?*

For thirty-six hours she had been awake, and she had not yet touched him or talked with him.

She stood there, feeling the gritty granular *earth* beneath her feet, through her boots, not really looking at things not trying to see or hear or taste or smell, but letting everything impinge on her, soak in as it would, while her eyes moved urgently, seeking one person in the weaving patterns around the street of houses, listening for just one voice in the murmuring welter of sound. Thirty-six hours one way, but literally *years*, in another sense ...

'Em!'

He charged across the open space, big and bony and beautiful, grimy, unshaven, hollow-eyed, his coveralls flapping around his legs, his arms reaching out for her long before he got there.

'Em!'

His arms went around her, pulling her against him, lifting her clear off the ground. The bristly hair on his face scratched her cheek and the dirt of the new planet rubbed off his coveralls on to her spotless

white jacket, and she smiled and opened her lips to his.

'You're cold,' he said, after a while.

'Cold?' They found each other again, with hands, with eyes, with lips, and they stood close in a warmth of their own while the wind went around them.

*Cold?*

She laughed against his shoulder, opened her eyes sidewise to a flash of brilliant colour, and backed off to look at *him* instead. 'Break it u-u-p!'

Someone was shouting at them, teasing, and someone else took her arm, and there was a whole crowd of people talking at once; she never remembered who they were, but friends, all of them, familiar faces. Hands to shake and cheeks to kiss, and excited words and gestures. And then more work to do.

Ten couples to a household; that was the plan for the temporary settlement. The outer walls and roofs were finished, but inside partitioning was still going on. Everyone helped; they all wanted their own rooms finished for the night.

Someone came around distributing mattress sacks, and Ken went off with Thad Levine to find an air pump. There was wild hilarity and a strange admixture of hysteria with relief, as one couple after another finished off their partitions, and joined the others in the central hall.

Ken and Em stood a little apart from the others, watching, very much aware of the special and extraordinary quality of their own happiness.

Out of a picked group of five hundred healthy eager young men and women, it is not difficult to select two hundred and fifty well-matched couples. Yet, when it is *necessary* to couple off, and all five hundred know it, a true marriage is the exception. Ken and Em were lucky, and they knew it. Em, watching the others, with Ken's arm around her, wanted somehow to share with all of them the flood of emotion in which she herself was caught up. They were all so impoverished by comparison ...

The one unbearable thought ran fleeting across her mind, and left with it a chill track of envy for those other poor ones: *If anything happens to him...*

Her hand tightened on his, and he looked down to her, not smiling, knowing what she felt. Together, they moved away from the group. They went into their empty room, and closed the new-hung door behind them.

A body is a solitary thing. You live with it, live in it, use its parts as best you can. But always it is alone, a thing apart, your own unique and individual portion of space.

It stands alone while the mind flicks out to make contact with the surrounding world; while the brain receives images from the eyes, the nose, the ears; while the mouth tastes and the fingers touch: and even while food is swallowed and ingested. All this time the body, as a whole, is lonely.

At points in time, infinitely far apart from the viewpoint of the cell-components of this body, two people may find unity, complete and perfect, with each other. In the act of procreation confluence occurs—or more often in the mimicry of the act.

Many bodies never know anything but solitude. The motions of procreation are gone through again and yet again, without awareness. But Kenneth and Emma Tarbell were fortunate in their bodies. Loneliness called to desperate isolation, and they came together from the first with ease and understanding.

They kissed. That was all, for the time being: mouth to mouth, sealed together, while the breath sweetened between them, his hand on her shoulder, hers against his back, merged to a single entity. They kissed, endlessly, and without reserve.

Then they lay back on the floor together, close and content, relaxed and knowledgeable in their unity with each other.

After a while Ken moved. He lifted himself on an elbow, looked down on her peaceful face, and traced her smile with a fingertip. Her eyes opened, welcoming his touch, and she stretched luxuriously, with great contentment, then turned to meet his hunger with her own.

When Sally came banging on the door, yelling about dinner, they realized they were both starved. They went out and sat in a circle with the others, in the central hall, eating the landing meal of roast beef

and corn and fruit that had left with them, and travelled with them in the freezer across the years. And with it they drank, most ceremoniously, coffee made from Uller-water. The vinegar-precipitation gave it an odd taste, but from that day on the taste of vinegar was good to all of them.

Little by little, the realization was sinking in. They were, thus, easily, and without obstacles, established on a planet twenty-one light years from home!

None of them stayed long after dinner. Two by two, they went off to their small separate cubicles, dragging their mattresses with them.

Leah Tarbell was not the only baby conceived that night.

## VIII

THEY WOKE up to brilliant sunlight, chill still air, and a hubbub of human activity. The big project now was exploration. The observations made by the landing crew indicated that the near-equatorial spot where they had landed was probably the most favourable location for a settlement. But we wanted closer ground observation before any further effort was made to establish the colony on a permanent basis.

Conditions over the surface of the planet varied widely—*wildly* would be a better word, from the point of view of a solar meteorologist. This was the first human contact with a planet whose axis of rotation lay in the plane of its orbit of revolution. All the solar planets have axes more or less perpendicular to their orbits. On Earth, for instance, there is a short winter-night and corresponding summer-day at either pole : but only at the poles. It took a good deal of readjustment in thinking habits to calculate Uller conditions with any degree of realistic accuracy.

The most obvious activity that day was the beginning of the construction of light aircraft for exploratory trips. Ken, of course, stayed on construction work, salvaging parts from the bowels of the big ship to build the smaller ones.

Meantime, scouting parties were being briefed and trained for their work, absorbing new information about what they were likely to find just as fast as it came out of the labs, still operating in ship around the clock. And everyone not directly concerned with the big project, or working in the labs, was assigned to one of the local scouting groups or specimen-collecting squads. Em found herself safety-monitoring a batch of wide-eyed collectors under the direction of a botanist, Eric Karga.

There were seven of them in the party, the others loaded down with sample cases and preservatives, Emma with a battery of micro-instruments strapped about her waist, a radiophone suspended in front of her face; and a kit of testing tongs and chemical reactors flapping against her leg. Nothing was to be touched bare-handed, smelled, or sampled, until the monitor's instruments had analysed it, and a verbal report on procedure had been made to the ship. With these provisions, it became evident almost as soon as they entered the forest that there were too many collectors, and not enough instruments. Karga himself would have thrown all discretion to the winds ... if there had been any wind, that is.

That was the first thing Emma became aware of, when they were out of range of the bustling activity of the settlement: the literally unearthly silence. Emma had grown up in this kind of background-silence, under domes. Later, she'd lived in a TAP open-air city filled with 'natural' noises: leaves rustling in a made-breeze; birds singing; small animals squeaking and creeping; an uninterrupted and infinitely inventive symphony of sound, behind and around the machines and voices and activities of men.

Here, in a *natural* open-air world, there was nothing to hear but the excited busy-ness of the small group of people: Karga rushing recklessly from horny-tipped plants to opalescent trees; the monitor-instruments clicking off their messages; the steady murmur of my own voice into the radiophone; and the awed exclamation of the collectors as novelty after unexpected novelty was uncovered in the fairyland fantasy of a forest.

The first two-hour period went by almost before they realized it. None of them wanted to go back, and the prearranged return for a complete checkup in medicentre seemed foolish even to Em, considering how careful on-the-spot precautions had been. But they really needed another monitor, or at least, another phone. And even more to the point: the rule had been established; therefore it must be obeyed. Regularity and conformity are the materials of which caution is formed, and caution was the order of the

day.

Five hundred people seemed like a lot when they were all crowded into the tender that took them up to the *Newhope* orbit around Pluto; or when they were being processed through defrost, the first two days on Uller; or when shelter had to be provided, and fast, for all of them. Now, looking outward from a double row of thin metal-walled huts at an unknown planet, five hundred humans seemed very few indeed. One death would leave a hole that could not be filled.

They griped about unnecessary precautions all the way back but back they went, and through the careful psychophysical that Jose Cabrini and Basil Dooley had worked out together.

Over a quick cup of coffee, they picked up some fresh data on the morning's discoveries. Evidence so far showed no signs of a dominant civilized, or even intelligent, natural species. Some small carapaced insect-like creatures had been found, one or two varieties in abundance. And the river from which they had drawn and purified their water was teeming with microscopic life. But nothing larger than a healthy Earth-type cockroach had turned up yet, and nothing any more dangerous either.

The small fauna, like the plant life, appeared to be almost entirely constructed along the lines of the silicate exoskeleton, cat-bon metabolism variety. Some of the smallest amoebae lacked the skeleton, but everything larger had it, and it seemed doubtful, therefore, that any larger form of mobile life would exist. The beautiful brittle tree-trunks had rigidity against the weather, but little flexibility. The arrangement would hardly be suitable for a large-size animal of any kind. Jose still seemed to be determinedly hopeful of finding intelligent life—but in the total absence of any such indications emphasis was being placed temporarily on the investigation of plant life.

When they came back from the second shift, they found tables and benches set up in the street between the huts, with a defrosting selector at one end. Emma hurried through her checkup, and went out to look for Ken. He wasn't at any of the tables, or anywhere in sight. Finally she picked out a lunch, and walked down the row of tables to where a group of medics were gathered. Most of them had been out on monitor duty that morning; all of them were engaged in eager debate; and Cabrini and Dooley seemed to be the opposing centres.

Jose was talking as she sat down. 'Lab says all the fauna so far are vulnerable to vibration. Those quartz shells are brittle,' he expounded earnestly. 'So suppose there was an intelligent species? Wouldn't it stay the hell away from a spot where a rocket came down?'

'And then all the building and tramping around,' someone else put in thoughtfully.

It fitted with the silence of the forest. 'It's hard to imagine a civilization without any noise,' she put in. 'I know it could happen, but it just doesn't fit *my* conditioning about what constitutes intelligence.' She grinned, and waved an arm pointedly around the table. 'What good is it if you can't have three people talking at once?'

'They're too small, anyhow,' Basil Dooley insisted. 'They'd shake themselves to pieces if they got big enough to do anything.'

'You can have intelligence without artifacts,' Jo said stubbornly, 'and without noise, too. Even without vocal noise.' He gulped at some coffee, and went on before anyone else could get fairly started: 'Or suppose they're so small we just haven't noticed? Why do they have to be big? Maybe something we think is a plant is really a termite-tower, like the ones on Earth? Or a hill out there somewhere is full of things the size of ants that are just smart enough not to want to show their faces? On a planet this size, a small species could have a completely material civilization, if that's what you're looking for—they could even make noise, by their own standards—and we'd have a hell of a time finding out about it.'

'Well, they'd have some kind of effect on the ecology of the planet, wouldn't they?'

'We wouldn't know that yet, either,' Emma said slowly. She was excited now, turning over the possibilities Jo was suggesting, but she knew better than to display her excitement in the discussion. People always seemed to mistrust enthusiasm. 'TAP is honest ecology,' she pointed out. 'An alien coming to Pluto would have a rough time finding out that the open-air cities are all artificial.'

Intelligent life! Non-human, non-solar intelligent life! And it was possible! This world had every prerequisite for it.

'Well, if they're that small, you're going to have some trouble talking to them.'

'Might *never* find out,' someone else suggested, 'if they didn't find some way to communicate with humans. That's your real problem, Jo. Suppose you find these critters? How are you going to talk to them? And turn it around: if they live in what looks like natural circumstances to us, how will we know which ones to try and talk to?'

'Which sums up neatly,' Jo answered him, 'the problems to which I shall probably devote the rest of my life.'

There was an intensity in his tone that silenced the table for a moment.

'Then whatever they are, let's hope you don't find 'em. We can't afford to lose your services, Jo.' It was Ken. He slid his long legs over the bench next to Emma, and squeezed her hand. 'What goes on?'

Everybody began talking at once again; everyone except Emma, who was surprised at the irritation she felt. He had no business stepping on Jo that way, she thought; and she didn't want to talk about it any more. 'Aren't you eating?' she asked.

'Ate before; they said you were getting a checkup, so I had lunch and left my coffee to have with you.'

He smiled at her, and reached for her hand again, and the irritation vanished. Even when the argument resumed, and she found that the two of them were tending to opposite extremes of attitude, she wasn't annoyed any more. They didn't have to agree about everything, after all. They had disagreed before. But this was such an *important* thing—the way you'd feel about an alien creature.

Still, she could understand it better in Ken than in Basil. Ken was a constructions man. His work was in materials; in parts and pieces to fit together. He didn't think in terms of the living organism, or the subtle and marvellous interplay of functions between organs, organism, individuals, species. Basil was a medic, and a good one; he should have understood.

Karga was at her shoulder, politely restraining himself from urging her, but too anxious to keep himself from a silent display of impatience. She stood up, and threw off the whole foolish mood. Ken would understand when they had more time to talk. And there would be plenty of time later...

## IX

IT MIGHT HAVE been a segment of petrified log. But it had legs, and the tapered bulbous end was a head. It might have been a cross between a pig and a dachshund, painted in streaky silver, and speckled with sequins. But it had *six* legs, and the head was too shapeless; there was no visible mouth and there were no ears at all.

And when you looked more closely, it wasn't actually walking. It was skating; six-legged tandem skating, with the sharp-run-nered feet never lifting out of the ground, leaving an even double row of lines incised in the granular ground behind it. And the squat barrel body glided forward with unexpected grace.

It moved into the street of huts, its head set rigidly right in front of its body, while the bulging dull black eyes darted and danced in all directions.

The first man who saw it shouted, and it froze in mid-glide. Then the man's comrade silenced him, and the creature started forward again. A crowd began to gather and after the manner of a crowd, a murmuring noise grew from it. The creature froze once more, and veered off in another direction.

Someone in the crowd had a gun. He raised it, and took care-ful aim, but someone else reached out to lower the barrel before the fool could shoot.

'It hasn't hurt anything!'

'Why wait till it does?'

'How do you know...?'

'Here's Jose.'

'Hey, Jo, here's your native. Look smart to you?'

Laughter. Comments and wonder and more and more un-controllable laughter, while the creature skated directly away from the crowd and edged up against an alu-malloy hut.

'Think we can catch it?'

'The projector ... are they getting it?'

Jose sent a whisper running back, and it only increased the volume of the sound. Better one noise than the hubbub, he thought, and spoke sharply above the crowd.

'Quiet!' Then in the momentary silence spoke more softly. 'I don't think it likes noise.'

After that, he left the group, and stepped forward steadily, slowly, towards the shadow of the hut where the creature stood.

He tried to curb his own eagerness, and make his advance without hurry and without menace. He tried, too, to ignore the slowly swelling hum of the crowd behind him. All his thoughts were on the animal, all his attention focused.

If it had intelligence, there had to be a way, *some* way, to make contact with it.

He was close enough now to touch it if he would, but he held back. It was looking at him, and from that moment on, he never once doubted that the animal was rational, impressionable, capable of communication. It was there in the eyes, in the way the eyes studied him, in something he *felt* in his own mind, hazily and without comprehension, examination-and-greeting was exchanged between them.

The creature turned to the hut, and there was a questioning feeling in Jose's mind. He did not want to speak aloud. Telepathy? Something of the sort. He thought the idea of a dwelling place, a shelter; all animals understood the concept. He thought it hard as he could, and knew he had failed, because the animal's next act was one of deliberate destruction.

Jose was the only one close enough to see exactly what was happening, but by that time they had cameras running from three different angles. Everybody saw the details, blown up, later: the people in the crowd, and those who, like Ken, were in ship, or like Em, out of the settlement.

It glided forward smoothly once again, edging towards the house, and gradually its body tilted sideways at an angle to the ground, without bending except at a concealed joint between the barrel-trunk and the right-hand set of legs.

The left-hand set described a perfect clean curve up the side of the building and down to the ground again. Then it reversed, and moving backwards, once more standing upright, edged the left-hand front runner slightly sideways and sheared a neat chord out of the wall.

The crowd saw the piece of metal fall away, and gasped, in unison, and then, for the first time, fell completely silent. What had just happened was virtually impossible. Alumalloy was *tough*. An oxy torch would cut it ... in a matter of hours. This creature had sliced it like a piece of meat.

The man with the gun took aim again, and nobody stopped him, but he couldn't fire. Jose was too close to the beast.

'Jo!' he called, and then a woman's voice said loudly, 'Shhh!' as the animal froze again. Jose looked around and smiled and waved another silencing motion at them.

He looked back just in time to see the tuskongs coming out. Two parallel needle-edged blades, curved like a set of paren-theses, they descended slowly from underneath the head, and went through the metal like tongues of fire through straw. The creature glided forward, and a long thin strip was sliced from the centre of the chord. The blades were hinged, somehow, and they seemed to be sticky inside. The needle edges met under the strip of metal, and the strip was carried up inside the tusks—or tones—as they retracted slowly into whatever opening (a mouth?) they came from.

'Jo, get outa there! I'm gonna shoot!'

There was no doubting that tone of voice. Jose held up a plead-ing hand, and stepping softly, walked backwards towards the crowd. Until he turned around, he knew, the man would hold fire. He waited till he was too close for his turned back to matter any more, then asked quietly, with all the command he could put into a low tone. 'Wait.'

'Why?' The man whispered in reply; then he would wait to shoot.

'We might as well see what it's going to do.'

'Ruined a wall already. Why wait for more?'

The words were passed back through the crowd, and the murmuring swelled again. The creature seemed to have adjusted to the noise. Calmly, it sliced another strip of the virtually impregnable alloy, and drew the metal into its interior.

Then, while they watched, it turned again to the wall, and, folding its front legs under it, slanted

forward to edge its snub-ended snout inside.

The gun came up once more, and Jose knew he couldn't stop it: the beast had poked its head inside a sacrosanct human habitation. But: 'Higher!' he whispered piercingly, 'Over its head!' The barrel jerked upward imperceptibly just as the gun fired.

It couldn't have hit; Jose was sure of that. But a sunburst of cracks appeared on the surface of the animal's hide, for all the world like the impact of a projectile on bullet-proof glass. And at the same instant a jagged lightning-streak arced from the centre of the 'wound' to the side of the hut.

The gunner drew his breath in sharply. 'It's a goddam walkin' dynamo!'

And the crowd-talk started up once more.

'Quartz ... crystals ... piezo-electric ... *generates!*'

*It's scared*, Jose thought—but now the animal had shown what power it had, so was the man. The gun came up again.

'*Stop!*' Jose shouted. 'Can't you see it's scared?'

It worked: not on the man, but as Jose had hoped, on the beast, and the man hesitated. The creature backed away from the wall, and started forward past the hut, away from the crowd and the street. It was leaning to one side, the good side, and lurching a little, going very slowly. Now its trail was a deep indentation on one side, and a barely marked line on the other, and in between a greyish ooze of something that didn't seem to be coming from the injured side. Perhaps from the 'mouth' or whatever those tusks went into? It was hard to tell.

The gunner still stood with his weapon half-raised.

'The field projector,' Jose whispered to him, and the man handed his gun to his neighbour, and ran for the rocket.

The Ullern animal had progressed perhaps fifty metres when he came out of the airlock again, a dozen others tumbling after him, with bulky pieces of equipment that took rapid shape on the ground.

There was grim speed in the way they worked. Jose, watching them, understood their fear, and could not share it; felt the pain of the hurt animal and grieved for it; fervently hoped the creature's piezo-electric properties would not make it unduly vulnerable to the projector.

There was a crackling, blinding flash of electricity as the field hit it.

Ken Tarbell answered the alarm bell reflexively, absorbed the data, and fell into drilled pattern responses with the projector team, getting it out of the airlock, setting it up, aiming, firing.

It should have trapped the animal in an invisible miniature dome through which no physical object could pass. Instead there was a small-scale electric storm over the creature, and when the glare was gone, it was lurching along just as slowly as before, with an odd look of urgency, but apparently none the worse for wear.

There was total silence in the camp, and then a shot shattered the quiet. Ken saw it hit; he saw the bullet *bounce off* the creature's hide, and saw the ragged black cracks radiate from the point of impact on the glittering surface of the skin. And he saw the *thing* keep moving, a little slower maybe, but still making progress. It was heading out of the camp, in the direction Karga's team had taken. It was heading towards the forest where Emma was.

*Had anyone warned them?*

Em had a radiphone; Ken turned and raced back to the ship, fear moving his feet while completely separate thoughts went through his head. The thing could fight off an electromagnetic field, but it was vulnerable to shock; he knew how to stop it.

In ship, he clambered up the ladder to Supply, grabbed the two things he needed, and leaped down again ignoring the footholds. Outside, he realized the others were on the same track, but their weapon was not strong enough. The crowd had separated into three groups, surrounding the thing, and they were shouting at it, screaming, singing, yelling, stomping, first from one side, then the other.

Each time it responded more feebly than before, moving away from the new source of noise. Someone ran past Ken, headed for the ship, and he caught from somewhere else a few words of questioning conversation. They thought they could head it into a trap; but what kind of trap would *hold* it?

Ken had the phone ready at his mouth, and his weapon in his hand. His eyes were on the beast, and he saw that each time the direction of the noises changed, it seemed a little less frightened, a little less anxious to change its path. Any animal learns what to fear, and what is safe. The shouting wouldn't hold it long, he thought, and as he thought it, saw the creature head straight for the group that stood between it and the forest-edge, undeterred by stamping, screaming cacophony.

'Emma! Em!' He spoke urgently, low-voiced, into the phone. 'There's an animal here. Headed your way, *Watch out!*'

He didn't realize for the first instant what had happened. The Ullern wasn't limping out towards the forest any more. It was moving fast now, as if something had galvanized it into action, somehow summoned its last resources of strength and speed. It was gliding fast and smooth and with a purpose in its direction ... back into camp, back towards the rocket, *straight at Ken.*

It was coming too fast to stop or fight or escape. There was only one thing to do, and Ken did it. He threw the hand grenade he'd brought from the ship.

*Let me through now, everybody out of the way, I'm a doctor, let me get through. There's a man hurt in there, I'm a doctor. Ken, oh Ken ...*

*Come on now, everybody out of the way, this door is in the way. Oh, Ken!*

'I'm sorry, Emma. You know we can't let you in. We're doing everything we can.

'Oh, Basil, don't be silly. I have *a right* to help.'

'Em, I think we can manage better than you could. He's ... he's pretty badly cut up. You'd be bound to ...'

'What do you think I am, Dooley? Somebody's snivelling wife? I'm *a doctor!*'

*And this is how they feel when we tell them they have to wait, now I'm not a doctor, he's right, I'm a snivelling wife, I'm even snivelling, I can hear it. But I'm a doctor, if I act like one they'll have to let me in ...*

'What ... what do you ... What are his chances, Doctor?'

'They'll be better if we let Basil get back in there, Em.'

*'Oh, it's you, is it? The nice careful semantic psychologist, the happy little word-weigher, the fellow who wanted to see some native life!'*

'Leave me alone, Jose. Please, go away! Basil ...'

*Basil is gone, he went back to Ken, you can't go to Ken, they won't let you, they're going to let him die, and they won't let you help, they've got the door locked too, you tried that before, and they're all in there and they'll let him die.*

'Em...'

'I said go away. Leave me *alone*, won't you?'

'Em ... it's me, Thad.'

And she collapsed gratefully, childishly, in familiar, friendly arms, abandoning the effort to be calm, to be convincing, to be reasonable and professional. They weren't going to let her into that room, whatever she did, so she sobbed in Thad's arms, until he said:

'Go on, Emmy, cry all you want to.' And then she stopped.

The door opened and closed again, and she looked up at Thad, and saw the news there, and all the confused emotion was gone. Now she was calm enough, and tired.

'He's ...'

'Dead,' Thad said the word out loud; one of them had to. 'They never let me say good-bye.'



'He wasn't conscious, Em.'  
'*He would have known!*'  
Thad didn't try to answer.

## X

TWO DAYS LATER, the entire settlement was fenced in with a vibration-field. No other animals showed up in the time it took to get the fence operating; and the occasional creature that came in sight afterwards turned quickly away. We knew, from that first experience, that vibration was not necessarily fatal to the beasts, but that they could be frightened and/or hurt by anything along the line, in or out of the human sonic range.

I think now that most of us rather overestimated, at the time, the danger that vibration represented to them; it was natural enough, because we were all attributing the creature's obvious difficulty when it left the hut to the cracks the first shot had left on its surface. Actually, it took a shock as severe as the bomb that was finally exploded almost underneath it, to damage the brittle armour enough to stop it in its tracks.

It was interesting, too, that when they tested the bullets in the ballistics lab, it turned out the first hadn't touched the animal, and the second had hit squarely, been flattened by the impact of the super-hard hide, and *bounced off*. Yet the cracks from the second had been hardly more severe than from the first. It was difficult to visualize a living creature, a mobile animal, going about with a skin as brittle as glass, as easily shattered by shock-waves and vibration as by actual impact; yet that was obviously the case.

The bullet cracks, we decided during the autopsy, were just about as serious, and as painful, as whip-welts might be to a human. That is, there was no loss of 'blood' and no real impairment of function; there was, instead, a state of potential damage, in which any ill-considered motion might result in a serious tissue-break. However, if you cover a man's *entire* body with welts, no matter how carefully you place them so as not to break the skin, you can incapacitate him completely and possibly even kill him, by reducing skin-function. This was, apparently, the net effect of the bomb: simply to destroy the animal's exterior mechanism for reacting to stimulus.

There was some doubt, too, as to whether the bomb had actually killed the thing. Possibly it wasn't entirely dead at first, but just immobilized. We didn't get close enough the first few hours to know for sure whether it was still breathing. We did, with instruments, check on temperature and response to various stimuli, and all the results, *in human terms*, indicated an absence of life. But it appears that the creature may have continued to ooze out that curious gel for some time after it fell. At least, when it was moved, there was a largish puddle underneath it; this might, of course, have been ejected at the time of the fall.

It took several days of fine and fancy improvisation at dissection (we had only the one sample, and we didn't want to spoil it) to find out just what that ooze was. Of course, we got a chemical analysis right away, but that only gave us an idea. The stuff was a mixture of aluminosilicate compounds and body fluids of a high pH, containing short-chain silicones and some quartz. The analysis presented a variety of interesting possibilities, but it needed the completion of the dissection to be certain.

When we knew, it was funny, in a way. The visiting beastie had got itself a bellyache from eating our house. All we could figure was that it ordinarily subsisted on the native plant life, hard-shelled and soft-interior, silicone outside the silicate inside. It had identified, with whatever sense organs it used for the purpose, the discernible trace of silicate in the aluminosilicate, and the presence of carbon in the interior, and had mistaken the house for an extra-large new variety of plant life. The aluminium, in compound with more tidbits of this and that than I can now remember, had reacted to the additional jolt of silicones in the animal's stomach by turning into a mess of indigestible (even for *it*) gelatinous-metallic stuff. The oozing trail it left behind as it tried to leave the settlement was nothing more or less than the trickling regurgitation of an animal with an inflexible outer hide, and an extreme vulnerability to the shock of sudden motion.

This much we knew after we had traced the thing's alimentary canal, with an oxy-torch, a hacksaw, and (when we got inside) more ordinary surgical implements. The inner tissues were more familiar-looking than the outside, of about the same composition and consistency one would find in an earth-animal, differing only in the replacement of the carbon chain compounds by silicon chains. Perhaps the most

curious and interesting phenomenon, from a medical viewpoint, was the way the soft inner tissues changed gradually to tough fibrous stuff, somewhat similar to silicon-rubber, and then, still gradually, so that it was almost impossible to determine at what point the actual 'skin' began, to the pure amorphous quartz of the hide-armour. The vicious-looking tuskongs were a natural enough adaptation for a creature that had to chomp up horny-hard surfaces with a minimum of vibration.

All this, and a good deal more of no especial interest except to a medic, we learned in the dissecting room and in reports from the chem lab during the two days it took to get the fence operating. Meantime, all exploration was stopped; a guard was maintained around the camp at all times until the field was in force, and a smaller lookout-guard afterwards. Work on the light aircraft went on, and construction of freight transport planes began immediately. We had already determined that we would move the settlement, if any habitable part of the planet could be found where these creatures did not exist. And all further investigation, as well as transport, would proceed by air.

The move was made exactly forty days after the Ullern came into the camp. If you've read the old Bible, there's a certain quaint symbolism in that figure. The date, of course, was 12/7—Firsttown Day. And it is curious to note, in passing the odd senti-mentalities that were applied to this business of dates and calendars.

One of the most impressive similarities between Earth and Uller was in the matter of time. An Earth-hour is a few minutes shorter than an hour here; the Uller-day, according to the Earth-setting of the chronos when we arrived, was about 26 hours long. And the year on Earth—the actual period of revolution around the sun—is slightly more than 365 days, instead of our 400.

Logically, when we arrived, we should have established a new metrical calendar and time-scale. Ten months of forty days, or forty weeks of ten days each—either one—would have been simple and efficient. A day divided into ten or twenty hours would have been sensible. But either one would have had the same effect: to make us stop and think when we spoke of time.

Humans—set apart from all other indigenous species of Earth by their ability to think—have a long-bred habit of avoiding mental strain. And the similarities to Earth-time were too noticeable and too tempting. We simply fixed our clocks and chronos to run slower and so saved ourselves from adjustment to the difference. The day here is still twenty-four hours, and the year has twelve months still. It didn't bother us to have 36 days each month; that part of the calendar had always been flexible. And the interim Fourday at year's end was an old Earth custom, too, I've since found out. Our only real departure was the six-day week.

(Parenthesis to Carla: iii)

2/10/52

I'M AFRAID I have been, in these last pages, rather drily concerned with facts as familiar to you as to anyone who has grown up side by side with the Ullerns. This was partly in an effort to get across to you some of the feeling we had then: how new all this information was to us and how difficult to assimilate. Also, the jump out of emotion into preoccupation with data was typical of my own reactions at the time.

I had one emotion that I was willing to identify, and that was hate. I worked in the dissection lab whenever I was awake, and took my meals there too, watching the work as it proceeded, and enjoying every slice and sliver that was carved out of that beast. That much *I felt*; for the rest I had ceased to be aware of any feelings at all. I had an overwhelming thirst for knowledge about the animal that had killed Ken; but Ken himself, and what his death meant to me ... this I refused to think about at all.

When I realized I was pregnant, I was still sleepwalking as the true love of a dead man. I was gloriously happy, and terribly depressed. Ken's baby would be Ken-continuing, and so not-quite-dead. But Ken was dead! I had no husband, and my child would have no father to grow up with.

Most of the time, the first few months, I just forgot I was pregnant. I meant that, literally. Someone would say something about it, and I'd have to collect my wits and remember, consciously, what they

were talking about. Maybe I didn't want to have the baby, and was trying to lose it by behaving as if I weren't pregnant, working long hours at tough jobs ... but I don't think so. I think I was determined not to be happy about anything, and afraid of being depressed. I was, in short, determined not to *feel* anything.

You can't grow a child inside you without feeling it: feeling it physically, as your body changes, and feeling the subtle complex of emotions that accompanies the changes. But I tried, and for a short time I succeeded.

I remember that Jose fell into step with me one time, as I was going from my room to the lab, and tried to talk to me; it didn't occur to me that he was taking a professional interest. I thought I had myself completely under control, and was rather proud of the way I was behaving. I didn't even listen to what he said, but took for granted that he still considered me his ally in the stupid argument of the first day of exploration.

'How are you feeling, Emma?' I guess he said ... some such thing, because it gave me an opening to turn on him and demand:

'How do you feel? Now you've got your *intelligent* life, how do you like it?'

I can remember thinking I'd said something witty as I stalked away. The unforgivable thing that Jose had done to me, you see, was not that he had convinced me of an erroneous attitude, but that he had convinced me of something about which I argued with Ken the last time I saw him ... and that I had continued to question Ken, and to cling to Jo's attitude, right up to the moment Ken proved his point with his own death.

I do not now apologize for these reactions, or even comment on them, but simply state them here as honestly as possible. Perhaps it was healthy, after all, that I reacted as I did. Hate kept me going where grief would have, literally, prostrated me. And I did not mourn Ken, then; I just hated: everything and everyone that contributed in any way to his death.

It occurs to me only now that perhaps that curious business of our time-reckoning system, as well as many other apparently irrational things we did, were done in part to save our faculties of adaptation for necessities. I still don't know whether it was inherent weakness or instinctive wisdom. It doesn't matter, really, and I see I'm digressing again. I *am* getting older. But I can still remember being very scornful of the same sentimental clinging to a calendar, when I was a child on Pluto—and there they'd had more excuse. Pluto doesn't rotate at all; it has no natural day. And its year is hundreds of Earth-years long. So for a system of time-reckoning that applied to human values, the old one was as good as any other there, except in terms of arithmetical efficiency.

Here it was another matter altogether: we *forced* an old system to fit new circumstance; why? Because we were human, and each of us had grown up somewhere. Because we had been children back there, and some part of each of us was still a child *there*, and needed a safe familiar handle of some sort to cling to. In space, we were completely set apart from 'home'. Time was our handle.

## XI

THE NIGHTS WERE already long when the colony moved south. Firsttown was located just below the 17th parallel, close enough to the pole so that few of the Ullern animals cared to brave the scorching summers, or freezing winters; still far enough so that humans could hope to survive them.

They had just about nine weeks of steadily shortening days in which to prepare for the winter-night; and at that latitude, it would be fourteen weeks after the last sunset before it would rise again for a few minutes of semi-daylight. The temperature, in Fourmouth, was already below freezing, and Meteorology pre-dicted cheerfully that the winter-night low would be somewhere about —50 deg.

To some of the others, the long stretch of cold and darkness was frightening. To the Plutonians and Marsmen the cold meant nothing, and for the former, artificial light was as natural as sun. Emma, had she stopped to think about it, would have been grate-ful for even the few months each year of Earth-normal temperate weather and sunlight.

She didn't think about it. She worked, with grim preoccupa-tion, all through those early months. When she no longer had the body of the beast to cut up, she threw herself into the conquest of the *planet*

that had killed Ken ... which was, too, the fulfilment of their joint dream. She was alone now, but somehow if she worked twice as hard, she could still make the dream come true for *both* of them.

She was lucky, too, because throughout that fall and winter there was always more work to be done than there were hands to do it. When her own shift at Medicentre was done each day, she went out and found more work; filled in on the auxiliary power-plant construction when people were sick; helped build the nursery and furnish it; spent long hours in the library, as she had done in her youth. Now she was studying chemistry, silicon chemistry. *Organic* silicon chemistry, working it out where it didn't exist, from what little the films recorded of solar knowledge.

She worked alongside other people, but made little contact with any of them, and she was happiest in the hours she spent alone, studying. She did not join the others in the big social hall, when they met on 18/5 to spend the last full hour of sunlight under the U.V. glass dome; she barely noticed when the long night set in. Almost, she might have been Emma Malook again, living under the Pluto dome, moving through artificial light and air, such as she'd known since birth, between Joan Thurman's library and Joe Prell's home, living all the time, wherever she was, in a fantasy of being grown-up, and a doctor. Only now she was a doctor, and the fantasy was being Emma Malook. She was Emma Tarbell, and she was going to have a baby, by which she knew indisputably that she was full grown now.

The days went by, one like the last, and all of them almost painless. In her sleep, she would reach out across the bed to emptiness, and withdraw her hand before she woke to know her own loneliness. But once awake, she followed the pattern of work and study rigorously, tended her body and the new body growing inside it, and when she was tired enough not to lie awake, went back to bed again.

The single event that stirred her immediate interest that winter was the Ullern they caught. One of the regular weekly scouting parties brought it back, along with their charts and statistics on conditions outside. They'd thought it was dead at first, then they discovered it was living, but too weak to resist capture. In the lab, they found out quickly enough that the animal was simply half starved. They fed it on specimens of local flora, and it flourished.

Then why, outside, surrounded by the same plants in abundance, had it almost died of starvation? That took a little longer to find out. Cabrini tried a specimen from outside on it when the next scouting squad returned and found it refused the frozen food. After that, they tried a range of temperatures, and discovered it would eat nothing below the freezing point of carbon dioxide. That made sense, too, when you thought about the problem of eliminating solid CO<sub>2</sub>.

Jo was tremendously excited. 'If they had fire, they could use the whole planet!' he pointed out, and met a circle of questioning eyes.

Planning to teach this one?' Basil asked, too quietly. Jose joined the general laughter, and let the matter slide. It was encouraging to know that at least half the year the colony was completely safe from the beasts ... and to have some kind of clue to a method of attack.

They kept the animal in a sort of one-man zoo, an island of Uller-earth and Uller-plants surrounded by a five-foot moat of gluey fluid through which its runners could not penetrate. And Jo, apparently through sheer stubborn conviction that it was possible to do so, actually managed to make 'friends' with the creature, at least, he was the only one who could approach it when it regained its strength, without some display of hostility.

The first sun rose again on 6/8, and by the beginning of Nine-month, the days were already nine hours long. By then, too, Emma was far enough along to have to slow her pace; she had just twelve more weeks—two months—to term.

It was a sad and lovely springtime: In the last weeks of waiting, Emma gave up everything except her regular work at Medi-centre. Studying no longer interested her; instead she would go out and sit for hours in the crisp fresh air and Tenmonth sunshine, intensely conscious of the life within her, impatient for its birth, and yet somehow fearful of letting it loose. It would be a boy, of course, it had to be a boy, and she would name it Kenneth.

Leah was born on 36/0, right in the middle of Medicentre's first and biggest baby-room. There were twenty-three new infants in the colony in two weeks' time.

Inevitably, Emma spent much of her time the next month with the other young mothers, all of them learning and sharing the care of their babies. After the first—not disappointment, but surprise—she didn't mind Lee's being a girl; and she was surprised, too, to discover how much pleasure she could find in the simple routine of feeding and cleaning a tiny infant. Her own infant.

She was busy and useful again, because the other mothers came to her for advice and opinions at every turn. She was a medic, after all, and had *some* kind of previous experience with babies.

Under the best of circumstances, it is likely to be eight or ten weeks after birth before the mother is once again quite convinced of her own existence as a separate and individual person. Emma had little desire to return to that conviction. She was stirred by occasional questioning curiosities about the details of the re-frigerating system, as the heat outside mounted through the summer-day. She began to pick up some of the chemistry films a little more often, and went, from time to time, to the zoo-in-a-lab where the Ullern was still kept, to find out what they had learned about it. But on the whole, she was more than content with the narrow slice of reality in which she found herself. Even her work at Medicentre, as she resumed it, somehow concerned itself primarily with babies: those already born, and those that were still expected.

The first New Year's Eve on Uller came in midsummer, just long enough after Lee's birth for Em to have gone to the celebra-tion comfortably if she wished. She preferred to stay in the nursery, and let the other mothers go, with their husbands. Two months later, when the early fall nights were beginning to be long enough to cool the air a little, she found her first real pleasure in contact with the new environment.

In the hour before dawn, it was possible to go outside without frig-suits; and every day, from that time, Em adjusted her sleep-ing so that she would be awake at that time of day. First, when the nights were still short, she would leave the sleeping baby in the nursery; later, when dawn began to coincide with the chrono-morning, she would take Lee with her.

Alone, or with the baby at her side in a basket on the ground, she would sit by the edge of the dry river-bed, and watch the world wake up. The first sun's rays, felt before they were seen, brought a swarm of near microscopic life out of the moist earth of the river bed, and started an almost imperceptible stirring in the trees. Emma would sit and watch while the budded branches snaked up and out of the sparkling columns of their trunks, turned their tender new greenery up to the sun for a brief time, and then melted back into the safety of the cool trunk shells.

Day after day, she tried to remember why the flexible tree-trunks were so fondly familiar. It was *silly*, somehow; and then at last the memory came. A little ball of stuff that bounced, and broke off clean when you stretched it ... that moulded to any shape, and dropped back slowly to a formless mass again when you left it alone ... a childhood toy, that someone had called *silly putty*. Some kind of silicon compound, she supposed, and told little Lee, who did not understand: 'See? See the silly-putty trees?'

On another level of interest, the phenomenon of twice-yearly budding fascinated her, as well as the marvellous apparatus offered by the flexible branches to protect the leaves against too much sun as well as against the winter cold. Each day, too, as the sun rose farther in the north, the branches turned their budded sides to catch its rays aslant: like the sunflower on Earth, but these trees turned to face the source of life throughout the year, instead of by the day.

When the tree-trunks began to crawl back in their shells, it was time to go inside. Minutes later, the sun would be too hot to take. But for the hour before that, it was a cool and peaceful world on the river bank.

By the time Lee was six months old, the weather outside had passed its brief month of perfection, and was once again too cold for pleasure. By that time, too, the first epidemic of parenthood was dying down. Emma was back at general medic work; the world was achieving a sort of normalcy. She had her baby. She had her work. And she was beginning to be aware of the fact that she was terribly lonely.

By that time, too, there were some unattached men. A good many of those early marriages broke up in the first year. In spite of the growing emphasis on typically frontier-puritan monogamous family patterns, divorce was, of necessity, kept easy: simply a matter of mutual decision, and registration. For that matter, the morality in the early years was more that of the huddled commune than of the pioneer

farmland.

Emma saw a lot of men that winter. Lee was a convenient age ... old enough not to need hovering attention, young enough still to be asleep a large part of the time. Emma was a romantic figure, too, by virtue of her widowhood; her long grief for Ken established her as a better marriage risk than those who had made an error the first time, and had had to admit it. The dawning recognition of these facts provided her at first with amusement, and later with a certain degree of satisfaction. She had been an intellectual adolescent, after all. Now, for the first time, she found out what it was like to be a popular girl. She discovered a new kind of pleasure in human relationships: the casual contact.

She found out that friends could be loved without being *the* beloved; that men could be friends without intensity; that affection came in varying degrees, and that she could have many different kinds of affection from many different people ... even though Ken was dead.

Yes, she found out too that Ken *was* dead. Perhaps it was fortunate that Lee was a girl; a boy named Kenneth might have helped her keep the truth from herself a while longer. And the inescapable violence of the seasonal changes made a difference. Life was determined to continue, and to do so it was constantly in a state of change. Even the silly-putty trees told her that much.

There was an impulse towards gaiety throughout the colony generally during the second winter-night. The first one had been too full of work and worry. Now, they felt established and moderately secure. They had survived a full year of what troubles the planet could offer, and Ken's death was still their only loss. A new science of chemistry and physics in the labs and a new technology was beginning to appear. Perhaps a new biology as well: Jo now had two Ullerns in his zoo, and there was some reason to believe that the creatures were capable of mating.

There was a warm sense of security in the colony, and when they had to take to the underground corridors again to keep their warmth, it added a womb-like complacency. It was a winter of parties and celebrations and increasing complexities of human relations. It merged into a springtime of renewed activity and interest for everyone, and most of all for Emma.

Now, when she went to the river-bank at dusk, instead of dawn, she had to watch the toddling one-year-old baby, and keep her from the rushing waters of the river. Everything, all around, was full of motion and excitement, even the intellectual life that was hesitantly picking up once more.

There was so much to learn: she started going to the library again, after Lee was in bed for the night, and scanning the recorded knowledge there for clues to the new facts of life. She spent hours, sometimes, in the zoo-lab, watching the two Ullerns, and in spite of her open amusement at Jo's undiminished belief in their intelligence as a species, she listened eagerly while he talked about their habits. He had been watching them for months. She did not have to accept his interpretation on the data he'd acquired, but the observations themselves were fascinating.

The zoo became something of a centre of debate throughout the colony. It was now firmly established that one of the creatures was, in human terms, female. Medicentre wanted the male for dissection now that a new generation was assured. Jose wouldn't hear of it. There was a good deal of humour at his expense, and an increasing amount of discussion and argument too, on both sides. Emma couldn't take it too seriously; the birth of her child had given her a new attitude towards time. There were years ahead of them. If Joe wanted his pet alive, why kill it? They'd catch more ...

The days were constantly longer and fuller. Now sunset came too late to take Lee with her when she went down to the river bank, and the water was beginning to move more thinly and slowly, low between the sides. The half-hour out there before bed was the only part of the day now that was quiet and unoccupied. It was a time for feeling, instead of thinking or doing, for a renewal of the loneliness she refused, quite, to surrender.

Refused, that is, until the evening Bart Heimrich met her there, and in the cool of twilight, just as the sun went down, took her in his arms. It shouldn't have made that much difference; they were two grown people, and one kiss by the side of the slow moving water could hardly have mattered so much.

Emma was frightened. For two weeks after that, she stayed away from the river, and she wouldn't

see Ban either. She'd been in love once, and once was enough. There were plenty of men around. This kind of thing was more than she wanted. As she had done a year ago, she threw herself into study and work.

There was still plenty to do. As unofficial specialist in obstetrics, she had been somehow selected to watch over the Ullern creature's pregnancy. She spent more time at the zoo, now, trying to weed out the facts and theories Jo threw at her. He was so sure of his conclusions about the Ullerns that it was almost impossible for him to separate observations from hypotheses, and Emma was alternately amused and infuriated by the problem of working with him. He was a first-rate psychologist, after all, and a careful semanticist ... where other people's attitudes were concerned. Even about himself, she decided on reflection—except in this one area of most intense belief.

Was that true for everyone? Was there, for each person, a space where one's own judgment *could not* be trusted? How about herself, and Bart?

Jo was a good psychologist, almost all the time. They were talking for the thousandth time, about the fate of the male Ullern. Jo had achieved a reprieve for the beast, till after the young ones were born, with the argument that they should at least wait and make sure they had another male to replace it. Emma approved the argument; it suited her tendency to temporize.

'Emmy,' Jo asked in a sudden silence: 'Has it occurred to you yet that you have a long time to live too?'

Her first impulse was to laugh. 'Never thought about it much,' she said lightly.

'Well, why don't you?'

'I don't know.' She was decidedly uncomfortable. 'What's that got to do with the price of baby Ullerns?'

'Nothing at all. I was just wondering, most intrusively, about you and Bart.'

'Me and ... what are you talking about?'

'I told you I was being intrusive. It's none of my business. Would you rather not talk about it?'

'I'd much rather..?' She changed her sentence half-way through; 'much rather talk about it, I guess.'

'All right then. What's the matter, Emmy? Don't you like him?'

'*Like* him? I ...' Then she saw he was smiling, and grinned ruefully herself. 'All right, so I'm wild about him. But ...' There was no way to explain it.

'But what?'

'Well ... it's not the *same*. I can't feel the same way about him that I did about ... Ken. I don't think I'll ever feel that way about anybody again. It wouldn't be fair ...'

'Come off it, Emmy. What are you afraid of? If you're sure you'll never feel the same way, what's there to worry about?'

She looked up, startled, and waited a moment to answer, while she admitted to herself that it wasn't Bart she was afraid of hurt-ing at all.

'I don't know. Look, things are all right the way they are. I don't need him; he doesn't need me. Why should we get all tangled up so we do need each other? What for? Oh, Jo, don't you see I can't take a chance on anything like that again? I ... this is a crazy thing to say, but I think if he was married, I'd be more willing to ... that's not very nice, is it?'

'Nice?' He shrugged. 'It's pretty normal. Understandable, anyhow. And just what was I talking about. You've got a long time to live yet, Emmy. You going to stick it out alone?'

She nodded slowly. 'Yes,' she said. 'I am.' And with the words spoken aloud, the impossible loneliness of the future struck her for the first time fully. She hadn't cried since the day Ken died; now a slow tear came to one eye, and she didn't try to stop it. There was another, and another, and she was sobbing, great gasp-ing sobs, against Jo's comforting shoulder.

He was a good psychologist. He didn't tell her it was all right to cry; he didn't tell her anything, except to murmur an occa-sional word of sympathy and affection. He stroked her hair and patted her shoulder, and waited till she was done. Then he grinned and said: 'You look like hell. Better wash up here before you go see him.'

For a year and more, Bart and Emma spent most of what free time they had together. They had fun, and they had tender happy moments. They understood and enjoyed each other. They might have married, but marriage was a sacred cow still; no matter how much she loved Bart, or liked being with him, Emma steadfastly refused to sign the vows. It wasn't the same as it had been with Ken; she was both relieved and disappointed to discover that. But if she married him, it might get to be the same—or it might not. Which prospect was the worse she hardly knew.

When, occasionally, she still felt frightened about caring as much as she did, there was always Jose to talk it over with, and talking to him always made her feel better. She might have resolved the ambivalence entirely through therapy. Jose hinted at the notion from time to time, but she didn't want to, and he knew better than to push it.

More and more, too, Emma and Jo were working so closely together in the zoo-lab that a therapy relationship between them would have been hard to establish. And Jo was the only really qualified therapist in the colony. The techniques were familiar to all the people in Medicentre, but psychotherapy is not a skill to be acquired in rapid training. Jo had a natural aptitude for it, that was all.

Jo was good to work with as Bart was to love. The important factor in each case was enthusiasm, the ability to participate completely. Emma's interest in the Ullerns differed from Jo's in all respects but one, and that was intensity. She listened to his theories both patiently and painstakingly, believing little and using much to further her own knowledge of the weird biology of the creatures. She was quite content to discard the largest part of what he said, and select the most workable of his ideas for follow-up. By the end of that year, she had begun to recognize, reluctantly, that she was getting good results surprisingly often when she worked along the lines suggested by his thinking. But it took a major incident to make her look back and count the trials and errors, before she would admit how consistent the pattern of predictability had been.

The Ullern babies had been born in the fall of '92. There were three of them, but it wasn't until early spring that it was possible to determine with any degree of certainty that two of them were female and one a male. Perhaps it could have been determined a little sooner; Jose had managed to get a postponement of the father-Ullern's death sentence once again, until the sex of the young ones was known, and there was some feeling that he, at least, knew for quite a while before he told anyone.

Once the announcement was made, however, there was no further question of delaying the opportunity for an autopsy. The only question now was whether it might not be best to take the older female, and gain some additional information about the reproductive system.

Discussion and debate went round and about for some ten days. It was terminated by the incredible information that the adult male had escaped.

The talk stopped then, because nobody wanted to say out loud what everybody was thinking. You see, it was simply not possible for the creature to make his way unaided through that gluey moat.

If there was any doubt at all in the public mind about what had happened, there was none in Emma's. She was shocked and angry and she saw to it that she had no further talks with Jo in which he might be tempted to confide anything she didn't want to know.

## XII

THE ANNOUNCEMENT, POSTED two days after the Ullern's escape, said simply:

### *LECTURE*

In the Small Hall, 19/5/93, at 20.00 hours.

A report by Jose Cabrini on  
the possibilities for direct communication  
with the native inhabitants of Uller.

I read it, and couldn't help feeling relieved on Jo's behalf. I might have known he wouldn't risk



anything so unpopular as letting that animal get away unless he had something else up his sleeve. What it was, I didn't know; Jose had never discussed with me any clues he had to the problem of direct communication.

He should have known the Small Hall wouldn't hold the crowd that turned out. Maybe he did know; if so, it was effective stag-ing, when the early arrivals had to move to the Main Hall, and latecomers found a sign directing them there.

Jose began his speech very informally, joking about the size of his audience, with some hoary gags about being unaccustomed to such *very* public speaking. Then his tone changed.

'I'm afraid the news I have for you tonight is more dramatic than it is useful ... so far. I think what has already been learned will eventually enable us to communicate directly with the natives of this planet, and perhaps—if my estimate of their capacities is accurate—to live on a co-operative basis with them. For the present time, however, my information does little more than answer a question that has baffled a good many of us.'

I had no idea what was coming.

'If you will all think back to our first contact with an Ullern,' he said slowly and distinctly, 'You may recall that there was one particularly puzzling piece of behaviour on the part of the animal—one question that was never answered in the autopsy.'

Thinking back was still too vivid. I shuddered in the warm room, and missed the next few words.

'... attack Ken Tarbell? What gave it the renewed energy to make such a fierce charge, when it was already badly hurt, and was seeking nothing but escape? My own theory at the time was that the Ullern was reacting with what would be, in the human metabolism, an adrenal release, to the telepathically-received information that Tarbell had found a means of attacking it fatally.

'That theory was inadequate. If you think of telepathy as a mystic or metaphysical power, my analysis was entirely incorrect. But if you will try to think of it, for the moment as an emanation similar in nature to radio or electromagnetic waves, I was close to the truth.

'You are all familiar with the piezo-electric properties of the Ullern physiology. You can see it for yourselves in the zoo, even the babies react electrically to certain irritations. Analogizing pretty broadly, one might say that the electrical reaction to stimulus in an Ullern is similar to the adrenal reaction in humans: that is, it is produced by just such irritations as might reasonably be expected to provoke the emotion of fear or anger.

'Now: in a human, the application of such a stimulus can have differing results. An unkind word, the semi-serious threat of a blow, anything on that order, will produce enough of an adrenal release so that the person affected may express his reaction rapidly in expletive, or door-slamming, or some similarly mild expenditure of energy. A slightly greater threat will produce a cocked fist; a little more will make a man strike out. But a really strong stimulus, ordinarily, will not produce a direct counter-action. If a man threatens your life by holding a gun at your head ... or if you are knocked over by a blow to the belly ... you will conserve the extra energy of the resulting adrenal release for an all-out effort against the attacker.

'This is, essentially, what the Ullern did. The many irritations to which it was subjected produced a variety of reactions, most of them in the fear-spectrum. The first shot, which failed to hit it, but shattered a part of its armour with shock-vibrations, angered it only within the fast-reaction range, and it responded, without conscious "planning", by an emission of "lightning". Apparently it was unable to place the source of the shot, and believed the shock to have come from the building; so the electrical "punch" was aimed at the wall.

'Subsequent irritations made it aware of some consciousness on the part of large lumps of carbon which it had previously ignored as being, in all past experience, most likely inorganic, or at least inedible, entities. The idea was devastatingly new and at least as frightening as the actual vibrations the carbon creatures then commenced to "hit" it with..?

There was a murmur of noise through the hall; some laughter, some coughing, much shuffling.

'All right,' Jo said smiling, 'I'll get to the point now. So far it's all been theorizing and analogy. Briefly, my information is this: the Ullerns contain, in their quartz-hide armour, crystals capable of sending and receiving radio waves ... by which I mean specifically that they can exchange information on the same

frequency bands on which our radiophones operate.'

The sentence was delivered so quietly, it took a moment to penetrate. Then the hall was in an uproar. Jose couldn't go on with the speech until he had answered a hailstorm of questions from the audience.

'What's that got to do with Tarbell?' somebody wanted to know first.

'Emma,' Jo said from the stand, 'maybe you can explain that best?'

I was a little confused myself. I got to my feet, and said hesitantly, 'Ken tried to warn me ... he phoned me about the Ullern heading our way ... that's why we came back ...'

'I suppose the gooks understand English!' somebody roared from the back of the room, and someone else added:

'Suppose they did? Wouldn't even an Uller-beast give a man the right to warn his wife?'

Laughter, and foot-stamping, and gradual quiet as I continued to stand in my place. 'Maybe it's funny to the rest of you,' I said, 'but *I'd* like to know just what Jo meant. So far, what he's said has made sense. If anybody who isn't interested will leave, per-haps the rest of us can learn something.'

I was just angry enough, and just intense enough, I guess, to get an effect. There was prompt and total silence. Jo went on.

There is no point in reproducing the rest of the speech here. It was, like most important discoveries, only very briefly incredible. After even the smallest amount of reflection, we could all see how logical the explanation was. The wonder was that we hadn't thought of it before. The same explanation can be found, almost word for word, in the basic biology text on Ullerns. Cabrini said simply, that when Ken used the phone, on a frequency just a little off the personal-broadcast wave-length that particular Ullern was tuned to, the heterodyning effect was the equivalent to it, in pain, of the belly-punch he'd mentioned earlier. It was immobilized momentarily, and the next immediate reaction was to utilize the energy thus generated in a life-and-death charge at the source of the intolerable pain. This time it had no trouble locating the source; a radio beam is easier to track than a bullet, if your senses happen to include a direction-finder.

I didn't listen to most of the discussion that followed the speech. I was busy readjusting, or admitting to readjustments. I had stopped hating the Ullerns a long time back, and now at last I had a rationale on which to hang what had seemed like a betrayal.

The attack on Ken was not irrational or unprovoked. In Ullern terms, Ken had attacked first. A silly difference, a piece of nonsense, really, but important to me at the time. It was no longer necessary to keep hating, even on a conscious verbal level.

As soon as I got that much clear in my mind, I wanted to leave.

'You stay if you want to,' I told Bart. 'I just want to get out of here and do some thinking.'

'Would you rather be alone?' He was a very sweet guy. I knew he meant just that; he'd let me go alone if I preferred it, or come along if I wanted him to.

I shook my head. 'No, I wouldn't. If you don't mind missing this, I'd like to have someone to talk to, a little bit.'

He took my arm, and saw to it that we got out without interference; stopped people who wanted to question me, and pushed through the knots of conversationalists who were too absorbed or excited to notice us.

Outside, it was hot. So close to summer-time it was always hot, but the sun was down when we left the hall, and it was possible to stay outdoors.

We walked down to the river bank in silence, and stood there and I looked around me and let myself know, for the first time, fully, how much I loved this place. It was mine; I had paid for it with the greatest loss I was ever likely to know. And now the loss was complete, because I understood it.

Bart saw the tears in my eyes.

'That son-of-a-bitch!' he said. 'Didn't he even *warn you?*'

'Who?' I didn't know what he was talking about.

'Cabrini. He had no business ... look, darling, never mind about him. The big thing is, we've got the knowhow now. We've got a way to fight them! We can ...'

'*What?*' I was sure I still didn't understand. 'What are you talking about Bart?'

'Don't you see, dear? Naturally, Cabrini didn't put it that way, but this thing is a weapon ... a *real* weapon! We can live anyplace on the planet now. If radio waves hurt the things that much, they'll kill 'em too. We can ...'

'Bart,' I begged. 'Don't you understand? Can't you see what it means? They're intelligent! We can learn to talk to them. We can make *friends* with them.'

I searched his face for some signs of comprehension, and found only indulgence there. 'Emma, you are just too good to be true,' he said. 'And you need some sleep. Come on, I'll take you back now, and we can talk about it tomorrow.' He put his arm around me.

\*\*\*Proofed to Here\*\*\*

He meant well. I have no doubt at all that he meant well.

'Will you please get the hell out of here?' I said, as quietly as possible. I would have said much more but he went.

When he was gone, I lay down on the river bank and pressed my face against the dirt of my planet and cried. That was the third time I cried, and now it was for the loss of Bart as well as Ken.

(Parenthesis to Carla: iv)

Josetown, Uller, 1/1

Dear Child:

I am, frankly, annoyed. This story was supposed to be about the generations of women who came before you, and about the early years on Uller. Looking back, I find it is almost entirely about one small portion of my own life.

I think I know what happened. Somewhat earlier in this narra-tive, I made a statement about the oddity of reversed pain and pleasure in Recall. I suspect that I enjoyed the reliving of those early months on Uller far more in the telling than I ever did in the experience. From the day Ken died till the day when I wept out my sorrows on the river bank, I was never entirely happy. There was much isolated pleasure during that period: delight in my baby, and fun with Bart, and satisfaction in my work ... and certainly much more pleasure in knowing Jose than I realized. But all through those two years, life had no meaning beyond the moment. I did not, would not, believe in any kind of future, without Ken.

In the years that followed, there were many hardships and moments of unhappiness and despair, but from that time on, I had a growing purpose in existence. Apparently, I have less need to re-experience the productive years than the others. And of course, there is really very little more that I can tell you. Thad Levine wrote the story of the bitter three years' quarrel in the colony, and wrote it far better than I could. You have heard from me, and probably from a dozen others too, the woe-filled history of the establishment of Josetown. Jo himself wrote a painstaking account of the tortuous methodology by which the Ullern code was worked out, and I know you have read that too.

(I am sternly repressing the inclination to excuse my many omissions by pointing to the date above, and referring to the page number. Time is short now, and the story too long. But neither of these is an honest reason for my failure to do what I planned ... no more than are my excuses in the paragraph immediately above.)

I had hoped, when I started this, to give you some clue to my own mistakes, so that you might avoid them. There are such striking similarities, Carla dear, between Joan Thurman and myself, between me and you! And on the other side, there is such a pattern of identity between Martha and Adne and Lee. It seems to me there should be some way of braking the pendulum swing ... of producing, sometime, a child who is neither rebelliously 'idealistic' nor possessively demanding of security in its most obvious forms.

It was at least partly in the hope that the history of those who went before you might teach you how to achieve this goal of impossible perfection with your children, when you have them, that I undertook this journal. I hope I have managed to include more helpful information in it than it now seems to me I have

done.

In any case, I see little purpose in carrying the story further. I have mulled over it for weeks now, and have written several chapters about what came after the day of Jo's lecture, and have decided, each time, to leave them out.

There are many things I wanted to say that I've left out ... little things, mostly, for which I could not find a proper spot in the narration. I could ramble on here, filling them in, but again there is no real purpose in it, except to satisfy myself.

But, reading what I have just written, I realize that there is still much unresolved conflict in my own attitudes. Yes (I tell myself), I should like to see you rear your children to be perfect little happy mediums—and yet I am so pleased, Carla, to see you play-ing out the role I know so well myself.

Perhaps the `others'—Leah and Ariadne and Martha—perhaps they knew some happiness I never understood; but I am certain that they never knew the kind of total purpose in living that has been my great joy. I had a dream ... I learned it from Joan Thurman. That dream is yours, too, and I'm quite irrationally pleased to think that you acquired it, in part, from me.

Tomorrow you will leave, Carla, and I will give you this film totake with you. When you leave, it will be as a part of the first great experiment with time ... and like the fuel for the *Newhope*, which has made over the whole life of man, the mastery of time has come as an adjunct to a commercial venture. Joe Prell, if he were here today, would laugh at the implications I see in your voyage ... but *not* at the possible profits. I ... I think it is more risk than merited to go to Nifleheim for new and more uranium. But to go in profitable comradeship with the Ullerns—this is the fulfilment of my own life's dream. And to go as the advance guard of a whole new science—this is the beginning of yours.

If it takes uranium to make the Prells pay for a time machine (did you know that's what you have?—at least the beginnings of one), why let us have enough of the stuff to blow us all sky-high!

#### (Epilogue)

I HAVE JUST come back from the ceremonies of the take-off, and I am more annoyed than ever. Now that I have handed over my imperfect gift, I have found out what it was lacking. There is no way of knowing, as I write, whether Carla has reached ... will reach ... her destination safely, or whether, if she does, she will arrive (has arrived?) there in a time-conjunction through which she can communicate with us. I can only wait, and hope there is some word.

But I shall assume, as I must, that she is safe, and that some time these words will reach her. The story is yet to be finished, and I found out today why I was unable to finish it before. (I suppose I thought I was too old and too objective to carry any more scars of hurt or hatred from Lee!)

Leah Tarbell was born on Uller, and grew up there. She was too young to understand the fury of the debate that preceded her mother's move from Firstown to Josetown; but she was not too young at all to resent the loss of her Uncle Bart's com-pany a scant few weeks after she had learned to pronounce his name.

Over the next three years, she understood well enough that her mother was somehow in disrepute with the parents of most of her playmates. And at five years of age, she was quite old enough to blame her mother for the almost complete loss of those play-mates. Only four other children accompanied the group of sixty-seven `Josites' when they betook themselves, their pet Ullerns, their special knowledge, and their apportioned share of the human colony's possessions to the new location on the loth parallel that became known as Josetown.

Only one of the other children was near her own age; that was Hannah Levine, and she was only four, really. The two little girls, of necessity, became friends. They played and ate and often slept together. At bedtime, they were lonely together too, while their parents went off to conferences and lab sessions. And late at night, sometimes, they would wake up and be frightened to-gether, remembering the stories they'd heard in the nursery at home about the Ullerns who lived at the foot of the hill.

She tried to cry about leaving her mother when she was sent back to Firstown a year and a half later, with Alice Cabrini and the two Cabrini children, to go to school. But she didn't really expect to miss

Emma; Em was always working, anyhow. Back home, the grown-ups had more time to pay attention to kids.

From that time till she was fourteen, she lived with Alice in Firstown, and she was happy there. When Alice decided it was safe to rejoin Jose in the smaller settlement, Leah desperately did not want to go. She tried every device an adolescent mind could contrive to keep Alice at home. But when it came down to a choice of going with them, or being left behind, she couldn't quite face the desertion of the family she loved as her own.

She went along, and her adolescent imagination seized on a whisper here and a word there to find real cause to hate her mother. She was not blind, as the adults seemed to be, to the fact that Emma and Jo had worked together day after day through the years, while Alice endured long nights of loneliness for the sake of the three children who needed her care.

Lee watched the three grown-ups closely. She heard the in-flexion of every word they spoke to each other, and noticed each small gesture that passed between them. In the end, she satisfied herself that Emma and Jose were not lovers (as indeed we had not been since Alice's return). Then she felt something amounting almost to compassion for her mother. She had not failed to observe the flush of enthusiasm with which Emma listened to Jo's ideas, and poured out ideas of her own to command his attention. At the same time she saw how Alice, sitting quietly in the background, pretending interest in nothing but Jo himself, and his home and the children, succeeded in drawing his attention.

She did not understand how her mother could be so stupid as to try to attract a man by being *bright*. She did not even begin to understand the further fact that she could not help observing: Emma seemed to be perfectly happy sharing Jo's work, and letting Alice share his home and his bed. As long as it was true, however, Lee was willing to let Emma go her own strange way.

She was less willing to accept any of the belated affection her mother tried to give her. And Emma's ludicrous attempts to convince her of the importance of the work they were doing in Josetown did not succeed even in antagonizing her. Lee had lived long enough in Firstown to know how little it mattered whether the code was ever completed. She knew the plans the other colony had already laid down for an equatorial settlement—a settlement which was to follow the extinction of the Ullerns. The agreement between the larger group and the small one had given Jose ten years to make a go of his project. Eight of those years had passed now, and he could hardly claim that making friends with a local group of Ullerns constituted proof of their intelligence. Any animal may be domesticated by one means or another.

All these things Lee knew, and she was not interested in learning any part of the foolishness in which her mother was engaged. After a while, Emma stopped trying to interest her in the work at Josetown, and for a while they got along together.

Lee never thought of the Josetown period as anything more than an enforced hiatus in her life. If by some miracle the settlement continued after the ten years were up, she for one had no intention of remaining in it. When she was seventeen, she knew, she would have the right to live by herself if she chose and she had already chosen. She would live in Firstown, where her friends and loyalties were.

She stuck to her resolve, even after the message from Earth. Not even the dramatic opening of subspace communication between Uller and the mother system disturbed her tight little plans. Nor did her private opinion of the foolishness of the Josetown project change when popular opinion shifted to favour it. Earth's problems were no concern of hers, and she saw no reason to give up her hopes or hatreds either one, just because Jose Cabrini had somehow turned out to be right.

Her strongest reaction to the news from Earth was irritation, because it meant that Josetown would continue beyond the ten-year period after all, and that she herself would have to spend a full year more there than she had expected.

She made use of the time. She started learning the code, and even studied a little Ullern biology. She helped Jo prepare his lab notes for printing in the form in which they are now available, and learned the history of the project while she did it. By the time she was old enough to go back to Firstown and take up residence in the single girls' dorm, she knew enough about the Josetown work to take a really intelligent part in discussions with the men back home.

As it turned out, Lee was our best ambassador. She had picked up, from Jo's notes, one item of information we had not intended to release just yet. Fortunately, as it turned out, she felt no ties of loyalty to us. That was how the news got out that Jose actually *had* taught Ullerns the use of fire, and it was that news that led to the Conference of 2108.

Fifteen of us went back to Firsttown for the Conference, armed with notes and speeches and films to document our defence. We were somewhat taken aback to find that no defence was necessary; Firsttown was way ahead of us in recognizing the implications of the Ullerns' use of fire. I suppose we had grown so accustomed to defensiveness by then, we simply couldn't see beyond the necessity of protecting next year's work. The people at Firsttown were used to thinking in terms of expansion and utilization of knowledge; they had the engineering minds to put our research to use.

Lee was only seventeen, but her greatest ability, even then, was the tactful manipulation of other people. It was her carefully developed friendship with Louis Dooley that made it possible for Basil and Jose to meet privately before the Conference started, and hash out their ideas. And it was in that private meeting that the mutual advantages of humans—Ullern co-operation in the Nifleheim venture were recognized.

When we went back to Josetown, it was with the long-range plan already worked out : the further development of the code to the point where we could communicate with Ullerns in the abstractions we were certain they were capable of understanding; they continued work on Ullern biochemistry to determine whether the quartz-to-teflon adaptation would actually take place, as we believed, in the atmosphere of Nifleheim; and the long, long process of persuading the Ullerns that other humans besides our own small group now wanted friendship with them.

That was our part of the job. Back in Firsttown, they worked, in communication with Earth, on the other end of the problem : the improvement of sub-space transport to eliminate the mishaps, and make it safe for live freight.

(P.S. to Carla)

IT IS TWO weeks now since I went to the take-off of the Nifleheim *Ark* and stood beside my daughter Lee, watching the whole show through her eyes, and gaining some of the understanding that made it possible for me to finish this story.

We were all together, Lee and Louis and the three youngsters. Carla, of course, was participating in the ceremonies.

Johnny, my youngest grandson, looked at the domed building in the centre of the field, and was disappointed.

'Just like any other building,' he grumbled.

Lee nodded automatically. 'Yes, dear, it is,' she said, but something made her shiver as she said it. It was ordinary-looking, far more like a house than a spaceship. Nothing frightening at all ... to look at. Yet it stood there, triumphant and menacing, the most impregnable enemy she had ever met. She hadn't even been able to stay away from the take-off as she'd planned. She had to come: she was Louis Dooley's wife and Carla's mother, and Emma Tarbell's daughter, and they wouldn't let her stay home. She had to bring her other children, too, and any minute now, she'd have to watch the plain domed structure *disappear*.

'Centuries gone, man looked to the stars and prayed,' the worn tape intoned. 'He made them his gods, then his garden....'

Leah shuddered, and reached for her young son's hand, but he never felt her touch. The magic of the old, old words was wrapping itself around him.

'... of thought, and at last his goal. We have not....'

Inside the dome was all the equipment for separating and storing the uranium that could be had, for the simple extraction, from the atmosphere of Nifleheim. Inside, too, were quarters for humans and Ullerns to live side by side together. Inside was Carla's bridal home, and beyond the wall that held her

bed was the dread machinery of sub-space itself.

'... reached that goal. This is not a beginning nor an end; neither the first step nor the last....'

Lee looked around at all the others, the mothers who were supposed to be proud and pleased today, and saw the tense fists clenching, the tired eyes squinting, the hands reaching for a younger child's touch. She felt better then, knowing they shared the mockery of the moment.

She stood patiently, listening to Jo's speech, hearing him explain once more how Ullerns could venture forth on the surface of Nifleheim, and actually benefit by the change ... how chang-ing shifts of Ullern workers could spend an adaptation period on the alien planet, expose themselves to the fluorine that would change their brittle skins to flexible teflon hides, while human hands inside worked the machinery that would process the des-perately-needed uranium for transport back to Earth. Lee stood and listened to it all, but it meant no more than it had meant last year, or forty years before, when they started work on it.

Then at last, Carla was standing before her, with all the speeches and display finished, and nothing left to do but say good-bye. She reached out a hand, but Louis was there first, holding the slender girl in a wide embrace, laughing proudly into her eyes... . Then Johnny, and Avis and Tim, they all had to have their turns. And finally Carla turned to her.

Lee leaned forward, kissed the smooth young cheek, and said, before she knew herself what words were coming:

`Carla ... Carlie, darling, aren't you *afraid*?'

Carla took both her mother's hands and held them tight. I'm terrified!" she said. And turned and left.

## WHOEVER YOU ARE

THIS IS A love story. That is to say, it is a story of the greatest need and greatest fear men know. It is also a story of conquest and defeat, of courage and cowardice, and the heroism that is a product of both of them. It begins in security and isolation; it ends in victory and desecration. Whoever you are, this story has happened to you already, and will again. Whoever you are, however you live, you are writing the ending to the story with every breath you take, with every move you make.

In the cabin of the Service rocket, Scanliter Six, Sergeant Bolster and his new crewman, Pfc. Joe Fromm, were playing checkers. It was the bored third day of a routine one-week tour of duty on the Web, checking the activities of the scanner-satellites that held the tight-woven mesh of e-m-g in a hollow sphere of protective power cast around the System.

Fromm studied the board soberly, sighed, and moved a man into unavoidable trouble. Bolster smiled, and both of them looked up momentarily as they heard the click of the keys cutting tape on the receiver.

The sergeant returned his attention to the checker board, and jumped two men before he bothered to look up at the viewer. He saw a streak of light move upward and across the screen in a wide expected curve, from right to left; reached over to inspect the fresh-cut tape, and grunted approval.

"BB-3, coming in at 26°, 13', 37", all correct," he said. "Check 'em off, Joe. "That's nine, thirty-eight, and oneoh-seven at the point of entry. All in correlation. Transmission clear. It's your move."

Fromm picked up the clipboard with the scanlite-station checkoff chart, and marked three tiny squares with his initials, almost without looking. He was still staring at the view-screen, empty now of everything but the distant specks of light that were the stars.

"Hey," Bolster said again. "It's your move."

Joe Fromm didn't even hear him. The scanner outside completed its revolution around the small ship, and .. there it was again! The flaring trail of rockets traveled across the screen, independent of the up-and-down motion of the revolving scanner.

The sergeant grunted again. "What's the matter? Didn't you ever see one home before?"

"That's the first," Fromm said without turning. "Shouldn't we be recording the tape?"

"Not yet." Bolster surveyed the checker board sadly; he'd have a king on the next move . . . if Fromm ever made another move. "All we got now is radar-recog. Then . . . there you are . . ." He nodded at the renewed clacking of the keys. "That'll be the code-dope coming in. Then we wait till after it hits detection, and we get the last OK, before we send the tape to the Post."

He explained it all dutifully just the same. It used to be when they sent a new man out, they at least took him on a practice tour first. "Look, make a move will you? You got a whole year here to sit and look at 'em come in."

With difficulty, the Pfc. took his eyes off the viewer, touch a piece on the board at random, and pushed it forward, leaving Bolster with the choice of a three-man jump to nowhere, or the one-man jump that would net him his king. The private leaned forward to finger the tape as it emerged from the receiver, reading off the replies to code-dope demands, and signal responses, with a certain reverent intensity. "Did you ever see an illegal entry?" he asked. "I mean an attempt? Somebody told me there was one on this sect . . ."

At that instant the BB-3 hit the detector field awaiting it at the point of entry on the Web, and generated mechanical panic in an entire sequence of scanlite instruments. Synchronized pulses from the three scanlite stations circling the point of entry transmitted their frustration in the face of the unprecedented and unpredicted; and the tape in the cabin of Scanliter Six vibrated out of the recorder under the furious impact of the chattering keys.

Alarm bells began to shrill: first in the small cabin, directly over the sergeant's head; then in similar cabins on four other Scanliter rockets within range; finally, about two minutes later, in the Exec Office at Phobos Post, which was the nearest Solar Defense base to the point of entry at the time.

Pfc. Joe Fromm stopped his hesitant query in mid-word, feeling vaguely guilty for having brought the subject up. Sergeant Bolster knocked over the checker board reaching for the tape. He read it, paled visibly, passed it across to the private, and started transmitting to the Post almost at the same instant.

On Phobos, a Signal Tech. depressed three levers on his switchboard before he stopped to wonder what was wrong. Green alarm meant emergency calls to the O.D., Psychofficer, and P.R. Chief. The Tech. sent out the summons, then stopped to read the tape.

DYTEKTR FYLD RYPORT: BB-3 EM RADASHNZ INDKAT ALYN LIF—RYPYT ALYN LIF UBORD. RYPT: DYTEKTR FYLD RYPORT VIA SKANLITS 9-38-107 TU SKANLITR 6 SHOZ NO UMN LIF UBORD BB-3.

BOLSTER, SGT/SKNR 6

By the time the Phobos Post Commander got up from his dinner table, the Psychofficer put down the kitten he was playing with, and the Public Relations Deputy pushed back the stool at her dressing table, the crews of all five

Scanliters within range of the point of entry, as well as the Signals Tech. on Phobos, knew all the pertinent details of what had occurred.

The Baby Byrd III, a five-man starscout, under command of Captain James Malcolm, due back after almost a full year out of System, had approached a point of entry just outside the orbit of Saturn on the electromagneto-gravitic Web of force that surrounded the Solar System. It had signalled the correct radar recognition pattern, and replied to the challenge of the scanlite stations circling the point of entry with the anticipated code responses. Accordingly, the point had been softened to permit entry of the ship, and a standard detector set up around the soft spot.

Thus far, it was routine homecoming for a starscout. It was only when the BB-3 entered the detector field that the automatics on the scanner-satellite stations began to shrill the alarms for human help. The field registered no human electro-magnetic emanations on board the BB-3. The e-m pattern it got was undoubtedly alive ... and just as undeniably alien.

For the third time in the history of the Web, an attempt at entry had been made by unauthorized aliens; and those aliens were apparently in sole possession of a Solar starscout. The third attempt . . . and the third failure: the BB-3 was already secured in a slightly intensified smaller sphere of the same e-m-g



mesh that made up the Web, suspended at midpoint between the three circling scanlite stations.

Eternal vigilance is most assuredly the price of the peace of the womb. The membrane of force that guarded the System from intrusion had, in turn, to be guarded and maintained by the men who lived within it. The scanner-satellites were as nearly infallible as a machine can be; they might have run effectively for centuries on their own very slowly diminishing feedback-power systems. But man's security was too precious a thing to trust entirely to the products of man's ingenuity. Each year a new group of the System's youth was called to Service, and at the end of the year, a few were chosen from among the volunteers to man the Scanliters that serviced the satellite stations which comprised the Web.

For even the most adventurous of youths, one further year of Scanliting was usually enough; they came back from their fifty tours Outside prepared to keep their feet on solid ground, and to forget the brief experience of facing the unknown. But each year, too, there were a few of them who learned to crave the intoxication of danger, who could no longer be content to settle back into the warm security of the System. It was these warped veterans of the Web who became Byrdmen.

Secure within the womb-enclosure of the Web, five billion Solar citizens could wreak their wills upon their little worlds, and carry on the ever more complex design for nourishment of all the intra-System castes and categories.

Outside, the emissaries of mankind streaked through the heavens on their chariots of fire, spreading the Solar culture through galactic space, spawning the seeds of men between the stars. First went the Baby Byrds, to scout new lands beyond the farthest outposts; then the Byrds, with their full complements of scientists, and giant laboratories, to test the promise of the newly-charted planets; and after them, the giant one-way starships went.

Somehow there were always just enough bold desperate souls, yearning for danger and ready to die for a dream, to fill the human cargo-couches of the colony ships: the Mayflowers and Livingstons and Columbos that left the safety of the Web forever to fix new germ-cells of humanity on far-flung planets in the speckled skies.

Inside the Web, on four inhabited planets and half a thousand habitable asteroids, men lived in the light of the sun by day, and drew their warmth and power from it. By night, they turned to rest at peace; each one under his own sector of the high-domed sky, the hollow sphere of force through which no alien source of light could penetrate and still retain identity.

The Web glowed always with the mingled and diffracted energy of all the universe Outside; no photon passed its portals, no smallest particle of energy came through without the necessary pause for hail-and-password that maintained the calm security of the Web's inner light.

Scanliter Six was already proceeding at full speed toward the trapped BB, acting on normal emergency procedures, when the keys taped out the order from Commander Harston on Phobos post to do just that. No stars showed on the viewer; they had stopped the rotation of the scanner and the screen held a steady picture of the three Scanlite stations with a fuzzy hump in the center that was too bright to look at comfortably. Scanner rays could not possibly penetrate the thick field that held the BB-3 suspended in the Web.

"Well," Bolster said sourly. "Here's your chance to be a hero, kid."

Joe Fromm knew it was childish of him to be excited. He tried not to look interested. "Yeah?" he said.

"Yeah. What happens now is, we get there and code in that the situation is as reported. Then the brass has a conference and they decide somebody has got to investigate, so they ask for volunteers. We're the laddies on the spot. The other boys are all on Stand-by according to this. . . ."

He waved the orders tape at Fromm, who caught it and read it through carefully.

"And if we were on Stand-by instead of Proceed, you know what we'd be doing right now?" the sergeant went on, enjoying his own discomfort as loudly as possible. "I'll tell you what. We'd be standing all right, right smack where we were when the tape came in. Not one second closer."

"Stand-by is supposed to mean that you get into the best position for observation," the Pfc. recited.

"Sure. The best position for observation, kid, is in-scan and out of blowup range. So you take your

choice: you stay where you are when the tape comes in, or you back out as far as you can and stay in-scan. Anyhow, we're the boys on the spot, see? They're going to want a volunteer to board the Beebee, and I got a hunch," he finished with a faint note of hope, "that I might come out of this in one piece just on account of you are probably going to want to be a hero."

"Could be," Fromm said nonchalantly. "You're senior; after all, it's your privilege."

He was delighted that he managed to keep a poker face throughout the statement

Joe Fromm stepped out of the airlock into space, and let himself float free, orienting, for a slow count of five. He had done it a hundred times and more in drill, but it felt different now. As in the drill, he made a routine extra check of his equipment: tank, jetter, axe, welder, magnograpple mechtape recorder, (no radio in an insul-suit), knife, gun, signal mirror, medikit. All OK.

He set the jet at gentle and squirted off toward the glowing ball of force that held the starscout. Two more squirts, and he was as close as he could get. He flashed the mirror twice at Bolster in the Scanliter, to start the passageway in the sphere opening. This was the last contact till he came out again. If he ...

If I come out again . . . he thought the whole phrase through deliberately, and was surprised at the way his mind accepted the possibility, and dismissed it. He felt tremendously alive, almost as if each separate cell was tingling with some special vigor and awareness. And in the center of it all, in some hidden part of himself, he was dead calm, almost amused. Was this what they called courage?

He flashed the mirror again. Bolster was certainly taking his time. All he had to do was throw a switch. Fromm began flashing angry code with the mirror and kept it up, knowing Bolster couldn't answer and rejoicing in the knowledge, until he saw the opening appear in the ball of force, and begin to expand.

Then he realized it wasn't simply throwing a switch. Once the passageway-mechanism was put into operation, it had to keep going on its own, opening and closing at intervals so as to permit him egress, and still not let enough e-m-g through in either direction to disturb the power-stasis inside. It took only a little bit of computer work . . . but quite a bit more intricate checking of the relays, to make certain the automatics would not fail.

He had to hold himself back to keep from diving through as soon as the hole was as big as his suit . . . but he waited, as he had been trained to do, until it stopped enlarging. The computer knew better than he did how much space he needed.

Then he squirted forward and through. The BB looked strange, hanging there in the middle of nothing, with an air of polite impatience, waiting to finish its passage into the System.

Joe grinned, and duly spoke his thought out loud for the record. "Every single thing that passes through your head," they'd said over and over again in school. "When you're on any kind of solo operation, you want to be sure the guy who takes over knows everything you did, no matter how crazy it seems. An idea that doesn't connect for you could make sense to him."

So Joe Fromm told the mechtape attachment on' his suit that the starscout looked impatient. He kept talking, describing his actions and thoughts and emotions, as he approached the ship cautiously, and opened the outer lock door. More waiting, and he informed the tape that the air lock was in operating condition.

Then he was in the ship, and omitted to mention in his running commentary that he was scared silly. Down the corridor ... open the cabin doors one at a time ... empty, empty . . . not empty. Go on in, Joe; he's out cold; couldn't hurt a fly.

"One of the aliens is in this cabin. This is the third door I have opened, second cabin to the right going down the corridor from the lock to Control . . . he's either dead or unconscious . . . hope they're all like that . he's big . . . hope they're not all like that. Maybe ten feet tall, sort of curled up on the bunk, might have been asleep." Might still be, might wake up.

He gulped and decided he'd better put it on record. "Might still . . ." No, that was foolish. These characters had registered e.m. radiations on the instruments in the stations. They couldn't stay conscious inside the e.m.g. field without insul-suits. Anything strong enough to stop a BB in its tracks would stop a man too.

But it's not a man; it's . . . "It's definitely humanoid . . . hard to believe any alien creatures could

evolve so much like humans. No tenacles, nothing like that. Arms and hands look like ours . . . fingers too. He's wearing some kind of robe . . . hard to get it loose with these gloves on, can't see the legs for sure, but the arms are human all right. Face is different, something funny about the mouth, sort of pursed-up-looking. Closed, can't see the inside ... guess I can try and open it ... no, later, maybe. I better take a look around. Anyhow, this guy is a lot like you and me only almost twice as big. Not very hairy, dark skin, big black eyes . . . how can anything that's not human have eyes that look at you like that, even when he's out cold? I don't know ... going out now, next cabin, second door on the left . . .

"Here's another one . . . on the floor this time, kind of crumpled up . . . must have been standing when the field hit, and fell down. Nothing new here . . . wait a minute, this fella must have cut his hand on something when he fell . . . yeah, there's an open locker door, with an edge. Blood is dried, looks like it's a lot darker than ours, but it's crazy how human it looks anyhow . . . Going out again now ... in the corridor, no more doors here . . ."

There were two more of them in the control room: one strapped in the pilot's seat, squeezed in really; he just about could make it. The other was slumped over the solar analog computer.

"Looks like he was checking the landing data," Fromm reported. "These guys sure were confident. Two of 'em off shift when they were coming in, and everything set for a normal landing. Didn't they figure on any trouble at all? They should have realized they couldn't just sit down on one of our planets. Hell, they knew about the Web; they gave the code-dope straight, and they decelerated to approach, and had the correct angle . . . I don't get it ... Here goes once around the room now. I will check all instruments.

"Starting from the door, and turning right: Star-chart microviewer intact and operating, films filed properly, I think. Won't take time to check them all now, but they look right. . . . Radio desk appears in normal condition for use, can't test. . . . Space suit locker is full of strange stuff, will come back to examine. . . . analog comps come next; this guy is sprawled all over them. . . ."

He followed his nose around the cylindrical room, till he came back to the door again. Everything was, or seemed to be, in good working order. A few adjustments had been made in levers and handholds, to fit the aliens' larger hands; otherwise, virtually nothing had been touched except for normal use.

"Okay, I guess I better start on the locker now. . . ." But he didn't want to; he felt suddenly tired. Not scared any more . . . maybe that was it. Now he knew he was safe, and there weren't any booby traps or anything seriously wrong, he was feeling the strain. Let Bolster do some work too, he thought angrily, and almost said it out loud for the tape. Then he realized that his sudden pique was really just weariness, and at the same time he became acutely aware of hunger and an even more pressing biological urge. Time to go home, Joe. Always leave the party early, that's how to stay popular.

He ought at least to get the robe off one of the creatures first, and make sure about their anatomy, but he had an odd reluctance to do it. They were too human . . . it seemed as if it wasn't fair somehow to go poking around under their clothes.

Hell! Let Bolster do it! He left the ship.

Alone in the Scanlitter, Joe Fromm played his mechtape into the permanent recorder, and turned up the volume so he could hear it himself, and get everything clear for his report to Phobos. Some of the stuff sounded crazy, but he could tell what part was fact and what was just his own imagination. He chewed on a pencil end, and occasionally noted down something he should be sure to remember.

Altogether, composing the report was more painful than visiting the ship had been. He had just started putting it onto the transmitter when he saw the indicator for the outer lock light up. Bolster sure hadn't stayed on that ship long! He felt better now about coming back himself.

The sergeant came inside shedding his insul-suit, and bursting with excitement.

"You should of looked in that locker, kid!" He was triumphant. "Anyway, it's a good thing for me you didn't. This is the kind of good luck bonuses are made of." He removed an envelope carefully from the storage pocket on the outside of the suit. "Got your stuff in yet? I want to shoot this to them fast!"

"I just started . . ." Fromm said.

"Well, we'll flash this, and you can finish up afterwards."

He handed the envelope to the younger man, and started climbing out of the leg pieces of the suit.

"Go on! Read it, man!"

Fromm opened the flap and unfolded a piece of official Service stationary. To whom it may concern; it said on top, and then right underneath: To the Staff Officers of Solar Defense:

"The other men have asked me to write this message, and I guess I can do it all right, but I'm afraid I'll have to be pretty informal. I've tried to write it up in military report style, only it's just not the kind of thing that Service language fits.

"For one thing, the very first line of the report form stopped me, because we don't know where we are. Only the Captain knew our orders and he's dead now, and we couldn't find his log, or any of his papers, anywhere in the ship.

"We've set a course for the big fellas by backtracking on the analog comps. That means it will take them almost as long to get back as it took us to get there, but that's just as well, because it will bring them in about the time our tour is due up, and maybe that'll make it easier for them to get in.

"We've done our best to explain to them all the dangers involved—not being sure of the course, even, and being pretty sure you folks won't let them through. But we can't talk to them as easy as they talk to us. We can get over general ideas all right, and any kind of thought that has a solid object nearby to attach to, but the idea of people, of humans that is, not wanting to let them into the System—well, even if we talked the same language ... that is, if they talked a language at all that we could learn ... I don't think they could understand that idea.

"I'm not going to try to tell you anything about them because if they get far enough to show you this, they can explain everything themselves. This message is just to let you know that the four of us are here, safe and sound, and staying behind of our own free will. Since Captain Malcolm's suicide, there's nobody to order us home, and we like it here. Besides, there isn't room enough in the BB for more than five people—humans, I mean—or four of them (they need more food). And they want to send four along on the trip; I think they picked out their leading scientists in different fields, so they can get as much information as possible, and be able to answer your questions.

"I don't know. Probably a Psychofficer or some of our scientists will be able to communicate better with them on this kind of thing. We get along fine for everyday purposes, but you see, I'm not even sure what kind of scientists they're sending.

"The only thing the others and I are sure of, and that's what this message is for, is that you can trust these big fellas up to the limit. They've treated us fine, and they ... well, it's a funny way to put it, but "like" isn't strong enough ... they just seem to love everybody, humans as well as their own kind.

"We will wait here for further orders. You can probably figure out where we are from the analog comp records.

"Respectfully yours,

"George Gentile, Byrdman 1st Class,

and on behalf of

"Johann Grauber By/2

Tsin Lao-Li, By/2

Arne Carlsen, By/ 3."

"I did a tour of duty with Jim Malcolm once," the Commander said slowly. "He was a pretty good guy. I ... liked him. It's hard to think of him committing suicide. I wish this Gentile had been a little more specific."

Lucille Ardin, Public Relations Deputy at Phobos Post, skimmed the message tape rapidly, and passed it along to the Psychofficer. She cocked one feathery eyebrow cynically. "These boys just don't make sense," she said. "They've been sold something all right ... but what?"

The Commander shook his head, waiting for Dr. Schwartz to finish reading. "Well, Bob?" he said, as soon as the Psychofficer looked up. "What do you think?"

"I'd like to see that log," Schwartz said thoughtfully. "So would I!" Commander William Hartson had

earned his position as Assistant Chief of Staff for Solar Defense. He was that rare thing: an officer admired equally by the general public and by the men who worked under him. At sixty-eight years of age, he was still in the prime of health and vitality—but old enough to have seen his fill of violence, danger, and death. He was decisive in action; but a decision involving the lives of others would be made with care.

Bob Schwartz had worked with Hartson long enough to understand these things. "This Captain . . . ?" he asked, "Malcolm? Would you say he was ... well, a fairly typical line officer?"

The Commander permitted himself a faint smile. "Trying to figure the 'military mind' again, Bob? As a matter of fact, I think Jim Malcolm is—was one of the few officers who'd fit your picture pretty well. Courage, devotion, precision—a stubborn s.o.b., who went by the rule book himself and figured everybody else could do at least as much . . . but the kind who'd lay down his life for his Service without thinking twice. It's just suicide that doesn't make sense...."

Hartson's voice broke off, and for a moment the only sound in the room was the shuffling of paper. Schwartz still held the message tape, running it through his fingers as if the feel of it would somehow help him to understand its meaning better. Lucy Ardin pushed away the pad on which she'd been scribbling Hartson's explanation of the forcesphere that was holding the BB-3 captive and its alien crew unconscious.

"God, what a story!" she whispered reverently into the silence. She ground out a half-smoked cigarette in the Commander's big ash-tray, and stood up; the silver-sequined dinner gown in which she'd answered the alarm glittered painfully under the overhead light. It was entirely typical of Lucy that when the call-bell rang in her bedroom, she had pushed back the stool from her dressing table without taking even the extra instant's time to complete the slash of crimson on her lips. Then picking up the portfolio that was always ready for use, she had arrived at the Exec Office, with the lipsticking finished en route, within seconds after the two men who lived on the Post.

"All right," she said briskly. "What happens now? We stitch up some six-tentacled strait-jackets and make our visitors nice and safe, then we take the field off and haul 'em down? Where to? What do we do with them afterwards? Who gets to interview them?"

The Psychofficer looked up sharply, and Hartson chuckled. "Relax, Bob. I'm afraid it's our baby all the way down the line. I wish I was looking forward to it like you two are. I have a hunch it may turn out to be something of a mess. . . . The aliens, by the way, are humanoid, Miss Ardin. Perhaps you'd like to see the tape again? I believe there's a detailed description . . . hey Bob? You're done with it, aren't you?"

"Sorry." Schwartz handed it to the girl, and snapped out of his abstracted mood. "Is it safe to leave them in the stasis a little longer, Bill?" he asked.

"Can't say for sure. With humans, twelve hours doesn't do any harm. These fellas may be dead already for all we know. Best we can do is assume they react like us."

"It seems to me that log must be somewhere on the ship," the Psychofficer said. "If there's time, I think it might be a good idea to try and find it—before we decide anything. A man like Malcolm would have made sure the papers were safe, if he had any way to do it at all."

"You're right." Hartson, too, came up from his reflections and sprang into action. "You're damned right! If it's there we can find it. And if we can't—well, that's an answer too!"

Joe Fromm went back to the BB-3 with two other men from the stand-in Scanliters that had now been ordered up to assist. Between them, they searched the Byrd from nose to nozzles, and behind a panel in the electrical repair cabinet, they found the ship's papers: charts, orders, and the missing log.

Fromm took time to open the log and look at the last page: he hardly had to struggle with his conscience at all over it. Under the dateline, in neat typing, it said:

"Carlsen should have been back an hour ago. Under the circumstances, that means they've got him too. My error was in not leaving after I talked to Tsin last week. Three of us could have brought the ship back. Alone, I don't believe I can do it.

"I have considered taking off anyhow, simply in order to make certain the natives do not gain any further knowledge of the ship. My only choices now are betrayal or self-destruction, and between these

two, I am afraid I have no real choice. I must therefore pick the most effective means of suicide, and after giving the matter careful thought, have determined that a systematic destruction of the control room is a wiser procedure than the complete removal of the ship from the planet.

"By following this course of action, I can at least hope that a future expedition, or perhaps even a rescue-ship, will find this log and understand the danger here.

"This evening, I shall have my last supper in style. Tomorrow, I shall finish the dismantling of the controls, and hide this book, together with the more important of the ship's papers . . . and may God have mercy on my soul!"

Below that, in almost equally neat and legible a script, were two paragraphs.

"Once more I have delayed too long. Gentile, my firstclassman, is at the outer lock now, and he has three of the natives with him. Apparently they now have him sufficiently under control so that he will do for them what they have not dared to do for themselves. They are coming into the ship.

"I expect they are coming for me, and I cannot risk exposing myself to their control. I know too much that they can use. The work of dismantling the controls is barely started; I'm afraid the enlisted men can still repair it readily, but none of them, after all, even know where we are; the star-charts and orders will be hidden with this log. I can only hope the papers remain hidden until the right people come to find them."

Underneath, there was a careful signature: "James Malcolm, Captain, Solar Byrd Service, in command Baby Byrd III," and in parenthesis below that, one word of macabre humor, "(deceased)."

They ordered Scanliter Six down to Phobos Post, to bring in the papers of the BB-3. There was too much material to transmit by radio.

Bolster grinned and slapped his Pfc. on the back. "We're both a couple of bloomin' heroes," he said. "Just the kind of a hero I like to be. Some other guys'll be around when they decide to blast that Baby, and you and me can watch it all from the Post."

"Blast it?" Joe looked up from the log, holding his finger in the page. "You're kidding. Why would they ..."

"Brother, you got the reason wrapped around your finger. One look at that, and they'll blow those babies clear back to where they come from! You can take a chance on a guy who fights fair, but these fellas—"

"How do you know they're fighting us?" Fromm demanded. "You saw the Byrdman's note, the one you brought in . . . This guy Malcolm was off his rocker!"

"Well, I'll buy that one, too. You can't tell with the brass when they get an idea in their heads. But look, kid, you gotta grow up some. That note I brought in—it's pretty easy to get a guy to write something like that if you got him hypnotized to start with, and you're twice his size anyhow—not to mention there being a whole planetful of your kind and only four of his. I can tell you any how, that's how the brass'll see it. Solar Defense doesn't take chances."

"Did you read what it says here?" Fromm insisted. "The part where Malcolm tells us about talking to Tsin? It just doesn't make sense to take it the way he did. He was space-happy, that's all. The Commander isn't going to swallow this stuff."

"You wait and see," the sergeant said again. "And when you do, you're gonna be awful glad you're down there instead of here."

"I . . . look, I know this sounds crazy . . ." Fromm put the log down finally, and blurted out the rest of it. "I'd like to stick around. If anybody goes back out there, I want a chance to take another look at those guys. You think you could take somebody from one of the other ships down with you, and leave me here?"

"It not only sounds crazy," Bolster said. "It is crazy. But it's your body, son. You want to stick around, you can bet nobody else does." He shook his head uncomprehendingly, and began punching out a message to Scanliter Twelve, where Chan Lal would jump at the chance to change spots with his weakwitted Pfc.

"I ordered him to return to ship immediately. He refused. His exact words, insofar as I recall them, were, 'Captain, I wish I could do as you desire me to—or even better that I could convince you to come

with me and visit our friends. They are our friends. If you would give them a chance to talk with you, I think you might understand better. It is hard to explain with just words. But I simply cannot go back now. (Emphasis is mine . . . JM) You are a married man, sir. Perhaps I might feel differently if there were some love waiting for me at home too. But I am young and not yet married, and . . ."

"I broke in here, thinking that I might be able to use persuasion, where authority had failed. I pointed out that there was very little likelihood he would ever be married, if I decided to take up the ship, abandoning him and Gentile on the planet—as of course, I have every right to do in view of their outright insubordination. The natives here, for all their startlingly humanoid appearance, are twice our size, and are almost certainly not suitable for breeding, from a purely biologic viewpoint.

"He replied quite earnestly that he hoped I would not take that drastic step . . . that he did not wish to remain permanently among the natives, but that he felt he 'had to' stay long enough to become fully acquainted with them and with their way of life, and to 'be healed of all the hurts and scars of a lifetime in the System.'

"The conversation went on for some time, but the parts I have already recorded contain the gist of it. There was one thing Tsin said, however, that I feel should be included here, along with the train of thought that followed it. If anything should happen to me or to my ship, I suspect it will in some way be connected with my low susceptibility to the emotional point he seemed to be trying to make.

"Tsin reminded me, during the conversation, of a story I have always considered rather bathetic: that of the little orphan girl, in the days before the creches, who threw a note over the high wall of the 'orphanage' saying: 'Whoever you are, I love you.'

"This anecdote, I gathered, was supposed to define for me the nature of the emotional 'healing' he was receiving at the hands—or I suppose I should say the minds—of the natives.

"This particular bit of bathos has been annoying me for years. I have had the story related to me at least three times previously, always to illustrate some similarly obscure emotional point. And I have always wondered afterwards what the end of the story might have been.

"Now it seems very important to be able to foresee the results of the child's action. What happened when the note was picked up and read? And why did the child write it?

"It is this last question, I think, that bothers me the most. A sentimentalist might answer that she meant it, but I find this unlikely. At best, I believe, she meant that she hoped whoever found it would love her; and that is the very best interpretation I can put on it. It seems even more likely that her motive was even more specific: if she threw such billet doux over the wall regularly, I should think eventually one of the sentimentalists would have found it, made some response, and provided the means for her to get over the orphanage wall into the world outside.

"The natives here have a fairly highly-developed technology, and quite obviously a very highly-developed psychology or mental science of some sort. They are telepaths, after all. And they have taken no pains to conceal from us their interest in acquiring a means of space travel.

"There is nothing to pin down, no way to make certain of their real attitudes towards us. They have greeted us warmly, and have done nothing to indicate any hostility or to harm us in any way—nothing but walk off with two of my crew in an apparently friendly fashion.

"Perhaps the wisest course of action would be to leave now, while I still have two men on board. But it is a hard decision to make—to maroon two of my men on an alien planet.

"If I believed for a moment that Gentile and Tsin are responsible for their own actions, I should not hesitate to make that decision. But their behavior is so entirely 'out of character' that I can see no explanation except that they are acting under some form of hypnotic control. As I see it, my duty is to make every effort, including main force, to return them to the ship before I leave."

Hartson read it for the fourth time, and slapped the typescript down on the desk. "I . . . hell, Jim Malcolm was a friend of mine! How can I tell? It sounds like him . . . sure! It sounds like every report he ever wrote, except where it sounds like him being pie-eyed in a bull-session."

He sat down, and let the blank bewilderment he felt show in his eyes as he faced the Psychofficer. "Well, what do you say? I can't decide this one by myself."

Courtesy turned him, halfway through the question to face the PR Chief on the other side of the desk.

Courtesy, and common sense, both. Officially, Lucy's job was just to get out the news—or to keep it in, as seemed wisest. The catch was in that last phrase. In practice, she was both public censor and interpreter-at-large for the Post; and her Civil Service appointment made her the only authority on Phobos who was independent of the Service.

The Commander had been dealing with the P.R. Bureau long enough so that in six months at the Post, Lucy had never yet had any cause to remove her velvet glove. It was easy to forget sometimes about the iron beneath it; one might almost think that she forgot herself.

"I'll check to Doctor Schwartz," she demurred now.

Schwartz managed a smile. "Will you please stop being polite?" he asked. "You've got an opinion. Let's hear it." She hesitated, and he added: "I don't even like what I'm thinking. I better think it a little more before I say it."

"All right." Her voice was controlled, but her eyes gleamed with excitement. She was talking at Schwartz, almost ignoring the Commander. "I think these fellas have the biggest thing since e-m-g. It's the one thing we haven't been able to crack at all; you know it as well as I do. They've got the unbeatable weapon—the psychological weapon. You can't fight 'em, because you don't want to. People call modern P.R. mass hypnotism, but the techniques we've got are child's play compared to what these guys can do. They've got the real thing. The question is, can we get it away from them? Has Psych Section got any way of handling something this hot?"

"I take it," Hartson put in drily, "that you are convinced of the accuracy of Captain Malcolm's interpretation of the events?"

She looked puzzled. "Why . . . yes. How else can you explain it? Has there ever been a case of desertion like that before?"

"Never," he said crisply, and turned to the Psychofficer again. "All right, Bob. You've had some time now. Say your piece."

"Let me start this way" Schwartz said hesitantly. "I think Lucy is right on one respect anyway ... what they've got is an irresistible weapon. If it is a weapon. But to accept that idea, we'd have to presuppose the existence of a war, or at least hostility between them and us. There's a verse that's been running through my head for the last hour. I'm sorry, Bill, to be so roundabout. Just try to put up with me a few minutes, will you? I can't quite remember the whole thing, but it's about an 'enemy' who 'drew a circle to keep me out.' Then there's a line I remember clearly: 'But love and I knew better. We drew a circle to bring him in.' You see what I'm driving at? Certainly our basic attitude toward any alien is potentially hostile. They are guilty until proven innocent."

"We've been all over that ground, Bob," Hartson broke in. "I know your opinion, and you ought to know mine by now. I don't like it either, but it's the reason why we have been consistently successful in such contacts."

"Consistently victorious, I'd say. All right, let's just put it that I am emotionally more inclined to accept Gentile's attitude than Malcolm's. I see no evidence to support the view that these people are using a hypnotic weapon; it is at least as likely that the feeling they projected at our men was honest and uncalculated. Why not assume for a moment that the occupants of that ship really are four of their leading scientists, sent here to exchange knowledge with us?"

"You've got a point there," Lucy Ardin said unexpectedly. "An act of aggression against these four could make trouble if they were on the level to start with. I think it gets down to a good old-fashioned problem in shielding. Has Psych Section got any way of handling these boys if we bring them in, Doc?"

He considered for a moment.

"That depends. We've got anti-hypnotics, and we've got personnel specially trained against susceptibility to hypnosis. But the Beebe had the same drugs, and should have had some trained personnel too. There's a point, Bill. I'd like to see the basic psych ratings on all five of those men, if you can get 'em. Especially Malcolm's. I could get the papers myself," he added, smiling weakly, "Through channels, it wouldn't take more than three or four weeks. Can you get 'em fast?"

"I can try." Hartson jumped at the chance for concrete action. He rang for an aide, and scribbled an order to Records in his own handwriting. "Put this on the facscan," he said briskly, "and give it a top-rush



priority. I think I see what you're getting at, Bob," he said, as the door closed behind the uniformed girl. "I remember I was kind of surprised myself when I heard Jim had gone into the Byrd Service. Couldn't imagine him going Outside voluntarily. He was an Earthman all the way through. Why he didn't even believe Marsmen were really human. Is that what you wanted to know?"

"Part of it. That much was pretty clear in his report. I want to know the comparative resistance of the crew members to hypnosis and what the other men's attitudes were toward alien life—things like that."

"I thought all Byrdmen had to pass standardized tests for that," the PR Chief said, just a little sharply.

"They do. At least, the enlisted men do. But there's still a range of individual variation. And officers . . . well, they have a tough time getting enough men to command the Beebees. I think just about any regular line officer who volunteered would pass the test. . . ."

He looked to Hartson for confirmation, and got a reluctant nod; then he went on. "Even with the men, it depends where they took their tests. That'll show on the papers. Psych Section isn't too—efficient—in some spots."

"I'll bear that in mind," Lucy said tautly. "But I'd still like to know just how much Psych Section right here is equipped to do. You say you've got the drugs and the personnel, Doctor. All right, then, if the Commander brings these fellows in alive, can you handle them? If you can't . . ." She shrugged.

"That depends." The Psychofficer declined the challenge of her tone and went on deliberately: "We can handle it all right . . . if it's as simple a thing as hypnosis. It happens that I don't believe Captain Malcolm was right about that. I can tell better after I see his psych ratings. . . ."

"All right! Then I take it we're going to sit around here for the next few hours waiting to see what the tests say? That gives you a little more time to make up your mind. Well, if I'm going to spend the night here, I'd like to be a little more comfortable. Do you mind if I run home for a change of clothes while we're waiting, Commander?"

Hartson eyed the shimmering stiffness of her dinner gown unhappily. "I'm sorry, Miss Ardin. I hope you'll understand. This qualifies as a Major Policy decision, and I'm afraid I'll have to ask you not to leave until we are finished with whatever we decide."

She shrugged again, and sat down. "Could I have a typer then? I could be getting some of my story into shape."

Schwartz laughed. From the vantage point of the smoking jacket and carpet slippers in which he'd answered the emergency call, he said easily, "Bill, couldn't you order something from Supply for the lady? S.I. coveralls, or something like that? It might make a difference in our decision if she could be more comfortable."

"I can do that," Hartson said shortly. "And of course you may have any equipment you wish, Miss Ardin."

"Thank you, Commander," she said, too sweetly. "I'm sure it will help. I wonder if perhaps we could facilitate matters by sending for the doctor's uniform too? If I'm to be made more flexible, I suspect a change of clothes might make him more decisive."

Hartson grinned. "She's got a point there, Bob," he said mildly.

"All right!" The Psychofficer stood up abruptly, paced the length of the small room, and wheeled to face them. "All right, I'll tell you what I think. I think the human race is too damn scared and too damn hungry to be able to face this thing. Hungry for security, for reassurance, for comfort—for love. And scared! Scared of anything different, anything Outside, anything one degree more intense than the rules allow."

"Also—pardon my bluntness, Bill—I think Captain Malcolm's reaction was typical of all that's sickest in our System. The very fact that we are seriously sitting here considering how much of a menace these four individuals represent—four humanoid beings, who come armed with nothing but a message of love! That very fact—that we sit and stew over it, I mean—makes them dangerous."

"You want to know what I think? I think what they've got—whether it's a weapon or a natural way of life, whether it's hypnotism or open-hearted honesty, or anything else, is—not unbeatable, not ultimate, not any of the other adjectives that've been thrown around here tonight but, specifically, irresistible."

"I think all of us—you, Bill, wanting to do the 'blameless' thing—and you, suffering through hours of

torment in those ridiculous clothes because they're supposed to make you 'attractive'—and maybe me most of all, hating to say what I know because it's brutal—all of us and the rest of the System too, have one crying need that the lousy culture we've made for ourselves can't possibly fulfill.

"We want love. We need love. Every poor blessed damned soul among us. And we need it so much, it can be used as a weapon against us!

"Understand, please, just because it's important to me to have it on the record, that I don't for a moment believe it's hypnotism they're using. I think they mean it. But ..."

"Well, at last!" Lucy Ardin sighed and moved a tense finger for the first time since he'd started talking. "Then you think you can handle it?"

Schwartz stared at her in amazement. "Didn't you hear anything I said? No. No, I don't think I can handle it, or that anybody else can. I don't believe it's hypnosis, but I can't see that that matters. Or rather, I might feel more at ease about it if I could believe that.

"Damn it, Bill, I hate this! I want you to understand clearly that the advice I am giving you is against my own inclinations and instincts. Now look: if it is to be regarded as a weapon—and I see no other way we may regard it from the point of view of Solar Defense—then it is irresistible. There is no way to tie or bind the minds of these—people—except by keeping them unconscious, which would automatically defeat any purpose of investigation."

He picked up his copy of the summary and excerpts from the log, riffled through the pages, and threw it down again, sadly. "Bill, I'd give all my ratings, and ten years off my life for the chance to talk to those guys myself, and find out . . . but my advice as an officer of Solar Defense is that we have no choice but to destroy the aliens before they regain consciousness."

Both the others were on their feet as he finished. "God damn it, Bob!" Hartson shouted. "You can't just . . ."

"Don't you see?" Lucy Ardin's crisp voice cut in. "All he's saying is he doesn't know; none of us know, and I want to find out! I'm not scared of it. Maybe you need love that bad, Psychofficer, but I don't!" She sat down again, triumphant and breathless.

The Commander ignored her. "Is that your last word, Bob? Shall I take that as your decision?"

"I'm afraid so, Bill. You heard Lucy just now. Remember what Malcolm was wondering, about the end of the story of the little orphan girl? That's one answer. In terms of the little girl, it would mean that whoever found the note took it back inside and told the authorities that one of their children was writing dirty notes—so the kid could be investigated. That's just one ending. There are lots of others, but don't forget the one he was afraid of. Don't forget all the sentimentalists—like me for instance. If I were to forget my duty as an officer of the Service, I would want nothing more than to get the little girl out of the orphanage, just so she could love them.

"And don't forget, either, that there would be any number of different answers besides. And that everyone would feel strongly about his own solution. You have your choice, Commander. You can destroy them in the name of Security and Safety—or you can risk a System-wide civil war, and total 'conquest' by an alien race. What'll you have?"

Commander Hartson smiled wryly. "I'll take vanilla," he said distinctly, and rang for an aide. The uniformed girl appeared in the doorway. "Jenny," he said, "I want orders typed up for countersigning to arrange all details for the moving of the Baby Byrd III to Deimos Isolation Post immediately. The ship will be piloted by Pfc. Joseph Fromm, now aboard the Scanliter Twelve. We will want a continuous radio report from the pilot starting with his entry into the ship.

"Separate orders are to go to Scanlitters Seventeen and Twenty-two, to follow the BB-3 in with all artillery on the ready. They are to maintain radio silence, with vocal reception open. Private Fromm is to know nothing of the ready-fire orders. The word "apple" will be the signal to fire, if I decide it is necessary to destroy the ship. Is that all clear?"

"Yes, sir."

The door closed quietly behind her, and Bob Schwartz stood up and walked around the desk to shake the Commander's hand.

"They say you're a great man, Bill," he said quietly. "I'm beginning to think you are. Now, I'd like to

ask a favor I'm not entitled to. I did my duty as I saw it, and gave you my advice as an officer of the S.D. Now I'm asking for a privilege as an old friend. If you're going to try bringing that ship in, I'd like to be aboard her on the way. I want to be there when they come to. I'm a qualified observer and it shouldn't take more than an hour to get me up there. It won't be much of a delay."

The Commander's voice was icy. "I think you know that's impossible, Bob. Certainly you're qualified—too qualified. We have to have a man on that ship, but we only need one man, and he has to be expendable. The only qualifications he needs are to know how to pilot the ship, and to be able to talk continuously. We already have a volunteer for the job, and he's acceptable. If you want to give him any instructions about what to look for or what to talk about, you have five minutes to prepare them. After that, the action will start. You understand, I am taking your advice. But I feel I must first prove to myself that your premises are correct. I want to see just how irresistible they are."

He turned to the P.R. Chief, and went on as coldly: "You are free to leave now, Miss Ardin. You'll want to hear the reports as they come in, I imagine. It should be about twenty minutes before the ship is actually under way."

Pfc. Joe Fromm walked through the inner airlock into the BB-3, climbed out of his space suit, and made a quick examination of the cabins. Three of the aliens, still unconscious, were bound ankle to ankle and wrist to wrist on the floor of one cabin. That door was to be locked. The other cabin was empty, as it was supposed to be.

"Cabins okay as planned," he muttered into the mouthpiece, strapped to his chest. "Corridor and cabinets clear." He entered the control room, and tested the manacles restraining the outside limbs of the alien who had formerly occupied the pilot's seat, and was now secured in a specially built chair. "Alien in control room unconscious and I'd say pretty safe, the way he's tied down. Instrument check: electronic controls, okay; radar, okay; rocket controls . . ."

He went down the list, cheerful with the familiar routine, talking easily, untroubled by the need for extra breaths between words that had plagued his inspection of the aliens.

"I am now strapping myself into the pilot-seat, and preparing for takeoff. Ready to leave as soon as I am signaled free . . . signal received, blasting off now ... utilizing minimum acceleration, coming in at Deimos on direct approach . . . the fella in the control room here seems to be wiggling his toes . . . you wouldn't think they'd have toes just like us, would you? . . . he's coming to, all right . . . I am on direct course to Deimos at min-axe still . . . I think maybe everything'll work out okay . . ."

He had to watch the instruments with one eye and the alien with the other. The—whatever he was—didn't seem to be trying to bust loose at all.

"He's moving his head now, and looking around ... looking at his handcuffs, and the chair, trying to turn his head around to see where his legs are cuffed underneath, but he isn't struggling at all . . . looking me over now . . . I caught his eye for a minute just then, or he caught mine. I think he wants me to look at him again, but I'll try not to. He has to be able to fasten my attention on something to hypnotize me, doesn't he? I am moving my eyes around, checking instruments, and thinking as many different thoughts as I can. . . ."

"We are now approaching an orbit around Mars, decelerating. My radar screen shows two Scanliters following us . . . should they be so close inside range in case it is necessary to fire on us? . . . Please don't . . . that's not my thought!"

"It . . . he's thinking at me . . . they are telepaths, all right. He doesn't seem to, I don't know, the first thought I was sure wasn't mine was, please don't fire on us, we are friends. It seemed so natural I started to say it. His thoughts aren't in clear words now ... I heard once that to 'receive' stuff like this you have to not concentrate . . . something like that. Maybe I'm trying too hard . . . No. I'm too tense ... that was his thought, not mine, he was telling me not to be so tense and I'd understand. . . ."

"He says—you can call it 'says'; it's enough like talking—he says they're friends, they like us. They want to be friends. He keeps saying it different ways but it's the same feeling all the time, with different—pictures, I guess to go with it. . . ."

Pictures! Hey, stay out of there!

"He wants me to . . . to love him. That's what he says. He . . . men don't feel that way about each

other . . . no! . . . loves me, he loves all—not men, some kind of thought for his own people, and all—living creatures —those are on his home planet. He loves all men, this time he means men."

That was silly of me . . . he wasn't being nasty . . . he just meant love . . . that picture was mine ...

"He says the pictures I get for meanings are all my own, so I might get his meaning wrong sometimes. He makes a picture in his mind, the way he'd visualize a thought on his world, but I see it the way it would be on mine. . . .

"Listen, Captain Malcolm just didn't understand. This is important . . . they don't mean the kind of thing we do when they say 'love.' They mean liking and sharing and . . . we haven't got the right words for it, but it's all right. It's not a grabby feeling, or taking anything, or hurting anybody. There's nothing to be afraid of. The only thing that Captain got right was that story about the kid. . . ."

On Phobos Base, Lucy Ardin's typer clacked eagerly, while Bill Hartson and Bob Schwartz turned from the viewer together. Hartson was a soldier; his face was stern and set, as he reached for the mike. The only emotion he showed was the single flash from his eyes to his friend's when he looked at Schwartz and saw the tears of frustration rolling unashamed down the psychofficer's face.

"... the one who threw the note over the wall. That is the way they feel. He's telling me now, to tell all of you, he's agreeing, he says I understand now, it's the way human beings love when they're kids, like the note the girl wrote: Whoever you are . . ."

The Commander spoke one word. "Apple."

"I love you."

## So Proudly We Hail

*. . . at the twilight's last gleaming...*

Great gray plain of poured concrete, level and bare, save for the network of construction at the center. There, ensnared in wood and metal, shadow shrouded, the clumsy bottom of the tapered rocket rested on the Earth. Far above, the nose pierced the thin air, a bloody beacon in the sunset.

A spiral ramp curved out from the high loading port, sweeping across the concrete to where the human builders of the spacebird lived and worked: twelve hollow cubes poured from the same concrete on which they stood.

Behind one lighted window, scattered groups of men and women lingered over the evening meal. They drummed their fingers, and shifted nervously between each other and the lurid light outside. They talked in quick soft voices, laughed too loud; sipped steaming coffee, or bit into bread and meat that could not satisfy the hungers they were feeling.

*. . . in the rocket's red glare...*

The words kept running through her head, absurdly appropriate, two solid centuries after they were written by a man who also had to wait till dawn. The old words hummed in her head, replacing the others — the one's she'd saved up for tonight. The ones she had to speak, soon, now:

"I guess I better tell you now."

In the wall mirror, Sue could see her own lips form the words, making precise movements against the set mask of her face. The careful mask of civilized conformity, red-and-white satin out of jars and boxes that could hide the pallor of fear and the blush of desire, both. She could see the words, but she couldn't hear them. She had no way of telling whether she spoke aloud, or whether the shapes in the mirror were only an echo of the intention in her mind.

He didn't hear. In the mirror she could see him too, his head turned from her to look out the window, watching the metal monster where it waited, crouched to spring at dawn.

*He doesn't even know I'm here.*

The thought came bitterly, perversely reassuring. She gulped at too-hot coffee, seeing over the rim of the cup the familiar thrusting angle of his shoulder, the slight backward tilt of his head.

*But he'd know if I wasn't here,* she reassured herself, and the coffee was bitter in her mouth.

"I guess I better tell you now," she said again, and this time she knew she spoke aloud. She could

*feel* her mouth moving to make the words: the lips, tongue, teeth, jaw, muscles of the cheek, working habitual patterns of speech beneath the mask. "I guess I better not wait any longer," she said, and watched him start to turn, reluctantly, back toward her.

"Sure, Baby. What is it?"

She knew the suppressed impatience of that tone as she knew, intimately, every sound his mouth could make and every shape it had. His face was in profile, and she saw the pushed-out firmness of the lower lip that could completely hide the sensitivity of the upper; the stubborn set of jaw that made you forget how quickly the forehead wrinkled with trouble or tension. When she looked into his eyes, she knew what she would find there, too: a veil of tenderness not quite able to conceal the glitter or irritation.

"What is it, Baby?" he asked. "What's the matter?"

She shook her head. "Drink your coffee," she said, grotesquely wifelike. "You won't get any coffee on Mars, you know."

"*Huh?*" He shook his head once sharply, like a man immersed in sleep or fog. His eyes opened wide, and he looked down at the coffee cup with astonishment; shrugged and picked it up; sipped once, symbolically, not to disagree; then put it down to look away again.

Sudden brilliance flashed through the window, and she turned too, watching over his shoulder while the lights came on outside, to play through the night on the monster. She looked at the man, and past him, to the embodied dream outside, trying to see what he saw, to suffer the same bewitchment. But the dream was his. It was no longer, even by sharing, hers.

*. . . o'er the ramparts we watched...*

On the ramp, a gang of workmen was loading the last stack of crates into the ship, hauling and pushing, making wide gestures, shouting to each other in a last burst of eager energy.

Man and wife, they watched the scene together, and fascination held them both. It seemed impossible that he could sit there, close enough to touch, and still not know how great a distance the rocket had already made between them.

He was hypnotized, she thought, spellbound by the mesmeric movements of the work gang and the flashing lights outside.

He stared out the window, not thinking or feeling, not wanting to know, not *letting* her tell him. Whatever it was, it was nothing. Nothing that mattered. The rocket outside was proof enough of that: a symbol of rightness triumphant; a tower of silver that would roar skyward on bolts of lightning at dawn, carrying five hundred motes of humanity beyond blackness to the planet Mars. Married couples, mostly, like Sue and himself. Healthy and skilled, trained for the job over years of preparing; big men and big women and brawn and brains and courage and a sense of humor in time of adversity. The kind of people to build a frontier in the sky and make it thrive.

He had spent his whole life preparing himself for this. His whole life, and the last five years of it with Sue. She'd wanted it as he did ...

*Or had she?*

*Face it, jerk!* He felt her eyes on the back of his head, and had to struggle not to turn around. She was scared, that's all. Worried. Natural enough.

A woman gets that way, that's all. He knew what she was thinking. No sense talking about it, not any more. They'd be in it soon enough, and she'd see it wasn't as bad as her fears had built it up to be.

Or else she'd turn out to be right. It would be bad. A lot of it was bound to be. Okay! Why drag it out? Why make it worse before it happened?

If he turned around now, they'd go all through it again. About the first two expeditions, and what could have happened to them. About the mosses and lichens and red hills of Mars. About living in steel cubicles and breathing through an oxygen mask; Then later, with luck, living in pressure chambers instead. About all the dangers and trials and troubles she could dream up.

He wasn't going to talk about it any more. Now now. This one last night to get through, and then they'd be on board, and once it started, she'd get over worrying. They'd be too busy to worry.

One more night. Nothing at all, after two months. Two months of waiting since they got their OK

slips. Nine weeks of watching the strain around her mouth pull her lips into angry lines; of meeting her eyes too seldom; of hearing her speak her love too often. Of talking and reassuring her about the worries she never voiced and wouldn't admit to.

*It's your own damn fault!* he told himself again. Just once, he'd laughed at her fears. A long time ago, but she didn't forget. She wouldn't, *couldn't*, admit it any more.

His eyes flickered sideways, to the mirror, took in the stiff mask of her face, and flickered back to the window, to the workmen finishing their job up high on the ramp. The contrast was funny, he thought. So funny it tied knots in his belly, and made his eyes burn for wanting to laugh.

*... oh, say can you see? . . .*

Dust whirled in slow eddies of illumination around the blast-revetments that girded the rocket's base. An Earth-breeze stirred the dust, an Earth-breeze that had wandered out of the Puget Sound, across Wyoming, and into Kansas where the concrete plain buried acres of flatland. The breeze sifted faint dust from the prairie all around, on the ramp and the bales and on the work gang that handled them. It whispered through the storm fence, and along the street between the concrete cubes into the cafeteria where they sat.

Sue felt the breeze on her face, and covered the cheek with the palm of her hand to keep the coolth, to hold it for some future need.

*But the need is his*, she thought. *The breeze will still be mine tomorrow*. The breeze and trees and grass, and the warm sun on ocean beaches that they'd known together. All hers, now.

"Will!" she said desperately. The name was a prayer.

He groped behind him for her hand. "What is it, Baby?" he said to the air in front of him, to the window, the rocket, the lights outside. He didn't turn around. "Something wrong?" he said.

*Yes!* The sudden wave of fury took her by surprise. It shocked her body, stiffening her spine; making her toes curl so her feet dug against the floor; winding her hands into tight fists under the table. It snapped her head back, so that when the shock-wave reached him and he turned to her at last, smiling a little sheepishly, her eyes were flashing straight into his.

And there it was again.

*I love you, Will!* The sudden sharp intake of breath; the reaching-forward feeling in her arms, spreading down through her whole body; the total sense of physical well-being, taking over after the tightness of the anger, that was gone now as quickly as it had come. Five years: five years of closeness, day after day, and it was still the same, whenever they returned to each other from even the most subtle of departures.

"I'm sorry, Baby." he said. "I guess I wasn't really listening." He sounded tired, as if it took great effort to say so little. But he was trying, anyhow. "What's the matter, Sue?"

"I love you, Will."

His eyes mapped her face, narrowing. There was a tightening at the corner of his jaw. "Why say it like that?" he asked finally. "You sound like it's something to say at a funeral." "Can you think of a better thing to say at a funeral?" "You're in a hell of a mood!"

*Oh, you noticed, did you?* She almost said the words out loud, but the song saved her, still running through her head. *.. through the perilous fight . . .*

"Sorry," she said.

Dismayed, he watched the stars film her eyes.

"What are you crying about?" He hadn't meant to growl like that.

"I'm not." She dabbed at her eyes.

"All right," he said. "Okay. Then there's nothing to worry about, I guess. Everything's just peachy. Hunky-dory." He was turning back to the window, when the loudspeaker over the door coughed and croaked at them officiously:

"All colonists report for final briefing and examination at nine o'clock. *All colonists*. White-slip holders, and yellow-slip reserve list, report to the Ad Building. There will be a warning siren at eight fifty-five."

The speaker coughed once more. Will turned back to his wife and took her hand in his. Now, if ever, he could pull her back with him, into the realization of the dream. Now.

Her hand was cold in his. He tried to squeeze warmth into it, to let his own thought and hope flow into her through their twined fingers. For just a moment he thought he had succeeded. Then the speaker cleared its throat again.

"Announcement: Provisions have been made for the accommodation of relatives of all colonists during the night. All authorized visitors who wish to remain until take-off may register for bedspace."

He didn't hear the rest of it, because she pulled her hand away, suddenly, jerkily, and he understood what he wouldn't yet say even to himself in words.

"There isn't much more time," she said, in a strange, tinny voice.

*Forty-five minutes*, he thought. *Forty-four now . . . three*. "What's that supposed to mean?" he demanded. *Make her say it now*.

"Well, they'll be ... the announcement..." She blinked her eyes, trying to dry them. "They said nine o'clock..."

"I heard it. All right, Sue, what is it? What do you want to say?"

Her eyes suddenly clear, were wide and warm. *Big brown eyes a man could drown in*. Looking straight at him, the way she always used to. No faking now. And love ... crazy love you couldn't doubt when she looked like that.

"I'm not going," she said.

"Yeah. That's what I figured." He felt nothing at all, not inside or out. He could see his hand still holding hers, but he couldn't feel the curl of his own fingers, or the skin of hers. "I'm glad you got around to telling me," he said, and found he could still manipulate his muscles. He disentangled his hand, and pushed back his chair. The legs scraped on the linoleum with nerve-splitting shrillness.

She was watching him, her eyes still wide, but baffled now. "Where are you ...?"

"Out," he told her. "I want to take a walk."

"All right." She started to get up, and he had to hold his left arm, the one near her, tight against his side to keep from shoving at her, forcing her back into the seat.

"Look, Sue," he said very evenly, casually, "I want to be alone for a while."

"But I..."

"I'll be back. Okay? I'll see you."

He walked off quickly, before she could answer, or make up her mind about sitting or standing. Walked out of the brightlit room into the dusk, and paused a moment on the steps to light his pipe. *Smoke your pipe, Will*, he jeered at himself, mimicking. *You won't have any smoking oxygen on Mars!*

He snorted his scorn, and strode down the steps, onto the ramp, up toward the storm fence. The breeze was cooler now, and it cooled his skin, but not the inferno raging inside him.

He wanted to hate her. He wanted to rend and tear and bellow.

*Why?* He twisted the blade of agony in the wound. *How long?* How long had she lied and cheated and tricked him? How long since she made up her mind?

No need to ask that; he knew how long. The night they celebrated; the night the white slips came. But — *why?*

Why did she have to lie at all? Why make a mockery of everything they'd had before by this last cheap pretense? *How could she?*

*. . . and the angry red stare, the words bursting in air . . .* the song had become a part of her by now, changing itself to suit her needs *. . . gave proof through the night that our love was still there ..*

She tried to get up. She wanted to go after him, run after him, explain it all to him, but her legs were rubbery and useless. She dropped back into the chair, and sat there, helpless, till she heard a voice over her shoulder.

"Felling sick, lady?" the busboy asked.

"Oh. No," she said. "No, I'm all right. Thank you." She stood up. Her legs worked all right now. She smiled mechanically at the busboy. "Sorry. I guess you want to get the table cleared."

"We're getting ready to close up," he said. "I can get a doctor if you..."

"I'm just fine," she said. "I'm sorry."

She walked out steadily, and stood on the steps, shivering. In all the darkness around her the only thing she could see was the area of garish brilliance centered on the rocket. It hurt her eyes, and she turned from it till gradually her vision acclimated to the pink-fringed grayness that had followed the gory sunset. She could make out shapes of other buildings, and then the near part of the ramp; bits of the storm fence; and finally a few scattered figures.

Which one was Will she did not know. If she'd known, she wasn't sure any more that she'd have gone to find him.

*Will!* she pleaded, *Will come back! I haven't told you yet. Will – please!*

He said he knew. Maybe he thought he knew. But he didn't. And maybe it was best that way. Maybe it was best for him never to know. To go hating her, as he did now. To leave without regrets.

*You're going to Mars, Will. Alone. I can't go, Will. Don't you see? They wouldn't let me go. They turned me down...*

But he didn't see. He couldn't. Because she hadn't told him. The words had deserted her. The words, the shining words, drilled daily for two months to march past her lips in shining ranks tonight; the treacherous, useless words had abandoned her in her hour of need.

She giggled, shivering again, wondering what to do. Silly to stand here in the cold, thinking melodramatic thoughts.

But if she left, he might not find her when he came back. The light went out in the cafeteria window, and she stood there, undecided. She opened her handbag, and reached down to the bottom, fingering the pink slip under the compact and the handkerchief. Too dark to read here if she took it out, but she didn't need to look at it. It was burned into memory behind her eyelids.

"Susan Barth," it said in neat typed letters on the mimeoed form. "3-45-A-7821. Disqualified. Medical Requ 44-B-3. Calcified node. Left lung."

That was all. Two lines of type on a pink slip, and the end of marriage, the end of plans and hopes and all that life meant to her.

And now it was ending again. A different end: the end of loving and lying; of hoping against hope; of hating. And waiting. For her, that is.

For him, for Will, it was the end of waiting only, and the beginning of the dream. The beginning of hate, maybe, too.

*They'll tell him,* she promised herself. *They'll tell him later, on the rocket. Or after they land.* It wasn't as if he'd go through life not knowing. He'd find out. No need to tell him now. It would be easier for him this way.

She went down one more step, and let herself look at the rocket. The workmen were still there. The metal dragon swallowed all they fed it, stolid, indifferent, letting itself be stuffed, for now, with bits and pieces of paraphernalia, oddments of fiber and metal, of glass and wood. But all the while it waited, knowing the feast that was coming soon, brooding and hungering for the living flesh that would feed it this night. Resting and planning for the moment of dawn when, with its belly full, it would belch fire and vanish from the earth.

*... and the rocket's red glare, the bombs bursting in air . . .* No sense waiting. It was better not to see him. She stood there, staring and shivering.

The wire of the storm fence was tearing his fingers and his hands. He made himself relax his clutching grip.

*Coward!* he raged futilely. *Cheat and coward!*

"Nervous, buddy?"

He whirled, his torn hands clenching into welcome fists, the muscles of his arms literally aching for trouble.



"Maybe," he said tightly.

It was one of the colonists, a man he knew by sight but not by name; a stocky, sandy-haired character with too many teeth in his smile. "Came out to get away from the wife a minute," the man said cheerfully. "Yakkety yakkety yak, that's all I get. And every other word about what a tough time we're in for. Your wife like that?"

"I – haven't got a wife."

"No kidding? I didn't know they were taking any bachelors. If I'd of known that ... Clara and I got married because both of us wanted to go."

"That's tough!"

"Yeah – *Say!* what'd you mean by that crack?"

"Beat it, Shorty," Will said coldly. "Unless you're looking for trouble." His knuckles itched with the urge to erase some of the expanse of tooth from the man's idiotic smile.

Shorty flushed, hitched up his belt. "I could use a little," he offered, "if you got some to spare."

They faced each other stonily for a few seconds. "A-a-a-h —skip it!" Will said, and turned back to stare through the fence again.

"Dame trouble?" Shorty asked, too sympathetically. Will shrugged.

"That's too bad." The other guy was going to go when he was good and ready, not just because Will told him to. "Another guy, huh?" The sympathy was laid on now, too obviously. But even Shorty seemed to know when he'd gone far enough.

Determinedly unresponsive, Will suffered himself to be jovially slapped on the back, and listened gratefully as he heard the man's footsteps recede into the distance. When he looked around again, he could no longer find the lighted square of window that had marked the cafeteria building. Just a huddle of squared-off silhouettes against the dark gray sky. In the center, on top of the Administration Building, a clock glowed a warning.

*Twenty-five minutes till nine.*

He had to go back. He told her he'd come back.

*Another guy?* Well, what about it? Why not? *Another guy!* It was the only possible answer, and he'd needed a grinning ape like Shorty to show it to him! Two months of worrying and wondering, noticing all the little changes, all the things that weren't quite *right*. Telling himself she was frightened. Telling himself he was wrong. Keeping the knowledge just below the surface of his mind. It spewed up now in all its rottenness, leaving him weak and clean.

It was the only possible explanation.

Will knocked his cold pipe against a fence-post, and put it back in his pocket. He considered slowly, surprisingly calm, what he wanted to do with the rest of the time. Nineteen minutes more, the clock told him.

Was she waiting, still?

Did he care?

He felt cool — indifferent or numb. It didn't matter which. He'd promised to come back. What difference did a promise make, to *her*? Another man — was she with him now, sharing the lovely joke? Telling him she loved him? Telling him she was free at last?

Will turned his back on the storm fence and the rocket. He paced slowly the hundred yards down the ramp. He didn't want to see her. He wanted to tell her that he understood. If there had been any emotion in him at all, he'd have wanted to denounce her, shame her, spit on her; what he might have felt now was not anger, but a bitter cold contempt.

Only he felt nothing.

*. . . Oh, say, does that star-spangled banner yet wave...*

The song still ran insanely through her head, and now she knew why, remembering the moment of getting the envelope, of opening it, of looking and seeing the two slips of paper, his and hers — white and pink. White for success and pink for failure. The song had been playing on the radio then, while she stood in the middle of the kitchen and stared at the incongruous slips of paper that didn't match. The first

time ever that things hadn't somehow fitted together for her and Will.

Bit by bit, while the song played through and finished, and somebody started to make a speech, the meaning of it had penetrated to the vital centers of her consciousness.

*I'm not going . . .* the statement was complete at last, the lesson fully learned . . . *I can't go.*

She didn't show Will the slips that night. She had to think it through first, decide what to do, how to tell him. Because as soon as the lesson of failure was thoroughly learned for herself, another piece of knowledge took shape within her.

If she told him, he'd stay too. He'd stay at home, and go out to stand in the yard on starry nights. He'd stare at the sky, smoking his pipe, the way he always did — the way he always had — but it would be different. He would stand alone, and his hand would not touch her arm, nor would she be with him. And when he came back into the house, his eyes would avoid her, and he would hate.

*You're going, Will,* she promised in her heart when she understood that much. *It's the thirst of your soul, and I shall see that you drink, though it drains me!*

Well, she was entitled to a little melodrama in her private thoughts, and the phrase gave her strength to act.

Next day she checked with the medics. "Calcified node." Just a little hardened-over spot that would never give her any trouble on Earth — but could kill her on Mars.

"I don't care," she told them, pleading.

"I'm sorry, Mrs. Barth. You understand we can't use passenger space on the rocket for anyone who isn't as fit as possible to survive the rigors of colonization ..."

They were kindly, sympathetic, understanding — but firm.

By that night, she had the duplicate slip ready: the one that wasn't good enough to get her on the ship, but looked enough like Will's to convince him if he didn't question it. She showed him both, and they went out for dinner and got a little tight together, *celebrating!*

After he was asleep, she crept out of bed and went outside to stare at the sky herself. She sat on the soft grass and cried; and when he woke up too, and found her missing, and came out looking for her, he thought he understood. He carried her back inside, and was gay and tender and funny and strong. They made cocoa in the kitchen while he talked about the dangers they would face together, making a joke of them, reassuring her, promising all his strength and support to help her through.

That was the last time she cried. After that she schooled herself, night and day, to feel nothing but her love for Will, to do nothing, say nothing, *be* nothing but a perfect living lie designed to give him what he wanted if it killed them both!

And now at last it was safe to tell him. Safe because it was too late for him to change his mind. He wouldn't stay back now.

But now he didn't want to hear. And maybe

Maybe it was better that way.

*Where is he?* Why didn't he come back? He *said* he would ... For the first time she thought: *I may never see him again!* The words had no meaning in her mind, but she doubled over as though she'd been hit in the middle.

*It's better this way,* she told herself, straightening up painfully. *Better for him . . . "Will! Here I am!"*

He'd almost walked right past her. "Will ..."

"Oh . . . hi!"

Casual. Just like that. As if it was any night, and he'd gone for a walk. As if there was still a tomorrow.

For him, there was. *I gave it to you, Will. Give me credit for that at least . . .* And immediately, she was ashamed of the thought. What difference did blame or credit make now?

"I guess we might as well say goodbye." His face was a cold stone carving in the dark. "No sense in you hanging around till dawn," he said. "You told them, didn't you?" he asked. "I mean, I take it I'm the last to know?"

All right, he was mad. She didn't have to fight back. "I'd rather stay." she said, forcing the words

through the dryness of her mouth. "But we can say goodbye now if you'd rather."

"I would."

He grinned, a tight stretching of lips across teeth that gave away the bravado of his nonchalance completely. "So long, Sue," he said, and one corner of his mouth quirked up. "It's been nice to know you."

He put his hands lightly on her shoulders, leaned forward and kissed her once, chastely, on the forehead.

*Oh, no! Not this way, Will! Oh, no!* Her own hurt, anger, sorrow faded to vanishing beside what she now understood of his. "Will, please," she said steadily. "Listen to me a minute. I want to tell you ..."

"Maybe you better not, Sue."

She swallowed slowly, moistened the caked dryness of her lips, blinked back the burning in her eyes, and started again. "I think it's better if I do. I'm ... I was dis ..."

"Maybe I don't want to hear it!" he exploded; and she saw his face tighten, his jaw tremble; felt his fingers bite into her shoulders as he struggled to maintain a semblance of calm.

Silence again. Frozen silence while the narrowed slits of his blue eyes locked with her wide brown ones.

"I—" She opened her mouth, but it was no longer possible to make the words come out. At last she managed a sort of croaking parody of speech: "Will, I ..."

"Skip it!" he said, and then with sudden gentleness: "It's all right, Baby. I understand." A spasm of bitterness twisted his mouth, belying his words; and he said again fiercely, "Just skip it, that's all!" Then the hands on her shoulders slid down her back, and his aching hunger crushed her too close for a breath to pass between them. For a moment, too close even for her own breath to leave or enter. But what need of breath, with his mouth covering hers, and the passion of a lost lifetime compressed into one everlasting moment?

*He understands!* For the little spell of the embrace she believed it, *wanted* to believe it. But as his arms released her, some cooler portion of her mind stood back in helpless laughter, mocking the kiss, the passion, her will to believe, and his stubborn refusal to listen, all at once. *He understands!* What did he think he understood? He had no way to know the truth. His anger proved he didn't know it.

*I hate you!* she thought, as she shifted her weight to regain her balance. *I hate your wonderful guts for wanting to go so much!*

"All right," she said quietly. "I'll skip it," and she smiled for a last time. This was a good way to say goodbye. The best she could have hoped for. No need to add anything now. He knew, he *had* to know after that kiss, that whatever her reason was, she loved him still and always. She watched him whirl around and stride away, and realized that she was going too; a part of her at least would be with him forever, wherever he went.

Six angry steps away, he turned back long enough to say: "And tell him for me, he better be worth it!"

Line up here. Get your papers stamped. Shots. Another line. Over here now. Final phys. ex.: no communicable diseases. Line up here now. Got your slips? Strip again. Standard issue coveralls. Clothing to be deposited in these containers, will be returned to next of kin. Shots. Another paper stamped. Final psych. ex.:

"You see, it's a bit unusual, Mr. Barth, for a husband or wife to decide to go ahead when the other's been disqualified."

Smile. No, that's not right. Just act the way the man expects you to. Think it out later. Line up here. Stamp that paper! Hold that line!

"... *disqualified!*"

They were all through now, and an hour to go before takeoff. Someone came around with coffee and some pills.

Sedative? Stimulant? He didn't know. He swallowed the pills, gulped the coffee.

*Disqualified?*

But she never said . . . she didn't . . . she had a white slip just like his.

He stood up, to go find someone who would know, and remembered the psychofficer's words and doubtful attitude. If he asked any questions now, if they found out he hadn't known . . .

*But he had to know.*

Disqualified? What for? There was nothing wrong with her. Wrong . . . something wrong . . . *what was it?*

There must be someone who'd know. He couldn't go if ... *couldn't go? But if she needed him . . .*

*You, you stupid little fool!* he thought. *What did you think you were doing?*

"*I love you, Will,*" she'd said. And he'd snarled back at her. Maybe he could see her now. Maybe she'd stayed over after all. Maybe — somebody around here would know.

*. . . whose broad stripes and bright stars . . .*

The hands of the clock were stripes, and the numbers were stars, and so she couldn't tell the time, and didn't have to know how long she had yet to wait. She edged over to her side on the narrow cot, trying not to make it squeak, not wanting to disturb the women on the other cots in the big room.

*Are they asleep?* she wondered. Or were they, too, turning over soundlessly, staring out the window at the clock on the Ad Building next door.

It was nineteen minutes after four. She must have slept a while after all. She remembered now, the roman candles and flaring sky-rockets of her dream, and right after that remembered his words again: ". . . *tell him from me . . .*"

She couldn't lie still any longer. She got up, walked the length of the room on tiptoe, barefoot, carrying her clothes. There was a bathroom at the other end. She went in, and closed the door, locking herself in with the sink and mirror and the blinding overhead light. She got into her clothes, rumpled and wrinkled from lying on the floor where she'd dropped them in the dark, a few hours ago.

Cold water on her face, and she was used to the light by then. The mirror was shock enough to wake her up. She fished in her bag for the compact, and felt the pink slip under it, and what difference did it make? She wouldn't see him, not to talk to. He wouldn't see her at all.

But if she went out now, and got there first, she could stand right near the gate. She knew which one they'd use. She'd almost be able to touch him as he went past.

Almost an hour till dawn. Probably other people had the same idea, though. She went out quickly, walked past the cafeteria where the light was on again, and people were drinking coffee, eating quick breakfasts.

It wasn't too late. She found a place with the other early-waiters, near the gate, and edged forward every time she saw an opening. By the time the band showed up and began tuning instruments, she was right next to the gate itself. When they started to play, she had to check the beginnings of hysteria. Everybody else started singing, so she sang too:

"Oh, say, can you see, by the dawn's early light ..."

Only it wasn't dawn yet. Not quite. When it was, the monstrous ship would be gone. It would be full of people, then, and Will would be one of them. Part of the human sacrifice that would slake the dragon's thirst, and make it go away . . .

The priests were coming now, herding the sacrifice along. Priests in business suits: presidents and professors and newspapermen.

Right behind them came the captives, all alike, five hundred heads, five hundred sets of arms and legs, all in the same white uniform, marching unmanacled, willingly, to their doom.

They marched past her, right under her nose, and some of them were smiling. Some were cowards, and they cried. She felt most sympathetic to the ones who just walked deadpan straight ahead.

A few of them looked at her, or right through her, as if they sought some other face or figure in the crowd that pressed behind her. One of them opened his mouth when he walked by. He seemed to speak, or try to speak.

His name was Will. He had seen her; he had said something. He ...

*He doesn't know! He hates me! He thinks . . .*

She couldn't remember what it was he thought. Something bad. *Awful.*

There was something she had to tell him, explain to him, to make it all right. *Something he said to me . . . what was it?*

What did he try to say when he walked past? She closed her eyes, remembered the face, the shape of the mouth, tried not to hear the sounds around her, or the band, or anything; just to hear what he'd been saying with his mouth that special shape.

She knew the shape; knew each and every shape his mouth could make. The word was "Baby." Another word was "love." But that was wrong. She was putting the shapes together wrong, because he hated her now.

Faint edge of light over the horizon, and the band was still, and one of the priests intoned a prayer.

And a shrill siren screamed, and screeched again, and the air was full of thunder, and people shouting.

"Stand back!"

"Get back, there, you!"

"Blastoff ... zero . . . *Back!*"

They pulled at her arms and legs, and somebody grabbed at her middle too, but they couldn't hold her. She was free now. Racing forward, running hard, before they could catch her.

They were afraid, she thought. *Poor fools, afraid!* They weren't following any more. They thought it was better to stay behind and live. They didn't know. Maybe for them it was better, poor fools, poor dears, let them live.

She had to let him know. Had to find out. What did he say, she say, could say, would say?

*Baby . . . Love ...*

*"Love you, Will!"* she whispered as the blast rent the air, and concrete shook under her feet with the final savagery of the dragon's pouncing departure. Then flame washed through her and she fell on the trembling ground, and lay still, watching, looking straight up to Will, who could see her, surely, through the flames on which he stood.

The last thought she had was blessed awareness: *they'll tell him. He'll find out.*

And the last thing she heard was the end of the song "*. . . of the free, and the home of the brave.*"

## A BIG MAN WITH THE GIRLS

*James MacCreigh and Judith Merril*

BART MANDELL was not, really, a jealous man; he'd been around enough to know it didn't pay. But he'd been around enough, too, to understand Sally.

She was a sweet kid: pretty as a sweetpea from the neck up, and absolutely terrific all the way down. Faithful, and loyal, and loving, too. But a party girl, always on the move, fast on her feet and quick with a quip. Not the sitting-home type at all.

Which explains why Bart decided that two hours sleep would have to do him.

He hadn't seen Sally for forty-eight hours—not since the search began; that was just about twenty-eight hours too long, and the last time he called she'd sounded pretty much indifferent to whether she ever saw him again. He had eight hours and that was all, before he had to go back out with the search party again. So he caught a fast couple of hours of sacktime, washed the sleep out of his system in the sharp spray of the shower, and started down to her house.

The street was lit up like a carnival. It was crazy; here the whole Army was on twenty-four hour duty, with the National Guard working alongside, and the cops out, too. The city—the whole world, maybe—was in danger, and folks who weren't actually out hunting were having themselves a time. He couldn't figure out where the stuff had come from so quickly, but every store along the street had souvenirs and gadgets for sale: maps of Mars, toy rocket ships, and mechanical Martians with green skin and red eyes. Kids were peddling illustrated reprints of the government White Paper on Mars. The bars

were full, and even the ice cream parlors were doing a land-office business.

And all the time, out there in the woods, grim parties of sleepless men were beating the bushes for some sign of the invader.

Bart strode angrily down the street, pushing his way past the meandering groups. His uniform gave him right-of-way, fortunately for the revelers.

He was almost at the side street where Sally lived, when he realized he had forgotten the flowers.

There was no florist nearby. He stopped at a hastily constructed sidewalk stand, picked out the biggest and fanciest of the toy rockets, sourly paid three times what it was worth, and turned off to Sally's.

He had to wait at the door just a minute too long when he rang. Then she opened up, and he found out why—she had an apron on, and the house was full of the nicest smell in the world, French fries frying. She stayed in his arms just long enough for him to work himself up to the kind of kiss he really wanted to give her, then she pulled away.

"The potatoes!" She turned and ran out to the kitchen, bronze curls bobbing as she ran. Bart closed his mouth, stopped gasping, and followed her, just in time to see her slide two inches of steak into the broiler.

"You are," he said, watching her, "beyond any possible doubt, the most wonderful woman on any planet, let alone on Earth."

The corners of her mouth tilted, and she caught her lower lip with her teeth just in time to stop a full-fledged smile. Bart watched the even white edges press down on the full redness of the lip, and decided he wasn't very hungry after all.

"Oh," he remembered, "I brought you a present." He went back to the entry, and got the package he'd dropped to get his arms free when she opened the door.

She unwrapped it while the steak sizzled and the potatoes crisped. "Why, that's sweet," she said, but Bart failed to note much enthusiasm.

"Look." He showed her how the nose unscrewed, and then set the hollow metal tube down on its rocket nozzles on the kitchen table. "You use it for a vase," he explained. "You can put flowers in."

"How cute! Listen, why don't you take it in and put it on the table? Take the jonquils out of the green pitcher and put them in here."

He felt a little better. "Sure thing," he said. He didn't even try to kiss her on the way out.

The table looked wonderful, set just for two, in front of the fireplace. Bart whistled while he transferred flowers and water to the shiny souvenir rocket, and placed it carefully off-center on the table. He didn't want it getting in the way of the view. He stood back to survey the effect, and saw that the fire was laid, ready to be lit.

Nice touch. He walked around the table, knelt down, and scratched a match on the hearthstones, then stopped, staring, while the match flared in his fingers.

He dropped the match. So that was why she hadn't gone into rhapsodies over his present!

The rocket on the hearth was a good two feet tall—almost twice as big as his—and a really beautiful job. Shiny, silver-colored metal, not cast, but seamed along the sides . . . even a miniature airlock standing open. Bart leaned closer, and saw that the surface was not as new and shiny as it had looked at first; it was scarred and dented in spots. But it was a beautiful job. He glowered at the hunk of tin he'd brought.

*Who . . . ?*

Bart ran through a quick review of the men he knew Sally knew, but none of them were quite the rocket-buying type. Seemed like there was some new competition in the field.

He touched the gleaming toy; it was warm.

Bart struck another match savagely, and lit the fire, then jumped up and paced over to the window. He stared out gloomily. Some joker had been there all afternoon—most likely had brought Sally the rocket. He turned on his heel, and started back to the kitchen. Even an unjealous man could be pushed too far.

Sally saved him from the biggest mistake he could have made. The minute he showed his face in the

kitchen door, she shoved a tray at him, smiled enchantingly, and said, "Take it in there, will you?" He carried the laden tray back to the other room, and cooled down on the way.

Bart Mandell, after all, was not *really* a jealous man. And he certainly knew better than to make a scene because some other character came visiting.

It took a little while to get back in the mood, but the salad was good, and the steak was better. Sally sat across the table, smiling and sparkling. The fire flickered, then roared, then settled down to a cheerful dance of flame and smoke and sparks. The shadows deepened, and the other man's present was not so obtrusive any more.

Bart helped her with the dishes. It was one of the things he'd learned, hither and yon. Nothing less likely to make a girl answer kindly next time you call up, than if her most recent memory of you is the dirty dishes you left behind. They stood close together in the bright kitchen, and when they went back to the living room, there was peace and intimacy between them.

Except, that, is, when Bart decided it was time to ask a casual question.

He added some wood to the fire, and before he stood up again, he said, "Nice gadget you've got there," pointing to the rocket on the hearth.

"Hmm-mm. Come sit down."

"Something new?" He was very off-hand.

"Hmmm-mm."

"Haven't seen anything like it anywhere," he pursued, though he knew she was stiffening up.

"Most likely not," she said briskly; "do you want the radio on?"

That settled that. It was another man, or she would have told him.

"Sure," he agreed. "But wouldn't you rather go out? I thought we might take in a show." It was the last thing in the world he'd thought of. All he wanted right now was to sit in the dim room with Sally as close to him as she'd get.

"I don't know," she said. "Why don't we just stick around here? You must be worn out."

She was a sweet kid. Bart relaxed. After all, the other guy was gone; he, Bart, had the center of the stage now, and he might as well make use of it while it lasted."

"Not so bad," he told her. "I felt knocked out before, but something around here seems to be good for me."

"The steak maybe?" she teased.

"Could be." He fiddled with knobs on the radio, flicked past the news he wanted to hear, and found some music. "Like that?" He turned and held out his arms. She floated into them, and for a half an hour he forgot about the search, the Army, the Martian, and everything else.

Then the music gave way to news again, and Bart went to change the station, but Sally passed another miracle. "Leave it, why don't you?" she said. "Don't you want to hear?"

He did, but he *knew* she never did. She sure was working overtime tonight to keep him happy. Guilty conscience, maybe. He flicked the thought away almost quickly enough.

". . . latest opinion from authoritative sources," the commentator said breathlessly, "is that the Martian invader space ship must have landed under cover of the dark, before the search began. One officer at the search headquarters believes that the Martian disembarked and sent his ship back into the sky on automatic controls while he is reconnoitering our defenses. The search for the Martian is spreading throughout this area. Civilian volunteers are being called on now to assist the armed forces, fire and police departments, already engaged in an intensive dragnet search.

"To summarize: there has been no trace of the Martian spaceship since it stopped broadcasting, and RDF installations lost it fifty-six hours ago. They have never been detected by radar. Government heads of all countries are conferring today on an island in the Pacific, formulating a world-wide cooperative policy in case of hostile activity on the part of the Martian. The search in this area, where the alien ship is believed to have put down, is being intensified.

"Stay tuned for further news . . ."

The music came on again, but Sally didn't want to dance. She turned to Bart with a frown furrowing her lovely forehead. "I just don't understand it, Bart. I thought the Martians were supposed to be so

friendly just like us, and all."

"That's what we all thought from the first radio messages," he told her. "Maybe they are; who knows? It's just that everybody got scared when they stopped broadcasting and the radar couldn't pick them up. That means they've got some kind of a screen that can stop us from tracking them, and naturally we don't like that. So we want to find out where they—I mean he—landed. That's all. Nothing to worry about really."

There was plenty to worry about. The Martians were too smart; that's what it came down to. Two years of communication with them . . . but they were the ones that started it; they were the ones who learned Earth languages, first English, then Russian; they were the ones who could build a spaceship to come and visit.

From their own descriptions they sounded just like human beings. But they were too smart; they could have figured out what people looked like, and just said they were that way. They could have ... oh, anything.

There was no sense in getting wrought up about it, and there was certainly no sense in getting Sally worried. In two more hours he'd have to leave and go out hunting Martians again; that was enough for him to do. Meanwhile, he was going to relax.

"Come on, honey." Bart slid an arm around her waist, and moved his feet in time to the music, not really dancing, just doing enough to give him an excuse to hang onto her. "You stick to the steaks, and let Old Uncle Bart chase Martians. It'll work out better that way."

She smiled up at him, and he stopped pretending to be dancing.

It was a superior sort of kiss, but after only a very short eternity, Sally broke and stayed that way. They wound up in separate chairs in front of the fireplace, watching the flame-pictures, and Bart decided it was probably the next-best thing. It was quiet and peaceful, and as long as he stayed at arm's length Sally was very sweet.

Once or twice he almost went to sleep, but he kept himself awake trying to figure out what had got into his girl. She didn't want to go out. She didn't want to dance; she listened to the news; she asked serious questions.

He added it all up, and the answer was too good to be true. When he had to leave at eleven-thirty, he wandered off down the street in a happy daze. Could Sally, the party girl, the on-again, off-again girl—could Sally have made up her mind? She sure was acting like a lady with honorable intentions. Bart smirked and smiled, and somehow found his way back to the barracks.

He really *wasn't* a jealous man, because he'd already forgotten about the model rocket on the hearth and the other guy who got there first with the most.

They went back to the woods at midnight, a truckful of weary GIs, none of them caring much whether they ever got to see a Martian. They were dropped at a godforsaken spot in the wilderness, completely unidentifiable in the dark, and given the coordinates to aim for. For three hours they beat through the bush, cross-country, to the next highway, where they met another truckful of men coming out of the dim stretches on the other side of the road, just as discouraged as they were.

Somebody passed out coffee and doughnuts; they had fifteen minutes to sit around and wish the coffee was hot. Then they all got loaded in a couple of different trucks. They were driven about a mile further down the road, then dumped out and ordered back through the woods again. In the greyest dawn on record, they fought their way through the tangled undergrowth toward the road they'd started on. Nothing happened except twigs snapping in their faces, brambles scratching their hands, and roots tripping them up. They met no living creatures more alien or dangerous than a million murderous mosquitoes. When they came out on the highway the bag was still empty.

Captain Connors was waiting with the trucks, his face grey. While he conferred with the noncoms, Bart edged closer to listen. A sergeant was saying, "He got away clean, Cap'n. If there was anything bigger than a chipmunk in these woods we'd've found it."

The captain shook his head. "The Martian couldn't get away," he said worriedly. "He's still in this area. Got to be. If we can't find him, there's only one answer; somebody's hiding him."

The first sergeant grunted in a shocked tone. "Hiding him? What kind of a rat would hide a monster



like that?"

"He might not be a monster; he might be quite good-looking."

"He's a Martian, ain't he?" the first sergeant grumbled. Bart didn't hear the captain's answer, because just then the order came to mount the trucks and the noise drowned it out. But it is doubtful that he would have heard anyhow . . .

Sally wasn't expecting company.

She was wearing a printed wraparound sort of dress, and a bright-colored scarf on her head. Peeping out from the edges of the scarf, Bart could see a few tightly bobby-pinned loops of lovely bronze-colored hair. She had no makeup on; she must have thought it was the laundryman at the door.

The funny part was it didn't make a bit of difference, Bart thought. She took his breath away just as thoroughly as she did when the glamour aids were intact.

"Hi," he said weakly. "We just got in from patrol. I thought maybe you'd give a soldier a cup of coffee." He almost added, "Or you could marry me instead." But there was a little matter to be cleared up first.

"You could have called first."

"I would have, if I'd been sure you'd say yes."

She hesitated, looked down at herself, and then the damage had already been done. "All right," she relented. It was hard to believe, but her smile was even prettier without lipstick. "Come on in. But you can't stay."

She led the way to the kitchen, Bart trying to figure a way to get another look at that toy rocket in the living room. Then he decided it wasn't necessary.

There was a new toy now, perched on top of the refrigerator. Bart knew for sure it hadn't been there last night. He remembered taking the cubes out of the box, and putting them on top there while he looked for glasses.

It was one of the little toy robots this time. This one was extra-small, not more than an inch-and-a-half high, Bart realized when he got up to take a closer look. And it wasn't a robot; there was a tiny manikin inside, dressed in a miniature space suit affair. Attached to the arm of the suit was a weird-looking machine, higher than the figure itself, and covered with minute dials and meters.

"Come and get your coffee," Sally called, but there was an edge of apprehension in her voice.

Bart reached out to pick up the toy, and instantly Sally was at his side. "Leave that alone!" she said sharply.

"Something special?" he asked, trying to look surprised.

"Yes," she said shortly. "Something special; now come drink your coffee if you want it, and leave that alone."

Bart turned back to the table. That little figurine was just the right size. It went with the rocket all right. And it had the same kind of fine workmanship in it. Bart wondered how you started this kind of a showdown.

"You're certainly acting peculiar, Bart Mandell!" Sally said.

He looked straight into smouldering brown eyes. "You're being a little strange yourself," he told her. "I'll tell you what I think," he said bluntly. "I think they're looking for that Martian in the wrong place."

"What are you talking about?" She was very haughty.

"About your new toys; that's what I'm talking about!"

"There is no need to scream at me," she said icily. "I can hear you perfectly . . ."

"Well, then, listen a while," he interrupted, lowering his voice. "That rocket you've got in the living room—and this little gadget here on the refrigerator—I want to know where you got them."

"I don't think that's any of your business!"

Bart got up and advanced a step, towering over her.

"Sally," he said angrily, "this is a serious matter. The United States Government is involved in this. If you can prove to me where you got those things, I'll apologize or anything else you want. But *you have to answer me.*"

"Bart, you've gone out of your head! If you want to know, *nobody* gave them to me! I got them for

myself!"

"Where?"

"If you were the last man on Earth, I wouldn't tell you! Now will you leave politely before I ... Bart, stop that!"

Halfway to the refrigerator he stopped and turned back.

"Sally, can you honestly say to me that you don't know anything about the Martians?"

"What in the world would I know?" All wide-eyed innocence, but just a bit too much of it, after being so angry.

"Just where you've got him hidden, that's all you'd know!" Now *he* lost his temper. "And why, that's what I don't understand. *Why?* Good Lord, Sally, I could stand anything but this! I wouldn't mind so much if you were seeing some other *man* behind my back. But a Martian! Sally, have you no discrimination? Don't you realize he's dangerous? Don't you understand that the whole world is looking—"

Sally laughed.

It was the wrong thing to do. She laughed, and pointed a shaking finger at Bart, and choked out, "Oh, you look so *funny*." She subsided a little, while he stood rooted to the floor, keeping himself in control. "Bart, you look so funny when you get mad. Now *let's* be sensible and stop fighting. Let's go out on the porch and talk a while, and then . . ."

He whirled around and reached out. Just before his hand closed on the miniature space suit, he heard her say, "Bart, stop! You'll hurt him!" Then he knew he was right.

Captain Connors took some convincing.

The first result of Bart's effort to call him with the news was the arrival of an MP, with instructions to bring in some drunken soldier. The MP came, and saw, and listened. Most especially he listened to Nong Kay, the one-inch high Martian, talking with the aid of his two-inch high metal larynx—the gadget with the knobs and buttons.

The MP went away with his story, and after a while a sergeant came, and went through the routine again. *He* called the captain.

Captain Connors listened, not only to the diminutive "Martian monster" but also, at great length, to Sally. She explained again how she'd found the spaceship on her lawn the morning before, and took them out to show them the scorched spot where the rocket exhaust had burned away the grass.

It was still too hot to touch when she found it, but she had had no idea what it was. Captain Connors had a hard time believing that; but Bart knew Sally, and he knew it was true.

She'd taken it indoors just out of curiosity, with the help of several thicknesses of potholders. She left it on the hearth to cool off ... and when she came back in the door was open, and the little mannikin was outside, with his voice box.

"He was real cute," Sally told the captain, looking up at him earnestly out of those big brown eyes. "And polite, too; he thanked me for taking him in, and explained all about why he turned off his radio the way he did."

"That would take some explaining," the captain said, grimly.

"Not from Nong's point of view, sir," Bart said. "You see, he didn't know . . ."

"I think you can let the young lady tell her own story." The captain looked at Sally again, and Bart began to burn. Sally, flushed and excited, was all too easy to look at.

"Well, the poor little fellow!" she said indignantly. "How would *you* feel if you suddenly found all the folks you were going to visit were—well *hundreds* of times bigger than you were? You might get scared, too! So he landed in the woods, and . . . Bart, you better explain. I'm not sure about the rest of it."

Bart managed not to smirk at Captain Connors. As simply as he could, he relayed what Nong Kay had told him about taking a quick and frightening look around at the fierce beasts—squirrels!—and giant trees, and then hopping over to Sally's lawn, in the middle of a human settlement. Then, when Sally told him how everyone was hunting for him, he begged her to keep him hidden for a few days, until he had a chance to find out what he was getting into. It was all that simple.

The captain listened, not too patiently, nodded his understanding, and went away, after shaking

Sally's hand just one moment too long. Nong Kay and the "model" rocket went, too, on the seat of the Army car—right next to the captain. Bart, not having received orders to do otherwise, stayed.

He put his time to good use, too.

Captain Connors came back, minus his small chum. He rang the bell, and stood on the porch, hat in hand, his eyes so fully occupied with Sally in the doorway, that he never even noticed Bart standing behind her in the hall.

"We're having an official welcoming for the little fellow," the captain said, "and I thought perhaps you ought to be there ma'am. I'd be glad to escort you . . ."

Bart Mandell was not a jealous man, but he knew when a good thing was going too far . . . and he knew it was wise to put one's foot down early.

"That's all right, sir," he said as respectfully as possible, pulling the door open a little farther.

"Anywhere my brand-new fiancée goes, I will be delighted to escort her myself."

## A Little Knowledge An Ironic Novelet by Judith Merrill

"Mental Sciences" pop up every now and then; but suppose someone came forth with a spiel and a miraculous device which actually did what he claimed it would do!

ONE HUNDRED dollars. That was two months' rent on the apartment, or the mailing-address paid up for a full year...two half-page ads for *Help Yourself*, or twenty bottles of reasonably good brandy. Or one ad, and five bottles, and some books and something for Irene...

Harry Barchester pushed back his chair determinedly, and crossed the room to his wife's desk.

"Here." He handed her the neatly- typed letter and, more reluctantly, the scrawled check. "We'll have to send it back, of course; you know what to write."

Irene barely glanced at the check, but she read the letter through carefully. "I don't see why," she said. "Did you read this?" The clean, coved ivory-white tip of her fingernail pointed to the fourth line, and swept inclusively down the page to the end of the first paragraph:

*...a small token of my appreciation for what the Cell has already done for me. I trust you will be able to utilize this gift, small as it is, for further research and development of this amazing science. I cannot tell you how grateful...*

He had already read it—not once, but too often. He shook his head. "There isn't any more research to be done on this thing, baby," he said unhappily, and added with an unexpected twinge of honesty: "At least, not anything that can be done for a hundred bucks. Look, we're making out. We're not rolling in dough, yet—I know that—but we're eating at least. We're paying the rent. This month," he smiled, "we can even pay the printer. Why take a chance on something like this?"

"He says development, too," Irene insisted. "We could take an extra ad, or send out a new mailing, or... *anything*. Anything that would reach more people. That's development, isn't it?" she finished triumphantly.

For one wavering moment he was tempted; it made sense the way she said it.

"A *hundred* dollars, Harry. We don't get that dropped in our laps every day!"

He couldn't possibly explain. "I wish we could keep it, baby," he said. "You could have a new dress, for once—and we could get out and see a show or something." Lesson One, Elementary Applied Psychology; subtitle: Keep 'em on the run! "We could have ourselves a time. It's all right for me to sit around here like this all the time; I don't mind it. But you're entitled to..."

"That's not what I meant!" she stopped him. "You know I didn't mean that. I just don't see what's wrong with using it the way he said..."

From the dubious vantage-point of twenty years of added age, Harry Bacchesteer looked down at his lovely wife, and made an urgent mental note of the stubborn set of her chin. Irene was beautiful, intelligent, and in love. Irene was young; she had years ahead of her in which to acquire the bitter lessons life had already offered him. But, right now, she was still inclined to be a trifle trusting about such unarguable realities as the underhanded methods of postal authorities, and the high cost of lawsuits. She still believed in all the things Harry had lost faith in...

"Look," she urged, "Why don't you wait till tomorrow? Just think it over..."

"I *am* thinking baby," he said firmly; "that's why we have to send it back. There just isn't any way to rush things, Irene. We've got a good thing here. All right, it's not shaking the world yet, but it takes time. And it's building; it's building all the time, you know that. Hell, I don't blame you for getting impatient. You're young and ... there's no sense talking about the things I'd like to do for you. I can't, not yet. But give me a few years' time, that's all..."

THE ARGUMENT was as good as won; she was already reaching for a fresh letterhead. He drove the point home, hating himself for the facility with which the words came to his lips: "Remember, we worked this out beforehand—together. It's been working out that way. All you need now is patience. I know; I used to think I could get-rich-quick, too—but it just doesn't work, baby. You can't do it..."

"*He* did." She slapped the letter down on the desk, sandwiched a slice of carbon paper between the fresh letterhead and a second-sheet, rolled the layers professionally into her typewriter.

*HELP YOURSELF, INC.*

*The Institute For Psychological Science*

*President: Harcourt Barchester, L.E., M.C.B., R.S. Secretary: Irene Kardin*

The lettering was shiny black on the crisp white paper. Harry stared at it, watched it blur in movement as her fingers began rattling the keys of the typewriter. He touched a kiss lightly to the top of Secretary Kardin's head, and was rewarded by a brief upturned smile.

"Just the same, she said over the clatter, "He did it."

"If he did," Harry assured her, "that letter means more to us than any hundred dollars. He started back to his own desk, and turned thoughtfully to add: "Don't forget to ask for a picture, baby—and permission to quote."

"Right."

Back at his own desk, Harry sat for minutes without making any move toward the small pile of mail that still waited for his attention. Then, abruptly, he took a large sheet of layout paper from a drawer, and ruled a precise rectangle in the top center. Over the empty space he sketched in bold capitals: *HE DID IT!*

Below the space reserved for the photograph, he lettered rapidly: *He did it for himself. Can you do it too?* Then a highly-satisfactory, remembered passage from the letter; and underneath, the standard patter.

Do you want to find a glowing new personality? Do you want to gain influence over your friends and surroundings? Would you like to be better at your job? "*Do* you want to make the most of yourself?" he demanded, in italics, at the bottom. "And have you got what it takes to do the job *alone*? If you can answer 'Yes!' to all these questions, then you *must* read the exciting new book by Harcourt Barchester, L.E., M.C.B., R.S.,

Self-Synthesis, a *Real* Mental Science.

No misleading statements; no exaggerated claims. Do it all in questions. It was tricky, but by now routine; Harry could have done it in his sleep. He surveyed the draft with satisfaction. There'd never been a word in any ad of his that they could question; there was nothing out of line in the book or the

blueprints, either. Perfectly innocuous, all of it. All they had to do was keep on selling the stuff, straight. No need to stick your neck out for a lousy hundred bucks...

WHEN THE second letter from James Serkin came, Harry sat for a long time reading it over, studying the glossy photograph, and examining the check—this time for \$250.00. In the end, he put the whole collection into his pocket without mentioning it to Irene. Later, when she went out to the postoffice, he sat down at the typewriter himself, and composed a careful answer to go back with the check. Then he dug out the rough copy of the ad he had written two weeks earlier, and made a fresh neat layout, typing the body of the copy clearly below the picture.

Waiting for Irene to get back, he studied the photograph curiously. It was an unexpectedly appealing portrait. Nothing really unusual about the face—even-featured, pleasant, youthful, strongly masculine. But none of that accounted for the compellingly *likeable* quality of the picture. The man's expression was suffused with a quiet unquenchable confidence that somehow did not offend, but made you look back, and look again.

Harry looked once more; it was possible, after all, that Serkin was on the level. There was no, reason, after all, why Self-Synthesis shouldn't work. If the subject had some ability to start with; if he was—like this man—personable, attractive; if nothing but lack of confidence was holding him back... Self-Synthesis, basically, was founded on good solid psychology. The very achievement of constructing a Sure-Self Cell, of building from a blueprint, could give such a man all the assurance he needed. For that matter, just reading the book might do it. The more he looked at that photograph, the more convinced Harry was that in this case, at least, the system had worked. *Faith-healing!* he told himself contemptuously, and then thought the same thing again, more reflectively. Maybe...

For the last time, he decided it was really necessary to return the check, and told himself—as he had told Irene the first time—that the check itself didn't matter. If the man's photograph had half the effect on magazine readers that it had on him, Harry wouldn't be able to fill the orders it brought in. Which left him with just one problem...how to avoid showing Irene the letter that came with the photograph. He knew well enough that, this time, he would be entirely unable to convince her of the necessity for refusing the money; and he was sorely tempted himself, he was afraid that—in an open argument—she might convince him.

HE CAME in from outside and brought the sun and air in with her. After a year and more, it still hit Harry with fresh surprise that she was so good to look at. Now she threw off her heavy black coat, and from inside the shapeless winterwear there emerged—a revelation just for him—the perfect slender-curves of her body, draped today in rosy wool. Soft, warm springy fabric, a dress on a hanger in the closet, but now an intimate integral part of Irene.

"It's wonderful out," she said, a little breathless still. "You ought to get out for a while." The wind had brightened the color in her face, almost to match the shade of her dress; and it had tossed the fringes of her hair into a thousand individual tendril-curls. She pulled a small black cap off her head, further disarranging her hair, and then, conscious of his eyes following her, made a small face and said, "I *know*, I'm a wreck."

"On you it looks good." She came over to kiss him, rumbled his scanty hair with a cold hand, and went out to the hall mirror to comb her own. I'm on my way out as a matter of fact," he called after her. "Just waiting for you; I wanted to show you something." He dropped the ad-layout on her desk as she turned back into the room. "Pretty windy out?" he asked. .

"Hats all over the place," she laughed. "I counted seventeen of them on Fifty-fourth Street alone. And I almost took off, crossing Columbus Circle. The wind got caught in my coat, and I had to grab a lamp-post to keep my feet on the ground..." She trailed off, and Harry glanced in to see that she was picking up the ad. He turned back again to the hall-mirror, and as quickly away from it, refusing the contrast between the balding middle-age he found there, and the glowing girl in the other room. Just a little stiffly, he retrieved her coat from the chair where she'd dropped it, and put it neatly in place in the closet.

"*Harry! This is wonderful!*" She rattled the stiff paper with pleasure, and read it again. "It's the best one yet. It's really *good*."

"You just think that because you wrote it," he teased her.

"I wrote...? Oh, I never even realized!" She looked up into his amused eyes, and protested happily: "Honestly, I didn't. I forgot all about that. Anyhow, that's only part of it. It's the letter and everything ...when did the picture come? Today?"

"Hm-hmm—want to see the letter? It wasn't as good as the first one, but he sure does like us."

"Where is it? Wait a minute, I'll get an envelope for this."

Harry went back to his desk, and started fumbling through the papers spread over the top, still smiling with an inner amusement that had little relation to Irene's pleasure at seeing her own words headline the new ad. He continued the inept hunt through his scattered papers all the time that she found an envelope, started to insert the layout, and pulled it, out again—and once more—for a last look. Then he kept it up, muttering furiously in his determination to find the letter, until she herself stopped him.

"It can *wait*," she laughed fondly. "The printer won't. They close at five, remember?" She almost pushed him out of the door.

By the time he was done at the printer's, and had mailed his letter, the last sun was gone, and the day had turned grey: the dull grey of early March, when winter is over and spring has not yet begun. Momentarily, the wind failed, and all around him the city-smells of smoke and soot and gas reasserted themselves. It fitted his mood: in his mouth was the flat flavor of one cigarette too many; and farther back inside him was the old bitter taste of stale laughter.

IT WAS almost too easy, handling Irene. All he had to do was to treat her like any other human being. What worked on one would work on all, no matter how smart they were or how beautiful; no matter what age or sex, or where they came from or what they did—or how much you loved them. He had learned that, just a little too late. Now he knew it, thoroughly, and hated the knowledge. There ought to be some way to live honestly with Irene, to be—genuine all the time. Perhaps there was... but not in this life.

Life was a game, at first; then he found out it was only a joke after all. Later, he learned that the joke was on him, and life became a farce. A farce that had somehow acquired—as leading lady—a lovely woman who should, by every rule of the game, have been cast as the heroine of somebody else's melodrama.

Irene...if there had been an Irene twenty years earlier...

If there had been one, he wouldn't have known it, wouldn't have cared. He'd have noticed; perhaps, the golden glints in her hair, and the warm curve of her smile; he would have watched, certainly, the slow swing of her thigh from hip to knee when she walked. He would have wanted her, might have had her. But he'd never have known, really, that she was there. She was too healthy; too solid and simple; too easy to comprehend.

That was when life was a game; they called it "Student of Psychology". Those were years of learning and discovery. He was an adventurer into the dim, untracked interior of the human mind and soul. One by one, he sought, found, and experienced... Each new piece of knowledge was not only a triumph of its own, but was a vital clue as well, luring him to more exciting, conquests.

Then, abruptly, the game was won. He picked up the last prepared piece of knowledge, and collected the prefabricated degrees whose letters were supposed to spell *victory*. That was when, in his own growing maturity, he was first aware of the poverty of the prize he'd won...

Still, there were joyous years that followed: years of creative thought and continual effort; of hard work and poverty; strenuous enjoyment, and honest laughter. He went beyond, the boundaries of the game; charted new courses for his thinking; explored far and away beyond, a dozen devious routes into other peoples' thoughts.

Until he found out that he knew more than others wanted him to know; and more than they were willing to learn themselves. Teachers, mentors, follow-students who had admired his brilliance, worshipped his quick grasp of knowledge, had only derision for his original work. Derision—and then

hatred, too, for his stubborn insistence...

He faced them—and fought them—with the full exuberant strength of his young manhood—hampered only by the hangover of respect for his opponents that still remained from his student days. He fought fairly, expecting honesty to come forward and meet his own. After a while, he was too tired to fight any more...

HE MET Irene at a poker-game, almost fifteen years later. That was after he got tired of teaching in second-rate schools, and had faced the fact that he didn't have the moral toughness for the big con—after fortune-telling and mind-reading had both palled on him; after he decided he didn't like the big city any more, and gave up his job as a professional chess-player in an amusement arcade.

He took up week-ending and made out moderately well as a peripatetic houseguest and first class poker-player. He never cheated; he didn't have to. You stay in any game long enough, and after awhile the rest of them give themselves away with their chin-scratchings, and cigarette-tappings, and compulsive jokes. He made money—and he gave full value in entertaining conversation.

He won Irene—won her away from younger, handsomer, and wealthier men, by exercising every psychological skill at his command. He watched her, during the poker-game and after it, with a knowledgeable eye and a sure instinct.

But even while he used his mental lures to ensnare her, even as he exulted in the impossible victory he was winning, he began to despise himself—for the first time consciously—as a charlatan, a fraud. He had nothing to offer but deceptions; and Irene was the one living person he did not want to deceive.

He won her interest; her respect; and at last her love by dazzling her with his display of understanding and perception; by evidencing the perfect tender response to her every mood and attitude. He dug up all the half-forgotten great truths of his earlier, happier years, and arrayed them all for her amusement. One after another, he showed her the despised creations of his youth—and among them the Sure-Self Cell.

THE CELL, as nearly as he could recall, was the product of a happy evening during the student years. He was rooming, at the time, with a promising young electrical engineer—a man as brilliant as himself in those days, and now as obscure. Together, they had worked out the blueprint for a super-self-help-gadget, killing two bottles in the process.

Harry found the blueprint when he was leafing through old files and took it to Irene, for laughs. He explained the whole thing to her with deadpan sobriety, showed her the meticulous plans made so it would be possible for an absolutely unskilled individual to build the sounding-board cabinet and install the complex, automatic electronic equipment. He expounded learnedly the theory of Self-Synthesis—patched up out of a dozen reasonably-harmless psychological devices, with a few of his own pet notions out of the old days thrown in for good measure.

He tapped at the blueprint with a nervous pencil, tracing the structure of each device. The flashing lamp that induced light auto-hypnosis. The recorder that played back questions previously set by the user, as soon as the relaxed trance position caused a limp finger to fall on a sensitive pushbutton. The ingenious mechanism that switched the machine from play-back to recording as soon as the patient's voice hit the sounding board. The lie-detector circuit that cut off the recorder again, shortly after the patient's pulse-beat indicated a peak of excitement. The electric massage that stimulated circulation and consciousness simultaneously, inducing a rare sense of well-being as the user came out of trance and heard his confessions played back to him.

All these, and half a dozen more equally-ingenuous devices were built into the Cell—some of them the products of such esoteric thinking that Harry himself could no longer remember exactly how they worked, or why.

He gave it to her dead-pan, anticipating her amusement—and she was not amused. At first, he was aware only of disappointment in her for failing to understand that it was all a tremendous hoax; then he caught some of her enthusiasm. And before he went home that evening, Harry had realized that here was a last opportunity to salvage something for himself. With the Cell he could free himself from the endless rounds of weekends, and from dingy boarding house rooms alike. He could make money—and he could

have Irene...

It took him exactly one month of inspired labor to produce the book, *Self-Synthesis*, that would go with the Cell. Another month of ardent, all-night talks with Irene produced a plan of operation—and a wedding-date as well. Through that whole hectic time, his only real problem was to prevent her from building a Cell herself. He tried to convince her that it simply wasn't necessary; she was already so well-balanced, so well-integrated, that she couldn't benefit by it.

When she argued that she wanted to do it experimentally, as he had, (at which he had the grace to avert his eyes) there was nothing more he could say. But it took all his skill just to postpone it until, in the rush of events, it was no longer discussed.

Now, for more than a year, he had devoted himself to the increasingly-complicated business of keeping her faith alive. And day by day, as the deception grew harder and more repulsive to him, Harry needed Irene more.

THE DAY the third letter came, he was out, fulfilling one of his rare lecture-engagements. What he would have done had he opened it himself he never knew. As it was, Irene handed him the letter when he walked in, and stood waiting silently while he read it.

*Dear Mr. Barchester:*

*A few months back, I should greatly have admired what would then have appeared to me to be your "high-minded principles." Since achieving synthesis in the Sure-Self Cell, however, I find it very difficult to comprehend the motivation that compels you to refuse my gifts. Your book is so eloquent on the subject of Relaxed Acceptance, and your axioms on the Least Resistance Principle are so appropriate and useful, that I confess your attitude confuses me.*

*However, since I can only conclude that your action is motivated by special considerations outside my knowledge, I should like to suggest the following arrangement:*

*Will you ship me fifty copies of your book, and forty copies of the Sure-Self Cell blueprints—along with a letter authorizing me, as your agent, to resell these items, and to publicize and advertise them? A check for the full retail price, \$500, is enclosed with this letter.*

*Let me make clear that I have no desire to profit on the resale of these items. I am interested only in bringing the benefits of your scientific discoveries to as many others as possible. My own recent successes, since achieving synthesis in the Cell, have placed at my command sufficient resources to enable me to expend the necessary time and money for this purpose.*

*I hope this arrangement will overcome whatever objections you may have had to my previous offers.*

*Very truly yours,  
James Serkin.*

"Well?" she asked. "What are you going to do?"

There was an edge to her voice, and that was all he really needed. He wished he had more time to figure it, but... five hundred dollars. And Irene's impatient eyes.

"I'm going to ship him the stuff, baby." She smiled at him, and they both relaxed. "This time it's all right," he told them both; "this time it's a business deal."

HE GOT the books and blueprints off the next day, with a letter making James Serkin his agent and distributor. The five hundred he allocated carefully: a year's rental on the mail-drop, *and* two months on the apartment; two full-page ads they couldn't otherwise afford; a few small bills. The rest—roughly a hundred and fifty—he gave Irene to do with as she liked. Irrationally, almost superstitiously, he worried less about taking the money because he used none of it for personal pleasures... not for books *or* brandy.



It meant a lot to Irene. She got in the habit of breaking away from her desk for at least an hour or two every day, and came back each time with long happy stories of her adventures in the stores and through the streets of New York. Harry would have thought she could spend ten times the money she had in the number of hours she spent shopping, but she seldom actually bought anything. She seemed to enjoy having the money so much that she was reluctant to spend it; most of the time, she just went around looking at things.

The whole thing was good for Harry too. It took off some financial pressure, of course, and seeing Irene so happy would have been enough for him all by itself. But there was a bonus in self-confidence and reassurance that probably meant more than anything else.

After reading Serkin's letters over and over again, twisting every possible shade of meaning out of them, and returning repeatedly to a study of that fascinating photograph, Harry found it virtually impossible to believe that the man could be a postal agent or investigator of any sort. And, if you once admitted that the man was honest, it could mean only one thing: he had really, conclusively benefited through the use of the Sure-Self Cell. With all its fancy trimmings, *Help Yourself* could do some good, and Serkin was the proof.

Harry got to work with fresh interest on a new revised edition of *Self-Synthesis*, stressing every little angle that would help to build up self-confidence in the reader. And, with the same thought in mind, he put a new emphasis into the wording of the two extra ads:

*"Self-expression instead of confession; constructive synthesis instead of analysis... Confidence is the key to success; understanding is the only way to mental relaxation..."*

Actually, though neither of them put as much time into the routine work of the business as they had formerly done, they both seemed to accomplish a lot more. *Confidence* and *relaxation* ...they were key words after all.

For the first time since the day he showed Irene the blueprint of the Cell, Harry admitted to himself how much the tensions and anxieties of his chosen way of life were impairing his abilities. And for the first time, too, he began to hope: perhaps, some way, the snowballing deceptions could be brought to a halt. All he had to do was find what element of the system...

The fourth letter from James Serkin did not enclose a check. Instead, it was a bulky envelope filled with glossy-paper proofs and layouts for an advertising-campaign whose expense Harry could not even estimate. There were plans for magazine ads, and other plans for a giant-sized mailing. And the obvious costliness of the program was equalled only by its boldness.

With all his suspicions fully reawakened, Harry took a blue pencil to the ad copy, and sent it back posthaste—along with a lengthy and detailed letter about the sort of claims he felt could be made for the book and for the Cell. He expected another squabble with Irene when he showed her the deletions and changes in the copy, but, surprisingly, she made no demur. He waited, still worried, till he got Serkin's reply, and then he had to admit to himself once again the power of a confident mind. The telegram from *Help Yourself's* mid-western agent said only, meekly, *Letter received and contents noted. Will mail you revised proofs.*

Still another letter, the following day, made no reference to the ad campaign; this was completely taken up with Serkin's scheme for Harry to embark on a lecture career. Only once did it refer, very delicately, to the financial advantages. For the rest, the new agent presented most convincingly a number of arguments in favor of the kind of publicity that might accrue to *Help Yourself, Inc.* as the result of such a tour. Dr. Barchester, he insisted with the happy faith of a firm disciple, could not help being a great success on the platform. In any case, Serkin concluded, he had already taken the liberty, of getting in touch with a lecture-agent, who would shortly contact Barchester himself.

HARRY read the letter, laughed, and filed it away. To Irene, who couldn't understand his amused indifference, he explained that their new convert had apparently confused cause with effect; it was publicity that made lecture-engagements possible, not the other way around. He did not add that years of speechifying before self-help groups, and adult Study-clubs, had made him all too well aware of his own limitations as a lecturer.

He was still hesitant, but less inclined to laugh, when the agent called and waxed persuasive. Harry stalled and tried to decline; but in the end, under the agent's baffling insistence, he agreed to a trial-run of three local engagements.

After the first one, he had to admit that he had once again underestimated himself. Speaking to a roomful of avidly-interested, middle-aged ladies turned out to be far more pleasant than trying to do the principles of psychology into a class full of disinterested adolescents—and certainly far more successful than expounding esoteric points in a rented clubroom to a handful of hopeless men. Possibly, too, it was just the difference in self-confidence cropping up again. Irene's faith in him; Serkin's firm belief; and the backing of the lecture bureau, may all have affected the outcome of the speech.

Whatever the cause, he was no longer surprised when the local engagements were followed swiftly by an offer of a really choice series of lectures—at a good price—for a group of women's clubs in small towns a few hundred miles away.

Still, he hesitated; he couldn't leave the office empty, and he didn't want to leave Irene behind. They had never been separated since their marriage.

He spoke to her about it, and she was almost angry at him. "For heavens' sake, Harry, you can't pass this up," she said indignantly. "It's only four days. I'm a big girl now, remember? I can get along all right."

"Of course you can," he said automatically, but with little conviction. "It's just that I hate to leave you, that's all. I don't know if *I* can get along."

"Well, you'll just have to." She smiled, and made her special loving little face at him. "Go ahead and call the man back ... or do you want to have your secretary do it for you?"

"Baby, are you *sure* you'll be OK?" he asked again at the last minute, still ready to put down his bag, take off his coat, and call the whole thing off.

"Yes, I'm sure," she said impatiently. "Now go on, you big oaf—get out of here before you miss your train!" She walked downstairs with him, and waved goodbye as the cab rolled off.

Inside it, Harry suppressed a sudden and unreasonable wave of wild suspicion. Why *was* she so willing to let him go? Then he reminded himself that she was only looking out for his interests. And it was just for four days, after all.

The trip was a sensational success. With new fervor, Harry discussed the solid old principles of Confidence through Understanding, and Success through Confidence. "Know yourself, and you can kid the whole world," was his private formulation; he used somewhat subtler language for the ladies.

Toward the end of the speech, always, he would make a few discreet references to the miraculous properties of the Sure-Self Cell... nothing definite, nothing too specific. Then he would return briefly to the major theme, and finish with a thunderous injunction right out of the brochure:

*Expression, not confession! Synthesis, not analysis!*

The slogan hit straight at the best potential customers, those who had already had their dabblings with sympathetic clergymen, and soft-voiced psychiatrists; and who were ready, now, for something new. After each meeting there were a few who gathered about the platform, prying for further information about the Cell. Harry discovered, with no great surprise, that women who had spent a lifetime prodding their husbands into making enough money, so that they never had to do anything for themselves, were fascinated at the prospect of curing their mental ills by *building* from a *blueprint*.

He came home with a sheaf of orders for books and blueprints; several tentative engagements for repeat lectures; and the conviction that he'd been placing his ads in the wrong magazines. Apparently the ladies were more anxious to influence their friends and families than the men, were to succeed in the larger world. He'd have to give some thought to a new kind of ad.

RENE WASN'T in the apartment, but a note on his desk said she'd be back by two o'clock. There was more than an hour to wait; he put in some time compiling an impressive list, for her benefit, of the orders he had taken en route. Then he got to work on a rough draft of an ad for the women's magazines.

He was too restless to work; he couldn't concentrate.

He tried to estimate the possible extent of future orders stemming from the lecture tour, and jotted some figures down on paper—to see if there was any chance that the eager ladies themselves would

contribute enough cash to the kitty to pay for an ad in a higher-priced medium.

It was two o'clock then, and she still wasn't back. Harry got up and wandered around the room, always winding up somehow at Irene's desk. He sharpened some pencils, and picked up the plastic paperweight he'd given her some months ago; studied for the thousandth time the intricate flower carved inside, and put it down again; wandered off and back; and noticed at last, on the corner of the desk, a familiar large envelope with Serkin's return address.

It had already been opened. Harry pulled out a sheaf of folded glossy papers—the revised ad proofs. He smoothed them out on the desktop for examination, meanwhile mentally composing a letter to his over-earnest disciple on the subject of the untapped women's market. If Serkin was determined to spend fantastic sums of money on Help Yourself, Harry could now provide him with something worth spending it on.

He spread out the unfolded sheets and stared at them in total disbelief.

They were revised, yes—but certainly not to conform to his own suggestions. If anything, the changes made were all in the opposite direction. Harry felt beads of sweat forming on his forehead as he read the outrageous list of things Serkin had promised the Cell would do.

These things had to be stopped before they appeared in print; they simply *had* to be stopped.

He was at his own desk, scribbling out an emphatic telegram to Serkin, when he heard Irene's key in the door. He jumped up, the proofs in his hand, and it occurred to him for the first time that she might already have taken care of the matter. Then, disturbingly, he realized she was not alone. From the entry hall he heard two voices: hers and another, deep, modious, and masculine.

Harry dropped the proofs back on his desk, and started for the door in irrational panic. He shouldn't have left her alone; he knew he shouldn't.

SHE ENTERED the room just as he approached the hall, and they nearly collided. Not a very effective greeting; he backed off, and ignoring her companion, let his eyes feast on Irene herself. He had missed her, these four days, had been building up her image in his own mind. But he was certain, as he looked at her, that she had never before been so beautiful as she was now.

Then she spoke, and he was stunned by the power her voice had over him. "Darling!" It was a greeting and caress all at once. "You didn't let me know when you'd be coming in," she accused. "You found my note, didn't you? We rushed back...oh! This is Mr. Serkin, Harry. He came in town yesterday... about those ads, you know."

"Mr. Serkin?" Harry mumbled, completely unable to tear his eyes from his wife's shining face, even as he remembered *those* ads.

"How do you do, Dr. Barchester? It's a pleasure to meet you. A hand reached past Irene and gripped his own; his attention was torn from the woman's face to the man's. He looked over Irene's shoulder, remembering the compelling charm of Serkin's photograph, and trying for a clearer view of the man himself. Instead, in the mirror behind both of them, he saw himself; middle-aged, a little soft, and irrevocably balding.

Ardently, Harry tried to dislike James Serkin. The closest he could come was rapid recognition of an increased liking for the man when his hand was released, and the pleasant deep voice offered a quick goodbye.

"I'll stop in again, Mrs. Barchester," Serkin said; "I imagine you and your husband would like to be alone for a while."

Then he was gone, and Harry trailed Irene back into the living-room-and-office combination; he watched her put down her bag and take off her hat, and finally identified for himself the change in her. She was all... *aglow*.

"Harry, darling..."

She still had her back to him. "I've got to tell you something right away," she said.

*This was it, then. Irene and Serkin ... that would account for the ... glow.* Harry's very genuine despair was unaccountably mixed with an odd feeling of relief.

"I know," he said, trying to stop her, to keep her from saying it out loud, in so many words.

"You *do*?" She turned rapidly. "Oh, I shouldn't have doubted you, *ever*, Harry!" Facing him now, her face broke into a smile that could only be under-rated by the word "glorious". "But why didn't you want me to try it? Why didn't you *make* me do it?"

Her face turned up appealingly to his. Only the caution of all his bitter years' experience saved Harry then.

"*Make* you do it?" he repeated

"How could I *make* you? It's exactly the sort of thing a man forces on his wife..."

SHE AGREED happily. "That's what Jim said at first; he kept telling me you were just waiting for me to go ahead on my own. But darling...listen, Harry, even though you know, I want to say it once, to tell you what a fool I was—before." She smiled at him, and Harry felt quite certain he didn't care what sort of fool she'd been, or what she'd done. All he wanted was to keep her.

"I...oh, it's hard to say, Harry, even now. I thought you were a ... charlatan. I didn't think you believed in it yourself; that's why I never told you when I started to build the Cell. All that time I was supposed to be shopping...but of course you knew about it; I keep forgetting that. I guess you knew about the letters from Jim, too?"

"The letters?" Harry tried to find the right, noncommittal words, but they wouldn't come. "No," he admitted, "I didn't."

He knew it was impossible to be anything less than completely honest with her, now. The fascination she had always exercised over him had turned into a sort of compulsive power.

"When did that start?" he asked.

"About a week after we shipped him the stuff. You were out when it came, and I opened it. He seemed so sure of himself, and he... really believed in the Cell. That was when I was wondering about you, whether you really believed it yourself," she explained. "So I wrote to him, and never told you about it... and then we just kept on writing: That was when I started building the Cell."

"You..." he tried to find the right, the noncommittal words, but they wouldn't come. "How did you do it?" he asked bluntly.

"What?"

"Build the Cell; how did you manage it?"

"Why, darling, you *know*... oh, anyone can do it. Jim says those blueprints are worth ten times what you charge; he says he doesn't see how you ever made it all so simple."

"It's all scientific," he answered automatically. "Had them designed by a damn good engineer."

Then he couldn't restrain himself. "You mean," he demanded, "it works? You built the whole dings and made it work?"

"Why, darling, you *know*... oh, Harry!" She stopped short, and a look of comprehension came over her face.

"I see," she said at last. "I *was* right, wasn't I, dear? You never did believe in it." Her voice was very gentle, very tender. "Poor Harry! *You never knew.*"

Even while he struggled against its implications, he basked in her sympathy. Then, as suddenly as she had changed before, the new softness vanished before a gathering determination. She walked briskly, but with ineffable grace, across the room to the cabinet, and came back with a fresh copy of the Sure-Self Cell blueprint.

"I think," she said simply, "you better start right away."

Harry managed to take his eyes off her face long enough to pull together the shreds of his convictions. "That's ridiculous!"

"Here you are, dear." She handed it to him, and pointed to the list of materials on the envelope. "You can get them in your local hardware store for under ten dollars—" She didn't seem to realize she was quoting from one of his ads. "Start now! You'll be a new man inside of three weeks."

"Yes, dear," said Harcourt Barchester L.E., M.C.B., R.S.

*The sea was now the source of metals, and each nation's Domes were vital.  
And the security-restrictions that had started with atomics, early in the century,  
were now something tremendous ...*

THE FAINT phosphorescence of the water fell away, flowing slowly at first, then with increasing speed, past the red markers on the wall of the lock-chamber. The level dropped ever more rapidly under the steady pressure of the incoming air, till at last there was nothing but a lingering circlet of moisture around the drain. Then that, too, disappeared into thick air. Literally thick ... air at water-pressure, fifty fathoms down.

Lev Sloane waited without impatience, while the pressure in the chamber diminished. When the safe-signal chimed at last, inside the heavy glass of his helmet, he began to remove the bulky parts of his suit, but still with no haste.

Earnestly, he wished he had been able to find some real trouble in the plant. One time in ten, they had a genuine technical problem he could tackle . . . and solve. But four hours out in the seaside plant this afternoon, inspecting, testing, and examining, had turned up nothing but neglect — whether wilful or wanton, he did not know.

Sloane made his way from the wall-lock, through the soft illumination of spiralling corridors to the bathyvator-lock on the top level, avoiding the exec office by some forty extra feet of ramp. Haywood, the production-boss in Dome Baker, was a man of many certainties; when things got bad enough in his bailiwick to need a trouble-shooter from Research, he expected something definite in the way of diagnosis. And Lev had no answer to give him.

Stupidity or sabotage? How can you tell?

Such little things, always...corrosion, exposure, outworn parts. Such little things, always quickly remedied, seldom repeated just the same way. But every time they called him, there was something new; and each call meant production was down again. A drop of seawater in an oil-bearing motor, and the quota for the whole dome was unfilled. A carload of metal...ten carloads...sometimes a hundred, that never reached the factories. Incredible carelessness? Or criminal intent?

On a written report he could file the single word, "*Neglect*," and let the front-office worry over what lay behind it. But if he talked to Haywood, here on the job, he knew from experience what would happen.

A surmise, a gesture, an inflection, the very breath of a suspicion of sabotage, and you lost six months' work testifying at hearings. A word, a number, a name remembered, an offhand hint of carelessness in such-and-such a sector, and some poor slob of a junior assistant's helper lost his job to show that Something was Being Done.

Lev wanted no part of such decisions. He was an engineer, not a politico, or a smooth-faced personnel man. He avoided even friendly conversation with the bathyvator-operator, determined that this time they would get nothing from him but the bare facts of his technical inspection. He stood in gloomy silence at the wide-vision port, as they emerged from the clear glow inside the dome, to the eerie translucence of the water outside; then up and up, through darkening strata, till penetrating streaks of sun began to reach them. They broke surface, and the autumn sunlight sparkled on blue waters with a

surprisingly normal brilliance.

The operator looped a line across three feet of gently choppy water, and made fast to the bobbing platform of the small bright green convertible that waited nervously, all alone in the vast ocean where Lev had left it hours ago. Sloane hopped across; as he closed the door of the coupe behind him, he made a conscious effort to dismiss the nagging indecisions of the day's work.

While the engine warmed, he lit a cigarette and inhaled gratefully. Smoking was not so much forbidden as frowned upon in the manufactured oxygen down below; but it was impossible in a divers' suit. He left the cigarette between his lips, gunned the motor, and swooped off the ocean-bed in a fine spray of disdain. Tonight, in his own apartment, he would write his neat, precise report—and let them make of it what they would. It was no problem of his now.

The small plane nosed eagerly into the sky; Lev Sloane sat back in contentment, as the warmth of the sun beat through the clean clear plastic against his face.

DUSK FELL on the city while he ate a leisurely and satisfying dinner. When he emerged from the restaurant, the orange incandescence of newly-lit sodium-lamps was reflected and repeated everywhere from glass shopfronts, in lucite lampposts, and on the shimmering plastenamel bodies of the slow-moving stream of cars. Another fifteen minutes, and the warming sodium vapors would shed a kindly yellow radiance on the wide thoroughfare. Meanwhile, Lev turned off to the sidestreets, where old-style white lamps cast a feebler light at greater intervals.

He walked abstracted, in a mood of his own making, with the good meal behind him, his pleasant apartment ahead, and only the damned report still tickling the back of his mind. The streets were darker and narrower now, and that pleased him. Factories and warehouses, instead of tenements. Until he chose, of his own accord, to turn back to the main highway, he was alone in the city night, and the endless complexities of society were powerless to disturb him.

Then, out of nowhere, were pounding feet, and a hoarse voice cursing breathlessly. A shadow darted almost under his arm, and vanished in the dimness of a warehouse-entryway, and the heavy running footsteps thudded to a halt in the street behind.

"Which way'd he go?"

Lev turned around to face a short, thick man whose blunt features were concealed behind equal parts of stubble and grime. One sleeve of his shapeless sweater hung flat at his side, tucked loosely into baggy trousers; the good arm was knotted with muscles, visible even in the dim street light. And something—a brick?—was clenched in the stubby fist.

"Well, you seen him! Which way'd he go?" the angry one demanded.

"I'm not sure," Sloane said coolly. "Into some doorway, or around the corner; I didn't really see."

"Never catch 'em now," the man muttered. "Damn kids *snatching* alla time! I tell you they can smell metal, every one of 'em. They give me eight stores to watch; I can't be everyplace, and them kids'll know the one room's got some brass pipe in it, ten minutes after they bring the stuff in. Never get the brat now!" But his eyes kept searching, following every gleam of light into the doorways and hiding-places along the street.

Lev was beginning to understand. "It's a shame," he agreed automatically. "There ought to be some way to put a stop to it."

"I'll put a stop to it if he pokes his head out," the thick man said grimly. "Damn kids! And then I get the blame. Just leave me get my hands on 'em once," he swore violently. "You won't find 'em hanging around *my* place again." He looked sharply at Lev. "You sure you didn't see 'em? That's *metal* he snatched now, don't forget."

To his surprise, Lev found himself shaking his head in a vigorous negative. It was his duty to assist the watchman; he knew it. This was his first brush with an incident of the sort, but he'd read about it and heard about it for months.

SINCE THE beginning of this last drive for recovery of underground pipe, juvenile theft had come out of the psychologists' counsel-rooms, and into the trial-judge's courts. Correction was good enough

procedure when young delinquents were harming only other individuals. But more stringent punishment was indicated when they started snatching urgently-needed salvage metal.

It had to be stopped. Lev opened his mouth, and tried to shut away the mental image of a terrified youngster pressed into the darkness of the doorway, sweating out the seconds. Sentiment and sympathy had no place in continental security.

"Damn kids!" the watchman muttered with disgust, and turned to go before Lev could get the words out of his mouth to betray the thief. But the turn was hardly started when the thick man wheeled back, and something—a brick—flew from his fist to where the echo of a sigh had come from the blackness within a shadow.

There was one shrill yelp of anguish, and an indrawn breath that was not quite a sob. Then something clanged to the ground with the unmistakable resonance of metal on concrete; a wiry form darted out of the doorway, scurried across the sidewalk, and became invisible again in the shadows along the opposite wall.

The thick-set man dashed after the vanishing noise of scurrying feet, and Sloane turned back the way he had come. He didn't want to wait till the watchman returned, didn't want to know whether the boy *was* caught. There was relief in him because his own inexcusable defection had been cancelled out; there was, too, a peculiarly strong distaste for the thickset man, and an absurd worrisome feeling about the young culprit.

Just a few inches of copper pipe ... easy enough for any youngster to run off with and easy for him to sell, too. Five inches of slender tubing grasped in a boy's hand; it meant more money than his father could make in a month. But even the fabulous prices on the metal-market didn't come close to the actual cost of unearthing the stuff from the depths of old cellars and tunnels far beneath the city. And financial investment was the smallest part of it; every inch of the stuff could be measured just as easily in terms of peace or war. Enough metal meant Continental security; not enough spelled certain defeat in an inevitable war.

APARTMENT 18-Q, the room-and Lev Sloane had rented when he first came to the city eight years earlier—and occupied steadily since—was in no way unusual. To the last fractional part of a square inch, its wall-space, floor space, and wall-fixtures were similar to those of four hundred and sixty-one other single units in the same building. But within those limitations, Sloane's place was most uniquely and thoughtfully his own. Every piece of furniture, each small convenience, the placement and relation of all the constituent parts of the room, bore the stamp of careful planning and equally careful use. The room-and was designed, specifically and functionally, to care for the physical and psychological needs of Lev Sloane.

Everything in it was intimately familiar to him; the surfaces were molded by his touch; the inner workings of all the mechanical objects had long since lost their secrets to him.

Still, as he opened the door this evening, the near-sense of danger and the unknown was sharply with him. The incident on the street had left him oddly exhilarated, more alive than usual. He wondered if it was the fleeting knowledge of guilt that had so affected him, and dismissed the notion with a smile. He could remember clearly enough how this same tingling awareness had come over him on his first visits to the Domes.

*Adventure!* he mocked himself, and had to remember once more that, to another person, his visit to the Dome today, his excursion through the processing plant outside the Dome on the sea-floor, would be vastly romantic and exciting. Fair enough, then, that an encounter with a street-urchin and a grimy watchman should perk up his own dulled perceptions.

He closed the door behind him, rather enjoying, now that he understood it, the dramatic sense of imminent menace.

From across the room, a voice spoke: "You will please, Senhor, make no unusual noises or movements. Turn on the light."

Dazed, half-convinced that this was no reality at all, Lev flicked the switch. In the corner armchair, a lean figure sat relaxed; the gun drooping from the stranger's hand seemed almost deadly for the casual ease with which it was held. Sloane had no slightest doubt that the owner of that gun could aim and fire, before he, himself, could complete any move to battle or escape.

"Who are you?" he asked, still too incredulous to be very frightened or angry.

"A friend." The lean man smiled, and exceptionally white teeth flashed in his dark face. "Or perhaps I should say—a messenger." It was not quite an accent, but American was not the man's native tongue.

Lev began to understand that this was really happening. Once you accepted the reality of it, the rest was not hard to understand. "A messenger from Latamer?" he asked.

"Please. I do not like the name. I am, yes, a Latin-American by birth. My country does not concern you. I come as a messenger of certain South-american Continental Interests... I am sure you have no desire to know their names as yet."

"That's where you're wrong," Lev said flatly. "But I don't imagine you're going to tell me. And you might as well save your breath, where your message is concerned. There are no Latamer messages that could be of interest to me."

The dark man in the chair smiled again and shrugged. "You are vehement, Mr. Sloane," he commented idly. "I wonder why."

"Because I don't like people who break into my apartment. Because I don't like Latamers much to start with. Because I don't like you, and I expect I wouldn't like your...interests much either."

"More vehemence! Well..." He unfolded his length from the comfortable chair, and walked over to Lev, the gun still hanging limply from his wrist. "You will turn around, please? I dislike holding this lethal weapon while I talk. I would like to ascertain that you are not armed before I put it away."

SLOANE turned, and let himself be patted cautiously all over. When he turned back, his visitor had already slipped the gun into a pocket. "All right," Lev told him. "Now get out. I don't want to hear whatever you came to say. Get out."

"You are so brave! But I'm afraid you overact. The role does not call for such heroics. Now listen sensibly, will you, dear fellow? Sit down; make yourself comfortable. This is your home, you know. I wish to say a few words; then, if you do not like it..." He shrugged. "I will go. If you like it, we will talk more. I think perhaps you will like it."

"I'm prejudiced," Lev said stiffly. "I don't like Latamers, and I don't like people who hold guns on me...it is my home, as you noticed."

"I am sorry for the gun. It was a necessary precaution, nothing more. It was not as a threat to you I carried it; we have no desire to harm you. But if I had not had it..." Again he shrugged, and smiled.

"Think how it would be for me if you had been so heroic when you first came in."

Lev almost smiled back. The man was right in a way; Sloane was dramatizing this thing more than was necessary. But, it suddenly occurred to him, so was his visitor. A secret agent should hardly look or act so much like one. Life, apparently, was determined to imitate art today...if you could call the movies art.

"All right," he said. "Go ahead and talk. Get it out. What's your . . . *message*?" He sat down on the edge of the couch, waiting.

"Ah, that's better." The dark man went back to his armchair. "I understand, Mr. Sloane, you are senior engineer for the Solute Metals work in this Continent?"

"I work for the SMRC," Sloane said. "I'm an engineer. What about it?"

"I am told also that you have been heard to voice certain sentiments of—ah—let me say a somewhat advanced nature?"



"Like what?"

"Concerning the exchange of scientific information."

Sloane stiffened. "I am," he said very carefully, "in favor of a somewhat more liberal policy in regard to information exchange."

"Ah, yes. Then we are in agreement. I have come only to discuss with you the means of effecting such an exchange."

"You're getting ahead of yourself," Lev put in drily. "I'm not so sure we agree about anything. My position on exchange is that of the Science Party—no more or less. I favor free exchange of non-classified matter with friendly governments, and limited exchange of classified matter...with *friendly governments*."

"It is so short-sighted," the dark man said sadly. "How do you know, Lev Sloane, who will be your friend tomorrow? No, I have a better notion. You can exchange now, freely, and ... perhaps you would, have some use for some small quantities of cash?"

"Get out!" Lev stood up and paced the floor to where the other man sat. "Get your filthy proposition out of here before I wring your neck!"

The gun was out again, a scant two feet from Lev's belly, and this time it was pointing.

"Back up!" the man snapped. Sloane backed. There was no civilized mockery in the threat now.

"We overestimated you," the visitor sighed; "*we* thought you had intelligence." He was out of the chair now, moving toward the door. "You would be wisest," he warned, "to make no move for ten minutes after I am gone. If you should be hurt, remember you were warned." The gun never wavered as he sidled up to the door, opened it, and slipped through it.

AS IT CLICKED shut, Lev leaped for the phone. He snapped on the audio and video simultaneously, and spun the dial around for the operator. As it made contact at the end of the long sweep, heat flashed through his arm, followed by a single wave of unbearable pain. Then nothing, till he heard the loud report, perhaps a fraction of a second later, but it seemed like hours.

It *was* hours—five of them—before the reporters, the emergency medics, and the security-cops were all gone. With his testimony taken, his arm bandaged, and the various misspellings of his name carefully noted, Lev studied his bruised face in the bathroom mirror and chuckled. He wondered whether the spy, Ortega, had known how much noise that gadget made. If it didn't sound so much like gunfire, the fellow might have got scotfree. As it was, every plain cop and security-man within three blocks was headed toward the apartment the instant it happened, and anyone in the way was inevitably held and searched. Ortega's graceful gun betrayed him, even before Sloane told his story.

Lev looked from the mirror to the clock: two a.m., and there was still that godforsaken report to do. He settled himself at his desk, and, using the damaged arm to hold the paper down, began filling in the proper little squares as concisely as possible.

He made just one conception. The last little box said, as it always did: "*To what do you ascribe the trouble?*"

When he left the Dome that afternoon he had the answer all figured out, in a single word: "*Negligence*." But things had been happening since then. Spies, sneak-thieves, sabotage...no, he had no proof of that.

"*Damned if I know*," he printed in neat block letters. Then, before he could change his mind, he sealed the printed form and dropped it down the mailing chute.

THERE WAS a little personal mail for Lev when he woke up; he could see it from his bed, a few sealed sheets waiting in the receiving-half of the chute, fluttering and floating on the updraft. It would only be bills and circulars. He punched for coffee and toast on the bedside Batchelor's Friend before picking the letters from the column of air.

Political circulars: keep us strong; vote for Gabble. Don't sell us out; vote for Gubble. Down with everybody except us; vote for Gobble.

Bills: Collections, Inc. reminded him that his monthly payment on his convertible would be due in only two weeks. Apartment rent due. Phone bill—he'd take that to work with him; some of his calls had been business and he'd have to put vouchers through on them.

And—an old-fashioned envelope addressed by old-fashioned typewriter. Return address (1347 Ave. Y, Wash., D.C.: he didn't know it) and delivery address were written out instead of code-punched. It must have been manually delivered, by a cursing mailman, instead of routed automatically by the switching system. He clumsily tore the envelope open and felt a pang go through him as his eyes fell on the signature at the bottom of the single-sheet letter.

*Paul Barrios.* He hadn't known he was still alive.

The Bachelor's Friend said in his own voice: "Toast and coffee ready. Get them while they're hot." Automatically he took the steaming cup from it and sipped, delaying on the letter. He felt a little ashamed of himself. Barrios. Ninety-plus at least. Fifty years ago the classic paper, *A Theory of Ion under Radiation Applied to the Differential Precipitation of Solute Metals in Sea-Water*.

And the old boy had meant *applied*.

To a dazed and metal-starved world he innocently showed his graphite tanks with sea-water circulating through them under the radiance of the simple little Barrios Tubes. He showed the world metals plating out onto the graphite from the sea-water. Vary the frequency of the Barrios Radiation and you vary the metal recovered...it was the fantastic year that the Nobel Prizes in Physics, Chemistry *and* World Peace had gone to one man: Barrios.

Lev Sloane blinked and turned to the letter:

My Dear Sloane:

If you will forgive a rather old-fashioned and sentimental gesture, I want to wish you a happy birthday. Doubtless this is proof—if any were needed!—that I am growing senile, which is by definition largely a tendency to live in the past. I woke up the other morning with a vague conviction that I had done somebody a grave injustice, and it was twenty-four hours before I remembered when. Just fifteen years ago! It was that unhappy occasion which you may recall, when you stood for your doctor's oral before me at Columbia, and made some astoundingly inaccurate remarks, apropos of Solute Metal Recovery and I made loose regrettably cutting remarks about Ph.D. candidates who were better suited to street-cleaning and the allied arts than to S.M.R. And I recalled, too, the pleasanter sequel when I learned that you had been celebrating your birthday the night before, and were unable to do yourself justice, re-examined you and had the pleasure of pronouncing you among the ten ablest S.M.R. men I had ever turned out. That verdict, my dear Sloane, still stands. I am pleased to see your name in the papers every so often as a mainstay of the S.M.P.C. technical branch, and to know that thereby you are playing a major part in the program that, God willing, will bring abundance and peace to our poor old world.

Sincerely yours,

Paul Barrios S.M.R. Professor Emeritus

Columbia University

He felt a lump in his throat. Poor old genius emeritus, passed by as the younger men turned his science into engineering, as specialization multiplied until he couldn't grasp what was going on in the field he had pioneered. Writing nostalgic letters, on slight excuse—to be doing something with the brain that once had been the mightiest creative tool on Earth...

His own voice said from the Bachelor's Friend: "Hey, you lazy bum, let's get this show on the road! Time to go to work. Hardnose Hennessey isn't going to like this." Sloane didn't feel funny. He switched off the voice-circuit and dressed slowly, favoring the bandaged arm.

SLOANE paused for a moment at the foot of a flight of marble steps, sighed and trudged up them,

passed between the great Ionic columns of the Solute Metals Recovery Commission building, and on into the bustling lobby. He might have hunted up the small entrance where top-level administrators and authentically handicapped employees could get an elevator-ride, but it would have taken an argument.

The lobby clock said 9:03; Hard-nose Hennessey—G. Mason Hennessey, Chief of Personnel, S.M.R.C. Grade 23—was *not* going to like it. Lev Sloane, Ph.D., Process Senior Engineer, S.M.R.C. Grade 18, decided that Hennessey could lump it; he had bruises and a bandage to show.

In his office he took a little kidding from the junior engineers and secretaries over his adventure; they showed him a bored little paragraph in the morning's newsroll. "Happens every day," he grunted, and disappeared into his private cubicle. Target for today was to block out an advisory for the Commission members themselves, a frank statement in broad terms understandable to the lay mind on the status of recovery processes.

He jotted down in shorthand: *Are processes satisfactory? Get figures metal output, graph vs. time. Get Central Intelligence estimates equivalent figures for Latamer, Africa, Europe, Sino-Russ. Brief Summary, three main extraction processes. Why three? Explain dome oxy-cycle. Status of extraction-process research; get figures from Research and Development, especially estimate of availability of halogen-reduction process. (This secret; observe security procedure.) Qualified opinion on—*

His phone lit up with the face of Hardnose Hennessey's very beautiful secretary, a young lady whose face and voice were one degree Kelvin above absolute zero as far as anybody below S.M.R.C. Grade 20 was concerned. "Mr. Sloane," she said, "Dr. Hennessey wishes to see you at your convenience." *Blink*, and the screen went off.

*Mister Sloane! Doctor Hennessey!* Hardnose was an honorary L.H.D. of some jerkwater Kansas college, and unblushingly used the title to the limit in his professional and social life. Sloane swore tiredly and then got up to go. "At your convenience" from a 23 to an 18 meant *now*. It couldn't be just coming in late; if the rest of the office knew about last night, so did Hardnose. That report, maybe, with the foolishly irritable answer on it? Kind of quick for that...

He expected the chilly secretary to tell him: "Please wait; Dr. Hennessey will be free shortly." Instead, she told him; "Go right in, Mr. Sloan, please." And—incredibly—she smiled at him.

Suspiciously, the engineer pushed open the plastic door of Hennessey's large, softly carpeted office.

"Come in, doctor!" boomed the Chief of Personnel. "I have a distinguished visitor whom I want you to meet."

She was distinguished indeed. In her early thirties. Tall, dark-skinned, with rather everted lips but the classic brow and nose of an Arab and straight—or straightened?—black, glossy hair. Her plain dress was prudishly high at the neck and low at the hem. That and the small silver triangle pendant on her bosom meant she was a practicing Ma'dite. He had met very few of them and hoped his manners would be adequate.

"Miss Vanderpoel—Dr. Vanderpoel, I should say—may I present Dr. Sloane, one of our most valued technical men."

SLOANE smiled politely and extended his hand. She ignored it. Murmuring "*Salaam aleikum*," she touched brow, lip and heart and inclined her head. The engineer reddened and did the same, clumsily. She looked at him evenly and said, with a faint Dutch accent: "That is not necessary, Dr. Sloane. I am not an exchange-student, who eagerly gives up his own nation's ways; but neither do I tacitly impose my own nation's ways on my host. You may greet me in the future with what polite words you please, but you should not say the words of peace unless you mean them."

"Uh," said Hennessey, "Dr. Sloane is the fellow who acquitted himself so well with, that Latamer agent. I trust you—"

"You told me all that, Mr. Hennessey," she said without inflection. "I will question him."

Hennessey hastily answered Sloane's inquiring glance. The engineer had never seen him so flustered. "Dr. Vanderpoel is a V.I.P., Sloane. She is, of course, an African, and her visit is part of an experimental program to exchange S.M.R. data between her government and ours. I thought you might be the best person to take her on a tour of one of our domes. She, ah, she wants to be sure—" He hesitated.

"I want to be quite sure," said the woman's precise voice, "that my guide is a qualified technical-man—"

"Yes, of course," Hennessey boomed heartily. "And I'm sure Dr. Sloane will satisfy you. He's rated one of the best in the country—academically, of course." You could hardly even call it a sneer, that faint deprecation as he qualified his praise. "Studied with Barrios himself, and I understand the Old Man gave him an extra-high recommendation when he came to us. Do you still see him, Sloane?"

"I...heard from him today," Lev said with difficulty, and promptly took the edge off the boast by adding: "I haven't seen him for years." It was somehow offensive to have Barrios' name dragged in for display-purposes this way, after reading that letter this morning. Hardnose Hennessey probably didn't even know just what it was Paul Barrios had done.

"You know," Hennessey rattled on cheerfully, "the Old Man always favored more exchange of information. That's another reason I picked Dr. Sloane to guide you. I hear he's on the same bandwagon himself."

Sloane didn't need any help to catch the veiled threat in the smiling words. *Show her the, dome*, Hennessey was saying. *Keep her happy. But keep your political notions out of it.*

"That is, I am sure, of great interest to you and Dr. Sloane," the lady V.I.P. said icily. "My interest, as I started to say earlier, is in obtaining a qualified technical-man to guide me—not a more-or-less-disguised public-relations person who will use my limited time trying to influence me, rather than give me information. I should like to have some time to talk to Dr. Sloane now . . . alone, if you please, Mr. Hennessey."

LEV WAS emphatically not looking forward to the rest of this business, but whatever came afterwards couldn't spoil this moment for him: he had the unadulterated pleasure of watching Hardnose Hennessey retreat, awkwardly, from his own office, under the frigid stare of a visiting V.I.P.

"Sit down, Dr. Sloane," she said as soon as the 'public-relations person' was gone. "And I hope you can be more informative than Mr. Hennessey."

"I'll try," he said drily. "If it's engineering you want to know about, I'll tell you all I can. You realize there are some questions I may have to refuse to answer, without instructions from a higher level than Hennessey."

"Your loyalty to your country is not under question, Doctor; that is one of the primary reasons why you were selected. I am not so foolish as to believe it impossible that the North American S.M.R.C. harbors some persons who may be agents of either Latin America or the Asia Union. Your adventure of last night—as reported by the newsrolls and verified by the African embassy—indicates as clearly as possible that you are not one of those persons. Now if we can get down to facts . . . ?"

"I'll be glad to," he said stiffly. "I'm not much on political talk myself."

"Good." And she launched into a full hour of questions and answers covering every phase of dome operation. He had to remind her regularly: "I'm a processes-man, Miss Vanderpoel; that's outside my field," when she wanted to know about safety-measures and working-conditions. Again, she found herself saying with a frequency that seemed to surprise her: "I do not understand that, Doctor; perhaps you can amplify and explain it when I see it."

When, finally, she sat back in silence, and the interview was concluded, Lev was, almost beginning to like her. She certainly knew the field, and she had a rare talent for admitting her gaps of knowledge where they existed.

"I think I shall be more than satisfied with your guidance, Dr. Sloane," she said, and though imperiousness was apparently a basic part of her, there was less of it in this statement than at any time before. It returned in full force as she asked: "Is there some way to call that person back?"

Lev studied the blank-faced intercom on Hennessey's desk, and decided against the assumption of

the prerogative. He went to the door, and addressed the request personally to the glamorous ice-maiden of a secretary.

"She's trying to find him," Lev told Miss Vanderpoel.

The V.I.P. sighed impatiently. "I hoped we could start the tour immediately," she said.

Sloane restrained a smile; he suspected the lady would not appreciate his amusement at her naivete. He hunted for an acceptably-polite way to explain to her that Domes could not possibly be entered that easily, that the law of the land required certain safeguards concerning visitors, no matter *how* important they were

But she obviously wasn't going to listen. She took from a pocket in her dress a brown book with a silver triangle and a word in Arabic stamped on the cover, and began to read. *Sayings of the Ma'di*, he supposed—the African Bible. All right, let Hardnose tell her; Sloane wandered back to the outer office, and amused himself till Hennessey showed up—unexpectedly soon—by conducting an experiment to determine exactly how much ogling it took to make the beautiful secretary nervous.

"Miss Vanderpoel wants a Dome tour arranged *immediately*," Lev said, dead-pan when Hennessey rushed in.

"We're ready *immediately*," Hardnose said with considerable self-satisfaction. "I got ahead of her that time. State pitched in, and cleared her in record time; here's a pass for her." He handed Sloane a stainless-steel tag with Miss Vanderpoel's picture and thumbprint photographed onto it. Plastic protected it, and Sloane knew there was an invisible pattern of magnetized dots in the steel as well—though the trick was supposed to be ultra-secret.

They went back to the private office, and Hennessey glowed under Miss Vanderpoel's faint show of approval.

"I think Dome Baker would be the best bet," Sloane suggested, "I know it better than the others, and it's not far." Hennessey nodded.

"Where is it?" the woman asked.

"Just ten miles off the Jersey coast," Lev told her, "I can drive you there myself in about an hour and we can have lunch in the Dome—if you wish."

"Very well." She gave the African salutation to Hennessey in parting, and they went down to pick up Sloane's car.

WALKING with him down the marble corridor she asked crisply: "What metals are extracted at your Dome Baker, Mr. Sloane?"

"Mostly iron—which makes it typical of the North American S.M.R.C. Iron's ninety percent of our output, of course. We buy our vanadium, chrome, tungsten—and so on for steelmaking—from Europe. Naturally, we have mothballed Domes set up to turn them out in case Sino-Russia jumps Europe and shuts off our supply." He wondered if she'd comment on the politics of that. She didn't, and her face was unreadable.

"Another interesting point at Baker," he went on, nettled; "the first Barrios cell ever made is still in use there."

"Oh?" She was clearly not impressed. "I am under the impression that the Barrios cell has been much improved since the first model." It was a sneer.

"Naturally. It's a tribute to a great man."

"His work is done," she said briefly.

"You're very casual," Lev said with a hint of anger. "Paul Barrios was—is—a genius. You people owe him as much as we do."

Frostily, without breaking her stride, she said: "Dr. Sloane, it doesn't become a person with your load of ancestral blood-guilt to reproach me for a casual attitude toward one of your geniuses. The iron that Barrios found a new way to isolate was first given to man by my equatorial ancestors."

There was a warning of passion in her voice as she went on, and Sloane found it reassuring; she was human after all. "Your north-temperate ancestors," she said, "were most notably casual—to use your word—in wiping out several of my equatorial ancestors' cultures." They were passing between the ionic columns of the S.M. R.C. Building. "And I notice that you have—casually—adopted architectural devices invented by my ancestors. Of course you call them 'Egyptian', pretending that Egypt was not a part of Africa and did, not continuously exchange, culturally and genetically, with all its peoples."

"My car's in the parking-lot here," he said, and pointedly dropped the conversation; he wouldn't argue ethnology with her.

He drove his convertible to the S.M.R.C. flying field, underwent a fast overwater-readiness check and took off. Beside him, Miss Vanderpoel read her *Sayings of the* as they droned northeast to the coast. In a quarter-hour she dozed off, with the book in her lap held open by her slender hands.

Sloane craned a little for a look at it. The graceful lines of Arabic meant nothing to him, but the condition of the book did. It was thoroughly thumbed and worn, from beginning to end—testimony that the woman was a serious believer in the Ma'di supposed to have lived, preached, worked wonders and died a century ago. He stole a glance at her face and thought with satisfaction: no wonder she believes—identification.

Her face had about the same blend of features attributed to the Ma'di in the hearsay, traditional portraits that even he had seen. Her face—the Ma'di's traditional face—were epitomes of the Ma'di's preaching: Africa united, proud and forward-looking. Probably that cold, bad-tempered reply to his reproach had been in the best Ma'dite tradition. Certainly she'd had a good point: it was a fake and a swindle to make the traditional assumption that the achievements of Egypt owed nothing to the peoples of the desert, mountain, rainforest and grasslands.

He wondered whether the Ma'di had been essential to the unification and industrialization of Africa, or whether he'd been a side-show to an inevitable technical-economic process. About one hundred million believers thought the former—fiercely enough to make the great of the world profoundly glad that Ma'dism was by nature non-exportable, and by decree of its founder non-aggressive. Not even the tactless, backward, ferociously godless SinoRussians claimed that Ma'dism was meddling with their internal affairs, a complaint they thundered regularly against every other major religion on Earth, and used often as pretext for a purge of unreliaables.

SLOANE had to shake her gently awake as he homed on the radar beacon. She blinked and put away her book. "I should apologize," she said. "My time in this country is limited, and I have been using it to the full."

"No apology necessary," he assured her, and then was busy with landing, mooring and the transfer to the bathyvator. The bathyvator man, who had been unshaved and sloppily-dressed yesterday, now wore sparkingly clean coveralls and a couple of razor-nicks on his jaw.

"You've been advised about Miss Vanderpoel?" Sloane asked.

"Yes, sir. If I could just see her pass, we'll go right down."

She produced it and the man said: "Thank you, ma'am." Down they went, and the Security-guards at the bottom end were equally deferential. *Hennessey must have scared the daylights out of them*, Sloane thought.

As they stepped out of the guardroom—and from under the gun-slits, to Sloane's relief, as usual—Haywood bustled up to them. "A great pleasure, Miss Vanderpoel," he burred. "I'll be happy to show you around my Dome—no eye like the master's eye, eh? No offense, Sloane."

The woman said: "It is precisely to avoid the possibility of your showing me around your Dome that Dr. Sloane has accompanied me—if I may say so without offense. I should like some lunch and then freedom to inspect, with Dr. Sloane as my guide."

Haywood managed to take it as a joke. "Topside gets all the gravy," he laughed painfully. "Sloane not only lives in a house and smokes when he wants to, but gets himself a good-looking girl to tour the Dome

with."

Miss Vanderpoel looked at him as though he were a chimpanzee who had just asked for her hand in marriage. "My time is very limited," she said. "If we may have something to eat—?"

SHORTLY afterwards, they were seated alone in the minute cafeteria. The unsquashable Haywood was talking proudly: "We serve nine hundred meals a day here—in shifts of course. I pride myself on the highest safety-rating of any Dome in operation—by the S.M.P.C., of course. I suppose, though, we can't hold a candle to your African Domes." Sloane winced at his clumsy gallantry, but Miss Vanderpoel was merely puzzled, "Hold a candle?" she asked. "I do not understand the relevance." She was eating quickly and delicately.

"It means we aren't as good as the African Domes," Haywood explained largely. She said nothing, and he went on: "We're one thousand percent safe. That bulkhead you're leaning back against—half an inch of steel and plastic; on the other side seawater at unimaginable pressure, but you're safe as if you were in your mother's arms. Three warning-circuits slam W.T. doors compartmenting the Dome seconds after leakage occurs. Everywhere, instantly, available, are safety-suits."

"Where are the safety-suits in here, Mr. Haywood?" she asked.

He looked embarrassed. "It isn't S.M.P.C. Dome policy to provide them for diningrooms," he said. "Wouldn't do any good, I'm afraid. Imagine the place, jammed with seventy-five people and a plate giving way. Thirty seconds to get into a safety-suit—if a man's kept up his drill the way he ought to. I'm very much afraid there'd be a panic and all lives lost, suits or not."

"We have suits in the public rooms of our Domes," Miss Vanderpoel said.

Sloane read in her face and words the contempt for dithering and hysteria, and the converse ideal of dignity and calm power. Haywood sensed a little of it and looked dubious. "Of course it's not a major point," he said. "Africa and North America are lucky enough to have stable subsea coastal ground. I'm damned if I'd go down into a Sino-Russ Dome in the Pacific, right smack on the Circle of Fire. And, of course, you never know with the censorship and lies what the Latamers are up to; but I hear they have some tom-fool business about Dome personnel making their wills and being *posthumously* decorated before they go downside. That smells like a terribly bad accident-rate to me. Of course you can get away with it if morale is high enough. Or, to be honest, your people are fanatics like the Latamer kids. But it's a hell of a way to get production, isn't it, Sloane?"

"It is, if true. On the other hand, I was in several European Domes—the Adriatic Dome, the Tyrrhenian, the Cycladic and the Cnossos. They take safety seriously there. All personnel wear suits all the time. Three-day tours of duty only. Shut-down every month for inspection."

"Hell, they can afford it," said Haywood, annoyed. "They turn out a few kilograms of tungsten or vanadium a day. Here we're in *production*. What I think—"

They never found out what he thought.

WITH A NOISE that was half the roar of a seige-gun and half the shriek of a tortured animal, a section of the wall ripped loose and a solid, glassy column reaching from the wall smashed Haywood where he sat. Sloane was utterly paralyzed, hardly recognizing the stuff as water, for a split-second. Haywood was almost headless, and something had happened to the woman—she was floating limply awash in a foot of water fed by the roaring column.

He ducked under it, shuddering, seized her as an alarm-bell began to bong, and raced, splashing, for the door of the cafeteria, threading his way through the tables and chairs. He was a yard from it, with the woman in his arms when it slammed murderously shut. *Three warning-circuits slam W. T. doors...*

How long did he have—thirty seconds? The water was rising one foot in two seconds; his ear drums thudded inward as the air compressed, driven up by the water. *It isn't S.M.P.C. policy to provide them for dining-rooms . . .*

Sloane wrenched at the dogs, which had automatically turned as the door slammed, one-handed, with the woman on his bad arm. There were seven dogs, and the water was to his knees. He pounded with his fist at one, chest-high, and felt it sullenly turn. With the water at his waist, he pounded open a

second and a third, cursing weakly, and the fourth and fifth, at the top of the W.T. door. He took a deep, sobbing breath of the thick air and hauled himself down by the doorframe into the icy water, with his arm still cramped around the woman. He didn't remember how he turned the two remaining dogs; the next thing he knew, was that he was being swirled into the corridor adjoining the cafeteria, and was swimming one-handed for the red-painted breakaway panels where there were two safety suits.

*Thirty seconds to get into a safety suit—if a man's kept up his drill the way he ought to...*

"Gobble the whobble mumble."

"Slump the anesthumbsia stroom."

"Buzz pulse and huspiration 'Duffle."

"Quark the anode on the patient's wrist."

"Yes, doctor."

"Pulse and respiration normal."

"That does it. You can take him from here."

Sloane opened his eyes and tried to focus. Faces swam above him; one of them said: "How're you feeling; fella?"

"Rotten. What happened?" he croaked. "I remember swimming for the safety-suit panels..."

"Believe it or not, you made it."

"Dr. Vanderpoel too?"

"That's right. She's alive and you're a hero. They found the two of you bobbing up against the ceiling of the corridor compartment. Uh, Haywood didn't make it."

"I saw. When the plate blew... where am I?"

"Roosevelt Memorial-Hospital, D.C. Want to tell us about the break-in for our records?"

HIS EYES were working better, and sensation was returning to his body. He saw three sympathetic-looking men in three chairs by his bedside; he was rolled over toward them a little, propped up with pillows along his hack. He tried to move and was restrained by things that cut into his limbs and belly.

"What is this?" he asked, panicky. "Am I in a cast? Is my back all right?" They laughed and one of them said: "No, no; you're all right. Should've told you; we gave you metrazol and globulin for shock. There's no metrazol-reaction history on you, but some people get the jerks from it."

"You mean I'm about to have convulsions so you tied *me* down? That was a dirty damned trick."

"Probably not, since the stuff's been in you for an hour now. But there's still a faint chance, so if you don't mind we really ought to keep the restrainers on a little longer. With them, nothing can happen. Without them—well, there's always the chance of fractured spinal discs before we got you under control."

Sloane shuddered and said: "Leave 'em on."

"Sensible man! Now, about the accident—from the beginning."

He told them about the accident, from the beginning. They asked him to tell it again from the beginning, in case anything else occurred to him. They pointed out that he might have unconsciously noticed some detail, or heard some noise that would have a bearing on the cause of the accident. He told it again, conscientiously filling in every scrap he remembered. Fine, they told him. This time they'd take it down in shorthand. If he'd just begin once more

"What the hell is this?" he demanded, enraged. "You people are the damndest doctors I ever ran into."

One of them said, suddenly cold: "We're not doctors, Sloane; we're F. B.I. agents. *Ortega has squealed.*"

"Start talking, Sloane."



"The sooner the better if you know what's good for you."

"Ortega turned you in; why protect the other rats?"

"It's a dirty business, but it'll count for you if you cooperate."

"This is your chance to make up for some of the dirt you've done your country."

"Start talking, Sloane."

"*You're crazy!*" he shrilled at them; "what am I supposed to say?"

"He's ready to tell us about it. Turn on the tape."

"Tape's on. Go ahead, Sloane."

"Start with the first Latamer approach to you."

"Let me the hell alone, you damned fools!" he yelled. "I never heard of anything as idiotic as this!"

Nor had he. And it was frightening, like the thought of a six-foot idiot who had conceived a dislike for you...

"He thinks we're bluffing. Get the tape on."

"Tape's on. Listen, Sloane."

HE HEARD a mechanically-reproduced voice, the almost-accented voice of Ortega, the theatrical Latamer agent. "—I make this confession of my own free will for the following reason: I understand that North American jurisprudence sometimes recognizes such cooperation as this with the authorities, as grounds for reduction of sentence. I have been asked to specify, however, that no person has promised that this will occur in my case, and this is true. Also, I have been asked to say that I have not been subjected to physical indignities or psychological duress other than what any reasonable person understands is normal and inevitable in police practice; this also is true.

"On September 17th I was advised by anonymous letter, bearing the correct code-designation, that I was to contact Mr. Lev Sloane, since he was sympathetic to our Latin-American cause. I waited for him that evening, letting myself in by an omnikey. We talked agreeably and I found him a most enthusiastic friend of my government and its principals.

"In discussing how we might further our common end, Mr. Sloane suggested that he could be raised to a more effective position for sabotage in the S.M.R.C. if he were to distinguish himself for courage and patriotism. Bluntly, he suggested that I permit him to 'capture and expose' me. I demurred at this, but he persuaded me that my term would be only a short one, since he would not allege in court that I had done, or offered to do, any substantive damage to the American power. His glibness won me over, but I am now informed that I face a prison-term of twenty-five years on conviction, and therefore I am impelled to make this confession."

The voice stopped.

Sloane told them: "I have nothing to say about that, except that it's a pack of lies."

One of the F.B.I. men was looking over his head and grumbling: "I never did trust the damn things; where there's smoke there's fire."

Another of the agents suddenly thrust an object at him, yelling: "Have you ever seen this before?" It was an oxy-torch, pocket size.

"I haven't had an oxy-torch in my hand for ten years," he said flatly. "Maybe that's a torch I used ten years ago, so I can't answer the question positively."

"Wise guy," one of them muttered. The one looking over his head seemed glum and disappointed.

"Why did you cut open the Dome bulkhead?" the third demanded.

He laughed incredulously.

"It isn't funny, Sloane. This torch was found in the cafeteria. One man died and three hundred could have died—"

"What do you men think you are doing?" a cool, angry voice demanded. Dr. Vanderpoel.

"We're questioning a suspected enemy agent, Miss. And from that bandage on your head, you'd better get back where you belong."

"Dr. Sloane saved my life and this is completely idiotic. Disconnect that lie-detector at once. Do you hear me?"

"I hear you all right, Miss, but I don't take orders from you."

"Call National 5-11783 immediately and appraise them of this situation," she snapped.

"How do you know that number?" asked an agent, astounded and suspicious.

"Never mind; call it."

One of them left silently and Sloane saw the woman come into his limited field of vision. She wore a bandage like a skull cap. "*Salaam aleikunt*," she said to him. "I thank the One God, and his servant the Ma'di, that nothing worse has happened to you than questioning by these buffoons."

"You're all right?" he asked, trying to move.

"You will be free soon. Yes, thank you. A slight concussion from a fragment of the wall's plastic paneling. I was conscious intermittently throughout and can testify to your selflessness and courage. Do not worry about these people. Police are the same the world over. They are paid to do this sort of thing."

"Look, Miss—" one of the G-men growled.

"Watch it, Renshaw!" warned a voice from the door. "Miss Vanderpoel, the chief says I should apologize to you, and we should release Sloane. I apologize; Renshaw, get him out of the polygraph."

The agent who had phoned looked down malignantly at Sloane as Renshaw unbuckled the fake restrainers which had camouflaged a lie-detector's input pads. "Sloane," he said, "I've been ordered to release you as not responsible for the dome break-in on Miss Vanderpoel's say-so. On this other thing from Ortega, it's dubious enough for us to leave you at large; without the Dome incident—which Miss Vanderpoel covers us on—there's no corroboration. *Yet*. I'm warning you now not to leave town. If you try, the D.C. police will pick you up for spitting on the sidewalk. As soon as you pay your fine they'll pick you up again for loitering. And so on. Come on, men."

THEY FILED disgustedly out with their polygraph as Sloane grinned and stretched his cramped limbs. The woman grabbed his bedside signal and pushed it ferociously. A thoroughly cowed nurse popped in, squeaking: "Yes, Miss Vanderpoel? What can I do for you?"

"Release-forms at once, please. And Dr. Sloane's clothes."

"Yes, Miss Vanderpoel!"

"Who are you, anyway?" he asked her when the nurse had gone.

She gave him an unexpected smile that was almost impish. "As Mr. Hennessey said, A Very Important Person."

"I'll let it go at that, doctor. But why are you so certain that I'm innocent of all this?"

"A simple matter of intercontinental relations," she said, gravely again. "The present world alignment is Sino-Russia and Latin America versus Europe and United Africa. The role of North America is to maintain the balance of power by throwing its support to the weaker of the two alliances. Because of Sino-Russia's immense manpower-reserves, and Latin America's plentiful supply of fanatics and raw-materials, North America judges that the Europe-Africa alliance is the weaker and so supports it.

"The great dream of the Sino-Russian and Latin American alliance is to win over Africa. They bombard us daily with propaganda—stupid propaganda, stressing the fact that the Chinese are yellow-skinned and many Latin-Americans brown-skinned. As if that were more important than cultural heritages!

"Failing in this positive appeal, they have evidently resorted to a negative attempt to split Africa from North America." She paused, broodingly. "My death, with the responsibility apparently North American, might have done it. I believe that the Dome accident was no accident, but an attempted murder by the Latin American and Sino-Russian alliance. I believe that you have been branded a Latin American agent because of your heroic rescue of me. In their propaganda they will represent it as a—Very Important Person—saved from death at the hands of the North Americans by a heroic agent of Latin America and Sino-Russia."

"Then you are in danger *now*!"

"I am," she said. "I have been in deadly danger since my incognito was penetrated by the Latin American spy-net in this country. I did not realize it had been broken until the Dome gave way."

The scared nurse came in with forms and Sloane's Clothes, with the water wrinkles pressed out.

"I've already signed mine," she said. "Put your name here, dress and we can walk out."

He studied the form and its grim disclaimer of responsibility by the hospital. He signed it and asked: "I don't see the reasoning behind this ..."

She moved a bedside chair two yards away, turned its back to him and sat in it. As he dressed, she told him: "I must get out of this place immediately. It would be too easy—there are poisons and surgical instruments in a hospital. I dare not go to our African Embassy; it is insufficiently-staffed, and not constructed to afford me safety. And above all, I dare not place my self under the protection of any North American officials. No matter how well I were guarded, there might be a mishap—and hours later there would be anti-North American riots and manifestos from Capetown to Alexandria. I trusted too much in my incognito. Perhaps—" For just a moment she showed a touch of indecision. "—I have been told I have a certain air of authority that might have betrayed me?"

"That might possibly be it," he agreed seriously. "I'm dressed now." She rose and said: "Will you take me to the—the *unlikeliest* place you know? A place where nobody would dream of you appearing, but a place where there will be no complications or fuss about entry. No—don't tell me what it is, please."

"They must surely be watching the hospital. Won't we be followed—or shot down in the street?"

"Yes," she said. "That is why we shall leave by ambulance."

SHE HAD arranged it, too. Waiting on the roof was a nervous driver who demanded of Sloane: "Ya sure this is okay, Jack? I tried to say no, but—" He glanced at the woman and shrugged helplessly.

Twenty minutes later, the ambulance hooted as it hovered above the 1200 block of avenue W and landed when traffic stopped at the intersections. Miss Vanderpoel tottered out, leaning heavily on Sloane's arm. There were ah's of sympathy from the crowd and the ambulance popped up into the air again on grasshopper legs.

When they rounded the corner, Miss Vanderpoel straightened and her walk became brisk. 1347 Avenue Y was a two-story brick home of faded elegance. Bare spots and improvisations of plastic where there had been brass bell-pulls, name-plates, graceful iron railings, foot scraper and other forgotten accessories dated it badly.

The old man opened the door himself, squinting into the afternoon light. "I'm afraid I can't make out your faces," he said in a voice that had grown thin and frail, but still had music in it. "You're—you're—?"

"Lev Sloane, Professor," said the engineer. "And a friend."

"Why, Sloane! How pleasant—please come in, and you, too—"

"Miss Vanderpoel."

"—Miss Vanderpoel, of course. How pleasant!" His stooped figure went before them down a dim entrance hall. "It's turning into quite a day for me. There are two other gentlemen here—but perhaps you knew?"

Lev stopped in mid-stride, slightly off-balance, and the girl stopped at the same instant.

"Who?" Sloane demanded.

"Why ... a Mr. Haines, and a Mr. Adanis. Do you know them? They were asking about you...?"

"Professor," Lev said rapidly and quietly. "I meant to explain this more gradually, but I'm afraid I've imposed on you. Miss Vanderpoel here is in some danger. I brought her here hoping to...to hide her. Is there any way...?"

"Company Professor?" A door opened into the hallway, and a competent-looking man stepped out, with a gun in his hand.

"Sir!" The old man turned on the intruder furiously. "Put that thing down. Have you forgotten you're a guest in my house? Put it down, sir, and be so kind as to leave immediately."

"Happy to, Prof. In a few minutes. I think we've got what we were looking for. In here, everybody."

It was a square, low-ceilinged living room, with casement windows that opened on a brick-walled backyard flower garden. A fire twinkled in a fabulous brass grate, and there was an equally fabulous stand of wrought-iron fire tools beside it. Lev Sloane remembered those: North America's gift to its savior, made from the first iron processed out of the first dome.

THE GUN directed them to a slip-covered sofa where Lev had spent uncounted afternoons in the distant schoolday past, warming himself in front of the fire in the iron grate... and afire himself with the knowledge that old Barrios was giving him. The Professor ignored the pointing gun. Trembling with indignation, he collapsed into a club chair by a smoking stand where a wax taper burned in a holder. Adams' partner—Haines—helped himself to a cigar from the humidor on the stand, and puffed it alight at the taper, grinning.

At a threatening jerk from the man with the gun, Sloane sat down on the sofa. Slowly and regally, the girl settled herself next to him, smoothing her skirt as she sat, as if not crushing it were her only concern. Never in their brief acquaintance had Sloane seen her quite so imperious as now.

"Okay, now let's get the formalities over with," Adams said genially. "You, miss ...you go by the name of Huyler Ngomo?"

"No," she said steadily. "My name is Vanderpoel...Miss Vanderpoel."

"That one's good enough," Adams said. "Be hard to make any mistake. Not many girls around that look just like you. We've got orders to take you back with us. I hope you're not going to make any trouble."

"I haven't decided yet," she said indifferently.

"Well, make your mind up. We ain't got much time," Haines put in.

"Would it be too much to inquire whose orders you are following?" Dr. Barrios said from his chair.

"Security," Adams said, smiling.

"Your identification?" the girl demanded.

"Right here." The man patted his gun with his free hand.

"How did you know where to find us?" Lev asked suddenly.

"We didn't; we were hoping. Mostly we came to see if the Professor knew anything that would help. Now if the young lady will just come along, we won't have any trouble at all."

"You think we should leave them?" Adams put in, looking worried.

"Nobody said anything about two guys. We want the girl."

"Sure, but...okay, it's your neck as much as mine." Adams subsided, but he wasn't satisfied,

Old Barrios had gathered his poise again. "May I ask for what purpose you desire to have the lady's company?"

"Sure, you can ask," Haines said boredly. "Ready, Miss *Vanderpoel*?"

She stood up. "Yes," she said wearily. Sloane could see her hand moving through the wool fabric of her dress pocket, fingering the worn brown book, the "Meditations." Suddenly it was too much; there was a time not to be cautious.

"I'll tell you what for, Dr. Barrios; to kill her."

THE WORDS hung on the air. Then the Professor too stood up, and with the most ordinary manner crossed his room to the telephone.

"That's enough, Prof." Adams clicked off the safety of his gun audibly; Barrios was not so old that the sound was meaningless to him. He mopped and turned to face them; his Mender shoulders sagging with defeat. A moment ago, he said thinly, "you were joking about my riches. I am rich, you know. I was a great man once. What do you want? Name your price for the lady's ransom." He slumped into the chair by the smoking stand.

"Everything you've got," Adams said promptly. "And then it wouldn't be enough. The Chief wouldn't like it if we came back without the lady."

"Do you know who I am?" the old man asked.

"Sure," Haines answered. "Everybody knows, even me. Barrios, SMRC. Mister SMRC, you might

say. Ain't that right?"

"Yes," said Barrios sadly. "I have here—" His hand dipped into his breast pocket. The gun made a sudden alarmed jerk in his direction and then subsided as Barrios drew out a flimsy sheet of pink paper, folded. "I have here the fruit of my last fifteen years of work. The world thought I was a dodderer whom the parade has passed by. But summarized on this sheet is a practical method of *multiplying the output of S.M.P. Domes ten times*. Think about it a minute and see if you still think it's not enough to pay for a girl's life."

"That changes the picture," Adams admitted grimly, reaching out his hand. "Hand it over." And then he gasped. Barrios had darted the paper toward the candleflame, twitching it back with a wisp of smoke curling from one corner. Adams stared for a moment at the curl of smoke, and then his eyes swung back on Sloane and Miss Vanderpoel.

"Why didn't you sell this thing long ago?" he demanded suspiciously.

Barrios sighed. "I long ago lost ambition; I long ago lost my illusion that men would use metal for anything but making war. Ten times more metal, ten times as much death and agony. I would have given it to the world if I thought it was any use. But now there is a reason. It's yours... for the lady's life."

Adams was watching Sloane and the woman. His friend was staring at Barrios. He muttered: "He was a big shot—"

"You are hesitating," said the triple Nobel, with a touch of the old resonance in his voice. "Very well. The world does not know how to use it and you do not want it. Let it burn!"

He crumpled the paper in his hand and tossed it at the fire that twinkled in the grate.

"Get it, Chuck!" shrieked the replica, diving for the grate, and so did Adams, clawing at the coals.

Sloane landed on the small of Adams' back with both feet. The other killer snatched up Adams' dropped gun and rolled over, spraying bullets at full-automatic until a priceless wrought-iron fire poker smashed his hand. Miss Vanderpoel said to him as he screamed: "Lie there unless you want it in the head next." She twirled the poker.

"Lord," said Sloane, white-faced. "I killed him." He rolled Adams over, shrinking from the touch, and found the ball of flimsy pink paper crushed under his chest, only charred at the edges.

"We saved it, Professor!" he said triumphantly turning to the club chair. But Barrios was slumped far down with blood throbbing from his chest. He was making a curious chuckling noise and Sloane bent low to hear.

"Glad you came," he said, slowly but distinctly. "I was bored." Then he died. Sloane thrust the crumpled ball of paper into his pocket and turned to the gunman.

"You killed him," he said.

The man groaned and clutched his mashed hand.

"Who's your boss, fella?" Sloane said grimly. "I want to know who sends people like you out to kill people like us—and him."

The man groaned louder.

"I won't ask you twice," Sloane said. He took the wrought-iron tongs and thrust them into the heart of the fire. Miss Vanderpoel's face writhed, but she didn't speak.

FIVE MINUTES and three seconds later Haines was screaming: "I don't know his name! He's a tall fat guy who works for the Gov'ment! He meets me in the Dupont Circle Bar! He'll get me killed if he knows about this! He'll send his greasers with their knives! I swear I don't know his name!"

Sloane said thoughtfully: "Lots of tall, fat men work for the Government. I can think of one who was in a position to break your incognito. I can think of one whom I told about getting a letter from Professor Barrios. I can think of one who's in a position to seed Latin-American sympathizers through the entire S.M.P.C. and botch things as thoroughly as they've been botched."

He thrust the cooling tongs back into the fire, and the man screamed again at the thought..

"No more!" said Miss Vanderpoel, compulsively.

"Perhaps not...does you boss swear a lot? Blue-eyed? Sandy hair with a widow's peak in front that he combs over a bald crown? Big square front teeth? Like grey suits? Extra-big chronometer

wrist-watch?"

He didn't need the tongs again. The man answered the right questions right and the catch questions right.

"Call that National number," he told her. "We have enough for a pick-up order on Hennessy."

She went to the ball and he heard the murmur of her voice at the phone.

Only when she came back did he remember the crumpled ball of paper in his pocket. He smoothed it open and found that it was a past-due laundry bill.

It was a lovely ceremony on the lawn of the African Embassy in the crisp fall air. The African Home Secretary for Science, Leila 'al-Mekhtub Waziri Huyler-Ngomo (after the Learner spy roundup she had been able to shed her ineffectual incognito) was a favorite target of the press photographers. She pinned the African Diamond Star, First Class, on Dr. Lev Sloane for courageous and selfless service to United Africa and made a little speech. Dr. Sloane spoke also, briefly, and concluded with the African salutation *salaam aleikum*, touching his brow, lips and breast with a graceful inclination of his head. The African guests were obviously moved by his sincerity, and the North American guests were obviously somewhat alarmed. Some of them murmured uneasily about Sloane's recent practice of dipping into the *Sayings of the Ma'di* at odd moments.

A lawn buffet followed, with couscous, Barbary sheep, antelope kebabs, plantain, scrambled ostrich eggs—two of them—curries in the style of the Durban Hindus and a rijstafel in the style of the Afrikanders.

Sloane had tasted the rijstafel, and hidden behind a transplanted jujube bush when he saw the Home Secretary for Science coming that way.

He saw her draw near and was about to come out when she too, simultaneously saw someone near and imperiously hailed him: "Mr. Kalamba! Come here if you please!"

Mr. Kalamba, tall, young and worried-looking, did so.

"*Salaam*," he said nervously.

"Mr. Kalamba, I'm very displeased with you. Strictly you are not under my direction, but you are science attache to the embassy and I feel that this gives me a right to speak. Frankly, it has become notorious that you are running around with young North American persons."

Mr. Kalamba mumbled something. "Tommyrot, my dear boy! You know perfectly well that I don't refer to legitimate contacts in the way of embassy business. I refer to your drinking beer and eating hamburgers with youngsters from the Commerce department, and Agriculture, and such."

"They're good chaps," muttered Mr. Kalamba.

"I dare say, but we must draw the line. Answer this question truthfully: would you want your sister to marry one?"

Lev Sloane didn't wait for Mr. Kalamba's answer.

## DEAD CENTER

THEY GAVE him sweet ices, and kissed him all round, and the Important People who had come to dinner all smiled in a special way as his mother took him from the living room and led him down the hall to his own bedroom.

"Great kid you got there," they said to Jock, his father, and "Serious little bugger, isn't he?" Jock didn't say anything, but Toby knew he would be grinning, looking pleased and embarrassed. Then their voices changed, and that meant they had begun to talk about the important events for which the important people had come.

In his own room, Toby wriggled his toes between crisp sheets, and breathed in the powder-and-perfume smell of his mother as she bent over him for a last hurried goodnight kiss. There was no use asking for a story tonight. Toby lay still and waited while she closed the door behind her and went off to the party, click-tap, tip-clack, hurrying on her high silver heels. She had heard the voices change back there too, and she didn't want to miss anything. Toby got up and opened his door just a

crack, and set himself down in back of it, and listened.

In the big square living room, against the abstract patterns of gray and vermilion and chartreuse, the men and women moved in easy patterns of familiar acts. Coffee, brandy, cigarette, cigar. Find your partner, choose your seat. Jock sprawled with perfect relaxed contentment on the low couch with the deep red corduroy cover. Tim O'Heyer balanced nervously on the edge of the same couch, wreathed in cigar-smoke, small and dark and alert. Gordon Kimberly dwarfed the big easy chair with the bulking importance of him. Ben Stein, shaggy and rumped as ever, was running a hand through his hair till it too stood on end. He was leaning against a window frame, one hand on the back of the straight chair in which his wife Sue sat, erect and neat and proper and chic, dressed in smart black that set off perfectly her precise blonde beauty. Mrs. Kimberly, just enough overstuffed so that her pearls gave the appearance of actually choking her, was the only stranger to the house. She was standing near the doorway, politely admiring Toby's personal art gallery, as Allie Madero valiantly strove to explain each minor masterpiece.

Ruth Kruger stood still a moment, surveying her room and her guests. Eight of them, herself included, and all Very Important People. In the familiar comfort of her own living room, the idea made her giggle. Allie and Mrs. Kimberly both turned to her, questioning. She laughed and shrugged, helpless to explain, and they all went across the room to join the others.

"Guts," O'Heyer said through the cloud of smoke. "How do you do it, Jock? Walk out of a setup like this into . . . God knows what?"

"Luck," Jock corrected him. "A setup like this helps. I'm the world's pampered darling and I know it."

"Faith is what he means," Ben put in. "He just gets by believing that last year's luck is going to hold up. So it does."

"Depends on what you mean by luck. If you think of it as a vector sum composed of predictive powers and personal ability and accurate information and . . ."

"Charm and nerve and . . ."

"Guts," Tim said again, interrupting the interrupter. "All right, all of them," Ben agreed. "Luck is as good a word as any to cover the combination."

"We're all lucky people." That was Allie, drifting into range, with Ruth behind him. "We just happened to get born at the right time with the right dream. Any one of us, fifty years ago, would have been called a wild-eyed visionary—"

"Any one of us," Kimberly said heavily, "fifty ago, would have had a different dream—in time with the times."

Jock smiled, and let them talk, not joining in much. He listened to philosophy and compliments and speculations and comments, and lay sprawled across the comfortable couch in his own living room, with his wife's hand under his own, consciously letting his mind play back and forth between the two lives he lived: this, here . . . and the perfect mathematic bleakness of the metal beast that would be his home in three days' time.

He squeezed his wife's hand, and she turned and looked at him, and there was no doubt a man could have about what the world held in store.

When they had all gone, Jock walked down the hall and picked up the little boy asleep on the floor, and put him back into his bed. Toby woke up long enough to grab his father's hand and ask earnestly, out of the point in the conversation where sleep had overcome him:

"Daddy, if the universe hasn't got any ends to it, how can you tell where you are?"

"Me?" Jock asked. "I'm right next to the middle of it."

"How do you know?"

His father tapped him lightly on the chest.

"Because that's where the middle is." Jock smiled and stood up. "Go to sleep, champ. Good night."

And Toby slept, while the universe revolved in all its mystery about the small center Jock Kruger had

assigned to it.

"Scared?" she asked, much later, in the spaceless silence of their bedroom.

He had to think about it before he could answer. "I guess not. I guess I think I ought to be, but I'm not. I don't think I'd do it at all if I wasn't sure." He was almost asleep, when the thought hit him, and he jerked awake and saw she was sure enough lying wide-eyed and sleepless beside him. "Baby!" he said, and it was almost an accusation. "Baby, you're not scared, are you?"

"Not if you're not," she said. But they never could lie to each other.

## II

Toby sat on the platform, next to his grandmother. They were in the second row, right in back of his mother and father, so it was all right for him to wriggle a little bit, or whisper. They couldn't hear much of the speeches back there, and what they did hear mostly didn't make sense to Toby. But every now and then Grandma would grab his hand tight all of a sudden, and he understood what the whole thing was about: it was because Daddy was going away again.

His Grandma's hand was very white, with little red and tan dots in it, and big blue veins that stood out higher than the wrinkles in her skin, whenever she grabbed at his hand. Later, walking over to the towering skyscraping rocket, he held his mother's hand; it was smooth and cool and tan, all one color, and she didn't grasp at him the way Grandma did. Later still, his father's two hands, picking him up to kiss, were bigger and darker tan than his mother's, not so smooth, and the fingers were stronger, but so strong it hurt sometimes.

They took him up in an elevator, and showed him all around the inside of the rocket, where Daddy would sit, and where all the food was stored, for emergency, they said, and the radio and everything. Then it was time to say goodbye.

Daddy was laughing at first, and Toby tried to laugh, too, but he didn't really want Daddy to go away. Daddy kissed him, and he felt like crying because it was scratchy against Daddy's cheek, and the strong fingers were hurting him now. Then Daddy stopped laughing and looked at him very seriously. "You take care of your mother, now," Daddy told him. "You're a big boy this time."

"Okay," Toby said. Last time Daddy went away in a rocket, he was not-quite-four, and they teased him with the poem in the book that said, *James James Morrison Morrison Weatherby George Dupree, Took great care of his mother, though he was only three. . . .* So Toby didn't much like Daddy saying that now, because he knew they didn't really mean it.

"Okay," he said, and then because he was angry, he said, "Only she's supposed to take care of me, isn't she?"

Daddy and Mommy both laughed, and so did the two men who were standing there waiting for Daddy to get done saying goodbye to him. He wriggled, and Daddy put him down.

"I'll bring you a piece of the moon, son," Daddy said, and Toby said, "All right, fine." He reached for his mother's hand, but he found himself hanging onto Grandma instead, because Mammy and Daddy were kissing each other, and both of them had forgotten all about him.

He thought they were never going to get done kissing.

Ruth Kruger stood in the glass control booth with her son on one side of her, and Gordon Kimberly breathing heavily on the other side. *Something's wrong*, she thought, *this time something's wrong*. And then, swiftly, *I mustn't think that way!*

*Jealous?* she taunted herself. *Do you want something to be wrong, just because this one isn't all yours, because Argent did some of it?*

*But if anything is wrong, she prayed, let it be now, right away, so he can't go. If anything's wrong let it be in the firing gear or the ... what? Even now, it was too late. The beast was too big and too delicate and too precise. If something went wrong, even now, it was too late. It was . . .*

You didn't finish that thought. Not if you were Ruth Kruger, and your husband was Jock Kruger, and



nobody knew but the two of you how much of the courage that had gone twice round the moon, and was about to land on it, was yours. When a man knows his wife's faith is unshakeable, he can't help coming back. (But: "Baby! You're not scared, are you?")

Twice around the moon, and they called him Jumping Jock. There was never a doubt in anyone's mind who'd pilot the KIM-5, the bulky beautiful beast out there today. Kruger and Kimberly, O'Heyer and Stein. It was a combo.

It won every time. Every *time*. Nothing to doubt. No room for doubt.

"Minus five . . ." someone said into a mike, and there was perfect quiet all around. "Four . . . three ...

(But he held me too tight, and he laughed too loud.)

(Only because he thought I was scared, she answered herself.)

". . . Mar—"

You didn't even hear the whole word, because the thunder-drumming roar of the beast itself split your ears.

Ring quiet came down and she caught up Toby, held him tight, tight. . . .

"Perfect!" Gordon Kimberly sighed. "Perfect!"

So if anything was wrong, it hadn't showed up yet.

She put Toby down, then took his hand. "Come on," she said. "I'll buy you an ice-cream soda." He grinned at her. He'd been looking very strange all day, but now he looked real again. His hair had got messed up when she grabbed him.

"We're having cocktails for the press in the conference room," Kimberly said. "I think we could find something Toby would like."

"Wel-l-l-l . . ." She didn't want a cocktail, and she didn't want to talk to the press. "I think maybe we'll beg off this time. . . ."

"I think there might be some disappointment—" the man started; then Tim O'Heyer came dashing up.

"Come on, babe," he said. "Your old man told me to take personal charge while he was gone." He leered. On him it looked cute. She laughed. Then she looked down at Toby. "What would you rather, Tobe? Want to go out by ourselves, or go to the party?"

"I don't care," he said.

Tim took the boy's hand. "What we were thinking of was having a kind of party here, and then I think they're going to bring some dinner in, and anybody who wants to can stay up till your Daddy gets to the moon. That'll be pretty late. I guess you wouldn't want to stay up late like that, would you?"

Somebody else talking to Toby like that would be all wrong, but Tim was a friend, Toby's friend too. Ruth still didn't want to go to the party, but she remembered now that there had been plans for something like that all along, and since Toby was beginning to look eager, and it was important to keep the press on their side . . .

"You win, O'Heyer," she said. "Will somebody please send out for an ice-cream soda? Cherry syrup, I think it is this week . . ." She looked inquiringly at her son. ". . . and . . . strawberry ice cream?"

Tim shuddered. Toby nodded. Ruth smiled, and they all went in to the party.

"Well, young man!" Toby thought the redheaded man in the brown suit was probably what they called a reporter, but he wasn't sure. "How about it? You going along next time?"

"I don't know," Toby said politely. "I guess not."

"Don't you want to be a famous flier like your Daddy?" a strange woman in an evening gown asked him.

"I don't know," he muttered, and looked around for his mother, but he couldn't see her.

They kept asking him questions like that, about whether he wanted to go to the moon. Daddy said he was too little. You'd think all these people would know that much.

Jock Kruger came up swiftly out of dizzying darkness into isolation and clarity. As soon as he could move his head, before he fully remembered why, he began checking the dials and meters and flashing

lights on the banked panel in front of him. He was fully aware of the ship, of its needs and strains and motion, before he came to complete consciousness of himself, his weightless body, his purpose, or his memories.

But he was aware of himself as a part of the ship before he remembered his name, so that by the time he knew he had a face and hands and innards, these parts were already occupied with feeding the beast's human brain a carefully prepared stimulant out of a nipples flask fastened in front of his head.

He pressed a button under his index finger in the arm rest of the couch that held him strapped to safety. "Hi," he said. "Is anybody up besides me?"

He pressed the button under his middle finger and waited.

Not for long.

"Thank God!" a voice crackled out of the loudspeaker. "You really conked out this time, Jock. Nothing wrong?"

"Not so I'd know it. You want . . . How long was I out?"

"Twenty-three minutes, eighteen seconds, takeoff to reception. Yeah. Give us a log reading."

Methodically, in order, he read off the pointers and numbers on the control panel, the colors and codes and swinging needles and quiet ones that told him how each muscle and nerve and vital organ of the great beast was taking the trip. He did it slowly and with total concentration. Then, when he was all done, there was nothing else to do except sit back and start wondering about that big blackout.

It shouldn't have happened. It never happened before. There was nothing in the compendium of information he'd just sent back to Earth to account for it.

A different ship, different . . . different men. Two and a half years different. Years of easy living and . . . growing old? Too old for this game?

Twenty-three *minutes!*

Last time it was under ten The first time maybe 90 seconds more. It didn't matter, of course, not at takeoff. There was nothing for him to do then. Nothing now. Nothing for four more hours. He was there to put the beast back down on ...

He grinned, and felt like Jock Kruger again. Identity returned complete. This time he was there to put the beast down where no man or beast had ever been before. This time they were going to the moon.

### III

Ruth Kruger sipped at a cocktail and murmured responses to the admiring, the curious, the envious, the hopeful, and the hate-full ones who spoke to her. She was waiting for something, and after an unmeasurable stretch of time Allie Madero brought it to her.

First a big smile seeking her out across the room, so she knew it had come. Then a low-voiced confirmation.

"Wasn't it . . . an awful long time?" she asked. She hadn't been watching the clock, on purpose, but she was sure it was longer than it should have been.

Allie stopped smiling. "Twenty-three," she said. Ruth gasped. "What . . . ?"

"You figure it. I can't."

"There's nothing in the ship. I mean nothing was changed that would account for it." She shook her head slowly. This time she didn't know the ship well enough to talk like that. There could be something. Oh, Jock! "I don't know," she said. "Too many people worked on that thing. I .. ."

"Mrs. Kruger!" It was the redheaded reporter, the obnoxious one. "We just got the report on the blackout. I'd like a statement from you, if you don't mind, as d, signer of the ship—"

"I am not the designer of this ship," she said coldly. "You worked on the design, didn't you?"

"Well, then, to the best of your knowledge . . . ?"

"To the best of my knowledge, there is no change in design to account for Mr. Kruger's prolonged unconsciousness. Had there been any such prognosis, the press would have been informed."

"Mrs. Kruger, I'd like to ask you whether you feel that the innovations made by Mr. Argent could—"

"Aw, lay off, will you?" Allie broke in, trying to be casual and kidding about it; but behind her own flaming cheeks, Ruth was aware of her friend's matching anger. "How much do you want to milk this for, anyhow? So the guy conked out an extra ten minutes. If you want somebody to crucify for it, why don't you pick on one of us who doesn't happen to be married to him?" She turned to Ruth before the man could answer. "Where's Toby? He's probably about ready to bust from cookies and carbonation."

"He's in the lounge," the reporter put in. "Or he was a few minutes—"

Ruth and Allie started off without waiting for the rest. The redhead had been talking to the kid. No telling how many of them were on top of him now.

"I thought Tim was with him," Ruth said hastily, then she thought of something, and turned back long enough to say: "For the record, Mr. . . . uh . . . I know of no criticism that can be made of any of the work done by Mr. Argent." Then she went to find her son.

There was nothing to do and nothing to see except the instrument meters and dials to check and log and check and log again. Radio stations all around Earth were beamed on him. He could have kibitzed his way to the moon, but he didn't want to. He was thinking.

Thinking back, and forward, and right in this moment. Thinking of the instant's stiffness of Ruth's body when she said she wasn't scared, and the rambling big house on the hill, and Toby politely agreeing when he offered to bring him back a piece of the moon.

Thinking of Toby's growing up some day, and how little he really knew about his son, and what would they do, Toby and Ruth, if anything . . .

He'd never thought that way before. He'd never thought anything except to know he'd come back, because he couldn't stay away. It was always that simple. He couldn't stay away now, either. That hadn't changed. But as he sat there, silent and useless for the time, it occurred to him that he'd left something out of his calculations. Luck, they'd been talking about. Yes, he'd had luck. But—what was it Sue had said about a vector sum?—there was more to figure in than your own reflexes and the beast's strength. There was the outside. Space . . . environment . . . God . . . destiny. What difference does it make what name you give it?

He couldn't stay away ... but maybe he could be *kept* away.

He'd never thought that way before.

"You tired, honey?"

"No," he said. "I'm just sick of this party. I want to go home."

"It'll be over pretty soon, Toby. I think as long as we stayed this long we better wait for . . . for the end of the party."

"It's a silly party. You said you'd buy me an ice-cream soda."

"I did, darling," she said patiently. "At least, if I didn't buy it, I got it for you. You had it, didn't you?"

"Yes but you said we'd go out and have one."

"Look. Why don't you just put your head down on my lap and . . ."

"I'm no baby! Anyhow I'm not tired."

"All right. We'll go pretty soon. You just sit here on the couch, and you don't have to talk to anybody if you don't feel like it. I'll tell you what. I'll go find you a magazine or a book or something to look at, and—"

"I don't *want* a magazine. I want my own book with the pirates in it."

"You just stay put a minute, so I can find you. I'll bring you something."

She got up and went out to the other part of the building where the officers were, and collected an assortment of leaflets and folders with shiny bright pictures of mail rockets and freight transports and jets and visionary moon rocket designs, and took them back to the little lounge where she'd left him.

She looked at the clock on the way. Twenty-seven more minutes. There was no reason to believe that anything was wrong.

They were falling now. A man's body is not equipped to sense direction toward or from, up or down,

without the help of landmarks or gravity. But the body of the beast was designed to know such things; and Kruger, at the nerve center, knew everything the beast knew.

Ship is extension of self, and self is—extension or limitation?—of ship. If Jock Kruger is the center of the universe—remember the late night after the party, and picking Toby off the floor?—then ship is extension of self, and the man is the brain of the beast. But if ship is universe—certainly continuum; that's universe, isn't it?—then the weakling man-thing in the couch is a limiting condition of the universe. A human brake. He was there to make it stop where it didn't "want" to.

Suppose it wouldn't stop? Suppose it had decided to be a self-determined, free-willed universe?

Jock grinned, and started setting controls. His time was coming. It was measurable in minutes, and then in seconds . . . *now!*

His hand reached for the firing lever (but what was she scared of?), groped, and touched, hesitated, clasped, and pulled.

Grown-up parties at home were fun. But other places, like this one, they were silly. Toby half-woke-up on the way home, enough to realize his Uncle Tim was driving them, and they weren't in their own car. He was sitting on the front seat next to his mother, with his head against her side, and her arm around him. He tried to come all the way awake, to listen to what they were saying, but they weren't talking, so he started to go back to sleep.

Then Uncle Tim said, "For God's sake, Ruth, he's safe, and whatever happened certainly wasn't your fault. He's got enough supplies to hold out till . . ."

"Shh!" his mother said sharply, and then, whispering, "I know."

Now he remembered.

"Mommy . . ."

"Yes, hon?"

"Did Daddy go to the moon all right?"

"Y . . . yes, dear."

Her voice was funny.

"Where is it?"

"Where's what?"

"The moon."

"Oh. We can't see it now, darling. It's around the other side of the earth."

"Well, when is he going to come back?"

Silence.

"Mommy ... when?"

"As soon as ... just as soon as he can, darling. Now go to sleep."

And now the moon was up, high in the sky, a gilded football dangling from Somebody's black serge lapel. When she was a little girl, she used to say she loved the man in the moon, and now the man in the moon loved her too, but if she was a little girl still, somebody would tuck her into bed, and pat her head and tell her to go to sleep, and she would sleep as easy, breathe as soft, as Toby did. . . .

But she wasn't a little girl, she was all grown up, and she married the man, the man in the moon, and sleep could come and sleep could go, but sleep could never stay with her while the moonwash swept the window panes.

She stood at the open window and wrote a letter in her mind and sent it up the path of light to the man in the moon. It said:

"Dear Jock: Tim says it wasn't my fault, and I can't explain it even to him. I'm sorry, darling. Please to stay alive till we can get to you. Faithfully yours, Cassandra."

#### IV

The glasses and ashes and litter and spilled drinks had all been cleared away. The table top gleamed

in polished stripes of light and dark, where the light came through the louvered plastic of the wall. The big chairs were empty, waiting, and at each place, arranged with the precision of a formal dinner-setting, was the inevitable pad of yellow paper, two freshly-sharpened pencils, a small neat pile of typed white sheets of paper, a small glass ashtray and a shining empty water glass. Down the center of the table, spaced for comfort, three crystal pitchers of ice and water stood in perfect alignment.

Ruth was the first one there. She stood in front of a chair, fingering the little stack of paper on which someone (Allie? She'd have had to be up early to get it done so quickly) had tabulated the details of yesterday's events. "To refresh your memory," was how they always put it.

She poured a glass of water, and guiltily replaced the pitcher on the exact spot where it had been; lit a cigarette, and stared with dismay at the burnt match marring the cleanliness of the little ashtray; pulled her chair in beneath her and winced at the screech of the wooden leg across the floor.

Get it *over* with! She picked up the typed pages, and glanced at them. Two at the bottom were headed "Recommendations of U.S. Rocket Corps to Facilitate Construction of KIM-VIII." That could wait. The three top sheets she'd better get through while she was still alone.

She read slowly and carefully, trying to memorize each sentence, so that when the time came to talk, she could think of what happened this way, from outside, instead of remembering how it had been for her.

There was nothing in the report she didn't already know.

Jock Kruger had set out in the KIM-VII at 5:39 P.M., C.S.T., just at sunset. First report after recovery from blackout came at 6:02 plus. First log readings gave no reason to anticipate any difficulty. Subsequent reports and radioed log readings were, for Kruger, unusually terse and formal, and surprisingly infrequent; but earth-to-ship contact at twenty-minute intervals had been acknowledged. No reason to believe Kruger was having trouble at any time during the trip.

At 11:54, an attempt to call the ship went unanswered for 56 seconds. The radioman here described Kruger's voice as "irritable" when the reply finally came, but all he said was, "Sorry. I was firing the first brake." Then a string of figures, and a quick log reading—everything just what you'd expect.

Earth acknowledged, and waited.

Eighteen seconds later:

"Second brake." More figures. Again, everything as it should be. But twenty seconds after that call was completed:

"This is Kruger. Anything wrong with the dope I gave you?"

"Earth to Kruger. Everything okay in our book. Trouble?"

"Track me, boy. I'm off."

"You want a course correction?"

"I can figure it quicker here. I'll keep talking as I go. Stop me if I'm wrong by your book." More figures, and Kruger's calculations coincided perfectly with the swift work done at the base. Both sides came to the same conclusion, and both sides knew what it meant. The man in the beast fired once more, and once again, and made a landing.

There was no reason to believe that either ship or pilot had been hurt. There was no way of finding out. By the best calculations, they were five degrees of arc around onto the dark side. And there was no possibility at all, after that second corrective firing that Kruger had enough fuel left to take off again. The last thing Earth had heard, before the edge of the moon cut off Kruger's radio, was:

"Sorry, boys. I guess I fouled up this time. Looks like you'll have to come and . . ."

One by one, they filled the seats: Gordon Kimberly at one end, and the Colonel at the other; Tim O'Heyer to one side of Kimberly, and Ruth at the other; Allie, with her pad and pencil poised, alongside Tim; the Colonel's aide next down the line, with his little silent stenotype in front of him; the Steins across from him, next to Ruth. With a minimum of formality, Kimberly opened the meeting and introduced Col. Swenson.

The Colonel cleared his throat. "I'd like to make something clear," he said. "Right from the start, I

want to make this clear. I'm here to help. Not to get in the way. My presence does not indicate any—criticism on the part of the Armed Services. We are entirely satisfied with the work you people have been doing." He cleared his throat again, and Kimberly put in:

"You saw our plans, I believe, Colonel. Everything was checked and approved by your outfit ahead of time."

"Exactly. We had no criticism then, and we have none now. The rocket program is what's important. Getting Kruger back is important, not just for ordinary humanitarian reasons—pardon me, Mrs. Kruger, if I'm too blunt—but for the sake of the whole program. Public opinion, for one thing. That's your line, isn't it, Mr. O'Heyer? And then, *we have to find out what happened!*

"I came down here today to offer any help we can give you on the relief ship, and to make a suggestion to facilitate matters."

He paused deliberately this time.

"Go ahead, Colonel," Tim said. "We're listening."

"Briefly, the proposal is that you all accept temporary commissions while the project is going on. Part of that report in front of you embodies the details of the plan. I hope you'll find it acceptable. You all know there is a great deal of—necessary, I'm afraid—red tape, you'd call it, and 'going through channels,' and such in the Services. It makes cooperation between civilian and military groups difficult. If we can all get together as one outfit 'for the duration,' so to speak . . ."

This time nobody jumped into the silence. The Colonel cleared his throat once more.

"Perhaps you'd best read the full report before we discuss it any further. I brought the matter up now just to—to let you know the attitude with which we are submitting the proposal to you . . ."

"Thank you, Colonel." O'Heyer saved him. "I've already had a chance to look at the report. Don't know that anyone else has, except of course Miss Madero. But I personally, at least, appreciate your attitude. And I think I can speak for Mr. Kimberly too. . . ."

He looked sideways at his boss; Gordon nodded.

"What I'd like to suggest now," O'Heyer went on, "since I've seen the report already, and I believe everyone else would like to have a chance to bone up some—perhaps you'd like to have a first-hand look at some of our plant, Colonel? I could take you around a bit. . . .?"

"Thank you. I would like to." The officer stood up, his gold Rocket Corps uniform blazing in the louvered light. "If I may say so, Mr. O'Heyer, you seem remarkably sensible, for a—well, a publicity man."

"That's all right, Colonel." Tim laughed easily. "I don't even think it's a dirty word. You seem like an all-right guy yourself—for an officer, that is."

They all laughed then, and Tim led the blaze of glory out of the room while the rest of them settled down to studying the R.C. proposals. When they had all finished, Kimberly spoke slowly, voicing the general reaction:

"I hate to admit it, but it makes sense."

"They're being pretty decent about it, aren't they?" Ben said. "Putting it to us as a proposal instead of pulling a lot of weight."

He nodded. "I've had a little contact with this man Swenson before. He's a good man to work with. It ... makes sense, that's all."

"On paper, anyhow," Sue put in.

"Well, Ruth . . ." the big man turned to her, waiting. "You haven't said anything."

"I . . . it seems all right to me," she said, and added: "Frankly, Gordon, I don't know that I ought to speak at all. I'm not quite sure why I'm here."

Allie looked up sharply, questioning, from her notes; Sue pushed back her chair and half-stood. "My God, you're not going to back out on us now?"

"I . . . look, you all know I didn't do any of the real work on the last one. It was Andy Argent's job, and *a* good one. I've got Toby to think about, and . . ."

"Kid, we need you," Sue protested. "Argent can't do this one; this is going to be another Three, only more so. Unmanned, remote-control stuff, and no returning atmosphere-landing problems. This is up

your alley. It's ..." She sank back; there was nothing else to say.

"That's true, Ruth." Tim had come back in during the last outburst. Now he sat down. "Speed is what counts, gal. That's why we're letting the gold braid in on the job—we are, aren't we?" Kimberly nodded; Tim went on: "With you on the job, we've got a working team. With somebody new—well, you know what a ruckus we had until Sue got used to Argent's blueprints, and how Ben's pencil notes used to drive Andy wild. And we can't even use him this time. It's not his field. He did do a good job, but we'd have to start in with somebody new all over again . . ." He broke off, and looked at Kimberly.

"I hope you'll decide to work with us, Ruth," he said simply.

"If . . . obviously, if it's the best way to get it done quick, I will," she said. "Twenty-eight hours a day if you like."

Tim grinned. "I guess we can let the braid back in now . . . ?" He got up and went to the door.

Another Three, only more so . . . Sue's words danced in her mind while the Colonel and the Colonel's aide marched in, and took their places, while voices murmured politely, exchanging good will.

Another Three—the first ship she had designed for Kimberly. The ship that made her rich and famous, but that was nothing, because it was the ship that brought Jock to her, that made him write the letter, that made her meet him, that led to the Five and Six and now . . .

"I've got some ideas for a manned ship," he'd written. "If we could get together to discuss it some time . . ."

". . . pleasure to know you'll be working with us, Mrs. Kruger." She shook her head sharply, and located in time and place.

"Thank you, Colonel. I want to do what I can, of course. . . ."

## V

*James James Morrison's mother put on a golden gown . . .*

Toby knew the whole thing, almost, by heart. The little boy in the poem told his mother not to go down to the end of town, wherever that was, unless she took him along. And she said she wouldn't, but she put on that golden gown and went, and thought she'd be back in time for tea. Only she wasn't. She never came back at all. *Last seen wandering vaguely . . . King John said he was sorry ...*

Who's King John? And what time is tea?

Toby sat quietly beside his mother on the front seat of the car, and looked obliquely at the golden uniform she wore, and could not find a way to ask the questions in his mind.

Where was James James's father? 'Why did James James have to be the one to keep his mother from going down to the end of the town?

"Are you in the Army now, Mommy?" he asked. "Well . . . sort of. But not for long, darling. Just till Daddy comes home."

"When is Daddy coming home?"

"Soon. Soon, I hope. Not too long."

She didn't sound right. Her voice had a cracking sound like Grandma's, and other old ladies. She didn't look right, either, in that golden-gown uniform. When she kissed him goodbye in front of the school, she didn't feel right. She didn't even smell the same as she used to.

"Bye, boy. See you tonight," she said—the words she always said, but they sounded different.

"Bye." He walked up the driveway and up the front steps and down the corridor and into the pretty-painted room where his teacher was waiting. Miss Callahan was nice. Today she was too nice. The other kids teased him, and called him teacher's pet. At lunch time he went back in the room before anybody else did, and made pictures all over the floor with the colored chalk. It was the worst thing he could think of to do. Miss Callahan made him wash it all up, and she wasn't nice any more for the rest of the afternoon.

When he went out front after school, he couldn't see the car anywhere. It was true then. His mother had put on that golden gown, and now she was gone. Then he saw Grandma waving to him out of her car, and he remembered Mommy had said Grandma would come and get him. He got in the car, and she

grabbed at him like she always did. He pulled away.

"Is Daddy home yet?" he asked.

Grandma started the car. "Not yet," she said, and she was crying. He didn't dare ask about Mommy after that, but she wasn't home when they got there. It was a long time after that till dinner was ready.

She came home for dinner, though.

"You have to allow for the human factor. . . ." Nobody had said it to her, of course. Nobody would.

She wondered how much tougher it made the job for everybody, having her around. She wondered how she'd stay sane, if she didn't have the job to do.

Thank God Toby was in school now! She couldn't do it, if it meant leaving him with someone else all day—even his grandmother. As it was, having the old lady in the house so much was nerve-racking.

I ought to ask her if she'd like to sleep here for a while, Ruth thought, and shivered. Dinner time was enough. Anyhow, Toby liked having her there, and that's what counted.

I'll have to go in and see his teacher. Tomorrow, she thought. I've got to make time for it tomorrow. Let her know . . . but of course she knew. Jock Kruger's family's affairs were hardly private. Just the same, I better talk to her.

Ruth got out of bed and stood at the window, waiting for the moon. Another ten minutes, fifteen, twenty maybe, and it would edge over the hills on the other side of town. The white hands on the clock said 2:40. She had to get some sleep. She couldn't stand here waiting for the moon. Get to sleep now, before it comes up. That's better. . .

"Oh, Jock!

" . . . the human factor . . ." They didn't know. She wanted to go tell them all, find somebody right away, and shout it. "It's not his fault. I did it!"

"You're not scared, are you, baby?"

Oh, no! No, no! Don't be silly. 'Who, me? Just stiff and trembling. The cold, you know . . . ?

Stop that!

She stood at the window, waiting for the moon, the man, the man in the moon.

Human factor . . . well, there wouldn't be a human factor in this one. If she went out to the field on takeoff day and told KIM-VIII she was scared, it wouldn't matter at all.

Thank *God* I *can do* something, at least!

Abruptly, she closed the blind, so she wouldn't know when it came, and pulled out the envelope she'd brought home; switched on the bed light, and unfolded the first blueprints.

It was all familiar. Just small changes here and there. Otherwise, it was the Three all over again—the first unmanned ship to be landed successfully on the moon surface. The only important difference was that this one had to have some fancy gadgetry on the landing mech. Stein had given her the orbit cafes today. The rest of the job was hers and Sue's: design and production. Between them, they could do it. What they needed was a goldberg that would take the thing once around low enough to contact Jock, if . . . to contact him, that's all. Then back again, prepared for him to take over the landing by remote, according to instructions, if he wanted to. If he could. If his radio was working. If ...

Twice around, and then down where they figured he was, if he hadn't tried to bring it down himself.

It was complicated, but only quantitatively. Nothing basically new, or untried. And no *human* factors to be allowed for, once it was off the ground.

She fell asleep, finally, with the light still on, and the blind drawn, and the blueprints spread out on the floor next to the bed.

Every day, she drove him to school, dressed in her golden gown. And every afternoon, he waited, telling himself she was sure to come home.

That was a very silly little poem, and he wasn't three, he was six now.

But it was a long time since Daddy went away.

"I'd rather not," she said stiffly.



"I'm sorry, Ruth. I know—well, I don't know, but I can imagine how you feel. I hate to ask it, but if you can do it at all . . . just be there and look confident, and . . . you know."

*Look confident!* I couldn't do it for Jock, she thought; why should I do it for them? But of course that was silly. They didn't know her the way Jock did. They couldn't read her smiles, or sense a barely present stiffness, or know anything except what she chose to show on the front of her face.

"Look confident? What difference does it make, Tim? If the thing works, they'll all know soon enough. If ..."

She stopped.

"All right, I'll be blunt. If it doesn't work, it's going to make a hell of a difference what the public feeling was at the time it went off. If we have to try again. If—damn it, you want it straight, all right! If we can't save Jock, we're not going to give up the whole thing! We're not going to let space travel wait another half century while the psychological effects wear off. And Jock wouldn't want us to! Don't forget that. It was his dream, too. It was yours, once upon a time. If . . ."

"All right!" She was startled by her voice. She was screaming, or almost.

"All right," she said bitterly, more quietly. "If you think I'll be holding up progress for fifty years by not dragging Toby along to a launching, I'll come."

"Oh, Ruth, I'm sorry. No, it's not that important. And I had no business talking that way. But listen, babe, you used to understand this—the way I feel, the way Jock fel—feels. Even a guy like Kimberly. You used to feel it too. Look: the single item of you showing your face at the takeoff doesn't amount to much. Neither does one ounce of fuel. But either one could be the little bit that makes the difference. Kid, we got to put everything we've got behind it this time."

"All right," she said again. "I told you I'd come."

"You do understand, don't you?" he pleaded.

"I don't know, Tim. I'm not sure I do. But you're right. I would have, once. Maybe—I don't know. It's different for a woman, I guess. But I'll come. Don't worry about it."

She turned and started out.

"Thanks, Ruth. And I am sorry. Uh—want me to come and pick you up?"

She nodded. "Thanks." She was glad she wouldn't have to drive.

## VI

He kept waiting for a chance to ask her. He couldn't do it in the house before they left, because right after she told him where they were going, she went to get dressed in her golden uniform, and he had to stay with Grandma all the time.

Then Mr. O'Heyer came with the car, and he couldn't ask because, even though he sat up front with Mommy, Mr. O'Heyer was there too.

When they got to the launching field, there were people around all the time. Once he tried to get her off by himself, but all she did was think he had to go to the bathroom. Then, bit by bit, he didn't have to ask, because he could tell from the way they were all talking, and the way the cameras were all pointed at her all the time, like they had been at Daddy the other time.

Then there was the speeches part again, and this time she got up and talked, so that settled it.

He was glad he hadn't asked. They probably all thought he knew. Maybe they'd even told him, and he'd forgotten, like he sometimes did. "Mommy," he listened to himself in his mind, "Mommy, are you going to the moon too?" Wouldn't that sound silly!

She'd come back for him, he told himself. The other times, when Daddy went some place—like when they first came here to live, and Daddy went first, then Mommy, and then they came back to get him, and some other time, he didn't remember just what—but when Daddy went away, Mommy always went to stay with him, and then they always came to get him too.

It wasn't any different from Mommy going back to be with Daddy at a party or something, instead of staying in his room to talk to him when she put him to bed. It didn't feel any worse than that, he told himself.

Only he didn't believe himself.

*She never did tell me! I wouldn't of forgotten that! She should of told me!*

She did not want to make a speech. Nobody had warned her that she would be called upon to make a speech. It was bad enough trying to answer reporters coherently. She stood up and went forward to the microphone dutifully, and shook hands with the President of the United States, and tried to look confident. She opened her mouth and nothing came out.

"Thank you," she said finally, though she didn't know just what for. "You've all been very kind." She turned to the mike, and spoke directly into it. "I feel that a good deal of honor is being accorded me today which is not rightfully mine. We gave ourselves a two-month limit to complete a job, and the fact that it was finished inside of six weeks instead . . ."

She had to stop because everybody was cheering, and they wouldn't have heard her.

". . . that fact is not something for which the designer of a ship can be thanked. The credit is due to all the people at Kimberly who worked so hard, and to the Rocket Corps personnel who helped so much. I think . . ." This time she paused to find the right words. It had suddenly become very important to level with the crowd, to tell them what she honestly felt.

"I think it is I who should be doing the thanking. I happen to be a designer of rockets, but much more importantly, to me, I am Jock Kruger's wife. So I want to thank everyone who helped . . ."

Grandma's hand tightened around his, and then pulled away to get a handkerchief, because she was crying. Right up here on the platform! Then he realized what Mommy had just said. She said that being Jock Kruger's wife was more important to her than anything else.

It was funny that Grandma should feel bad about that. Everybody else seemed to think it was a right thing to say, the way they were yelling and clapping and shouting. It occurred to Toby with a small shock of surprise that maybe Grandma sometimes felt bad about things the same way he did.

He was sort of sorry he wouldn't have much chance to find out more about that.

She broke away from the reporters and V.I.P.'s, and went and got Toby, and asked him did he want to look inside the rocket before it left.

He nodded. He was certainly being quiet today. Poor kid—he must be pretty mixed up about the whole thing by now.

She tried to figure out what was going on inside the small brown head, but all she could think of was how much like Jock he looked today.

She took him up the elevator inside the rocket. There wasn't much room to move around, of course, but they'd rigged it so that all the big shots who were there could have a look. She was a little startled to see the President and her mother-in-law come up together in the next elevator, but between trying to answer Toby's questions, and trying to brush off reporters, she didn't have much time to be concerned about such oddities.

She had never seen Toby so intent on anything. He wanted to know everything. Where's this, and what's that for? And where are you going to sit, Mommy?

"I'm not, hon. You know that. There isn't room in this rocket for . . ."

"Mrs. Kruger, pardon me, but . . ."

"Just a minute, please."

"Oh, I'm sorry."

"What was it you wanted to know now, Toby?" There were too many people; there was too much talk. She felt slightly dizzy. "Look, hon, I want to go on down." It was hard to talk. She saw Mrs. Kruger on the ramp, and called her, and left Toby with her. Down at the bottom, she saw Sue Stein, and asked her if she'd go take over with Toby and try to answer his questions.

"Sure. Feeling rocky, kid?"

"Kind of." She tried to smile.

"You better go lie down. Maybe Allie can get something for you. I saw her over there. . . ." She

waved a vague hand. "You look like hell, kid. Better lie down." Then she rushed off.

He got away from Grandma when Sue Stein came and said Mother wanted her to show him everything. Then he said he was tired and got away from her. He could find his Grandma all right, he said.

He'd found the spot he wanted. He could just about wiggle into it, he thought.

The loudspeaker crackled over her head. Five minutes now.

The other women who'd been fixing their hair and brightening their lipstick snapped their bags shut and took a last look and ran out, to find places where they could see everything. Ruth stretched out on the couch and closed her eyes. Five minutes now, by herself, to get used to the idea that the job was done.

She had done everything she could do, including coming here today. There was nothing further she could do. From now on, or in five minutes' time, it was out of anyone's hands, but—Whose? And Jock's, of course. Once the relief rocket got there, it was up to him.

If it got there.

If he was there for it to get to.

The way they had worked it, there was a chance at least they'd know the answer in an hour's time. If the rocket made its orbit once, and only once, it would mean he was alive and well and in control of his own ship, with the radio working, and ...

And if it made a second orbit, there was still hope. It might mean nothing worse than that his radio was out. But that way they would have to wait ...

God! It could take months, if the calculations as to where he'd come down were not quite right. If . . . if a million little things that would make it harder to get the fuel from one rocket to the other.

But if they only saw one orbit.

For the first time, she let herself, forced herself to, consider the possibility that Jock was dead. That he would not come back.

He's not dead, she thought. I'd know it if he was. Like I knew something was wrong last time. Like I'd know it now if . . .

"Sixty seconds before zero," said the speaker.

*But there is!* She sat bolt upright, not tired or dizzy any more. Now she had faced it, she didn't feel confused. There was something ... something dreadfully wrong. .

She ran out, and as she came on to the open field, the speaker was saying, "Fifty-one."

She ran to the edge of the crowd, and couldn't get through, and had to run, keep running, around the edges, to find the aisle between the cords.

Stop it! she screamed but not out loud, because she had to use all her breath for running.

And while she ran, she tried to think.

"Minus forty-seven."

She couldn't make them stop without a reason. They'd think she was hysterical ...

". . . forty-five . . ."

Maybe she was, at that. Coolly, her mind considered the idea and rejected it. No; there was a problem that hadn't been solved, a question she hadn't answered.

But what problem? What ...

"Minus forty."

She dashed down between the ropes, toward the control booth. The guard stepped forward, then recognized her, and stepped back. The corridor between the packed crowds went on forever.

"Minus thirty-nine . . . eight . . . thirty-seven."

She stopped outside the door of Control, and tried to think, think, think what was it? What could she tell them? How could she convince them? She knew, but they'd want to know what, why ...

You just didn't change plans at a moment like this.

But if they fired the rocket before she figured it out, before she remembered the problem, and then

found an answer, it was as good as murdering Jock. They could never get another one up quickly enough if anything went wrong this time.

She pushed open the door.

"Stop!" she said. "Listen, you've got to stop. Wait! There's something . . ."

Tim O'Heyer came and took her arm, and smiled and said something. Something soothing.

"Minus nineteen," somebody said into a microphone, quietly.

She kept trying to explain, and Tim kept talking at her, and when she tried to pull away she realized the hand on her arm wasn't just there to comfort her. He was keeping her from making trouble. He . . .

Oh, God! If there was just some way to make them understand! If she could only remember what was wrong . . .

"Minus three . . . two . . ."

It was no use.

She stopped fighting, caught her breath, stood still, and saw Tim's approving smile, as the word and the flare went off together:

"Mark!"

Then, in a dead calm, she looked around and saw Sue. "Where's Toby?" she asked.

She was looking in the reserved grandstand seats for Mrs. Kruger, when she heard the crowd sigh, and looked up and saw it happening.

## VII

The crash fire did not damage the inside of the rocket at all. The cause of the crash was self-evident, as soon as they found Toby Kruger's body wedged into the empty space between the outer hull of the third stage, and the inner hull of the second.

The headlines were not as bad as might have been expected. Whether it was the tired and unholy calm on Ruth Kruger's face that restrained them, or Tim O'Heyer's emergency-reserve supply of Irish whisky that convinced them, the newsmen took it easy on the story. All America couldn't attend the funeral, but a representative hundred thousand citizens mobbed the streets when the boy was buried; the other hundred and eighty million saw the ceremonies more intimately on their TV sets.

Nobody who heard the quiet words spoken over the fresh grave—a historic piece of poetry to which the author, O'Heyer, could never sign his name—nobody who heard that simple speech remained entirely unmoved. Just where or when or with whom the movement started is still not known; probably it began spontaneously in a thousand different homes during the brief ceremony; maybe O'Heyer had something to do with that part of it, too. Whichever way, the money started coming in, by wire, twenty minutes afterwards; and by the end of the week "Bring Jock Back" was denting more paychecks than the numbers racket and the nylon industry combined.

The KIM-IX was finished in a month. They didn't have Ruth Kruger to design this time, but they didn't need her: the KIM-VIII plans were still good. O'Heyer managed to keep the sleeping-pill story down to a tiny back-page notice in most of the papers, and the funeral was not televised.

Later, they brought back the perfectly preserved, emaciated body of Jock Kruger, and laid him to rest next to his wife and son. He had been a good pilot and an ingenious man. The moon couldn't kill him; it took starvation to do that.

They made an international shrine of the house, and the garden where the three graves lay.

Now they are talking of making an interplanetary shrine of the lonely rocket on the wrong side of the moon.

## CONNECTION COMPLETED

*HELLO, DARLING. I'm glad you waited.*

*I couldn't do anything else. She smiled wryly. I'm glad I waited, too. Hello.*

He saw her through the window, sitting alone in a pool of white light, on a white chair, at a white table, almost exactly centered in the expanse of white-tiled floor. She was wearing the green suit and the gray-green scarf with the narrow border of pink rose on it. Her back was toward him, but he knew beyond doubt it was she: her hair, over the scarf, was the same dark mist that floated in his mind, cool and caressing, tickling the filaments of his imagination.

He stood out there on the sidewalk in the chill city drizzle, staring in through the plate glass window of the cafeteria, waiting for her to make some move, any move that would confirm or deny: to turn around and show her face, looking as he knew it must; or to vanish as suddenly and completely as the elusive fantasy he also knew she had to be. He stood there waiting, mostly, for his own shock to give way to decision. Go in? Go away?

"Move along, Mac!"

Todd jerked his head around, eyes wide and startled, then narrowing in anger at the dough-faced cop.

"Is that a new law?" he sneered. "Something wrong with standing on the street?"

"Not so you just stand there," the policeman said. Then, in a different tone: "Sorry, doc. It was just the way you was looking in the window."

"You mean hungry?" Todd didn't feel like being reasonable. The apology was to his clothes anyhow; not to him. "Well, I am. You know any better reason to look in a restaurant?" If the cop got mad enough, there wouldn't be any impossible decision to make; he'd be in night court, paying a fine instead.

The cop didn't get mad. He shook his head tiredly and wandered off; muttering. Todd turned back to the window, and the girl had moved.

She was getting up. She had her check in her hand, and she was reaching for her raincoat on the next chair. Immediately, urgently, Todd wanted her not to go.

*Sit still, he begged. You waited this long, don't spoil it now. I'm coming, kid. I shouldn't have stalled like that, but I'm coming in now. Just wait a minute.*

He was walking fast up the block toward the door, watching her through the window all the time, and he saw her change her mind and settle back in the chair again. She never turned around. He still hadn't seen her face.

He pushed through the door into warm dry air, struggling with the corners of his mouth, keeping his smile underneath his skin. He couldn't very well walk in on her with a triumphant smirk all over his face. There was no reason to assume that she knew.

She didn't; he was sure of that when he saw the baffled defeat in the set of her shoulders as she leaned back in her chair and picked up the coffee cup again. The cup was empty; he knew that. She realized it a moment later, and set it down again, and looked up straight ahead of her at the big clock on the wall.

*What on earth am I sitting here for?* She made a restless, irritable motion toward her raincoat.

*Hey, wait a minute!* he pleaded. *Don't go now. Just give me time to think of something.*

What did she expect? To have him walk over and say "Pardon me, but aren't you the girl in my dreams?"

She didn't expect anything. She didn't even know who he was. But she turned and looked out the window while he crossed the big room to the counter at the back. It's still raining, she satisfied herself. I might as well sit here. She picked up a folded newspaper, and Todd stared across the perforated metal drip-board of the counter, into a dry, yellow-wrinkled face.

"Coffee—black," he said, and waited while brown liquid flushed slowly out of the urn into a thick tan mug. He tried to find her image in the mirror on the sidewall, but the angle was distorting; all he could tell was that she was still there, waiting.

For what?

He wasn't even sure who asked the question, let alone whether it had an answer. He couldn't trust the certainty he felt. He hadn't even seen her face yet.

The dry wrinkled face pushed a mug at him across the counter.

"Sugarcream?"

Todd shook his head. "No, thanks." He fumbled in his pocket for change, cursing his clumsy fingers, suddenly sure she would be gone when he turned around. Then:

Didn't I say "black" before? he wondered. He had to watch out. Ever since this thing started, he had been worried about things like that. How could you tell if you were just going off your rocker? How could you know whether you remembered to say things out loud at all?

*You did. I heard you.*

*That's a big help! You heard me! I can hear you too, he snapped at her, and you never said a word out loud! Hell, I don't know if you even thought a word!*

He could just as easily be talking to himself. He was, anyhow. Even if this was all real, actually happening—even if he wasn't just tripping a light fantastic down the path to a padded cell—he was still just talking to himself, effectively, until he was sure that she knew.

*Stop fighting it, man! It's real, all right.*

He had the dime in his hand finally, flung it across the counter, picked up his mug, slopping coffee over the siles, and headed toward her table, with the familiar feeling of her smile lingering in his head after the words began to fade.

The place was almost empty. There was no excuse for sitting at her table—except the obvious one, that he had come in for just that purpose. He sat down directly across from her, took one quick look at her face, and it was all wrong. It wasn't the face that went with the green suit. She wasn't smiling. And she didn't seem to be aware that he was there.

Todd burned his tongue on his coffee, and took another look over the edge of the cup. This time he caught her by surprise and she turned away swiftly when their glances met. She was aware of him, then; and she was frightened!

*Scared stiff!* she assured him. *You're not real. I don't believe in you. Get out of here, will you? God damn it, get out!*

The vehemence of it almost convinced him. He wouldn't be shrieking at himself that way—or would he? What did he know about how a person feels inside when he's slipping his gears? It made sense for her to feel just as scared and mad inside as he did . . . but if the whole thing was originating inside his own mind, it made even more sense for her to sound that way. . . .

He knew just where that train of thought went: round and round and all the way back round again. He put down his coffee cup, made a face over it, and looked straight at her.

"Would you pass the sugar please?" he said, and waited, watching.

She was scared, all right. Scared, or very tired, or both. He noticed, now, that there were long deep lines running down from the inside corners of her eyes, along her nose, outlining tight-bunched muscles; another set of lines striking down from the edges of her mouth; a taut set of defiance to her jaw. And in the same instant, he realized her eyes were gray-green like the scarf, as he knew they ought to be, and her lipstick was soft coral-pink like the roses on the scarf.

She was reaching for the jar of sugar automatically. Her face showed no reaction, no memory of what he thought had happened a few minutes earlier, at the counter. He tried transposing her features, in his mind, setting them in the other expression, the only one he'd "seen" before, relaxing all the tense muscles, turning up the lips into a smile of warm acceptance. . . .

"Here," she said impatiently, holding the jar under his nose. He looked from her face to her hand and back again, wondering how long she'd been holding it there while he stared at her. If she was the wrong girl—if there was no right girl—

There was a very small smile on her face now. Nothing like the look he was used to, but enough so he was certain it was the same face.

*Well, do you want it or don't you?*

She meant the sugar, he realized after an instant's pause. "Thanks. I don't usually use it," he started to explain, and watched the same struggle on her face that he remembered feeling on his own as he walked into the place: the effort to suppress apparently unwarranted laughter.

He let the explanation drift off, and realized he'd done what he'd been worried about all this time:

answered aloud what he had heard only inside his ears.

In that case, she could be laughing at him just because of his confusion and insanity. She could . . . she could be anything or anyone, but she also could be the girl who had haunted his waking and sleeping dreams for the last six months.

"Thanks," he said again, and relieved her of the sugar jar.

*You better think of something better than that. I can't keep sitting here much longer.* "You're welcome," she said. *I ... imagined ... I thought about you as a sort of fluent character. Not the tongue-tied kind ...*

*I don't usually have so much trouble. You're not yourself exactly, either ...*

"Pardon me, miss," he asked courteously, "I wonder if you happen to know whether there's a post office open anywhere near here? At this hour, I mean?" *Pretty feeble, I know, babe, but you're rushing me. . . .*

"I don't think . . . there's one that might be open, but I'm not sure. It's just about five blocks. You turn to the left at the corner, and . . ."

He didn't listen to the rest. He didn't need a post office for anything.

*Oh, my God!* her voice screamed inside his head. *What am I doing now? I've never seen this man before. I don't, I don't, I don't, know who he is or anything about him! He looks like . . . he looks like somebody I invented, but that's an accident, it has to be! Daydreaming isn't so bad . . . anybody who's lonely daydreams . . . but when you start having hallucinations ...*

*Yeah, I know! It's time to go look up a good reliable old-fashioned psychiatrist and tell him all your troubles. Don't think you're the only one, babe.*

He watched her eyes flick to the phone booth in the corner, and realized he'd meant in the directory when he thought the words "look up."

There was a way to find out after all!

"I suppose I could call from here and find out if they're open," he said. *Calm yourself, fellow,* he told himself. *You could have thought about the directory after she looked that way. It's hard to be sure about subjective time-sequence.*

The thing to do was set it up ahead of time, make sure she knew what he was doing—or as sure as he could be—and then see what happened.

"That's a good idea," she said flatly ... and began making motions at her handbag and raincoat again. It took swering, of course, his remark about calling the post swering, of course, his remark about calling the post office.

"Nasty weather," he said brightly. "Hate to go wandering around out there for nothing." *Please darling . . . stick it out a little longer . . . I know I'm being dumb, but I don't know much about picking up a girl.*

*Well, I don't usually get picked up!*

"Would you care for some more coffee?" he said desperately, rising before she had a chance to get her things together. "Could I bring it back?" *Listen, listen good, now . . . if you want to try a test of this thing, listen good ...*

She hesitated, holding the bag in her hand, her arm half-extended toward the next chair where her raincoat was draped over the back of the seat.

*Now, listen: if you want to try a test, just to find out, let me know by putting your bag in your other hand, and then putting it down on the table ...*

He watched anxiously.

"Well-I-I ... thank you." She smiled tightly, and transferred her bag from her right hand to the left, then set it down, carefully, as though jarring might explode it, on the left-hand side of her empty cup.

Todd heard himself saying smoothly, naturally, "Do you take cream and sugar?" It was startling that his voice should behave so well, when every nerve cell and fiber in him was vibrating with incredulous exaltation. He wanted to reach out and grab her, hold her face between his two hands, pull her head to

rest on his shoulder, soothe her, explain, reassure, until the sharp-etched lines of fear and tension vanished from her face and he could see her, really her, not in a dream or vision or in some unknown receptive part of his mind, but see her in the flesh, smiling with her whole face as she always had before.

And he couldn't do it.

Not yet.

He'd planned that first request to be a signal, nothing more. It wasn't enough to go on. It could be coincidence, accident; he might even have anticipated from some unconscious memory of an earlier action of hers, that that move was the one she would make, and so have set up the signal to get the answer he wanted.

This time it wouldn't be like that.

"I'll make that phone call, and bring the coffee back with me," he told her slowly and distinctly. She nodded, and then he thought as clearly as he could:

*Only if you hear me, baby, if you understand and want to believe it like I do, don't wait for me to bring it back. You get the coffees while I'm in the booth. You understand? Do you, babe? You get the coffees while I go in the phone booth ... then I'll know for sure. You wouldn't do that for any other reason, see? That way I'll know. You just do that, and you can leave the rest to me . . . Understand?*

She was nodding again. *All right. Go ahead. I understand.* But there was a feeling of irritation—or impatience? He couldn't tell. *Go on. Hurry up.*

Impatience. He turned and walked across the white-tiled floor, his heels sounding loud and hollow all the way. He didn't look around. He was sure she understood. He knew she was somehow irritated. He didn't know what she would do. But what he had to do was walk across the endless rows of tiles to the phone booth, and not give himself any chance to give her a signal of any kind—in case he was wrong.

He didn't trust himself to give her enough time if he faked it, so he looked up the post office in the directory, and stepped into the booth, pulled the door shut, without ever looking around, put his coin into the slot, and let the number ring twenty times before he hung up again and stepped out.

He glanced at the counter, and the wrinkle-faced man was leaning back against the wall next to the coffee urn, turning a racing form over in his hand. He looked toward the table, then, and she was gone.

Handbag, raincoat, green suit, scarf, and all. Gone.

*You little fool!*

The thought was hopeless and tender and the loneliest thought of his life. He was at the door, looking out, up and down the street but she was gone completely, vanished, like ...

Like the illusion she was?

He went back to the table, or tried to. He couldn't find it. He wanted to see her coffee cup there; he thought she might have left the newspaper she was reading. Something, anything, to prove she had been there, flesh and blood, a real girl. Not just an image his own mind had made for him six months ago, to live with and talk to—and love.

Nothing. All the tables in the center of the room were clear and clean. There was a boy dumping cups and clattering silver in the far corner. Todd strode over, stood behind him, and couldn't think what to say.

"Did you take two cups off a table over there?" It sounded ridiculous.

The boy looked around, sleepy, stupid, glazed-eyed. "Huh?"

I said, "Did you take some coffee cups off a table just now?"

"Sure, doc. That's what they pay me for."

Todd shook his head impatiently, like clicking a telephone receiver, trying to clear the line. "Look," he said slowly. "Right about the middle of the room there's a table I was sitting at. Then I went to the phone booth. When I came back, the dishes were gone. Did you just clear that table off?"

"Listen, Mister, if you wasn't done with your coffee, you shouldn't of left it there. All I know is, a table is empty, I clear it off. How should I know . . ."

"I was done." He made himself relax outwardly, realizing that his stance, his voice, his eyes were all



threatening the youngster. "It's all right. I was finished. All I want to know is, were there . . . did you take a newspaper off of there?"

"A paper?" The boy looked doubtfully at the bottom rack of his pushwagon. "Lessee now . . . there was a paper on one of them tables. . . ." He reached and brought forth a folded sheet. Todd gazed at it helplessly. He hadn't noticed which paper she was reading. He couldn't tell if that was the one.

"Did you ... was that on a table with *two* coffee cups?"

"Gee, mister, I don't know. . . ." The boy was really trying to remember, Todd realized, with surprise. Trying hard. "Yeah I guess . . . listen, mister, if it's so important I won't kid you. I don't know, that's all see?"

"Okay kid. Thanks. Thanks a lot." Todd fished a coin out of his pocket, pushed it into the startled boy's hand, and turned and walked out. Where to, he didn't know; but he had to get out of there. The girl wasn't coming back, that much he was sure of. That is, if there was a girl. If ever there had been a girl with a green suit and a mist of dark hair, and a face that smiled for him in memory.

It was cold and wet outside, and that suited him fine. He paced the sidewalk, out of lamplight into shadow, and back into damp reflections of the light. Mica particles in the gray cement flashed like tiny distant stars or signaling fireflies under his eyes. Unseen drops of moisture chilled the back of his neck, damped the edge of his collar. He stepped off the curb, and a car screeched, braking, around the corner avoiding him by inches.

All these things he perceived, but without meaning. Perception was suddenly a frightening thing, to be examined and tested every time before you could trust it. What you saw was not necessarily there at all. What you wanted, you could not see, or else you saw without reality. He felt the cold rain on his skin, but put no faith in it, because it was all a part of the girl and the night and the illusion he had made for himself.

He turned a corner, walking faster. No sense trying to avoid obstacles, or dodge moving objects, if you didn't know for sure that they were there. He crossed another street, and walked faster still. He didn't know where he was going, and if he knew it wouldn't matter, because when he got to the end of the journey, he still wouldn't know where he was.

The city flashed its distractions. Sights and sounds and odors, moisture, temperature, touch assailed him, and could not penetrate his isolation.

A man lives all his life inside the wall of his own skull, making words into sentences, moving muscles to form gestures, so that he can make his existence and purposes known to others; and in the same way, absorbing his perceptions of the people and things around him, trying to interpret as best he can, so as to understand some part of their meaning for himself. But he never gets outside the bony barriers of his own head, or past the hardening defenses of others. For every human being, the word or the gesture has some slightly different meaning.

No two people ever meet completely without some slight or great distortion of intent or understanding, occurring in the jangled complexity of living cells that make up the expressive and interpretive mechanisms of the man.

Todd Harmacher made this discovery, as most men do, when he was very small. Each contact of the thirty-odd years since had served to confirm it. Each contact until, for a few brief minutes this evening, he had let himself believe that he was truly, entirely, in communication with another human being, rather than with some strangely shaped and ill-ported section of his own imagination.

Now he paced the city streets, oblivious to rain and cold, defying noise and light, aware of the potentialities of total loneliness as he had never quite envisioned it before.

He crossed another street and turned a corner, for no reason except the inner urgency that said, *Turn! Here! Now!*

*Stop!*

He stopped.

Perception invaded him. He was standing in front of an old stone building, a relic of the city's first pride in size and strength, gray and massive and dirty. A lamppost down the street threw a flood of light along the rain-soaked sidewalk, but the doorway directly in front of him was dark. And her smiling face

was in his head again, framed by the soft scarf, the drifting mist of her hair touching gently against the bitterness and anger in his mind.

*I'm sorry, dear, she told him, but I got so scared! I used to think I made you up, then for a while I thought you were real. Then I told myself that was nonsense, and I learned to live with a dream.*

...

*I know. I know!*

*And then when I saw you, I got frightened. And when I started doing things I didn't mean to do. . . .*

*Poor darling! I shouldn't have ...*

*No! Don't you see? That's when I knew it was real! But then ...?*

*But then I knew you still didn't believe it yourself, and I thought, if I did as you asked each time, you'd never never know which one of us it was, or whether I was really here. So . . . so when you weren't looking, I ran out, and came here and called you and waited. . . .*

He couldn't see her in the darkness of the doorway, but he knew. They both knew now. He knew, too, what her face would look like if he could see it at this moment, but, knowing, he didn't have to see it.

"Hi, babe," he said, stepping forward gladly into the dark doorway. "I'm glad you waited."

"I couldn't do anything else," she said wryly. Then he opened his arms to her, and she said, "I'm glad I waited, too. Hello."

## Stormy Weather

*Thirty days on, thirty days off, and almost all the problems routine for the job—but the blues may be an occupational hazard for a woman in space. Startling Stories—Summer, 1954.*

The time . . . For three days Cathy had watched and waited. Three days: measured in Earth-hours by creeping hands around the smug face of the chrono overhead; measured in mood and majesty by the slow progress of the dark ball of the Earth across the distant bright face of the sun.

Three days: twelve meals out of the chest freeze, duly warmed and eaten, but untasted; as many snatches at brief sleep that gave no rest; eighteen loggings of the instruments, checking new readings against prediction data 'from the analog. Three days: four thousand, three hundred and twenty minutes; how many seconds?

She could figure that out, but she couldn't, wouldn't, count the times she'd tried to call him. Or the endless stretches in between, waiting for him to call.

*Where are you now?* her need cried out within her. *Darling, I love you!*

How could he possibly not hear?

*Mike! How could you go away?*

She wouldn't call again. Not yet. Cathy moved restlessly under the magneblanket in her bunk, and wide awake in her renewed determination, sat bolt upright and peeled herself out of its comfortless clutches. She pushed off from the metal frame, barefoot, and floated in aimless circuit of her small domain: one round room, three full lengths of her body in diameter; a tiptoe stretch, with arms upraised, from the light magnetism that held her metal-seeded sandals on the "floor" to the "ceiling" bulkhead that separated the living quarters here from the storage compartment "above."

She *wouldn't* call again. She couldn't afford to.

On the ceiling, near the chrono, a green bulb glowed, had glowed for three full periods now, twelve hours, to remind her that the tiny universe was rapidly becoming a closed system. The bulb went on when the u-v's did, as soon as solar radiation on the algae-air tank fell below full-activity point. It would keep burning, tingeing the round room faintly green, as long as the lamps kept working on the tanks outside.

Beside the bulb, green numerals glared from a pale, violet-hued panel, offering the current index activity in the tank:

89.593.

She couldn't afford to use up oxygen now for anything but real necessities. And even if you stretched a psychological point to call this need essential, it was insane to draw on her reserves of air and heat both, trying to send a message he wouldn't even answer.

Wouldn't answer . . . All right, then keep the small reserves until he wants to call. That would be funny, wouldn't it? *Hilarious!* If he tried to call later, and she'd run her air too low by calling him to be able to answer.

Cathy tried to laugh at such absurdity, and found the humor of it was beyond her.

*Serve him right!*

The thought shocked her; she hadn't realized how angry she was beneath the doubt and worry. Just the same, she told herself, still trying to be funny, she didn't have to use all her oxygen and power now just to make sure she *didn't* answer when he—if he—called.

Besides, it might be useful to be able to answer a call from Control Central—or even *make* one if she had to. That's what they were paying her for, after all.

Eat; that's the thing to do. Time, and past time for a meal. *One message equals two meals*, she told herself primly in training-school sing-song.

Only she wasn't hungry.

"Ping!" The chrono chime startled her. She hadn't realized it was so late. "Instrument check," it reminded her softly. "1200 hours. Instrument check." Louder now: "Instrum—"

She switched it off in midword. They were paying her for this, too, she thought without interest, and reset the alarm for 1600 hours. She pushed off in the direction of the bunk, slid her feet into her sandals, began a slow, walking circuit of the room, logging the meter readings, resetting dials and controls.

Her mind was made up now. She would not—repeat, and underline, *would not*—make any effort to call Mike during the next period. After the 1600 check she could try again—once.

ALL quiet. All correct. Cathy fed her readings into the calcker, pulled a fresh tape out of the analog computer, and fed that data too into the softly whirring machine for swift comparison, knowing beforehand what the results would be. Everything checked well within the margin. She noted the minor variations meticulously on the analog corrector, reset the alarm systems, and checked her mental picture visually on the radar screen.

Everything in its place. A few tidy little asteroids, chasing their orbits around the vanishing sun, just as trim and true as the course of her own hollow cylinder of metal. Plenty of traffic to log, of course, but none to worry about. She was less than a million miles out from Earth now, and at that distance, Control Central still handled the live traffic.

All quiet . . . Bound to be quiet here, on the sunside swing of the Station's "rogue" orbit. A few more days, and she'd be inside Earth, slanting steadily "down" from the ecliptic, headed for perihelion just outside Venus. But by the time that happened, she wouldn't be aboard.

Just five more days to this tour. A week's time—one short week, if you looked at it that way—and she'd be back on Earth, while the station whirled on under the care of a pleasant-looking blonde girl named Eileen whose height and weight and basal metabolism rate were just the same as Cathy's, and who, fortunately, liked the same music and films. More than that they were unlikely to know about each other ever—or at least not while they were both in Service.

Thirty days on, thirty off. A great life if you could take it. The pay was good. The food was better than you might think. If you didn't mind no gravity or solitude. The living conditions were pleasant enough, once you had your own permanent Station, especially if your alternate had somewhat the same tastes you did. Bring out a few replacements each new trip for reading and amusement, and find the changes made in your absence as well.

Five years of it, and you were set for life. Not that you could save much in Service—too much temptation to spend when you were Earthside. But besides the retirement pay, which was good, there

were always jobs waiting for the glamorous heroes and heroines of the Space Service; and the best jobs of all were for the expert psychosomanticists who womanned—or manned—the Stations.

Cathy had almost four years of it behind her now. Seven more tours to retirement—and they'd both agreed it was foolish of her to quit. They could spend almost half the time together anyhow; and with both of them p-s-trained, no more was necessary. They could always keep in message-touch.

That's what they told each other, sanely, sensibly, after twenty days of wonder and enchantment back on Earth. No, not twenty, she reminded herself: nineteen. There was one day when they quarreled . . .

That was even worse than now. That time she'd known his absence was angry and deliberate. Now she could find excuses, invent reasons . . . *Drunk? . . . doped? . . . dead?* . . . she asked herself brutally, marveling that she found these answers easier to contemplate than anger or indifference.

*Because I don't believe them,* she realized ruefully. But what other reasons could there be?

Pride. His foolish pride! Or just hard work? Something top secret so he couldn't even let *her* know? Or ...

Sure, lots of reasons she could find, but none—the last included—that could make him just *walk out* without warning as he'd done. Unless the dream had been a warning after all: the scream in the dream that woke her from a period's sleep three long days back, just as the Station entered the penumbra of eclipse. He'd been gone when she came frightened-wide-awake that time; and she hadn't been able to reach him since.

THE coincidence was tempting, but she knew better. It *couldn't* be because of the eclipse. If it took radiating energy to message with, no one would ever be able to contact Earth from the outer Stations. . .

Still, there might be something special about *this* eclipse. Some by-effect, some related phenomenon she didn't know about. It was also quite true that she hadn't heard from Control Central since she entered the shadow. Hadn't tried to call them, either. She could try now, of course, and then she'd *know*. But if she *didn't* try, she could keep the illusory comfort in her mind; a feeble sort of straw to cling to, but in the absence of anything more solid, she hesitated to let it go.

Besides, it was just as wasteful to make an unnecessary call to Control as to Mike. *One message equals two meals.*

Oxy at 88.974. One meal equals two cigarettes. And she still wasn't hungry.

Ought to sleep, then. She was afraid to sleep. . . . Read a good film, then. She didn't feel like reading. She wanted a cigarette.

Four cigarettes is one message. *A message is only a message, but a good cigarette is a smoke.* Where did that come from?

*And where are you now, my darling? Mike! Please, Mike. . . .*

Sharply, she shut off the thought, and beneath it ran the thread of lonely melody again.

*Gloom an' misery everywhere . . . Since my man an' I ...*

Cathy reached over to the calcker and fingered the roll of tape that wound out of its answend, as if she could find with her fingers some piece of information that her eyes missed when she read it through before. Something, maybe, to tell her why Mike and the sun had gone away together.

But the calcker didn't know about Mike. If she asked it, *Where is he now? Why won't he answer me?* it would buzz and click unevenly, and in the end tap out one terse rebuking symbol on the tape: Insufficient data.

Well, that was her problem, too. A scream in a dream, and the shadow of the sun; that was all she had to work with. Plenty of data about everything else, though: a wall full of it all around her, and a roll of it, neatly digested, right in her hand.

And the warning on the ceiling: 88.899.

*You don't take chances on a Station!*

One cigarette, that's all, she promised herself. After all, she'd missed a meal. It was taking more of a chance, really, getting into this kind of state than using the extra little bit of air and heat.

*Algae's not at top efficiency, but neither am I.* Go ahead; pamper yourself a little. Better to have it now while the tank's still fairly high, still getting some solarays. If you're still wanting it tomorrow, you'll just be out of luck ...

CATHY kicked off her sandals and floated over to her personal storage cabinet. She got out a cigarette, hesitated, and, holding it, made a quick automatic check of radar screen and indicator dials. No change; with everything quiet outside, she could watch for a while. She threw a switch to open the sunward port, retrieved her shoes, and walked back across the room to a padded piece of bulkhead from which she could keep both screen and view-port comfortably within her angle of vision.

Curled up against the foampad on the 'floor,' her metal soles and metal-seeded tunic were enough to keep her "sitting," even if she moved 'a bit from time to time. It took some conscious effort of the muscles to pull free from the light magnetism of floor, chair, and bunk. Settled into a reasonable facsimile of gravity-sitting, Cathy listened to the purring of the motor fade away as the heavy metal hatch slid off the port, filling the room with deep-empurpled light.

*If things go on this way, ole rockin' chair will get me.* . . . With one long, angry inhalation, she lit her cigarette. Then she relaxed and watched the solar spectacle outside. Watched with an added guilty pleasure in her own delinquency through a thin veil of smoke that fanned out from the tip of fire in her fingers to the wide slits of air ducts round the room. . . .

She had watched at least a little while each day since it began. First a wedge of darkness, nothing more, nudging into the edge of the sun. Then a round black mallet squeezed at the giant ball of butter floating in fluid ice of space: shaped it into a fat crescent, then a thin and thinner one.

This time she found an almost total sphere of darkness cuddled inside the scant embrace of a lopsided new-moon sun: one arm, on top, much longer than the bottom one, because of the Station's relative position "under" the plane of the ecliptic.

But even as she watched, the long skinny arm on top grew visibly shorter; less than five hours from now the Station's orbit would intersect and enter the umbra of Earth's shadow. The "total" eclipse would last, then, for a full day and a little more. Twenty-six hours, seventeen minutes, thirty-nine seconds, the calcker said, and the figures stuck in her head like symbols of doom.

*No sun up in the sky! Stormy weather!*

There would be only a few more hours after that, two periods at most, before the Station raced inward under Earth's orbit, moving faster and faster into the full light of the sun again. Three days gone, and less than two to go—but all that time the green index figure on the ceiling would be falling.

At 50 percent, oxy production in the tank was just about equal to basic minimum requirements for one Cathy-sized individual doing a predetermined job in a known volume of space, with no waste motion, and no other unnecessary expenditure of air. According to the tape, the index wasn't likely to go below 57.000 this time—if she was careful. And that of course assumed continuous effective operation by the notoriously unreliable u-v's.

Cathy looked up at the green figure on the ceiling: 88.215.

It was falling faster now. Abruptly, she squashed out the not-quite-finished cigarette. The margin was just too narrow to fool around with. If the index did fall to fifty, it would mean accelerating the Station, using storage fuel from the great tank "overhead" to get back into the sunlight more quickly.

AT THE other end of the Station's long elliptical orbit, in the inner circle of the Asteroid Belt, such a maneuver was inevitably dangerous, and very possibly fatal. Getting even slightly off-course at any time made the analog predictions useless, and following an uncharted course out in the Belt, you were likely as not to find yourself disputing the right-of-way with a stubborn chunk of rock.

Cathy sat huddled against the cushioned bulkhead, alone and miserable, weary and wakeful, frustrated and fearful. The vast expanse outside the viewport seemed to have borrowed her mood for coloring.

*When he went away, the blues came in and met me.* . . .

Suddenly, she leaned over to the right, reached for a dial, and spun it fiercely, adjusting the

polarization of the port plastic to compensate for the change in quality and intensity of the sunlight. Three days drifting into the shadow, and she hadn't thought to do that before! Now the crescent sun flared into sudden brilliance, and the small room acquired an almost cheerful glare.

She was surprised at the difference it made; the purplish light had seemed normal and inevitable. *Stormy weather* . . . three days of it. No Mike. No light.

"Three days, that's all," she said out loud, trying to make it sound like just a little while. She'd gone twenty-five years, after all, without even knowing him. Now it was just three days since they'd lost contact. At worst, it was only another week before she'd be back on Earth herself, and could *find out*. One week . . . seven days; just seven brief eternities, that's all!

Time is a subjective phenomenon, she told herself. Time is a trick of the mind. "A purely personal psychological defense against dimensions beyond understanding. . . ." *Who was it who said that?* It seemed very profound. An instructor somewhere, maybe. . .

Time is where you hang your hopes. At least nobody had said *that*; that was Cathy, herself, original. Time-past is flat and gone, no more than a set of impressions in the cells of a brain. *My brain*. Time-future is tomorrow. But tomorrow never comes. It's always today, the time is now, a composite of memory and hope and longing focused on the pinpoint of perception that is now. . . .

Now is the time for all good Cathys to go to sleep. Got to sleep sometime. Close the hatch. Get in the bunk. Pull up the magneblanket . . . wonderful . . . good, good, *good* to be sleepy, relaxed . . .

"Alert for action. *Alert for action!* ALERT FOR ACTION."

The chrono speaker was louder and more incisive each time.

Cathy dived across the room to where two red bulbs glowed their warnings over agitated meter-needles. Quickly, reflectively, she fed new data into the calcker, ignoring the chrono speaker's increasingly urgent warnings till she could take time to switch it off. Then she hovered nervously over the whirring machine, waiting for the fresh tape to emerge, watching the radar screen beyond it for some sign of what the trouble might be.

Nothing there she didn't know about. Nothing but a little almost invisible interference fuzz in the far corner. Like windo tracks, or. . . .

She pulled at the tape as it began rolling out, and started it through the microfilm magnifier almost before there was enough length to let it ride the reel. Eagerly, she absorbed the steady stream of figures and symbols until, abruptly, everything fitted together, and the pattern was clear.

Just a little interference fuzz in one corner—a particloud! A mass of fragmentary rocks and pebbles, the debris of some unidentified catastrophe in space: perhaps a minor everyday collision in the Belt; perhaps some greater mishap farther out in the System; possibly, though unlikely, a grand smashup between two extra-solar bodies light-years away.

IT DIDN'T matter now where the cloud of grit and gravel came from; it mattered very much where it was going. And it was headed straight *in*, irresistibly drawn by the gravitational pull of the giant incinerator at the heart of the System. A tidy way to clean up solar trash—except that at its present velocity, the drift- was due to cross the busiest space-lanes in the System, just outside Earth's orbit, and perhaps—if it diffused at all under the pull of planetary gravity—brush through the very edges of the atmosphere.

Once more, Cathy checked the coordinates and velocity of the cloud, and then the Stations Catalogue. No doubt about it: it was her baby. No other Station anywhere in range, and she was almost directly in line between the oncoming drift and Control Central's satellite around Earth.

There was nothing very complex about the operation. Standard procedure was to release a fizz-jet from the storage bay; position it inside the cloud and set it off; the whole job done at the remote control board, using coordinates and timing set forth with near-impossible precision on the calcker tape.

If it were done just so, the tiny particles of matter that composed the cloud would be reduced to powder fine enough to be *pushed* back, clear out of the System, by photon-power alone. And any specks or pieces that remained big enough to continue to respond to the sun's gravity would be impelled by the bomb burst to drift out sideways, perpendicularly away from the plane of the ecliptic; when they

came floating back eventually, they'd be far out of the traveled space-lanes.

The operator's job was not so much difficult as delicate: a matter of steering the fizzer to its optimum placement, and then exploding it at the split second laid down by the calcker's figuring. It took practiced skill and close coordination—but Cathy had done it before, and as she got the data from the tape, found nothing out of the ordinary in this story beyond the edge of excitement provided by its imminent closeness to Earth.

She moved energetically now, logging data, setting up equations for the coordinates on the calcker, checking the analog, the screen, the dials and meters that belted her little world. When the call came through from Control Central twenty minutes after the first Alert, she registered it and replied without so much as a moment's delusion that it was Mike calling instead.

"Cath? Just checking. We got a particloud pattern on our screen in your sector."

"Yeah, I noticed."

"Everything under control?"

"I'm calcking the bomb-set now."

"How's it look from out there?"

*What's the matter with them?* Cathy wondered irritably, but kept her reactions out of her reply, or hoped she did. "S.O.P.," she answered tersely.

"Right. Check in when you get your set?"

"Better not. I'm eclipsed." She glanced at the ceiling. "Oxy's under 85 now, and a long way to go."

"Sorry."

Cathy recognized the personal pattern of the girl on the other end now: a kid named Luellen, just a few months out of school. No wonder she was nervous; this would seem like a Big Thing to her.

"Nobody told me," Luellen explained. "I guess I should have figured it out—"

"Forget it!" Cathy sent back briskly.

"Okay. We won't call again then unless it's urgent."

"Good. Anything goes wrong, I can still signal."

"Right. Signing out. . ." But before the contact was broken, another, more familiar, pattern cut in. ". . . Hey, Cath—you okay?" That was Bea Landau; she and Cathy had been in training together, and there was no excuse for anyone who'd spent four years behind a desk at Control Center kibitzing a message at a time like this.

"Sure I'm okay. Why?" This time Cathy didn't bother to conceal her annoyance.

"I dunno. Got some funny stuff around the edges there—I'm supervising the new girls today, and I was listening in on you—Listen, Cath, if anything's wrong, this is the time to—"

"*Nothing's* wrong. I just don't feel sociable. Get out, will you? I already said my oxy's low."

"Okay. But listen, Cath, if you want a hand, yell out."

"Sure. G'bye now."

DELIBERATELY, Cathy cut out of contact and went back to work. But as the data piled up, she began to realize more fully that Control had some reason to be worried. This cloud wasn't just the usual nuisance that might clutter up the spaceways and perhaps make a mess of repair bills for somebody's Mars-ship. A whole lot of money, and probably plenty of Service brass would be sitting around holding its breath right now, she thought with a certain relish.

Not that the job was actually a tough one. The cloud was coming in from outside and on top. Made it a simple matter to hit—the bomb would set practically smack in front of the middle of it.

Not a tough job, but a crucial one. Just what the doctor ordered, she thought grimly, for a girl who wanted to forget her own troubles.

It was almost too simple, though. Fifteen minutes more or less had all the figuring finished, and everything checked and rechecked. Nothing else to do about it now till the cloud came into range, and by the tape it would be close to five hours yet before any action began.

Meanwhile, the space around her was clear and quiet. She opened the viewport again, and settled back into the foam-padded spot on the floor, consciously seeking a renewal of the pleasant apathy that

had come last time, after she adjusted the plastic to let the sun come in.

But the mood was hard to find again. Part of her mind was busily retabulating the calcker's figures, and reevaluating the total problem, making certain of what needed to be done. For the rest, she was aware of an increasing sense of dullness and irritability as the good adrenal feeling of the first emergency wore off.

Well, dull is what I got to be right now, she told herself. Adrenalin equals oxygen, and don't forget it. She forced herself to relax, muscle by muscle, until she was little more than a collapsed heap on the floor: two great eyes drinking in the drama being staged outside her window; two ears alert for the first summons from the complex personality of the machine around her.

For more than an hour, she stayed that way; then the chime *pinged* again for the routine 1600-hour check. Cathy performed her chores mechanically, paying close attention only to what part of the data related to the cloud.

It was still holding shape and direction. Something better than three hours yet to wait before it was time for action.

She sat down again and remembered she had promised herself to call Mike again after this checkup.

But that was before the Alert. She couldn't do it now. Certainly not after snapping at Luellen just for keeping a contact open.

No, she wasn't even going to *think about* him any more; not till this business was done with, anyhow. Too easy to drift from memory and wistfulness into wanting to call; and such a swift slip from wanting to trying

The bomb-set was absurdly simple. Usually, there was a certain amount of complicated geometry involved in the placement. But this one was straightforward. No tricky angle shots this time—

THE open viewport was a black-felt billiard table and the dark ball of Earth rested in the golden pocket of the sun. Off to one side, an unknown player held an invisible cue-stick; nothing of it showed but the blue-chalked tip, where Venus ought to be

*And me behind the eight ball. No, he is. One of us is.*

Behind the eight ball. Maybe he wasn't on Earth at all. If he was on the other side of the sun for some reason

She tried to remember whether she had ever messaged cross-sol, and couldn't recall. But if it made any difference, she'd have learned about it long before this. Sun . . . thermal energy . . . she wanted a cigarette.

83.323.

She was hungry now, she guessed. It was food she really wanted, not a smoke.

Messaging would make her hungry. It always did.

*One message equals two meals.* But that was only in terms of direct oxygen consumption. It didn't figure thermal energy used up at the time, or the air and heat both that went into extra eating afterwards. The heat didn't matter so much right now; the Station's thermal-erg reserve was a lot bigger than its oxy margin.

Sure, and it takes a lot more ergs to send than to receive a message, she reminded herself. Besides, she didn't want to call him. He could reach her if he wanted to, pride said, and common sense approved.

*Just can't pull my poor self together. Stormy weather. . . .*

IT HAD been raining on Earth, the first time she heard the crazy old song, on a tinny-sounding tape made from an antique disk-record. That was the one time they'd been separated before. Two weeks after they first met, when they had their first, last, only, quarrel. For a whole day she couldn't reach him. She didn't have any pride that time—and she had lots of air.

On Earth the air is free.

She kept trying to find him all day, and couldn't. Then she heard the song.

It had all the tearing, tearful nostalgia so typical of the early twentieth-century folksongs. It sounded close and loud, for all the cracked acoustics of it, but she couldn't figure out where the sound was coming



from till she realized she'd found him at last. He was listening to it, playing it for her, too proud himself to say how he felt, but needing her back, and using this way to let her know, if she cared to hear.

A man can afford to be proud. Lucky for both of them that she knew *she* couldn't. He didn't try to find her at all; just sat listening to the tearful old tune, hoping she'd come and understand.

A woman couldn't afford to be proud. A Servicegirl couldn't take chances. Maybe that's why there were more women than men on the Stations, why women did better in psi-training than men. She'd heard something about new work with older people, where there was no sex differential in aptitude. A man, a young man, *had* to be proud. It made biologic sense. But it also meant somatic-semantic sets built-in . . . preconceptions that would naturally get in the way of free-associative interpretation of psi-somatic messages.

That meant it was up to her again, just like the last time. She was lucky to have found a guy who could psi at all. A guy worth having, that is.

But how could she do it? This time they hadn't quarrelled. She didn't know where or how to look for him.

No way of knowing even whether the scream in the dream had any meaning, or whether it was a product of her own subconscious fears.

Last month that wouldn't have occurred to her. But the psych tests didn't take into account the things that might happen when a girl met a guy.

Yes, they did, too. That's why you were supposed to report it when anything like this happened. She hadn't reported. She'd wanted to finish her term of Service. They never actually fired you, of course. But somehow the girls who fell in love always decided to quit—after a few visits with the psychers.

Maybe they were right, if she'd got to the point now where she couldn't tell the difference between a dream of her own and a message from Mike!

She ought to try just once more. . . .

81.506.

And outside, only the slimmest rim of light around the Earth.

*You don't take chances on a Station!*

It's not your own life you're playing with, Cathy. The Solar System has its eye on you.

No, it doesn't, either. Just a tiny corner of one eye, a veritable lewd wink of an eye. The sun can't see me now; it's got a cataract.

But the System depends on you, kid. How will all those lil chunks of rock know where to go if you don't show 'em the way?

*"Traffic Control is the most vital agency in the Space Service. We are no stronger than the weakest link in. . . ."*

Keep the vermin out of the skies. *Catherine Andauer, girl exterminator*. Somebody has to tell all the nasty little rogue rocks where to get off.

*If things keep up this way, ole rockin' chair will get me...*

If things kept up this way, she'd have to report in for psych leave, that's all.

If she could, that is . . . if she could still send a message at all. . . .

Meanwhile, there was a job to do, and no one to do it but her.

81.487, and the chrono said 1735 hours. Seventy minutes to go. Too late to sleep now.

Exercise.

That was the next best thing. Or maybe the best. Use up more oxygen, of course, but she could afford a *little* bit. And right now it was more important to stay alert. Stimulation could do more than relaxation sometimes.

She strapped herself into the massager and felt better almost immediately as rubber arms began to manipulate her stiff muscles and blood started pounding faster through her veins. She gave it ten minutes—less than she wanted, but a compromise with the green index figure. Then, in lieu of the meal she still didn't really want, she opened a bar of vi-choc concentrate and ate it slowly and determinedly, piece by piece, till it was all gone. Saved oxygen, too, she told herself, not heating a freeze-meal.

THE ceiling panel said 80.879 when the chrono read 1835, and the speaker said importantly:

"Final check before action. Commence last logging now. Initiate action in fifteen minutes. Last logging now. Final instrument check. Commence last. . . ."

She worked swiftly, surely, enjoying the feeling of urgency, as well as her own sense of competence. Meters and dials and familiar precision mechanisms—all things your eyes could perceive and your fingers could direct. Not like the strange uncharted stretches in the dark interior of self.

Check the logging against the analog. Run the last equations through the calcker one more time. Everything should check. Everything would be exactly... .

But it wasn't.

The cloud was not behaving in an orderly fashion. It was diffusing, as she'd known it might . . . toward Earth.

A three-body problem, in a sense: the third body composed of millions of specks and bits and pieces, and behaving in gravitational terms exactly as if it were a composite mass—of fluid!

She had set up general equations to meet the possibility beforehand, but now she had to work quickly, filling in new data and getting corrected results. She finished the comping and was still rechecking when the chrono speaker pinged again to remind her:

"Space suit. Space suit. Prepare for open locks. Space suit. Space suit."

Cathy slid out of her sandals and kicked off to where the empty metal shell stood firm and tall inside its grapples against the wall. She floated into position "above" it, then pushed herself feet first "down" inside. When her toes slid into place into the fleece-lined shoe-pieces, the torso section encased her up to her shoulders. She wriggled her arms into the flexible sleeves and each finger carefully into place in the glove-ends. Then she pulled the headpiece out of its clamps overhead, settled it into place on the shoulders, and gave it a quarter-turn, pushing hard against the gasket pressure till she heard the closure latch into place.

She snapped on the headphone, tested the battery of switches and levers on the controls belt, turned off the magnetism of the shoe soles, and floated clumsily over to the compactly designed remote-control keyboard.

Six minutes to zero. Cathy threw the permissive switch that would allow the twin bays in the bomb-storage compartment at the other end of the Station to open, as soon as the timing mechanism went into action. Nothing left to do now but close the "gills" of the space suit, and open the valve on the built-in oxygen tank.

But it was too soon still for that. Two minutes ahead of time was S.O.P., just long enough to make sure the system was operating effectively. Actually, the whole space-suit procedure was an almost-unnecessary precaution. There were two solid bulkheads between Cathy and the bomb-stores, and between them twenty feet of liquid fuel. But Service practice on this point was firmly set: if any port in a space vessel is to be opened out of atmosphere, all personnel must first don space gear. Overcautious, perhaps, but sensible in its way.

More important, actually, in this case was the always-present possibility that the Station attendant might actually have to leave the Station during the operation. It didn't happen often—but it could.

Five minutes to go, and time now for a final clearance check with Control Central if she were going to make one. Once the gills were closed, she had no further choice in the matter; any kind of long-distance messaging, even blank reception, would drain the suit's small oxy tank beyond the safety point.

Under normal circumstances, the final clearance was also S.O.P. But they wouldn't be expecting it now, with the complicating happenstance of the eclipse. And Cathy wasn't even thinking about Control Central at the moment.

*Suppose he tried to call now?*

Well, suppose he did! She'd been trying to get him for three solid days. If he tried once, and came up against a shut-out, he could damn well try again!

She *couldn't* call him now. If she *got* him, she wouldn't be able to stay in contact anyhow. There wasn't time.

It would be an hour, maybe more, after she closed the suit before she could open up again.

She stood there, struggling with the impossible, and suddenly his image was so sharply in her mind, his voice remembered in her ears, the imagined brush of his lips against her face so vividly real that, knowing the figure for the delusion it was, she was immersed in a salt wave of loneliness and misery beside which all that had gone before was insignificant.

FOR a moment she let herself be inundated by grief. But for a moment only. One sob escaped her; then her gloved fingers fumbled for the gill-valve switch.

*Better be lonely than dead*, she told herself, and wondered what the difference really was. But if he wouldn't answer anyhow, far better at least to be lonely alive than dead. Pride, this time, came to the aid of common sense; but with her finger on the switch, she still hesitated.

Three minutes still . . . In a swift compromise between desire and necessity, Cathy opened her mind to total blank reception; and even as she told herself once more on the thin top-conscious level that was still aware that she couldn't accept a call if it came—she felt him, and sent out a desperate searching hopeful answering cry:

*Mike!*

But there was nothing. Emptiness. Nobody there, until she felt the forming of a pattern that wasn't his at all. Luellen's? She couldn't wait to find out. The ringing in her ears was *not* emotion; it was the warning chime still sounding to announce the start of action!

Her finger on the switch exerted the small necessary pressure, and the suit was closed at last. Through the clear plastic of the headpiece her eyes sought and found twin dials on the control board where slim red needles moved in unison from left to right . . . *one tenth around already!* The timing mechanism was already operating, swinging open the two hatches on opposite sides of the cylinder from which the bomb and its counterweight in mass would be released.

*How long?*

*How long ago did it start?*

A few seconds? Or a fraction of one? What should she be doing right now?

She could figure it out, of course, from the position of the moving needles, but there was no time for figuring now, and her mind, set for a routine pattern of familiar activity, refused to face the unexpected new demands.

She'd missed the opening note, and she couldn't pick up the beat. Like trying to remember the words to a song, starting in the middle of a line . . . *Jest can't pull my poor self together.* . . .

*You damn well better, kid!*

Then her mind focused on what her eyes were watching; the control comp tape glowing on the board in front of her acquired meaning as well as form and color. Still, for one further stretch of time, uncounted and unrecoverable, her fingers twitched and trembled uncontrollably inside the heavy gloves. One bead of sweat, tracking across her cheek, seemed irritant beyond endurance.

She cursed herself and Mike and the Traffic Control Service in general and its many officers, sections, and subsections in particular and in detail. Then she stopped cursing, or thinking about anything at all, and pressed down a button on the board, *knowing* it was right, without knowing which it was, or why.

The fingers of the gloves, activated by nerves and ganglia in the girl's hand, impressed her will effortlessly on keys and switches whose grooves and weights had been designed to suit their touch. Cathy herself, from that moment on, was a machine, a complex and delicate machine, within a jointed metal container. She was conscious of nothing, for the time, except the job at hand, and her capacity to perform it.

Girl, suit, and cylinder, bomb and dummy counterweight: they were one organism with one mind, one goal, one life in common; and between them they possessed every organ of perception or of motion that could conceivably be utilized to conquer the immediate objective.

THE bomb was underway now, curving through empty space outside, under the impetus of radio

directives from the board. No way, no way at all for the girl at the board to know whether the time lost had upset her careful calculations. She followed the luminous pointer as it worked its way down the calcker tape; set her coordinates and velocities according to the predetermined course; but never for an instant was she unaware of the danger that the delay—how long, *how long*?—might have made the whole performance useless.

Useless or worse. When it was done, placement achieved as planned, and there remained just one more act to perform, Cathy depressed the button that would fire the bomb, not knowing as she did whether her act was one of dutiful efficiency, futile stupidity—or suicide.

Then the pinpoint of light on the screen that piped the bomb vanished from sight. And the irregular area of interference fuzz now centered on the screen began to spread out and retreat, dissolving as it went. Like that. Done. *Right!*

HE STROKED her head absently, the fear not quite gone from his eyes above his broad grin.

"You silly dame," he said tenderly. "Silly suspicious female. If you can't trust me when you can't see me, you better stick around after this."

Cathy smiled and stretched luxuriously, and woke from the wonderful dream to sweet reality.

"Hi, babe." *His* pattern this time. No mistake. "Awake now? Sure. Sure I'm here. I have been all along . . . almost all along. Except four hours maybe, till they got my leg fixed up."

"Your leg? What...?" But she didn't have to ask. She knew. He'd told her in the dream, while she was sleeping. The accident. The torn second's pain, and her own scream, feeling what he did as she slept, and then he was gone, and she was terrified.

He'd shut her out briefly, to keep the pain from her. And when he tried to call her back again, he couldn't find her.

*His pride*, she thought with a smile now. *It was his pride.*

He wouldn't share the pain. And she *couldn't* share her fear. From the first moment that she thought he'd left her, from the beginning of her harried searching for him, from when she'd let herself mix motives and meanings with the memory of her own scream—from that time on, it was increasingly impossible for him to make contact with her. From that time, till she fell asleep in the total-exhaustion aftermath of the day's work. "Okay, babe?" he asked. "You all right now?"

"I'm fine," she answered. "I'm just fine now. But Mike —don't go away again."

"Never," he promised, and she thought: *I can walk in the sun again.*

## PEEPING TOM

YOU TAKE a boy like Tommy Bender—a nice American boy, well brought-up in a nice, average, middle-class family; chock-full of vitamins, manners and baseball statistics; clean-shaven, soft-spoken, and respectful to women and his elders. You take a boy like that, fit him out with a uniform, teach him to operate the most modern means of manslaughter, reward him with a bright gold bar, and send him out to an exotic eastern land to prove his manhood and his patriotism.

You take a kid like that. Send him into combat in a steaming jungle inferno; teach him to sweat and swear with conviction; then wait till he makes just one wrong move, pick him out of the pool of drying blood, beat off the flies, and settle him safely on a hospital cot in an ill-equipped base behind the lines, cut off from everyone and everywhere, except the little native village nearby. Let him rest and rot there for a while. Then bring him home, and pin a medal on him, and give him his civvies and a pension to go with his limp. You take a boy like Tommy Bender, and do all that to him, you won't expect him to be quite the same nice, apple-cheeked youngster afterwards.

He wasn't.

When Tommy Bender came home, he was firmly disillusioned and grimly determined. He knew what he wanted out of life, had practically no hope of getting it, and didn't much care how he went about getting the next best things. And in a remarkably short time, he made it clear to his erstwhile friends and

neighbors that he was almost certain to get anything he went after. He made money; he made love; he made enemies. Eventually, he made enough of a success so that the enemies could be as thoroughly ignored as yesterday's woman. The money, and the things it bought for him, he took good care of.

For almost five years after he came home, Tommy Bender continued to build a career and ruin reputations. People tried to understand what had happened to him; but they didn't really.

Then, abruptly, something happened to change Tommy. His business associates noticed it first; his family afterwards. The girls he was seeing at the time were the last to know, because he'd always been undependable with them, and not hearing from him for two or three weeks wasn't unusual.

What happened was a girl. Her name was Candace, and when she was married to Tommy, seven weeks after her arrival, the papers carried the whole romantic story. It was she who had nursed him back to health in that remote village on the edge of the jungle years ago. He'd been in love with her then, but she'd turned him down.

That last part wasn't in the news story of course, but it got around town just as fast as the paper did. Tommy's bitterness, it seemed, was due to his long-frustrated love. And anyone could see how he'd changed since Candace came back to him. His employees, his debtors, his old friends and discarded women, his nervous mother and his angry brother all sighed with relief and decided everything was going to be all right now. At last they really understood.

But they didn't. They didn't, for instance, understand what happened to Tommy Bender in that God-forsaken little town where he'd spent two months on crutches, waiting for his leg to heal enough to travel home.

It was hot and sticky in the shack. The mattress was lumpy. His leg itched to the very fringes of madness, and the man on his right had an erratically syncopated snore that took him past the raveled edge straight to insanity. All he needed to make the torture complete was the guy on his left—and the nurse.

The nurse was young and round and lithe, and she wore battle fatigues: slacks, and a khaki shirt that was always draped against her high, full breasts in the damp heat. Her hair, dark blonde or light brown, was just long enough to be pinned back in a tiny bun, and just short enough so wisps of it were always escaping to curl around her ears or over her forehead.

When she bent over him to do any of the small humiliating services he needed done for him, he could see tiny beads of sweat on her upper lip, and that somehow was always the one little touch too much.

So that after she moved on to the next bed, and beyond it, it would be torture to have Dake, the guy on the left, turn toward him and start describing, graphically, what he would do if he could just get his remaining arm out of the cast for fifteen minutes some day.

You see Tommy Bender was still a nice young man then—after the combat, and the wound, and the flies, and the rough hospitalization.

Dake was nothing of the sort. He'd been around, and he knew exactly what value he placed on a woman. And he enjoyed talking about it.

Tommy listened because there was no way not to, and he wriggled and sweated and suffered, and the itch in his leg got worse, and the stench from the garbage pile outside became unbearable. It went on that way, hour after hour and day after day, punctuated only by the morning visit from the medic, who would stop and look him over, and shake a weary, discouraged head, and then go on to the next man.

The leg was a long time healing. It was better after Dake left, and was replaced with a quietly dying man who'd got it in the belly. After him, there was a nice young Negro soldier, somewhat embarrassed about being in sick bay with nothing more dramatic than appendicitis. But at least, now, Tommy could keep his thoughts and dreams about Candace to himself, untarnished.

Then one day, when it had begun to seem as if nothing would ever change again in his life, except the occupants of the beds on either side of him, something happened to break the monotony of discomfort and despair. The medic stopped a little longer than usual in front of Tommy's cot, studied the neat chart Candy was always filling in, and furrowed his brow with concern. Then he muttered something to Candace, and she looked worried too. After that, they both turned and looked at Tommy as if they were

seeing him for the first time, and Candy smiled, and the doctor frowned a little deeper.

"Well, young man," he said, "We're going to let you get up."

"Thanks, doc," Tommy said, talking like a GI was supposed to. "What should I do with the leg? Leave it in bed?"

"Ha, ha," the doctor laughed. Just like that. "Good to see you haven't lost your spirit." Then he moved on to the next bed, and Tommy lay there wondering. What would he do with the leg?

That afternoon, they came for him with a stretcher, and took him to the surgery shack, and cut off the cast. They all stood around, five or six of them, looking at it and shaking their heads and agreeing it was pretty bad. Then they put a new cast on, a little less bulky than the first one, and handed him a pair of crutches, and said: "Okay, boy, you're on your own."

An orderly showed him how to use them, and helped him get back to his own bed. The next day he practiced up a little, and by the day after that, he could really get around.

It made a difference.

Tommy Bender was a nice normal American boy, with all the usual impulses. He had been weeks on end in the jungle, and further weeks on his back in the cot. It was not strange that he should show a distinct tendency to follow Candy about from place to place, now he was on his feet again.

The pursuit was not so much hopeful as it was instinctive. He never, quite, made any direct advance to her. He ran little errands, and helped in every way he could, as soon as he was sufficiently adept in the handling of his crutches. She was certainly not ill-pleased by his devotion, but neither, he knew, was she inclined to any sort of romantic attachment to him.

Once or twice, acting on private advice from the more experienced ambulant patients, he made tentative approaches to some of the other nurses, but met always the same kindly advice that they felt chasing nurses would not be good for his leg. He accepted his rebuffs in good part, as a nice boy will, and continued to trail around after Candy.

It was she, quite inadvertently, who led him to a piece of good fortune. He saw her leave the base one early evening, laden with packages, and traveling on foot. Alone. For a GI, these phenomena might not have been unusual. For a nurse to depart in this manner was extraordinary, and Candace slipped out so quietly that Tommy felt certain no one but himself was aware of it.

He hesitated about following at first; then he started worrying about her, threw social caution to the winds, and went swinging down the narrow road behind her, till she heard him coming and turned to look, then to wait.

She was irritated at first; then, abruptly, she seemed to change her mind.

"All right, come along," she said. "It's just a visit I'm going to pay. You can't come in with me, but you can wait if you want to, and walk me back again."

He couldn't have been more pleased. Or curious.

Their walk took them directly into the native village, where Candace seemed to become confused. She led Tommy and his crutches up and down a number of dirty streets and evil-looking alleys before she located the small earthen hut she was looking for, with a wide stripe of blue clay over its door.

While they searched for the place, she explained nervously to Tommy that she was fulfilling a mission for a dead soldier, who had, in a period of false recovery just before the end, made friends with an old man of this village. The dying GI had entrusted her with messages and gifts for his friend—most notably a sealed envelope and his last month's cigarette ration. That had been three weeks ago, and she'd spent the time since working up her courage to make the trip. Now, she confessed, she was more than glad Tommy had come along.

When they found the hut at last, they found a comparatively clean old man sitting cross-legged by the doorway, completely enveloped in a long gray robe with a hood thrown back off his shaven head. There was a begging bowl at his side, and Tommy suggested that Candace might do best just to leave her offerings in the bowl. But when she bent down to do so, the old man raised his head and smiled at her.

"You are a friend of my friend, Karl?" he asked in astonishingly good English.

"Why . . . yes," she fumbled. "Yes. Karl Larsen. He said to bring you these. . . ."

"I thank you. You were most kind to come so soon." He stood up, and added, just to her, ignoring

Tommy. "Will you come inside and drink tea with me, and speak with me of his death?"

"Why, I—" Suddenly she too smiled, apparently quite at ease once more. "Yes, I'd be glad to. Thank you. Tommy," she added, "would you mind waiting for me? I . . . I'd appreciate having someone to walk back with. It won't be long. Maybe—" she looked at the old man who was smiling, waiting—"maybe half an hour," she finished.

"A little more or less perhaps," he said, in his startlingly clear American diction. "Perhaps your friend would enjoy looking about our small village meanwhile, and you two can meet again here in front of my door?"

"Why, sure," Tommy said, but he wasn't sure at all. Because as he started to say it, he had no intention of moving away from that door at all while Candy was inside. He'd stay right there, within earshot. But by the time the second word was forming in his mouth, he had a sudden clear image of what he'd be doing during that time.

And he was right.

No sooner had Candy passed under the blue-topped doorway than a small boy appeared at Tommy's other elbow. The youngster's English was in no way comparable to that of the old man. He knew just two words, but they were sufficient. The first was: "Youghcigarreh?" The second: "Iguhsisseh."

Tommy dug in his pockets, came out with a half-full pack, registered the boy's look of approval, and swung his crutches into action. He followed his young friend up and down several of the twisty village alleys, and out along a footpath into the forest. Just about the time he was beginning to get worried, they came out into a small clearing, and a moment later "Sisseh" emerged from behind a tree at the far edge.

She was disconcertingly young, but also unexpectedly attractive: smooth-skinned, graceful, and roundly shaped. . . .

Somewhat later when he found his way back to the blue-topped door in the village, Candy was already waiting for him, looking thoughtful and a little sad. She seemed to be no more in the mood for conversation than was Tommy himself, and they walked back to the base in almost complete silence. Though he noted once or twice that her quiet mood was dictated by less happy considerations than his own, Tommy's ease of mind and body was too great at that moment to encourage much concern for even so desirable a symbol of American womanhood as the beautiful nurse, Candace.

Not that his devotion to her lessened. He dreamed of her still, but the dreams were more pleasantly romantic, and less distressingly carnal. And on those occasions when he found his thoughts of her verging once more toward the improper, he would wander off to the little village and regain what he felt was a more natural and suitable attitude toward life and love in general.

Then, inevitably, there came one such day when his young procurer was nowhere to be found. Tommy went out to the clearing where Sisseh usually met them, but it was quiet, empty and deserted. Back in the village again, he wandered aimlessly up and down narrow twisting streets, till he found himself passing the blue-topped doorway of the old man whose friendship with a dead GI had started the whole chain of events in motion.

"Good morning, sir," the old man said, and Tommy stopped politely to return the greeting.

"You are looking for your young friend?"

Tommy nodded, and hoped the warmth he could feel on his face didn't show. Small-town gossip, apparently, was much the same in one part of the world as in another.

"I think he will be busy for some time yet," the old man volunteered. "Perhaps another hour . . . his mother required his services for an errand to another village."

"Well, thanks," Tommy said. "Guess I'll come back this afternoon or something. Thanks a lot."

"You may wait here with me if you like. You are most welcome," the old man said hastily. "Perhaps you would care to come into my home and drink tea with me?"

Tommy's manners were good. He had been taught to be respectful to his elders, even to the old colored man who came to clip the hedges. And he knew that an invitation to tea can never be refused without excellent good reason. He had no such reason, and he did have a warm interest in seeing his dusky beauty just as soon as possible. He therefore overcame a natural reluctance to become a visitor in

one of the (doubtless) vermin-infested native huts, thanked the old man politely, and accepted the invitation.

Those few steps, passing under the blue-topped doorway for the first time, into the earthen shack, were beyond doubt the most momentous of his young life. When he came out again, a full two hours later, there was nothing on the surface to show what had happened to him . . . except perhaps a more-than-usually thoughtful look on his face. But when Sisseh's little brother pursued him down the village street, Tommy only shook his head. And when the boy persisted, the soldier said briefly: "No got cigarettes."

The statement did not in any way express the empty-handed regret one might have expected. It was rather an impatient dismissal by a man too deeply immersed in weighty affairs to regard either the cigarettes or their value in trade as having much importance.

Not that Tommy had lost any of his vigorous interest in the pleasures of the flesh. He had simply acquired a more far-sighted point of view. He had plans for the future now, and they did not concern a native girl whose affection was exchangeable for half a pack of Camels.

Swinging along the jungle path on his crutches, Tommy was approaching a dazzling new vista of hope and ambition. The goals he had once considered quite out of reach now seemed to be just barely beyond his grasp, and he had already embarked on a course of action calculated to remedy that situation. Tommy was apprenticed to telepath.

The way it happened, the whole incredible notion seemed like a perfectly natural idea. Inside the one-room hut, the old man had introduced himself as Armod Something-or-other. (The last name was a confusion of clashing consonants and strangely inflected vowels that Tommy never quite got straight.) He then invited his young guest to make himself comfortable, and began the preparation of the tea by pouring water from a swan-necked glass bottle into a burnished copper kettle suspended by graceful chains from a wrought-iron tripod over a standard-brand hardware-store Sterno stove.

The arrangement was typical of everything in the room. East met West at every point with a surprising minimum of friction, once the first impact was absorbed and the psychological dislocation adjusted.

Tommy settled down at first on a low couch, really no more than a native mat covering some woven webbing, stretched across a frame that stood a few inches off the floor on carved ivory claws. But he discovered quickly enough that it did not provide much in the way of comfort for a long-legged young man equipped with a bulky cast. An awful lot of him seemed to be stretched out over the red-and-white tile pattern linoleum that covered the center of the dirt floor . . . and he noticed, too, that his crutches had left a trail of round dust-prints on the otherwise spotless surface.

He wiped off the padded bottoms of the crutches with his clean handkerchief, and struggled rather painfully back to his feet.

The whole place was astonishingly clean. Tommy wandered around, considerably relieved at the absence of any very noticeable insect life, examining the curious contents of the room, and politely refraining from asking the many questions that came to mind.

The furnishing consisted primarily of low stools and tables, with a few shelves somehow set into the clay wall. There was one large, magnificently carved mahogany chest, which might have contained Ali Baba's fortune; and on a teakwood table in the corner, with a pad on the floor for a seat, stood a large and shiny late-model American standard typewriter.

A bookshelf near the table caught Tommy's eye, and the old man, without turning around, invited his guest to inspect it. Here again was the curious mixture of East and West: new books on philosophy, psychology, semantics, cybernetics published in England and America. Several others, though fewer, on spiritualism, psychic phenomena, and radio-esthesia. And mixed in with them, apparently at random, short squat volumes and long thin ones, lettered in unfamiliar scripts and ideographs.

On the wall over the bookshelf hung two strips of parchment, such as may be seen in many eastern homes, covered with ideograph characters brilliantly illuminated. Between them was a glass-faced black frame containing the certification of Armod's license to practice medicine in the state of Idaho, U.S.A.

It did not seem in any way unnatural that Armod should come over and answer explicitly the obvious



questions that this collection of anomalies brought to mind. In fact, it took half an hour or more of conversation before Tommy began to realize that his host was consistently replying to his thoughts rather than to his words. It took even longer for him to agree to the simple experiment that started him on his course of study.

But not much longer. An hour after he first entered the hut, Tommy Bender sat staring at eight slips of white paper on which were written, one word to each, the names of eight different objects in the room. The handwriting was careful, precise and clear. Not so the thoughts in Tommy's mind. He had "guessed," accurately, five of the eight objects, holding the faded piece of paper in his hand. He tried to tell himself it was coincidence; that some form of trickery might be involved. The hand is quicker than the eye. . . . But it was his own hand that held the paper; he himself unfolded it after making his guess. And Armod's calm certainty was no help in the direction of skepticism.

"Well," Tommy asked uncertainly, "what made you think I could do it?"

"Anyone can do it," Armod said quietly. "For some it is easier than for others. To bring it under control, to learn to do it accurately, every time, is another matter altogether. But the sense is there, in all of us."

Tommy was a bit crestfallen; whether he believed in it or not, he preferred to think there was something a bit special about it.

Armod smiled, and answered his disappointment. "For you, it is easier I think than for many others. You are—ah, I despise your psychiatric jargon, but there is no other way to say it so you will understand—you are at ease with yourself. Relaxed. You have few basic conflicts in your personality, so you can reach more easily into the —no it is not the 'subconscious.' It is a part of your mind you have simply not used before. You can use it. You can train it. You need only the awareness of it, and—practice."

Tommy thought that over, slowly, and one by one the implications of it dawned on him.

"You mean I can be a mind reader? Like the acts they do on the stage? I could do it professionally?"

"If you wished to. Few of those who pretend to read minds for the entertainment of others can really do so. Few who have the ability and training would use it in that way. You—ah, you are beginning to grasp some of the possibilities," the old man said, smiling.

"Go on," Tommy grinned. "Tell me what I'm thinking now."

"It would be most . . . indelicate. And . . . I will tell you; I do not believe you will have much chance of success, with her. She is an unusual young woman. Others . . . you will be startled, I think, to find how often a forbidding young lady is more hopeful even than willing."

"You're on," Tommy told him. "When do the lessons start, and how much?"

The price was easy; the practice was harder. Tommy gave up smoking entirely, suffered a bit, got over it, and turned his full attention to the procedures involved in gaining "awareness." He lay for hours on his cot, or sat by himself on a lonely hillside in the afternoon sun, learning to sense the presence of every part of himself as fully as that of the world around him.

He learned a dozen different ways of breathing, and discovered how each of them changed, to some slight degree, the way the rest of his body "felt" about things. He found out how to be completely receptive to impressions and sensations from outside himself; and after that, how to exclude them and be aware only of his own functioning organism. He discovered he could feel his heart beating and his food digesting, and later imagined he could feel the wound in his leg healing, and thought he was actually helping it along.

This last piece of news he took excitedly to Armod along with his full ration of cigarettes—and was disappointed to have his mentor receive his excited outpourings with indifference.

"If you waste your substance on such side issues," Armod finally answered his insistence with downright disapproval, "you will be much longer in coming to the true understanding."

Tommy thought that over, swinging back along the jungle path on his crutches, and came to the conclusion that he could do without telepathy a little longer, if tic could just walk on his own two feet again. Not that

really believed the progress was anything but illusory—until he heard the medics' exclamations of

surprise the next time they changed the cast.

After that, he was convinced. The whole rigamoro was producing some kind of result; maybe it would even, incredibly, do what Armod said it would.

Two weeks later, Tommy got his first flash of certainty. He was, by then, readily proficient in picking thoughts out of Armod's mind; but he knew, too, that the old man was "helping" him . . . maintaining no barriers at all against invasion. Other people had habitual defenses that they didn't even know how to let down. Getting through the walls of verbalization, habitual reaction, hurt, fear and anger, to find out what was really happening inside the mind of a telepathically "inert" person took skill and determination.

That first flash could not in any way be described as "mind reading." Tommy did not hear or read or see any words or images. All he got was a wave of feeling; he was sure it was not his own feeling only because he was just then on his way back from a solitary hillside session in which he had, with considerable thoroughness, identified all the sensations his body then contained.

He was crossing what was laughably referred to as the "lawn"—an area of barren ground decorated with unrootable clumps of tropical weeds, extending from the mess hall to the surgery shack and surrounded by the barracks buildings—when the overwhelming wave of emotion hit him.

It contained elements of affection, interest, and—he checked again to be certain—desire. Desire for a man. He was quite sure now that the feeling was not his, but somebody else's.

He looked about, with sudden dismay, aware for the first time of a difficulty he had not anticipated. That he was "receiving" someone else's emotions he was certain; whose, he did not know.

In front of the surgery shack, a group of nurses stood together, talking. No one else was in sight. Tommy realized, unhappily, that the lady who was currently feeling amorous did not necessarily have to be in his line of vision. He had learned enough about the nature of telepathy by then to understand that it could penetrate physical barriers with relative ease. But he had a hunch. . . .

He had learned enough, too, to understand some part of the meaning of that word, "hunch." He deliberately stopped thinking, insofar as he could, and followed his hunch across the lawn to the group of nurses. As he approached them, he let instinct take over entirely. Instead of speaking to them, he made as if to walk by, into the shack.

"Hey there, Lieutenant," one of them called out, and Tommy strained his muscles not to smile with delight. He turned around, innocently, inquiring.

"Surgery's closed now," the little red-headed one said sharply. That wasn't the one who'd called to him. It was the big blonde; he was almost sure.

"Oh?" he said. "I was out back of the base, on the hill there, and some damn bug bit me. Thought I ought to get some junk put on it. You never know what's hit you with the kind of skeeters they grow out here." He addressed the remark to the group in general, and threw in a grin that he had been told made him look most appealing like a little boy, meanwhile pulling up the trouser on his good leg to show a fortuitously placed two-day-old swelling. "One leg out of commission is enough for me," he added. "Thought maybe I ought to kind of keep a special eye on the one that still works." He looked up, and smiled straight at the big blonde.

She regarded the area of exposed skin with apparent lack of interest, hesitated, jangled a key in her pocket, and said abruptly, "All right, big boy."

Inside the shack, she locked the door behind them, without appearing to do anything the least bit unusual. Then she got a tube of something out of a cabinet on the wall, and told him to put his leg up on the table.

Right then, Tommy began to understand the real value of what he'd learned, and how to use it. There was nothing in her words or her brisk movements to show him how she felt. While she was smoothing the gooey disinfectant paste on his bite, and covering it with a bandage, she kept up a stream of light talk and banter that gave no clue at all to the way she was appraising him covertly. Tommy had nothing to do but make the proper responses—two sets of them.

Out loud, he described with appropriate humor the monstrous size and appearance of the bug that they both knew hadn't bitten him. But all the time he kept talking and kidding just as if he was still a nice American boy, he could feel her wanting him, until he began to get confused between what she wanted

and what he did; and his eyes kept meeting hers, unrelated to the words either of them were saying, to let her know he knew.

Each time her hand touched his leg, it was a little more difficult to banter. When it got too difficult, he didn't.

Later, stretched out on his cot in the barracks, he reviewed the entire incident with approval, and made a mental note of one important item. The only overt act the girl made—locking the door—had been accompanied by a strong isolated thought surge of "Don't touch me!" Conversely, the more eager she felt, the more professional she acted. Without the aid of his special one-way window into her mind, he knew he would have made his play at precisely the wrong moment—assuming he'd had the courage to make it at all. As it was, he'd waited till there was no longer any reason for her to believe that he'd even noticed the locking of the door.

That was Lesson Number One about women: Wait! Wait till you're sure she's sure. Tommy repeated it happily to himself as he fell asleep that night; and only one small regret marred his contentment. It wasn't Candace. . . .

Lesson Number Two came more slowly, but Tommy was an apt pupil, and he learned it equally well: Don't wait too long! The same simple forthright maneuver, he found, that would sweep a normally co-operative young lady literally off her feet if the timing was right would, ten minutes later, earn him nothing more than an indignant slap in the face. By that time, the girl had already decided either that he wasn't interested (insulted); or that he wasn't experienced enough to do anything about it (contemptuous); or that he was entirely lacking in sensitivity, and couldn't possibly understand her at all (both).

These two lessons Tommy studied assiduously. Between them, they defined the limits of that most remarkable point in time, the Precise Moment. And the greatest practical value of his new skill, so far as Tommy could see, was in being able to locate that point with increasing accuracy. The most noticeable property of the human mind is its constant activity; it is a rare man—and notoriously an even rarer woman—who has only one point of view on a given subject, and can stick to it. Tommy discovered soon enough that whatever he was after, whether it was five bucks to get into a poker game, or a date with one of the nurses, the best way to get it was to wait for that particular moment when the other person really wanted to give it to him.

It should be noted that Tommy Bender retained some ethics during this period. After the first two games, he stopped playing poker. Possibly, he was affected by the fact that suspicious rumors about his "luck" were circulating too freely; but it is more likely that the game had lost its punch. He didn't really need the money out there anyhow. And the process of his embitterment was really just beginning.

Three weeks after the incident in the surgery shack, Tommy got his orders for transfer to a stateside hospital. During that short time, though still impeded by cast and crutches, he acquired a quantity and quality of experience with women that more than equaled the total of his previous successes. And along with it, he suffered a few shocks.

That Tommy had both manners and ethics has already been established. He also had morals. He thought he ought to go to church more often than he did; he took it for granted that all unmarried women were virgins till proved otherwise; he never (or hardly ever) used foul language in mixed company. That kind of thing.

It was, actually, one of the smaller shocks, discovering the kind of language some of those girls knew. Most of them were nurses, after all, he reminded himself; they heard a lot of guys talking when they were delirious or in pain, but—but that didn't explain how clearly they seemed to understand the words. Or that the ones who talked the most refined were almost always the worst offenders in their minds.

The men's faults he could take in stride; it was the women who dismayed him. Not that he didn't find some "pure" girls; he did, to his horror. But the kind of feminine innocence he'd grown up believing in just didn't seem to exist. The few remaining virgins fell into two categories: those who were so convinced of their own unattractiveness that they didn't even know it when a pass was being made at them; and those who were completely preoccupied with a sick kind of fear-and-loathing that Tommy couldn't even stand to peep at for very long.

Generally speaking, the girls who weren't actually looking for men (which they did with a gratifying

but immoral enthusiasm), were either filled with terror and disgust, or were calculating wenches who made their choice for or against the primrose path entirely in terms of the possible profit involved, be it in fast cash or future wedded bliss.

Tommy did find one exception to this generally unpleasant picture. To his determined dismay, and secret pleasure, he discovered that Candace really lived up to his ideal of the American girl. Her mind was a lovely, orderly place, full of softness and a sort of generalized liking for almost everybody. Her thoughts on the subject of most interest to him were also in order: She was apparently well-informed in an impersonal sort of way; ignorant of any personal experience and rather hazily, pleasurably, anticipating the acquisition of that experience in some dim future when she pictured herself as happily in love and married.

As soon as he was quite sure of this state of affairs, Tommy proposed. Candace as promptly declined, and that, for the time being, terminated their relationship. The nurse went about her duties, and whatever personal matters occupied her in her free time. The soldier returned to his pursuit of parapsychology, women and disillusion.

Tommy had no intention of taking these troubles to his teacher. But neither did Armod have to wait for the young man to speak before he knew. This time he was neither stern nor impatient. He spoke once again of the necessity for continuing study till one arrived at the "true understanding," but now he was alternately pleading and encouraging. At one point he was even apologetic.

"I did not know that you would learn so quickly," he said. "If I had foreseen this—doubtless I would have done precisely what I did. One cannot withhold knowledge, and . . ."

He paused, smiling gently and with great sadness. "And the truth of the matter is, you did not ask for knowledge. I offered it. I sold it! Because I could not deny myself the petty pleasure of your cigarettes!"

"Well," Tommy put in uncomfortably, "You made good on it, didn't you? Seems to me you did what you said you would."

"Yes—no," he corrected himself. "I did nothing but show the way. What has been done you did for yourself, as all men must. I cannot see or smell or taste for you; no more could I open the way into men's hearts for you. I gave you a key, let us say, and with it you unlocked the door. Now you look on the other side, but you do not, you can not, understand what you see. It is as though one were to show an infant, just learning to use his eyes, a vision of violent death and bloody birth. He sees, but he does not know. . . ."

Tommy stirred on the low couch, where he could now sit, as the old man did, cross-legged and at ease. But he was uneasy now. He picked up the cane that had replaced the crutches, toying with it, thinking hopefully of departure. Armod understood, and said quickly, "Listen now: I am an old man, and weak in my way. But I have shown you that I have knowledge of a sort. There is much you have yet to learn. If you are to perceive so clearly the depths of the human soul, then it is essential that you learn also to understand. . . ."

The old man spoke on; the young one barely listened. He knew he was going home in another week. There was no sense talking about continuing his studies with Armod. And there was no need to continue; certainly no wish to. What he had already learned, Tommy felt, was very likely more than enough. He sat as quietly as he could, being patient till the old man was done talking. Then he stood up, and muttered something about getting back in time for lunch.

Armod shook his head and smiled, still sadly. "You will not hear me. Perhaps you are right. How can I speak to you of the true understanding, when I am still the willing victim of my own body's cravings? I am not fit. I am not fit. . . ."

Tommy Bender was a very disturbed young man. He was getting what he'd wanted, and he didn't like it. He was grateful to Armod, and also angry at him. His whole life seemed to be a string of contradictions.

He drifted along in this unsettled state for the remaining week of his foreign service. Then, in a sudden flurry of affection and making amends, the day he got his orders, he decided to see the old man just once more. Most of the morning he spent racing around the base rounding up all the cigarettes he could get with what cash he had on hand, plus a liberal use of the new skills Armod had taught him. Then he got his

gear together quickly. He was due at the air strip at 1400 hours, and at 1130 he left the base for a last walk to the village, the cane in one hand, two full cartons of butts in the other.

He found Armod waiting for him in a state of some agitation, apparently expecting him. There ensued a brief formal presentation of Tommy's gift, and acceptance of it; then for the last time, the old man invited him to drink tea, and ceremoniously set the water to simmer in the copper pot.

They both made an effort, and managed to get through the tea-drinking with no more than light polite talk. But when Tommy stood up to leave, Armod broke down.

"Come back," he begged. "When you are free of your service, and have funds to travel, come back to study again."

"Why, sure, Armod," Tommy said. "Just as soon as I can manage it."

"Yes, I see. This is what they call a social lie. It is meant not to convince me, but to terminate the discussion. But listen, I beg you, one moment more. You can see and hear in the mind now; but you cannot talk, nor can you keep silence. Your own mind is open to all who come and know how to look—"

"Armod, please, I—"

"You can learn to project thought as I do. To build a barrier against intrusion. You can—"

"Listen, Armod," Tommy broke in determinedly again. "I don't have to know any of that stuff. In my home town, there isn't anybody else who can do this stuff. And there's no reason for me to ever come back here. Look, I'll tell you what I can do. When I get back home, I can send you all the cigarettes you want—"

"No!"

The old man jumped up from his mat on the floor, and took two rapid strides to the shelf where Tommy's present lay. He picked up the two cartons, and tossed them contemptuously across the room, to land on the couch next to the soldier.

"No!" he said again, just a little less shrilly. "I do not want your cigarettes! I want nothing, do you understand? Nothing for myself! Only to regain the peace of mind I have lost through my weakness! Go to another teacher, then," he was struggling for calm. "There are many others. In India. In China. Perhaps even in your own country. Go to one who is better fitted than I. But do not stop now! You can learn more, much more!"

He was trembling with emotion as he spoke, his skinny frame shaking, his black eyes popping as though they would burst out of his head. "As for your cigarettes," he concluded, "I want none of them. I vow now, until the day I die, I shall never again give way to this weakness!"

He was a silly, excitable old man, who was going to regret these words. Tommy stood up feeling the foolish apologetic grin on his face and unable to erase it. He did not pick up the cigarettes.

"Good-bye Armod," he said, and walked out for the last time through the blue-topped door.

But whatever either of them expected, and regardless of Tommy's own wishes, his education did not stop there. It had already gone too far to stop. The perception-awareness process seemed to be self-perpetuating, and though he practiced his exercises no more, his senses continued to become more acute—both the physical the psychological.

At the stateside hospital, where his leg rapidly improved, Tommy had some opportunity to get out and investigate the situation with the nice old-fashioned girls who'd stayed at home and didn't go to war. By that time, he could "see" and "hear" pretty clearly.

He didn't like what he found.

That did it, really. All along, out at the base hospital, he'd clung to the notion that the women at home would be different—that girls so far from civilization, were exposed to all sorts of indecencies a nice girl never had to face, and shouldn't have to. Small wonder they turned cynical and evil-minded.

The girls at home, he discovered, were less of the first, and far more of the second.

When Tommy Bender got home again, he was grimly determined and firmly disillusioned. He knew what he wanted out of life, saw no hope at all of ever getting it, and had very few scruples about the methods he used to get the next-best things.

In a remarkably short time, he made it clear to his erstwhile friends and neighbors that he was almost

certain to get anything he went after. He made money; he made love; and of course he made enemies. All the while, his friends and neighbors tried to understand. Indeed, they thought they did. A lot of things can happen to a man when he's been through hell in combat, and then had to spend months rotting and recuperating in a lonely Far Eastern field hospital.

But of course they couldn't even begin to understand what had happened to Tommy. They didn't know what it was like to live on a steadily plunging spiral of anger and disillusionment, all the time liking people less, and always aware of how little they liked you.

To sign a contract with a man, knowing he would defraud you if he could; he couldn't, of course, because you got there first. But when you met him afterward, you rocked with the blast of hate and envy he threw at you.

To make love to a woman, and know she was the wrong woman for you or you the wrong man for her. And then to meet her afterward ...

Tommy had in the worst possible sense, got out of bed on the wrong side. When he first awoke to the knowledge of other people's minds, he had seen ugliness and fear wherever he looked, and that first impress of bitterness on his own mind had colored everything he had seen since.

For almost five years after he came home, Tommy Bender continued to build a career, and ruin reputations. People tried to understand what had happened to him . . . but how could they?

Then something happened. It started with an envelope in his morning mail. The envelope was marked "Personal," so it was unopened by his secretary, and left on the side of his desk along with three or four other thin, squarish, obviously non-business, envelopes. As a result, Tommy didn't read it till late that afternoon, when he was trying to decide which girl to see that night.

The return address said "C. Harper, Hotel Albemarle, Topeka, Kansas." He didn't know anyone in Topeka, but the name Harper was vaguely reminiscent. He was intrigued enough to open that one first, and the others never were opened at all.

"Dear Tommy," it read. "First of all, I hope you still remember me. It's been quite a long time, hasn't it? I just heard, from Lee Potter (the little, dark girl who came just before you left . . . remember her?)"—Tommy did, with some pleasure—"that you were living in Hartsdale, and had some real-estate connections there. Now I'd like to ask a favor. . . .

"I've just had word that I've been accepted as Assistant Superintendent of the Public Health Service therein Hartsdale—and I'm supposed to start work on the 22nd. The only thing is, I can't leave my job here till just the day before. So I wondered if you could help me find a place to stay beforehand? Sort of mail-order real estate service?

"I feel I'm being a little presumptuous, asking this, when perhaps you don't even remember me—but I do hope you won't mind. And please don't go to any special trouble. From what Lee said, I got the idea this might be right in your line of business. If it's not, don't worry. I'm sure I can find something when I get there.

"And thanks, ahead of time, for anything you can do.

"Cordially," it concluded, "Candace Harper."

Tommy answered the letter the same day, including a varied list of places and prices hurriedly worked up by his real-estate agent. That he owned real estate was true; that he dealt in it, not at all. His letter to Candy did not go into these details, just told her how vividly he remembered her, and how good it would be to see her again, with some questions about the kind of furnishings and decor she'd prefer. "If you're going to get in early enough on the 21st," he wound up, "how about having dinner with me? Let me know when you're coming, anyhow. I'd like to meet you, and help you get settled."

For the next eleven days, Tommy lived in an almost happy whirl of preparation, memory and anticipation. In all the years since he had proposed to Candace, he had never met another girl who filled so perfectly the mental image of the ideal woman with which he had first left home. He kept telling himself she wouldn't, couldn't, still be the same person. Even a non-telepath would get bitter and disillusioned in five years of the Wonderful Post-War World. She couldn't be the same. . . .

And she wasn't. She was older, more understanding, more tolerant, and if possible warmer and pleasanter than before. Tommy met her at the station, bought her some dinner, took her to the perfect

small apartment where she was, unknown to herself, paying only half the rent. He stayed an hour, went down to run some errands for her, stayed another half-hour, and knew by then that in the most important respects she hadn't changed at all.

There wasn't going to be any "Precise Moment" with Candy; not that side of a wedding ceremony.

Tommy couldn't have been more pleased. Still, he was cautious. He didn't propose again till three weeks later, when he'd missed seeing her two days in a row due to business-social affairs. If they were married, he could have taken her along.

When he did propose, she lived up to all his qualifications again. She said she wanted to think it over. What she thought was: Oh, yes! Oh, yes, he's the one I want! But it's too quick! How do I know for sure? He never even thought of me all this time . . . all the time I was waiting and hoping to hear from him . . . how can he be sure so soon? He might be sorry. ...

"Let me think about it a few days, will you, Tommy?" she said, and he was afraid to take her in his arms for fear he'd crush her with his hunger.

Four weeks later they were married. And when Candy told him her answer, she also confessed what he already knew: that she'd regretted turning him down ever since he left the field hospital; that she'd been thinking of him, loving him, all the long years in between.

Candy was a perfect wife, just as she had been a perfect nurse, and an all-too-perfect dream girl. The Benders' wedding was talked about for years afterwards; it was one of those rare occasions when everything turned out just right. And the bride was so beautiful . . .

The honeymoon was the same way. They took six weeks to complete a tour of the Caribbean, by plane, ship and car. They stayed where they liked as long as they liked, and did what they liked, all the time. And not once in those six weeks was there any serious difference in what they liked. Candy's greatest wish at every point was to please Tommy, and that made things very easy for both of them.

And all the while, Tommy was gently, ardently, instructing his lovely bride in the arts of matrimony. He was tender, patient and understanding, as he had known beforehand he would have to be. A girl who gets to the age of twenty-six with her innocence intact is bound to require a little time for readjustment.

Still, by the time they came back, Tommy was beginning to feel a sense of failure. He knew that Candace had yet to experience the fulfillment she had hoped for, and that he had planned to give her.

Watching her across the breakfast table on the dining terrace of their new home, he was enthralled as ever. She was lovely in negligee, her soft hair falling around her face, her eyes shining with true love as they met his.

It was a warm day, and he saw, as he watched her, the tiny beads of sweat form on her upper lip. It took him back . . . way back . . . and from the vividness of the hospital scene, he skipped to an equally clear memory of that last visit to Armod, the teacher.

He smiled, and reached for his wife's hand, wondering if ever he would be able to tell her what had come of that walk they took to the village together. And he pressed her hand tighter, smiling again, as he realized that now, for the first time, he had a use for the further talents the old man had promised him.

That would be one way to show Candace the true pleasure she did not yet know. If he could project his own thoughts and emotions ...

He let go of her hand, and sat back, sipping his coffee, happy and content, with just the one small problem to think about. Maybe I should have gone back for a while, after all, he thought idly.

"Perhaps you should have, dear," said innocent Candace. "I did."

## PROJECT NURSEMAID

### I

THE GIRL IN the waiting room was very young, and very ill at ease. She closed the magazine in her lap, which she had not been read-ing, and leaned back in the chair, determined to relax. It was an interview, nothing more. If they asked too many questions or if anything happened that looked like

trouble, she could just leave and not come back.

*And then what ... ?*

They wouldn't, anyhow. The nurse had told her. She didn't even have to give her right name. It didn't matter. And they wouldn't check up. All they cared about was if you could pass the physical.

That's what the nurse had said, but she didn't *like* the nurse, and she wished now that she had bought a wedding ring after all. Thirty-nine cents in the five-and-ten, and she had stood there looking at them, and gone away again. Partly it was knowing the salesgirl would think she was going to use it for a hotel, or something like that. Mostly, it was just—*wrong*. A ring on your finger was supposed to mean something, even for thirty-nine cents. If she had to lie with words, she could, but not with ... That was silly. She should have bought it. Only what a ring meant was one thing, and what Charlie had meant was something else.

*Everybody's got to learn their lesson sooner or later, honey,* the nurse had said.

*But it wasn't like that,* she wanted to say. Only it was. It was for Charlie, so what difference did it make what *she* thought?

'I still say, it's a hell of a way to run an Army.'

'You could even be right,' said the Colonel, and both of them smiled. Two men who find themselves jointly responsible for a vitally important bit of insanity, who share a strong, if reluctant, mutual respect for each other's abilities, and who disagree with each other about almost everything, will find themselves smiling frequently, he had discovered.

The General, who was also a politician, stopped smiling and added, 'Besides which, it's downright immoral! These girls—*kids!* You'd think...'

The Colonel, who was also a psychologist, stopped smiling too. The General had a daughter very much the same age as the one who was waiting outside right now.

'It's one *hell* of a way to run an Army.'

The Colonel nodded. His concept of morality did not coincide precisely with the General's, but his disapproval was not one whit less vehement. He had already expressed his views in a paper rather dramatically entitled 'Brave New World???' which dealt with the predictable results of regimentation in prenatal and infantile conditioning. The manuscript, neatly typed, occupied the rearmost position in a folder of personal correspondence in his bottom desk drawer, and he had no more intention of express-ing his view now to the General than he had of submitting the paper for publication. He had discovered recently that he could disapprove of everything he was doing, and still desire to defend his right to do it; beyond doubt, it was better than supervising psych checks at some more conventional recruiting depot.

'A *hell* of a way,' he agreed, with sincerity, and glanced mean-ingly at his appointment pad.

Thursday was apparently not the General's day for accepting hints gracefully from junior officers; he sat down in the visitor's chair, and glared. Then he sighed.

'All right, so it's still the way we have to run it. Nobody asked you. Nobody asked me. And I'll say this, Tom, in all fairness, you've done a fine job on one end of it. We're getting the babies, and we're delivering them too ...'

'That's more your work than mine, Hal,' the Colonel lyingly demurred.

'Teamwork,' the General corrected. 'Not yours or mine, but both of us giving it everything we've got. But on this other business, now, Tom—' His finger tapped a reprimand on the sheaf of papers under his hand. '—Well, what comes first, Tom, the chicken or the egg? All eggs and no hens, it just won't work.'

The General stopped the chuckle, and the Colonel followed suit.

'The thing is, now we've got the bastards—and I mean no dis-respect to my uniform, Colonel, I'm using that word literally—now we've got 'em, what're we going to do with 'em?'

His fingers continued to tap on the pile of reports, not im-patiently, but with emphasis.

'I don't say it's your fault, Tom, you've done fine on the other end, but if you're going to bounce everybody who can pass the physicals, and if everyone who gets by you is going to get blacked out by the medics, well—I don't know, maybe the specs were set too high. Maybe you've got to—well, I don't want to tell you how to do your job, Tom. I don't kid myself about that; I know I couldn't fill your shoes if



I tried. All I can do is put it squarely up to you. You've got the figures there in front of you. *Cold figures*, and you know what they mean.'

He stopped tapping long enough to shove a neatly typed sheet an inch closer to the other man. Neither of them looked at the sheet; both of them knew the figures by heart. 'Out of three hundred and thirty-six applicants so far, we've accepted thirty-eight. We've had twenty-one successful Sections to date,' the General intoned. 'And six of those have been successfully transported to Moon Base. Three have already come to term, and been delivered, healthy and whole and apparently in good shape all around.'

'Out of one hundred and ninety-six applicants, we have so far accepted exactly *three*—one, two, three—foster parents. Only one of those is on the Base now. She's been on active duty since the first delivery—that was August 22, if I remember right, and *that* makes twenty-five days today that's she's been on without relief.

'Mrs. Kemp left on the rocket this morning. She'll be on Base—let's see—' He shuffled rocket schedules and Satellite-Moon Base shuttles in his mind. '—Wednesday, day after tomorrow. Which makes *twenty-seven* days for Lenox. If Kemp's willing to walk in and take over on a strange job, Lenox can take a regular single leave at that point; more likely she'll have to wait for the next shuttle—thirty-one days on duty, Tom, and most of it carrying full responsibility alone. And that's not counting the two days she was there before the first delivery, which adds up to—let's see—thirty-three altogether, isn't it?'

The Colonel nodded soberly. It was hard to remember that the General happened to be right, and that the figures he was quot-ing were meaningful, in terms of human beings. Carefully, he lowered mental blinds, and managed to keep track of the recital without having to hear it all. He knew the figures, and he knew the situation was serious. He knew it a good deal better than the General did, because he knew the *people* as well as how many there were ... or weren't.

More women on more rockets would make the tally-sheet look better, but it wouldn't provide better care for the babies; not unless they were the *right* women. He waited patiently for a break in the flow of arithmetic, and tried to get this point across. 'I was thinking,' he began. 'On this leave problem—couldn't we use some of the Army nurses for relief duty, till we catch up with ourselves? That would take some of the pressure off and I'd a lot rather have the kids in the care of somebody we didn't know for a few days than send up extra people on one-year contracts when we do know they're not adequate.'

'It's a last resort, Tom. That's just what I'm trying to avoid. I'm hoping we won't have to do that,' the General said ominously. 'Right now, this problem is in our laps, and nobody else's. If we start asking for help from the Base staff, and get *their* schedules fouled up—I tell you, Tom, we'll have all the top brass there is down on us.'

'Of course,' he said. 'I wasn't thinking of that angle ...' But he let it go. No sense trying to make any point against the Supreme Argument.

'Well, that's my job, not yours, worrying about things like that,' the General said jovially. But all the time, one finger, as if with an independent metronomic existence of its own, kept tapping the pile of psych reports. 'But you know as well as I do, we've got to start showing better results. I've talked to the Medics, and I'm talking to you. Maybe you ought to get together and figure how to...

'No, I said I wouldn't tell you how to do your job, and I won't. But we've *got* to have somebody on that December 8 rocket. That's the outside limit, and it means you've got three weeks to find her. If nobody comes up, I don't think we'll have any choice but to reconsider some of the rejects, and see if we can settle on somebody between us.'

The General stood up; so did the Colonel. 'I won't keep you any longer, Tom. I believe there's a young—lady?—outside waiting for you.' He shook his head. 'It's a good thing I don't have to talk to them,' the General said feelingly.

The Colonel, again, agreed.

They both smiled.

The intercom phone on the Wac's desk buzzed. The girl sat up straight, watching. The Wac picked up the receiver and listened and said crisply, 'Yes, sir,' and hung up and pushed back her chair and went through the door behind the desk, into the Colonel's office.

The girl watched, and when the door closed, her eyes moved to the wall mirror over the long table on the opposite wall, and she wondered if she would ever in her life achieve the kind of groomed smartness the Wac had. She was pretty; she knew that without looking in the mirror. But it seemed to her that she was bulky and shapeless and *unformed*. Her hair was soft and cloudy-brownish, where the Wac's was shiningly coifed and determinate in colour; and where the Wac was trim and tailored, the contours of her own body, under the powder-blue suit, were fluid and vaguely indistinct.

*It's just a matter of getting older*, she thought, and she wondered what the Wac would do in the spot she was in. But it wouldn't happen. A woman like that wouldn't let it happen. Anybody who could keep each hair in place that way could keep a hold on her emotions, too; or at least make sure it was safe, ahead of time.

The door opened, and the Wac smiled at her. 'You can go in now, Mrs. Barton,' she said, a little too kindly.

*She knows!* The girl could feel the heat flame in her cheeks. Of *course!* Everybody here would know what was the matter with the girls who went in to see Colonel Edgerly. She walked stiffly past the other woman, without looking at her.

'Mrs. Barton?' The Colonel stood up, greeting her. He was too young. Much too young. She could never talk to him about—there was nothing to talk about. She didn't have to tell him about anything. Only he should have been older, and not so nice-looking.

He pulled up a chair for her, and went through all the ordinary gestures of courtesy, getting her settled. He was wearing a Colonel's uniform all right, but he didn't look like one, and he didn't act like one. He took a pack of cigarettes out of his desk drawer, offered her one, and lit it for her. All that time, she didn't have to say anything; and by then, she was able to talk.

The application form was a necessary formality. He wrote down the name and address she gave, and a little doubtfully, after AGE, *nineteen*. She surprised him by claiming *student* as her occupation, instead of the conventional *housewife*, but everything else went according to expectations. She had had measles and mumps, but no chicken pox or scarlet fever or whooping cough. No operations, no previous pregnancies, no congenital conditions. He checked down the list rapidly, indifferently. When she'd had her physical, they'd know the accurate answers to all these things. Meantime, the girl was answering familiar questions that she had answered a hundred times before, in less frightening places, and they were getting near the bottom of the sheet.

He looked over at her, smiling a little, frowning a little, and his voice was apologetic with the first personal, and pertinent, question. 'Have you had a medical examination yet?'

'No, they said the interview was first ... Oh! You mean for ...? Yes. Yes, of *course*.'

'Do you know how far along you are?' His eyes were on the form, and he scribbled as he talked.

She took a deep breath. 'Eleven weeks,' she said. 'The doctor said last week it was ten, so—so I guess it's eleven now,' she finished weakly.

'Do you think your husband would be willing to come down for a physical? We like to get records on both parents if we can ...' There was no answer. He looked up, and she was shaking her head; her face was white, and she wasn't breathing at all.

'You're quite sure?' he said politely. 'It's not *necessary*; but it does work to the advantage of the child, if we have as much information as possible.'

'I'm sorry,' she said tightly. 'He—' She paused, and made up her mind. 'He doesn't know about it. We're both still in school, Colonel. If I told him, he'd think he had to quit, and start working. I can't tell him.'

It sounded like the truth, almost, but her face was too stiffly composed, and the pulse in her temple beat visibly against the pale mask. Her words were too precise, when her breath was coming so quickly. She wasn't used to lying.

'You realize that what you're doing here is a real and important contribution, Mrs. Barton? Don't you think he might see it that way? Maybe if I talked to him...?'

She shook her head again. 'No. If it's that important, I guess I better ...' The voice trailed off, almost out of control, and her lips stayed open a little, her eyes wide, frightened, not knowing what the end of

that sentence could possibly be.

The Colonel pushed the printed sheet away from him, and looked at her intently. It was time for the last question.

'Mrs. Barton— What do people call you, anyway? Cecille? Cissy? Ceil? Do you mind...?'

'No, that's all right. Ceil.' It was a very small smile, but she was obviously more comfortable.

'All right, Ceil. Now look—there's a line on the bottom there that asks your reason for volunteering. I wish it wasn't there, because I don't like inviting lies. I know, and everybody connected with this project knows, that it takes some pretty special motivation for a woman to volunteer for something like this. Occasionally we get someone in here who's doing it out of pure and simple—and I do mean simple—patriotism, and then I don't mind asking that question. I don't think that applies to you ...?'

She shook her head, and tried a smile.

'Okay. I wanted to explain my own attitude before I asked. I don't care why you're doing it. I'm damn glad you are, because I think you're the kind of parent we want. You'll go through some pretty rugged tests before we accept you, but by this time I can usually tell who'll get through, and who won't. I think you will.

And it's in the nature of things that if you *are* the right kind, you'd have to have a pretty special personal reason for doing this ...?'

He waited. Her lips moved, but no sound came out. She tried again, and when she swallowed, he could almost feel in his own throat the lump that wouldn't let her lie come out. He pulled the application form closer to him, and wrote quickly in the last space at the bottom, then shoved it across, so she could see:

*I think I'm too young to raise a child properly, and I want to help out.*

'All right?' he asked gently. She nodded, and there were tears in her eyes. He opened the top drawer and got her some Kleenex. Again she started to say something, and swallowed instead; then the dam broke. He wheeled his chair over to her, and reached out a comforting hand. Then her head was on his shoulder, and she was crying in loud snuffly childish sobs. When it began to let up, he gave her some more Kleenex, and got his chair back in position so he could kick the button under the desk and dim the light a little.

'Still want to go through with it?' he asked.

She nodded.

'Want to tell me any more?'

She did; she obviously wanted to very much. She kept her lips pressed firmly together, as if the words might get out in spite of herself.

'You don't have to,' he said. 'If you want to, you understand it stops right here. The form is filled out already. There's nothing else I have to put on there. But if you feel like talking a little, now that we're—' he grinned, and glanced at the damp spot on his shoulder, '—now that we're better acquainted—well, you might feel better if you spill some of it.'

'There's nothing to tell,' she said carefully. 'Nothing you don't already know.' Her face was expressionless; there was no way to tell what she meant.

'All right,' he said. 'In that case, sit back and get comfortable, because *I've* got some things to tell you. The Colonel is about to make a speech.' She smiled, but it was a polite smile now; for a minute, she had warmed up, now they were strangers again.

He had made the same speech, with slight variations, exactly 237 times before. Every girl or woman who got past him to the medics heard it before she went. The wording and the manner changed for each one, but the substance was the same.

All he was supposed to do was to explain the nature and purposes of the Project. Presumably, they already knew that when they came in, but he was supposed to make sure. He did. He made very sure that they understood, as well as each one was able, not only the purposes, but the nature: what kind of lives their children might be expected to lead.

It never made any difference. He knew it wouldn't now. Just once, a woman had come to them because she had been warned that carrying a child to term would mean her death and the baby's, both.

She had listened and understood, and had asked soberly whether there were any similar facilities available privately. He had had to admit there were not. The process was too expensive, even for this purpose, except on a large-scale basis. To do it for one infant would be possible, perhaps, for a Rocke-feller or an Aga Khan—not on any lesser scale. The woman had listened, and hesitated, and decided that life, on any terms, was better than no life at all.

But this girl with her tremulous smile and her frightened eyes and her unweathered skin—this girl had not yet realized even that it was a human life she carried inside herself; so far, she understood only that she had done something foolish, and that there was a slim chance she might be able to remedy the error without total disaster or too much dishonour.

He started with the history of the Project, explaining the reasons for it, and the thinking behind it: the psychosomatic problems of low-grav and null-weight conditions; the use of hypnosis, and its inadequacies; the eventual recognition that only those conditioned from infancy to low-grav conditions would ever be able to make the Starhop ... or even live in any comfort on the Moon.

He ran through it, but she wasn't listening. Either she knew it already, or she just wasn't interested. The Colonel kept talking, only because he was required to brief all applicants on this material.

'The problem was how to get the babies to the Base. So far, nobody has been able to take more than four months of Moon-grav without fairly serious somatic effects, or else a total emotional crackup. It wasn't practical to take families there, to raise our crop of conditioned babies, and we couldn't safely transport women in their last month of pregnancy, or new-born babies, either one.'

She was paying attention, in a way. She was paying attention to *him*, but he could have sworn she wasn't hearing a word he said.

'The operation,' he went on, 'was devised by Dr. Jordan Zamesh, of the Navy...'

'I'm sorry,' she said suddenly, 'about your uniform.'

'Uniform ...?' He glanced at the spot on his shoulder. 'Oh, that's all right. It's almost dry, anyhow. Dacron.' *Damn!* He'd miscalculated. She was too young to stew over a brief loss of control this way—but she'd been doing it anyhow, and *he hadn't noticed*. Which was what came of worrying about your boss when you were supposed to have your mind on the customers. *Damn!*

And double it for the General. She might have been ready to talk, and he'd rushed into his little speech like an idiot while she sat there getting over the sobbing-spell. All by herself. Without any nice sympathetic help from the nice sympathetic man.

'I guess,' she was saying, 'I suppose you're used to that?'

'I keep the Kleenex handy,' he admitted.

'Does everybody—?'

'Nope. Just the ones who have sense enough to know what they're doing. The high-powered patriots don't, I guess. All the others do, sooner or later, here or some place else.' He looked at her, sitting there so much inside herself, so miserably determined to sustain her isolation, so falsely safe inside the brittle armour of her loneliness. She had cried for a minute, and cracked the armour by that much, and now she hated herself for it.

'What the hell kind of a woman do you think you'd be?' he said grimly. 'If you'll pardon my emphasis—what the hell kind of woman could give a baby away without crying a little?'

'I didn't have to do it on your uniform.'

'You didn't have to, but I'm glad you did.'

'You don't have to feel ...' She caught herself, just in time, and the Colonel restrained a smile. She had almost forgotten that there wasn't any reason to feel sorry for *Mrs. Barton*.

She smoothed out her face, regained a part of her composure. 'I'm sorry,' she said. 'All I do is apologize, isn't it? Now I mean I'm sorry, because I wasn't really listening to you. I was too embarrassed, I guess. I'll listen now.'

He'd lost her again. For a moment, there had almost been contact, but now she was gone, alone with her shell of quiet politeness. The Colonel went on with his speech.

'... the operation is not dangerous,' he explained, 'except in-sofar as any operation, or the use of anaesthesia, is occasionally dangerous to a rare individual. However, we have managed to cut down on

even that narrow margin; the physical exams you'll get before the application is approved will pretty well determine whether there is any reason why you should not undergo opera-tive procedure.

'Essentially, what we do is a simple Caesarian section. There are modifications, of course, to allow the placenta and membrane to be removed intact, but these changes do not make the opera-tion any more dangerous.

'There is a certain percentage of loss in the postoperative care of the embryos. Occasionally, the nutritive surrogate doesn't "take", whether because of miscalculations on our part, or unknown factors in the embryo, we can't tell, but for the most part, the embryos thrive and continue to grow in normal fashion, and the few that have already been transported have all survived the trip—'

'Colonel ...?'

He was relieved; he hadn't *entirely* misread her. She was a nice girl, a good girl, who would be a good wife and mother some day, and she interrupted just where she ought to.

'Yes?' He let himself smile a little bit, and she took it the right way.

'Does— Is— I mean, you said, the operation isn't dangerous. But what does it do as far as—having babies later goes?'

'To the best of our knowledge, it will not impair either your ability to conceive or your capacity to carry a baby through a normal pregnancy. Depending on your own healing potential, and on the results of some new techniques we're using, you *may* have to have Caesarians with any future deliveries.'

'Oh!'

As suddenly as it had happened before, when she cried, the false reserve of shame and pride and worry fell away from her. Her eyes were wide, and her tongue flickered out to wet her upper lip before she could say, '*There'll be a scar!* Won't there? This time, I mean?'

There were two things he could say, and the one that would comfort her would also seal her away again behind the barrier of proper manners and assumed assurance. He spoke slowly and deliberately:

'Perhaps you'd better tell your husband beforehand, Ceil....'

She stared at him blankly; she'd forgotten about the husband again. Then she sat up in her chair and looked straight at him. '*You know I'm not married!*' she said. She was furious.

The Colonel sat back and relaxed. He picked up the application blank he had filled out, and calmly tore it down the centre.

'All right,' she said tiredly. She stood up. 'I'm sorry I wasted your time.'

'You didn't,' he said quietly. 'Not unless you've changed your mind, that is.'

Half-way to the door, she turned around and looked at him. She didn't say anything, just waited.

He took a fresh form out of his drawer, and motioned to the chair. 'Sit down, won't you?' She took a tentative half-step back towards him, and paused, still waiting. He stood up, and walked around the desk, carefully not going too close to her. Leaning on the edge of the desk, he said quietly, in matter-of-fact tones:

Look, Ceil, right now you're confused. You're so angry you don't care what happens, and you're feeling so beat, you haven't got the energy to be mad. You don't know where you're going, or where you *can* go. And you don't see any sense in staying. All right, your big guilty secret is out now, and I personally don't give a damn—except for one thing: that it *had* to come out before we could seriously consider your application.'

He watched the colour come back to her face, and her eyes go wide again. 'You mean—?' she said and stopped. Looked at the chair; looked at the door; looked at him, waiting again.

'I mean,' he said, 'bluntly, that I used every little psychological trick I know to get you to make that Horrible Admission. I did it because what we're doing here is both important and expensive, and we don't take babies without knowing what we're getting. Besides which, I think you're the kind of parent we want. I didn't want to let you get away. I hope you won't go now.' He reached out and put a hand on her arm. 'Sit down, won't you, Ceil? It won't hurt to listen a while, and I think we can work things out.'

This time he pretended not to notice the tears, and gave her a chance to brush them away, and get settled in the chair again, while he did some unnecessary rummaging around in his closet. After that it went smoothly. They stuck to the assumed name, Barton, but he got her real name as well, and the college she

was going to. She lived at school; that would make the arrangements easier.

'We can't do it till the fifth month,' he explained. 'If everything goes all right till then, we can probably arrange for an emergency appendectomy easily enough. You'll come in for regular check-ups meanwhile; and if things start to get too—obvious, we'll have to work out something more complicated, to get you out of school for a while beforehand. The scar is enough like an appendix scar to get away with,' he added.

The one thing he had really been disturbed about was her age, but she insisted she was really nineteen, and of course he could verify that with the school. And the one thing she wouldn't break down about was the father's name. He decided that could wait. Also, he left out the unfinished part of his speech: the part about the training the children would have. For this girl, it was clear, the only realities were in the immediate present, and the once-removed direct consequences of present acts. She was nineteen; the scar mattered, but the child did not. Not yet.

He took her to the outer office and asked Helen, at the desk, to make an appointment for her with Medical and to give her the standard literature. Helen pushed a small stack of phone messages over to him, and he riffled through. Just one urgent item, a woman in the infirmary with a fit of postoperative melancholia. *They're all in such a damn hurry to get rid of the babies*, he thought, *and then they want to kill themselves afterwards!* And this nice girl, this pretty child, would be the same way... .

Helen had Medical on the phone. 'Tell them I'll be right down,' he told her, 'for Mrs. Anzio. Ten-fifteen minutes.'

She nodded, confirmed the time and date for Ceil's appointment, and repeated the message, then listened a minute, nodding.

'All right, I'll tell him.' She hung up, pulled a prepared stuffed manila envelope out of her file, and handed it to the girl. 'Four-fifteen, Friday. Bring things for overnight. You'll be able to leave about Sunday morning.' She smiled professionally, scribbling the time on an appointment-reminder slip.

'I'll have to get a weekend pass—to stay overnight,' the girl said hesitantly.

'All right. Let us know if you can't do it this weekend, and we'll fix it when you can.' The Colonel led her to the door, and turned back to his secretary inquiringly.

'They said no rush, but you better see her before you leave today. They're afraid it might get suicidal.'

'Yeah. I know.' He looked at her, smart and brisk and shiny, the perfect Lady Soldier. She had been occupying that desk for three weeks now, and he had yet to find a chink or peephole in the gleaming wall of her efficiency. *And for an old Peeping Tom like me, this is going some!* The thought was indignant. 'You know what?' he said.

'Sir?'

'This is a *hell* of a way to run an Army!'

'Yes, sir,' she said; but she managed to put a good deal of meaning into it.

'I take it you agree, but you don't approve. If it will make you feel any better, I have the General's word for it. He told me so himself. Now what about this Browne woman?'

'Oh. She called twice. The second time she told me she wants to apply for FP. I told her you were in conference, and would call her back. She was very—insistent.'

'I see. Well, you call her back, and make an appointment for tomorrow. Then ...'

'There's another FP coming tomorrow afternoon,' she reminded him. 'A Mrs. Leahy.'

'Well—Two in one day. Maybe business is picking up. Put Browne in first thing in the morning. Then call the Dean of Women at Henderson, and make an appointment for me—I'll go there—any time that's convenient. Sooner the better. Tell her it's the Project, but don't say what about.' There were three more messages; he glanced at them again, and tossed them back on her desk. 'You can handle these. I better go see that Anzio woman.'

'What shall I tell General Martin, sir?' She picked up the slip with the message from his office, and studied it with an air of uninformed bewilderment.

*The Perfect Lady Soldier, all right*, he decided. *No bucks passed to her.* 'Tell his secretary that I had to rush down to Medical, and I'll ring him back when I'm done,' he said, and managed to make it sound as if that was what he'd meant all along.

## II

IN THE MORNING, very slightly hung over, he checked first with the Infirmary, and was told that Mrs. Anzio had been quiet after he left, had eaten well, and had spent the night under heavy sedation. She was quiet now, but had refused breakfast.

'She supposed to go home today?'

'That's right, sir.'

'Well, don't let her go. I'll get down when I have a chance, and see how she sounds. Who's O.D. down there? Bill Sawyer?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Well, tell him I'd suggest stopping sedation now.'

'Yes, sir.'

He hung up and buzzed Helen. 'You can send Miss Browne in now.'

Miss Browne settled her bony bottom on the edge of the visitors' chair. She was dressed in black, with one smart-looking gold pin on her lapel to show she was modern and broad-minded—and a mourning-band on her sleeve, to show she wasn't *too* forgetful of the old-fashioned proprieties. She spoke in a faintly nasal whine, and used elegant, refined language and diction.

It took about 60 seconds to determine that she could not be seriously considered for the job. It took another 60 minutes to go through the formality of filling out an application blank, and hearing her reasons for wanting to spend a year at Moon Base in the service of the State. It took most of the rest of the morning to compose a report that might make clear to the General just why they could not use an apparently healthy woman of less than thirty-five years, with no dependents or close attachments (her father had just died, after a long illness, during which she had given up *'everything'* to care for him), with some nursing experience, and with a stated desire to 'give what I can for society, now that there is nothing more I can do for my beloved father.'

*Give*, he thought. *Give till it hurts. Then give a little more, till it hurts as much as possible.* It was inevitable that this sort of job should attract the martyr types; inevitable, but still you wondered, when nine-tenths of the population had never heard of the Project, just how so *many* of this kind came so swiftly and unerringly to the waiting room.

He wrote it down twice for the General: once with psychological jargon, meant to impress; and again with adjectives and examples, and a case history or two, meant to educate. When he was done, he had little hope that he had succeeded in making his point. He signed the report and handed it to Helen to send up.

Mrs. Leahy, in the afternoon, was a surprise.

She walked into his office with no sign of either the reluctance--and-doubt or the eagerness-and-arrogance that marked almost every applicant who entered there. She sat down comfortably in the visitors' chair, and introduced herself with a friendliness and social ease that made it clear she was accustomed to meeting strangers.

She was a plump—not fat—attractive woman, past her first youth, but in appearance not yet what could be called middle-aged. He was startled when she stated her age as forty-seven; he was further startled when she stated her occupation.

'Madam,' she said, and chuckled with pleasure when he couldn't help himself from looking up sharply. 'You don't know how I've been waiting to see your face when I said that,' she explained, and he thought wearily, *I should have known. Just another exhibitionist.* For a few minutes, he had begun to think he had one they could use.

'Do you always show your feelings all over your face like that?' she asked gleefully. 'You'd think, in your job—The *reason* I was looking forward to saying it was—well, two reasons. First, I figured you'd be one of these suave-faced operators, professionally unshockable, and I wanted to jolt you.'

'You did, and I am,' he said gravely. 'Usually.'

She smiled. 'Second, I'm not often in a position to pull off anything like that. People would disapprove,

and what's worse, they'd refuse to wait on me in stores, or read me lectures, or—anyhow, it seemed to me that here I could just start out telling the truth, seeing that you'd find out anyhow. I don't suppose the people you accept get sent up before you've checked them?'

'You're right again.' He pushed his chair back, and decided to relax and enjoy it. He liked this woman. 'Tell me some more.'

She did, at length and entertainingly. She was a successful businesswoman. She had proved that much to her own satisfaction, and now she was bored. The house ran itself, almost, and was earning more money than she needed for personal use. She had no real interest in expanding her operations; success for its own sake meant nothing to her. She had somehow escaped the traditional pitfalls of Career; maybe it was the specialized nature of her business that never let her forget she was a woman, and so preserved her femininity of both viewpoint and personality.

It was harder to understand how she had managed to escape the normal occupational disease of her world: the yearning for respectability and a place in conventional society. Instead she wanted new places, new faces, and something to do that would make use of her abilities and give scope to her abundant affections.

'I've never had children of my own,' she said, and for the first time lost a trace of her aplomb. 'I—you realize, in my business, you don't start out at the top? A lot of the girls are sterile to start with, and a lot more get that way. Since I started my own place, the girls have been almost like my own—some of them, the ones I keep—but ... I think I'd like to have some real babies to take care of.' Her voice came back to normal: 'Getting to grandmother age, I guess.'

I see.' He sat up briskly, and finished the official form, making quick notes as she parried his questions with efficient quiet answers. When he was done, he looked up and met her eyes, unwillingly. 'I may as well be frank with you, Mrs. Leahy—'

'Brush-off?' she broke in softly.

He nodded. 'I'm afraid so.' She started to get up, and he reached out a hand, involuntarily, as if to hold her in her seat. 'Don't go just yet. Please. There's something I'd like to say.'

She sat still, waiting, the bitterness behind her eyes veiled with polite curiosity.

'Just ...' He hesitated, wanting to pick the right words to get through her sudden defences. 'Just that, in my personal opinion, you're the best prospect we've had in six months. I haven't got the nerve to say it in so many words, when I make my report. But I didn't fill out that form just to use up more of your time. If it were up to me, you'd be on your way down for a physical exam right now. Unfortunately, I am not the custodian of moralities in this Army, or even on Project.

'What I'm going to do is send in a report recommending that we reserve decision. I'll tell you now in confidence that we're having a hard time getting the right kind of people. The day *may* come—' He broke off, and looked at her almost pleadingly. 'You understand? I can't recommend you, and if I did, I'd be overruled. But I wish I could, and if things change, you may still hear from us.'

'I understand.' She stood up, looking tired; then, with an effort, she resumed her cheerful poise, and took his offered hand to shake good-bye. 'I won't wish you bad luck, so—good-bye.'

'Good-bye. And thank you,' he said with sincerity, 'for coming in.'

Then he wrote up his report, went down to see the Anzio woman, cleared her for release, and went home where a half-empty bottle waited from the night before.

There was no summons from the General waiting for him in the morning, and no friendly, casual visit during the hour before he left to see Dean Lazarus at Henderson. He didn't know whether to regard the silence as ominous or hopeful; so he forgot it, temporarily, and concentrated on the Dean.

He approached her cautiously, with generalizations about the Project, and the hope that if she were ever in a position to refer anyone to them, she would be willing to co-operate, etc., etc. She was pleasant, polite, and intelligent for half an hour, and then she became impatient.

'All right, Colonel, suppose we come to the point?'

'What point did you have in mind?' he countered warily.

'I have two students waiting outside to see me,' she said, 'and I imagine you also have other business



to attend to. I take it one of our girls is in what is called "trouble"? She came to you, and you want to know whether I'll work with you, or whether the kid will get bounced out of school if I know about it. Stop me if I'm wrong.'

'Go on,' he said.

'All right. The answer is, it depends on the girl. There are some I'd grab any chance to toss out. But I'd guess, from the fact that she wound up coming to you, she either isn't very experienced or she is conscientious. Or both.'

'I'd say both, on the basis of our interview.'

She looked him over thoughtfully. *Lousy technique*, he thought, and had to curb a wicked impulse to ham up his role and confuse her entirely; it wasn't often he had a chance to sit in the visitors' chair.

That studying look of hers would put anybody on the defensive, he thought critically, and then realized that maybe it was meant to do just that. Her job didn't have the same requirements as his.

'Let me put it this way,' she said finally. 'I'm here to try to help several hundred adolescent females get some education into their heads, and I don't mean just out of books. I'm *also* here to see to it that the College doesn't get a bad reputation: no major scandals or suicides, or anything like that. If the girl is worth helping, and if you want my co-operation in a plan that will keep things quiet and respectable, and make it possible for her to continue at school—believe me, you'll have it.'

That left it squarely up to him. Was the girl 'worth helping'? or rather: would Dean Lazarus think so?

'I think,' he said slowly, 'I'll have to ask you to promise me first—since your judgment and mine may not agree—that you won't use any information you get from me *against* the girl. If you don't want to help, when you know who it is, you'll just sit back. All right?'

She thought that over. 'Providing I don't happen to acquire the same information from other sources,' she said.

'Without going *looking* for it,' he added.

'I'm an honest woman, Colonel Edgerly.'

'I think you are. I have your word?'

'You do.'

'The girl's name is Cecille Chanute. You know her ...?'

'*Ceil!* Oh, my God! Of course. It's always the ones you don't worry about! Who's the boy? And why on earth don't they just get married, and... ?'

He was shaking his head. 'I don't know. She wouldn't say. That's one thing I thought you might be able to help me with...'

He left shortly afterwards. *That* part, at least, would be all right. Unless something unexpected turned up in the physical, the only problem now was getting the necessary data on the father.

When he got back to the office, the memo from the General was on his desk.

*TO: Edgerly*

*FROM: Martin*

[No titles. Informal. That meant it wasn't the death-blow yet. Not quite.]

*RE: Applicants for PN's and FP positions.*

*After reading your reports of yesterday, 16/9, and after giv-ing the matter some thought, bearing in mind our conversa-tion of 15/9, it seems to me that we might hold off on accepting any further PN's until the FP situation clears up. Suggest you defer all further interviews for PN's. Let's put our minds to the other part of the problem, and see what we can do. This is urgent, Tom. If you have any suggestions, I'll be glad to hear them, any time.*

It was signed, in scrawly pencil, H. M. Just a friendly note. But attached to it was a detailed schedule of PN acceptances, opera-tions, shipments, and deliveries to date, plus a projected schedule of operations, shipments, and theoretical due dates for deliveries. The second sheet was even adjusted for statistical expectations of losses all along the line.

What emerged, much more clearly than it had in the General's solemn speechmaking, was that it would be necessary not only to have one more Foster Parent trained and ready to leave in less than three months, but that through January and February they would need at least one more FP on every bi-weekly rocket, to take care of the deliveries *already* scheduled.

Little Cell didn't know how lucky she was. *Just in under the wire, kid.* She was lucky to have somebody like that Lazarus dame on her side, too.

And *that* was an idea. People like Lazarus could help.

He buzzed Helen, and spent most of the rest of the day dictat-ing a long and careful memo, proposing a publicity campaign for Foster Parent applications. If the percentage of acceptances was low, the logical thing to do about it was increase the totals, starting with the applications. Now that he'd have more time to devote to FP work, with the curtailments on PN, he might fruitfully devote some part of it to a publicity campaign: discreet, of course, but designed to reach those groups that might provide the most useful material.

The Colonel was pleased when he had finished. He spent some time mapping out a rough plan of approach, using Dean Lazarus as his prototype personality. Social workers, teachers, personnel workers—these were the people with the contacts and the judg-ment to provide him with a steady stream of referrals.

Five women to find in two months—with this programme, it might even be possible.

The reply from the General's office next morning informed him that his suggestion was being considered. For some weeks, apparently, it continued to be considered, without further discus-sion. During that time, the Colonel saw Cell Chanute again, after her Med report came through okayed, and then went to see Dean Lazarus once more.

Neither of them had had any luck finding out who the boy was. They worked out detailed plans for Ceil's 'appendectomy', and the Dean undertook to handle the girl's family. She felt strongly that they should not be told the truth, and the Colonel was content to let her exercise her own judgment.

At the end of the two weeks, another applicant came in. The Colonel tried his unconscientious best to convince himself the woman would do; but he knew she wouldn't. This time it took less than an hour for an answer from the General's office. A phone call, this time.

'... I was just thinking, Tom, until we start getting somewhere on the FP angle—I notice you've got six PN's scheduled that aren't processed yet. Three-four of them, there are loopholes. I think we ought to drop whatever we can... ?'

'If you think so, sir.'

'Well, it makes sense to me. There's one the Security boys haven't been able to get a complete check on; something funny there. And this gal who won't tell us the father's name. And the one who was supposed to come in last week and postponed it. We can tell her it's too late now ... ?'

'Yes, sir. I'll have to see them, of course. These women are pretty desperate, sometimes. They—well, I think it would be better to consider each case separately, talk to each one— There's no, telling what some of them might do. We don't want any unfavourable publicity,' he said, and waited for some response to the pointed reminder.

There was none. 'No, of course not. You use your judgment, Tom, that's all, but I'd like to have a report on each one—just let me know what you do about it. Every bit of pressure we can get off is going to help, you know.'

And that was all. Nothing about his Memo. Just a gentle warning that if he kept on being stubborn, he was going to be backed up a little further—each and *every* time.

He got the file folders on the three cases, and studied two of them. The 'Barton' folder he never even opened. He found he was feeling just a little more stubborn than usual.

Sergeant Gregory came in, and he dictated a letter of inquiry to the woman who had failed to keep her appointment, then in-structed the Sergeant to call the other one, and make an appoint-ment for her to come in and see him. 'But first,' he finished, 'get me Dean Lazarus at Henderson, will you?'

### III

WAITING OUT THERE in the room with the Wac and the mirror was almost as bad as it had been the first time. Something was wrong. Something had happened to spoil everything. It had to be that, or he couldn't have got her called out of class. Not unless it was *really* important. And how did he explain it to Lazar anyhow?

She sat there for five minutes that seemed like hours, and then the door opened and he came out with a welcoming smile on his lips, and all of a sudden everything was all right.

'Hi. You made good time, kid. Come on in.'

'I took a cab. I didn't change or anything.' It *couldn't* be very bad; if he looked so calm.

'Well, don't change next time either,' he said, closing the door behind them. 'Jeans are more your speed. And a shirt like that coming in here once in a while does a lot to brighten up my life.'

The main thing was, he had said *next time*. She let out a long breath she didn't know she'd been holding, and sat down in the big chair.

'All right,' he said, as soon as he had gone through the pre-liminary ritual of lighting cigarettes. 'Now listen close, kid, because we are in what might be called a jam. A mess. Difficulties. Problems.'

'I figured that when you called.' But she wasn't really worried any more. Whatever it was, it couldn't be *very* bad. 'I was wondering—what did you tell the Dean?'

'The Dean... ? Oh, I told her the truth, Cell. About two days after you first came in.'

'You *what*?' Everything was upside down; *nothing* made sense. She had been asked to one of Lazar's teas yesterday. The old girl had been sweet as punch today about the call, and excusing her from classes. 'What did you say?' she asked again.

'I said, I told her the truth, away back when. Now, listen a minute. You're nineteen years old and you're a good girl, so you still respect Authority. Authority being people like Sarah Lazarus and myself. Only it just so happens that people like us are human beings too. I don't expect you to *believe* that, just because I say it, but try to pretend for a few minutes, will you?' There was a smile playing around the corners of his mouth. She didn't know whether to be angry or amused or worried. 'I went in to see Mrs. Lazarus in the hope that she'd co-operate with us in planning your "appendectomy". It turned out she would. She thinks a lot of you, Cell, and she was glad to help.'

'You took an awful chance,' she said slowly.

'No. I made sure of my ground before I said anything. A lot surer than I am now. I think when you get back, you better go have a talk with the lady. And after that, you better remember that she's keeping her mouth shut, and it would be a good idea if you did the same. You realize the spot *she'd* be on, if other girls found out...?'

She flushed. 'I'm not likely to do much talking,' she reminded him, and immediately felt guilty, because Sally knew. It was Sally who had sent her to that doctor....

'Everybody talks to somebody,' he said flatly. 'When you feel like you have to talk, try to come here. If you can't, just be careful who it is.'

His voice was sharp and edgy; she'd never heard him talk that way before. *I didn't do anything*, she thought, bewildered. He cleared his throat, and when he spoke again, his voice sounded more normal.

'All right, we've got that out of the way. Now: the reason I asked you to come in such a hurry—well, to put it bluntly, and without too much detail, there've been some policy changes higher-up here, and there's pressure being put on me to drop as many of the PN's coming up as I can find excuses for.'

PN's? she wondered, and then realized—Pre *Natal*.

'... I didn't want to do this. I hoped you'd tell me in your own time.' She'd missed something; she tried to figure it out as he went along. 'If you didn't—well, we've handled two-three cases before where the father could not be located.'

*Oh!*

'Till now,' he went on, 'I thought if we couldn't convince you that it was in the best interests of the child for you to let us know, we might be able to get by without insisting. But now I'm afraid I'm going to have to ask you to tell me whether you want to or not. I'll promise to use every bit of tact and discretion

possible, but—'

'*I can't*,' she broke in.

'Why not?'

'Because ... I can't.' If she told the reason, it would be as bad as telling it all.

'Not even if it means you can't have the operation?'

*That's not fair!* There was nothing she could say.

'Look, Cell, if it's just that you don't want him to know, we might be able to work it that way. Most people have physical exams on record one place or another, and the little bit more that we like to know about the father, you can probably tell us—or we can find out other ways. Does that change the picture any?'

She bit her lip. Maybe they *could* get all the information without—not without going through the Academy, they couldn't. It was there, *that* was true enough. Charlie wouldn't have to know at all—not till they kicked him out of school, that is! She shook her head.

'Look,' he said. He was pleading with her now. Why didn't he just tell her to go to hell and throw her out, if it was all that important? Why should it matter to *him*? 'Look, I'm supposed to be sending you a regretful note right now. But the fact is, if I can put in a report that you came in today, before I could take any action, and that you voluntarily cleared up the problem ... do you understand?'

'Yes,' she said. 'I think I do.'

'You're thinking that this is a trick? I tricked you once before, so that you told me what you didn't mean to, Now I'm doing it again? Is that it?'

'Aren't you?'

'No.' His eyes met hers, and held there. She *wanted* to believe him. He had admitted it the other time—but not till after he found out what he wanted to know.

'Maybe I don't *know*,' she said spitefully. That was silly, a childish thing to say. Suddenly she realized he hadn't spoken since she said it, and

*Migod! Suppose he believes it!* She looked up swiftly, and found a smile on his lips.

'Why on earth would you tell me a thing like that?' he asked mildly. 'Are you feeling wicked today?'

*All right*, she thought, *you win*. But she needed a few minutes; she had to think it out. 'Thank you,' she said, stalling, but also because she meant it.

'You're welcome I'm sure. What for?'

'At the doctor's I went to—they asked me if I knew who it was.'

The Colonel smiled. 'You're a nice girl, Ceil. Don't forget it. You're a nice girl, and it shows all over you, and anybody who can't see it is crazy. That doctor should have his head examined.'

'It wasn't the doctor. It was the nurse.'

'That explains it.' When he grinned like that, he seemed hardly any older than she was.

'You mean she was just being—well, *catty*?'

'That's one way of putting it.' He opened his bottom desk drawer, and pulled out a round shaving mirror, with a little stand on it. She took the mirror hesitantly, when he handed it to her.

*Jonathan Jo had a mouth like an O, And a wheelbarrow full of surprises ...* or a desk drawer. She held the mirror gingerly, not sure what it was for.

'I'm sorry,' she giggled. 'I don't shave yet. I'm too young.' He smiled. 'Take a look.'

She didn't want to. She looked quickly, and tried to hand it back, but he didn't take it. He left it lying on the desk. 'All right,' he said. 'Now: do you remember what the other' lady looked like? The nurse?'

'She was blonde,' Cell recalled slowly. 'Dyed-blond, I mean, and her skin was sort of—I guess she had too much powder on. But she was kind of good-looking.'

'Was she? How old do you think she was?'

'Oh, maybe, I don't know—forty?'

'*And why do you suppose she was working in a place like that?*'

She sat there, and tried to think of an answer. What kind of reason would a woman have for working for that kind of a doctor? All she could think of was what her mother would have said: *Well, you know, dear, some people just don't care. I don't suppose she thinks about it, just so long as she earns a*

*living. They're well paid, you know.*

That's what was in the back of her own mind, too—until she stopped to think about it; and then she couldn't figure out an answer. She couldn't think of *any* reason that could make *her* do it.

She looked at him hopelessly, like a child caught unprepared in grammar school, and she saw he was grinning at her again. Not in a mean way; it was more as if he were pleased with her for *trying* to answer than making fun because she couldn't.

Maybe the important thing was just to try. That's what he'd been trying to tell her. That was the way *he* thought about people, all the time.

'I can't tell you his name,' she said, and took a deep breath and let out a rush of words with it, all run together: 'He's-a-cadet-at the-Space-Academy-they'd—' She had to stop and breathe again. 'They'd throw him out.'

'I don't think so,' he said thoughtfully. 'I think we could manage it so they ...' His voice trailed off.

'You don't know how tough they are there—' she insisted, and then stopped herself. 'I guess you do.'

He was silent for a moment, and then he said unexpectedly, 'Nope. You're right.' His voice was bitter. 'That's *exactly* what they'd do.' He sat and thought some more; then he smiled, looking very tired. 'All right. All we really care about with the father is the physical exam. If you want to get in touch with him yourself, and ask him to come in, using any name he wants, that would do it. Or if you'd rather, you can tell me, off the record, and I'll get in touch. But either way, you have my word his name won't get any farther than this chair without your permission.'

She thought about that. She ought to do it herself, but ... 'I'd trust *you*,' she said. 'If that's all right. If you don't mind. I'd—just as lief not—I don't really want to see him, if I don't have to.'

'Any way you want it, kid.' He wrote down the name, when she told him, on a piece of paper from his memo pad. *Charles Bolido*. He drew a line slowly under the two words; then he looked up at her, and down at the pad again, and drew another line, very dark and swift, beneath the first.

'Look, Ceil, it's none of my business if you don't want to talk about it, but—well, are you sure you know what you want to do? Before I get in touch with the boy—well, put it this way: are you giving *him* a fair break? I gather you're not on very good terms any more, and you say he doesn't know about the baby. Maybe—'

'No,' she said.

He smiled. 'Okay, kid. It's your life, not mine. Only one thing: what do I do if *he* wants to see *you*? Suppose he *wants* to quit school and get married?'

'He won't,' she said, but she had to clear her throat before the words came out right. 'He won't.' And she remembered....

*...the grass was greener than any grass had ever been, and the water was bluer, and the sky was far and high above and beyond while he talked about the rockets that would take him on top of the fluffed-out clouds, and away beyond the other side of the powder-puff daytime moon. The sun trailed across the vaulting heaven, and the shade of the oak tree fell away from them. They were hot and happy, and he jumped up, and took her hands, and she stood up into his arms.*

'Love you, babe,' he whispered in her ear.

*She leaned back and looked up at him and in the streaming sunlight he seemed to be on fire with beauty and strength and youth and she said, 'I love you, Charlie,' savouring the words, tasting them, because she had never said them before.*

*She thought a frown crossed his face, but she wouldn't believe it, not then. He took her hand, and they ran together down into the water.*

*It wasn't till later, in the car, that she had to believe the frown; that was when he began explaining carefully, in great detail, what his plans were, what a Spaceman's life was like, and why he could not think about marriage, not seriously about any girl.*

*He never even knew it had been the first time for her, the only time....*

She couldn't explain all that. She sat still and looked at the man across the desk, the man with the nice

smile and the under-standing eyes and the quiet voice. *Charlie has wavy black hair*, she remembered; the Colonel's was sandy-coloured and straight, crew-cut. Charlie had broad shoulders and his skin was bronzed and he had a way of tilting his head so that he seemed to be looking off into the distance, too far for *her* to see. The Colonel was nice enough looking, but his skin was pale and his shoulders a little bit round—from working indoors, at a desk, all the time, she supposed. Only, when he looked at you, he *saw* you, and when he listened, he understood. She couldn't explain the whole thing, but of course she didn't have to ... not to him.

'He won't want to,' she said quietly; she had no trouble talking now. 'If he says so, he won't really mean it. He—he *couldn't* give up the Space school. That's all he ever wanted. It's the only thing that matters to him.' She said it evenly, in a detached objective way, just the way she wanted to, and then she sat absolutely still, waiting for what he'd say.

He tapped his pencil, upside down, on the top of the desk. She couldn't see his face at all. Then he looked up, and he had a made-up smile on his face this time, a smile he didn't *mean*. He nodded his head a little. 'I see.' Then he stood up, and came around to the side of the desk where she was sitting, and put both his hands on her shoulders, and with his thumbs against the sides of her jaw, he tilted her face up, so she was looking straight at him.

'You're a good girl, Ceil.' He meant *that*. 'You're a hell of a good girl, and the chances are Charlie is a lot better than you give him credit for. *Therefore*—' He laughed, and let go of her shoulders, and leaned back against the desk. '... I am *not* going to give you the fond paternal kiss I had in mind a moment ago. You might misunderstand.' He grinned. 'Or you might *not*.'

He wanted her to go now. She stood up, but there was a feeling of something more she had to say. 'I wish you had,' was what she said, and she was horrified. She hadn't even *thought* that.

'All right,' he said. 'Let's pretend I did. Didn't you wear a coat?'

'I had a jacket. I guess I left it outside.'

He had the door open. 'I'll let you know how it turns out,' he promised her, and then he turned around and started talking to the Wac.

He didn't even see her out of the other door.

#### IV

ONCE EACH MONTH, on the average, a Miracle came to pass, and a woman entered Colonel Edgerly's office who seemed, in his judg-ment, emotionally fit to undertake a share of the job of giving 200 homeless, motherless, wombless infants the kind of care that might help them grow up to be mature *human* beings.

He had thought the Miracle for this month was used up when Mrs. Leahy came in. It was a Major Miracle, after all, when one of these women could also pass the Medical and Security checks, as well as his own follow-ups with the formal psych tests. To date, in almost nine months of interviewing, there had been only three such Major Miracles.

Mrs. Serruto, the colonel suspected, was not going to be the fourth. But if she failed, it would likely be in Medics; meantime, he could have the satisfaction at least of turning in one more favourable preliminary report.

She came in the morning after his interview with Ceil, without an appointment, and totally unexpected—a gift, he decided, directly from a watchful Providence to him. Virtue had proved an inadequately self-sufficient reward through a restless night; but surely Mrs. Serruto had been Sent to make recompense.

*Little girls with big blue eyes should keep their transferences out of my office*, he wrote rapidly on a crisp sheet of white paper. He underlined it, and added three large exclamation points. Then he filed it neatly in his bottom desk drawer—the same one that held his unpublished article—and turned to Mrs. Serruto with a smile. She was settled and comfortable now, ready to talk; and so was he. He pulled over an application pad, and began filling things in, working his way to the bottom, and the im-portant personal questions.

He paused a moment at OCCUPATION—but it couldn't happen twice. It didn't. 'Housewife,' she said quietly; then she smiled and added, 'but I think I'm out of a job. That's why I came.'

He listened while she told him about herself and her family, and he actually began to hope. Her son was in the Space Service already, on the Satellite. He'd just passed his year of Probationary, and now the daughter-in-law had qualified for a civilian job up there. The young wife and the two grandsons had been living with her; the grandmother kept house, while the mother went to school, to learn astronomical notation.

Now the girl was going up to be with her husband and to work as an Observatory technician and secretary; the boys would go to Yuma, to the school Spacery maintained for just that purpose.

'We weren't sure about the boys,' Mrs. Serruto explained. 'We talked it over every which way, whether they'd be better off staying with me, or going to Yuma, but the way they work it there, the children all have a turn to go up Satellite on vacations, and they have an open radio connection all the time. And of course, it's such a wonderful school.... It was just they seemed awfully young to be on their own, but this way they'll be closer to their own parents than if they were with me.'

'What made you decide on a Foster Parent job, Mrs. Serruto?' *Let her just answer right once more*, he prayed, to whatever Providence had sent her there. *Just once more ...* 'Most of the applicants here are a good deal younger than you are,' he added. 'It's unusual to find a woman of your age willing to start out in a strange place again.' He smiled. 'A *very* strange place.'

'I— Oh, it's foolish for me to try to fool you, isn't it? You're a trained psychologist, I guess? Well, all the reasons you'd think of are part of it: I'm not young, but I still have my strength, thank the Lord, and I kind of *like* the idea of something new. Lots of people my age feel that way; look at all the retired people who start travelling. And keeping house in the same town for thirty-two years can kind of give you a yen to see the world. But if you want the honest answer, sir, it's just that *I heard*, I don't know if it's true, but I heard that if you get one of these jobs, you spend your leaves on Satellite... ?'

She was watching him anxiously; he had to restrain his own satisfaction, so as not to mislead her. She wasn't in yet, by a long shot—but he was going to do everything he could to get her there.

'That's right,' he told her. 'In theory, you get four days off out of every twenty. The shuttle between Base and Satellite is on a four-day schedule, and one FP out of every five is supposed to have leave each trip. Actually, that only gives you about 45 hours on the Satellite, allowing for shuttle-time. And at the beginning, you may not get leave as regularly as you will later on.' He realized what he was doing, and stopped himself, switching to a cautious third-person-impersonal. 'There's been a good deal of research done on what we call LGT, Mrs. Serruto—that's short for Low Gravity Tolerance. We don't know so much yet about no-grav, but they're collecting the data on that right now. There's a pamphlet with all the information we have so far; you'll get a copy to take home with you, and then if you still want to apply, and if you can pass the tests, there's a two-months' Indoctrination Course, mostly designed to prepare the candidate for the experience of living under Moon-grav conditions.'

'The adjustment isn't easy, no matter how much we do to try and simplify it. But the leave schedule we're using has worked out, for regular SpaSery personnel. That is to say, we've cut down the incidence of true somatic malfunctions—'

She made a funny despairing gesture with hands and shoulders. He smiled. 'Put it this way: Low-grav and no-grav do have some direct—call it *mechanical* effects on the function of the human body. But most of these problems are cumulative. It takes—let's see, at Moon-grav, which is about one-sixth of what you're used to, it takes from ten to twelve months, in the average case, for any serious mechanical malfunctions to show up—I should have let you read the pamphlet first,' he said. 'They've got it all explained there, step by step.'

He paused hopefully, but she obviously didn't want to wait; she wanted to hear it now. 'Anyhow,' he went on, 'we found, by experimenting, that the total tolerance could be extended considerably by breaking up the period. To put it as simply as possible: the lower the gravity, the shorter the time before serious "structural" malfunctions begin to appear—you understand? When I say "structural" I mean not only that something isn't working right, but that there's been actual physical damage done to the body in some way, so that it *can't* work right.'

The faint frown went away, and she nodded eagerly.

'All right. The lower the gravity, the quicker the trouble. Also, the shorter the time-span, the more you can take. That is, a person whose total tolerance at any particular low gravity is, say, six weeks—taken at a stretch—can take maybe ten or twelve weeks if he does it a few days at a time, with leaves spent at normal, or at least higher, gravity.

'The reason for this last fact is that even before the structural malfunctions begin to appear, most people start suffering from all kinds of illnesses—usually not serious, at first, but sometimes pretty annoying—and these are *psychogenic*....'

He looked at her inquiringly, and she nodded, a little uncertainly.

'Very few of the body functions actually *depend* on gravity,' he explained. 'I mean *internal* functions. But all of us are *con-ditioned* to performing these functions under a normal Earth-gravity. A person's digestive system, for instance, or vasc—cir-culatory system, will work just as well with low gravity, or none; but it has to work a little differently. And the result is a certain amount of confusion in the parts of the brain that control what we call "involuntary" reflexes: so that the heart, for instance, tries to pump just as hard as it should to suit the environment it's in—and *at the same time* it may be getting messages from the brain to pump just as hard as it's used to doing.

'When that happens you *may—or* anyone may—develop a heart condition of some kind; but it's just as likely that the patient might come up with purely psychological symptoms. *Or* any one of the various psychogenic diseases that result from ordinary internal conflicts, or anxiety states, may develop instead—'

Now she was shaking her head in bewilderment again. 'Look,' he said. Enough was enough. 'This is all in the reading matter you'll get when you leave today. And it's a lot clearer than I can make it. For now, just take my word for it, on account of the psych end of it, four months has been set as the limit of unbroken Moon duty. However, we've found that people can take up to a year there with no bad effects at all, *if* they get frequent enough leave. That's why it's set up the way it is now.'

'You mean one year is all?' she asked quickly. 'That's the most?'

He shook his head. 'No. That's the standard tour of duty on the present leave system. Here's how it works: You sign a year's contract, which is really for sixteen months, except the last four months are Earth leave. During the twelve months on the moon, you get twenty per cent Satellite leave. That means you spend one-fifth of your time at a higher gravity. Not Earth-normal: the Satellite's set at three-quarters—you know that?'

She shook her head. 'I didn't know. I knew it was less than here on Earth, but the way Ed described things there, I thought it was a lot less than that.'

'It probably would be,' he told her, 'if we didn't use the Satellite for leaves for Base personnel and people from the asteroid stations. Down to about one-half-grav, the bad effects are hardly noticeable, and there are technical reasons why we'd prefer to have to maintain less spin on Satellite. But three-quarters is just about optimum for the short leaves: high enough to restore your peace of mind, and low enough to make it comparatively easy to readjust each time.

'We used to have less frequent longer leaves on Earth—usually a fifty per cent system, one month there, one here. We changed it originally so as to avoid having our LG people constantly exposed to high-grav in acceleration, as well as to save rocket space, and travel time, and things like that. Afterwards, we found out that we were getting much easier adjustments back to LG after the short leave at three-quarters, instead of the longer one on Earth.'

'That makes sense,' she said thoughtfully. 'If you were picking the people who could take the low gravity best, they'd maybe have the most trouble with the acceleration.'

'Yes and no. Strictly, physiologically, it tends to work that way; psychologically it's just the opposite, usually. And all this is in the prepared literature too.' He smiled at her, and determinedly changed the subject. 'Now what we've got to do is arrange for your physical. If it's all right with you, I'd like to get an appointment set up right away, for as soon as possible. Frankly, that's going to be your toughest hurdle here. If you get past that, I don't think we'll have too much more to worry about. But don't kid yourself that it's going to be easy.'

'I'm pretty healthy, Colonel.' She smiled comfortably. 'My people were farmers, over there and over



here; I think they call it "peasant stock"? And I've been lucky. I always lived good.'

'For fifty-two years,' he reminded her gently. 'That's not *old*—but forty is old in SpaServ. Remember, the whole reasoning behind this Project is that if we catch 'em young enough, we think we can train the kids to get along under no-grav conditions. And at your age, even acceleration can be a problem. Anyhow—'

He stood up, and she started gathering her coat and purse together. She was wonderful, he thought, almost unbelievable, after most of the others who came in here: a woman, no more, no less—a familiar, likable, motherly, competent, womanly kind of woman. When it came to psych tests (*if* it got that far, he had to remind himself, as he'd been trying to remind her), he knew she'd come up with every imaginable symptom and psychic dis-order ... in small, safe quantities. A little of this, and a little of that, and the whole adding up to the rare and 'balanced' per-sonality.

'Anyhow,' he said, 'there's no sense talking any more till after you see the Medics.' He led her out to Helen's desk, got her appointment lined up, and made sure she was provided with duly informative literature. Then he saw her out, and went back to his desk, to plot.

The routine report he kept routine. That was no place to urge special allowances or special treatment. He mentioned the SpaSery connections, of course, but did not emphasize them. If the General read carefully, that would be enough. But he had to be *sure*.

He laid out his strategy with care, and found two items pend-ing in his files that would serve his purpose: neither very urgent, either capable of assuming an appearance of immediate im-portance. Satisfied, he went out to lunch, and from there over to Henderson College to see the Dean again. He outlined to her his conversation with Ceil the day before—or at least some of it. The only part of that interview that concerned Sarah Lazarus was in connection with the young man at the Academy.

'When I thought it over,' he explained, 'it seemed to me it might cause some embarrassing questions all around if I were to approach the boy myself. I'm not in a position to say, "Personal", and not be asked any more. So I wondered if you ...' He let it slide off, waiting to see what she'd offer.

'What was it exactly you wanted me to do?' she hedged.

'Write to him. That's all that would be necessary. They don't censor incoming mail there. Or if you'd rather not have anything down on the record, a phone call could do it.'

She nodded thoughtfully. 'I suppose ...' she began slowly, then made up her mind. 'Of course. I'll take care of it. What's the young man's name?'

'I'm afraid,' he smiled, 'we'll have to get Ceil's permission before I tell you that. I made some powerful promises yesterday.'

'I know,' she said, and he looked at her, startled. 'Cecille came in to see me yesterday evening,' she explained, enjoying her moment of superior knowledge. 'She said she wanted to thank me for—for "being so wonderful", I think she said. I believe she *meant* for not tossing her out on her ear as soon as I had heard the *awful truth*.'

'She comes from a—rather old-fashioned family?'

'That's one way of putting it. Her father is a very brilliant man in his line of work, I understand—something technical. He is also a boss-fearing, Hell-fearing, foreigner-fearing, bigoted, narrow-minded, one-sided, autocratic, petty, self-centred domestic tyrant. He spoils his wife and daughter with pleasure, as long as they abide by his principles—and his wife is a flexible, intelligent, family-loving woman who decided a long time ago that his principles had better be hers. Yes—I'd say it was an old-fashioned family. A fine family, if you stick to the rules.'

He nodded. 'That's about the way I figure it.'

The Dean cleared her throat. 'Anyhow, Cecille spent an hour or more with me last night, and after she got done telling me how wonderful I was, she started on what *really* interested her.'

'She's already told you about him? Well, good. That makes it easier.'

'No.'

Again he was startled, but only for an instant. He knew what was coming now, and he had time to cover his responses. Her technique was still lousy—but maybe it worked on her students.

'No,' she said. 'The rest was all about you.' She was watching him closely—of course. 'I suppose,' she

asked thoughtfully, 'that happens fairly often? A girl in trouble comes to see you, and finds you a sympathetic saviour, and promptly decides she's in love?'

'Sometimes,' he admitted. 'I didn't think Ceil had quite reached that stage yet. I was even hoping she might avoid it.'

'She didn't put it that way herself.'

'It's annoying most of the time,' he told her. 'Sometimes, it's flattering as all hell.' He grinned, and refused further comment; when she laughed, he thought he detected a note of relief. He hoped he had said enough, and not too much.

'If you want to wait a minute,' she said, 'I'll get her up here now, and we can get this settled.'

He glanced at his watch. 'Fine!' And it was. Ceil came up, looked in horror from one to the other, and, as soon as she could breathe out again, asked, pleading, '*What's wrong?*'

His own laughter and the Dean's mingled, and when the girl had gone again, much relieved, the faint edge of doubt or suspicion between the man and the woman was gone too. He promised to get in touch with her as soon as he heard from the boy, and got back to his own office in plenty of time for the afternoon's carefully mapped campaign.

About 3:30, and for an hour afterwards, there was usually a lull in the General's afternoon. At 3:45, the Colonel went upstairs with his knotty-looking little problem, and got his expected sequence of responses: irritation at being bothered when no bother was looked for, followed by the gratification at having so easily solved a really minor difficulty the Colonel had apparently been unable to untangle for himself.

'Takes the organizational mind, Tom,' the General said jovi-ally. 'I guess you have to get older, though, before you begin to get the broad view most of the time.' He took his 4 o'clock cigar from the humidor, and offered one to the Colonel.

'No thanks. I think I'll have to get older to appreciate those, too.' He lit himself a cigarette, and held the lighter for the other man.

'You'll get there,' the General puffed. 'See you finally broke down,' he added, grunting around the fat cigar. 'Let one of those ladies get past you.'

'I got tired of saying no. I'm afraid she won't get too far, though.'

The General raised an inquiring eyebrow. 'Haven't studied the report yet, but looked okay, quick glance.' Fragrant smoke rolled over the words, and swallowed up some of them.

'She's not *young*,' the Colonel said hesitantly. 'I—well, frankly, I was making some allowance for the fact that her son and daughter are stationed in Satellite—'

'Oh? SpaServ?' He was interested now.

'The boy is. Five-year hitch, I think. I thought it might make her more likely to stick with us, if she lasts out one year.'

'Tom, you got a positive *talent*—' The General even took the cigar out of his mouth to indulge himself in the lately rare luxury of using the faintly Southern-Western-home-folks manner that had done so much to put him where he was today. '—a *talent*, I tell you, for seein' things wrong-end hind-to.'

Edgerly made the politely inquiring sound that was indicated.

'Naturally, I mean, we want re-enlistments. But that's next year, and frankly, Tom, off the record, by the time we can get her up there and she's worked a year and had her four months' leave, you and me, we're going to be wearing the skin off our backsides some place else altogether. But don't get me wrong.' He chuckled warmly, and reinserted the cigar. 'You wan' make 'lownces, you make 'em, *any* reason you want.'

The Colonel stayed a few more minutes, till his cigarette was finished and he could politely leave. But on the way home, he stopped down in Medical, and dragged Bill Sawyer out with him for a drink.

It took two before Bill got around to it.

'That dame you called us on today—what's her name, Sor-rento?'

'Serruto.'

'Yeah. Did you put a bug in the Old Man's ear, or what?'

'Me? What kind of bug?'

'Oh, he was dropping gentle hints all over me this afternoon. Real gentle. One of them hit my toe, and I think the bone's broken. He thinks she ought to pass her Medic?'

'She's not *young*,' Edgerly said judiciously.

'No. But she's got a son in SpaServ, and after all, we *do* try to make some allowances, keep family together—hell, *you* know!' The Colonel grinned. 'What you need is a drink.'

'You know, I never thought of that!' The doctor chuckled. 'Hey! Remember that babe you were all steamed up about? Canadian. She'd lost her forearm ...?'

'Yeah, Buonaventura. And I still don't see what damn differ-ence sixteen inches of good honest plastic and wire instead of flesh and blood could make on the Moon.'

'Regulations, son, regulations. That's what I was thinking about. Maybe if you could fix it for *her* to get a son into SpaServe...'

'About twenty years from now, you mean?'

'Well, she wasn't exactly a knockout, but she wouldn't be hard to take. Maybe I'd co-operate myself.'

'Leave those little things to us bachelors,' the Colonel said sternly. 'No married man should have to sacrifice that way for the Service.'

The waiter came with fresh drinks, and they concentrated on refreshing themselves for a short time. 'Just the same,' Edgerly said seriously, 'I wish we could get more young ones like that.... I guess it's six of one and you-know-what of the other. The young ones wouldn't want to stay more than a year or maybe two ... this Buonaventura gal, for instance. You know, her husband was killed in the same accident where she lost her arm. Honeymoon and all that. So she wanted to go be real busy for a while, till she could start thinking about another man. But any *young* woman who was healthy enough in the head to trust up there would just be putting in time, the same way..?'

'Okay, but these grandmas you're sending up aren't going to be able to take any more than one or two tours, anyhow,' Sawyer put in.

'That's what I meant. You can't win.'

'What you need,' said the doctor, 'is a drink.'

'You know, that's an idea....'

## V

FOR A LITTLE while, there was the illusion that things were im-proving, all around. Tuesday, the same day Serruto was winding up her 38-hour session in Medic, there was a letter from one Adam Barton, asking if an appointment for the necessary exam-inations could be arranged sometime between November 27 and 30. Thanksgiving leave, the Colonel realized, and phoned down himself to set it up. They'd been trying to keep the weekend free for the staff, but this one would have to go through.

He managed to keep himself from asking about Mrs. Serruto; they wouldn't have a final answer till late afternoon. Then, on impulse, he phoned Sarah Lazarus, and asked her to have lunch with him.

'Celebration. Space Service owes you something,' he explained.

'More than you know,' she replied, but wouldn't say any more on the phone, except to suggest that in her own opinion she was entitled to a good lunch.

Over hors d'oeuvres, and the remains of a ladylike Dubonnet, she explained : she had neither written nor telephoned to Barton-Bolido; she had gone to see him instead.

'When I thought it over, it seemed too awkward any other way,' she said. 'It's only about a three-hour drive, and I under-stood they had visiting Sunday afternoon.'

'We can reimburse you for the expense,' the Colonel offered. 'We have a special fund for that kind of thing....'

'So do *we*,' she said. 'The expense was the least of it. If you could reimburse me for the—what do they call it—"mental agony" ... ?'

'I take it you had something of a heart-to-heart talk?' He was very genuinely curious. 'Is Ceil's impression of him anywhere near accurate?'

'I don't know what Ceil's impressions are,' she said drily. 'Which kind of evens the score, doesn't it?'

She attacked a casse-roule of beef-burgundy saute, with apparent uninterest in continuing the conversation.

'All right,' he laughed. 'I surrender. One betrayal deserves another. *He* wouldn't be very likely to talk to *me*, you know.' He told her what the girl had said, and she nodded.

'That's about it—except he happens to be crazy about her, so this bit of news has really got him in a tizzy. He'd managed to "forget" about her, he said, since the summer—convincing himself that it was best to let the whole thing drop—don't see her any more, don't write—you know? And it makes sense. He does have his handsome little heart set on SpaServ—see, I'm learning the lingo? I'll have the pastry,' she told the waiter, with no change of tone or tempo. 'Anyhow, he can't marry for the next two years, till he graduates. And after that, there's a four-year ... hitch?'

He nodded soberly.

'Hitch, before he can even *hope* to get permission to have his family with him, wherever he is—provided it's some place where he can *have* a family.'

'It will be,' he told her. 'Policy is shaping up that way. They're encouraging wives to go up Satellite now, and any station with enough grays for moderate good health will be opened for families as fast as possible. The boys seem to last longer that way, and work better.'

She was interested. He would have liked to hear more about Charles, but that was personal curiosity, which would in any case be satisfied later on. There was more urgent business for this luncheon, and it was already getting late. He answered her questions, more or less completely but always with a direction in mind, and eventually they came round to the Foster Parent problem.

'I'm sweating one out today,' he told her. 'Maybe that's why I decided to use you as an excuse for a good lunch. It's not easy to find the right people, and half the time, when I do get someone I'm satisfied with, she can't get past the Medics. Stands to reason: the kind I want are likely to have led pretty busy lives, and mostly they run to older women—old, that is, in SpaServ terms—forty and fifty. The one I'm waiting to hear about is fifty-two. If her heart will stand up to blast-off acceleration, she *may* make it. But you never know what kind of ruination those boys can pull out of their infernal machines.'

'What you need is a good old-fashioned diagnostician,' she said, laughing. 'The kind that looked you over and told you in five minutes what was wrong—and turned out to be right.'

He shook his head sadly. 'We're not even allowed to do *that* in psych clinics any more. If you can't tab it up on IBM or McBride cards, it just ain't so.' He sipped at his coffee, which was cold, but—by design—not yet empty. 'I'll tell you what we *do* need, though,' he said seriously.

'What?'

'More Foster Parents.'

She gave him that studying look again. 'Just what is it you're trying to tell me, Colonel?'

'Nothing at all,' he said steadily, returning her look. 'Just chit-chat over lunch. I *did* have a notion about how to publicize our problem in the quarters where it might do the most good: educators, social workers, people like that. But I haven't been able to get official authorization for it yet, so ...'

Deliberately, he paused and sipped again at the cold coffee.

'...so naturally, this is all just idle talk. I'm not *trying* to tell you anything; I'm just answering your questions.'

She was sipping her own coffee when he tried to get a look at her face. When he dropped her off at the College, she hadn't revealed any reaction. They said a friendly good-bye, and he thanked her again for her efforts with the young man, then drove back fast. It was mid-afternoon already, and the report on Mrs. Serruto

The report was on his desk when he got back. He read it through, and sank back in his chair to find out what it felt like to relax.

The General had given him till October 9 to find a satisfactory FP. Today was the seventh.

He swivelled his chair around to look out of the window, at the wide sweep of the mountain range, the dark shapes, green-blue and purple, pushing up into the pale-blue sky of the mesa country. Life was good. For some minutes, he did nothing at all but fill his vision with colour and form, and allow his excellent lunch to be digested. Finally he turned back to the desk and riffled through papers in the *Hold*

basket till he found the Schedule that had come with the General's last memo.

Mrs. Serruto would be ready for the rocket on December 9. They didn't have to have another one till January 6. After that, one on each bi-weekly shipment, at least through February.

January 6, less two months' training, left him 30 days. Serruto had been blind luck; he couldn't count on that again. He buzzed Helen, and dictated a brief memo for the General, asking for a conference, soon, on his proposals about publicity. Halfway through, the phone rang in the outer office. He picked it up on his desk, and it was Sarah Lazarus.

*God is on my side*, he thought. He had hardly expected to hear from her so soon, after her stubbornly non-committal silence during lunch.

She had enjoyed the luncheon, she said, and wanted to thank him again.

'You earned it,' he told her. 'Besides which, the pleasure was at least half mine.' *Or will be, when you get around to what's on your mind....*

'The other thing I wanted to ask you about,' she said, 'was whether Thanksgiving weekend would be all right for our girl's visit?'

Not with the Medics it wouldn't, but he assured her it would. They had the boy coming in that Friday anyhow. The Colonel mentally apologized to God for his presumption.

'You said five days, I think?'

'Fi—oh, for the ... *visit*. Yes. She ought to be here two days ahead of time, and then it's usually best to wait at least two days afterwards.'

'Well—maybe she'd better come in at the beginning of the week. That will give her a chance to get dramatically ill in class. And it will work out better when I tell her parents, I think.'

'Any way you want it,' he assured her. 'It's far enough ahead so the schedule's pretty open. Especially with our present curtail-ments....' He waited.

'Oh, yes,' she said. 'That's right. I'd forgotten.' Then, very sweetly, she asked him if he would care to come to dinner at her home on Saturday evening.

*It's your deal, lady*, he thought; all he could do was pick up the cards and play them as they came.

'Cocktails start at six,' she said, and gave him an address. He hung up, trying to remember whether he had ever heard any reference to a *Mr. Lazarus*. That cocktail-chatter sounded like a big party, but her tone of voice didn't. He shrugged, and turned back to his secretary, who was waiting with an inevitable expression of intelligent detachment.

'Make a note, Sergeant. Remind me to buy a black tie. I'm in the social whirl now.'

She made the note, too. Nothing he could do now would save him from being reminded. He favoured the Perfect Lady Soldier with a look of mingled awe, horror, and affection, and got on with the business of dictating his reminder to the General....

Brigadier General Harlan Foley Martin, U.N.S.S., resplendent in full uniform, with the blazing-sun insignia of SpaSery shining on his cap, was conducting a party of visitors through his personal domain: the newest, cleanest, finest building in the entire twenty-seven acres that made up the North American Moon Base Supply Depot—which was beyond doubt the biggest, cleanest, fastest and generally bestest Depot anywhere on Earth.

It was of particular importance that these (self-evident) facts should be brought to the attention of the visitors, against the time when they returned to their respective Depots in South Africa, North Asia, and Australia, to establish similar centres in which to carry out their share of the important and inspiring work of Project Nursemaid.

Half a dozen duly humble seekers after knowledge followed at his heels (metaphorically speaking; in actual practice, the General politely ushered them ahead of him through doors and narrow passageways), drinking in wisdom, observing efficiency, and uttering appropriate expressions of admiration.

The General felt it was time for a bit of informality, and there was no better way than in a display of that indifference to rank and protocol for which the Normerican Section was famous. Accordingly, he headed straight for the office of his Psychological Aide, Colonel Edgerly. There were times when it was possible to place a good deal of faith in the Colonel's judgment and behaviour.

Edgerly rose to the occasion. He showed them through his Department, explained the psych-testing equipment in three languages, and excused himself from accompanying them further on account of the press of his own work.

In the waiting-room, as they took leave of the Colonel, the General drew the attention of the visiting gentlemen away from the admirable example of Normerican soldiery behind the reception desk with a typical display of typical Normerican informality.

'Oh, by the way, Tom, before I forget it—I've been too busy the last day or two, but I saw your memo on that idea of yours, and I want the two of us to get together some time and talk it over. Some time soon....' He smiled, and the Colonel smiled back.

'Well, let's set up a date now.' Edgerly turned to the Sergeant behind the desk.

'Oh, no need for that, Tom. Just give me a ring, or I'll drop in on you. Any time, any time at all ...'

The General and his party proceeded to examine the hospital facilities on a lower floor.

Colonel Edgerly reknotted his tie, adjusted the angle of his cap, and stepped out of his car in front of one of the city's better apartment houses. A doorman led him to the proper elevator, and pushed the appropriate button for him. He stepped out into a foyer done in walnut wood and cream-coloured plaster. As the elevator door closed, a chime rang softly in a room behind the floral-printed draperies, and he had hardly time to savour the nostalgia the decor had produced before his hostess pulled the drapes aside and asked him in.

She was wearing a black dinner dress that displayed, among other things, a rather different personality from the one she wore in her office. However, there *was* a Mr. Lazarus, and five or six other guests besides.

They drank cocktails and engaged in party conversation until one more couple arrived. The dinner was well-cooked and well-served, and eaten to the accompaniment of some remarkably civilized table talk, plus an excellent wine and subdued back-ground music. Afterwards, three more couples came in, and by the time the last of them arrived, the Colonel's opinion of his hostess—already improved by her home, her dress, her food and drink—had reached a peak of admiration and appreciation. Out of thirteen persons present that evening, every one except three escorting husbands—every other one was an upper-echelon executive of some social service agency, woman's club, child care organization, or adult educational centre.

The Colonel did not proselytize, nor did he mention any specific difficulties the Project was having. There was no need to do either. The guests that evening had come specifically to meet him, because they were curious and interested and felt them-selves inadequately informed about Project Nursemaid. He had nothing to do but answer eager intelligent questions put to him by alert and understanding people—and in the course of answer-ing, it took no more than an occasional shift of emphasis to convey quite clearly that the Project's capacity for handling PN's must necessarily depend in large part on its success in finding satisfactory Foster Parents.

'Did you say before that you preferred older women for these jobs, Colonel?' He looked around for the questioner: a slim tailored woman with a fine-drawn face and clean, clear skin; she looked as though she belonged on a country estate with dogs and horses and a prize-winning garden. For the moment, he couldn't remember her name, or which outfit she was connected with.

'No. Not at all. If I mentioned anything like that, it should have been by way of complaint. The fact is that most of the people who satisfy our other requirements *are* older women—older in SpaSery terms, anyhow. Most of our candidates are, for that matter. Women under the age of forty, if they're healthy, well-balanced personalities, are either busy raising their own families, or else they're even busier looking for the right man to get started with. From the Medical viewpoint, we'd a lot rather get younger people. And for that matter, I think they might suit our purposes better all around—the right kind, that is.'

'I see. I was particularly interested, because we've been doing some intensive work lately on the problem of jobs for women over thirty-five, and I thought if we knew just what you wanted ... ?' She let it drift off into a pleasant white-toothed smile, one feathery eyebrow barely raised to indicate the question-mark at the end. He remembered now—Jane Somebody, from Aptitudes, Inc., the commercial

guidance outfit. He struggled for the last name.

'I think Miss Sommers has a good point there, Colonel.' This was the dumpy little woman with the bright black eyes, sitting on the hassock across from him. *Sommers, that's right! Next time I'll put Sergeant Gregory in my pocket to take notes.* 'I hate to pester you so much on your night out, but I think several of us here might be able to send you people occasionally, if we knew a little more about just what you want.'

This one he remembered: she was the director of the Beth Shalom Family Counselling Service. 'Believe me, Mrs. Goldman, I can't think of any way I'd rather be pestered. I just wish I'd known beforehand what I was getting into. I'd have come prepared with a mimeographed list of requirements to hand out at the door.' With complete irrelevance, the thought flashed through his mind that the Sergeant never *had* reminded him about that black tie. *You're slipping, old girl!* he thought, and smiled at Mrs. Goldman. 'As it is—well, it takes about a week to complete the testing of an applicant. If I tried to tell you in detail what we want, Mrs. Lazarus might get tired of our company after a while. I think you probably know in general what per-sonality types are suitable for that kind of work. Beyond that, probably it would work better for you to ask any specific ques-tions you have in mind, and let me try to answer them.'

'Well, *I was* wondering—are you only taking women, or are you interested in men too? There's one couple I had in mind; they're young and healthy and what psychological problems they've got are all centred on the fact that they can't have any kids of their own, and because he's a freelance artist with no steady income, they can't adopt one. I think they might like to go, for a year or two... ?'

There was no point in telling her that the chances were a thousand to one they'd never pass the psychs. Nobody had ever proved that most cases of sterility were psychogenic, but the Project had, so far, built up some fascinating correlations be-tween certain types of sexual fears and childlessness; and then the 'free-lance artist' . . . He satisfied himself with answering the question she'd asked, and the other important one implied in her last sentence.

'We'd be delighted to have couples, if we can get them. We haven't taken any men so far, but we've got a couple on our reserve list. We want them later on, but for the immediate future, we need women in the nursery. One other point, though ... what you said about "a year or two".'

'We're signing people up for one-year contracts. One year's duty, and four months' leave, that is. We're doing it that way for several reasons: we want to be able to retest everyone medically before we renew contracts; and we want to check actual records of behaviour on duty and psychosomatic responses against our psych tests. A few other things, too, but all of 'em boil down to the fact that we *think* we know what we're doing, but we're not sure yet. However—'

'If it weren't for the special problems of LGT, we'd—well, obviously, if it weren't for those problems, the Project wouldn't be necessary at all—but since it is necessary, we're still hampered by the same limitations. We'd like to provide permanent Foster Parents for each group of children. We can't do that, for the same reason we can't just send whole families up there: the adults can't take it that long. Even with the present leave system, five years is probably going to be the maximum—five years' duty, that is, with four-month intervals on Earth between each tour.

'Right at this point, we're just not in a position to insist that anyone who goes should agree to put in the maximum number of tours—I mean whatever maximum the Medics decide on for the individual person. We can't do it, because it's more important just to get people *up* there. But we would if we could.'

He broke off, uncomfortably aware that he was monopolizing the floor. 'I'm sorry. I seem to be making a speech.'

'Well, go ahead and make it,' Mrs. Lazarus said easily. 'It's a pretty good one.'

'I'm just letting off steam,' he laughed. 'This is my pet frustra-tion. Right now, the Project, or our division, has the specific job of supplying personnel, and we're not supposed to worry about the continuation of the Project five or ten years from now. But I'm the guy who's supposed to pick the right people to do the job—and I *can't* pick them without thinking in terms of what will happen to those kids when they're five years old and fifteen and twenty.'

'I think I understand your difficulty a little bit, Colonel.' It was a quiet, very young-sounding voice from

across the room. 'We have something of the same problem to face.' He picked her out now: the nun, Mother Mary Paul. One of the orders specializing in social work; Martha... ? Yes: Order of Martha of Bethany. 'Some of the children who come to us are orphans; others are from homes temporarily unable to care for them; some are day students; some are students who live in the convent. Most of them, in one way or another, are from homes where they have not received—well, quite as much as one might hope a happy home could provide. We want to give them the *feeling* of having a home with us—and yet, we know that most of them will be leaving us and going to their own families, or adopted families, or other schools. It's—rather a harder job, I think, to give a small child a sense of security and of *belonging*, when you know yourself that the time will come when the child must be handed over to someone else's care. I know I tend to demand a good deal more of the sisters going into orphanage work than a family qualifying for adoption.'

`You've said that better than I could have—' What were you supposed to call her? Not *Sister*; he gathered she was too high up in her order. *Mother? Your Reverence?* He compromised by omitting any title, and hoped the omission was not an offence. `About the sense of belonging. Ideally, of course, the children should be in families, with permanent adoptive parents. But we have to juggle the needs of the children against the limitations of the adults. The kids need permanence; but the grown-ups just can't last long enough under the conditions. So to even up the books, an FP, Foster Parent, has to be something pretty special : a mature woman with the health of a young girl—a sane and balanced personality just sufficiently off keel to want to go to the Moon—someone with the devotion of a nun, who has no very pronounced doctrinal beliefs ... I could go on and on like that, but what it all comes down to is that the kind of people we want are useful and productive right here on Earth, and mostly much too busy to think about chasing off to the Moon.'

There was a general laugh, and people started moving about, shifting groups, debating the wisdom of one more drink. The Colonel debated not at all. He took a refill happily, and turned away from the bar to find himself being converged upon. Mrs. Goldman, Mother Mary Paul, and a Dr. Jonas Lutwidge, pastor of the local Episcopal Church, and a big wheel of some kind in the city's interdenominational social welfare organization.

They did not exactly all speak at once, but the effect was the same : What, they wanted to know, had he meant by 'no pro-nounced doctrinal beliefs'?

The Colonel drank deeply, and began explaining, grateful that this had come up, if it had to in a small group, and equally glad that he had thoughtfully provided himself with a double shot of whisky in this glass.

The broad view first: `... you realize that there will be, alto-gether, one thousand babies involved in this Project. Two hun-dred of them will come through our Depot. The rest will be from every part of the world, from every nationality, every faith, every possible variation of political and social background. The men and women who care for them, and who educate them, will not necessarily be from the same backgrounds at all....' And world governments being still new, and human beings still very much creatures of habit and custom, there was no guarantee that bias and discrimination could be ruled out in the Project except by the one simple device that would make anything of the sort *impossible*.

From the individual viewpoint: `These kids are going to grow up in an environment almost entirely alien, from the Earth view-point. They'll spend their time half on Moon Base, and half on the no-grav training ship. They won't have parents, in the sense in which we use the term, or families, or any of the other factors that go to forming the human personality. Maybe we could grow us a thousand supermen this way, but frankly we don't want to find out. We might not *like* them; they might even not like us....' Therefore every effort was going to be made to provide a maxi-mum of artificial `family' life. The babies would be assigned, shortly after birth, to a group of five `brothers and sisters'; Foster Parents in the group would necessarily change from time to time, but whenever a contract was renewed, the parent would go back to the same group. There would be a common group-designation, to be used as a last name; even first names were to be given by the first FP to assume the care of each baby. `It's all part of what you were saying before, Mother,' he pointed out. 'We want the Foster Parents to *feel and act* as much as possible as if these were their own children; unfortunately, the physical setup is such that the opportunities



to create such situations are few enough. We have to use every device we can.'

Obviously, under these circumstances, religious training could not be given in accordance with the child's ancestry. The solution finally decided upon had been to invite all religious groups to select representatives to participate in the children's education. They would all be exposed to every form of religious belief, and could choose among them. A compromise at best—and one that could work only by a careful system of checks and balances, and by making certain, insofar as possible, that the proselytizing was done *only* by the official representatives, and not by evangelical Foster Parents.

Mother Mary Paul and Mrs. Goldman both seemed tentatively satisfied with the explanation. Dr. Lutwidge was inclined to argue, but Sarah Lazarus came to the Colonel's rescue with a polite offer of coffee which drew their attention to the noticeable absence of the other guests.

It was almost one o'clock when Edgerly got home, in a glow of pleased excitement, and in no mood for bed. He stalked through the four rooms of his bachelor cottage, surveying everything with profound distaste, and sat up for an hour more, making sketches and notes about the improvements he meant to effect. Next morn-ing, on his way to work, he stopped at a florist's for the brown jug and yellow roses that he had felt, all evening, should have been on the table in that foyer. Briefly, he debated drawing on the Special Account to cover the cost, and decided against it; he had made his gesture now towards Better Living, and could leave his own home alone.

Within a week, the number of FP applicants in his office began to increase; within three weeks, he had another successful candi-date. His working day, which had for a short time been quiet and peaceful, resumed its normal pace, an hour or two behind schedule. And if the General still had failed to authorize the publicity campaign which the Colonel had already unofficially initiated, at least the Old Man had done nothing to impede it, and was showing a remarkable tendency to stay entirely out of the Psych Dept.'s hair.

This was good, up to a point. But by the middle of November, when the first rush of applicants referred by the Dean's friends had begun to diminish and he had found only one more accept-able candidate, the Colonel began to feel the need of an official authorization that would make it possible to carry his campaign farther abroad. The people he'd met were all local; some had state-wide influence, others only in the immediate area. The Depot represented a territory that covered all of what had once been Canada, Alaska, and the U.S.A., plus part of Mexico.

The Colonel chafed a while, then sent another memo, asking for a conference on his suggestions of five weeks ago. For some days afterwards, he watched and waited for a response. Then another satisfactory applicant turned up, and he was busy with psych-tests and briefing interviews for the better part of a week. He checked off the second January rocket on his schedule, and offered up a brief prayer to whatever Deity had been looking out for him, that another such woman should come his way before the third of December.

And then it was Thanksgiving week.

## VI

MONDAY AFTERNOON, Cell Chanute was admitted to the Project infirmary. Tuesday morning, Dean Lazarus called to report that she had informed the girl's family of her illness, and had successfully headed off any efforts at coming out to visit her. Wednesday morning, the day her operation was scheduled, the Colonel came in early and had breakfast with Ceil in the Med staff-room. He saw no reason to tell her that this was standard practice whenever possible, and when he went upstairs he was basking in the glow of her evident pleasure at what she thought a special attention.

He spent most of the morning dealing swiftly and efficiently with correspondence; the only time he hesitated was over one handwritten letter, from a town a hundred miles away. This he read carefully, then slid it into his pocket, to handle personally later on.

At 4:30 that afternoon Ruth Mackintosh came in. She was the most recent of his successful candidates, now in her first week of regular training, and part of the process was a daily hour in his office,

mostly to talk over any problems or questions of hers—partly to allow him continuous observation of her progress and her attitudes.

At five-oh-four the Sergeant, out at the desk, buzzed him with the news that the operation on the Chanute girl was completed, without complications, and she would be coming out of anaes-thesia shortly. The Colonel repeated the news for his visitor's benefit, explaining that he might have to leave in a hurry, if Cell began to wake up.

'Oh, of course—maybe you'd rather go down now?'

He would. For some idiotic reason, he said instead; 'It'll be ten or fifteen minutes anyhow.'

'I wish I'd known,' she said. 'I was going to ask you if I could see an operation before I went up.'

That was a new one. 'Have you ever watched an operation before?'

'Well, I used to be a practical nurse; I've seen plenty of home deliveries, and I saw a Caesarian done once—oh, you mean, will it upset me? No.' She laughed. 'I don't think so.'

That wasn't what he'd meant. 'Why do you want to see it?' he asked slowly. With some people the best way to get an answer was to ask a direct question.

'I don't know—I just want to see as much as I can, know as much as I can about the babies and what's happened to them already, and where they come from, and—if you people weren't so obviously oriented in the opposite direction, I'd want to meet the mothers, too, as many as I could.'

Wonderful—if true. He scribbled a note to check over certain of her tests for repressed sadistic leanings, and told her, 'We're not oriented the other way *entirely*. In fact, we've changed our feeling about that several times already. Just now, I don't think it would be possible for you to meet any of the parents, but I think we can manage a pass to see a section performed. I'll check.'

He reached for the phone, but it buzzed before he could get to it. He listened, and turned back to Mrs. Mackintosh.

'I'm afraid I am going to have to run out on you.' He stood up. 'The kid downstairs is coming out of it now—you understand?'

'Of course.' She stood up, and followed him to the door. 'Do you want me to wait, or ... ?'

'If you'd like to. Check with Sergeant Gregory here. She'll give you all the dope about getting that pass. And if you want to wait, that's fine, unless the Sergeant says I'm going to be busy. She knows better than I do.' He wanted to get out of the other door and downstairs. The feeling of urgency was unreasonable, but it was there. 'Helen,' he said briskly, 'you get things worked out with Mrs. Mackintosh. I'll be downstairs if you want me. Sorry to rush off like this,' he told the other woman again. 'Helen'll set up another appointment for us. Or wait if you want.' *That's the third time I said that*, he thought irritably, and stopped trying to make sense, or to say anything at all.

He had the satisfaction, at least, as he went out of the door, of one quick glimpse of the Perfect Lady Soldier, out of control. Helen was flabbergasted ... and it showed.

Waiting for the elevator, he wondered what she thought. Going down in the elevator, he was sure he knew. And striding down the corridor on the hospital floor, he was dismayed to consider that she might possibly be right.

He had some news for Cell Chanute, tucked away in his jacket pocket—news he had withheld all morning, uncertain what effect it might have on her, and therefore unwilling to deliver it before the operation. True enough, he ought to be on hand when she woke up; it *might* be what she'd want to hear. True, but *not* true *enough*—not enough to warrant his indecent haste.

He made himself slow down before he reached the nurse's cubicle outside the Infirmary. When he went inside, he had already made up his mind that his concern about his own be-haviour was ridiculous anyhow. An occasional extra show of interest in an individual case—any case—was *not* necessarily the same thing as an unprofessional personal involvement.

Not *necessarily*, echoed a sneaky, cynical voice in the back of his mind.

He reached the bed, and abandoned introspection. She was awake, not yet entirely clear-minded, but fully conscious. He sat down on the chair right next to her head, and picked up her limp hand.

'How's the girl?'

'I'll live.' She managed a sort of a smile.

'Feeling bad?'

'All right ...'

'Hungry?'

She shook her head.

'Thirsty?' She hesitated, then nodded. 'Water? Tea? Lemon-ade? Ginger ale?' She just smiled, fuzzily. The nurse, standing at the foot of the bed, looked to him for decision. 'Tea,' he said, but the girl shook her head. 'Something cold,' she murmured.

The nurse went away, and the Colonel leaned back in the chair, to an angle where he could watch her face without making her uncomfortably aware of it. 'I've got some news for you,' he said.

She turned her head to look at him, suddenly worried.

'Take it easy, kid. If it was anything bad, I wouldn't tell you *now*. Just that you'll have some company tonight—if you want to.'

'Company ...?' Her eyes went wide, and she seemed to come out of the post-operative daze entirely. 'Not *my mother!*'

'Nope. Gentleman who gave his name as Adam Barton.'

It took her a moment to connect; then she gasped, and said uneasily, 'How did he know—? But how could he get here *tonight*? Isn't he at school? How—'

'One at a time. He's coming for his physical on Friday. I guess Dean Lazarus told him you were being operated on today. I had a note from him this morning.' He took it out of his pocket, and held it out, but she shook her head in vigorous refusal. 'Look, kid: he's leaving there at five this evening; left already. He'll be here about eight, and he's going to phone when he gets in. He'd like to see you.'

She didn't say anything, but he could see the frowning intensity of her face. 'Do you want to see him, Cell? It's up to you, you know. I thought—in case you wanted to, you might like to know about it right away, when you woke up. But ...'

'No!'

'Whatever you want, gal. I wouldn't decide right away, if I were you. He'll phone when he gets in. I'll tell the nurse to check with you then.'

'No,' she said again, less violently, but just as certainly. 'No. She doesn't have to ask me. Just tell him no.'

'Okay. If you change your mind, tell her before eight. Otherwise, she'll tell him no, just like the lady said. Here's your drink.'

He took the cold glass from the nurse's hand, and put it on the table. 'Can you sit up?' She tried. 'Here.' He lifted her head, cradling her shoulders in his arm, and helped her steady the glass with his other hand. It didn't feel like anything special. She was female, which was nice, and well-shaped, which was better. Otherwise, he couldn't find any signs of great emotion or excitement in himself. He eased her down gently, and stood up.

'I'll be around till six if you want me,' he said. 'Anything you get a yen for, tell the nurse. If she can't fix you up, she'll call Colonel Edgerly, of the Special Services Dept. We aim to please. The patient is always right. If you want to get sat up some more, you can use the nurse, but it's more fun if I do it.'

She giggled weakly, and the nurse produced a tolerant smile. Out in the hall, he left instructions about the phone call. 'She may change her mind,' he finished. 'Nobody says *no* that hard unless they meant to say *yes* at the same time. Let me know if she has any sudden change of mood—up *or* down. I'll be at my home phone all evening, if you want me—or if she does.'

Going back in the elevator, he didn't worry about his own emotions; he pondered instead on what 'Adam Barton's' must be.

She lay flat on her back in the neat hard white bed, and felt nothing at all. Delicately, she probed inside herself, but there was no grief and no gladness; not even anger; not even love. It was all over, and here she was, and that was that. After a while, she'd be getting up out of the bed, and everything would be just the same as before.

No. Not quite everything. They had taken out more than the—the baby. She thought the words,

thought them as words. *Baby*. They had taken out more than that, though. Whatever it was Charlie had meant, that was gone too. Out. Amputated. Cut away.

She couldn't see him, because he would be a stranger. She didn't know him. She wouldn't know what to say to him, or how to talk. What had happened long ago had happened to a different girl, and to some man she didn't know.

*Adam Barton!*

Her hand came down hard on the mattress and jarred her so that she became aware of pain. That was a relief. At least she could feel something. She saw the clenched fist of the hand, and was astonished: it hadn't *fallen* on the bed; she'd *hit* the mattress with her fist!

Why?

She couldn't remember what she was thinking about when she did it. The pain in her pelvis was more noticeable now, too, and no longer something to be grateful for.

She didn't remember calling the nurse, but somebody in a white uniform handed her a pill, and lifted her head so she could sip some water.

He was right. It was more fun when *he* did it. She wished he would come back. She wanted him to stroke her head, the way her daddy used to do when she was very little, and then she was waking up, and very hungry.

The nurse came in right away; she must have been watching through the glass at the end of the room. But when she brought the tray, there was nothing on it except some junket and a glass of milk. When she insisted she was still hungry, the nurse agreed doubtfully to some orange juice. Then she lay there with nothing to do but dream about a full meal, and try to sort out memories: The terrible moment when they put the cone over her face in the operating room—the dazed first waking—the Colonel ...

'Nurse!'

The white uniform popped through the door.

'What time is it?'

'Seven twenty-four.'

'Oh. Is—Colonel Edgerly wouldn't be here now, would he?'

'No. But he left word for us to call if you wanted him.'

'Oh, no. It's not important. It can wait.' It *wasn't* important; it wasn't even *anything*. I was just—just wanting to know if he was here. No, it wasn't, because she felt better now. It was wanting to know he hadn't *forgotten* about her. *Well, he didn't!* she scolded herself happily. He wouldn't, either. He wasn't the kind of man who took on responsibilities and then walked out on them, like ...

*Like I did*, she thought suddenly.

The telephone out in the nurse's room was ringing. It cut off halfway through the second ring. She listened, but you couldn't hear the nurse's voice through the wall. He could be calling to find out how she was. Or her father—if her *father* knew ...

She giggled, because her father would bawl her out for day-dreaming and 'woolgathering'. That's what he called it when he talked to her, but she'd heard him telling her mother once, when he didn't know she could hear, 'Mental masturbation, that's all it is! Poking around inside herself till she wears herself out. There's no satisfaction in it, and all it does is make you want more of the same. Plenty of good men, men with *ability*, starving to death right now because they couldn't stop themselves from doing just that.' It was funny how she remembered the words, and just the way he'd said them; it was years and years ago, and she'd hardly understood it at the time. 'If that girl spent half the time think-ing about *what she's doing* than she does worrying about what she already did and dreaming about what she's going to do,' he'd finished indignantly, 'then I wouldn't worry about her at all!'

He was right, she thought tiredly, and a moment later she thought it again, more so, because she remembered that it was Charlie who had called. She should have talked to him; she could have done that much, at least. She'd been lying here thinking he was the kind of person who walked out on his responsibilities, and that wasn't fair, because she didn't know what he would have done if she'd told him.

*Well, why didn't I tell him?* she wondered, and ...

*Stop it!* she told herself. *If you have a toothache, you won't make it better by worrying it with*

*your tongue all the time.*

Her father had said *that*, too, she remembered, and suddenly she was furious. *That's not what I was doing*, she told him coldly, but she didn't try to explain, not to him. Only there was a difference. She wasn't just worry-warting or daydreaming now; she was trying to find out *why*—a lot of *why's*.

That was the way *he* thought, all the time: *Why?* It was think-ing that way that made him the kind of person he was....

She giggled again. Every time she thought about him, she thought *he*, and never a name. *Colonel* didn't fit at all. and *Mister* wasn't right, and just plain *Edgerly* was silly, and she didn't dare think *Tom*.

The nurse came to give her a pill.

'Is that to make me go to sleep?' she asked warily.

'It's a sedative,' the nurse said, as if that was different.

'I slept all day,' she said. Will it bother anybody if I read a while?' She didn't want to read, especially, but she didn't want to sleep yet either. The nurse handed her the pill, and held out the water, and obediently, because she didn't know how to argue about it, she lifted her head and swallowed twice. When she moved like that, she remembered what it was she was trying so hard not to think about. It didn't hurt so much any more, but there was a kind of *empty-ache*.

The nurse turned on her bed light, and got some magazines from the table across the room. 'If you want anything, the bell's in back of you,' she said.

Ceil let her hand be guided to the button, but there was something she wanted right now. 'Was it—' she started, and tried again. 'What was it?'

'It's a boy,' the nurse said, and laughed. 'Or anyhow, it *will* be, we think. You can't always tell for sure so soon.'

*Is ... will be...*

Her head was swimming, from the pill probably.

Not *was*. *Will be*.

*It's alive*, she thought. *I didn't kill it*. She smiled, and sank back into the pillow, but when she woke up she was crying, and she couldn't stop.

## VII

THE PHONE WOKE him at 3:43, according to the luminous figures on the dark clock-face. By the same reckoning, he had had exactly one hour and fifty-eight minutes of sleep. It was not enough.

He drove down to the Depot at a steady thirty-five, not trusting his fuzzy reflexes for anything faster; he made up for it by ignor-ing stop signs and traffic signals all along the way. The streets were empty and silent in the darkest hour of a moonless night; in the clear mountain air, the rare approach of another set of headlights was visible a mile or more away. He drove with the window down and his sports shirt opened at the neck, and by the time he got there he was wide awake.

They had taken her out of the infirmary into one of the consultation rooms, where the noise would not disturb the other woman who was waiting for an operation the next day. She was crying uncontrollably, huddled under a blanket on the couch, her shoulders trembling and shaking, her face turned to the wall, her fingers digging into the fabric that covered the mattress.

He didn't try to stop her. He sat on the edge of the couch, and put a hand on her shoulder. She moved just enough to throw it off. He waited a moment, and rested the same hand on her head. This time there was a hesitation, a feeling of preparation for movement again, and then she stayed still and went on crying.

After a little while he began stroking her head, very softly, very slowly. There was no visible or audible reaction, yet he felt she wanted him to continue. He couldn't see his watch. The dial was turned down on the arm that was stroking the girl's hair, but he thought it must have been a long time. He began to feel over-whelmingly sleepy. The sensible thing would have been to lie down next to her, and take her in his arms, and both of them get some sleep....

No, not sensible. Sensible was what it wouldn't be. What it *would* be was pleasant and very

reasonable—but only within the limits of a two-person system of logic. From the point of view of the Depot, the General, the nurse, the Space Service's honour, and the civilized world in general, it would be an unpardonable thing to do. *If I were in uniform*, he thought sharply, *it would never have occurred to me!*

She hadn't quite stopped crying yet, but she was trying to say something; the words got lost through the sobs and the blanket, but he knew what they would be. Apologies, embarrassment, explanations. Tie stood up, opened the door, called down the corridor for the nurse and asked for some coffee.

*If I were in uniform, she'd have said, 'Yes, sir!' clickety, clack.*

When he turned back, Ceil was sitting up on the couch, the blanket wrapped around her, covering everything but her face, which was a classical study in tragi-comedy: tear-stained and grief-worn, red-nosed and self-consciously ashamed.

'I—I'm sorry. I don't know what—I don't *know* what was the matter.'

He shrugged. 'It happens.' When the coffee came, he could try to talk to her some, or get her to talk. Now he was just tired.

'They woke you up, didn't they?' She had just noticed the sports shirt and slacks; she was looking at him with real interest. 'You look different that way. N—' She cut it off short.

'Nicer?' he finished for her. 'How do? My name is Tom. I just work here.'

'I'm sorry I made you get out of bed,' she said stiffly.

*No you're not. You feel pleased and important and self-satis-fied.* He shrugged. 'Too much sleep would make me fat.' 'What time is it?'

He looked at his watch. 'Ten to five.' The nurse came in with a tray. 'Time for breakfast. Pour some for me, will you? I'll be right back.'

He followed the nurse down the corridor, out of earshot of the open door. 'Did the kid call last night—Barton?'

'Not since I've been on; that was midnight.'

He walked back to the little cubicle with her and found the neat notation in the phone log at 2003 hours, with a telephone number and extension next to the name. He turned to the nurse, changed his mind, and picked up the phone himself. There was a distinct and vengeful satisfaction in every twirl of the dial; and a further petty pleasure when the sleepy, resentful voice at the other end began to struggle for wakefulness and a semblance of military propriety as soon as he said the word 'Colonel.'

'I'm not certain,' he said briskly, 'but if you get out here fast, Ceil just might want to see you this morning.'

'Yes, sir.'

'You have a car?'

'Yes, sir, I dr—'

'Well, it should be about twenty minutes from where you are. Come to the main gate at the Depot. You have any identification, *Mister Barton?*'

'I ... no, sir. I didn't think about ...'

'All right. Use your driver's licence.'

'But that has my own na—'

'Yeah, I know. You're permitted civvies on leave, aren't you?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Okay. You ask for me. Personal visit. I'll leave word at the gate where they can find me. You know how to get out here?' 'I think so, sir.'

'Well, let's make sure.' He gave careful instructions, waited for the boy to repeat them, and added a final reminder: 'You'll only need identification to get in the main gate. Understand?'

'Yes, sir.'

The Colonel hung up and picked up the other phone, the inside system. He left word at the gate that he was expecting a visitor, and could be found in the Infirmary. Then he went quickly back to the little room where Ceil waited, before the creeping dark edge of a critical conscience could quite eclipse the savage glow of his ego.

With a cup of coffee steaming in his hands and the comfort of an armchair supporting him, he decided it was certainly unjust, but not at all unreasonable, for a man who had barely napped all night to take a certain irritable delight in awakening another man at five—even if there was no element of masculine competition—which of course there wasn't, really. This last point he repeated very firmly to himself, after which he could give his full attention to what Ceil was saying.

She was talking in a rambling steady stream; words poured through the floodgates now with the same compulsive force that had produced the violent tears and wracking sobs of an hour earlier. He didn't have to answer; he didn't even have to listen, except to satisfy his own interest. *She* had to talk; and she would have to do a lot more of it, too. *But not all at once*, he thought drowsily, *not all of it at five o'clock in the morning*.

Sometimes it happened this way. A single shock—and having one's abdomen cut open is always a shock—was enough to jolt an individual over a sudden new threshold of maturity. Ceil had been crying for a double loss: her own childhood, as well as the baby she hadn't known she wanted till it was gone. Now she had to discover the woman she was becoming. But *not* all in the next half-hour.

The nurse came to the door with a meaningful look. He stood up, realizing he had waited too long to tell the girl, uncertain now which way to go. The nurse retreated from the doorway, and he stepped over to the couch, sat down on the edge, and put his hand on Ceil's arm.

'Look, kid, I have to go see somebody now....'

'*Oh, I'm* sorry!' She didn't look sorry; she looked relaxed and almost radiant, under the tousled hair and behind the red eyes. 'That other woman ... she's being operated on today, isn't she?'

'Yes.' And he'd damn near forgotten that himself. 'Yes, but that's not ... There's somebody here to see *you*, really.'

This time she didn't think of parents. This time she knew.

'Charlie...!'

'*Adam*.' He smiled.

'I don't ... I don't *know* ...?'

He didn't smile, but it was an effort. 'Well, you'll have to de-cide. I've got to go talk to him anyhow.' He stood up and re-luctantly left his half-full cup of coffee on the tray. At the door he turned back and grinned at her. 'While you're making up your mind—we might be a few minutes—you'd have time to comb your hair a little if you wanted to, and things like that....'

He watched her hands fly, dismayed, to her head, and saw her quick horrified glance in the wall mirror. Her mind was made up....

The boy was in the waiting room, at the end of the corridor, standing with his back to the door, staring out of the window. He was tall—taller than Edgerly—and built big; even in rumpled tweeds there was an enviable suggestion of the heroic in his stance and the set of his, shoulders. Empathy, the Colonel de-cided, was going to be a bit harder to achieve than usual. He took a step into the room, a quiet step, he thought, but the boy turned immediately, stepped forward himself, then paused.

Eagerness turned to uncertainty in his eyes, and then to dis-appointment. He started to turn back to the window.

'Barton?' the Colonel asked sharply, and as the boy started forward again, the man was suddenly genuinely annoyed with himself. Of course the kid didn't know who he was; you don't spring to attention and salute a lounging figure in wrinkled slacks and open-necked shirt. For that matter, they were *both* in civvies.

His irritation had been based on something else altogether.

'I'm Colonel Edgerly,' he said, and was gratified to hear the trained friendliness of his own voice. 'I've been looking forward to meeting you.' *A little stiff, but all right* ... He extended a hand, and the boy took it, doubtfully at first, then with increasing eager pressure.

'It's a pleasure to meet you, sir. Mrs. Lazarus told me about you and how much you'd done for—for Ceil. I was hoping I'd get to see you while I was here.'

'Nothing much to see now but an empty shell.' The Colonel produced a smile. 'Ceil will see you in a few minutes, I think. Might as well sit down and take it easy meanwhile....' He dropped into an

overstuffed chair, and waved the boy to another. 'I've been in there with her since three o'clock, or somewhere around there. You'll have to excuse it if I'm not at my brightest.' *Sure, excuse it. Excuse me for being fifteen years older and two inches shorter. Excuse her for being seductive as all hell with a red nose. Excuse you for being so damn handsome! Excuse it, please....*

'Is she ... is everything all right?' The kid was white under his tan. 'They said last night she was resting comfortably. Did anything...?'

'She's fine. She had a fit of the blues. It happens. Better it happened so quickly, while she was still here....' He hesitated, not sure what to say next. The boy on the other chair waited, looking polite, looking concerned, looking intelligent.

*A regular little nature's nobleman!* the Colonel thought angrily, and gave up trying to generate any honest friendliness; he would be doing all right if he could just keep *sounding* that way.

'Now look,' he said, 'there are a couple of things I ought to tell you before you go in. First of all, she didn't ask to see you. It was my own idea to call you. I thought if you were here, she'd be—glad.'

'Thank you, sir. I appreciate that.'

*Quite all right. No favours intended.* As long as he allowed himself full inner consciousness of his resentment, he could maintain a proper surface easily. 'I don't know how she'll act when you go in. She's been having a kind of crying jag, and then a talking spell. If she wants you to stick around, you can stay as long as the nurse lets you, but you ought to bear in mind that she didn't have much sleep last night, and she needs some rest. It might be better if you just checked in, so to speak, and let her know you're available, and come back later for a real visit—if she wants it. You'll have to decide that for yourselves. She ...'

He stopped. There was so *much* the boy ought to know, so much more, in quality and subtlety both, than he could convey in a short talk in the impatient atmosphere of a hospital waiting room—or perhaps more than he could possibly convey to this particular person in any length of time anywhere. And he was tired—much too tired to try.

'Look,' he said. 'There's another patient I have to see while I'm here. The nurse will come and get you as soon as Ceil's ready for company. Just—sort of take it easy with her, will you? And if I'm not around when you're done, ask the nurse to give me a ring. I'd—like to talk to you some more.'

'Yes, sir.' The boy stood up. There was an easy grace in his movements that the Colonel couldn't help enjoying. 'And—well, I mean, thank you, sir.'

The Colonel nodded. 'I'll see you later.'

He spent half an hour being professionally reassuring at Nancy Kellogg's bedside, while she ate her light preoperative meal. With a clinical ear, he listened to her voice more than her words, and found nothing to warrant the exertion of a more personal and demanding kind of listening. As soon as he could, he broke away and went upstairs to his office, striding with determined indifference past the little room where Cell and Charlie were talking.

There was a spare uniform in his closet. He showered and shaved in the empty locker room at the Officers' Club, and emerged feeling reasonably wide-awake and quite unreasonably hungry. It was too early yet for the Depot cafeteria to be open—not quite seven.

The Infirmary had its own kitchen, of course.... So *that's* it) More understandable now, why he was so hungry. He usually got along fine on coffee and toast till lunch; and lunch was usually late—a good deal more than four or five hours after he woke up.

He stood undecided in the chill of the mountain-country morning, midway between the Officers' Club, the Nursemaid building, and the parking lot. All he had to do was get into his car and drive downtown to a restaurant. Not even downtown: there was an all-night joint half a mile down the road.

On the other hand, he *ought* to be around, for the Kellogg woman as much as Cell....

The Psychologist, the Officer, the Man, and a number of identifiable voices held a brisk conference, which came to an abrupt conclusion when the Body decided it was too damn cold to argue the matter out. The composite individual thereupon uttered one explosive word, and Colonel Edgerly headed for the Infirmary.



The nurse said, Yes, sir, they could get him some breakfast. Yes, sir, Mrs. Barton had seen Mr. Barton, and she was now back in bed, asleep or on her way to it. Yes, sir, Mr. Barton was wait-ing. In the waiting-room. She had tried to call the Colonel, but he was not in his office. Mr. Barton had decided to wait.

'I told him you'd probably gone home, sir, and I didn't know if you'd be back today or not, but ...'

Home? There was more about the boy insisting that the Colonel wanted to see him, but he lost most of it while the realization dawned on him that it was Thanksgiving Day. He was officially not on duty at all. He could have ...

He could have gone away for the weekend; but not having done so, he couldn't have refused the call in the middle of the night; *nor* could he leave now, with Young Lochinvar waiting to see him, and Nancy Kellogg expecting him to be around when she was done in the operating room.

'... anything in particular you'd like to have, sir?'

*Break fast*, he remembered. He smiled at the nurse. 'Yeah. Ham and eggs and pancakes and potatoes and a stack of toast. Some oatmeal maybe. Couple quarts of coffee.' She finally smiled back. 'Anything that comes easy, but lots of it,' he finished, and went off to find Barton.

Colonel Edgerly put his coffee cup down, lit a cigarette, and sank back into the comfortable chair, savouring the fragrance of the smoke, the flavour of food still in his mouth, the overall sense of drowsy well-being.

On the edge of the same couch where Ceil had huddled under a blanket earlier the same morning, Ceil's young man sat and talked, with almost the same determined fluency. But this time, the Colonel had no desire at all to stop the flow.

He listened, and the more he heard, the harder it got to maintain his own discomfort, or keep his jealous distance from the boy. Barton-Bolido was a good kid; there was no way out of it. And Ceil, he thought with astonishment, was another. A couple of good kids who had bumped into each other too soon and too hard. In a couple of years

No. That's how it could have been, if they hadn't met when they did, and if the whole train of events that followed had never occurred. The way it was now, Charlie would be ripening for marriage in two or three more years; but Cell had just this early morning crossed into the country of maturity—unaware and unsuspecting, but no longer capable of turning back to the self-centred innocence of last summer or last week.

Briefly, the Colonel turned his prying gaze inside himself and noted with irritation, but no surprise, that the inner image of the Ceil-child was still vividly exciting while the newer solider Ceil evoked no more than warm and pleasant thoughts. Well, it wasn't a new problem, and unless he started slapping teen-age rumps, it wasn't a serious one. He returned his attention to the young lady's young man, and waited for a break in the flow of words to ask:

'I take it you and Ceil are on ... speaking terms again?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Good. It was important for her, I think.'

'How do you mean, sir?' The boy looked vaguely frightened now.

'Just—oh, just knowing that you came, that you give a damn....'

'I guess she had a pretty low opinion of me,' the boy said hesitantly.

'I wouldn't put it that way,' the Colonel told him, professionally reassuring.

'Well, she did. And I'm not so sure she was wrong. Frankly, sir, I'm glad it turned out the way it did. I mean, if she had to—to get *pregnant*, I'm glad she came here. I don't know what I would have..?'

'Well, we're glad too,' the Colonel interrupted. 'And right now, it doesn't really matter what you would have done, if things worked out any other way. You could be a blue-dyed skunk or a one-eyed Martian and the only thing that would make any real difference is what Ceil *thought* you were. She's gone through a tough experience, and her own opinion of herself, her ability to pull out of this thing, is going to depend a lot on whether it all seemed worthwhile—which means, in part, her opinion of you.' He stood up. 'Well, I suppose as long as I'm here, I might as well get some work done....'

'I didn't mean to take up so much of your time, sir.'

'You didn't take it. I donated it. You going back to the hotel, or stick around here?'

'I'd like to stay around if it's all right.'

'All right with me. Major Sawyer—Dr. Sawyer to civilians like you, boy—should be in soon. If he kicks you out, you'll have to go. Otherwise, don't get in the nurse's way, and I don't imagine anyone will care. I'll be down later myself.'

He was in the doorway, when the boy called, 'Colonel ...' He turned back.

'Colonel Edgerly, I just wanted to say—I guess I said it before, but—I want to thank you again. In case I don't see you later. Ceil—Ceil told me how much you've done for her, and how you arranged for Dean Lazarus to get in touch with me, and—well, I want you to know I appreciate it, sir.'

'Aw 'twarn't nothin'.' The Colonel grinned, and added, 'After all, that's what I'm here for.' He went on down the corridor to the elevators, and up to his office, comfortably aware of a full stomach and a fully distended sense of virtue. Everybody would live happily ever after, and to top it all, he had a full day ahead to catch up on the neglected paper work of months behind.

The phone was ringing when he entered the office. He had heard it all the way down the corridor, buzzing with tireless mechanical persistence.

'Hello. Edgerly speaking.'

'Oh, Tom. Good. They told me you were in, but switchboard couldn't find you. Told 'em to keep ringing till they got you. Could you run up for a minute? Couple things to talk over.'

'Yes, sir. I'm free now, if you'd like ...'

'Fine. Come right up.'

The Colonel looked at the overstuffed *Hold* basket, and smiled. The paper work could wait. He didn't know what the General was doing there on Thanksgiving Day, and he didn't care. This conference was long past due.

## VIII

THE GENERAL WAS doing the talking; the Colonel sat in stunned silence, listening. Not the smallest part of his shock was the realization that the General not only sounded, but really was, sincere.

'... when you're running an outfit like this, Tom, the biggest thing is knowing who to put the pressure on and when to ease up. You're a psychologist. You're supposed to be able to see something like this, even when you're the one who's concerned. These last couple months, now, you had a pretty free hand. You realize that?'

The Colonel nodded. It was true. He hadn't thought of it that way. He'd been champing at the bit, waiting for some kind of recognition. But it was true.

'Okay, I think I did the right thing. I told you what we had to have, and I told you I wasn't going to tell you how to do it. I put some pressure on, and then I left you alone. I got the results I wanted. We had three successful applicants the first nine months, and three more in less than nine weeks afterwards.

'I didn't ask how you were doing it, and I didn't want to know. It's your job, and the only time I'll mess around with what you're doing is when you're not getting results. The only trouble was, I didn't ask for enough, or I didn't do it soon enough. I should have allowed for a bigger margin of safety, and I didn't. That was my fault, not yours—but we're both stuck with it now.'

Again the Colonel nodded. There were questions he should ask, ideas he should generate, but all he could feel at the moment was overpoweringly sleepy.

The General surprised him again.

'I take it you had a rough night. Suppose you take a copy of the transcript with you. Look it over. If you get any ideas, I'll be right here. I've got to have an answer Monday morning, and it better be a good one.'

The Colonel took the stapled set of onionskins, and stood up. 'Sorry to spoil your holiday,' the General rumbled.

The Colonel shrugged. 'At least the holiday gives us a few days to figure things out.'

The General nodded, and they both forgot to smile.

Back in his office, with a container of coffee getting cold on his desk, the Colonel read the transcript of the telephone conversation all the way through, carefully, and then through again.

The call had been put through to the General's home phone at 7:28 that morning, from the Pentagon in Washington. Apparently there had been some sleepless nights on that end too, after the arrival of the Satellite Rocket the evening before.

The conversation ran to seven typed pages. The largest part of it was a gingerbread facade of elaborately contrived informalities and irrelevancies. Behind the facade of jovial threats and ominous pleasantries, the facts were these:

For reasons as yet unknown, there had been three 'premature' deliveries of PN's on the Base: that is, the babies had come to term and been delivered from their tanks, healthy and whole, several weeks in advance of the expected dates. The three 'births', plus two that *were* expected, had all occurred within a 36 hour period, at a time when only two or three FP's were on Base. Mrs. Harujian was on Satelleave; and to complicate matters, Mrs. Lenox, the first one to go up, was suffering at the time from an attack of colitis, a lingering aftereffect of her first long un-relieved spell of duty.

Army nurses had had to put in extra time spelling the two women in the nursery. The extra time had been sufficient to foul up the Satelleave schedule for the regular Army staff on Base. A four-star General who had gone on the rocket to Satellite, for the especial purpose of conferring with a Base Captain, whose leave was cancelled without notice, inquired into the reasons therefor, and returned on the rocket without having accomplished the urgent business for which he had submitted his corpulent person to the discomforts of blast-off acceleration.

The rocket had hardly touched ground, before the voice of the four stars was heard in the Pentagon. Channels were activated. Routine reports were read. Special reports analysing the reports were prepared—and somewhere along the line, it became known that the PN schedule at the Depot was not what it should be.

The phone call to General Martin therefore informed him that on Monday morning a small but well-starred commission would set forth from Washington to determine the nature of the difficulties at the Depot, and make suggestions for the improvement of conditions there.

For some time the Colonel sat in his office digesting these pieces of information. At noon he went down to the infirmary; said hello to Ceil, who was awake and looking cheerful; spent half an hour talking to Mrs. Kellogg, who was being prepared for the operating room; left word that he would be with the General, if not in his own office, when she came out of anaesthesia; declined, with thanks, an invitation from the staff to join them in Thanksgiving dinner; and went upstairs to see his boss.

The conference was shorter than he had expected. The General had also been doing some thinking, and had arrived at his conclusions.

'We took a gamble, and we lost, that's all,' he said. 'I figured by the time the shipments began to fall off enough so anybody would notice, we'd be back on a full schedule of operation again. Somebody noticed too soon, that's all. Now we have to get back to schedule right away. As long as we do that there won't be any heads rolling....'

'Now this Serruto woman is ready to go on the next trip, that right?'

The Colonel nodded, waiting.

'Then you've got, what's-er-name, Breneau? She's scheduled for 'January 6, that right? And Mackintosh just started training, she goes January 20? Okay, I want those two accelerated. I'll give you any facilities or help you need, but I want them ready for December 23 and January 6 instead.'

The Colonel did some quick figuring, and nodded. 'We can manage that.'

'Okay. The next thing is, I want somebody else started right away. You got a back file of maybe nineteen-twenty names that are open for reconsideration. Couple of 'em even had medicals already. I want one started next week. She goes up with Mackintosh January 6.'

'You realize, sir, you're asking me to send up a woman I've already rejected as unsatisfactory, and to do it with only five weeks' training instead of two months?'

'I'm not asking you. I'm telling you. That's an order, Colonel. You'll get it in writing tomorrow.'

'Yes, sir.'

'Oh, hell, Tom, take it easy, will you? I'm sorry I had to put it that way, but I'm taking responsibility for this. You don't have to agree; all you have to do is produce. You give me what I want, I give them what *they* want, and after things settle down, you can get things going more the way you want 'em.'

'May I say something, sir? Before I start doing what I'm told?'

'Sure. Go ahead.'

'You were talking about a margin of safety. I'm worried about the same thing. You want to make sure we have enough people up there to handle a normal scheduled flow of shipments. I want to see the same thing. But sending up ten or twenty or fifty un-qualified women *isn't going to give us any margin ...* sir.

'I'd tell the Pentagon boys what we're doing, and why, and stick with it. I wouldn't start more PN's till we're sure we have enough FP's. And I'd start doing some scouting around for the FP's.'

'Oh, we got back to that? The publicity campaign?'

'I still think it's a good idea.'

'Okay, Tom let's get a couple of things straight. You made a suggestion, and I didn't pay any attention, and you went ahead and tried it out anyhow. Yeah, sure I know about it. What do you think I meant this morning about knowing when to put on pres-sure? You did it the right way. You were discreet and sensible, and it worked—a one-man campaign, fine.

'But what you could do that way wasn't enough, so you sent me another little note, because you wanted to get it set up officially, and expand it. Well, look, Tom, I don't want to sound insulting. I know you know a lot about people, that's your job. But you know 'em one-at-a-time, Tom, and it's been *my* business for a hell of a long time to know them all-in-a-bunch, and believe me—'

'You start a big full-scale publicity campaign on this thing, and we'll be out of business so fast, you won't know what hit you. The American people won't stand for it, if they know what's going on here.'

'They know now, sir. We're not Secret.'

'Yeah. They know. If they subscribe to *The New York Times* and read the science column on page thirty-six. Sure we're not Secret; the Project is part of the knowledge of every well-in-formed citizen. And how many citizens does that include? Look at the Satellite itself, Tom. It was no secret. The people who read the small print knew all about it way back some time in the 1940's when it was mentioned in a congressional budget. But it sure as hell surprised the citizens when it got into the sky—and into the headlines. We can't risk the headlines yet. If people knew *all* about us ... well, probably we could win over a good majority. But if all they see is the headlines and the lead paragraphs and the editorials in the opposition papers ... and don't think they aren't going to make it sound as if the government was running a subsidized abortion ring! Does that make it any clearer?'

'Yes, sir. A lot clearer.'

'Okay. I'll get official orders typed up in the morning, and a new schedule for trainees. Now you might as well knock off, and enjoy what's left of the holiday. Start worrying tomorrow....'

Colonel Edgerly sat in a chair by the head of a hospital bed and listened to fears and complaints, and was grateful that Nancy Kellogg was really married, and had three children and a husband at home, and was not going to go off any deep ends in the immediate future. He made little jokes and reassuring noises, and held the little pan for her when she was sick the second time.

With the surface of his mind he listened to everything she said and could have repeated a perfect catalogue of all her aches and pains. When she moved on to the subject of previous deliveries, he asked interested questions at appropriate intervals. She wanted to talk, and that was fine, because as long as he kept the top surface busy he didn't have to pay attention to what was going on farther down.

When she began to get sleepy, he went and found Ceil, who was watching television out in the staff-room. She turned off the set and started a stream of nervous small talk, from which he could gather only that she had been doing some heavy thinking and had a lot to say, but didn't know how to say it. Whatever it was, it did not seem to be particularly explosive or melancholy; when the nurse came to tell her it was time to be back in bed, he ignored the girl's hopeful look, and said he would see her next day.

He started off up the corridor, knowing what he was heading for and hoping something or someone

would stop him. Nothing and nobody did. He stepped through the wide door at the far end of the hall, and waited while the student nurse encased him in sterile visitors' coveralls. Inside, he wandered up and down the rows of tanks, stopping occasionally to stare through a glassed top as if he could see through the membrane and the liquids, or even perhaps through pale flesh and cartilage and embryonic organs, to some secret centre of the soul, to the small groupings of undeveloped cells that would some day spell *mind* and *psyche* in the walking, living, growing, feeling, thinking bodies of these flat-faced fetal prisoners.

Charlie, the Kaydet, had said to him wistfully, 'I wish the kid could have my name.' To carry to the stars, he meant. But not right now, not here on Earth, oh no, that would be too em-barrassing....

On the tanks there were no names: just numbers. And in the office down the hall, a locked file case contained a numbered folder full of names and further numbers and reports and charts and graphs of growth and in every folder of the 37, one name at least appeared. His own.

*They're not my babies*, he thought angrily, and with reluct-ance: *Yes they are*.

*You need to get married*, he told himself clinically. *Have one of your own*.

That would be an answer, one kind of answer. But *not* an answer to the problem now at hand. It was an answer for girls like Cell, and later for boys like Charlie—for the people who had listened to his promises and pledges, and walked away, and left their babies here.

*They walked out. So can I...* The job the Generals wanted done was not a job that he could do. *So quit!* It could be done. The typed-out request for a transfer was in his pocket now. Quit now, and let them find him a job that wasn't too big for a merely human being. Get married, have some kids. Let somebody else ...

He couldn't.

If he knew *which* somebody, if there were a Colonel Edgerly to talk to him and reassure him and promise him, so he'd *believe* it, that his babies would be cared for...

He laughed, and the vapour forming on the face-plate of the sterile suit made him aware that he was uncomfortably warm and had been in there too long. He went out and stripped off the coveralls. His uniform was wet with sweat, and he smelled of it. Through empty halls he went upstairs, avoiding even the ele-vator, grateful to meet no one on the way. In his own office, he stood and stared out of the window at the faint edge of sunset behind the mountains, no more than a glow of red shaping the ridges against a dark sky.

He took the wilted sheet of paper from his pocket and would have torn it up, but instead he opened the bottom desk drawer and filed it with all the other unfulfilled acts of rebellion.

The parents of these children could walk out, and had done so. But the man who had cased the responsibility from their shoul-ders, who had used his knowledge of human beings and his trained skill in dealing with them to effect the transfer of a living human embryo from its natural mother to a tank of surrogate nutrient, the man who had dared to determine that one par-ticular infant, as yet technically unborn, would be one of the thousand who would grow up not-quite-Earthmen, to become the representatives of Earth over as yet-uncoverable distances—the man who had done all this could not then, calmly, doff his Godhead, hand it to another man, and say, 'I quit,' and walk away.

He changed his clothes and got his car from the near-empty parking lot and drove. Not home. Anywhere else. He drove towards the mountains, off the highway, on to winding dirt roads that needed his full attention in the dark. He kept the window down and let the night wind beat him and when, much later, he got home, he was tired enough to sleep.

The blessing of the Army, he thought, as he slid from wakefulness, was that there was always someone over you. Whatever authority you assumed, whatever responsibility came with it, there was always some higher authority that *could* relieve you of a Godhead you could not surrender.

## IX

IN THE MORNING, he felt calm and almost cheerful. His own personal decision was made, and the consequences were clear to him, but the career that had mattered very much at one time seemed comparatively unimportant at this juncture.

He checked off the list of appointments for the day—Kellogg, Barton, Mackintosh, two new names, FP applicants; he read the mail, and read the typed orders and schedule that came down from the General's office; he went efficiently through the day's routine, and whenever there was ten minutes to spare, he worked on the report the General required for Monday morning.

Saturday was an easier day. He talked to Cell in the morning, and signed her release, and told her to come see him any time she felt she wanted to. Then he went upstairs, and finished the report. Read it through, and tore it up, half-angry and half-amused at the obvious intent of his defiance. Making sure you get fired is not at all different from quitting.

He went carefully through the card-file of rejects and selected half a dozen names, then started the report again. Along towards mid-afternoon, he buzzed the Sergeant to order a belated lunch sent up, and not till after he had hung up did he stop to wonder what she was doing at her desk. She was supposed to go off duty at noon on Saturdays. He picked up the phone again.

'Hey, Sarge—didn't you hear the noon whistle?'

'Noon ... ? Oh. Yes, sir.'

'You don't have to stick around just because I do, you know. They don't pay overtime in this man's Army any more.'

'I ... don't mind, sir. There's nothing special I have to do today. I thought if I stayed to answer the phone, you could ... you'll want that report typed when you're finished, won't you, sir?'

*Well, I'll be damned!* He was surprisingly touched by her thoughtfulness. 'It was good of you to think of it, Helen.' As soon as the words were out, he realized how wrong they were. Too formal, and then her first name—it didn't sound like what he meant. 'I appreciate it,' he added, even more stiffly.

'That's all right, Colonel. I really don't mind. I didn't have anything special to do, and I just thought ...'

He put the receiver down, got up quickly, and opened the connecting door. She was sitting there, still holding her phone, looking slightly baffled and faintly embarrassed. He grinned, as the click of the door-latch startled her. 'You're a good kid, Sarge, but there's no sense hanging on to a phone with nobody on the other end.'

She flushed, and replaced the receiver on its hook. Apparently anything he said was going to be wrong—but this was hardly surprising when, after four months of almost daily association, he suddenly found a person instead of a uniform sitting at the outside desk.

'Tongue-tied schoolboy, that's me,' he said defiantly. 'I just never learned how to say *Thank You* politely. Even when I mean it. I think it was damned decent of you to stay, and I appreciate what you've done so far, but I'm not going to let you toss away the whole weekend just because *I'm* stuck in the mud. Look ... did you order that stuff yet?'

'No ... no, sir.'

'Could you stand to drink a cup of coffee?' He grinned. 'With a superior officer, I mean?'

Almost, she smiled. *The Almost Perfect Lady Soldier*, he thought with relief.

'Yes, sir, I think I could.'

'All right. Pick up your marbles and let's get out of here. I could use a break myself. After that,' he finished, 'you're going home. I'll tell the switchboard I've gone myself, and let them take any calls. And as far as the typing goes, I don't know when I'm going to have this thing finished. It could be three o'clock in the morning ... and I can always get one of the kids from the pool to type it up tomorrow, if I'm too lazy to do it myself.'

She frowned faintly; then her face smoothed out again into its customary unruffled surface of competence. 'You're the boss.' She smiled and shrugged almost imperceptibly. 'Let's go!'

He had thought he wanted company. A short break would be good. Generalized conversation—enforced refocusing of attention—sandwich and coffee—twenty minutes of non-concentration. Fine. But all the way to the commissary he walked in silence, and when they found a table and sat down, it took only the simplest query—'How's it coming?'—to set him off.

He talked.

For an hour and a half, while successive cups of coffee cooled in front of him, he talked out all he meant to say. Then when he finally looked at the clock and found it read almost five, he said, abashed,

'Hey—didn't I tell you to go home?'

'I'm glad I didn't,' she said.

There was a note of intensity in the saying of it that made him look more closely. She meant it! It wasn't a proper secretarial remark.

'So am I,' he told her with equal seriousness. 'I got more done yakking at you here than I would have in five hours, crumpling up sheets at my desk. Thanks.'

He smiled, and for an instant he thought the uniform would slip away entirely, but the answering smile was only in her eyes. At least, he thought, she'd refrained from giving him her standard Receptionist's Special....

He didn't do any more that day. Sunday morning, he went into the office early, and started all over again, this time knowing clearly what he meant to say, and how. When the phone rang at eleven, he had almost completed a final draft.

'This is Helen Gregory, sir. I thought I'd call, and find out if you wanted that report typed up today ...?'

*Bless you, gal!* 'As a matter of fact, I'm just about done with it now,' he started, and then realized he had almost been betrayed by her matter-of-fact tone into accepting the sacrifice of the rest of her weekend. 'It's not very long,' he finished, not as he'd planned. 'I'll have plenty of time to type it up myself. Take yourself a day off, Sarge. You earned it yesterday, even if you didn't have it coming anyway.'

'I ... really don't mind.' Her voice had lost its easy certainty. 'I'd *like* to come in, if I can help.'

*Ohmigod!* He should have known better than to crack a surface as smooth as hers. Yesterday afternoon had been a big help, but if she was going to start playing mama now ...

'That's very kind of you, Helen,' he said. 'But there's really no need for it.'

'Whatever you say ...' She sounded more herself again—or her familiar self—but she left it hanging, clearly not content. He pretended not to notice.

'Have a good day; he said cheerfully. 'Tomorrow we maybe die. And thanks again.'

'That's all right, sir. I really—I suppose I'm just curious to see how it came out, really.'

'Pretty good, I think. I hope. I'll leave a copy on your desk to read in the morning. Like to know what you think—Hey! where do you keep those report forms?'

'Middle drawer on the left. The pale green ones. They're quadruplicate, you know—and onionskin for our file copy is in the top drawer on that side.'

'It's a good thing you called. I'd have had the place upside down trying to figure that out. Thanks, Sarge—and take it easy.'

He hung up thoughtfully; then shook his head and dismissed the Sergeant, and whatever problems she might represent, from his immediate universe. He spent another half-hour changing and rewording the final paragraph of the report, and when he was satisfied that he at least could not improve it further, found the forms and carbon sheets neatly stacked where she'd said. A hell of a good secretary, anyhow. Nothing wrong in her wanting to mother-hen a little bit. *He* was the one who was over-react-ing....

*The father-pot calling the mother-kettle neurotic*, he thought bitterly. And *that* was natural enough too. Who could possibly resent it more?

He stacked a pile of sheets and inserted them in the typewriter, wishing now he'd been rational enough to trade on the girl's better nature, instead of rejecting so hard. It would take him a couple of hours to turn out a decent-looking copy. She could have done it in thirty minutes....

The phone jangled at his elbow; he hit two keys simultaneously on the machine, jamming it, and reached for the receiver. 'Colonel Edgerly... ?'

Excited young female type. *Not* the Lady Soldier.

'Speaking.'

'Oh ... *Tom*. Hello. This is Ceil.' She didn't have to tell him; he knew from the breathless way she said his first name. 'I tried to call you at home, but you weren't there.... I hope I'm not bust-ing into something *important*?'

'Well, as a matter of fact—' Whatever it was she wanted, this wasn't his day to give it out. 'Look, kid, will it keep till tomorrow? I've got a piece of work here I'm trying to finish up—' Maybe *she* could type, he thought, and reluctantly abandoned the idea.

'... really what I wanted anyhow,' she was saying. He had missed something and, backtracking, missed more. '... only time we're both free, and I wanted to check with you ahead of time ...' Who was *both*? Charlie maybe? Coming to ask for his blessing?

*I'm getting hysterical*, he decided, and managed to say good-bye as calmly as if he knew what the call had been about. Tomorrow. She'd come in tomorrow, and then he'd find out.

One isolated phrase jumped out of the lost pieces: '... called yesterday...' The Sergeant had been turning away calls all day, and he hadn't looked at the slips when he left, because he thought he was coming back.

He found them on her desk, neatly stacked. Cell had called twice: no message. A Mrs. Pinckney of the local Child Placement Bureau wanted to speak with him about a matter of importance; he dimly remembered meeting her at the Lazarus' party. Two candidates for FP had made appointments for next week. The rest were interdepartmental calls, and the Sarge had handled them all.

His hand hesitated briefly over the phone as he considered calling Sergeant Gregory and giving them both the gratification of allowing her to do the typing for him. Then he took himself firmly in hand, and headed back to the inner office and the typewriter. No need to pile up future grief just to avoid a couple of hours of tedium.

He settled down, unjammed the stuck keys, and started again with a fresh stack of paper.

In the morning, over his breakfast coffee, he read again through the carbon copy he had brought home, and decided it would do. He had managed to give the General what he'd asked for, and at the same time state his own position, with a minimum of wordage and—he hoped—a maximum of clarity.

The report began by complying with the specific request of the General. It listed the names of six rejected candidates who might be reconsidered. The first three, all of whom he recommended, included Mrs. Leahy, the madam; Mrs. Buonaventura, who had failed to be sent through for further testing because she had only one arm; and a Mr. George Fitzpatrick, whose application had been deferred, rather than rejected, since they planned to start sending men later.

He pointed out that in the first two cases the particular disabilities of the ladies would not, in practice, make any difference to their effectiveness; and in the case of the man—if the programme were to be accelerated other ways, why not this way too?

There followed a list of three names, conscientiously selected as the least offensive of those in his file who might be expected to qualify on Medic and Security checks; in these three cases he undertook, as Psychological Officer, to qualify any or all for emergency appointments of two months, but added that he could not, in his professional capacity, sign his name to full-term contracts for any one of them.

The next section was a single page of figures and statistics, carefully checked, recommending a general slow-down for the Project, based on the percentage of acceptable FP candidates encountered so far. A semi-final paragraph proposed an alternate plan: that if the total number of applicants for FP positions could be increased, by means of an intelligently directed publicity programme, the number of acceptable candidates might be expected to be large enough to get the Project back to its original schedule in three months.

And then the final paragraph:

'It should be remembered, in reviewing this situation, that on this Project we are dealing with human beings, rather than inanimate objects, and that rigid specifications of requirements must in each individual case be interpreted by the judgment of another human being. As an Officer of the Space Service, whose duty it is to make such judgments, I cannot, in all conscience, bring myself to believe that I should include in my considerations any extraneous factors, no matter of what degree of importance. My official approval or rejection of any individual can be based only on the qualifications of that individual.'

He read it through, and drove to work, wondering what the chances were that anyone besides the General would ever see it.

The day was routine, if you discounted the charged air of sus-pense that circulated through the building from the time the three star-studded Washingtonians drove into the parking lot and disappeared into the



General's office. The Colonel conducted the usual number of interviews, made minor decisions, emptied a box of Kleenex, and replaced it.

For the Colonel, there was a feeling of farce in every appointment made for the future and every piece of information carefully elicited and faithfully recorded. But the Sergeant, at least, seemed to have come back to normal, and played the role of Lady Soldier with such conviction that the whole absurd melodrama seemed, at times, almost real. She complimented him gravely on the report when she handed him his list of appointments; thereafter, the weekend and its stresses seemed forgotten entirely in the familiar routine of a Monday morning.

At 10:30, Mrs. Pinckney called again. It seemed she was going to a social welfare convention in Montreal next month; would the Colonel like to work with her on part of a paper she meant to present there, in which she could 'plug' the Project?

He couldn't tell her, through the office switchboard, that the boss had rapped his knuckles and threatened to wash his mouth with soap if he kept talking about indelicate matters outside the office. He suggested that they get together during the week; he'd call her when he saw some free time. She hung up, obviously chagrined at the coolness of his tone, and immediately the phone buzzed again.

This time it was the Sergeant. 'I just remembered, sir, there were some phone slips from Saturday that you didn't see.' 'Thanks. I picked 'em up yesterday.'

'Oh. Then you know Mrs. Barton called? She seemed very eager—'

'Yuh. She called again yesterday. That's what made me check the slips. Oh, yes. She's coming in today, sometime.'

'She didn't say when, sir?'

'No. Or I'm not sure. If she did, I don't remember.' And what difference did it make?

'Shall I call her back and check, sir?'

'I don't see why.' It was getting irritating now. Apparently, the Sergeant was going to remain slightly off keel about anything connected with the weekend. Well, he thought, one could be grateful at least for small aberrations—if they stayed small. 'She'd be in class now, anyhow,' he added sharply.

'Yes, sir. It's just that I understand you'll probably be going up to the Conference right after lunch. So if it was important...'

'It wasn't,' he said with finality. 'If I'm busy when she comes in, she can wait.'

'Yes, sir.'

He hung up, wondered briefly about the exact nature of the rumour channels through which the secretaries of the Depot seemed always to know before the decisions were actually made just what was going to happen where and when, gave it up as one of the great insoluble mysteries, and went back to the ridiculous business of carrying on the normal day's work.

At noon, the General's secretary informed Sergeant Gregory that the General and his visitors were going out to lunch and that the Colonel's presence was requested when they returned, at 1330 hours. The Sergeant reported the information to her superior. He thanked her, but she didn't go away. She stood there, looking uncomfortable.

'Something else?'

'Yes, sir, there is. It's ... not official.'

There was an urgency in her tone that drove away his first quick irritation. He focused on her more fully, and decided that if this was more of the mothering act, it was bothering her even more than it (lid him. 'Sit down, Sergeant,' he said gently. 'What's on your mind?'

'No, thanks. I ... all right.' She sat down. 'I ... just wanted to tell you, sir ... just wanted to tell you, sir ... I mean I thought I ought to let you know before you go up..?'

'Yes?' he prompted. *And where has my little Lady Soldier gone?*

'It's about your report. I can't tell you how I know, sir, but I understand the General turned it over to the other officers. Maybe I should have..?'

'Excuse me.' He was beginning to feel a burst of excitement. His first reaction to the idea of being included in the Conference at all had been a sinking certainty that Edgerly was going to play Goat after all. But if they'd seen his report ... 'I won't ask you how you know, but I do want to find out just how reliable

your source is,' he said eagerly. It was possible, just *barely* possible, that his ideas might be given some serious consideration by the Investigating Committee!

'It's reliable,' she said tightly and paused, then went on with quick-worded determination : 'Perhaps I should have said something before, when I read it, but it was too late by then to make any changes, so I ... I mean, if you'd agreed with me, sir. But the way you wrote the report, it does—excuse me, sir, but it makes such a perfect out for the General! I know you've been co-operat-ing with him, and *he* knows it, but anyone who just read the report ...' She stood up, not looking at him, and said rapidly, 'I just thought I ought to let you know before you go up, the way it looks to me, and how it might look to them. I'm sorry if I should have spoken up sooner.'

She turned and almost ran for the door.

'That's all right, Sarge,' he said, almost automatically. 'It wouldn't have done any good to tell me this morning. I should have let you come in yesterday....'

Just before the door closed, he had a glimpse of a shy smile in which gratitude, apology, and sympathy merged to warm friendliness. But the marvel of this, coming from the Sergeant, was lost entirely in the hollowness of his realization that he was going to get what he wanted. He was going to get fired. The General had passed the buck with expert ease, and Tom Edgerly would be quietly relieved of a post that was too big for him, and—

He felt very very sick.

## X

THE TWO GIRLS walked in through the open door, just how much later he didn't know. He'd been sitting with his back to the desk, staring out of the window, remembering the care he had taken to write that report in such a way as to defeat his own acknow-ledged weakness, and marvelling bitterly at the subconscious skill with which he had composed the final document.

He heard the noise behind him, a hesitant cough-and-shuffle of intrusion, and turned, realizing that Helen would have gone out for lunch and left the doors open.

It was Ceil; the other girl with her was the last PN before her. They had met in the Infirmary, he supposed; Janice had gone home last Tuesday; Ceil came in Monday. Yeah.

They both looked very intense. *Not today, kids. Some other time.* He stood up, and smiled, and began rehearsing the words to get rid of them.

Cell stepped forward hesitantly. 'Was this a bad time to come? If 'you're busy, we could make it tomorrow instead. It's just lunch hour is the only time we're both free, and we wanted to come together. Jannie works late....'

She was chattering, but only because she had sensed something wrong.

'It's not a good day,' he said slowly, and glanced at his watch and back at the girls, and knew defeat again. Whatever it was, it was *important—to* them.

'Well, we can come in tomor—'

'You're here now,' he pointed out, and formed his face into a smile. 'I have some time now, anyhow.' The time didn't matter to him. He had more than half an hour yet before he had to go upstairs and get put to sleep in the mess of a bed he had made. 'Sit down,' he said, and pulled the extra chair away from the wall over to the desk.

They sat on the edge of their seats, leaning forward, eager, and both of them started talking at once, and then both stopped. 'You tell him,' Ceil said. 'It was your idea first.'

'You can say it better,' the other one said.

*For God's sake, one of you get to it!* 'Spit it out,' he said brusquely.

They looked at each other, and Ceil took a deep breath, and said evenly, 'We want to apply for Foster Parent positions.'

He smiled tolerantly. Then he stopped smiling. It was im-possible, obviously. A couple of kids

'Why?' he asked, and as a jumble of answers poured out, he thought, with mounting elation, *Why not?*

'My mother acts like I committed a sin....' That was Janice. 'In two years, Charlie can get married....'

'... maybe I did, but if I helped to take care of some of them ...' .. I'd know more about how to manage in a place like that, in case we did ...' Ceil.

'...even if it wasn't my own ...'

That was the catch, of course. They'd play favourites. They'd—if they didn't know—Mrs. Mackintosh had said, *if you weren't so obviously oriented in the opposite direction ....*

Janice—she was the one who'd had an affair with her boss. He was going to marry her of course, but when she found out she was pregnant, it turned out he already had a wife. No job, no man. He would pay for her to get rid of it—but she wouldn't. She couldn't. And she couldn't stay home and have it; it would *kill* her mother, she said....

Ceil—Ceil came in as a child, not knowing, not understanding, and downstairs, in a hospital bed, she grew up.

A couple of kids, sure. But *women*, too. Grown women, with good reason for wanting to do a particular job.

He heard the Sergeant come in, and flew into a whirlwind of activity. It was 1:15. By 1:27, they had both applications neatly filled out and the already-completed Medical and Security checks out of the folders. The psych tests for FP's were more comprehensive than the ones they'd had, but he knew enough to figure he was safe.

He took another twenty seconds to run a comb through his hair and straighten his tie. Then he went upstairs.

The Colonel sat at his desk, and filled in an application form neatly and quickly. He signed his name at the bottom and stood up and looked out of the big window and laughed without noise, till he realized there was a tear rolling down his cheek.

It was all over now, but it would all begin again tomorrow morning, and the next day, and the next. The visiting Generals had accomplished their purpose, which was to goose Nursemaid into action, and had gone back home. The resident General had come through without a blot on his record, because it was all the Colonel's fault. The Colonel had come through with a number of new entries in his record, and whether they shaped up to a blot or a star he could not yet tell.

The interview had been dramatic, but now the drama was done with and the last piddling compromise had been agreed on : the two new candidates; plus the man, Fitzpatrick; plus consideration for men from now on; plus reviewing the backfiles of PN's to see how many more were willing; plus the trickle that could be expected from this source in the future; plus an over-all 20 per cent slowdown in the original schedule; plus policy conferences in Washington on the delicate matter of publicity; plus a reprimand to the Colonel for his attitude, and a commendation to the Colonel for his work....

He pushed the buzzer, and the Sergeant came in.

'Sit down,' he told her.

She sat.

'It just occurred to me,' he said, 'that the—uh—dramatic state-ments on those applications you typed up were ... extraordinarily well put.' He kept the smile back, with a great effort.

'What statements did you mean, sir?' The Perfect Lady Soldier had her perfect deadpan back.

'The last questions, Sergeant. *You* know— "Why do you desire to..." The answers that were all about how Colonel Edgerly had inspired the applicants with understanding, patriotism, maternal emotion, and—similar admirable qualities.'

'I—' There was a faint, but not quite repressed, glint in the Sergeant's eye. 'I'm afraid, sir, I suggested that they let me fill that in; it would be quicker, I thought, than trying to take down everything they wanted to say.'

'Sergeant,' he said, 'are you aware that those applications become a part of the permanent file?'

'Yes, sir.' Now she was having trouble not looking smug.

'And are you also aware that it is desirable to have truthful replies in those records?'

'Yes, sir.' She didn't feel smug now, and for a moment he was afraid he'd carried the joke too far. He meant to thank her, but ... 'Yes, sir,' she said, and looked directly at him, not hiding anything at all. 'I

wrote the truth as I saw it, sir.'

The Colonel didn't answer right away. Finally he said, 'Thanks. Thanks a lot, Sergeant.'

'There's nothing to thank me for.' She stood up. 'I hope it—helped?'

'I'm sure it did.'

She took a step, and stopped. 'I'm glad. I think—if you don't mind my saying so, sir, I think they'd have a hard time finding anybody else to do the job you're doing. I mean, to do it as well.'

He looked at her sharply, and then at the filled out form on his desk.

'I guess I have to say *Thank You* again.' He smiled, and realized her embarrassment was even greater than his own.

'I'll—is there anything else you want, sir? I was just going to leave when you buzzed—' Her eyes were fixed one foot to the right of his face, and her cheeks were red.

'Yes; he said. 'There is something else—unless you're in a hurry. It can wait till tomorrow, if you have a date or anything.' 'No, sir. I'm free.'

'All right, then. What do you like to drink, and where would you prefer to eat? I have lousy taste in perfume, and I owe you something, God knows—besides which, it's about time we got acquainted; we may be working together for a while after all.'

She was still embarrassed, but she was also pleased. And his quick glimpse before had not fully prepared him for how sweet her smile was, when she wasn't doing it professionally.

There was just one more thing he had to do before he left. He took the application for a Foster Parent position from the top of his desk—the one with his own name signed to it—and filed it in the bottom desk drawer. There was a job to be done here—a job he couldn't possibly do right. The requirements were too big, and the limitations were too narrow. It was the kind of job you could never be sure was done right—or even done. But the Sergeant—who was in a position to know—thought he could do it better than anyone else.

Time enough to go traipsing off to the Moon when he finished as much of the job as they'd *let* him do, here.

## MECALLING

### I

THERE WAS NO warning. Deborah heard her mother shout, '*Dee! Grab the baby!*'

Petey's limbs hung loose; his pink young mouth fell open as he bounced off the foam-padded floor of the play-space, hit more foam on the sidewall, at a neat ninety-degree angle, and bounced once more. The small ship finished upending itself, lost the last of its spin, and hurled itself surfaceward under constant acceleration. Wall turned to ceiling, ceiling to floor and Petey landed smack on his fat bottom against the foam-protected toy-bin. Unhurt but horrified, he added a lusty wail to the ever shriller screaming of the alien atmosphere, and the mighty reverberations of the rocket's thunder.

'... the bay-beeee ... *Dee!*'

'I got him.' Deborah hooked a finger finally through her brother's overall strap, and demanded: 'What do I do now?'

'I don't know; hold on to him. Wait a minute.' Sarah Levin turned her head with difficulty towards her husband. 'John,' she whispered, 'what's going to happen?'

He gnawed at his lower lip, tried to quirk a smile out of the side of his mouth nearest her. 'Not good,' he said, very low. 'The children?'

'Dunno.' He struggled with levers, frantically trying to fire the tail rockets—now, after their sudden space-somersault became the forward jets. 'Don't know what's wrong,' he muttered fiercely. 'Mommy, it hurts..?'

Petey was really crying now, low and steady sobbing, and Dee whimpered again, 'It hurts. I can't get up.'

'Daddy's trying to fix it,' Sarah said. 'Dee ... listen..? It was hard to talk. 'If you can, try to ... kind of ... wrap yourself around Petey ...'

'I *can't*...' Deborah too broke into sobs.

Seconds of waiting, slow eternal seconds; then incredibly, gout of flame burst out ahead of them.

The braking force of the forward rocket eased the pressure inside, and Dee ricocheted off a foamed surface—wall, floor ceiling? She didn't know—her finger still stuck tight through Petey's strap. The ground, strange orange-red terrain with towering bluish trees, was close. Too close. There was barely time before the crash for Sarah to shout a last reminder.

'...*right around him!*' she yelled. Dee understood; she pulled her baby brother close to her chest and wound her arms and legs around his body. Then there was crashing splintering jagged noise through all the world.

It was too warm. Dee didn't want to look, but she opened an eye.

Nothing to see but foam-padded sides of the play-space, with the toys scattered all over.

A bell jangled, and a mechanical voice began: 'Fire ... Fire ... Fire ... Fire ... Fire . . .' Dee knew what to do. She wondered about letting go of Petey, but she'd have to, she couldn't ask her mother, because the safety door was closed. Her mother and father were both on the other side in front—that was where the fire would be. She wondered if they'd get burned up, but let go of Petey, and worked the escape lock the way she'd been taught. While it was opening, she put on Petey's oxy mask and her own. She didn't know for sure whether they would be needed on this planet, but one place they'd been called Carteld, you had to wear a mask all the time because there wasn't enough oxygen in the air.

She couldn't remember the name of this planet. They'd never been here before, she knew that much; but this must be the one they were coming to, or Daddy wouldn't have started to go down, and everything wouldn't have happened.

That meant probably, at least the air wasn't poisonous. They had space-suits and helmets on the ship, and Dee had space-suit drill every week; but she was pretty sure she didn't need anything more than the mask here. And there wasn't time for space-suits anyhow.

The lock was all the way open. Deborah went to the door and recoiled before the blast of heat; it was burning *outside*. Now she had to get away, quick.

She picked up Petey, looked around at all the toys, and at the closet where her clothes were; at the blackboard, the projector, and the tumbled pile of fruit and crackers on the floor. She bent down and stuffed the pockets of her jumper with the crumbly crackers and smashed sticky fruit. Then she looked around again, and felt the heat coming through the door, and had to leave everything else behind.

She climbed out, and there were flames in the back. She ran, with Petey in her arms, though she'd been told never to do that. She ran straight away from the flames, and kept going as long as she could; it was hard work, because her feet sank into the spongy soil at every step. And it was still hot, even when she got away from the rocket. She kept running until she was too tired, and began to stumble, then she slowed down and walked—until Petey began to be too heavy, and she couldn't carry him any more. She stopped, and put him down on the ground and looked him over. He was all right, only he was wet—very wet—and the whole front of her jumper was wet too, from him.

Deborah scowled, and the baby began to cry. She couldn't stand that, so she smiled and tried playing games with him. Petey wasn't very good at games yet, but he always laughed and stayed happy if she played with him. Sometimes she thought he liked her better than anybody else, even Mommy. He acted that way. Maybe it was because she was closer to his size—a medium size giant in a world full of giant-giants; that's how people would look to Petey.

When he was happy again, she gave him half a cracker from her pocket, and a piece of fruit for his other hand. He tumbled over backwards, and lay down, right on the muddy ground, smearing the food all over his face and looking sleepy.

Sooner or later, Dee knew, she was going to have to turn around and look back, meanwhile, she sat on the ground, crosslegged, watching Peter fall asleep. She thought about her ancestors, who were

pioneers on Pluto, and her father and how brave *he* was. She thought once, very quickly, about her mother, who was maybe all burned up now.

She had to be brave now—as brave and strong as she knew, in her own private self, she really was. Not silly-brave the way grown-ups expected you to be, about things like cuts and antiseptics, but deep-down *important brave*. She was an intrepid explorer on an alien planet, exposed to unknown dangers and trials, with a helpless infant under her wing to protect. She turned around and looked back.

Her own footsteps faced her, curving away out of sight between two tall distant trees. She looked harder in the direction they pointed to, if the fire was still burning, she ought to be able to see it. The trees were far enough apart, and the ground was clear between them—clearer than any ground she'd ever seen before. There were no bushes or branches near the ground, higher than a rocket-launch—tall yellow orange poles with whis-pering foliage at the top.

The overhead canopy was thick and dark, a changeable ceiling with grey and green and blue fronds stirring in the air. She couldn't see the sky through it all, or see beyond it to find out whether there was any smoke. But that made it dark here, underneath the trees, so Dee was sure she would be able to see the fire, if it was still going.

She got up and followed her own footsteps back, as far as she could go without losing sight of Petey, that was the spot where the trail curved away in a different direction. It curved again, she saw further on; that was strange, because she was sure she'd been going in a straight line when she ran away. The trees all looked so much alike, it would have been hard to tell. She'd heard a story once about a man who went around and around in circles in a forest till he starved to death. It was a good thing that the ground was so soft here, and she could see the footprints so clearly.

Petey was sound asleep. She decided she could leave him alone for a minute. She hadn't seen any wild beasts or animals, or heard anything that sounded dangerous. Deborah started back along her own trail, and at the next bend she saw it, framed between two far trees: the front part of the rocket, still glowing hot, bright orange red like the persimmons Daddy had sent out from Earth one time. That was why she hadn't been able to see it before, the colour was hardly different from the ground on which it stood: just barely redder.

Nothing was burning any more.

'Mommy I' Deborah screamed, and screamed it again at the top of her lungs.

Nothing happened.

She started to run towards the rocket, still calling; then she heard Petey yelling, too. He was awake again and she had to turn around and run back and pick him up. Then she started the trip all over again, much slower. Petey was dripping wet now, and still hollering. And heavy. Dee tried letting him crawl, but it was too slow. Every move he made, he sank into the soft ground an inch or so; then he'd get curious and try to eat the orange dirt off his fingers, so she had to pick him up again.

By the time they got back to the rocket, Dee was wet all over, plastered with the dirt that Petey had picked up, and too tired even to cry when nobody answered her call.

## II

THE LADY OF the house sat fat with contentment on her couch, and watched the progress of the work. Four of her sons—precision masons all—performed deft manoeuvres with economy and dispatch; a new arch took place before her eyes, enlarged and re-designed to suit her needs.

They started at the floor, sealing the jagged edges a full foot farther back on either side than where the frame had been before. They worked in teams of two, one to stand by and tamp each chip in place with sensitive mandibles, smoothing and firming it into position as it set; the other stepping off to choose a matching piece from the diminishing pile of hard-wood chips, coating it evenly with liquid plastic from his snout and bringing it, ready for placement in the arch, just at the instant that his brother completed the setting of the preceding piece.

Then the exchange in roles : the static partner moving off to make his choice; the second brother

setting his new chip in perfect pattern with the rest: Two teams, building the two sides of the arch in rhythmic concert with each other. It was a ritual dance of function and form, chips and plastic, workers and work, each in its way an apparently effortless inevitable detail of the whole. Daydanda gloried in it.

The arch grew taller than ever before, and the Lady's satisfaction grew enormous, while her consort's fluttering excitement mounted. 'But why?' he asked again, still querulous.

'It is pleasant to watch.'

'You will not use it?' He was absurdly hopeful.

'Of course I will!'

'But, Lady ... Daydanda, my dearest, Mother of our children, this whole thing is unheard of. What sort of example ...?'

'Have you ever,' she demanded coldly, 'had cause to regret the example I set to my children?'

'No, no my dear, but..?'

She withdrew her attention entirely, and gave herself over to the pure aesthetic delight of watching her sons—the two teams of masons—working overhead now on the final span of the arch, approaching each other with perfect timing and matched instantaneous motions, preparing to meet and place the ceremonial centre-piece together.

Soon she would, rise, take her husband's arm and experience—for the first time since her initial Family came to growth—the infinite pleasure of walking erect through her own door into the next chamber.

Even the report, shortly afterwards, of a fire spreading on the eastern boundary, failed to diminish her pleasure. She assigned three fliers to investigate the trouble, and dismissed it from her mind.

### III

FOR A LONG, long time Deborah sat still on the ground, hugging Petey on her lap, not caring how wet he was, nor even trying to stop his crying—except that she rocked gently back and forth in a tradition as ancient as it was instinctive. After a while, the baby was asleep; but the girl still sat crosslegged on the ground, her shoulders moving rhythmically, slower and slower, until the swaying was almost imperceptible.

The rocket—the shiny rocket that had been new and expensive a little while ago—lay helpless on its side. The nozzles in the tail, now quiet and cool, had spouted flame across a streak of surface that stretched farther back than Dee could see, leaving a Hal-lowe'en trail of scorched black across the orange ground. Up forward, where the fire in the ship had been, there was nothing to see but the still-red glow of the hull.

Deborah tried to figure out what flames she had seen when she left the ship with Petey; but it didn't make sense, and she hadn't looked long enough to be sure. She'd been taught what to do in case of fire: *get out!* She'd done it; and now ... The lock was still open where she'd climbed out before. Very very carefully, not to wake him she laid her baby brother on the soft ground, and step by reluctant step she approached the ship. Near the lock, she could feel heat; but it was all coming from one direction—from the nose, and not from inside. She touched a yellow clay stained finger to the lock itself, and felt the wall inside, and found it cool. She took a deep breath, ignored the one tear that forced its way out of her right eye, and climbed up into the rocket.

It was quiet in there. Dee didn't know what kind of noise she'd expected, until she remembered the last voice she'd heard when she left, saying calmly, 'Fire ... fire ... fire ...'

She thought that out and knew the fire had stopped; then it was all right to open the safety door to the front part. Maybe ... maybe they weren't hurt or anything; maybe they just couldn't hear her call. If there was just *a little* fire in there, it might have damaged the controls so they couldn't open the door for instance.

She knew where the controls on her side were, and how to work them. Her hand was on the knob when she had the thought, and then she was afraid. She knew from T.Z.'s how a burning body smelled; and she remembered how hot the outside of the hull was.

Her hand withdrew from the knob, returned, and then withdrew again, without consulting her at all. That wasn't any *little* fire.

If they were all right, they'd find some way to open the door themselves; Daddy could always figure out something like that.

*If people ask, she told herself, I'll tell them: I didn't know how.*

'Mommy,' she said out loud. 'Mommy, *please* ...'

Then she remembered the tube. She ran to it and took the speaker off the hook, fumbling with impatience so that it fell from her hand and dangled on its cord, it buzzed the way it should; it was working!

She grabbed at it, and shouted into it. 'Mommy! Daddy! Where are you?' That was a silly thing to say. 'Please answer me. Please. *Please!* I'll be good all the rest of my life, she promised silently and faithfully, all the rest of my life, if you answer me.

But no one answered.

She didn't think about the door controls again. After a while she found she could look around without really *seeing* the locked safety door. She had only to try a little, and she could make-be-lieve it was a wall just like the sidewalls, that belonged there.

Eight and a half years is a short span of time to an adult; no one seriously expects very much of a child that age. But almost *nine* years is a long time when you're growing up, and more than time enough to learn a great many things.

Besides the sealed-off control room, and the bedroom-play-space, the family rocket had a third compartment, in the rear. Back there were the galley, bathroom facilities, and the repair equipment, with a tiny metals workshop. Only this last section held any mysteries for Deborah. She knew how to find and prepare the stored food supplies for herself and the baby; how to keep the water-reuser and air-fresher operating; where the oxy tanks were, and how to use them if she needed them.

She knew, too, how to let the bunks out of the wall in the play-space, and how to fasten Petey in so he wouldn't smother or strangle himself, or fall out, or even get uncovered in the night. And she knew where all the clean clothes were kept, and how to change the baby's diapers.

These things she knew as naturally and inevitably as a child back on Earth would have known how to select a meal on the push-panel, how to use the slide-walks, how to dial his lessons.

For five days, she played house with the baby in the rocket.

The first day it was fun; she made up bottles from the roll of plastic containers, and mixed milk in the blender from the dried supply. She ate her favourite foods, wore all her best clothes, dressed the baby and undressed him, and took him out for sun and air in the clearing blasted by the rocket jets. She discovered the uses of the spongy soil, and built fabulous mud castles while Petey played. Inside, when he was sleeping, she read films, and coloured pictures, and left the T.Z. running all the time.

The second day, and the third, she did all the same things, but it wasn't so much fun. Petey was always crying for something just when she got interested in what she was doing. And you couldn't say, 'Soon as I finish this chapter,' because he wouldn't understand.

Deborah got bored; then she began to get worried, too.

At first she had known that help would come; the people who lived on this planet would come looking for them. They'd rescue her and Petey; she'd be a heroine, and perhaps they'd never even ask if she knew how to open that door.

The third day, she began to think that perhaps there weren't any people on the planet at all—at least not on this part of it. There always had been a few people at least, whenever they went any place. The Government didn't send out survey engineers or geologists, like John and Sarah Levin, until after the first wildcat claims began to come in from a new territory. But this time maybe nobody knew they were coming. Or perhaps nobody had seen the crash. Or maybe this wasn't even the right planet.

She worried about that for a while, and then she remembered that her father always sent back a message-rocket when they arrived anyplace. He'd told her it was so the people on the last planet would



know they were safe; if it didn't come at the right time, somebody would come out looking, to see what had hap-pened to them.

Dee wondered how long it would take for the folks back on Starhope to get worried and come and rescue them. She couldn't even figure out how long they'd been in space on the way here. It was a long trip, but she wasn't sure if it had been a week, or a month, or more. Trips in space were always long.

The fourth day, she got tired of just waiting, and decided to explore.

She wasn't bothering with the masks any more. The dials still said full after the first three times they went out, and that meant air had enough oxygen in it so that the masks weren't working. So *that* was no problem.

And she could take along plenty of food. The only thing she wasn't sure about was Petey. She was afraid to leave him by himself, even in the play space, and he was too heavy to carry for very long. She took his stroller out and tried it, but the ground was too soft to push it when he was inside.

The next morning, early, Deborah packed a giant lunch, and took the stroller out again. She found out that, though it wouldn't push, it could be *pulled*, so she tied a rope to the front, and loaded it up with bottles and diapers and her lunch and Petey. Then she set off up the broad black avenue of the rocket jets; that way she could always see the ship, and they wouldn't get lost.

#### IV

DAYDANDA WAS TIRED. Truthfully, all this walking back and forth between chambers was a strain. Now she submitted gratefully to Kackot's fussing anxiety as he plumped the top mat here and pulled it there, adjusting the big new dais-couch to conform to her swollen body.

'I told you it was too much,' he fumed. 'I don't see why you want to do it anyhow. Now you rest for a while. You ...' 'I have work to do,' she reminded him.

'It can wait; let them think for themselves for once!'

She giggled mentally at the notion. Kackot refused to share her amusement.

'There's nothing that can't wait half an hour anyhow.' He was almost firm with her; she loved to have him act that way sometimes. Contentedly, she stretched out and let her weight sink into the soft layers of cellulose mat. Her body rested, but her mind and eye were as active as ever. She studied the new shelves and drawers and files, the big new desk at the head of the bed. Everything was at hand; everything in place; it was wonderful. The old room had been unbearably cluttered. Now she had only the active records near her. Everything connected with the departed was in the old room: easy to get at on the rare occasions when she needed it; but not underhand every time she turned around.

Daydanda examined the perfect arch her sons had built, and exulted in the sight of it. When she wanted anything on the other side, all she had to do was *walk right through*.

She was aware of Kackot's distress. Poor thing, he did hate to have her do anything unconventional. But no one had to know, no one who wasn't really *close* to them ...

'Lady! Mother Daydanda!'

Kackot's image blanked out. This was a closed beam, an urgent call from an older daughter, serving her turn in training as relay-receptionist for messages from the many less articulate children of the Household.

'What's wrong?'

'Mother! The Stranger Lady has left her wings at last! She came out from *inside* them! And with a babe in arms! She ... oh Mother, I do not know how to tell it; I have never known the like, She is *not* of our people. The wings are not proper wings. She has no consort. A Family of *one*! I do not understand...'

'Be comforted, child. There is no need for you to understand. With her own mind seething, Daydanda could still send a message of ease and understanding to her daughter. 'You have done well. She is *not* of our people, and we must expect many strange things. Now I want the scout.'

The daughter's mind promptly cleared away; in its place, Day-danda felt the nervous tingling

excitement of the winged son who had been sent out to report on the fire in the east, and then to keep watch over the Strange Wings he had found there.

'Mother! I am frightened!'

The message was weak; the daughter through whom it came would be struggling with her curiosity. She was of the eighth family, almost mature, soon to depart from the Household and already showing signs of individualism and rebelliousness. She would be a good Mother, Daydanda thought with satisfaction, even as she closed the contact with the scout and shut the daughter out with a sharp reprimand for inefficiency.

'There is nothing to fear,' she told her son sharply; 'tell me what you have seen.'

'The Strange Lady has left her Wings. She has not enough limbs, and she uses a Strange litter to carry her babe. She ...'

'She is a Stranger, son! And you have already quite adequately described her appearance. If you fear Strangeness for its own sake, you will never pierce the tree-tops, nor win yourself a Wife. You will remain in the Household till your wings drop off, and you are put to tending the corral..?'

As she had expected, the familiar threat reassured him as nothing else would have done. She listened closely to his detailed report of how the Stranger had left her Wings, and set off down the blackened fire-strip, pulling behind her a litter containing the Strange babe and some Strange, entirely unidentifiable, goods.

'She has not seen you?' the Mother asked at last.

'No.'

'Good; you have done well. Keep her in sight, and do not fear. I shall assign an elder brother to remain near the Wings, and to join you when the Stranger chooses her new site. Do not fear; your Mother watches over all.' But when the contact was broken, she turned at once in perturbation to her consort: 'Kackot, do you suppose ... please, now, try to use a *little* imagination ... do you suppose ... ?' She caught his apprehensive agreement, even before the thought was fully articulated; clearly that was the case: 'The little one is no babe, but her consort!'

That put a different complexion on the whole matter. The flames of landing clearly could not be considered an act of deliberate hostility, if the Strange Lady's consort were so small and weak that he could not walk for himself, let alone assist in the clearing of a House-site. The fire thus assumed a ritual-functional aspect that made good sense.

If the explanation were correct, there need be no further fear of fire. And since the Strangers' march now was in a direction that would carry them towards the outer boundary of Day-danda's Houseland—or perhaps over it, into neighbouring territory—there was no need either for immediate conflict of any kind.

Daydanda wondered that she did not feel pleased. As long as one assumed the smaller creature to be a babe, it would have meant that a fully-developed Mother was capable of leaving her home, and walking abroad...

Kackot, pacing restlessly across the big room, sputtered with derision. 'A Mother,' he reminded her irritably, 'of a *very* Strange race!'

'Yes,' Daydanda agreed. In any case, they had been wrong in assuming the smaller one to be a babe, simply because of size. Still, as she lay back to rest and think, the Lady was bemused by a pervading and inexplicable sense of disappointment.

## V

IT WAS VERY hot. After half an hour of sweat and glare, Deb-orah compromised with her first plan of staying out in the open, and began following a path just inside the forest edge. She kept one tree at a time—and only one—between herself and the 'road'. That way she had shade and orientation both.

Lunch time seemed to come quickly, judging from her own hunger. She stepped out from under the trees, and tried to look up at the sun to see how high it was. It was too bright; she couldn't look at it right.

Then she realized she was fooling herself. You didn't need a clock if you had Petey. He would be wanting his bottle before it was time for her to eat. She trudged on, drag-ging the ever-heavier stroller behind her. Petey just sat there, quiet and content, gurgling his approval of the expedition, and refusing to show any interest in food at all.

Dee might have been less concerned with her insides if the exterior were any less monotonous. It didn't seem to matter where she was, or how far she walked: the forest went on endlessly, with no change in appearance except the random situation of the great trees.

After a while, she stepped out again and sighted back to the rocket; then off the other way. The end of the blasted road was in sight, now; but as far as Dee could see, there was nothing beyond it but more trees—exactly the same as the ones that stretched to left and right: tall straight dirty-yellow trunks, and a thin dense layer of grey-blue fronds high up on top.

At last Petey cried.

Dee was delighted. She tilted him back in his seat, and adjusted the plastic bottle in the holder, then fell ravenously on her own lunch.

When she was finished, she looked around again, more hope-fully; at least they'd come this far in safety. Tomorrow, maybe she'd try another direction, through the woods, away from the road. While Petey napped, she raised a magnificent edifice of orange towers and turrets in the soft dirt; when he woke, she pulled him home again, content.

Maybe nobody lived here at all; maybe the planet had no aborigines. Then there was nothing to be afraid of, and she could wait safely with Petey till somebody came to rescue them. She was thinking that way right up to the time she stepped around the tail-jets of the rocket, and saw tracks.

There were two parallel sets of neat V-prints, perhaps two feet apart; they came from behind a tree near the ship, went almost to the open lock, and curved away to disappear behind another tree.

Two not-quite-parallel sets of tracks; nothing else.

Dee had courage. She looked to see what was behind the tree before she ran. But there was nothing.

That night was bad. Dee couldn't fall asleep, even in the foam bunk, even after the long walk and exercise. She twisted and turned, got up again and walked around and almost woke Petey, and got back in bed and tried to read. But when she got tired enough to sleep, and turned the light out, she'd be wide awake again, staring at the shadows, and she'd have to turn the light on and read some more.

After a while she just lay in her bunk, with the night light on, staring at the closed safety door to the control room, where her mother and father were. Then she cried; she buried her face in the pillow and cried wetly, fluently, hopelessly, until she fell asleep, still sobbing.

She dreamed, a nightmare dream with flaming V-shaped feet and a smell of burning flesh; and woke up screaming, and woke Petey too. Then she had to stay up to change and comfort him; by the time she got him back to sleep again, she was so tired and annoyed that she'd forgotten to be scared.

Next morning, she opened the lock cautiously, expecting to see ... almost anything. But there were only giant trees and muddy orange ground: no mysterious tracks, no strange and horrifying beasts. And no glad crew of rescuers.

Maybe the V-tracks never existed, except in that nightmare. She spent most of the morning trying to decide about that, then looked out again, and noticed one more thing. Her own footsteps were also gone; the moist ground had filled in overnight to erase all tracks. There was no way to know for sure whether she had dreamed those tracks or seen them.

The next two days, Dee stayed in the rocket. She was keeping track of the days now. She'd looked at the chrono right after they crashed, so she knew it was seven Starhope days since they came to the planet. She knew, too, that the days here were different, shorter, because the clock was getting ahead. The seventh day on the chrono was the eighth Sunday here; and at high noon the dial said only nine o'clock. She could still tell noon by Petey's hunger, and she wondered about that: his hunger-clock seemed to have set itself by the new sun already. Certainly, he still got sleepy every night at dusk, though the clock told three hours earlier each time.

Deborah spent most of one day working out the difference. She couldn't figure out any kind of arithmetic she'd been taught to do it with, so she ended up by making little marks for every hour and counting them. By evening, she was sure she had it right. The day here was seventeen hours instead of twenty. And then she realized she didn't know how to set days on the chrono anyhow; all that work was useless.

The next morning she went out again. Two days of confinement had made Petey cranky and Dee brave.

Nothing happened; after that, they went out daily for airings, as they had done at first. Dee made a calendar, and marked the days on that; then she started checking the food supplies.

They had enough of almost everything, too much to figure out how long it would last. But she spent one afternoon counting the plastic bottles on Petey's roll, and figured out that they'd be gone in just three weeks, if he kept on using four a day.

Someone would come for them before that; she was sure of it. Just the same, she decided that baby was old enough to learn to drink from a glass, and started teaching him.

Eight days became nine and ten, eleven and twelve; still nothing happened. There was no sign of danger nor of help. Dee was sure now that she had dreamed those tracks, but somewhere on this planet she knew there were people. There *always* were; always had been, whenever they came to someplace new. And if the people didn't come to her, she'd have to find them. Deborah began to plan her second exploratory expedition.

There was no sense in covering the same ground again. She wanted to go the other way, into the woods. That meant she'd need to blaze a trail as she went; and it meant she couldn't use the stroller.

She added up the facts with careful logic, and realized that Petey would simply have to stay behind.

## VI

THE BABY CRAWLED well now, and he could hold things; he could pick up a piece of cracker and get it to his mouth. He couldn't hold the bottle for himself, of course, but ...

She tried it, closing her ears to the screams that issued steadily for an hour before he found his milk. But he did find it; her system worked. If she hung the bottle in the holder while his belly was still full, he ignored it; but when he was really hungry, he found it, and wriggled underneath to get at the down-tilted nipple. That gave her, really, a whole day to make her trip.

The night before, she packed her lunch, and for the first time, studied the contents of her father's workshop. There was a small blowtorch she had seen him use; and even in her present restless state Deborah was not so excessively brave that the thought of a weapon, as well as tree-marker, didn't tempt her. But when she found the torch, she was afraid to try it out indoors, and had to wait till morning.

At breakfast time, she stuffed Petey with food till he would eat no more. Then she clasped a bottle in the holder she'd rigged up, set the baby underneath to give him the idea once again, and went outside to try her skill with the torch. She came back, satisfied, to finish her preparations. When she left, a second bottle hung full and tempting in the play-space; Petey's toys were spread around the floor; and a pile of the crackers in the corner would keep him happy, she decided, if all else failed. There was no way to solve the diaper-changing problem; he'd just have to wait for her return.

At first she tried to go in a straight line, marking every second tree along the way. After just a little while, she realized that it didn't matter which direction she took; she didn't know where she was going, anyway.

She walked on steadily, a very small girl under the distant canopy spread by the tall trees; very small, and *insignificant*, but erect and self-transporting on two overalled legs; a small girl with a large hump on her back.

The hump disappeared at noon, or somewhat earlier. She stuffed the remaining sandwich and a few pieces of dried fruit into her pockets, and tied the emptied makeshift knapsack more comfortably around

her waist where it flopped rhythmically against her backside at every step.

Never did she forget to mark the trees, every second one along the way.

Nowhere did she see anything but more trees ahead, and bare ground underfoot.

She had no way of knowing how far she'd gone, or even what the hour was, when the silence ceased. Ever since she'd landed, the only noise she'd heard had been her own and Petey's. It was startling; it seemed impossible, by now, to hear anything else.

She stopped, with one foot set ahead of the other in midstep, and listened to the regular loud ticking of a giant clock.

It was impossible. She brought her feet into alignment and listened some more, while her heart thumped sympathetically in time to the forest's sound.

It was certainly impossible, but it came from the right, and it called to her; it promised warmth and haven. It was just an enormous alarm-clock, mechanically noisy, but it was somehow full of the same comfort-and-command she remembered in her mother's voice.

Deborah turned to the right and followed the call; but she didn't forget to mark the trees as she passed, every other one of them.

If it weren't for the trail-blazing, she might have missed the garden entirely. It was off to one side, not directly on her path to the ticking summons. She saw it only when she turned to play the torch on one more tree: a riot of colours and fantasy shapes in the near distance, between the upright trunks.

Not till then did the ticking frighten her: not till she found how hard it was to move crosswise, or any way except right towards it. She wanted to see it. Most likely it was just wild, but there was always a chance ...

And when she tried to walk that way, her legs didn't want to go. Panic clutched at her, and failed to take hold. She was an intrepid explorer on an alien planet, exposed to unknown dangers. Also, she was a Space Girl.

'I pledge my honour to do everything in my power to uphold the high standards of the human race,' she intoned, not quite out loud, and immediately felt better. 'A Space Girl is brave. A Space Girl is honest. A Space Girl is truthful. A Space Girl ...'

She went clear down the list of virtues she had learned in Gamma Troop on Starhope, and while she mumbled them, her legs came under control. The ticking went on, but it was just a noise—and not as loud as it had been, either. She dodged scout-wise from behind one tree-trunk to another, approaching the garden. If, indeed, it *was* a garden. Two trees away, she stopped and stared.

Every planet had strange new shapes and sights and smells; the plants in each new place were always excitingly different. But Dee was old enough to know that everywhere chlorophyll was green, as blood was red. Oh, blood could seem almost black, or blue, or pale pink, or even almost white; and chlorophyll could shade to dark grey, and down to faint cream-yellow. But growing gardens had green-variant leaves or stems. And everywhere she'd been, the plants, however strange, were unified. The trees here grew blue-green-grey on top. The flowers should not grow, as they seemed to do, in every random shade of colour.

There was no way to tell the leaves from seeds from stems from buds. It was just ... growth. A sort of arched form sprouted bright magenta filaments from its ivory mass. A bulbous some-thing that tapered to the ground showed baby blue beneath the many-coloured moss that covered it. Between them on the ground, a series of concentric circles shaded from slate grey on the outside to oyster white in the centre, only it was so thin that a tinge of orange showed through from the soil below. Dee would not have thought it lived at all, until she noticed a slow rippling motion outward towards the edges.

Farther in, one form joined shapeless edges with another; one colour merged haphazard with the next. Deborah blinked, confused, and walked away, following the call of the great ticking clock, then mumbled to herself, 'I pledge my honour to do everything ...' She turned back to the puzzling growths again, aware now that the calling power of the sound diminished when she said the words aloud.

The colours were too confusing. She had to concentrate, and couldn't think about the garden while she

talked to herself. Maybe the Pledge wasn't the only thing that would do it. She said under her breath: 'That one is purple, and the other's like a pear...'

It worked. All she had to do was make her thoughts into words. It didn't matter what she said, or whether she whispered or shouted. As long as she kept talking, the summoning call would turn to a giant clock again, with no power over the movements of her legs. She went up closer to the baffling coloured shapes, and made out a fairy-delicate translucent spiral thing and then a large mauve mushroom in the centre.

*Mushroom!* At last she understood. They were so big, she hadn't thought of it at first: it was all fungus growth, and that made sense in the dim damp beneath the trees.

Strange it isn't every place, all over, she thought, and realized she was moving away from the garden again, and remembered this was one time it was all right to talk to herself out loud. 'There must be some people here. Some kind of people or natives. That noise is strange, too. It couldn't just *happen* that way; somebody lives here ...'

She didn't want to touch the fungus, but she went up close to it. 'Things *don't* just happen this way. That stuff would grow all over if it was wild; somebody planted it.' She peered through the arch-shape to the inside, and jumped back violently.

The thing was lying on its side, sucking a lower follicle of the arch, its livid belly working as convulsively as its segmented mouth, its many limbs sprawled out in all directions.

Dee jumped away in horror, and crept back in fascination. 'It doesn't know I'm here,' she remembered to whisper. From around the other side of the bulbous growth she watched, and slowly understood.

'It's like some kind of insect.' It couldn't really be an insect, of course, because it was two feet long—much too large for an insect. An insect this size, on a planet as much like Earth as this was, wouldn't be able to breathe. They'd explained about why insects couldn't be any larger than the ones you found on Earth in Space Girl class. But men had found creatures on other planets that did look a lot like insects, and acted a lot like them, too. And even though people knew they weren't really insects, they still called such creatures 'bugs'...

Well, this thing was as close to an insect as a thing this size could be, Deborah decided. It was two feet long, and that made sense when you stopped to think about it, what with the tall trees and the giant mushrooms. She counted six legs, and then realized that the other two in front, resting quietly now, were feelers. The two front legs clutched at a clump of hairy shoots on the arched moss, almost like Petey holding his bottle. The back leg that was on top was longer than the front ones; it was braced against the arch for steadiness. The lower leg was tucked under-neath the body; its lower middle leg also lay still on the ground, stretched straight out. The upper middle leg was busily scratch-ing at a small red spot on the belly, acting absurdly independent of the rest of the feeding creature.

There was really, Dee decided, nothing frightening except the mouth. She looked for eyes, and couldn't see them, then remembered that some bugs on other planets had them on the backs of their heads. But that mouth ...

It worked like Petey's on a nipple; but not like Petey's, because this one had *six* lips, all thick and round-looking instead of like people's lips, and all closing in towards each other at the same time. It was horrible to watch.

Dee backed off silently, and found herself walking the wrong way again. She tried the multiplication table while she made a circuit of the 'garden', examining it for size and shape, and look-ing for a clear part that would let her see into the centre.

She found, at last, a whole row of the jelly-like translucent things, lying flat and low, so she could look inside. The ground beneath them was scattered with flashing jewel-like stones ...

*No, black stones, with the bright part in the middle,* she thought in words. *No, not the middle. At one end ...* each stone was lying partly on an edge of the jelly-stuff ... *about as big as my foot,* she thought, and saw the tiny feet around the edge of every stone.

*Eyes on the backs of their heads*, she thought, *and they have car ... carpets? ... carapaces!* These bugs were smaller than the first one, and not frightening at all. Bugs only looked bad from the bottom, she realized, and instantly corrected that impression.

Something walked into the garden, and picked up four of the little ones. Something as tall as Dee herself when it went in, and half again as high when it left. It entered on four legs, and walking upside-down, head carried towards the ground, and looking backwards ... no, *facing* backwards, *looking* forward. It entered calmly, moving at a steady even pace; approached the edge of the garden where Deborah watched the infants feeding ... and froze.

An instant's immobility, then the big bug erupted into a frenzy of activity: scooped up the four closest little ones—two of them with the long hairy jointed arms (or legs? back legs?), and two more hurriedly with two front legs (or arms?)—and almost *ran* out, now on just two legs, the centre ones, its body neatly balanced fore and aft, almost perfectly horizontal, the heavy hooded head in front, the spiny rounded abdomen at the back.

It scuttled off with its four tiny wriggling bundles, and as it left, Dee registered in full the terror of what she had seen.

She fled ... and by some miracle, fled past a tree she'd marked, so paused in flight to find the next one, and the next, and followed her blazed trail safely back. The ticking of the forest followed for a while, then stopped abruptly. But while it lasted, it *pushed* away as hard as it had pulled before.

## VII

DAYDANDA MADE THE last entry in her calendar of the day, and filed it with yesterday's and all the others. Things were going well. The youngest Family was thriving; the next-to-youngest—the Eleventh—was almost ready to start schooling; ready, in any case, for weaning from the Garden. Soon there would be room in the nurseries for a new brood.

Kackot was restless. She hadn't meant the thought for him at all, but he was sensitive to such things now, and he moved slightly, eagerly, towards her from his place across the room—perhaps honestly mistaking his own desire for the summons.

She sent a thought of love and promise, and temporary firm refusal. The new Family would have to wait. Within the House-hold, things were going well; but there were other matters to consider.

There was the still-unsolved puzzle of the Strangers, for instance. For a few hours, that mystery had seemed quite satis-factorily solved. When the Strange Lady left her Wings with baby--or-consort—now it seemed less certain which it was—to travel the path the flames had cleared for her, the whole thing had assumed a ritual aspect that made it easier to understand. Whatever Strange reasons, motives, or traditions were involved, it all seemed to fit into a pattern of some kind ... until the next report informed Daydanda that the two Strangers had returned to their Wings—an act no less, and no more, unprecedented than their manner of arrival, or their strange appearance.

They had not since departed from the—*The house?* she wondered suddenly. Could a House be somehow made to travel through the air?

She felt Kackot's impatient irritation with such fantasizing, and had to agree. Surely the image of—it—relayed by the flier-scout who had approached most closely, resembled in no way any structure Daydanda had ever seen or heard of.

But neither was it similar in any way, she thought—and this time guarded the thought from her consort's limited imagination—to ordinary, Wings, except by virtue of the certain knowledge that it had descended from the sky above the trees.

Today there had been no report. The fliers were all busy on the northern boundary, where a more ordinary sort of nesting had been observed. When the trouble there was cleared up, she could afford to keep a closer watch on the apparently not-hostile Strangers.

Meantime, certainly, it was best to let a new Family wait. Lay-ing was hard on her; always had been. And with possible action developing on two fronts now...

Kackot stirred again, but not with any real hope, and the Lady barely bothered to reply. It was time to bring the young ones in. Daydanda began the evening Homecalling, the message to return, loud and strong and clear for all to hear: a warning to unfriendly neighbours; a promise and renewal to all her children in the Household, young and old.

`Lady! oh, Mother!' Daydanda sustained the Homecalling at full strength, through a brief surge of stubborn irritation; then, suddenly worried—the daughter on relay knew enough not to interrupt at this time for anything less than urgent—she allowed enough of her concentration to be distracted so as to permit a clear reception.

`Lady! ... nurse from east garden ... very frightened, confused ... message unclear ... she wishes.'

`Send her in!' Daydanda cut off the semi-hysterical outburst, and terminated the Homecalling abruptly, with extra emphasis on the last few measures.

The nurse dashed through the archway, too distraught to make a ritual approach, almost forgetting to prostrate herself in the presence of the Lady, her Mother. She opened communication while still in motion, as soon as she was within range of her limited powers. Daydanda recognized her with the first contact: a daughter of the fifth family—not very bright, even for a wingless one, but not given to emotional disturbance either, and a fine nurse, recently put in charge of the east garden.

`The Stranger, Mother Daydanda! The Strange Lady! ... she came to the *nursery* ... she would have stolen ... killed ... she would have ...'

*To the nursery!*

The Mother had to quell an instant's panic of her own before she could commence the careful questioning and reiterated reassurance that were needed to obtain a coherent picture from the nurse. When at last she had stripped away the fearful imag-inative projections that stemmed from the daughter's well-conditioned protectiveness, it appeared that the Strange Lady had visited the Garden, had spied on the feeding babies, and then had departed with haste when the Nurse came to fetch them home for the night.

'The babies are all safe?' the Mother asked sternly.

'Yes, Lady. I brought them to the House quick as I could before I came to you. I would not have presumed to come, my Lady, but I could not make the winged one understand. Will my Mother forgive ...'

'There is nothing to forgive; you have done well,' Daydanda dismissed her. 'You were right to come to me, even during the Homecalling.'

Breathing easy again, and once more in full possession of her faculties, the nurse offered thanks and farewell, and wriggled backwards out of sight under the arch, quite properly apologetic. The Lady barely noticed; she was already in contact with the flier-scout who had been reassigned from the North border by the daughter on relay, as soon as the nurse's first wild message was connected with the Strange Wings.

It was a son of the eighth Family, the same scout who had approached the Wings before, a well-trained, conscientious, and devoted son, almost ready to undertake the duties of a consortship. Daydanda could not have wished for a better representative through whose sense to perceive the Strangers.

Yet, there was little she could learn through him. The Strange Lady had returned to the Wings ... *the House?* More and more it seemed so ... where the small Stranger presumably awaited her. Now they were both inside, and the remarkable barrier that could be raised or lowered in a matter of seconds was blocking the entranceway.

Perception of any kind was difficult through the dense stuff of which the ... whatever-it-was: Wings? House? ... was made. The scout was useless now. Daydanda instructed him to stay on watch, and abandoned the contact. Then she concentrated her whole mind in an effort to catch some impression—anything at all—from beyond the thick fabric of ... whatever-it-was.

Eventually, there was a flash of something; then another. Not much, but the Lady waited patiently, and



used each fleeting image to build a pattern she could grasp. One thought, and another thought, and...

To Kackot's astonishment, the Lady relaxed suddenly with an outpouring of amusement. She did not communicate to him what she knew, but abruptly confirmed all his worst fears of the past weeks with a single command: 'I will go to the Strange Wings, oh Consort. Prepare a litter for me.'

When she addressed him thus formally, he had no recourse but to obey. If she noticed his sputtering dismay at all, she gave no sign, but lay back on her couch, thoroughly fatigued, to rest through the night while her sons and daughters prepared a litter, and enlarged the outer arches sufficiently to accommodate its great size.

## VIII

DEE WAS SCARED, and she didn't know what to do. She wanted her mother; it was no fun taking care of Petey now. She made him a bottle to keep him from screaming, but she didn't bother with his diaper or fixing up his bunk or anything like that. It didn't matter any more.

There were no people on this planet.

Nobody was going to rescue them; nobody at all.

It wasn't the right planet, at all. If anybody on Starhope got worried and went to look for them, it was some other planet they'd look on. It had to be, because there were no people here. Just *bugs*!

Petey fell asleep with the bottle still in his mouth, sprawled on the floor, all wet and dirty. Deborah didn't care; she sat on the floor herself and fell asleep and didn't even know she slept till she woke up, with nothing changed, except that the clock said it was morning.

And she was hungry after all.

She started back to the galley, but first she had to open the outer lock. She actually had her hand on the lever before she realized she didn't *want* to open it. She was hungry; the last thing in the world she wanted to do was look outside again. She went back and got a piece of cake and some milk.

Milk for Petey, too. If she got it fixed before he woke up, she wouldn't have to listen to him yelling his head off again. She started to fix a bottle, but first she had to open the lock.

This time, she stopped herself half-way there.

It was silly to think she had to look out; she didn't want to. Petey was awake, but he wasn't hollering for once. She went back and got the bottle, and brought it into the play-space. 'Open it,' Petey said. 'Come out. Mother.'

'All right,' Dee told him. She gave him the bottle, went over to the lock, and then turned around and looked at him, terrified.

He was sucking on the bottle. 'Come on,' he said. 'Mother wait-ing.'

She was watching him while he said it. He didn't say it; he drank his milk.

She didn't think she was crazy, so she was still asleep, and this was a dream. It wasn't really happening at all, and it didn't matter.

She opened the lock.

## IX

*Once she had flown above the tree-tops, silver strong wings beating a rhythm of pride and joy in the high dry air above the canopy of fronds. Her eyes had gleamed under the white rays of the sun itself, and she had looked, with wild unspeakable elation, into the endless glaring brilliance of the heavens.*

Now she was tired, and the blessed relief from sensation when they set her down on the soft ground—after the lurching motion of the forest march—was enough to make her momentarily regret her decision. A foolish notion this whole trip ...

Kackot agreed enthusiastically.

The Lady closed her thoughts from his, and commanded the curtain at her side to be lifted. Supine in her litter, safely removed from the Strangers under a tree at the fringe of the clearing, her vast body

embedded on layers of cellulose mat, Daydanda looked out across the ravaged black strip. And the sun, in all its strength, collected on the shining outer skin of the Strange Wings, gathered its light into a thousand fiery needles to sear the surface of her eye, and pierce her very soul with agony.

*Once she had flown above the trees themselves ...*

Now her sons and daughters rushed to her side, in response to her uncontained anguish. They pulled close the curtain, and formed a tight protective wall of flesh and carapace around the litter. And from the distance, came a clamouring bloodlust eager-ness: the Bigheads waking in answer to her silent shriek of pained surprise. She sent them prompt soothing, and firm com-mand to be still; not till she was certain they understood, and would obey, did she dare turn any part of her mind to a considera-tion of her own difficulties. Even then she was troubled with the knowledge that her stern suppression of their rage to fight would leave the entire Bighead brood confused, and useless for the next emergency. It might be many days before their dull minds could be trained again to the fine edge of danger-awareness they had just displayed. If any trouble should arise in the meanwhile ...

She sent instructions to an elder daughter in the House to start the tedious process of reconditioning at once, then felt herself free at last to devote all her attention to the scene at hand. Tomorrow's troubles would have to take care of themselves till tomorrow. For now, there was disturbance, anxiety, and mortification enough.

That she, who had flown above the trees, higher and further than any sibling of her brood, that *she* should suffer from the sunlight now ...

'It was many years and many Families ago, my dear, my Lady.'

Daydanda felt her consort's comforting concern and thought a smile. 'Many years indeed...' And it was true; she had not been outside her chamber till this day—since the first Family they raised was old enough to tend the fungus gardens, and to carry the new babes back and forth. That was many years behind her now, and she had grown through many chambers since that time: each larger than the last, and now, most recently, the dar-ing double chamber with the great arch to walk through.

The Household had prospered in those years, and the bound-aries of its land were wide. The gardens grew in many places now, and the thirteenth Family would soon outgrow the nursery. The winged sons and daughters of Seven Families had already grown to full maturity, and departed to establish new Houses of their own ... or to die in failure. And through the years, the numbers of the wingless ones who never left the Household grew great; masons and builders, growers and weavers, nurses and teachers—there were always more of them, working for the greater welfare of the House, and their Mother, its Lady.

Through all those building, growing, widening years, Day-danda had *forgotten* ... forgotten the graceful wings and the soaring flight; the dazzling sunlight, and the fresh moist air just where the fronds stirred high above her now; the bright colours and half-remembered shapes of trees and nursery plants. Not once, in all that time, had she savoured the full sensory sharpness of *outside*...

She thought longingly of the nursery garden, the first one, that she and Kackot had planted together when they waited for the first Family to come. She thought of it, determined to see it again one day, then put aside all thoughts, hopes, and regrets of past or future.

Daydanda directed that her litter be moved so that the open-ing of the curtain would give her a view of the forest interior. Then, while her eye grew once again accustomed to their former functioning, she began to seek—with a more practised organ of perception—the mind-patterns of the Strangers inside that frighteningly bright structure in the clearing.

It was hard work. Whether there was something in the nature of the dense fabric of the Wings, or whether the difficulty lay only in the Strangeness of the beings inside, she could not tell, but at the beginning, the Lady found that proximity made small dif-ference in her ability to perceive what was inside.

*Strangers!* One could hardly expect them, after all, to provide familiar friend-or-enemy patterns for perception. Yet that very knowledge made the brief flashes of contact that she got all the more confusing, for they contained a teasing familiarity that made the Strange elements even less comprehensible by

contrast.

For just the instant's duration of a swift brush of minds, the Mother felt as though it were a daughter of her own inside the Strange structure; then the feeling was lost, and she had to strain every effort again simply to locate the image.

A series of slow moves, meantime, brought her litter gradually back round to where it had been at first; and though she found it was still painful to look for any length of time directly at the blazing light reflected from the Wings, the Lady discovered that by focusing on the trees diagonally across the clearing, she could include the too-bright object within her peripheral vision.

That much assured, she ceased to focus visually at all. Time enough for that when—if—the Strangers should come forth. Once more she managed to grasp, briefly, the mental image of the Strangers, or of one of them; and once again she felt the unexpected response within herself, as if she were in contact with a daughter of the Household ...

She lost it then; but it fitted with her sudden surmise of the night before.

Now, in the hopeful certainty that she had guessed correctly, she abandoned the effort at perception entirely; she gathered all her energies instead into one tight-beamed communication aimed at penetrating the thick skin of the Wings, and very little different in any way from the standard evening Homecalling.

It took some time. She was beginning to think she had failed: that the Strangers were not receptive to her call, or would respond only with fear and hostility. Then, without warning, the barrier at the entranceway was gone.

No ... not actually *gone*. It was still there, and still somehow attached to the main body of the Wings, but turned round so it no longer barred the way. And the opening this uncovered turned out to be, truly, the double-arch she had seen—but not quite credited—through her son's eyes.

Two arches, resting on each other base-to-base, but open in the centre : the shape of a hollowed-eve. Such a shape might grow, but it could not be *built*. Half-convinced as she had been that the Wings or House, or whatever-it-was, was an artificial structure rather than a natural form, Daydanda had put the relayed image of the doorway down to distortion of communication the night before. Now she saw it for herself: that, and the device that moved like a living thing to barricade the entrance.

*Like a living thing...*

It could fly; it was therefore, by all precedent of knowledge, alive. Reluctantly, the Lady discarded the notion that the Wings had been built by Strange knowledge. But even then, she thought soberly, there was much to be learned from the Strangers.

And in the next moment, she ceased to think at all. The Stranger emerged—the bigger of the two Strangers—and at the first impact of full visual *and* mental perception, Daydanda's impossible theory was confirmed.

## X

DEBORAH STOOD OUTSIDE, on the charred ground in front of the rocket, earnestly repeating the multiplication table: 'Two two's are four. Three two's are six. Four two's ...'

She was just as big as any of these bugs. The only one that was bigger was the one inside the box that she could only see part of—but that one had something wrong with it. It just lay there stretched out flat all the time, as if it couldn't get up. The box had handles for carrying, too, so Dee didn't have to worry about how big that one was.

All the rest of them were just about her own size, or even smaller but there were too *many* of them. And when she thought about actually touching one, with its hairy, sticky legs, she remembered the sick crackling sound a beetle makes when you step on it.

She didn't want to fight them, or anything like that; and she didn't think they wanted to hurt her specially, either. She didn't have the knotted-up, tight kind of feeling you get when somebody wants to hurt you. They didn't *feel* like enemies, or act that way, either. They were just too...

'Four four's are sixteen. Five four's are twenty. Six four's are twenty-four. Seven ...'

... too *interested!* And that was a silly thing to think, because how could *she* tell if they were interested? She couldn't even see their faces, because all the ones in front were bending backwards-upside-down, like the one she'd seen in the garden...

'... four's are twenty-eight. Eight four's are thirty-two. Nine four's are ...'

... just standing there, the whole row of them, with their back legs or arms or whatever-they-were sticking up in the air, and their heads dipped down in front so they could stare at her out of the big glittery eye in the middle of each black head. . .

'... thirty-six. Ten four's are forty. Eleven ...'

What did they want, anyhow? Why didn't they do something? '... four's are forty-four. Twelve four's ...'

The Space Girl oath was hard to remember if you were trying to think about other things at the same time; but Deborah knew the multiplication tables by heart, and she could keep talking while she was thinking.

Daydanda was fascinated. She had guessed at it, in her cham-ber the night before ... more than guessed, really. She would have been *certain*, if the notion were not so flatly impossible in terms of all knowledge and experience. It was precisely that con-flict between perception and precedent that had determined her to make the trip out here.

And she was right! These two were neither Lady and consort, nor Mother and baby, but only two children: a half-grown daughter and a babe in arms. Two young wingless ones, alone, afraid, and ... *Motherless?*

Eagerly, Daydanda poured out her questionings:

Where did they come from?

What sort of beings were they?

*Where was their Mother?*

'Twelve four's are forty-eight. One five is five. Two five's are ten, Three ...'

The important thing was just to keep talking—Dee knew that from when she had so much trouble at the garden. As long as she was saying something, anything at all, she could keep the crazy stuff out of her head.

'... five's are fifteen. Four five's are twenty. Five five's ...'

It was harder this time, though. At the garden, with the drum-beat-heartbeat sound that felt like Mommy's voice, all she had to do was *think* words. But now, it was stuff like thinking Petey was saying things to her—or feeling like somebody else was asking her a lot of silly questions. And every time she stopped for breath at all, she'd start wanting to answer a lot of things inside her head that there wasn't even anybody around to have asked.

'... are twenty-five. Six five's are thirty.'

The aching soreness in her body from the jolting journey through the forest ... the instant's agony when the sunlight seared her eye ... the nagging worry over the disturbed Bigheads ... all these were forgotten, or submerged, as the Lady exper-ienced for the first time in her life the frustration of her curiosity.

Every answer she could get from the Strange child came in opposites. Each question brought a pair of contradictory replies ... if it brought any reply at all. Half the time, at least, the Stranger was refusing reception entirely, and for some obscure reason, broadcasting great quantities of arithmetic—most of it quite accurate, but all of it irrelevant to the present situation.

Would they remain here? the Lady asked. Or would they return to their own House? Had they come to build a House here? Or was the Wing-like structure on the blackened ground truly a House instead?

The answers were many and also various.

They would not stay, the Stranger seemed to say, nor would they leave. The structure from which she had emerged was a House, but it was also Wings: Unfamiliar concept in a single symbol—Wings-House? *Both!*

Their Mother was nearby—inside—but—dead? No! Not *dead!*

How could the child possibly answer a sensible question sensibly if she started broadcasting sets of numbers every time anyone tried to communicate with her? *Very rude*, Daydanda thought, and very *stupid*. Kackot eagerly confirmed her opinion, and moved a step closer to the litter, as if preparing to commence the long march home.

The Lady had no time to reprimand him. At just that moment, the Strange child also broke into motion—perhaps also feeling that the interview was over,

'... Thirty. Seven five's are thirty-fi ...'

*One of them moved!*

Just a couple of steps, but Dee, panicked, forgot to keep talking and started a dash for the rocket; her head was full of questions again, and part of her mind was trying to answer them, without *her* wanting to at all, while another part decided *not* to go back inside, with a mixed-up kind of feeling, as if Petey didn't want her to.

And *that* was silly, because she could hear Petey crying now. He wanted her to come in, all right, or at least to come and get him. She couldn't tell for sure, the way he was yelling, whether he was scared and mad at being left alone—or just mad and *wanting* to get picked up. It sounded almost more like he thought he was being left out or something, and wanted to get in on the fun.

*If he thinks this is fun...!*

'We're lost, that's what we are,' she said out loud, as if she were answering real questions someone had asked, instead of crazy ones inside her own head. 'I don't *know* where we are. We came from Starhope. That's a different planet. A different *world*. I don't know where ... One five is five,' she remembered. 'Two sixes are seven. I mean two seven's are twenty-one ... I can't think *anything* right!'

It *really* didn't matter what she said; as long as she kept talking. If she answered the silly questions right out loud that was all right too, because they couldn't understand her anyhow. How would *they* know Earthish?

It was possible that the Stranger's sudden move to return to the Wings-House was simply a response to Kackot's gesture of readiness to depart. The Lady promised herself an opportunity to express her irritation with her consort—soon. For the moment, however, every bit of energy she could muster went into a plea-command-call-invitation to the Strange child to remain outside the shelter and continue to communicate.

The Stranger hesitated, paused—but even before that, she had begun, perversely, now that no questions were being asked, to release a whole new flood of semi-information.

*More* contradictions, of course!

These two, the Stranger children, were—something hard to comprehend—not-aware-of-where-they-were.

They were in need of help, but not helpless.

The elder of the two—the daughter who now stood wavering in her intentions, just beside the open barrier of the Wings-House —was obviously acting in the capacity of nurse. Yet her self-pattern of identity claimed reproductive status!

Certainly the girl's attitude towards her young sibling was an odd mixture of what one might expect to find in nurse or Mother. Possibly the relationship could be made clearer by contact with the babe himself. There was little enough in the way of general information to be expected from such a source, but here he might be helpful. Tentatively, with just a small part of her mind, Daydanda reached out to find the babe, still concen-trating on her effort to keep the older one from departing ...

'Food ... mama ... suck ... oh, look!'

The Lady promptly turned her full attention to the babe.

After the obstructionist tactics, and confused content of the Strange girl's mind, the little one's response to a brushing con-tact was doubly startling. Now that she was fully receptive to them, *thoughts* came crowding into the Mother's mind, *thoughts* unformed and infantile, but buoyantly eager and hope-ful.

'Love ... food ... good ... mama ... suck ... see ... see ...'

'Three seven's are twenty one!' Dee remembered triumphantly, and began feeling a lot better. They were all standing still again, for one thing; and her head felt clearer, too.

She moved a cautious step backwards, watching them as she went, and not having any trouble now remembering her multiplication.

'Four seven's are twenty-eight ...'

Just a few more steps. If she could just get back inside, and get the door closed, she wouldn't open it again for anything. She'd stay right there with Petey till some *people* came..?

'... MAMA ... SUCK ... see ... see ... good ... love ...'

It might have been one of her own latest brood, so easy and familiar was the contact. Just about the same age-level and emo-tional development, too. Daydanda was suddenly imperatively anxious to see the babe directly, to hold it in her own arms, to feel what sort of strange shape and texture could accommodate such warmly customary longings and perceptions.

'The babe!' she commanded. 'I wish to have the babe brought to me!' But the nurse to whom she had addressed the order hung back miserably.

'The babe, I said!' The Lady released all her pent-up irritation at the Stranger child, in one peremptory blast of anger at her own daughter. `Now!'

'Lady, I cannot ... the light ... forgive me, my Lady ...'

With her own eye still burning in its socket, Daydanda hastily blessed the nursing daughter, and excused her. Even standing on the fringes of the bright-lit area must be frightening to the wingless ones. But whom else could she send? The fliers were unaccustomed to handling babes...

Kackot...

He was good with babes, really. She felt better about sending him than she would have had she trusted the handling of the Stranger to a nurse. Kackot himself felt otherwise; but at the moment, the Lady's recognition of his discomfiture was no deterrent to her purpose; she had not forgotten his ill-advised move a little earlier.

The consort could not directly disobey. He went forward, doubtfully enough, and stood at the open entranceway, peering in.

'Oh, *look* I ... love ... look!'

The babe's welcoming thoughts were unmistakable; Kackot must have felt them as Daydanda did. Stranger or no, the near presence of a friendly and protective entity made it beg to be picked up, petted, fondled, loved—and hopefully, though not, the Mother thought, truly hungrily—perhaps also to be fed.

Meantime, however, there was the older child to reckon with. The babe was eager to come; the girl, Daydanda sensed, was determined not to allow it. Once more, the Mother tried to reach the Strange daughter with empathy and affection and reassur-ance. Once again, she met with only blankness and refusal. Then she sent a surge of loving invitation to the babe, and got back snuggling eagerness and warmth—and suddenly, from the elder one, a lessening of fear and anger.

Daydanda smiled inside herself; she thought she knew now how to penetrate the strange defences of the child.

## XI

DEE STOOD STILL and watched it happen. She saw the nervous fussy-bug—the one that had scared her when he moved before—go right over to the rocket and look inside. He passed right by her, close enough to touch; she was going to do something about it, until Petey started talking again.

He said, `Baby come to mama.'

At least, she *thought* he said it. Then she *almost* thought she heard a Mother say, `It's all right; don't worry. Baby wants to come to mama.'

'Mother's *dead*!' Deborah screamed at them all, at Petey and the bugs, without ever even opening her mouth. 'Five seven's are thirty-five,' she said hurriedly. She'd been forgetting to keep talking, that's what the trouble was. 'Six seven's are forty-two. Seven..?'

And still, she couldn't get the notion out of her head that it was her own mother's voice she'd heard. 'Seven seven's..?' she said desperately, and couldn't keep from turning around to look at the part of the rocket where Mommy was—would be—had been when—

The smooth gleaming metal nose looked just the same as ever, now it was cool again. There was no way of knowing anything had ever happened in there. *If anything had happened ...*

Deborah stared and stared, as if looking long enough and hard enough would let her see right through the triple hull into the burned-out inside: the wrecked control room, and the two char-red bodies that had been Father and Mother.

'... seven seven's is forty—forty seven? ... eight ... ?'

She floundered, forgetting, she was too small, and she didn't know what to do about anything, and she wanted her mother.

'It's all right. Stand still. Don't worry. Baby *wants* to come to mama.'

It wasn't her own mother's voice, though; that wasn't the way Mommy talked. If it was these bugs that were making her hear crazy things and putting silly questions in her head ... seven seven's ... seven seven's is ... just stand still ... don't worry ... everything will be all right ... seven seven's ... *I don't know* ... don't worry, all right, stand still, seven's is...

'*Forty-nine!*' she shrieked. The fussy-bug was all the way inside, and she'd been standing there like any dumb kid, hearing thoughts and voices that weren't real, and not knowing what to do.

'Forty-nine, fifty, fifty-one, fifty-two,' she shouted. She could have been just counting like that all along, instead of trying to remember something like seven times seven. *Get out of there, you awful hairy horrible old thing!* 'Fifty-three, fifty-four. You leave my brother alone!'

The fussy-bug came crawling out of the airlock, with Petey —soft little pink-and-wet Petey—clutched in its sticky arms.

'Fifty-five,' she tried to shout, but it came out like a creak instead. *You leave him alone!* her whole body screamed; but her throat was too dry and felt as if somebody had glued it together, and she couldn't make any words come out at all. She started forward to grab the baby.

'Come to Mama,' Petey said. 'Nice Mama. Like. Good.'

She was looking right at him all the time, and she *knew* he wasn't *really* talking. Just drooling the way he always did, and making happy-baby gurgling noises. He certainly didn't act scared—he was cuddling up to the hairy-bug just as if it was a *person*.

'Come to Mama,' the baby crooned inside her head; she should have made a grab for him right then, but somehow she wasn't *sure*...

The fussy-bug walked straight across the Bearing to the tree where the big box was, and handed Petey inside.

'Oo-oo-oooh, *Mama!*' Petey cried out with delight.

'Mommy's *dead!*' Deborah heard herself shouting, so she knew her voice was working again. 'Dead, she's dead, can't you understand that? Any dope could understand that much. She's *dead!*'

Nobody paid any attention to her. Petey was laughing out loud; and the sound got mixed up with some other kind of laughter in her head that was hard to not-listen to, because it felt *good*.

## XII

HOLDING THE BABE tenderly, Daydanda petted and patted and stroked it, and made pleased laughter from them both. Cautiously, she experimented with balancing the intensities of the two con-tacts, trying to gauge the older child's reactions to each variation. Reluctantly, as she observed the results, she came to the conclu-sion that the Strange daughter had indeed been consciously attempting to block communication.

It was unheard-of; therefore impossible—but impossibilities were commonplace today. The Mother's own presence at this scene was a flat violation of tradition and natural law.

Nevertheless:

The child had emerged from the Wings-House, in response to a Homecalling pattern.

Therefore, she was not an enemy.

Therefore she could not possibly feel either fear or hostility towards Daydanda's Household.

These things being true, what reason could she have for desiring to prevent communication?

Answer: Obviously, despite the logic of the foregoing, the Strange child was *afraid*.

Why? There was no danger to her in this contact.

'Stupid,' Kackot grumbled; 'just plain stupid. As much brains as a Bighead. Lady, it is getting late; we have a long journey home ...'

Daydanda let him rumble on. A child was likely to behave stupidly when frightened. She remembered, and sharply reminded her consort, of the time a young winged one of her own, a very bright boy normally—was it the fifth Family he was in? No, the sixth—had wandered into the Bigheads' corral, and been too petrified with fear to save himself, or even to call for help.

The boy had been afraid, she remembered now, that he would call the Bigheads' attention to himself, if he tried to communicate with anyone, so he closed off against the world. Of course, he knew in advance that the Bigheads were dangerous. If the Stranger here had somehow decided to be fearful *in advance*, perhaps her effort to block contact was motivated the same way ...

'The Homecalling,' Kackot reminded her; 'she answered a Homecalling.'

'She is a Stranger,' Daydanda pointed out. 'Perhaps she re-sponded to friendship without identifying it ... I don't know ...'

But she would find out. Once again she centred her attention on the babe, keeping only a loose contact with the older child.

Dee kept watching the box on the ground that had the big bug inside it. She couldn't see much of the bug, and she couldn't see Petey at all, after the other bug handed him in. But it wasn't just Petey she was watching for.

It was that big bug that was—talking to her. Well, anyhow, that was making it sound as if Petey talked to her and putting questions in her head and...

She didn't know how *it* did it, but she couldn't pretend any more that it wasn't really happening. Somebody was picking and poking at her inside her head, and she didn't know how they did it or why, or what to do about it. But she was sure by now that the big bug in the box was the one.

'Let's see now—seven seven's is forty-nine.' Just counting didn't seem to work so well. 'Seven eight's is ... I mean, *eight seven's is* ... I don't *know* I can't *remember* ... We came for Daddy and Mommy to make reports. That's what they always do. Daddy's a Survey Engineer and Mommy's a Geologist. They work for the Planetary Survey Commiss ... I mean they *did* ...'

It was none of their business. And they did know Earthish!

If they didn't, how could *they* talk to *her*?

'Seven seven's is forty-nine. Seven seven's is forty-nine. Seven seven's ...'

At the first exchange, the Lady had put it down to incompet-ence, but she could no longer entertain that excuse. The Strangers had no visible antennae, yet the ease of communication with the babe made it clear that they could receive as well as broadcast readily—if they wished.

The perception appeared to be associated with an organ Day-danda had at first mistaken for a mouth: small and flat, centred towards the bottom of the face, and enclosed by just two soft-look-ing mandibles.

In the babe, the mandibles were almost constantly in motion, and there was a steady flow of undirected, haphazard communi-cation, such as was normal for the little one's apparent level of development. With the older child, it was apparent that the mes-sages that came when the mandibles were moving were stron-ger, clearer, and more purposeful in meaning than the others. Unfortunately, the content of these messages was mostly nothing but arithmetic.

Yet even when the 'mouth' was at rest, Daydanda noticed that there was a continuous trickle of communication from the Strange daughter—a sort of reluctant release of thought, rather like the babe's in



that it was undirected and largely involuntarily, but with two striking differences: the eagerness of the babe to be heard, and the fact that the content of the older one's thoughts were not at all infantile, but sometimes startlingly mature.

Daydanda repeated her questions, this time watching the man-dibles as the answers came, and realized that the thin stream of involuntary communication went on even while mandible mes-sages were being sent—and that the 'opposite' answers she'd been receiving were the result of the differences between the purposeful broadcasts and the background flow.

The Strangers' Mother and her consort, it appeared, (gradually, the Lady learned to put the two answers together so that they made sense) had come here to survey the land (to look for a House-site, one would assume), and they had techniques as well for determining before excavation what lay far underground. However, they were now dead ... perhaps ... and ...

*More arithmetic!*

'What is it that you fear, child?' the Mother asked once more.

'I'm not afraid of those (unfamiliar symbol—something small and scuttling and unpleasant),' the daughter addressed her sibling, mandibling. 'Scared, scared, *scared*...' came the running edge of thought behind and around it.

'Don't be scared,' Petey told her.

'I'm not afraid of those old bugs!' she told him.

But it wasn't Petey, really; it was that big Mother-bug in the box. *Mother-bug*? What made her think that? That was what *Petey* thought....

Deborah was all mixed up. And she *was* scared; she was scared for Petey, and scared because she didn't know how they put things in her mind, and scared...

Scared all the time except when that good-feeling laughing was in her head; and then, even though she knew the—the *Mother-bug* must be doing that too, she *couldn't* be scared.

Deborah stood still, trembling with the realization of the awful-ness of destruction she would somehow have to visit upon this bunch of bugs, if anything bad happened to Petey. She didn't understand how she had come to let them get him out of the ship at all; and now that they had him, she didn't know what to do about it. The first large tear slid out of the corner of her eye and rolled down her cheek.

'Make food for sibling?' the Mother inquired, as she watched the clear liquid ooze out of the openings she had at first thought to be twin eyes.

The Strange daughter was apparently receiving all communication as if from the babe, for her answer was addressed to him: a reassurance, a promise, 'I will prepare (unfamiliar symbol) inside the ...' Another unfamiliar symbol there—ship—but with it came an image of an interior room of Strange appearance; and Day-danda safely guessed the symbol .to refer to the Wings-House. The first symbol—*bottle*, she found now, in the babe's mind—was a great white cylinder, warm and moist, and connected with the sucking concept ... but no time to classify it further, because the older child was mandibling another message, this time directly to the Mother.

'Return the babe to me, the babe is hungry. I must prepare his food.'

'You have food for the sibling now,' Daydanda pointed out patently. 'Come here to the litter and feed him.'

'Sure there's milk,' Dee said. 'There's lots of milk, Petey. I'll give you a bottle soon as we get back inside,' she promised, and warned the big bug hopefully: 'That baby's hungry; he's awful hungry—you wait and see. He'll start yelling in a minute, and then you'll see. You better give him back to me right now, before he starts yelling.'

'There is much food inside the ship,' the child told the babe, but all the while a background-message trickled out: 'There isn't; there really isn't. It won't last much longer.' And even as the two conflicting thoughts came clear in her own mind, Daydanda saw a large drop of the precious fluid roll off the girl's

face and be lost forever in the ground.

'Come quickly!' she commanded. *'Now!'* Come to the Mother, and give food to the babe. Quick!' But the doltish child simply stood there rooted in her fears.

Maybe if she just walked right over and lifted him out of the big box, they wouldn't even try to stop her ... but there were too many of them, and she didn't dare get much further away from the rocket.

'You better give him back to me,' she cried out hopelessly.

It took a while to sort out the sense from the nonsense. Of course, the child believed the babe to be hungry because the message about feeding came to her through him. Actually, the little one was warm and happy and content, with no more than normal infantile fantasies of nourishment in his mind. His belly was still half-full from earlier feeding.

But half-full meant also half-empty. If the older child was now producing food, and could not continue to do so much longer—as seemed clear from the contradictory content of her messages—the babe should have it now, while it was available. The daughter's reluctance to provide him with it seemed somehow connected with the *bottle* symbol. It was necessary to go into the Wings-House to get the *bottle*...

Daydanda searched the babe's mind once again. *Bottle* was food ... ? No ... *a mechanism* of some sort for feeding. Perhaps the flat mandibles were even weaker than they looked; perhaps some artificial aid in nourishment was needed ...

And that thought brought with an equally startling notion in explanation of the Wings-House ... a Strange race of people might possibly need artificial Wings to carry out the nuptial flight ...

That was beside the point from now. Think about it later. Meantime ... she had to reject the idea of artificial aid in feeding; the babe's repeated sucking image was too clear and too familiar. He nursed as her own babes did; she was certain of it.

Then she recalled the Strange daughter's earlier crafty hope of finding some way to return to the Wings-House with the babe, and emerge no more. Add to that the child's threat that the babe, if not immediately returned to her, would start *yelling*—would attempt to block communication as the girl herself did. It all seemed to mean that *bottle* was not a necessity of feeding at all, but some pleasurable artifact inside the *ship*, somehow associated with the feeding process, with which the daughter was trying to entice the babe.

'You wish to feed?' Daydanda asked the little one, and made a picture in his mind's eye of the girl's face with liquid droplets of nourishment falling unused to the ground.

'Not food,' came the clear response. 'Not food. *Sad.*' Then there was an image once again of the tubular white container, but this time she realized the colour of it came from a cloudy fluid inside ... *milk*. 'Milk-food, Tears-crying-sad.'

*Tears-crying* was for the face-liquid. It was useless, or rather useful only as emotional expression. It was a waste product ... (and she had been right in the first guess about twin eyes!) ... and then the further realization that the great size she had at first attributed to the *bottle* was relative only to the babe. The thing was a reasonably-sized, sensibly-shaped storage container for the nutrient fluid the babe and child called *milk*; and it was further-more provided with a mechanism at one end designed to be sucked upon.

Out of the welter of freshly-evaluated information, one fact emerged to give the Lady an unanticipated hope.

There was food—*stored, portable* food inside the winged structure. The Strangers were *not biologically tied* to the Wings; there was no need to return the babe in order to satisfy its hunger. Babe and Strange daughter bath could, if they would, return to Daydanda's House, there to communicate at leisure.

It remained only to convince the daughter ... and Daydanda had not forgotten that the child was susceptible to the Homecall-ing and to laughter both.

### XIII

DEBORAH WALKED BEHIND the litter where Petey rode in state with ... with *the Mother* ... and all around her walked a retinue of bugs; dozens of them. They walked on four front legs, heads carried down and facing backwards, eyes looking forward. The tallest of them was just about her own height when it stood up straight. Walking this way, none of them came above her waist; they weren't so awful if you didn't have to look at their faces.

Certainly they were smart—so smart it scared her some ... but not as much as it would have scared her to keep on staying in the rocket. She was just beginning to realize that.

Dee still didn't know how they made her think things inside her head; or how they made Petey seem to talk to her; or how they knew what she was thinking half the time, even if she didn't say a word. She wasn't sure, either, what had made her decide to do what the *Mother* wanted, and packed up food to take along back to their house. She didn't even know what kind of a house it was, or where it was. But she was pretty sure she'd rather go along with them than just keep waiting in the rocket alone with Petey.

Wherever they were going, it was a long walk. Dee was tired, and the knapsack on her back was heavy. They'd started out right after lunch time, and now the dimness in the forest was turning darker, so it must be evening. It was hot, too. She hoped the milk she'd mixed would keep overnight; but she had crackers and fruit, too, in case it didn't. It wasn't the food that made the knapsack so heavy, though; it was the oxy torch she'd slipped into the bottom, underneath the clean diapers.

These bugs were smart, but they didn't know *everything*, she thought with satisfaction. They never tried to stop her from tak-ing along the torch.

It was hot and damp, and the torch in the knapsack made a knobby hard spot bouncing against her back. But the bugs never stopped to rest; and Dee walked on in their midst, remembering that she was a Space Girl, so she had to be brave and strong.

Then suddenly, right ahead, instead of more trees, there was a bare round hill of orange clay. Only when you looked closer, it wasn't just a hill, because it had an opening in it, like the mouth of a cave, because the edges of the arch were smooth. It was even on both sides, and perfectly round on top; it had little bits of rock or wood set in cement around the edges to make it keep its shape...

She couldn't tell what was inside. It was dark in there `Too *dark*. Deborah paused inside the entranceway, oppressed by shad-ows, aghast at far dim corridors. One of the bugs tried to take her hand to lead her forward. The touch was sticky. She shuddered back, and stood stock-still in the middle of the arch.

'*I hate you!*' she yelled at all of them.

'Not hate,' said Petey, laughing. 'Fear.'

'I'm not scared of anything,' she told him; 'you're the one who's scared, not me. Petey's afraid of the dark,' she said to the big bug. 'You give that baby back to me right now. That's not your baby. He's *my* brother, and I want him back.'

The rocket, lying helpless on its side in the bare black clearing, seemed very safe and very far away. Dee didn't understand how she could have thought—even for a little while—that this place would be better. Everything back there was safety: even the burned-out memory of the control room was sealed off behind a *safety* door. Everything here was strange and dark, and no doors to close on the shadows—just open arches leading to darker stretches beyond ...

"Fraid of a *door!*" said Petey.

'I'm not afraid of any old door.' Deborah's voice was hoarse from pushing past the choke spot in her throat that was holding back the tears. 'You give me back my brother, that's all; we're not going into your house. He is, too, afraid of the dark; and he hates you too!' *A Space Girl is brave*, she thought, and then she said it out loud, and walked right over to the shadowy outline of the big bug's box, and reached in and grabbed for Petey.

Only he didn't want to come. He yelled and wriggled away; held on tight to the Mother-bug, and

kicked at Dee.

She didn't know what to do about it, till she heard that good laughing in her head again. Petey stopped yelling, and Dee stopped pulling at him. She realized that she was very tired, and the laughing felt like home, like her own mother, like food and a warm room, and a bed with clean sheets—and maybe even a fuzzy doll tucked in next to her as if she were practically a baby again herself.

She was tired, and she didn't feel brave any more. She didn't want to go inside, but she didn't want to fight any more, either—especially if Petey was going to be against her, too. She sat down on the ground under the arch to figure out what to do.

'Light?' a voice like Mother's asked gently inside her head. 'You want a light inside?'

'I've got a light,' Dee said, before she stopped to think. 'I've got a light right here.'

She dragged the knapsack around in front of her and dug down into it. She was going to have to go in after all; there wasn't anything else to do. She got the torch out, and turned it on low, so it wouldn't get used up too fast. Then she started laughing, because this time it was the bugs who were scared. They all started run-ning around like crazy, every which way, and half of them ran clear away, inside.

The child was certainly resourceful, Daydanda thought ruefully, as she issued rapid commands and reassurances, restoring order out of the sudden panic that the light had caused among the sensitive unpigmented wingless ones.

*No daughter of mine*, she thought angrily, with admiration, *no daughter of mine would even dare to act this way!*

'So you begin to see, my dear Lady ...' Kackot was obviously irritated and *not* impressed ... 'They have no place in the House-hold. Useless parasites ... Why not admit ...?'

'*Quiet!*'

Useless parasites? No! *Dangerous* they might well be; *useless* only if you counted the acquisition of new knowledge as of no use. The child would certainly have to be watched closely. This last trick with the light was really quite insupportable behaviour: rudeness beyond belief or toleration. Yet the bravado of the Stranger's attitude was not too hard to understand. Still unequipped for Motherhood, she had already acquired the in-stincts for it; she was doing, in each case, her inadequate best to protect both sibling and self from any possible dangers. And each new display of unexpected—even uncomfortable—ingenuity left Daydanda more determined than before to make both Strangers a part of her Household.

There was much to be learned. And...

Daydanda was many things :

As a Mother, she felt a simple warm solitude for two un-mothered creatures.

As the administrative Lady of her Household, it was her duty first to make certain that the Strangers were so established that they could do no harm; and then to learn as much as could be learned from their Strange origins and ways of life.

As a person—a person who had flown, long ago, above the treetops—a person who had only a short time ago walked through the enlarged archway in defiance of all precedent and tradition—a person who had just this day dared the impossible, and ventured forth from her own House to make this trip—Daydanda chuck-led to herself, and wished she knew some way to make the Stranger understand the quite inexplicable affection that she felt.

The child said the babe feared darkness; this was manifestly untrue. The Mother still held the soft infant in her arms, and she *knew* there was no fear inside that body. As for the older one—it was not lack of light that *she* feared, either. Yet if the presence of accustomed light could comfort her—why, she should have her light!

'Come, child,' Daydanda coaxed the girl gently through the mind of the babe. 'Inside, there is a place to rest. You have done much, Strange daughter, and you have clone well; but you are tired now. Inside, there is safety and sleep for the babe and for you. Come with us, and carry your light if you will. But it is time now to sleep; tomorrow we will plan.'

At the Lady's command, the litter-bearers picked up her stretcher once more, and the lurching forward motion recommenced. The child on the ground stood up slowly, holding her light high, and followed after them. All down the dim corridors, Daydanda's warning went ahead, to spare those whom the little light might hurt from the shock of exposure.

#### XIV

DEBORAH LAY ON her back on a thick mat on the floor. It had looked uncomfortable, but now that she was stretched out on it, it felt fine. She had no blanket, and no sheets, and she'd forgotten to bring along pyjamas. At first she tried sleeping in all her clothes, but then she decided they were only bugs after all, and they didn't wear anything; so she took off her overalls and shirt. The room was warm, anyhow—almost too warm.

She got up and went across the room to the other mat, where Petey was, and changed his diaper and took off the rest of his clothes, too. She didn't know what to do with the dirty things; there was no soil-remover here. Finally, she folded them up neatly—all except the dirty diaper, which she wadded up and threw in a far corner. The rest of the things they'd have to wear again tomorrow, dirty or not.

Then she propped up Petey's almost empty bottle, and went back to her own mat, lay down again, and turned the oxy torch as low as she could, without letting it go out altogether. She could barely see Petey across the room, still sucking on the nipple, though he was just about asleep.

They hadn't really been captured, she told herself. Nobody tried to hurt them at all. It was more like being *rescued*. She didn't know what would happen tomorrow, except one thing—and that was that she would have to go back to the rocket to get some clothes at least. It was a long walk, though. Right now, she felt warm and safe and sleepy.

These bugs were smart, but there were plenty of things they didn't know at all ...

She was pretty sure they wouldn't understand anything about the safety door, for instance. Unless...

Maybe they could find out about it in her mind. But even if they did, they wouldn't *understand* ...

And they couldn't even find out anything, if she just didn't *think* about it any more....

That was the best way. *I'll just forget all about it*, she decided.

She felt very brave. The Space Girl Troup Leader on Starhope would be proud of her now, she thought, as she reached out and turned the light all the way off before she fell asleep.

Petey was crying again. 'Shut up,' Dee said crossly; 'why don't you shut up a minute?'

Her eyes felt glued together. She didn't want to wake up. She was warm and comfortable and still very sleepy; and now that it was all over, why didn't Mommy come, and... ?

She opened one eye slowly, and couldn't see anything. It was pitch dark in the room; no lights or windows...

She reached out for the oxy torch, her hand scraping across the smooth clay floor, and it wasn't there. The bugs had taken it away. They had come in while she was sleeping and taken it ...

Her hand found the torch, fumbled for the switch, and she had to close her eyes against the sudden bright flare of light. Petey, startled, stopped crying for a minute, then started in again just twice as loud.

The knapsack was in the corner, back of the light, and there was a bottle all ready for him inside it, but Dee still didn't want to get up. If she got up, it would be admitting once and for all that this was real, and the other part had been a dream—the part where she'd been waking up in a real bed, with Mommy in the next room ready to come and take care of them and give them breakfast.

It still felt that way a little bit, as long as she lay still with her eyes closed. *Mother in the next room ...* Dee didn't want the feeling to stop, but she couldn't help it if the food was in this room. *Mother can't feed me ...* That was a silly thing to think. She was a big girl; nobody had to *feed* her...

Dee got up and got the bottle for Petey, and some fruit and crackers for herself. She was wide awake now and she knew she wasn't dreaming; but when she was all done eating, she didn't know what to do. There was still some food left, but she wasn't really hungry. She knew she might need it later on, so she just sat around listening to Petey making sucking noises on his bottle, and wondering what was going to

happen next.

## XV

THE MORNING PATTERN of the Household was a familiar and punctilious ritual: a litany of order and affirmation. Each member of each Family knew his role and played it with conditioned ease; the sum of the parts, produced a choreography of timing and motion, such as had delighted the Mother on that day when she watched her mason sons construct the new arch in her double chamber.

Daydanda's great body rested now, as then, on the couch of mats from which she had once thought she would never rise again; but her perceptions spread out of the boundaries of her Household, and her commands and reprimands were heard wherever her children prepared for the day's labour.

Some of the pattern was set and unvarying: the nurses to care for the babes, and the babes to the gardens to feed; the growing sons and daughters to their classrooms, workrooms, and the training gardens; those whose wings are sprouting to instruction in the mysteries of flight and reproduction.

The winged ones whose nuptial flight time has not come as yet wait in their quarters for assignments to scouting positions for the day; the builders breakfast largely to prepare cement, and gather up clay and chips for work in some new structure of the House; the growers, gardeners, and harvesters spread out across the forest, clearing the fallen leaves and branches, sporing the fungi, damming or redirecting a flow of water to some more useful purpose, bringing back new stores of leaf and wood and brush to fill the storage vaults beneath the House.

It was never precisely the same. There was always some minor variation in the combination of elements: a boundary dispute today on this border, instead of the other; a new room to add to the nursery quarters, or an arch to repair in the vaults; a garden to replant into more fertile soil. And on this particular morning, two matters of special import claimed the Lady's attention.

The most urgent of these was the reconditioning of the disturbed Bigheads. Two of the eldest winged daughters—both almost ready for nuptial departures from the Household—had been assigned to work with the nurses who ordinarily tended to the needs of the corral. Under different circumstances, Daydanda would have considered the process worthy of her own direct supervision. Now, however, she contented herself with listening in semi-continuously on the work being done. The programme was proceeding slowly—too slowly—but as long as some progress was being made, she refrained from interfering, and concentrated her own efforts on a matter of far greater personal interest: the Strangers in the House.

Or, rather, the Strange daughter. The babe was no great puzzle; his wants were familiar, and easy to understand. Food and love he needed. The latter was easy; the former they would simply have to find some way to provide ...

She pushed aside the train of thought that led to making these new arrivals permanent members of the Household. No telling how much longer their supply of their own foods would last; nor whether it would be desirable to keep them in the House. For the time being, Daydanda could indulge her curiosity, and concentrate on the unique components of the Strange daughter's personality.

The child was a conglomeration of contradictions such as the Mother would not previously have believed possible in a sane individual—in one who was capable of performing even the most routine of conditioned tasks, let alone initiating such original and independent actions as those of the Stranger.

And yet, the confusions that existed in the child's thought patterns were so many, and so vital, it was a wonder she could even operate her own body without having to debate each breath or motion in her neurones first.

*Fear!* The child was full of fear. And something else for which there was no proper name at all: *I should-I shouldn't.*

Impossible confusion, resulting even more impossibly in better--than--adequate responses!

*Hunger ... Mother ... hunger ... Mother?...*

The drifting thoughts merged with the Lady's reflections, and for a moment she was not certain of the source. Too clearly-formed in pattern to be the babe ... and then she realized it was the older one, just waking from sleep, and still stripped of defences.

'I cannot feed you, child,' she answered the Strange daughter's unthinking plea. 'Not yet. You brought food with you from your ... *ship*. Eat now, and feed the babe; then we will make plans for tomorrow.'

But in her own mind, Daydanda knew, there was no question of what plans to make. If there were any way to do so, she meant to have the Strangers stay within her House. She meant to have the secrets of the Strange Wings-House explored and uncovered and to learn the Strange customs and knowledge. It remained only to determine whether it was possible to feed them and care for them adequately within the Household ... and to convince the strange daughter to stay.

The Mother opened her mind once more to her sons and daughters, at their tasks, and found that all was well throughout the Families. Then she waited patiently till the Strangers were done feeding.

Petey was sleeping. All he ever did was drink milk and go to sleep and yell and act silly. Dee got up and walked around the room, but there was nothing to see and nothing to do.

She didn't even remember which way they had come to get to this room last night, and she didn't know whether they'd let her go out if she wanted to. There was no door closing the room off from the corridor—just another open archway. But outside there was only dimness and darkness.

Abruptly, she picked up the torch and walked to the doorway, flared brilliance out into the hall, and peered up and down. After that she felt better, at least they weren't being *guarded*. She had seen half a dozen other open arches along the corridor, but not even a single bug anywhere.

When Petey woke up, she decided they'd just start walking around until they found some way to get out. She'd have to wait for him to get up, though, because she couldn't carry the lighted torch and the baby both; and even if she didn't need it to see with, she had to have the torch turned up real bright, because that's what they were afraid of. They wouldn't bother her ...

*They're not all scared of the light, she thought. Just the white-coloured ones are.* She wondered how she knew that, and then forgot about it, because she was thinking: *If we did get out of here, I don't know how we could get back to the rocket.*

It was a long way, and she'd have to carry Petey most of the time; and she didn't know *which way* it was, and...

*I'm going to go find the Mother-bug!* she decided. For just an instant after that she hesitated, wondering about leaving Petey, but somehow she felt it was all right. He was asleep, and she figured if he woke up and started yelling, she could hear him; any place in here she'd be able to hear him because there weren't any doors to close in between.

She picked up the torch again, and turned it down low, so there was just enough light to see her way. *Don't scare them, she thought. They're friends.* But it was comforting to know, anyhow, that she *could* scare them just by turning it up. The white ones were the only ones who couldn't *stand* it, but none of them were used to bright light.

She wondered again how she knew that, and tried to remember something from last night that would have let her know it, but that time she was too busy trying to figure out which corridors and archways would take her to the Mother-bug's room.

## XVI

A TREMENDOUS EXCITEMENT was building up inside Daydanda's vast and feeble bulk, while she guided the Strange child through the labyrinth of the House from the visitor's chamber near the outer walls to her own central domain.

Yesterday, for the first time in many years of Motherhood, she had experienced once more—with increasing ease and pleasure through the day—the thousand subtly different sensations and perceptions of direct vision. Through all the years between, she had known the *look* of things outside her chamber—and of beings outside her own Families—only through the distortions and dilutions of the

minds of her sons and daughters, travelling abroad on missions of her choosing, and reporting as faithfully as they could, all that they saw and touched and felt for her appraisal.

But no image filtered through another's brain emerges quite the same as when it entered ... and no two beings, not even those as close as Mother and daughter, can ever see quite the same image of an object. Certainly, Daydanda had perceived both more and less of the winged object in the clearing when she viewed it with her own eye, than when she had watched it through the mind of her own scouting son.

And now she was to have the Strange child here before her eyes again, to watch and study! The thought was so far removed from precedent and past experience, it would not have occurred to her at all to have the girl come to her chamber. But when she tried to make the child aware of her desire to converse, to exchange information, the prompt and positive response had come clearly: *I want to see the Mother. I want to try and talk to her.*

And behind the response was a pattern Daydanda dimly perceived, in which two-way communication was *commonly* associated with visual sensation. The girl seemed to *assume* that an exchange of information would occur only where an exchange of visimages was also possible!

## DAYDANDA

And now the child was standing in the entrance to the new chamber, and the background patter of her mind was a complaint about the difficulty of seeing clearly.

'You may have more light, child, if you wish to see me more clearly,' the Mother assured her. 'I told you before, it is only the ones unpigmented who are harmed by the brightness, and only the wingless who fear it at all.'

An instant later, she realized she had been boasting. The flaring-up of the light caused her no agony, such as she had experienced the day before; but it was quite sufficient to cause her to turn her face abruptly towards the stranger, so as to shield her eye.

And then there was a far worse pain than anything her eye could feel. The Mother's vanity was almost as carefully fed, and quite as much enlarged, as her great abdomen; certainly it was far more vulnerable to attack.

Nobody had ever thought her anything but beautiful before. The Stranger child, at the first clear look, thought she was...

Ugly and awful and frightening and fat!

It was the clearest, sharpest message she had had at any time from the Strange daughter ... that she was hideous!

Shame and disappointment both receded before a sudden access of fury.

Reflexively, Daydanda shot out a spanking thought; and in the very next instant, regretted it.

'I am sorry, child. I should not have punished you for what you could not help thinking, but ... I am not used to such thoughts.'

'You did that?' the child demanded, and angrily: 'You meant to do it?'

'I did not plan to do it; but it was done with volition, yes.'

The Stranger, Daydanda felt, had no clear concept in her mind to understand that distinction. A thing was done she'd either—on purpose was the child's symbol, or else involuntarily. Nothing in between.

Well, it was a common enough childish confusion, but not one the Mother would have expected in this uncommon child.

'It was a punishment,' she tried to explain, 'which I had no right to administer. You are my guest, and not my daughter. I offer apology.'

'I am laughing,' came a mandible message; but the background was a quick shiver of fear. Daydanda tried to soothe the fright away, and the laughing stopped, to be replaced by a sturdy mandibled denial of the fear that was, truthfully, already considerably lessened. And then an apology! 'I am sorry,' the child said. 'It was most improper of me to laugh.'



And the background message was no different, but only more specific: 'It was very rude of me to be frightened at the idea of being your daughter.'

This time Daydanda repressed her reflexive irritation. 'Laugh when you like, child,' she said; 'perhaps it is a good way to release your fear.'

Promptly, she was rewarded by a clear, unmandibled, but strong reply: 'You're good; I like you. I don't care what you look like.'

The woman's vanity quivered, but her curiosity triumphed. The child, at long last, was receptive to communication. Daydanda withdrew from contact entirely, to calm her wounded feelings, and to formulate carefully the question now uppermost in her mind: how to gain more knowledge of the Wings-House in which the Strangers had arrived.

## DEBORAH

Deborah stood in the open archway between the two big rooms, and peered intently at the great bulk of the Mother—bug on the couch of mats against the far wall. Then she decided it was all right now to turn the torch up high, so she could see something more than her own feet ahead of her.

The shadows jumped back, and the gently heaving mass on the cot sprang suddenly into full view. Deborah stood still, and gawped at ugliness beyond belief.

The big bug's enormous belly was a mound of grey-white creases and folds and bulges under the sharp light, reflecting pin-points of brightness from oily drops of moisture that stood out all over the dead-looking mass.

And up above the incredible belly, a cone-shaped bulbous lump of the same whitish grey that must have been a face despite its eyeless lack of any expression, tapered into six full thick lips just like the ones of the baby bugs in the fungus garden.

It was a good thing, Dee thought, that she hadn't seen the Mother-bug this close the day before. She never could have made herself believe that anything that looked ... that looked like that ... could possibly be friendly.

She tried now to believe it was true, tried to remember that good-feeling laughter that she was certain had come from the big bug; but the inside of her head had begun to prickle, just as if somebody was sandpapering in back of her eyes. She shook her head, rubbed at her stinging eyes, sniffled, and the feeling went away as suddenly as it had come.

Then she got mad. 'You did that on purpose!' she gasped. And then a moment later, she had a crazy thought come through her head that the Mother-bug wanted her to feel better, like sometimes Mom ... the way a mother, maybe, would feel bad after spanked a child. The idea of being a big fat bug's little girl was too silly, and she couldn't help laughing. Then she felt the same kind of panting inside her head that she remembered from last night, and she knew what Mother-bug thought.

'I am not scared,' she said emphatically. 'What do you think I do? Laugh when I get scared?' Then she thought it over and decided it wasn't very nice of her to laugh at an idea like that—about being the Mother-bug's child—if the big bug really could read her mind, so she apologized.

'I'm sorry,' she said. 'I guess it wasn't very nice of me to laugh at you.' And she had a feeling as if the Mother-bug knew she had apologized, and was telling her it was all right.

The big old bug was ugly, all right, Dee thought, but so were a lot of people she'd seen ... and the bug was really pretty nice. Good, sort of, the way a mother ought to be ...

Just the same, Dee realized, she didn't want to stay here.

She didn't want to stay in the rocket either, though. I don't know which is worse, she thought mournfully; then she decided this was worse—even though in a lot of ways it was better—just because she didn't know whether she could get out if she wanted to.

She had to find that out first.  
She had to get back to the rocket. Once she was safe inside again, with Petey, she could make up her mind.

## XVII

'I HAVE TO go back to the rocket,' Dee said out loud. 'I have to go and get us some clothes, anyhow, if we're going to stay here.'

Then she thought she felt cold, but there was a question-y feel-ing in her mind; she decided the Mother-bug must be *asking* her if she was cold, and finally realized that that was because she had said they needed clothes.

'No, I'm not cold,' she said. 'We have to have some clothes, that's all. The ones we wore yesterday are dirty. Unless..? Unless they had a soil-remover. Then she'd have to think of some other reason to go back to the rocket. 'Unless you have some old clothes around,' she finished up craftily. But it sounded silly, and her voice sounded too loud anyhow, every time she said anything, as if she were talking to herself ... and how did she know she wasn't, anyhow? How did she know she wasn't making it all up?

The feeling she got was so exactly like the sound of her own mother's little impatient sigh when Dee was being stubborn, that it was suddenly impossible to go on doubting at all.

When the Mother-bug laughed, it tickled in her mind; when the Mother was angry it prickled. When the Mother called to her, it was a feeling that came creeping; when she didn't want to hear, it came seeping anyhow.

Trickle-prickle; creep-seep. I spy. I speard you. It was like seeing and hearing both, if you let it be, or just like knowing what you didn't know a minute before. It could be without the seeing part, as when she thought she heard Petey's voice; or it could be without hearing, just a picture full of meaning, without any words. You didn't *really* see or hear; you really just *found out*.

And if you let yourself know the difference, you could tell what was coming from the Mother-bug ... such as thinking she was cold for a minute a little while ago. You could tell, all right, if you wanted to...

It was a lot smarter to make sure you knew the differences to watch for when the Mother-bug was putting something in your head, so you wouldn't get mixed up and start thinking you wanted something yourself, when it was really what *she* wanted. Or like thinking *Petey* wanted her to open the door in the rocket, where it was really the Mother-bug...

No it wasn't either ... Petey *did* want her too, because he heard the Mother-bug calling them from outside, before Dee heard it ... or he understood better what it was, or ... *she's telling me all this; I'm not thinking it for myself!* Up to that part about Petey being the one who wanted her to open the door, she *had* been thinking for herself; after that, it was the bug. It was getting easier, now, to tell the difference.

'How do you know Earthish?' she asked out loud, but there wasn't any kind of answer except the question-y feeling again. 'I mean the language we use. I mean how do you know the words to put in my head...?' She stopped talking because her head was hurting; then she realized the Mother-bug was trying to explain, only it was too complicated for her to understand.

Part of it was that the bugs *didn't* know Earthish, though. She understood that much well enough, and lost the hope she'd had for just an instant that other *people* were here already. She didn't try to understand the rest. 'How do you make Petey put things in my head?' she asked instead.

It felt as if the Mother was smiling. She didn't *make Petey say things* at all. He was always saying things, only mostly Dee didn't know how to listen—except, somehow, when the Mother-bug was around, it was easier...

Her head was starting to hurt again, so she stopped asking questions about that. 'Listen,' she said, 'I still have to go back to the rocket.'

She didn't know whether she wanted to come hack here or stay there. No—that was true, all right,

that she didn't know; but right now it was the Mother-bug *asking* her what she wanted to do.

'I don't know,' she said, not trying to pretend anything, because the Mother-bug would have spy-heard that part already. 'Only I have to get back there anyhow; so I'll wait till I get there to decide.'

She'd leave Petey behind, and return at least for a visit?

'No!' she said. That was one thing at least she was sure about. Even if she was sure she was coming back, she couldn't leave Petey all alone here with these bugs. Mommy would ... *anybody* would get mad at a kid for doing a thing like that!

'No!' she said again. 'I've got to go, and Petey has to go with me; that's all there is to it.' She thought she sounded very firm and grown-up, until she felt the Mother smiling again in the way that made her remember her ... somebody she used to know.

## XVIII

THE MORE SHE learned, the less she seemed to know. The Strange child, though still inexplicably frightened, was at last being com-municative and co-operative. Yet each new piece of information acquired during the morning's interview had only served to make the puzzle of the Strangers more complex or more abstruse.

How and why they had come here ... even *whence* they had come ... their habits, customs, biology, psychology ... the nature of the *ship* in which they lived, and flew ... the very fact of the existence of the older child's continuing fear and doubt ... and Strangest of all, perhaps, the by-now irrefutable fact that *neither of the children knew whether their Mother was alive, inside the Ship, or had departed ...*

None of these matters were any easier to comprehend now than they had been the day before; and most of them were more confusing.

However, there was now at least some hope of solving some parts of the puzzle ... two parts, in any case. The Strange daughter had agreed, after only slight hesitation, to allow a flying son to come inside the *ship* with her, and to explain to the Mother, watching through her son's eyes, as much of what was to be found there as she could. The child apparently had felt that by permitting the exploratory visit, she was securing the right of the babe to accompany her on the trip ... a right she would in any case have had for the asking. And there was some further thought in the girl's mind of perhaps not returning ... but Daydanda was not seriously concerned about it. She had re-frained carefully from proffering any insistent hospitality, since the daughter's fear of remaining alone with her sibling seemed even greater than that of remaining with the Household, pro-vided only she did not feel herself to be *a captive* in the House.

It still remained to be seen, of course, whether it would be possible to provide for the two Strangers within the biological economy of the Families. That, however, was the other part of the puzzle that was already on the road to a solution. The daugh-ter had most fortuitously, before leaving the Lady's chamber, ex-pressed an urgent need to perform some biological functions for which, apparently, a waste receptacle of some sort was required. Daydanda had issued rapid orders to one of the more ingenious of the mason sons, to manufacture as best he could a receptacle conforming to the image she found in the child's mind. Then she had seized the opportunity to ask if she might have a nursing daughter take some samples of the *milk* and other food that had come with them from the *ship*, and of such other bodily by-products as she had already observed the Strangers to produce; the *tears* that came from the eyes in the release of grief, and the general bodily exudation for which the child's symbol was *sweat*, but whose purpose or function she seemed not to understand herself.

Once again, as she had had occasion to do many times before, the Lady regretted the maternal compulsiveness of her own nature that had stood in the way of producing a Scientist within the Household. As matters now stood, the samplings she had secured from the Strange children would have to be flown two full days' journey away, to the Encyclopaedic Seat, for analysis. If she had been willing—just once in all these years—to inhibit the breeding of a full Family in order to devote the necessary nutrient and emotional concentration to the creation of a pair of Scientists, she would be able to

have the answer to the present problem in hours instead of days, and without having to forgo the services of two of her best fliers for the duration of the trip there and back. Then, if it appeared necessary to utilize the more varied facilities of the Seat, she could submit her samples with the security of knowing that her own representative there would keep watch over her interests; and that everything learned about the Strange samples would be transmitted instantly and fully from the brother at the Seat to the twin in the Household. Daydanda knew only too well how often in the past the Seat had seen fit to retain information for its own use, when the products for analysis came from an unrepresented House ...

No use in worrying now, either about what might be, or about what had not been done. *One* matter, at least, would be resolved before the day was done ... the baffling question of what lay inside that double-arched opening in the wall of the Wings-House ... and along with it, the answer, perhaps, to the puzzle of the Strange children's Mother.

## XIX

THIS TIME THEY rode in the litter; and the trip that had taken a long afternoon the day before was accomplished in a short hour of trotting, bouncing progress. Yesterday, the pace had been slowed as much by the litter-bearers' efforts to spare their Lady any unnecessary jostling, as by the shortness of Dee's leg; today Daydanda's labouring sons were inhibited by no such considerations.

At the edge of the clearing they paused, their eyes averted from the shiny hull.

Dee laughed out loud, and ran out into the sunlight. It felt good. She knew she was showing off, but it made her feel better just to stand there and look straight *up*, because she knew there wasn't one of them that would dare to do it.

'Sissies!' she yelled out, there was no answer ... not even a scolding-feeling from the Mother-bug.

She went back to the litter, got Petey out, and parked him on the muddy ground near the airlock, wondering if it was safe to leave him out there while she went inside. They wouldn't do anything like grabbing him and running off, she decided. The Mother-bug wanted to know about the rocket too much; and the Mother-bug wanted *her* to come back, too—not just Petey.

Still, she didn't make any move to go inside. It was good standing there in the sun, even without the show-off part of it. She watched Petey grab big chunks of yellow mud and plaster himself with them, and felt the sun soak into her shoulders and warm the top of her head.

This place wouldn't be so bad, she thought, if it wasn't for the trees everyplace, cutting out the sun. Inside the forest, it was always a little bit drippy and damp, and the light was always dimmed. But when you got out into it, the sun here was a good one—better than on Starhope. It felt like the sun used to feel, she thought she remembered, when she was almost as little as Petey, before they went away from Earth.

She wished she could remember more about Earth. Mommy always told her stories about it, but Morn ...

*Don't think about that!*

She wished she could remember more about Earth. It was green there, Green like in the forests here, where the treetops lent their colour to everything? That wasn't what Morn ... what the stories meant, she was sure. For just an instant, there was a picture in her mind; and because it came so suddenly, she suspected at first that the Mother-bug put it there, but it didn't *feel* that way. Then she wasn't sure whether it was something she remembered, from when she was very little, or whether it was truly a *picture*—one she'd seen at school, or on the T-Z. But she was sure that that was how Earth was supposed to look, wherever she was remembering it from.

The trees there were called Appletrees, for a kind of fruit they had, and they grew separated from each other on a hillside, with low branches where the children could climb right up to the tops of them like walking up steps. Then you'd sit in the top, and the breeze would come by, smelling sweet and fresh like Mom ... the way lavender looked. And you would eat sweet fruit from the swaying branch, and...

She jumped as a hairy arm brushed her hand. It was the one with wings who was supposed to go with her into the rocket. It .. *he*, the Mother said it was her son, pointed to the airlock, and Dee got the

question-y feeling again. Then there were words to go with it.

`Go inside now?'

It was surprising at first that his `voice" sounded' just like the Mother-bug's. Then she realized it *was* the Mother-bug, talking through his mind. Dee understood by now that the words she `heard' were supplied by herself to fit the picture or emotions the other *person—that was silly, calling a bug a person!*—`sent' to her; but she was pretty sure that the words or the sort-of-a-voice- sound she'd make up for one person—bug—would be different from the way she'd `hear' another one.

Anyway, the Mother wanted her to go inside. She decided against leaving Petey outdoors by himself, and picked him up and lifted him in before she climbed through the airlock. The bug with wings came right behind her.

The playroom was a mess. Living in there all the time, Dee hadn't realized how everything was thrown around; but now, when she had a visitor with her—even if he was just a bug—she felt kind of ashamed about the way it all looked. Maybe he wouldn't know the difference ... but he would. She remembered how the inside of their big House was neat and clean all over; and not just the inside ... even the woods were kept tidy all the time. She'd seen a bunch of bugs out picking up dead branches and gathering leaves off the ground on the way over here.

This bug didn't seem to care though. He looked around at everything, with his head bent down backwards so he could see, and Dee got the idea he wanted to know if it was all right to touch things. She picked up a toy and some clothes, and put them into the hands on his front legs. After that, he went around looking and touching and handling things all over the playroom, while Dee hunted up some clothes to take back with them.

She couldn't find very much that was clean, so she took a whole pile of stuff from the floor, and went to the back to put them into the soil remover. The bug followed her. It—he—watched her put the clothes into the square box; he jumped a little when she turned the switch on and it started shaking, as it always did, a little. Dee laughed. Then she went around turning on all the machines that she knew how to work, just to show the bug. She wished she knew how to use the power tool, because that made a whole lot of noise, and did all kinds of different things; but Daddy never let ... but she didn't know how to, that's all.

The bug just stood still in the middle of the room, looking and listening. He didn't even *want* to touch anything in here, Dee figured; so she asked him out loud, didn't he want to feel what the machines were like? And then she found out she *could* tell the difference in one bug's voice and another's, because the Mother said a kind of eager, `Thank you—are you sure,' the son-bug said at the same time, kind of nervous-sounding, 'No, thank you! these devices are very Strange ...' and then he must have realized what his Mother wanted, because he said, 'I am afraid I might damage them.'

Dee felt the Mother's smiling then, and with the smile, a ques-tion: 'Where do they breath? With what do they eat?'

'Who?' Dee said out loud.

'Those others ... the *machines*, is your symbol for them.' And at the same time, she saw inside her head a sort of twisty picture of the room all around her. She saw it with her own eyes, the way it really was; and at the same time, she was seeing it the way the Mother-bug must be seeing it—which was the way her son was seeing it, and 'sending' the picture to her. It wasn't *much* different, mostly just the colours weren't as bright. And somehow, all the machines, the way the Mother-bug saw them, were *dive*.

Dee laughed. Those bugs were pretty smart, but there were lots of things she knew that they didn't.

'They *don't* breathe,' she said scornfully; 'they're just machines, that's all.'

'????'

'They're machines; they do things for people. You turn 'em on and make them work, and then when you're done, you turn them off again. They run on electricity.'

'????'

She couldn't explain electricity very well. 'It's like ... lightning.' But the Mother didn't know what she meant by that either. 'Don't talk,' the big bug told her; 'make a picture in your head.'

Stand near the machine-that-cleans, and make pictures, not words, in your own head, to show how it

works for you.'

Deborah tried, but she'd never seen what the machinery looked like inside the soil remover. There wasn't very much of it anyway. Da ... somebody had explained it to her once. There was just a horn—or something like a horn—that kept blowing, without making any noise; at least not any noise that you could hear. The blowing shook all the dirt out of the clothes, and there was a u-v light inside to sterilize them at the same time. That was all she knew, and she didn't know what it really *looked* like, except for the u-v bulb; and she didn't even know what made *that* work, really.

'I'm sorry,' she said. 'I'd make a picture for you if I could.'

'Is there one of these creatures ... machines ... you have *seen* inside?'

She'd seen inside of the freeze unit when it was being fixed once. She tried to remember just how that looked; but it was complicated, and the Mother still didn't seem to understand.

'The little pipes?' she asked, and Dee wasn't sure whether she meant the freezing coils or the wires; but then she was sure it was the wires. 'They bring food to the creature so it can work?'

'No I *told you*. It's not a "creature". It doesn't even *ever* eat. The wires just have electricity in them, that's all. Don't you even know what an electric wire is?'

'Where do the pipes ... wires ... bring the *electric* from?'

Dee looked around. The generator was ... it was in ... 'There's a generator someplace,' she said carelessly. 'It makes electricity; that's what it's for. I can show you how the T-Z works, because somebody I know showed me once.' She went out to the play-room, and started talking, describing her favourite toy, and making pictures in her mind to show the Mother-bug how it worked, and what some of the stories looked like. She talked fast, and kept on talking till she had to stop for breath; but then she realized she didn't have to talk out loud to the Mother, so she went on thinking about stories she'd seen on T-Z, and she decided she'd take it back with some of the film strips, so the Mother could see for herself how it worked.

*Machine!* An entity capable of absorbing energy in one form, transmitting it to some other form, and expending it in the performance of work ... work requiring judgment, skill, training ... and yet the Strange child said these things were not alive! Daydanda rested on her great couch, but felt no ease, and wished again that she had had the fortitude to go out with the small group. To *see for herself* ...

But she could never even have got through the narrow double-arch entrance to the *ship*. The ship ... that too, then, was a machine! It was a structure; a builded thing; *not-alive*; yet it could fly...

These two Strangers were very different creatures from a very different race; she began to understand that now. The striking similarities were purely superficial. The differences...

The thought of the babe tugged at her mind, asking warmth, asking food, and she could not think of him as Strange at all. There were differences; there were samenesses. No need now to make a counting of how many of which kind. Only to learn as much as could be learned, while she determined whether it was possible or desirable to keep the two Strange ones within the Household.

Very well then: these *machines* are not alive ... not all the time. They live only when the Strange daughter permits it, in most cases by moving a small organ projecting from the outside. Not so different, if you stopped to think of it, from the Bigheads, who might be counted not-alive most of the time. It was hard to adjust to the notion of working members of a Household existing on that low level, but ... these were Strangers.

And still the child maintained the *machines* were not alive at all, not members of her Household, merely structures, animated by...

By what? The things absorbed energy from somewhere. Through the little pipes ... apparently almost pure energy, the stuff the child called *electric*. What was the source of the *electric*?

The Strange daughter had a symbol and not-clear picture in her mind: a thing with rotating brushes, and a hard core of some kind. A thing kept under a round shelter, made of the same fabric as the ship ... *metal*. From under this *metal* housing came *wires* through which *electric* flowed to the *machines* ...

much as cement flowed from the snout of a mason, or honey from the orifice of a nurse.

Into this machine, food was ... no, the child's symbol was a different one, though the content of the symbol was the same; food designed for a *machine* was *fuel*. Very well: *fuel* was fed only to the ... the *Mother-machine*!

Now the whole thing was beginning to make sense. The *machines* were comparable—in relationship to the Stranger's Household—to the winged or crawling creatures that sometimes co-existed with the Household of Daydanda's own people, sharing a House in symbiotic economy, but having, of course, a distinct biology and therefore, a separate Mother and separate reproductive system.

The *generator*, said the child, supplied warmth and nourish-ment and vital power to the other *machines*; the *generator* was fed by the *humans* (the child's symbol for her own people); the *machines* worked for the *humans*.

'Is the generator of machines alive?' the Lady asked.

'No. I told you before..?'

'Am I alive?'

'Yes. Of course.'

The wonder was not that the Strange daughter failed to include the symbiotes in her semantic concept of 'life', but rather that she *did* include Daydanda, and Daydanda's Household. The Lady abandoned the effort to communicate such an abstraction, and ask if she might be shown the Mother-machine.

Wavering impression of willingness, but ...

The thing was on the other side of a door. The daughter went through one doorway into the room she had first entered, ap-proached the far wall, and turned sideways, to demonstrate in great detail a mechanism of some sort (not one of the *machines*; no wires connected it to the Mother-machine) whose function apparently was educational. It created visual, auditory, and olfac-tory hallucinations, utilizing information previously registered on strips of somehow-sensitized fabric inside it ... roughly anala-gous to the work of a teaching-nurse, who could register and retain for instructive purposes information supplied by the Mother, and never fully available to the nurse in her own func-tioning, nor in any way necessary for her to 'know'. Thus an unwinged nurse could give instruction in the art of flying, and the biology of reproduction. But, once again, the Stranger's mecha-nism was—or so the child said—simply an artifact, a *made* thing, without life of its own, and this time it was even more puzzling than before, because the object in question was self-contained—had its own internal source of *electric*, and needed no connecting *wires* with the Mother-machine.

Mother-machine ... *Mother*!

Daydanda reacted so sharply to the sudden connection of data that Kackot, asleep in the next chamber, woke and came rushing to her side. Smiling, she shared her thoughts with him.

Machine-Mother and Stranger-Mother both ... behind a door!

The *same* door?

'The source of *electric* is behind the other door?' The Mother-bug's question formed clearly in her mind this time. Dee looked up from the T-Z. There *wasn't* any other door. She looked all around but she couldn't see one. There was just the airlock, and the door to the workroom and kitchen in the back, but the Mother didn't mean either of those.

'I don't know what you're talking about,' she said, and went back to get the clothes out of the soil-remover, and thawed out a piece of cake from the freeze.

Daydanda looked at one and the same time through the eyes of her son in the Strange ship, and through those of the Stranger. Both focused on the same part of the same wall. Through the son's eyes, the Lady saw a rectangular outline in the surface of the wall, and a closure device set in one side. Through the child's eyes, she could see only a smooth unbroken stretch of wall.

'*There is no door*,' the child informed her clearly ... then turned around and left the room, once more broadcasting mean-ingless symbols, and accurate, but inappropriate, arithmetic.

Dee made sure she had enough clothes for a while. She didn't want to come back here right away. Maybe later on. She'd have to come back later on, of course. She couldn't really *stay* with the bugs. But...

She took a long strip off the roll of bottles, and a lot of milk, and all the powdered stuff she could find that looked any good. They probably had water there, anyhow. Things out of the freeze would spoil if she took them, so she left them for later, when she came back to the rocket.

She had to make a couple of trips to get everything out to the litter: the clothes and food and the T-Z and Petey and some toys for Petey; and the Mother-bug or the son-bug, one of them, kept trying to say things at her, but she wouldn't listen. She just started saying the Space Girl oath again; and when she couldn't remember it, even some of the silly multiplication, because she didn't feel like talking right now.

## XX

DAYDANDA WAS SHORT of time, and entirely out of patience. The Strange child's antics had gone from the puzzling to the incomp-rehensible, and the Lady of the House had other concerns ... many of them now aggravated by inattention over the preceding days. She simply could not continue to devote nearly all her thought, nor nearly so much of her time, to any one matter.

The children had brought back with them provisions sufficient for a few days at least, and the Mother was satisfied that their presence in the Household for that period represented no menace to the members of her own Families.

There was no purpose to thinking about their continued stay until the Encyclopaedic Seat completed a biological analysis. Nor could she determine how much responsibility she was willing to take for possible damage to the Wings-House in further ex-ploration and examination, until she knew for certain that she could offer the Strange children a permanent home in her own Household.

The flying son who had accompanied the two of them on their trip to the *rocket*, had informed her that the barrier on which the daughter's fear seemed centred was, like the rest of the Strange structure, composed of *metal*, and that this *metal* was the hardest wood he had ever seen. It could be cut through, he thought, but not without damage to the fabric that might not be repairable. As for discovering the secret of the mechanism that was designed to hold the *door* closed or allow it to open, he was pessimistic.

There was nothing to do, then, but put the matter from her mind until she had more information.

Accordingly, the Mother gave instructions—when all her chil-dren were in communion, after the evening Homecalling—that every member of the Household was to treat the Strange guests with kindness and respect; to guard them from dangers they might fail to recognize; to co-operate with their needs or wishes, insofar as they could express them; and to offer just such friend-ship—no more and no less—as the young Strangers themselves seemed to desire. She then assigned a well-trained elder daughter (a nurse might have done better in some ways, but she wanted a written record of any information acquired, and that meant it had to be a winged one) to maintain full-time contact with the Strange daughter, so as to answer the visitors' questions and to keep the Household informed of their activities.

With that, she turned her mind to more familiar problems of her Household.

Dee was glad she'd decided to come back. Of course, they couldn't really *stay* here, but just for a little while, it was interest-ing.

The bugs were really pretty nice people she thought, and giggled at the silly way that sounded ... calling bugs *people*. But it was hard not to, because they thought about themselves that way, and *acted* that way: and once you got used to how they looked, (And how they looked at you, too: it still felt funny having them turn their backs to you when you talked to them, so they could see you) it was just natural to think of them that way.

Anyhow, they were all nice to her, and especially nice to Petey. She could 'talk' to them pretty easily



now, too; but she had an idea she wasn't really doing it herself. There was a ... *big-sister?* ... bug who was sort of keeping an eye on her, she thought. Not a real eye, of course; she giggled again. Just the kind of an eye that could see pictures in somebody else's head. But any time she wanted to know something, such as whether it was all right to go out, and where could she find some water to mix the food with, and—as now—how to get to one of those gardens—the big -sister-bug would start telling her almost before she asked.

And Dee thought that probably most of the other bugs she talked to were at least partway using the big-sister's mind—the way the Mother-bug had helped her 'hear' what Petey 'said'—because now they all seemed to have pretty much the same kind of 'voice'. But it was different from the Mother's, or from the one who went to the rocket with her.

That gave her a strange feeling sometimes ... thinking that maybe the big-sister one was *listening in* on her all the time, but at least it wasn't like with the Mother-bug, who'd make that prickly hurting if you thought something she didn't like. The big--sister-bug didn't try to tell her what to do or what not to do, or put ideas in her head, or anything like that. So if she wanted to just listen all the time, Deborah supposed it didn't matter much. And it certainly was useful.

Petey was stuck in the mud again; Dee helped him get loose. She couldn't carry him around all the time, so she'd finally settled for not putting any clothes on him except a diaper, and just letting him go as gucky as he wanted to. He'd learned to crawl pretty well on the soft surface; it was just once in a while that he'd put an arm in too deep, or something like that. But he didn't mind, so she didn't either.

She still couldn't see any garden; just the trees and the mud. 'How far is it?' she asked or wondered.

'Not much more,' Big-sister told her. 'Walk around the next tree, and go to ... to your *right*.'

Just a little farther on, after she turned, Dee saw the sudden splurge of colour. It was a different garden from the one she'd seen the first time; at least the big-sister-bug said it was. The other one was for the tiny babies—the ones who were really about the same age as Petey, but about half his size. This one was for the next oldest hunch, but they were all just about Petey's size, so maybe he could play with them.

It looked just the same, though; the same kind of crazy com-binations of colours and shapes. Everything was just as she re-membered, except for not being scared now; and when she got right up to it, she saw these bugs weren't nursing on the plants the way the others had been doing. Once in a while, one of there would stop and suck a little while on a tendril; mostly, though they were chasing each other around, and kind of playing games—just like kindergarten kids any place.

There were two big bugs—the kind that had dark-coloured skins, and had eyes, but didn't have any wings. These ones were nurses, Dee figured. There were others just like these, with different kinds of noses—and some with different kinds of hands—who did other things; but these ones had to be nurses, because they were watching the kids. They were sitting outside the gar-den, not doing anything, and Dee felt funny about going inside, partly because it was supposed to be for *little* kids, partly because she was afraid she'd step on one of the plants or something like that. So she let Petey crawl, and she sat down next to the nurses, and just watched.

It was warm in the forest. It was always warm there, but she was getting to like it. She wasn't wearing anything except shorts now, and the only thing she minded was always feeling a little bit *damp*, because the air was so wet. But altogether, she had to admit it was better at least than being in the rocket all by themselves; shut up in there as they had been, Petey was always cranky and fussing about something. Now he was having a good time, so he didn't keep bothering her. And she had the T-Z set back in their room, now, and you didn't even need a light on to work that. Of course, she didn't have very many film-strips for it; she'd have to go back to the rocket pretty soon and get some more.

They'd need some more food, too, and she'd have to get Petey's diapers dean again. She wished there was some way to take along frozen food; then she wouldn't have to fuss around with mixing things with water, and all that, but...

The big-sister-bug was asking her what she meant by 'frozen food', but she'd tried to explain that before.

Anyhow, she had to go back there pretty soon, if she and Petey decided to stay here for a while, because she had to leave a message, so that when somebody came to rescue them, they'd know where to look.

'You wish to visit the Wings-House now?' Big-sister asked.

'It's kind of late today,' Dee said; 'tomorrow, I guess.' Sometimes she talked out loud like that, even though she knew it didn't make any difference. All she had to do was *think* what she meant, but sometimes she just talked out loud from habit.

'The litter goes swiftly,' said Big-sister. 'If you wish to make the visit now ...'

*Tomorrow!* This time she didn't say it ... just thought it extra hard. Big-sister stopped bothering her about it, and she sat still and watched Petey crawling around and grabbing at the pretty colours.

## XXI

DAYDANDA RECEIVED THE report personally, and trusted not even her own memory to retain it all, but relayed to three elder daughters, so that whatever errors any one might make in trans-cription, the records of the others could correct. There was so much technical symbology throughout the message—even though the clerk at the Seat tried to keep it intelligible—that she could not try to comprehend it entirely as it came. She would have to study and examine the meaning of each datum, before she could fully determine what it meant in terms of the questions she had to answer for her Household and the Strangers.

If she had only had a pair of Scientists! Communicating with each other, they would have known the purpose of the analysis; communicating with her, Mother and sons, there would have been no problem of translation of symbols. But it was hardly possible to give full information to the Scientists at the Seat, when many of them were from neighbouring or nearby Households, whose best interests were by no means identical with her own. Of course, they vowed impartiality when they took up Encyclopaedic work, but...

The next breeding, *definitely* ... ! (Rackot, daily more sensitive, came to the archway and peered in. He had taken to working and napping in the other room these few days. She sent a gentle negative.) The *very next* breeding would have to be limited to a pair of Scientists! Though now that she had put it off so long, and the youngest babes were already growing too big for fondling ...

Scientists it would be! The Household needed them. All very well to follow easily along the drive to procreate, but it was necessary, also, to safeguard those already born. And right now, the problem was not one of breeding, or breeding inhibition, but of making enough sense out of the message so that she could come to some decision about the Strangers.

She had the three daughters bring her their copies, and lay for a long while on her couch, studying and comparing and making rapid notes. Finally, she called to Kackot, and thought as she did so that it would perhaps do something to soothe his wounded feelings, if he felt she was unable to make this decision without his help.

He listened, soberly, and did what she knew she could count on him to do: reformulated, repeated, and advised according to what she wished. Since the report clearly established that the Strangers represented no biologic danger to the Household—their exudations were entirely non-toxic, and some of the solid matter was even useable, containing large quantities of semi-digested cellulose—it was clearly her duty to keep them in the Household, and learn as much as possible from them. Since the report further indicated that normal food would be non-toxic to the Strangers (and Mother and consort both tended to avoid the question, unanswered in the report, of whether normal feeding would supply *all* the nourishment the two Strange children needed), it was possible to extend indefinite hospitality to them.

(After all, if there were elements of nourishment they required beyond what the fungus-foods and wood-honey offered, they could continue to make use of their own supplies ... which would last longer if supplemented by native food. So Daydanda eased her conscience.)

The question of how far to go in examining the *rocket* was more complicated. The ethic involved...

'There is no ethic,' Kackot reminded her stiffly, 'above the duty of a Mother to her Household. The obligations to a Stranger in the House are sacred, but ...' He droned his formality, and ended, smiling and once more at ease '... *non-biologic!*' So, again, Daydanda soothed her conscience.

Still, it would be better at least to try to get the child's agreement, even though it was a foregone conclusion that they could not expect her co-operation. The Lady summoned the Strange daughter once more to her chamber.

'I could write the message here, I guess,' Dee said thoughtfully. 'If you're going to send somebody to the rocket anyhow, there's no reason for me to go.' It wasn't as if she couldn't trust them; they wouldn't hurt anything. And anyhow, the Mother said she wanted to keep showing Dee what the son was doing, so they could ask questions whenever they didn't understand something.

Right now, the Mother-bug was feeling a question. 'Write a message?' Dee stopped thinking herself, and then she understood. The bugs only used writing for keeping *records* of things. When they wanted to tell somebody something, it didn't matter how far away the person was; so they didn't write things down for other people. Just for themselves, and to make a kind of history for other bugs later on. The Mother wanted to know: wouldn't she 'be aware' of the rescue party when it came.

She shook her head, and didn't try to explain anything, because it was just too *different*. 'I've got some crayons in my room,' she told the Mother-bug, 'but I used up all the paper already.'

'We have paper.' The funny jumpy Father-bug jumped up in his funny way, and went over to a kind of big table full of cubby holes, even before the Mother was done 'talking', and got a piece of their kind of paper, and gave it to Dee. The Mother was asking about crayons, what they were and how they worked, but Dee was asking *her* at the same time for something to write with, and what kind of paper was this?

The paper was made out of tree bark, and covered with a kind of waxy stuff that they made in their bodies. They seemed to make everything right inside themselves—as if each bug was a kind of chemicals factory, and you could put in such and such, and turn some switches inside, and get out so-and-so. It was certainly useful, Dee thought, with vague distaste, and then realized nobody had given her a pencil or anything yet.

But you wouldn't use a pencil' on this kind of paper. You'd use a stylus, or something sharp.

'Very soon,' the Mother-bug said. 'My daughter brings you a sharp thing to write with.' Then she raised her arm to show Dee where a little sharp horny tip was, on the back of her elbow, that she used herself.

'But how can you see what...?' Dee started to ask, and then she felt the Mother-bug laughing, and then she laughed herself. It was so hard to get used to people with eyes in the backs of their heads.

One of the nurse-type bugs came in, bowing and crawling the way they always did if they got near the Mother-bug, handed Dee a pointed stick, and crawled out again.

'I am staying with some bugs in a big house,' Dee scratched as clearly as she could through the wax. The bark underneath was orangy-coloured, and the wax was white, so it showed through pretty well. 'My baby brother Petey is with me. Please come and get us.' Then she signed it, 'Deborah (DEE) Levin.' And then realized she hadn't put anything in about *how* to find them. She tried to ask the Mother, but so far they hadn't been able to get together on that kind of thing at all. The bugs didn't use measurements or distances or directions the same way; they just seemed to *know* where to go, and how far they were.

'We will know if Strangers come,' the Mother promised her; 'we will go to them.'

Dee thought that over, and added to her message : 'P.S. If some big bugs come around, don't shoot. They're friends; they're taking care of Petey and me.' And put her initials at the end, the way you're supposed to do with a P.S.

'When is he going?' she asked. 'I mean, should I stay here, so you can ask me questions, or do you want me to come back later?' Petey was getting kind of restless, and he wanted something, but she wasn't sure what.

'The brother wishes to return to the garden,' the Mother explained. 'He understands what I told you

about the food. He wanted to suck on the sweet plants before, but was afraid. Now he desires to return to the garden and to the other children, and suck as they do.' Then she said her son was going to the ship right away; but if Dee wanted to go to the garden with Petey, that was all right; the Mother-bug could talk to her just as well that way.

'I'd rather ... I'd kind of rather *look* at you when we talk,' Dee said. She knew it seemed silly to them, because they weren't used to it, but she couldn't help it. Anyhow, she got a kind of good feeling being in the Mother-bug's room. The first time she came in here it was *awful*, but right now she felt nervous or something. She didn't know why, but she *did* know she'd feel better if she stayed here with the big old bug.

'Stay then, my child.'

One of the ones with wings came in; this kind just bowed, they didn't crawl. He took the message from Dee, and went back to the garden; then they just waited for a while.

The mother was busy, thinking some place else, and the Father-bug gave her a funny feeling when she tried to talk to him, because he wasn't like a Daddy at all. Not the way the big fat bug was like a real Mother. The skinny, jumpy one was nervous and fussy and worried; and Dee thought he probably didn't like her very much. So she just sat still, squatting on the floor with her back against the wall, and thought maybe she'd go get her T-Z set and look at something till the Mother-bug was ready. But it was warm and comfortable and she didn't want to go away, out of this room, where the Mother was just like a Mother was a Mother—so she sort of rolled over a little bit, and curled up right on the floor and closed her eyes. If she didn't *look* at the piled-up mats and the ugly old belly on top, it felt more like a Mother than ever before for a long time since it was so warm, hot, glowing red, and the voice said, *fire ... fire ... fire...*

That was on Hallowe'en, all black and orange, witches and ghosts, and the witch said, 'Fire ! Fire! Run ! Run!' but the ghost looked like a big fat bug, only white, except the white ones don't have eyes; and this one had two great big hollow eyeholes; and it was crying because it couldn't find the little girl who should have opened ... opened her eyes, so she could see, why didn't she open her eyeholes, so she could see the little girl? Because the little girl had no eyes, only it didn't matter as long as the door was closed, the ghost couldn't get through a safety safety safe; the little girl is safe, on Hallowe'en when the ground is black and behind the door is black, black, black you can't see, and black it's all burned up, and the ghost is white; so there's no ghost there in the black, only a great big ugly bugley belly all swell up with white dead long time ... No! ... all black for Hallowe'en, black, black....

## XXII

THE LADY HEARD; and by her lights, she understood. It was a sick and ugly thing to hear, and a terrible sad thing to comprehend.

A Mother of fourteen Families is, perforce, accustomed to grief and fear and failing; she has suffered time and again the agonies of flesh and spirit with which her children met the tests of growth: the fears of battle, terror of departure, pains of hunger, the awful shrinking from death. The time they almost lost their House to swarming hostile Families; the time the boy died in the ravenous claws of their own Bigheads; the time the rotten-fungus- sickness spread among them ... time after time; but never, in all the crowded years of life-giving and life-losing had Daydanda known a sickness such as now shouted at her from the Strange girl's dream.

Even her curiosity would have faltered before this outpouring, but she *could* not turn away. One listens to a troubled child's dream to diagnose, to find a remedy ... but *this!* If it were possible to invade the barriers of a full-grown Mother of crime, one might find sorrow and fear and torment such as this.

As the sunlight had seared her eyeball, so the hellfires of the childish dreaming burned her soul.

*The girl desired that they should find her Mother dead!* There was no other way to make sense of it. Daydanda tried. Everything in her fought against even the formulation of such a statement. It was not only evil, but impossible ... *unnatural*. Non-biologic.

*The child wanted to know that her Mother had been burned to death.*

Within the shining rocket, Daydanda's son moved curiously, feeling and touching each Strange object cautiously, examining with his eager eye each Strange and inexplicable shape. He waited there, unable to be still in the presence of so much to explore; too fearful of doing damage to explore further till his Mother's mind met his. But the Lady could not be disturbed, the sibling at relay duty said; the Lady was refusing all calls, accept-ing no contact.

*Wait!*

He waited.

*Non-biologic* ... But what did she know of the biology of a Stranger? Even as much as the clerk at the Seat had told her, from the analysis of scrapings and samplings-even that much she did not fully understand, and that could not be more than a fractional knowledge in any case.

She could not, would not, believe that the Strange daughter's Strange complex of feelings and fears and desires was as subject-ively *sick* as it seemed, by her own standards and experience, to be. A different biologic economy—which most assuredly they had—or a completely different reproductive social organiza-tion ...

It *was* possible. The child's independence and resourcefulness her untrained awareness of self and others ... her lack of certainty even as to whether her Mother still lived ... the very existence of two siblings of such widely divergent age and size, without even a suggestion of others who had departed, or been left behind...

Till now, the Mother had been trying to fit these two Strange children somehow into the patterns of her own world. But she remembered what she had considered at the time to be childish over-statement, or just a part of the confusion of the girl's mind as to place, time, and direction.

*From another world ...*

From above the treetops, but that had not been startling. A nesting couple always descended from above the trees, after the nuptial flight. From above the treetops, *but not from below them. From another world...!*

Kackot was hovering nervously above her. The daughter on relay was asking on behalf of the son at the Strange ship. The daughters in the corral wished to report...

To Kackot and the son both, imperative postponements. She clamped control on her seething mind long enough to determine that it was no emergency in the corral, then closed them all out again, and tried to think more clearly.

The dream was still too fresh in her mind. And now there was more data to be had. Don't think, then ... just to regain one's sanity, detachment, ability to weigh and to consider. One cannot open contact with the child while looking upon her as a monster.

*(A monster! That's how I seemed to her!)*

Perspective returned slowly. She groped for Kackot's soothing thoughts, refusing to inform him yet, but gratefully accepting his concern. Then the son, waiting restively inside the Strange Wings-House. And last, the child ... Strange child of a Strange world.

'Very well,' she told them all calmly, or so she hoped. 'Let us commence.'

Dee was getting tired of it. For a while, it was sort of fun, looking at things the way the son-bug saw them, and watching how clumsy he was every time he tried to do anything the way she told him. Even if these bugs didn't have any machines themselves, you had to be pretty dumb not to be able to just turn a knob when somebody explained it to you.

She realized she was being rude again. It was hard to remem-ber, sometimes, that you shouldn't even *think* anything impolite around here. It would be pretty good for some kids she knew, to come here for a while...

'Other children ... others like yourself?' the Mother felt all excited. 'Of your own Family?'

Dee shook her head. 'No; just some of the kids who were in the Scout Troop on Starhope.'

'Others ... brothers and sisters ... from your Household then?'

She had to think about that, to figure out the right answer. A town or a dome or a city was kind of like the Household here ... but of course, the other kids weren't brothers and sisters, just because you played with them and went to school together. 'Petey's the only brother I have,' she said.

She didn't think she'd made it very clear, but she had a feeling that the Mother was kind of glad about the answer. She didn't know why; and anyhow, it had nothing to do with the rocket. The son-bug was waiting for his Mother to pay attention to him again.

For a minute, everybody seemed to go away. *Telling secrets!* Dee thought irritably. She was beginning to get very bored now, just sitting here answering a lot of silly questions. They'd already put the message on the waxbark up where anybody who came in could see it, and the son-bug had a batch of diapers cleaned for Petey, and a lot of food picked out of the dry storage cabinet. She hoped it was stuff she liked. She couldn't read the labels when she was looking through his eye; anyhow they didn't need her around any more.

'Don't be silly,' she said out loud. 'There isn't any door to open; they're both open.' *Now what did I say that for?* 'Listen, I better go see how Petey's getting along. I don't like him trying out that fungus food all by himself. I better ...'

She started to stand up, but the Mother said quietly, 'Soon. Soon, child. Just a little more. You did not understand; we wish to know how to *close* the door ... just how to operate the mechanism. My son is eager to try his skill at turning knobs to make machines work.'

'You mean the airlock? You can't close that from outside. But if he just wants to try it out while he's inside, I guess that's all right. It's kind of complicated, though; he might get stuck in there or something, and..?'

'No child. The airlock is the double-arch opening in the outer wall, is it not?'

'... yes, and I don't think he better ...'

'He does not wish to experiment with that one. My son is brave, but not foolish. Only the other, the inner door. If you will...'

'Okay, but then I want to go see Petey, all right?'

'As you please.'

'Okay. Well, you have to turn the lever on the right hand side ...'

'No, please ... make a picture in your mind. Move your own hand. Pretend to stand before it, and to do as you would do yourself. Think a picture.'

*No! It won't open again!* That was a silly thing to think. *But all the food's in there!*

'He will not dose it then, child. Only show him how it works, how he *would* close it if he did. He will not; I promise he will not.'

She showed him. She pretended to be doing it herself, but she felt strange; and when she was done showing him, she took a good look through the Mother and through him to make sure he hadn't really done it. The door was still open though.

'Thank you, my child. You wish to go to the garden now?'

Dee nodded, and felt the Mother go away, and almost ran out, She felt very strange.

Wearily, the Lady commended her son for his intelligent perception, and queried him about his ability to operate the mechanism. He was a little doubtful. She reassured him: such work was not in his training; he had done well. She ordered two of her mason-builder sons to join their winged sibling in the ship and left instructions to be notified when they were ready to begin

She tried to rest, meanwhile, but there was too much confusion in her mind: too much new information not yet integrated. And more to come. Better perhaps to wait a bit before they tried that door? *No!* She caught herself with a start, realized that she had absorbed so much of the Strange daughter's terror of ... of what lay beyond ...

*What* lay beyond? Because the child feared it, there was no cause for *her* to fear as well. It was all inside the girl's subjective world, the thing that was not to be known, the thing that made the door unopenable. It was all part and parcel of the child's failure to be aware of her own Mother's life or death,

of ...

Of the *sickness* in the dream. She, Daydanda, had brought that sickness into her Household. It was up to her now, to diagnose and cure it—or to cast it out. Such facts were communicable; she had seen it happen, or heard of it at least.

When a mother dies, there is no way to tell what will happen to her sons and daughters. Even among one's own people, strange things may occur. One Household she had heard of, after the sudden death of the Mother, simply continued to go about the ordinary tasks of every day, as though no change were noticed. It could not last, of course, and did not. Each small decision left unmade, each little necessary change in individual performance, created a piling-up confusion that led at last to the inevitable re-sult: when undirected workers no longer cared for the food supplies; when the reckless unprepared winged ones flew off to early deaths in premature efforts to skim the tree-tops; when nurses ceased to care for hungry Bigheads, or for crying babes, the starving soldiers stormed the corral fences, swarmed into the gardens and the House, and feasted first on succulent infants; then on lean neighbours, and at last—to the vast relief of neigh-bouring Households—on each other.

For a time, Daydanda had thought the Strange child's curious mixture of maternal and sibling attitudes to be the product of some similar situation—that the girl was simply trying not to *believe* her Mother's death, and somehow to succeed in being daughter and Mother both in her own person. But the dream made that hopeful theory impossible to entertain any longer.

Nor was it possible now to believe that the two children were the remnants of any usual Household. The girl had been too definite about the lack of any other siblings, now or *in the past*.

What then? Try to discard all preconceptions. These are Strange creatures from *another world*. Imagine a biology in which there is no increase in the race—only replacement. The Lady recalled, or thought she did, some parasitic life in the Household of her childhood wherein the parent-organism had to die to make new life...

*The parent had to die!*

Immediately, her mind began to clear. Not sickness then ... not foul untouchable confusion, but a *natural* Strangeness. Daydanda remembered thinking of the fires of the landing as a ritual ... and now more fire ... the Mother must be burned before the young one can mature? Some biologic quality of the ash, per-haps? Something ... if that were so, it would explain, too, the child's persistent self-reminder that she *must* return to the *rocket*, even while she yearned to stay here where safety and protection lay.

It was fantastic, but fantastic only by the standards of the familiar world. Mother and consort bring the young pair, male and female, to a new home; and in the fires of landing, the parent-creatures die ... *must* die before the young pair can develop.

She thought a while soberly, trying this fact and that to fit the theory, and each Strange-shaped piece of the puzzle fitted the next with startling ease.

Perhaps if a world became too crowded, after many Households had grown up, some life-form of this kind might evolve, and ... *yes, of course!* ... that would explain as well the efforts at migration over vast distances across the glaring sky.

The Lady was prepared now to discover what lay behind the door; her sons were waiting on her wishes.

### XXIII

PETHEY WAS CHASING a young bug just a little bit bigger than he was round and round a mushroom shape that stood as high as Dee herself. Out of the foot-wide base of the great plant, a lacy network of lavender and light green tendrils sprouted. Deborah watched them play, the bug-child scampering on all sixes, Petey on all fours; and she didn't worry even when they both got tired and stopped and lay down half-sprawled across each other, to stick on adjoining juicy tendrils.

One of the nurses had already told her that Petey had tried some of the fungus juice when he first

came out to the garden. That must have been a couple of hours ago, at least. Dee wasn't sure how long she'd been asleep, there in the Mother-bug's room, but she thought it was getting on towards evening now. And she knew that a baby's digestion works much more quickly than a grown-up's; if the stuff was going to hurt him, he'd be acting sick by now.

Probably she shouldn't have let him try it at all, until she tested some first herself. She still didn't really want to, though; and when the Mother said it was all right for him, she hadn't thought to worry about it.

She couldn't keep on fussing over him every minute, anyhow. Besides, that wasn't good for babies either. You have to let them take chances or they'll never grow up ... *where did I hear that?* ... somebody had said that...

She shook her head, then smiled, watching the two kids, Petey and the bug, playing again. Petey was chortling and laughing and drooling. She decided it was probably pretty safe to trust what-ever the Mother-bug said.

The Strange Mother and her consort were indeed inside the ship, behind the door the child wouldn't see; and they were most certainly dead.

'It is ... they look ...' Her son had not liked it, looking at them. 'I think the fire's heat did as the teaching-nurse had told us might happen when we go above the tree-tops, if we fly too long or too high in the dry sun's heat.' He had had trouble giving a clear visimage to her, because he did not like to look at what he saw. But the skin, he said, judging by that of the children was darkened, and the bodies dehydrated. They were strapped in-to twisted couches, as though to prevent their escape. That and the locked door ... the *taboo* door?

Each item fitted into the only theory that made sense. Ft)] some biologic reason, or some reason of tradition on an over crowded home-world, it was necessary that the parents die as soon as a nesting place for the young couple was found. And the curious conflict in the Strange daughter's mind—the wish that her Mother was burned, with refusal to accept her Mother's death...

After all, many a winged one about to depart forever from the childhood home—not knowing whether happiness and fer-tility will come, or sudden death, or lonely lingering starvation ... many a one has left with just such a complex of opposite-wishes.

But Daydanda could not tell, from what her son had said, or what he showed, whether the parents were *burned*, within the child's meaning of the word. The son was not too certain, even that the heat had been responsible for death, directly. The room, when he first opened up the door, was filled with a thick grey cloud which dispersed too quickly to make sure if his guess was right; but he took it to be smoke ... cold smoke. No one could breathe and live through a dozen heartbeats in that cloud, he said.

Whether the cloud formed first, or the heat did its work beforehand, the two were surely dead when their children came back from the first swift trip into the forest, that much was sure.

Whether they had themselves locked the door, and placed a taboo on opening it, or whether the daughter had obeyed the custom of her people in sealing it off, was also impossible to determine—now.

This much, however, was clear: that the children had had ample opportunity to learn the truth for themselves if they wished, or if it were proper for them to do so. There had been no difficulty opening the door, not even for her sons who were unused to such mechanisms. The daughter knew how to do it; the daughter would not do it. Finally: the daughter had been *purposefully* set free to develop without the protection of her Mother.

If Daydanda had been certain that the protection of a foster-Mother would also inhibit the growth of the Strange children, she might have hesitated longer. As it was, she asked her consort what he thought, and he of course replied: 'It might be, my Lady, my dear, that these Strange people live only as parasites in the Houses of such as ourselves. See how their Wings are a semi-House, not settled in one location, but designed for transport. See how they chose a landing place almost equidistant from ourselves and our neighbours, as if to give the young ones a little better chance to find a Household that would accept them. It would seem to me, my dear, my Lady, that our course is clear.'

Daydanda was pleased with his advice. And it was time for the Homecalling. The Lady sent out her



summons, loud and clear and strong for all to hear: a warning to unfriendly neighbours; a promise and renewal to all her children, young and old.

Dee lay on her mat in the chamber she still shared with Petey, and watched the T-Z, but she did not watch it well. Her mind was too full of other things.

The Mother wanted them to stay and ... 'join the Household.' She wasn't sure just what that would mean. Doing chores, prob-ably, and things like that. She didn't mind that part; it would be kind of nice to *belong* someplace ... until the rescue party came.

That was the only thing. She hoped the Mother understood that part, but she wasn't sure. They couldn't just *stay* here, of course.

But it might be quite a while before anybody came after them, and meanwhile ... she looked at Petey, sleeping with a smile on his small fat face, and on his round fat bottom a new kind of diaper, made by the bug-people the same way they made the sleeping mats, only smaller and thinner. That was so she wouldn't have to bother with cleaning the cloth ones any more.

Petey was certainly happier here, but she'd have to watch out, she thought. If the rescue party took too long to come, he'd be more like a bug than a human!

She went back to watching the T-Z set. She had to learn a lot of things, in case she was the only person who could teach Petey anything. Tomorrow, the very next day, she was going to start really teaching him to talk. He could say words all right, if he tried. And with the bugs just in and out of your head, the way they were, he'd never try if she didn't get him started right away.

She turned back the reel, and started the film from the begin-ning again, because she'd missed so much.

The Lady of the House was pleased.

## Exile From Space

I don't know where they got the car. We made three or four stops before the last one, and they must have picked it up one of those times. Anyhow, they got it, but they had to make a license plate, because it had the wrong kind on it.

They made me some clothes, too — a skirt and blouse and shoes that looked just like the ones we saw on television. They couldn't make me a lipstick or any of those things, because there was no way to figure out just what the chemical composition was. And they decided I'd be as well off without any driver's license or automobile registration as I would be with papers that weren't exactly perfect, so they didn't bother about making those either.

They were worried about what to do with my hair, and even thought about cutting it short, so it would look more like the women on television, but that was one time I was way ahead of them. I'd seen more shows than anyone else, of course — I watched them almost every minute, from the time they told me I was going — and there was one where I'd seen a way to make braids and put them around the top of your head. It wasn't very comfortable, but I practiced at it until it looked pretty good.

They made me a purse, too. It didn't have anything in it except the diamonds, but the women we saw always seemed to carry them, and they thought it might be a sort of superstition or ritual necessity, and that we'd better not take a chance on violating anything like that.

They made me spend a lot of time practicing with the car, because without a license, I couldn't take a chance on getting into any trouble. I must have put in the better part of an hour starting and stopping and backing that thing, and turning it around, and weaving through trees and rocks, before they were satisfied.

Then, all of a sudden, there was nothing left to do except *go*. They made me repeat everything one more time, about selling the diamonds, and how to register at the hotel, and what to do if I got into trouble, and how to get in touch with them when I wanted to come back. Then they said good-bye, and made me promise not to stay *too* long, and said they'd keep in touch the best they could. And then I got

in the car, and drove down the hill into town.

I knew they didn't want to let me go. They were worried, maybe even a little afraid I wouldn't want to come back, but mostly worried that I might say something I shouldn't, or run into some difficulties they hadn't anticipated. And outside of that, they knew they were going to miss me. Yet they'd made up their minds to it; they planned it this way, and they felt it was the right thing to do, and certainly they'd put an awful lot of thought and effort and preparation into it.

If it hadn't been for that, I might have turned back at the last minute. Maybe they were worried; but I was petrified. Only of course, I wanted to go, really. I couldn't help being curious, and it never occurred to me then that I might miss them. It was the first time I'd ever been out on my own, and they'd promised me, for years and years, as far back as I could remember, that some day I'd go back, like this, by myself. But ...

Going back, when you've been away long enough, is not so much a homecoming as a dream *deja vu*. And for me, at least, the dream was not entirely a happy one. Everything I saw or heard or touched had a sense of haunting familiarity, and yet of *wrongness*, too — almost a nightmare feeling of the oppressively inevitable sequence of events, of faces and features and events just not-quite-remembered and not-quite-known.

I was born in this place, but it was not my home. Its people were not mine; its ways were not mine. All I knew of it was what I had been told, and what I had seen for myself these last weeks of preparation, on the television screen. And the dream-feeling was intensified, at first, by the fact that I did not know *why* I was there. I knew it had been planned this way, and I had been told it was necessary to complete my education. Certainly I was aware of the great effort that had been made to make the trip possible. But I did not yet understand just *why*.

Perhaps it was just that I had heard and watched and thought and dreamed too much about this place, and now I was actually there, the reality was — not so much a disappointment as — just sort of *unreal*. Different from what I knew when I *didn't* know.

The road unwound in a spreading spiral down the mountainside. Each time I came round, I could see the city below, closer and larger, and less distinct. From the top, with the sunlight sparkling on it, it had been a clean and gleaming pattern of human civilization. Halfway down, the symmetry was lost, and the smudge and smoke began to show.

Halfway down, too, I began to pass places of business: restaurants and gas stations and handicraft shops. I wanted to stop. For half an hour now I had been out on my own, and I still hadn't seen any of the people, except the three who had passed me behind the wheels of their cars, going up the road. One of the shops had a big sign on it, "COME IN AND LOOK AROUND." But I kept going. One thing I understood was that it was absolutely necessary to have money, and that I must stop nowhere, and attempt nothing, till after I had gotten some.

Farther down, the houses began coming closer together, and then the road stopped winding around, and became almost straight. By that time, I was used to the car, and didn't have to think about it much, and for a little while I really enjoyed myself. I could see into the houses sometimes, through the windows, and at one, a woman was opening the door, coming out with a broom in her hand. There were children playing in the yards. There were cars of all kinds parked around the houses, and I saw dogs and a couple of horses, and once a whole flock of chickens.

But just where it was beginning to get really interesting, when I was coming into the little town before the city, I had to stop watching it all, because there were too many other people driving. That was when I began to understand all the fuss about licenses and tests and traffic regulations. Watching it on television, it wasn't anything like being in the middle of it!

Of course, what I ran into there was really nothing; I found that out when I got into the city itself. But just at first, it seemed pretty bad. And I still don't understand it. These people are pretty bright mechanically. You'd think anybody who could *build* an automobile — let alone an atom bomb — could *drive* one easily enough. Especially with a lifetime to learn in. Maybe they just like to live dangerously ...

It was a good thing, though, that I'd already started watching out for what the other drivers were doing when I hit my first red light. That was something I'd overlooked entirely, watching street scenes on

the screen, and I guess they'd never noticed either. They must have taken it for granted, the way I did, that people stopped their cars out of courtesy from time to time to let the other go by. As it was, I stopped because the others did, and just happened to notice that they began again when the light changed to green. It's really a very good system; I don't see why they don't have them at all the intersections.

From the first light, it was eight miles into the center of Colorado Springs. A sign on the road said so, and I was irrationally pleased when the speedometer on the car confirmed it. Proud, I suppose, that these natives from my own birthplace were such good gadgeteers. The road was better after that, too, and the cars didn't dart in and out off the side streets the way they had before. There was more traffic on the highway, but most of them behaved fairly intelligently. Until we got into town, that is. After that, it was everybody-for-himself, but by then I was prepared for it.

I found a place to park the car near a drugstore. That was the first thing I was supposed to do. Find a drugstore, where there would likely be a telephone directory, and go in and look up the address of a hock shop. I had a little trouble parking the car in the space they had marked off, but I could see from the way the others were stationed that you were supposed to get in between the white lines, with the front of the car next to the post on the sidewalk. I didn't know what the post was for, until I got out and read what it said, and then I didn't know what to do, because I didn't *have* any money. Not yet. And I didn't dare get into any trouble that might end up with a policeman asking to see my license, which always seemed to be the first thing they did on television, when they talked to anybody who was driving a car. I got back in the car and wriggled my way out of the hole between the other cars, and tried to think what to do. Then I remembered seeing a sign that said "Free Parking" somewhere, not too far away, and went back the way I'd come.

There was a sort of park, with a fountain spraying water all over the grass, and a big building opposite, and the white lines here were much more sensible. They were painted in diagonal strips, so you could get in and out quite easily, without all that backing and twisting and turning. I left the car there, and remembered to take the keys with me, and started walking back to the drugstore.

That was when it hit me.

Up to then, beginning I guess when I drove that little stretch coming into Manitou, with the houses on the hills, and the children and yards and dogs and chickens, I'd begun to feel almost as if I belonged here. The people seemed so *much* like me — as long as I wasn't right up against them. From a little distance, you'd think there was no difference at all. Then, I guess, when I was close enough to notice, driving through town, I'd been too much preoccupied with the car. It didn't really get to me till I got out and started walking.

They were all so *big* . . .

They were big, and their faces and noses and even the pores of their skin were too big. And their voices were too loud. And they *smelled*.

I didn't notice that last much till I got into the drugstore. Then I thought I was going to suffocate, and I had a kind of squeezing upside-down feeling in my stomach and diaphragm and throat, which I didn't realize till later was what they meant by "being sick." I stood over the directory rack, pretending to read, but really just struggling with my insides, and a man came along and shouted in my ear something that sounded like, "Vvvm trubbb 111-111-111 ay-dee?" (I didn't get that sorted out for hours afterwards, but I don't think I'll ever forget just the way it sounded at the time. Of course, he meant, "Having trouble, little lady?") But all I knew at the time was he was too big and smelled of all kinds of things that were unfamiliar and slightly sickening. I couldn't answer him. All I could do was turn away so as not to breathe him, and try to pretend I knew what I was doing with the directory. Then he hissed at me ("Sorry, no offense," I figured out later), and said clearly enough so I could understand even then, "Just trying to help," and walked away.

As soon as he was gone, I walked out myself. Directory or no directory, I had to get out of that store. I went back to where I'd left the car, but instead of getting in it, I sat down on a bench in the park, and waited till the turmoil inside me began to quiet down.

I went back into that drugstore once before I left, purposely, just to see if I could pin down what it

was that had bothered me so much, because I never reacted that strongly afterwards, and I wondered if maybe it was just that it was the first time I was inside one of their buildings. But it was more than that; that place was a regular snake-pit of a treatment for a stranger, believe me! They had a tobacco counter, and a lunch counter and a perfume-and-toiletries section, and a nut-roasting machine, and just to top it off, in the back of the store, an open-to-look-at (*and* smell) pharmaceutical center! Everything, all mixed together, and compounded with stale human sweat, which was also new to me at the time. And no air conditioning.

Most of the air conditioning they have is bad enough on its own, with chemical smells, but those are comparatively easy to get used to ... and I'll take them *any* time, over what I got in that first dose of *Odeur d'Earth*.

Anyhow, I sat on the park bench about fifteen minutes, I guess, letting the sun and fresh air seep in, and trying to tabulate and memorize as many of the components of that drugstore smell as I could, for future reference. I was simply going to have to adjust to them, and next time I wanted to be prepared.

All the same, I didn't feel prepared to go back into the same place. Maybe another store wouldn't be quite as bad. I started walking in the opposite direction, staying on the wide main street, where all the big stores seemed to be, and two blocks down, I ran into luck, because there was a big bracket sticking out over the sidewalk from the front of a store halfway down a side street, and it had the three gold balls hanging from it that I knew, from television, meant the kind of place I wanted. When I walked down to it, I saw too that they had a sign painted over the window: "We buy old gold and diamonds."

Just *how* lucky that was, I didn't realize till quite some time later. I was going to look in the Classified Directory for "Hock Shops." I didn't know any other name for them then.

Inside, it looked exactly like what I expected, and even the smell was nothing to complain about. Camphor and dust and mustiness were strong enough to cover most of the sweaty smell, and those were smells of a kind I'd experienced before, in other places.

The whole procedure was reassuring, because it all went just the way it was supposed to, and I knew how to behave. I'd seen it in a show, and the man behind the grilled window even *looked* like the man on the screen, and talked the same way.

"What can we do for you, girlie?"

"I'd like to sell a diamond," I told him.

He didn't say anything at first, then he looked impatient. "You got it with you?"

"Oh, yes!" I opened my purse, and took out one of the little packages, and unwrapped it, and handed it to him. He screwed the lens into his eye, and walked back from the window and put it on a little scale, and turned back and unscrewed the lens and looked at me.

"Where'd you get this, lady?" he asked me.

"It's mine," I said. I knew just how to do it. We'd gone over this half a dozen times before I left, and he was behaving exactly the way we'd expected.

"I don't know," he said. "Can't do much with an unset stone like this." He pursed his lips, tossed the diamond carelessly in his hand, and then pushed it back at me across the counter. I had to keep myself from smiling. It was just the way they'd said it would be. The people here were still in the Mech Age, of course, and not nearly conscious enough to communicate anything at all complex or abstract any way except verbally. But there is nothing abstract about avarice, and between what I'd been told to expect, and what I could feel pouring out of him, I knew precisely what was going on in his mind.

"You mean you don't *want* it?" I said. "I thought it was worth quite a lot."

"Might have been once." He shrugged. "You can't do much with a stone like that any more. Where'd you get it, girlie?"

"My mother gave it to me. A long time ago. I wouldn't sell it, except ... Look," I said, and didn't have to work hard to sound desperate, because, in a way, I was. "Look, it must be worth something?"

He picked it up again. "Well ... what do you want for it?"

That went on for quite a while. I knew what it was supposed to be worth, of course, but I didn't hope to get even half of that. He offered seventy dollars, and I asked for five hundred, and after a while he gave me three-fifty, and I felt I'd done pretty well — for a greenhorn. I put the money in my purse,

and went back to the car, and on the way I saw a policeman, so I stopped and asked him about a hotel. He looked me up and down, and started asking questions about how old I was, and what was my name and where did I live, and I began to realize that being so much smaller than the other people was going to make life complicated. I told him I'd come to visit my brother in the Academy, and he smiled, and said, "Your *brother*, is it?" Then he told me the name of a place just outside of town, near the Academy. It wasn't a hotel; it was a motel, which I didn't know about at that time, but he said I'd be better off there. A lot of what he said went right over my head at the time; later I realized what he meant about "a nice respectable couple" running the place. I found out later on, too, that he called them up to ask them to keep an eye on me; he thought I was a nice girl, but he was worried about my being alone there.

By this time, I was getting hungry, but I thought I'd better go and arrange about a place to stay first. I found the motel without much trouble, and went in and registered; I knew how to do that, at least — I'd seen it plenty of times. They gave me a key, and the man who ran the place asked me did I want any help with my bags.

"Oh, no," I said. "No, thanks. I haven't got much."

I'd forgotten all about that, and they'd never thought about it either! These people always have a lot of different clothes, not just one set, and you're supposed to have a suitcase full of things when you go to stay anyplace. I said I was hungry anyway, and wanted to go get something to eat, and do a couple of other things — I didn't say what — before I got settled. So the woman walked over with me, and showed me which cabin it was, and asked was everything all right?

It looked all right to me. The room had a big bed in it, with sheets and a blanket and pillows and a bedspread, just like the ones I'd seen on television. And there was a chest of drawers, and a table with more small drawers in it, and two chairs and a mirror and door that went into a closet and one that led to the bathroom. The fixtures in there were a little different from the ones they'd made for me to practice in, but functionally they seemed about the same.

I didn't look for any difficulty with anything there except the bed, and that wasn't *her* fault, so I assured her everything was just fine, and let her show me how to operate the gas-burner that was set in the wall for heat. Then we went out, and she very carefully locked the door, and handed me the key.

"You better keep that door locked," she said, just a little sharply. "You never know . . ."

I wanted to ask her *what* you never know, but had the impression that it was something *everybody* was supposed to know, so I just nodded and agreed instead.

"You want to get some lunch," she said then, "there's a place down the road isn't too bad. Clean, anyhow, and they don't cater too much to those . . . well, it's clean." She pointed the way; you could see the sign from where we were standing. I thanked her, and started the car, and decided I might as well go there as anyplace else, especially since I could see she was watching to find out whether I did or not.

These people are all too big. Or almost all of them. But the man behind the counter at the dinner was enormous. He was tall and fat with a beefy red face and large open pores and a fleshy mound of a nose. I didn't like to look at him, and when he talked, he boomed so loud I could hardly understand him. On top of all that, the smell in that place was awful: not quite as bad as the drugstore, but some ways similar to it. I kept my eyes on the menu, which was full of unfamiliar words, and tried to remember that I was hungry.

The man was shouting at me — or it was more like growling, I guess — and I couldn't make out the words at first. He said it again, and I sorted out syllables and matched them with the words on the card, and then I got it:

"Goulash is nice today, miss . . ."

I didn't know what goulash was, and the state my stomach was in, with the smells, I decided I'd better play safe, and ordered a glass of milk, and some vegetable soup.

The milk had a strange taste to it. Not *bad* — just *different*. But of course, this came from cows. That was all right. But the vegetable soup . . . !

It was quite literally putrid, made as near as I could figure out from dead animal juices, in which vegetables had been soaked and cooked till any trace of flavor or nourishment was entirely removed. I took one taste of that, and then I realized what the really nauseating part of the odor was, in the diner and

the drugstore both. It was rotten meat, dead for some time, and then heated in preparation for eating.

The crackers that came with the soup were good; they had a nice salty tang. I ordered more of those, with another glass of milk, and sat back sipping slowly, trying to adjust to that smell, now that I realized I'd probably find it anywhere I could find food.

After a while, I got my insides enough in order so that I could look around a little and see the place, and the other people in it. That was when I turned around and saw Larry sitting next to me.

He was beautiful. He *is* beautiful. I know that's not what you're supposed to say about a man, and he wouldn't like it, but I can only say what I see, and of course that's partly a matter of my own training and my own feelings about myself.

At home on the ship, I always wanted to cut off my hair, because it was so black, and my skin was so white, and they didn't go together. But they wouldn't let me; they liked it that way, I guess, but *I* didn't. No child wants to feel like a freak, and nobody else had hair like that, or dead-white colorless skin, either.

Then, when I went down there, and saw all the humans, I was still a freak because I was so small.

Larry's small, too. Almost as small as I am. And he's all one color. He has hair, of course, but it's so light, and his skin is so dark (both from the sun, I found out), that he looks just about the same lovely golden color all over. Or at least as much of him as showed when I saw him that time, in the diner.

He was beautiful, and he was my size, and he didn't have ugly rough skin or big heavy hands. I stared at him, and I felt like grabbing on to him to make sure he didn't get away.

After a while I realized my mouth was half-open, and I was still holding a cracker, and I remembered that this was very bad manners. I put the cracker down and closed my mouth. He smiled. I didn't know if he was laughing at the odd way I was acting, or just being friendly, but I smiled back anyhow.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I mean, hello. How do you do, and I'm sorry if I startled you. I shouldn't have been staring."

"*You*" I said, and meant to finish. *You were staring?* But he went right on talking, so that I couldn't finish.

"I don't know what else you can expect, if you go around looking like that," he said.

"I'm sorry . . ." I started again.

"And you should be," he said sternly. "Anybody who walks into a place like this in the middle of a day like this looking the way you do has got to expect to get stared at a little."

The thing is, I wasn't used to the language; not used *enough*. I could communicate all right, and even understand some jokes, and I knew the spoken language, not some formal unusable version, because I learned it mostly watching those shows on the television screen. But I got confused this time, because "looking" means two different things, active and passive, and I was thinking about how I'd been *looking at* him, and . . .

That was my lucky day. I didn't want him to be angry at me, and the way I saw it, he was perfectly justified in scolding me, which is what I thought he was doing. But I *knew* he wasn't really angry; I'd have felt it if he was. So I said, "You're right. It was very rude of me, and I don't blame you for being annoyed. I won't do it any more."

He started laughing, and this time I knew it was friendly. Like I said, that was my lucky day; *he* thought I was being witty. And, from what he's told me since, I guess he realized then that *I* felt friendly too, because before that he'd just been bluffing it out, not knowing how to get to know me, and afraid *I'd* be sore at *him*, just for talking to me!

Which goes to show that sometimes you're better off not being *too* familiar with the local customs.

The trouble was there were too many things I didn't know, too many small ways to trip myself up. Things they couldn't have foreseen, or if they did, couldn't have done much about. All it took was a little caution and a lot of alertness, plus one big important item: staying in the background — not getting to know any one person too well — not giving any single individual a chance to observe too much about me.

But Larry didn't mean to let me do that. And I didn't want him to.

He asked questions; I tried to answer them. I did know enough at least of the conventions to realize

that I didn't have to give detailed answers, or could, at any point, act offended at being questioned so much. I *didn't* know enough to realize that reluctance or irritation on my part wouldn't have made him go away. We sat on those stools at the diner for most of an hour, talking, and after a little while I found I could keep the conversation on safer ground by asking *him* about himself, and about the country thereabouts. He seemed to enjoy talking.

Eventually, he had to go back to work. As near as I could make out, he was a test-pilot, or something like it, for a small experimental aircraft plant near the city. He lived not too far from where I was staying, and he wanted to see me that evening.

I hadn't told him where the motel was, and I had at least enough caution left not to tell him, even then. I did agree to meet him at the diner, but for lunch the next day again, instead of that evening. For one thing, I had a lot to do; and for another, I'd seen enough on television shows to know that an evening date was likely to be pretty long-drawn-out, and I wasn't sure I could stand up under that much close scrutiny. I had some studying-up to do first. But the lunch-date was fine; the thought of not seeing him at all was terrifying — as if he were an old friend in a world full of strangers. That was how I felt, that first time, maybe just because he was almost as small as I. But I think it was more than that, really.

I drove downtown again, and found a store that seemed to sell all kinds of clothing for women. Then when I got inside, I didn't know where to start, or what to get. I thought of just buying one of everything, so as to fill up a suitcase; the things I had on seemed to be perfectly satisfactory for actual *wearing* purposes. They were quite remarkably — when you stopped to think of it — similar to what most of the women I'd seen that day were wearing, and of course they weren't subject to the same problems of dirtying and wrinkling and such as the clothes in the store were.

I walked around for a while, trying to figure out what all the different items, shapes, sizes, and colors, were for. Some racks and counters had signs, but most of them were unfamiliar words like *brunchies*, or *Bermudas* or *scuffs*; or else they seemed to be mislabeled, like *dusters* for a sort of button-down dress, and *Postage Stamp Girdles* at one section of a long counter devoted to "Foundation Garments." For half an hour or so, I wandered around in there, shaking my head every time a saleswoman came up to me, because I didn't know, and couldn't figure out, what to ask for, or how to ask for it.

The thing was, I didn't dare draw too much attention to myself by doing or saying the wrong things. I'd have to find out more about clothes, somehow, before I could do much buying.

I went out, and on the same block I found a show-window full of suitcases. That was easy. I went in and pointed to one I liked, and paid for it, and walked out with it, feeling a little braver. After all, nobody had to know there was nothing in it. On the corner, I saw some books displayed in the window of a drug store. It took all the courage I had to go in there, after my first trip into one that looked very much like it, but I wanted a dictionary. This place didn't smell quite so strong; I suppose the pharmacy was enclosed in back, and I don't believe it had a lunch counter. Anyhow, I got in and out quickly, and walked back to the car, and sat down with the dictionary.

It turned out to be entirely useless, at least as far as *brunchies* and *Bermudas* were concerned. It had "scuff, v.," with a definition; "v.," I found out, meant *verb*, so that wasn't the word I wanted, but when I remembered the slippers on the counter with the sign, it made sense in a way.

Not enough sense, though. I decided to forget about the clothes for a while. The next problem was a driver's license.

The policeman that morning had been helpful, if over-interested, and since policemen directed traffic, they ought to have the information I wanted. I found one of them standing on a streetcorner looking not too busy, and asked him, and if his hair hadn't been brown instead of reddish (and only half there) I'd have thought it was the same one I talked to before. He wanted to know how old I was, and where was I from, and what I was doing there, and did I have a car, and was I *sure* I was nineteen?

Well, of course, I wasn't sure, but they'd told me that by the local reckoning, that was my approximate age. And I almost slipped and said I *had* a car, until I realized that I didn't have a right to drive one till I had a license. After he asked that one question, I began to feel suspicious about everything else he asked, and the interest he expressed. He was helpful, but I had to remember too, that it was the police who were charged with watching for suspicious characters, and — well, it was the last time I

asked a policeman for information.

He *did* tell me where I could rent a car to take my road test, though, and where to apply for the test. The Courthouse turned out to be the big building behind the square where I'd parked the car that morning, and arranging for the test turned out to be much simpler than, by then, I expected it to be. In a way, I suppose, all the questions I had to answer when I talked to the policeman had prepared me for the official session —though they didn't seem nearly so inquisitive there.

By this time, I'd come to expect that they wouldn't believe my age when I told them. The woman at the window behind the counter wanted to see a "birth certificate," and I produced the one piece of identification I had; an ancient and yellowed document they had kept for me all these years. From the information it contained, I suspected it might even *be* a birth certificate; whether or not, it apparently satisfied her, and after that all she wanted was things like my address and height and weight. Fortunately, they had taken the trouble, back on the ship, to determine these statistics for me, because things like that were always coming up on television shows, especially when people were being questioned by the police. For the address, of course, I used the motel. The rest I knew, and I guess we had the figures close enough to right so that at least the woman didn't question any of it.

I had my road test about half an hour later, in a rented car, and the examiner said I did very well. He seemed surprised, and I don't wonder, considering the way most of those people contrive to mismanage a simple mechanism like an automobile. I guess when they say Earth is still in the Mechanical Age, what they mean is that humans are just *learning* about machines.

The biggest single stroke of luck I had at any time came during that road test. We passed a public-looking building with a sign in front that I didn't understand.

"What's that place?" I asked the examiner, and he said, as if anyone would know what he meant, "That? Oh—the Library."

I looked it up in my dictionary as soon as I was done at the License Bureau, and when I found out what it was, everything became a great deal simpler.

There was a woman who worked there, who showed me, without any surprise at my ignorance, just how the card catalogue worked, and what the numbering system meant; she didn't ask me how old I was, or any other questions, or demand any proof of any kind to convince her I had a right to use the place. She didn't even bother me much with questions about what I was looking for. I told her there were a lot of things I wanted to know, and she seemed to think that was a good answer, and said if she could help me any way, not to hesitate to ask, and then she left me alone with those drawers and drawers full of letter-and-number keys to all the mysteries of an alien world.

I found a book on how to outfit your daughter for college, that started with underwear and worked its way through to jewelry and cosmetics. I also found a whole shelf full of law books, and in one of them, specific information about the motor vehicle regulations in different States. There was a wonderful book about diamonds and other precious stones, particularly fascinating because it went into the chemistry of the different stones, and gave me the best measuring-stick I found at any time to judge the general level of technology of that so-called Mechanical Age.

That was all I had time for. I couldn't believe it was so late, when the librarian came and told me they were closing up, and I guess my disappointment must have showed all over me, because she asked if I wouldn't like to have a card, so I could take books home?

I found out all I needed to get a card was identification. I was supposed to have a reference, too, but the woman said she thought perhaps it would be all right without one, in my case. And then, when I wanted to take a volume of the Encyclopedia Americana, she said they didn't usually circulate that, but if I thought I could bring it back within a day or two ...

I promised to, and I never did, and out of everything that happened, that's the one thing I feel badly about. I think she must have been a very unusual and *good* sort of woman, and I wish I had kept my promise to her.

Some of the stores downtown were still open. I bought the things I'd be expected to have, as near as I could make out from the book on college girls: panties and a garter belt and a brassiere, and stockings. A slip and another blouse, and a coat, because even in the early evening it was beginning to get chilly.



Then the salesgirl talked me into gloves and a scarf and some earrings. I was halfway back to the car when I remembered about night clothes, and went back for a gown and robe and slippers. That didn't begin to complete the college girls' list, but it seemed like a good start. I'd need a dress, too, I thought, if I ever did go out with Larry in the evening . . . but that could wait.

I put everything into the suitcase, and drove back to the motel. On the way, I stopped at a food store and bought a large container of milk, and some crackers, and some fruit —oranges and bananas and apples. Back in my room, I put everything away in the drawers, and then sat down with my book and my food, and had a wonderful time. I was hungry, and everything tasted good, away from the dead meat smells, and what with clothes in the drawers and everything, I was beginning to feel like a real Earth-girl.

I even took a bath in the bathroom.

A good long one. Next to the library, that's the thing I miss most. It would be even better, if they made the tubs bigger, so you could swim around some. But just getting wet all over like that, and splashing in the water, is fun. Of course, we could never spare enough water for that on the ship.

Altogether, it was a good evening; everything was fine until I tried to sleep in that bed. I felt as if I was being suffocated all over. The floor was almost as bad, but in a different way. And once I got to sleep, I guess I slept well enough, because I felt fine in the morning. But then, I think I must have been on a mild oxygen jag all the time I was down there; nothing seemed to bother me too much. That morning, I felt so good I worked up my courage to go into a restaurant again — a different one. The smell was beginning to be familiar, and I could manage better. I experimented with a cereal called oatmeal, which was delicious, then I went back to the motel, packed up all my new belongings, left the key on the desk — as instructed by the sign on the door — and started out for Denver.

Denver, according to the Encyclopedia Americana, is more of a true metropolitan area than Colorado Springs; that means — on Earth — that it is dirtier, more crowded, far less pleasant to look at or live in, and a great deal more convenient and efficient to do business in. In Denver, and with the aid of a Colorado driver's license for casual identification, I was able to sell two of my larger diamonds fairly quickly, at two different places, for something approximating half of their full value. Then I parked the car they had given me on a side street, took my suitcase, coat, and book with me, and walked to the nearest car sales lot. I left the keys in the old car, for the convenience of anyone who might want it.

Everything went extraordinarily smoothly, with just one exception. I had found out everything I needed to know in that library, except that when dealing with humans, one must always allow for waste time. If I had realized that at the time I left Colorado Springs that morning, everything might have turned out very differently indeed — although when I try to think just what other way it *could* have turned out I don't quite know . . . and I wonder, too, how much they knew, or planned, before they sent me down there . . .

This much is sure: if I hadn't assumed that a 70-mile trip, with a 60-mile average speed limit, would take approximately an hour and a half, and if I had realized that buying an automobile was not the same simple process as buying a nightgown, I wouldn't have been late for my luncheon appointment. And if I'd been there on time, I'd never have made the date for that night. As it was, I started out at seven o'clock in the morning, and only by exceeding the speed limit on the last twenty miles of the return trip did I manage to pull into that diner parking space at five minutes before two.

His car was still there!

It is so easy to look back and spot the instant of recognition or of error. My relief when I saw his car ... my delight when I walked in and saw and *felt* his mixture of surprise and joy that I had come, with disappointment and frustration because it was so late, and he had to leave almost immediately. And my complete failure, in the midst of the complexities of these inter-reactions, to think logically, or to recognize that his ordinary perceptions were certainly the equivalent of my own ...

At that moment, I wasn't thinking *about* any of these things. I spent a delirious sort of five minute period absorbing his feelings about me, and releasing my own at him. I hadn't planned to do it, not so soon, not till I knew much more than I did — perhaps after another week's reading and going about—but when he said that since I'd got there so late for lunch, I'd *have* to meet him for dinner, I found I agreed with him perfectly.

That afternoon, I bought a dress. This, too, took a great deal of time, even more than the car, because in the one case I simply had to look at a number of component parts, and listen to the operation of the motor, and feel for the total response of the mechanism, to determine whether it was suitable or not—but in the other, I had nothing to guide me but my own untrained taste, and the dubious preferences of the salesgirl, plus what I *thought* Larry's reactions *might* be. Also, I had to determine, without seeming too ignorant, just what sort of dress might be suitable for a dinner date — and without knowing for sure just how elaborate Larry's plans for the evening might be.

I learned a lot, and was startled to find that I enjoyed myself tremendously. But I couldn't make up my mind, and bought three dresses instead of one. It was after that, emboldened by pleasure and success, that I went back to that first drugstore. The Encyclopedia volume I had taken from the library, besides containing the information I wanted on Colorado, had an article on Cosmetics. I decided powder was unnecessary, although I could understand easily enough how important it must be to the native women, with their thick skin and large pores and patchy coloring; that accounted for the fact that the men were mostly so much uglier . . . and I wondered if Larry used it, and if that was why his skin looked so much better than the others'.

Most of the perfumes made me literally ill; a few were inoffensive or mildly pleasant, if you thought of them just as smells, and not as something to be mistaken for one's *own* smell. Apparently, though, from the amount of space given over to them on the counter, and the number of advertisements I had seen or heard for one brand or another, they were an essential item. I picked out a faint lavender scent, and then bought some lipstick, mascara, and eyebrow pencil. On these last purchases, it was a relief to find that I had no opportunity to display my ignorance about nuances of coloring, or the merits of one brand over another. The woman behind the counter knew exactly what I should have, and was not interested in hearing any of my opinions. She even told me how to apply the mascara, which was helpful, since the other two were obvious, and anyhow I'd seen them used on television, and the lipstick especially I had seen women use since I'd been here.

It turned out to be a little more difficult than it looked, when I tried it. Cosmetics apparently take a good deal more experience than clothing, if you want to have it look *right*. Right by *their* standards, I mean, so that your face becomes a formal design, and will register only a minimum of actual emotion or response.

I was supposed to meet Larry in the cocktail lounge of a hotel in Manitou Springs, the smaller town I'd passed through the day before on my way down from the mountain. I drove back that way now, with all my possessions in my new car, including the purse that held not only my remaining diamonds and birth certificate, but also a car registration, driver's license, wallet, and makeup. A little more than halfway there, I saw a motel with a "Vacancy" sign out, and an attractive clean look about it. I pulled in and got myself a room with no more concern than if I'd been doing that sort of thing all my life.

This time there was no question about my age, nor was there later on that evening, in the cocktail lounge or anywhere else. I suppose it was the lipstick that made the difference, plus a certain increase in self-confidence; apparently I wasn't too small to be an adult, provided I looked and acted like one.

The new room did not have a bathtub. There was a shower, which was fun, but not as much as the tub had been. Dressing was *not* fun, and when I was finished, the whole effect still didn't look right, in terms of my own mental image of an Earth-woman dressed for a date.

It was the shoes, of course. This kind of dress wanted high heels. I had tried a pair in the store, and promptly rejected the whole notion. Now I wondered if I'd been too hasty, but I realized I could not conceivably have added that discomfort to the already-pressing difficulties of stockings and garter belt.

This last problem got so acute when I sat down and tried to drive the car, that I did some thinking about it, and decided to take them off. It seemed to me that I'd seen a lot of bare legs with flat heels. It was only with high heels that stockings were a real necessity. Anyhow, I pulled the car over to the side on an empty stretch of road, and wriggled out of things with a great deal of difficulty. I don't believe it made much difference in my appearance. No one *seemed* to notice, and I do think the lack of heels was more important.

All of this has been easy to put down. The next part is harder: partly because it's so important; partly

because it's personal; partly because I just don't remember it all as clearly.

Larry was waiting for me when I got to the hotel. He stood up and walked over to me, looking at me as if I were the only person in the room besides himself, or as if he'd been waiting all his life, and only just that moment saw what it was he'd been waiting for. I don't know how I looked at him, but I know how I felt all of a sudden, and I don't think I can express it very well.

It was odd, because of the barriers to communication. The way he felt and the way I did are not things to put into words, and although I couldn't help but feel the impact of *his* emotion, I had to remember that he was deaf-and-blind to mine. All I could get from him for that matter, was a sort of generalized *noise*, loud but confused, without any features or details.

He smiled, and I smiled, and he said, "I didn't know if you'd really come . . ." and I said, "Am I late?" and he said, "Not much. What do you want to drink?"

I knew he meant something with alcohol in it, and I didn't dare, not till I'd experimented all alone first.

"Could I get some orange juice?" I asked.

He smiled again. "You can get anything you want. You don't drink?" He took my arm, and walked me over to a booth in the back corner, and went on without giving me a chance to answer. "No, of course you don't. Just orange juice and milk. Listen, Tina, I've been scared to ask you, but we might as well get it over with. How old are you anyhow? . . ." We sat down, but he still didn't give me a chance to answer. "No, that's not the right question. Who are you? What are you? What makes a girl like you exist at all? How come they let you run around on your own like this? Does your mother . . . Never mind me, honey. I've got no business asking anything. Sufficient unto the moment, and all that. I'm just talking so much because I'm so nervous. I haven't felt like this since . . . since I first went up for a solo in a Piper Cub. I didn't think you'd come, and you did, and you're still here in spite of me and my dumb yap. "Orange juice for the lady, please," he told the waiter, "and a beer for me. Draft."

I just sat there. As long as he kept talking, I didn't have to. He looked just as beautiful as he had in the diner, only maybe more so. His skin was smoother; I suppose he'd just shaved. And he was wearing a tan suit just a shade darker than his hair, and there was absolutely nothing I could say out loud in his language that would mean anything at all, so I waited to see if he'd start talking again.

"You're not mad at me, Tina?"

I smiled and shook my head.

"Well, *say* something then."

"It's more fun listening to you."

"You say that just like you mean it ... or do you mean *funny*?"

"No. I mean that it's hard for me to talk much. I don't know how to say a lot of the things I want to say. And most people don't say anything when they talk, and I don't like listening to their voices, but I do like yours, and ... I can't help liking what you say ... it's always so *nice*. About me, I mean. Complimentary. Flattering."

"You were right the first time. And you seem to be able to say what you mean very clearly."

Which was just the trouble. Not only able to, but unable not to. It didn't take any special planning or remembering to say or act the necessary lies to other humans. But Larry was the least alien person I'd ever known. Dishonesty to him was like lying to myself. Playing a role for him was pure schizophrenia.

Right then, I knew it was a mistake. I should never have made that date, or at least not nearly so soon. But even as I thought that, I had no more intention of cutting it short or backing out than I did of going back to the ship the next day. I just tried not to talk too much, and trusted to the certain knowledge that I was as important to him as he was to me —so perhaps whatever mistakes I made, whatever I said that sounded *wrong*, he would either accept or ignore or forgive.

But of course you can't just sit all night and say nothing. And the simplest things could trip me up. Like when he asked if I'd like to dance, and all I had to say was "No, thanks," and instead, because I *wanted* to try it, I said, "I don't know how."

Or when he said something about going to a movie, and I agreed enthusiastically, and he gave me a choice of three different ones that he wanted to see ... "Oh, anyone," I told him, "You're easy to please,"

he said, but he insisted on my making a choice. There was something he called "an old Astaire-Rogers," and something else that was made in England, and one current American one with stars I'd seen on television. I wanted to see either of the others. I could have named one, any one. Instead I heard myself blurting out that I'd never been to a movie.

At that point, of course, he began to ask questions in earnest. And at that point, schizoid or not, I had to lie. It was easier, though, because I'd been thoroughly briefed in my story, for just such emergencies as this — and because I could talk more or less uninterruptedly, with only pertinent questions thrown in, and without having to react so much to the emotional tensions between us.

I told him how my parents had died in an automobile accident when I was a baby; how my two uncles had claimed me at the hospital; about the old house up on the mountainside, and the convent school, and the two old men who hated the evils of the world; about the death of the first uncle, and at long last the death of the second, and the lawyers and the will and everything — the whole story, as we'd worked it out back on the ship.

It answered everything, explained everything — even the unexpected item of not being able to eat meat. My uncles were vegetarians, which was certainly a harmless eccentricity compared to most of the others I credited them with.

As a story, it was pretty far-fetched, but it hung together — and in certain ways, it wasn't even *too* far removed from the truth. It was, anyhow, the closest thing to the truth that I could tell — and I therefore delivered it with a fair degree of conviction. Of course it wasn't designed to stand up to the close and personal inspection Larry gave it; but then he *wanted* to believe me.

He seemed to swallow it. What he did, of course, was something any man who relies, as he did, on his reflexes and responses to stay alive, learns to do very early — he filed all questions and apparent discrepancies for reference, or for thinking over when there was time, and proceeded to make the most of the current situation.

We both made the most of it. It was a wonderful evening, from that point on. We went to the Astaire-Rogers picture, and although I missed a lot of the humor, since it was contemporary stuff from a time before I had any chance to learn about Earth, the music and dancing were fun. Later on, I found that dancing was not nearly as difficult or intricate as it looked — at least not with Larry. All I had to do was give in to a natural impulse to let my body follow his. It felt wonderful, from the feet on up.

Finally, we went back to the hotel, where we'd left my car, and I started to get out of his, but he reached out an arm, and stopped me.

"There's something else I guess you never did," he said. His voice sounded different from before. He put both his hands on my shoulders, and pulled me toward him, and leaned over and kissed me.

I'd seen it, of course, on television.

I'd seen it, but I had no idea ...

That first time, it was something I felt on my lips, and felt so sweetly and so strongly that the rest of me seemed to melt away entirely. I had no other sensations, except in that one place where his mouth touched mine. That was the first time.

When it stopped, the world stopped, and I began again, but I had to sort out the parts and pieces and put them all together to find out who I was. While I did this, his hands were still on my shoulders, where they'd been all along, only he was holding me at arm's distance away from him, and looking at me curiously.

"It really was, wasn't it?" he said.

"What?" I tried to say, but the sound didn't come out. I took a breath and "Was what?" I croaked.

"The first time." He smiled suddenly, and it was like the sun coming up in the morning, and then his arms went all the way around me. I don't know whether he moved over on the seat, or I did, or both of us. "Oh, baby, baby," he whispered in my ear, and then there was the second time.

The second time was like the first, and also like dancing, and some ways like the bathtub. This time none of me melted away; it was all there, and all close to him, and all warm, and all tingling with sensations. I was more completely alive right then than I had even been before in my life.

After we stopped kissing each other, we stayed very still, holding on to each other, for a while, and

then he moved away just a little, enough to breathe better.

I didn't know what to do. I didn't want to get out of the car. I didn't even want to be separated from him by the two or three inches between us on the seat. But he was sitting next to me now, staring straight ahead, not saying anything, and I just didn't know what came next. On television, the kiss was always the end of the scene.

He started the car again. I said, "I have to . . . my car . . . I . . ."

"We'll come back," he said. "Don't worry about it. We'll come back. Let's just drive a little . . . ?" he pulled out past my car, and turned and looked at me for a minute. "You don't want to go now, do you? Right away?"

I shook my head, but he wasn't looking at me any more, so I took a breath and said out loud, "No."

We came off a twisty street onto the highway. "So that's how it hits you," he said. He wasn't exactly talking to me; more like thinking out loud. "Twenty-seven years a cool cat, and now it has to be a crazy little midget that gets to you." He had to stop then, for a red light — the same light I'd stopped at the first time on the way in. That seemed a long long time before.

Larry turned around and took my hand. He looked hard at my face. "I'm sorry, hon. I didn't mean that the way it sounded."

"What?" I said. "What do you mean?" I hadn't even tried to make sense out of what he was saying before; he wasn't talking to me anyhow.

"Kid," he said, "maybe that was the first time for you, but in a different way it was the first time for me too." His hand opened and closed around mine, and his mouth opened and closed too, but nothing came out. The light was green, he noticed, and started moving, but it turned red again. This time he kept watching it.

"I don't suppose anybody ever told you about the birds and the bees and the butterflies," he said.

"Told me *what* about them?" He didn't answer right away, so I thought about it. "All I can think of is they all have wings. They all fly."

"So do I. So does a fly. What I mean is . . . the hell with it!" He turned off the highway, and we went up a short hill and through a sort of gateway between two enormous rocks. "Have you ever been here?" he asked.

"I don't think so ..."

"They call it The Garden of the Gods. I don't know why. I like it here ... it's a good place to drive and think."

There was a lot of moonlight, and the Garden was all hills and drops and winding roads between low-growing brush, and everywhere, as if the creatures of some giant planet had dropped them, were those towering rocks, their shapes scooped out and chiseled and hollowed and twisted by wind, water, and sand. Yes, it was lovely, and it was non-intrusive. Just what he said — a good place to drive and think.

Once he came to the top of a hill, and stopped the car, and we looked out over the Garden, spreading out in every direction, with the moonlight shadowed in the sagebrush, and gleaming off the great rocks. Then we turned and looked at each other, and he reached out for me and kissed me again; after which he pulled away as if the touch of me hurt him, and grabbed hold of the wheel with a savage look on his face, and raced the motor, and raised a cloud of dust on the road behind us.

I didn't understand, and I felt hurt. I wanted to stop again. I wanted to be kissed again. I didn't like sitting alone on my side of the seat, with that growl in his throat not quite coming out.

I asked him to stop again. He shook his head, and made believe to smile.

"I'll buy you a book," he said. "All about the birds and the bees and a little thing we have around here we call sex. I'll buy it tomorrow, and you can read it — you *do* know how to read, don't you? — and then we'll take another ride, and we can park if you want to. Not tonight, baby."

"But I *know* . . ." I started, and then had sense enough to stop. I knew about sex; but what I knew about it didn't connect with kissing or parking the car, or sitting close . . . and it occurred to me that maybe it did, and maybe there was a lot I *didn't* know that wasn't on Television, and wasn't on the Ship's reference tapes either. Morals and mores, and nuances of behavior. So I shut up, and let him take me

back to the hotel again, to my own car.

He leaned past me to open the door on my side, but he couldn't quite make it, and I had my fourth kiss. Then he let go again, and almost pushed me out of the car; but when I started to close the door behind me, he called out, "Tomorrow night?"

"I . . . all right," I said. "Yes. Tomorrow night."

"Can I pick you up?"

There was no reason not to this time. The first time I wouldn't tell him where I lived, because I knew I'd have to change places, and I didn't know where yet. I told him the name of the motel, and where it was.

"Six o'clock," he said.

"All right."

"Good night."

"Good night."

I don't remember driving back to my room. I think I slept on the bed that night, without ever stopping to determine whether it was comfortable or not. And when I woke up in the morning, and looked out the window at a white-coated landscape, the miracle of snow (which I had never seen before; not many planets have as much water vapor in their atmospheres as Earth does) in summer weather seemed trivial in comparison to what had happened to me.

Trivial, but beautiful. I was afraid it would be very cold, but it wasn't.

I had gathered, from the weather-talk in the place where I ate breakfast, that in this mountain-country (it was considered to be very high altitude there), snow at night and hot sun in the afternoon was not infrequent in the month of April, though it was unusual for May.

It was beautiful to look at, and nice to walk on, but it began melting as soon as the sun was properly up, and then it looked awful. The red dirt there is pretty, and so is the snow, but when they began merging into each other in patches and muddy spots, it was downright ugly.

Not that I cared. I ate oatmeal and drank milk and nibbled at a piece of toast, and tried to plan my activities for the day. To the library first, and take back the book they'd lent me. Book . . . all right then, get a book on sex. But that was foolish; I *knew* all about sex. At least I knew . . . what did I know? I knew their manner of reproduction, and ...

Just why, at that time and place, I should have let it come through to me, I don't know. I'd managed to stay in a golden daze from the time in the Garden till that moment, refusing to think through the implications of what Larry said.

Sex. Sex is mating and reproduction. Dating and dancing and kissing are parts of the courtship procedure. And the television shows all stop with kissing, because the mating itself is taboo. Very simple. Also *very* taboo.

Of course, they didn't *say* I couldn't. They never said anything about it at all. It was just obvious. It wouldn't even work. We were *different*, after all.

Oh, technically, biologically, of course, we were probably cross-fertile, but ...

The whole thing was so obviously *impossible*!

They should have warned me. I'd never have let it go this far, if I'd known.

Sex. Mating. Marriage. Tribal rites. Rituals and rigmaroles, and stay here forever. Never go back. *Never go back?*

There was an instant's sheer terror, and then the comforting knowledge that they wouldn't *let* me do that. I had to go back.

Baby on a spaceship?

Well, I was a baby on a spaceship, but that was different. How different? I was older. I wasn't born there. Getting born is complicated. Oxygen, gravity, things like that. You can't raise a *human* baby on a spaceship . . . *Human*? What's human? What am I? Never mind the labels. It would be *my* baby ...

I didn't want a baby. I just wanted Larry to hold me close to him and kiss me.

I drove downtown and on the way to the library I passed a bookstore, so I stopped and went in there instead. That was better I could buy what I wanted, and not have to ask permission to take it out,

and if there was more than one, I could have all I wanted.

I asked the man for books about sex. He looked so startled, I realized the taboo must apply on the verbal level too.

I didn't care. He showed me where the books were, and that's all that mattered. "Non-fiction here," he said. "That what you wanted, Miss?"

Non-fiction. Definitely. I thanked him, and picked out half a dozen different books. One was a survey of sexual behavior and morals; another was a manual of techniques; one was on the psychology of sex, and there was another about abnormal sex, and one on physiology, and just to play safe, considering the state of my own ignorance, one that announced itself as giving a "clear simple explanation of the facts of life for adolescents."

I took them all to the counter, and paid for them, and the man still looked startled, but he took the money. He insisted on wrapping them up, though, before I could leave.

The next part of this is really Larry's story, but unable as I am, even now, to be *certain* about his unspoken thoughts, I can only tell it as I experienced it. I didn't do anything all that day, except wade through the books I'd bought, piece-meal, reading a few pages here and a chapter there. The more I read, the more confused I got. Each writer contradicted all the others, except in regard to the few basic biological facts that I already knew. The only real addition to my factual knowledge was the information in the manual of technique about contraception — and that was rather shocking, even while it was tempting.

The mechanical contrivances these people made use of were foolish, of course, and typical of the stage of culture they are going through. If I wanted to prevent conception, while engaging in an act of sexual intercourse, I could do so, of course, but ...

The shock to the glandular system wouldn't be too severe; it was the psychological repercussions I was thinking about. The idea of pursuing a course of action whose sole motivation was the procreative urge, and simultaneously to decide s an act of will to refuse to procreate ...

I *could* do it, theoretically, but in practice new I never would.

I put the book down and went outside in the afternoon sunshine. The motel was run by a young married couple, and I watched the woman come out and put her baby in the playpen. She was laughing and talking to it; she looked happy; so did the baby.

But *I* wouldn't be. Not even if they let me. I couldn't live here and bring up a child — children? — on this primitive, almost barbaric, world. Never ever be able fully to communicate with anyone. Never, ever, be entirely honest with anyone.

Then I remembered what it was like to be in Larry's arms, and wondered what kind of communication I could want that might surpass that. Then I went inside and took a shower and began to dress for the evening.

It was too early to get dressed. I was ready too soon. I went out and got in the car, and pulled out onto the highway and started driving. I was halfway up the mountain before I knew where I was going, and then I doubled my speed.

I was scared. I ran away.

There was still some snow on the mountain top. Down below, it would be warm yet, but up there it was cold. The big empty house was full of dust and chill and I brought fear in with me. I wished I had known where I was going when I left my room; I wanted my coat. I wanted something to read while I waited. I remembered the library book and almost went back. Instead, I went to the dark room in back that had once been somebody's kitchen, and opened the cupboard and found the projector and yelled for help.

I didn't know where they were, how far away, whether cruising or landed somewhere, or how long it would take. All I could be sure of was that they couldn't come till after dark, full dark, and that would be, on the mountain top, at least another four hours.

There was a big round black stove in a front room, that looked as if it could burn wood safely. I went out and gathered up everything I could find nearby that looked to be combustible, and started a fire, and began to feel better. I beat the dust off a big soft chair, and pulled it over close to the stove, and curled

up in it, warm and drowsy and knowing that help was on the way.

I fell asleep, and I was in the car with Larry again, in front of that hotel, every cell of my body tinglingly awake, and I woke up, and moved the chair farther back away from the fire, and watched the sun set through the window — till I fell asleep again, and dreamed again, and when I woke, the sun was gone, but the mountain top was brightly lit. I had forgotten about the moon.

I tried to remember what time it rose and when it set, but all I knew was it had shone as bright last night in the Garden of the Gods.

I walked around, and went outside, and got more wood, and when it was hot in the room again, I fell asleep, and Larry's hands were on my shoulders, but he wasn't kissing me.

He was shouting at me. He sounded furious, but I couldn't feel any anger. "You God-damn little idiot!" he shouted. "What in the name of all that's holy? . . . put you over my knee and ... For God's sake, baby," he stopped shouting, "what did you pull a dumb trick like this for?"

"I was scared. I didn't even plan to do it. I just did."

"Scared? My God, I should think you would be! Now listen, babe. I don't know yet what's going on, and I don't think I'm going to like it when I find out. I don't like it already that you told me a pack of lies last night. Just the same, God help me, I don't think it's what it sounds like. But I'm the only one who doesn't. Now you better give it to me straight, because they've got half the security personnel of this entire area out hunting for you, and nobody else is going to care much what the truth is. My God, on top of everything else, you had to *run away*! Now, give out, kid, and make it good. This one has got to stick."

I didn't understand a lot of what he said. I started trying to explain, but he wouldn't listen. He wanted something else, and I didn't know what.

Finally, he made me understand.

He'd almost believed my story the night before. Almost, but there was a detail somewhere that bothered him. He couldn't remember it at first; it kept nudging around the edge of his mind, but he didn't know what it was. He forgot about it for a while. Then, in the Garden, I made my second big mistake. (He didn't explain all of this then; he just accused, and I didn't understand this part completely until later.) I wanted him to park the car.

Any girl on Earth, no matter how sheltered, how inexperienced, would have known better than that. As he saw it, he had to decide whether I was just so carried away by the night and the mood and the moment that I didn't *care* — or whether my apparent innocence was a pose all along.

When we separated in front of the hotel that night, we both had to take the same road for a while. Larry was driving right behind me for a good three miles, before I turned off at the motel. And that was when he realized what the detail was that had been bothering him: my car.

The first time he saw me, I was driving a different make and model, with Massachusetts plates on it. He was sure of that, because he had copied it down when he left the luncheonette, the first time we met.

Larry had never told me very clearly about the kind of work he did. I knew it was something more or less "classified," having to do with aircraft — jet planes or experimental rockets, or something like that. And I knew, without his telling me, that the work — not just the *job*, but the work he did at it — was more important to him than anything else ever had been. More important, certainly, than he had ever expected any woman to be.

So, naturally, when he met me that day, and knew he wanted to see me again, but couldn't get my address or any other identifying information out of me, he had copied down the license number of my car, and turned it in, with my name, to the Security Officer on the Project. A man who has spent almost every waking moment from the age of nine planning and preparing to fit himself for a role in humanity's first big fling into space doesn't endanger his security status by risking involuntary contamination from an attractive girl. The little aircraft plant on the fringes of town was actually a top-secret key division in the Satellite project, and if you worked there, you took precautions.

The second time I met him at the luncheonette, he had been waiting so long, and had so nearly given up any hope of my coming, that he was no longer watching the road or the door when I finally got there — and when he left, he was so pleased at having gotten a dinner date with me, that he didn't notice much



of anything at all. Not except out of the corner of one eye, and with only the slightest edge of subconscious recognition: just enough so that some niggling detail that was out-of-place kept bothering him thereafter; and just enough so that he made a point of stopping in the Security Office again that afternoon to add my new motel address to the information he'd given them the day before.

The three-mile drive in back of my Colorado plates was just about long enough, finally, to make the discrepancy register consciously.

Larry went home and spent a bad night. His feelings toward me, as I could hardly understand at the time, were a great deal stronger, or at least more clearly defined, than mine about him. But since he was more certain just what it was he wanted, and less certain what *I* did, every time he tried to fit my attitude in the car into the rest of what he knew, he'd come up with a different answer, and nine answers out of ten were angry and suspicious and agonizing.

"Now look, babe," he said, "you've got to see this. I trusted *you*; really, all the time, I did trust you. But I didn't trust *me*. By the time I went to work this morning, I was half-nuts. I didn't know *what* to think, that's all. And I finally sold myself on the idea that if you were what you said you were, nobody would get hurt, and — well, if you *weren't* on the level, I better find out, quick. You see that?"

"Yes," I said.

"Okay. So I told them about the license plates, and about — the other stuff."

What other stuff?" What else was there? How stupid could I be?

"I mean, the — in the car. The way you — Listen, kid," he said, his face grim and demanding again. "It's still just as true as it was then. I *still* don't know. They called me this evening, and said when they got around to the motel to question you, you'd skipped out. They also said that Massachusetts car was stolen. And there were a couple of other things they'd picked up that they wouldn't tell me, but they've got half the National Guard and all the Boy Scouts out after you by now. They wanted me to tell them anything I could think of that might help them find this place. I couldn't think of anything while I was talking to them. Right afterwards, I remembered plenty of things — which roads you were familiar with, and what you'd seen before and what you hadn't, stuff like that, so —"

"So you —?"

"So I came out myself. I wanted to find you first. Listen, babe, I love you. Maybe I'm a sucker, and maybe I'm nuts, and maybe I-don't-know-what. But I figured maybe I could find out more, and easier on you, than they could. And honey, it better be good, because I don't think I've got what it would take to turn you in, and now I've found you —"

He let it go there, but that was plenty. He was willing to listen. He wanted to believe in me, because he wanted me. And finding me in the house I'd described, where I'd said it was, had him half-convinced. But I still had to explain those Massachusetts plates. And I couldn't.

I was psychologically incapable of telling him another lie, now, when I knew I would never see him again, that this was the last time I could ever possibly be close to him in any way. I couldn't estrange myself by lying.

And I was *also* psychologically incapable — I found out — of telling the truth. They'd seen to that.

It was the first time I'd ever hated them. The first time, I suppose, that I fully realized my position with them.

I could not tell the truth, and I would not tell a lie; all I could do was explain this, and hope he would believe me. I could explain, too, that I was no spy, no enemy; that those who had prevented me from telling what I wanted to tell were no menace to his government or his people.

He believed me.

It was just that simple. He believed me, because I suppose he knew, without knowing how he knew it, that it was truth. Humans are not incapable of communication; they are simply unaware of it.

I told him, also, that they were coming for me, that I had called them, and — regretfully — that he had better leave before they came.

"You said they weren't enemies or criminals. You were telling the truth, weren't you?"

"Yes, I was. They won't *harm* you. But they might . . ." I couldn't say it. I didn't know the words when I tried to say it. *Might take you away with them ... with us . . .*

"Might what?"

"Might . . . oh, I don't *know*!"

Now he was suspicious again. "All right," he said. "I'll leave. You come with me."

It was just that simple. Go back with him. Let them come and not find me. What could they do? Their own rules would keep them from hunting for me. They couldn't come down among the people of Earth. Go back. Stop running.

We got into his car, and he turned around and smiled at me again, like the other time.

I smiled back, seeing him through a shiny kind of mist which must have been tears. I reached for him, and he reached for me at the same time.

When we let go, he tried to start the car, and it wouldn't work. Of course. I'd forgotten till then. I started laughing and crying at the same time in a sort of a crazy way, and took him back inside and showed him the projector. They'd forgotten to give me any commands about not doing that, I guess. Or they thought it wouldn't matter.

It did matter. Larry looked it over, and puzzled over it a little, and fooled around, and asked me some questions. I didn't have much technical knowledge, but I knew what it did, and he figured out the way it did it. Nothing with an electro-magnetic motor was going to work while that thing was turned on, not within a mile or so in any direction. And there wasn't any way to turn it off. It was a homing beam, and it was on to stay – foolproof.

That was when he looked at me, and said slowly, "You got here three days ago, didn't you, babe?"

I nodded.

"There was – God-damn it, it's too foolish! There was a –a *flying saucer* story in the paper that day. Somebody saw it land on a hilltop somewhere. Some crackpot. Some . . . how about it, kid?"

I couldn't say yes and I couldn't say no, and I did the only thing that was left, which was to get hysterical. In a big way.

He had to calm me down, of course. And I found out why the television shows stop with the kiss. The rest is very private and personal.

*Author's note: This story was dictated to me by a five-year-old boy – word-for-word, except for a few editorial changes of my own. He is a very charming and bright youngster who plays with my own five-year-old daughter. One day he wandered into my office, and watched me typing for a while, then asked what I was doing. I answered (somewhat irritably, because the children are supposed to stay out of the room when I'm working) that I was trying to write a story.*

*"What kind of a story?"*

*"A grown-up story."*

*"But what kind?"*

*"A science-fiction story." The next thing I was going to do was to call my daughter, and ask her to take her company back to the playroom. I had my mouth open, but I never got a syllable out. Teddy was talking.*

*"I don't know where they got the car," he said. "They made three or four stops before the last . . . "He had a funny look on his face, and his eyes were glazed-looking.*

*I had seen some experimental work with hypnosis and post-hypnotic performance. After the first couple of sentences, I led Teddy into the living room, and switched on the tape-recorder. I left it on as long as he kept talking. I had to change tapes once, and missed a few more sentences. When he was done, I asked him, with the tape still running, where he had heard that story.*

*"What story?" he asked. He looked perfectly normal again. "The story you just told me."*

*He was obviously puzzled.*

*"The science-fiction story," I said.*

*"I don't know where they got the car," he began; his face was set and his eyes were blank.*

*I kept the tape running, and picked up the parts I'd missed before. Then I sent Teddy off to the playroom, and played back the tape, and thought for a while.*

*There was a little more, besides what you've read. Parts of it were confused, with some*

*strange words mixed in, and with sentences half-completed, and a feeling of ambivalence or censorship or inhibition of some kind preventing much clarity. Other parts were quite clear. Of these, the only section I have omitted so far that seems to me to belong in the story is this one:—*

The baby will have to be born on Earth! They have decided that themselves. And for the first time, I am glad that they cannot communicate with me as perfectly as they do among themselves. I can think some things they do not know about.

We are not coming back. I do not think that I will like it on Earth for very long, and I do not know — neither does Larry — what will happen to us when the Security people find us, and we cannot answer their questions. But—

I am a woman now, and I love like a woman. Larry will not be their pet; so I cannot be. I am not sure that I am fit to be what Larry thinks of as a "human being." He says I must learn to be "my own master." I am not at all sure I could do this, if it were necessary, but fortunately, this is one of Larry's areas of semantic confusion. The feminine of *master* is *mistress*, which has various meanings.

Also, there is the distinct possibility, from what Larry says, that we will not, *either* of us, be allowed even as much liberty as we have here.

There is also the matter of gratitude. *They* brought me up, took care of me, taught me, loved me, gave me a way of life, and a knowledge of myself, infinitely richer than I could ever have had on Earth. Perhaps they even saved my life, healing me when I was quite possibly beyond the power of Earthly medical science to save. But against all this—

*They* caused the damage to start with. It was *their* force-field that wrecked the car and killed my parents. *They* have paid for it; *they* are paying for it yet. *They* will continue to pay, for more years than make sense in terms of a human lifetime. *They* will continue to wander from planet to planet and system to system, because *they* have broken *their* own law, and now may never go home.

But *I* can.

I am a woman, and Larry is a man. We will go home and have our baby. And perhaps the baby will be the means of our freedom, some day. If we cannot speak to save ourselves, he may some day be able to speak for us.

I do not think the blocks they set in us will penetrate my womb as my own thoughts, I hope, already have.

*Author's note: Before writing this story – as a story – I talked with Teddy's parents. I approached them cautiously. His mother is a big woman, and a brunette. His father is a friendly fat redhead. I already knew that neither of them reads science-fiction. The word is not likely to be mentioned in their household.*

*They moved to town about three years ago. Nobody here knew them before that, but there are rumors that Teddy is adopted. They did not volunteer any confirmation of that information when I talked to them, and they did not pick up on any of the leads I offered about his recitation.*

*Teddy himself is small and fair-haired. He takes after his paternal grandmother, his mother says . . .*

## THE LADY WAS A TRAMP

SHE HAD been lovely once, sleek-lined and proud, with shining flanks; and men had come to her with hungry hearts and star-filled eyes, and high pulse of adventure in their blood.

Now she was old. Her hide was scarred with use, her luster dulled; though there was beauty in her still it was hidden deep. A man had to know where to look—and he had to care.

The young man left the conditioned coolness of the Administration Building and paused outside the door to orient. Then he strode briskly forward, ignoring the heat that wilted his uniform collar and damply curled the edges of the freshly stamped papers in his breast pocket. He passed the inner tier of docks,

refusing to look to left or right at the twin proud heights of gleaming Navy vessels.

Beyond them, alone in the outmost ring, the Lady Jane sat on her base in the concrete hole, waiting. In the white-light glare of the shadowless Dome, each smallest pit and pockmark of twenty years' usage stood out in cruel relief against the weathered darkness of her hull. Potbellied, dumpy, unbeautiful, she squatted without impatience inside the steel framework of supports, while her tanks were flushed and her tubes reamed clean. When the dock gang was done, and the ravages of the last voyage repaired insofar as could be, she would set forth once more on her rounds of the ports in space. Meantime, she rested.

The young man paused. It was his first good look at the Lady Jane. He half-turned back; but it was too late now. Fury, or training, or despair, or some of all of them, moved him on.

"That's him all right," Anita smiled, and turned a knob on the Lady Jane's viewpoint screen; the figure leaped toward them with focussed clarity, and the IBMan insignia showed up on the jacket sleeve.

"Mad dogs and eye-bee-men," Chan quoted softly, and leaned forward to study the young man with mock amazement. On the tenth "day" of Lunar sunlight it was still possible to keep moderately cool inside an unsealed ship, and the central Administration Building was kept at a steady seventy, day or night. But out in the atmosphere dome, it was hot. Yet the young man walking briskly toward the ship wore formal greens, and his shirt was bound at his neck with a knotted tie. Chandra leaned back, picked up a tall cold glass and shook his head.

"Look at him, Chan! He's a kid. . . ."

Chan shrugged. "You knew that before. You got the papers. . . ."

Impatiently, she shook her head. "I know. But look at him. . . ."

"I wasn't any older—" Chandra began.

"Yes you were! I don't know what your papers said, but—look at him. And you weren't an IBMan. And we were all younger then. And—darling, you were a man!"

He laughed and stood up, rumpling her hair as he passed. "Well, if that's all that's eating on you, babe—hell, four of us kept you happy half-way home."

He ducked through the bunk-room door as she started to rise. "Don't shoot," he called back.

"It ain't so funny, honey." She stood watching the screen. "What's bothering me is, who's going to keep him happy?"

Terence Hugh Carnahan, Lieutenant, U.N.N. Reserves, was twenty-four years old and newly commissioned. He was stuffed to the gills with eight full years of Academy training, precision, and knowledge. The shiny new stripes on his sleeve and the dampening papers inside his breast pocket were the prizes he'd worked for and dreamed of as long as it mattered. The fruits were sour now, and the dream was curdled. A man might approach the Lady incited by lust to a venture of greed; but the sight of her was enough to wipe out the last visions of glory.

The Lieutenant moved on, more slowly. He stopped as a three-wheeled red-and-white-striped baggage truck swung out in a wide crazy curve from behind the Navy ship to the left and careened to a stop at the Lady's side.

A tall thin man in rumpled full-dress whites leaped out of the bucket, swinging a canvas suitcase in his hand. He climbed aboard the ship's waiting elevator and it started up.

Terry walked on and waited beside the truck for the cage to come down. When it did, he produced his ID card, got inside, and rode up in silence.

In the open lock, the man in the dirty whites was waiting for him. He held out his hand, and for the first time Terry saw the pilot's jets on his lapels; and the boards on his shoulders spelled Commander.

"You the new IBMan?" the pilot asked. "Where's your gear?"

"I sent it on this morning." They shook, and the pilot's slim fingers were unexpectedly cool and dry.

"Welcome to our happy home," he said. "Glad to have you aboard. And all that sort of thing. Manuel Ramon Decardez, at your service. They call me Deke."

"I'm Terry Carnahan."

"Come on in. I guess they're all waiting." Deke led the way through the open inner valve.

In the suit room, the pilot turned back. "Just take it easy, kid," he said. "It ain't like the Navy in here."

It wasn't.

The Lieutenant had been on merchant ships before. It was part of his training to know the layout and standard equipment of every jump-ship ever made. He had been on inspection tours; and a Lady class ship was still in Academy use for cadet instruction trips. But that one was Navy-maintained and Navy-staffed.

This Lady had left the service thirteen years back. The crew quarters had been torn out to make an extra hold, and the rule book had gone by the wayside along with the hammocks.

"Up here," Deke said, and Terry followed him up the ladder to Officers' Country. Then he stood in the wardroom doorway and stared at the crazy carnival scene.

To start with, the overheads were off. The only light was diffused U-V out of the algy tanks that cut two-foot swaths along opposite bulkheads. In the yellow-green dimness, the scattered lounging chairs and coffee cups and a tray with a bottle and glasses on the table, gave a ridiculous cocktail-bar effect to the whole place. And the first thing he saw was a hippy blonde, in tight black slacks and a loosely tied white shirt, who detached herself from the arm of a chair—and from the encircling arm of what looked like a naked brown-skinned man inside the chair. She ran across the room to fling herself on Deke, who picked her up bodily, kissed her with gusto.

"Where did you sneak in from?" she demanded. "We were waiting for—"

"Whoa, babe," Deke started. "If you mean—" He started to turn, began to move forward, to let Terry in, but from a shadowy corner a wiry little man in coveralls, with grease-stains on his hands and his hair and his face, broke in.

"What the hell! These two give me a pile of pitch about haulin' myself up here to give the new kid a big hello, and all I find is this old s.o.b. instead!" These two appeared to be the blonde and the naked man. Deke was the s.o.b.

"You bitchin' again, Mike?" The voice was a bull-roar; it came from the only member of the Lady's crew Terry had met before. The Captain came down the ladder from Control, sneakers and rolled-cuff workpants first, and then the tremendous bulk of chest and arms, bristled with wiry curling red-gold hair. The room had looked crowded before. With Karl Hillstrom's two-hundred-twenty pounds added, it was jammed. "Relax," he said. "Have a drink and relax. Nita said she saw the kid comin' . . ."

Deke had given up trying to interrupt. He turned back to Terry and shrugged. "I told you—" he started, and just then the blonde saw him.

"Oh, my God!" she said, and broke into helpless laughter; so did Deke. She took a step forward toward Terry, trying to talk. He ignored it.

"Captain Hillstrom?" he said formally, as loud as possible. He felt like a school-kid in a lousy play, doing a bad job of acting the part of the butler at a masquerade.

The big man turned. "Oh, there you are!" He held out a burly hand. "You met Deke already? Anita, this is our new IBMan, Terry Carnahan. Anita Filmord, our Medic. And Mike Gorevitch, our Chief—" that was the grease-stained one—"and Chan—Chandra Lal, our Biotech."

Terry fished in his pocket for the orders the Captain had failed to request, and noted with relief meantime that the Biotech, Chan, now unfolding himself from his chair, wasn't entirely naked after all.

It wasn't till then that he fully realized the hippy blonde was nobody's visiting daughter or friend, but a member of the crew and an officer in the Naval Reserve.

The blonde officer put a drink in his hand, and his last clear thought that night was that Deke was quite right: it wasn't like the Navy. Not at all.

When they gave him his commission, at the Examiner's Board, they had also delivered elaborate and resounding exhortations about the Great Trust being placed this day in his hands: how the work of an IBMan on a merchant ship was both more difficult and more important by far than anything done by an officer of equivalent rank on a Navy ship.

He knew all that. The ranking IBMan officer, on any ship, was fully responsible for the operation and maintenance of all material connected in any way with either solar navigation or space-warp jumps. On a

tramp, there was likely to be just one IBMan to do it all, Navy Transports carried a full complement of four officers and five enlisted men. Fresh Academy graduates came on board with j.g. status only, and worked in charge of an enlisted maintenance crew on the "jump-along"—that abstract mechanical brain whose function it was to set up the obscure mathematic-symbolic relationships which made it possible for matter to be transmitted through the "holes" in space-time, enabling a ship to travel an infinite distance in an infinitesimal time.

On a Navy transport, a full Lieutenant IBMan would be in charge of SolNav only, with two petty officers under him, both qualified to handle maintenance, and one at least with a Navy rating, capable of relieving him on duty at the control board during the five or twelve or twenty hours it might take to navigate a jump-ship in or out of the obstacle course of clutter and junk and planets and orbits of any given System.

Even the senior officer, on a Navy Transport, would never have to jump "blind," except in the rare and nearly unheard-of instance of an analog failure; only tramps and Navy Scouts ever jumped willingly on anything but a 'log-computed course. The stellar analog computers were the Navy's Topmost Secret; when you used one, nothing was required except to make sure the jump-along itself was in perfect condition, and then to pull the switch. The 'log did the rest.

Merchant ships carried 'logs for their chartered ports of call—the Lady had two—but the charter ports were the smallest part of a merchant trip. The number of destinations for which Navy analogs were available was hardly a hatfull out of the galaxies. Without a 'log to point the way for him, it was up to the IBMan to plot coordinates for where a hole ought to be. With luck and skill he could bring the ship out into normal space again somewhere within SolNav reach of the destination. With the tiniest error in computation, a ship might be lost forever in some distant universe with no stars to steer her home.

Terry Carnahan had been hoping desperately for a Navy transport job—but only because it was the route to the Scouts: the Navy's glory-boys, the two-bunk blind-jump ships that went out alone to map the edges of man's universe. It was the Scout job he'd worked for those long eight years—and dreamed about five years before, while he sweated for credits to get into Academy.

He didn't argue with his tramp assignment; nobody argued with the Board. He knew that most of the men who drew Navy assignments would envy him; the money was in the Reserves. And most of the rest, the ones who drew Transport and liked it, were there because they couldn't jump blind, and they knew it.

He knew all that. But when his orders came, and they told him he drew a tramp because he was tenth in his class—that's what they said: tramp work was the toughest—he also knew how close he had come to the dream, because he also knew that the top five men had been sent to Scout training.

Eight years of the most he could give it just wasn't enough. The answer was NO! For good.

But you didn't throw out eight years of training for a good job either. Terry went for his psychs and medics, and met Captain (U.N.N. Reserve) Karl Hillstrom; he took his two weeks' leave and reported for duty.

That first night, he fell asleep with the bunkroom spinning around him, and an obvious simple solution to the whole mess spinning with it, just out of his reach, no matter how fast he turned. When he stopped whirling, the dreams began, the dreams about naked crewmen, one of whom might have been him, and a terrible wonderful blonde in a sea of stars, winkin' and blinkin' and nod in a herring tramp to the smiling moon-faced girl who asked him in. . . .

In the morning, Captain Karl Hillstrom showed him around Control. It was ship-shape and shiny up here, and the IBMan plunged gratefully into routine, checking and testing his board, and running off sample comps. He allowed himself only the briefest inspection of the jump-along and the keyboard and calckers attached. His first job would be solar navigation. Once they were clear of the System, there'd be three weeks on solar drive before they jumped—plenty of time to double-check the other equipment. Right now, the standard computers and solar 'log were what counted.

He worked steadily till he became aware of the Captain at his side.

"How does it look?"

"Fine so far, sir." Terry leaned back.

"Anything messed up there, you can blame it on me. I worked that board coming in. "

Terry remembered now—they had lost their IBMan on Betelgeuse IV, last trip, and come back short-handed, and with half the trade load still in the holds. Since no one but an IBMan could jump blind, they'd had to come back to pick up a new man—Terry.

"I haven't found anything wrong, sir," Terry said.

"You can drop the 'sir.' We go mostly by first names here." There was an edge of irritation in the Captain's voice. "It's chow time now. You want to knock off?"

Terry hesitated. This wasn't the Navy; it was a lousy tramp. If the pilot was drunk half the time, and the Chief had a dirty neck, and the Captain looked like a pirate or stevedore (the first of which he was, and the second had been), the IBMan was certainly free to work or eat when he chose.

"I'd just as lief stick with it for a while," Terry said cautiously.

"Sure. Suit yourself. Galley's open. Take what you want when you want it. . . ."

He disappeared. For a blessed two hours, alone with machines he knew and trusted, Terry ran off the standard tests and comps, noting with trained precision each tiniest deviation from perfect performance. The computer had never been built that could navigate without error. Maybe only in the tenth decimal, but that was enough for disaster. You had to know your 'log and your board and machines, and make your adjustments as automatically as a man makes allowance for the Sights on a rifle he's known and shot for years.

It took Terry four hours to learn this board, and he had started his first dry-run when the sandwich appeared on his arm-rest. A tall plastic glass with a straw in the top and a tempting froth came next.

"Well, thanks," he said, "but you didn't have to—" "It's chocolate," she told him. "I ordered strawberry when your papers came in, but they haven't sent it yet." "Chocolate is fine," he said weakly, and let himself look.

The loose-tied shirt and tight-fitting slacks of the evening had been replaced by standard-issue summer-weight fatigues. The blouse was zipped up, and she seemed to be wearing a bra underneath. Her shorts displayed no more than a reasonable length of shapely leg. She wore no makeup, and her face looked scrubbed and clean. You could hardly get mad at a woman for being good-looking. The sandwich looked toasted and crisp, and he found he was very hungry.

"Well, thanks," he said again, and took a bite, and picked up the pencil with his other hand.

"Karl had to go down to Ad," she said. He took his eyes off his paper, and figured that out. Administration office, she'd mean.

"They called him to bring down the Beetle 'log papers," she said. "He asked me to let you know—it'll be back in the morning."

He nodded, trying to match her casual air. The Betelgeuse analog was coming back from the shop tomorrow. And IBMan Carnahan would be due for his first installation—the first on his own command.

". . . we could finish your med-check in time for dinner," she was talking still. "You want to knock off up here pretty soon?"

He nodded again, and glanced over his board. The run he'd started would take most of an hour. Then some time for adjustments. . . . "Sixteen hours all right?" he asked.

"Fine. Dinner's at nineteen."

He sat there and stared at his sandwich and thought it all over, including the staggering fact of the Commander's silver leaves on the woman's faded green shirt collar.

The milkshake turned out to be good; the sandwich delicious. The run on the board got fouled up, and after a half an hour of grief, he had to admit his mind wasn't on it. There was a Manual on the wardroom shelf below, that would tell him the things he wanted to know. He switched off the board, and went down.

Page 532, Section six, was explicit. The Medical Officer for a six-man crew had to have junior psych, as well as a senior pharmacist's or nurse's rating—besides being qualified sub for the Biotech. With Commander's rank, it meant she likely had more actual years of training than he did. And: "The Medical Officer shall be supplied with dossiers . . . psych ratings and personality profiles ... responsible

for well-being of personnel. . . ."

It explained some things: the milk shake and strawberry order, for instance; and why she should bother with either one. It did nothing to change the first impression of last night; or to make him forget his dreams; or —certainly—to make him feel any more at ease with Commander Anita Filmord. There were some things a woman shouldn't know about a man . . . or at least some women. . . .

There was very little Anita Filmord didn't know about Terry Carnahan three hours later. For the first half-hour she took smears and samples and scrapings with deft impersonal proficiency. Each labeled slide or tube went into its own slot or niche or clamp; then she threw a switch, and sat down to confront him with a questionnaire. To the familiar humming background of the diagnostics, she asked him all the questions he had answered twice a year for the past eight years.

"They put me through all this when I got my orders," he said at the end. "How come . . ."

"We do it every time you come on board. I'll have to run samples on Karl this evening too." The machine had run itself down. She pulled out the tape, tossed it onto her desk for reading later. "I don't know what you've been doing the past two weeks," she pointed out, and he felt himself flush at the certainty of what she meant. "And we've got a good long time to be shut up on this ship together." She stood there looking at him. Her smile faded. "The prospect isn't too appealing, is it?"

"You are!" he might have said. This wasn't the Navy. The way she was dressed last night, the way she acted . . .

Last night—was it one of those dreams? He couldn't be sure, but the memory came clearly. . . . He had heard a door close, and the murmur of voices, one high and one low. Before he fell asleep again—or in his dream?—a tall figure had entered the bunkroom and flopped in the last empty sack.

Five men and one woman . . .

"You're goddam right it's not!" he wanted to say, but he shifted his gaze four inches, and the leaves on the collar of her short-sleeved shirt were still a Commander's.

He threw out all putative answers, and retreated to subordination.

"Yes, ma'am," he said blank-faced. "It surely is, ma'am." Five men and one woman . . . and Deke had it all tied up! . . .

"I'm glad to hear you say so, Lieutenant," she answered deadpan. "But if anything should turn up—any problems or questions or troubles of any kind—remember, that's why I'm here." Her smile was just a bit mechanical this time. Good!

"Just come if you need me," she said. "Any time . . ."

Five men and one woman . . . and come, she said, any time . . . maybe it wasn't just Deke. Maybe

...

He went to the spray room and stripped and turned on the shower full blast to shut out Chandra Lal's cheerful talk. When he was finished, Chan was still in a cloud of steam, the effects of a day cleaning algy tanks now removed. While Terry rubbed himself harshly dry, Chan resumed conversation.

"How do you like the old bitch?" he asked idly.

"I'm not an expert," Carnahan said, and rubbed faster.

"Who is? I've been here six years now, and I still get surprises. She may not look like much, but she's a hell of a mess of boat for five men to run . . .

Five men and one woman . . . What the hell? Come off that track, boy. Chan was talking about the ship—not the Medic.

"You're right about that," Terry said, and escaped to his locker.

He wore his clean uniform like armor into the wardroom, accepted a cocktail, and sipped at it slowly. Deke, the pilot, and Captain Hillstrom were both drunk already, loudly replaying the ball game they'd just seen on the vid.

Hillstrom had shed his uniform as soon as he got back in the ship; he was bare-chested and rolled-cuffed again.

Deke at least dressed for dinner. So did Anita. Tonight, the tight-ass slacks were red, and she did wear a bra—also bright red—under her clear plastic shirt.



Mike wasn't dressed and he wasn't drunk. He came up just in time to sit down and eat with the rest, his face and coveralls both, if possible, one layer greasier than the day before. Chandra did not dress either: he emerged from the spray room, glowing, immaculate in the virtually non-existent trunks he'd worn the night before. Anita poured him a drink.

Obviously, she wouldn't care how—or if—Chan was dressed.

And if she didn't, who should?

Not Karl Hillstrom, that was clear; or perhaps he was too drunk to notice. . . .

Sleep didn't come easy that night. When all the crew's bunks but Deke's were filled, Terry gave up, and went out to the wardroom. He found Deke there, alone, watching a film. He tried to watch, too, but next to the screen, a red light on the Medic's door flashed, DON'T DISTURB! and his eyes kept seeing, instead of the picture, the curve of a thigh limned in the fiery red of her slacks, or perhaps of the bulb. . . .

He got up and prowled the room.

DON'T DISTURB: ". . . any time . . ."

The door opened. Karl Hillstrom came out. It closed behind him, and the light flicked off. She was alone now. She could be disturbed.

"Hi . . . late-late show?" Karl poured himself a drink and held up the bottle. "How about you?" "I had it," Deke said.

"Terry?"

"Thanks. I will . . . later." He poured his own, a big one, and took it back to his bunk.

. . . any time . . . Deke didn't have it tied up, not at all. .

At two in the morning, he remembered vaguely some provision in the Manual for refusal to serve in ships with a crew of less than ten, on grounds of personality stress. That meant a psych Board of course—and it had to go through the Medic . . . well, she might have reasons to make it easy for him. This wasn't the Navy, but it was still under Navy charter. Lousy tramp! He grinned, and promised himself to look it up, and went to sleep.

At three, he woke briefly, remembering she had said the Captain would have to have a new set of samples run that evening for his med records. Well, that could explain the DON'T DISTURB . . . At eight, they woke him to tell him the Beetle 'log was coming on board.

Mike Gorevitch drifted up from his engines to lend a hand, and the hand was a steady one, Terry found. By noon they were finished with a job that would have taken Terry more than a day by himself. His first installation was finished. Over a shared plate of cold meat in the galley, the IBMan found himself inexplicably pleased at the Chief's terse invitation to have a look below.

"Nothin' you didn't see before better on a Navy boat," Mike said, "But some of the stuff is rigged up my own way. You ever get stuck with a duty shift down there, you'll want to know . . ."

Like every jump-ship, the Lady was Navy built, equipped, and staffed. Even Hillstrom, who had made his stake in the Solar Fleet, had to get his Reserve Commission before they'd sell him his ship and lease him a stellar analog to hook onto the jump-along.

By now he had traded in that first cheap Sirius 'log for a prized Aldebaran, and had acquired a Betelgeuse besides. It was on Betelgeuse IV that Bailey, the IBMan who'd been with the Lady for nine of her thirteen years tramping, had lost his nerve. It was something that happened. The best jump-man reached the point where he'd figured he'd had it—the one more blind trip wouldn't work. Bailey quit cold, and declined even passage back.

This trip, the Lady carried a consignment of precision instruments for the new colony on Aldebaran III. But nobody ever got rich on consignment freight. It paid for the trip; that was all. The profit-shares came out of the other hold: the seeds and whisky and iron pigs and glassware and quick-freeze livestock embryos; the anything-and-whatsit barter goods that someone at some unchartered planet off the Analog routes would pay for in some way. That was the lure that kept the crews on merchant ships: you never knew when you'd come back with the barter-hold full of uranium, or cast-gold native artifacts, or robin-egg diamonds.

And if you also never knew for sure when you'd come back, or where from, or whether . . . well, that was the reason why IBMen went upstairs fast. For a man who could handle the job, there was pay and promotion, and almost anything else he might want.

What Carnahan wanted, the Lady didn't have.

For Mike Gorevitch, that was not the case.

The Lady was a tramp. She was scratched and dented and tarnished with age. She'd lost her polish, and her shape was out of date. She'd been around, and it showed.

But she had beauty in her still, if you knew where to look, and you cared.

"There's a dance in the old girl yet," Mike said approvingly, when he saw the IBMan's hand linger with pleasure on the smooth perfect surface of the shaft he'd ground the night before. "You read Archy?" he asked.

Terry shook his head. "What's that?"

"You might not like it," Mike said doubtfully. He opened a locker and pulled out a battered grease-stained book. "Here. You can take it up with you if you want."

That night, Terry slept. He took the Manual and Mike's book both to the bunk with him right after dinner, and found what he wanted in one, then returned to the other. Both of them helped, and so did exhaustion.

But somewhere in the night he woke long enough to note that it was Deke who came in last again, and to identify the pattern of repeated sounds from two nights back. It had not been a dream.

Five men and one woman . . . He wondered why Bailey had quit. Nine years, and then . . . If you took it that long . . . Well, he had the same way out if he wanted it . . . any time . . .

Next day, again, he worked at his board through the morning. This time it was Chandra who happened to be in the galley when Terry went down for his lunch. The pattern began to come clear: informal, haphazard, and unsystematic, but they were taking him over the ship, little by little.

The two of them sat on a white-painted bench in the Bio lab, and discoursed of algae and alien life-forms and also Anita. "Listen," Chan said abruptly, "has the blonde bombshell got you mixed up?"

"No," Terry said bitterly. "I wouldn't say that."

"It ain't like the Navy, is it kid?" Chan smiled, and it didn't matter if you knew the man had been trained for years to create just this feeling of empathy and understanding; he created it all the same. If he couldn't, they'd be in a hell of a spot on an alien planet. . . .

"Don't get me wrong," Terry said cautiously. "I like girls. If you think everyone sleeps in his own bed on a Navy ship . . ."

"I came out of Academy too," Chan reminded him.

"All right, then, you know what I mean. But this kind of deal—one dame, and the five of us, and—I just can't see it. If I go to a whore, I don't want her around me all day. And if I have a girl, I damn sure don't want every guy she sees to get into . . . you know what I mean!"

"Yeah." He was silent a moment. "I know what you mean, but I don't know if I can explain . . . Look, it's a small ship, and the payload counts. A girl friend for every guy would be nice, but . . . well, hell, kid, you'll see for yourself once we get going. All I wanted to say to begin

with was if you got the idea it was all for one guy, you were wrong. Deke's always kind of hopped up before we go, and he's the guy we have to count on to get us out safe. She just naturally . . . anyhow, don't let him monopolize anything—not if you want it, that is."

"I don't," Terry said, and they went back to algae and aliens. And at least one thing emerged: Mike wasn't the only man on board who cared. Just what it was that mattered so much to him or to Chan, Terry wasn't quite sure: their work, or the Lady herself, or the dead dream she stood for. Whatever exactly it was, the feeling was something that Terry could understand—and that Deke and Hillstrom never could . . .

Hillstrom didn't have to. He owned the Lady. He wasn't obliged to understand her: only to pay the bills, and let the hired hands do their work for him. For her . . . ?

The hired help worked, all right. At least, Mike and Chan did, and Terry Carnahan. Even Deke put in a full morning up in Control, checking his board, and testing a dry run with Terry.

Even Deke? What the hell? Deke had been holding down the driver's seat on the Lady for four years now. He had to be good. And he was; the half-hour's test was enough to show his class.

In his bunk that night, Terry improved his acquaintance with Archy the poet-cockroach, and Mehitabel the cat. Archy's opinions amused him; but in the determined dignity of the lady-cat's earthy enthusiasms, he found a philosophy sadly appropriate for the life of a Lady ship: and it was difficult to continue to feel entirely sad about the fit of the shoe while Mehitabel danced her wild free whirling dance, defiant and tourjoursai . wotthehell...wotthehell ...

Mehitabel, Mike, and Chandra all helped. But backing them all up was the Manual.

P. 549, at the bottom: "An IBMan specialist may exercise his privilege of declaring the psychological conditions on board a ship of the specified classes unfit for blind jump at any time before plotting navigation data to the jump-off point in question. In such cases, the ship will return by analog to Lunar Base; or if unequipped to do so, will remain in its current port, pending a hearing by the Commandant."

They wouldn't jump till after the Aldebaran hop. Six weeks out, two weeks in port: there was time to wait and find out whether one lousy tramp could ruin the work and the dreams of thirteen years.

As he fell asleep, the IBMan thought with surprise that grease and nudity were perhaps as fitting uniforms in their ways for engine maintenance and bio work as kniteedge trouser creases were for precision computing. . . .

The thirty-foot-wide metal collar that encircled the lower third of the Lady Jane, in drydock, rose slowly out of the concrete pit. When the Lady had been lifted some twenty feet, the trucks moved in and extended supporting yard-wide jacks up into smaller collars, set in the underside of the wide, upper flange.

The outer lock, 'midships, swung open, and the elevator cage started down. Five figures in full-gear pressure suits emerged and took their places on the flange. They fastened the chains and winches securing the jacks in their sockets and belted themselves in position to keep a watch on the winches during the overland voyage.

One by one their voices cleared over the suit-to-suit. "All secure here . . . Okay . . . Check . . . Secure ... That's it!" Hillstrom's was the last.

"All clear?" He waited five seconds, then waved the red flag at his side. The enormous pit jack sank downward; and the trucks started lifting alone. At fifty feet, the jet tubes were clear of the ramp. The trucks swivelled into alignment, and sixty-five earth-tons of wheelchair began to move the Lady away from drydock in lumbering state.

From his seat on the flange, Terence Hugh Carnahan surveyed man's moon, and found it good. Six hours away, the black knife-edge of lunar night sliced off the horizon. Ten minutes ahead, the mile-long launching tube yawned empty and waiting.

The suit-to-suit crackled with small talk and still-smaller humor. Terry almost gave in to the urge to turn it off. He'd been through the launching routine a hundred times, in mockups and dry runs, but this was his first time to ride a live ship over the face of the moon from the dock to the tube. If the schoolboy dreams of glory were dead forever . . . if the battered old hulk of the Lady was all he could have . . . even she had her dubious virtues, and among them the brightest was this . . . this moment, now, the fulfillment of, not a child's dream, but the Big Dream of a man, of mankind, for the stars.

It was sacrilege, nothing less, to be approaching the launch-site with a series of schoolboy double entendres supplying the background music.

He had actually reached for the switch, when a new voice floated in. "Still with us, Lieutenant?"

"Yes, ma'am!" He let his hand drop. The regulations made sense. Secured as they were in their seats, and spread round the bulge of the Lady, the audio was all the proof they had that each of them was still on post, alive and conscious. Even the Medic inside the sealed ship, watching the screens, couldn't be sure from what she could actually see, whether a man immobile inside a suit was effectively operative.

They came up to the tube, and the great cranes reached out steel fingers, stripping and lifting the

Lady out of her wheelchair wrappings, pushing and nudging and sliding her into place on the runway. Six moon-suited figures slid down the jacks into the trucks, and were toted back up to the airlock by the tube elevator.

There was no time for small talk now. Five hours to see for the last time that the ship was secure; once the word, ready, went down, it was too late to look any more.

Terry covered his section with swift methodical care. Satisfied, he went to his chair, and strapped himself in; he did a last double check on his board; then he fastened his helmet back on, and began the slow conscious relaxing of muscles and breathing that ended the ritual.

When the count-down began, he was off in a floating dream of sunshine and sparkling water. Zero minus nine, and he sat up erect. Minus eight, and he forced himself back into limpness before they hit seven. Breathe in . . . out . . . hold . . . in . . . six . . . out . . . hold . . . in . . . hold . . . five . . . out . . . four . . . in . . . three . . . out . . . two . . . innnnnnone-annnnnou—out!

Off and out ... down and out . . . blackness and whirlpools and terror and kick back, up, out!

His finger punched the wake-up button before he was fully aware of consciousness again. The light ahead of him flashed green, and there was an instant's prideful notice that his was the second green on. Then he forgot to be proud, and forgot to be Terry Carnahan. Green lights flashed and steadied, then yellow and blue and red. The board was a Christmas-tree crossword constellation, each light a word or a number or place, their shifting patterns spelling out death and life.

Pressure eased; and the voices began—voices of engines and scanners and stresses and temps. Some he heard in the helmet and some the board told him with signals and lights. A voice in the helmet allowed him to take it off: the voice of the Bio board. A key on the pilot's board, at the chair up ahead, was depressed by a finger; the think-board, in this chair, flashed questioning lights. The think-board replied, and new figures lit up ahead, for the hands to use—the hands and direction and eyes of the Lady, up there at the pilot's board, steering her free of the multitude of menacing mites and pieces and bits of matter and mass in the populous planet-plied system.

The dance of escape began rhythm to suit itself, and the old girl whirled on her axis, and pushed her way out to the stars, with a dance in her yet, wotthell and the think-board was metal-and-plastic but flesh-and-blood too; part of her, of the streaming single mote which alone in this mote-filled single cell-of-Sol was bound to break out of bounds and escape to the endless entropic emptiness of Universe.

"Take a break, kid. We got a clear stretch here. Karl can take over."

He looked at the chrono, and didn't believe what he saw, and looked again. Five hours, and seventeen minutes past zero. Now aching muscles returned to sensation, and ego to Terry Carnahan.

Anita was standing beside him, one hand on a chair strap, the other held out to help.

"Whore!" he said. "Get away, bitch!"

She went away; Terry stayed where he was. What Deke could take, he could take too.

He took it for six hours more, through the last of the dust and debris of the System. He drank from the flask when it nuzzled his lips, and swallowed the pills she put in his mouth, and gave back what she needed: the readings and scannings and comps and corrections that went to the driver's seat, to the pilot's board, to Deke with the strength of ten and a tramp in his heart.

He stayed there and took it until there was no more to do. Then he reached for the straps, and her hands were already there, unfastening him.

Bitch! he thought. Tramp! You don't want me!

He let her lead him out of the room, down the ladder, through dim yellow-green, to the door where the light would be flashing red outside.

And there he stopped. There was something important to ask her, when he found out what it was, he started to smile. Which one do you want?

Which one? How could she possibly tell?

As well ask, Which one needs her?

He laughed and stepped forward ... and the tramp was his.

# A WOMAN OF THE WORLD

## by ROSE SHARON

IT TOOK LONGER THAN SHE planned to fill her pockets and lock up the cabinet again. After that, she had to find some place to leave the key where they could find it, but where the children couldn't reach it. Then when she got back to the party, Toni was nowhere in sight. Naturally.

And—wouldn't you know it?— Steve was right there, just inside the door. He had his back to her, talking to somebody else, but the first step she took inside he turned around as if she'd gone right up and touched him; he heard her or smelled her or something.

She stood there, just inside the doorway, convinced that he had also sensed somehow the weight of the sagging full pockets that pressed against her hip, on the inside of the carefully arranged coat over her arm.

"Well, hi there, Princess," he said, and only his voice made a joke of the name. His eyes meant it. "I was beginning to think you were going to stand us all up tonight."

"I went back to get my wrap . . ." she began.

"Here, I'll put that away for you—" he interrupted.

Then his hand touched the coat over her arm, and both of them stopped short as her muscles jumped in recoil, shrinking away from the touch.

She saw the hurt cross his face as he pulled his hand back, and she was almost sorry for him—the damn fool! just like the rest of them here: they wanted and wanted and wished and wailed, and not one had the guts to go get what he wanted.

But she did.

She made a remote small smile at Steve, and stepped forward a pace to search the room with her eyes. When she found Tommy, she just stood there waiting till he saw her too. He came across the big barn floor, weaving between the dancing couples, and she held out her coat to him with an inward sigh of relief.

Everyone there would have noticed, and they'd all feel sorry for Steve, and nobody would be surprised at all when she walked out with Tommy Handley later.

But that was all just helpful; the big thing was what nobody knew, except Tommy. The way the pockets of her coat were sagging ' with the weight of the rifle shells, she could no more have let Steve carry it than she could have stood up there and made a public speech about what she was doing.

It was a wonderful party—the best one she could remember. Partly because it was Tommy's party in a way, and she was Tommy's girl. But probably more because she knew it was the last one, and her own excitement was catching. She could feel it coming back at her from every man she danced with.

They stayed just long enough to make it look barely all right, and walked out, her coat on his arm while everything was still going strong.

As soon as they were out of earshot she whispered fiercely: "You still *have* it?"

"Sure," he said. "What did you think?"

"I don't know. He might have asked you for it . . ."

"He did—when I got back to the party. I told him I left it in my other pants."

"No," she said loudly. A shadow had passed the door. "I want to go down to the dock." It was what any girl would say. If you left the dance with a boy, you could only be going to the woods or to the dock, where they had a floodlight on party nights. And the way to the dock took them past the small barn.

The little barn was a carpentry shop and machine shop now; this was one of the keys Steve usually kept after working hours; it was the one Tommy had lied about leaving in his other pants.

Inside, the two of them worked feverishly. The stores of food, smuggled out of the kitchen by Ellen and into the shop by Tom; the few tools he thought he *had* to have; two rifles off the wall hooks; their stored ammunition, plus her last two pocketfuls; the three spare cans of gasoline—everything went into the car, where two empty packs, and a change of clothes for each of them were already hidden under the

seat.

By the time anybody who cared enough to watch could be sure they weren't coming out onto the lighted path again, Ellen *did* come out—walking fast, and headed straight across toward the gate, not toward the dock at all.

This was the only tricky part, and she was the one who had to do it, because they weren't sure if she could drive well enough to manage the car. At the barbed wire fence she stopped and waited, till she heard the roar of the motor and the sudden shouting voices, and the headlights seemed to be coming straight at her. She pulled the gate open wide, jumped onto the running-board of the ancient Ford as it slowed to go through, and held on tight till they were round the bend and far enough down the road for Tom to open the door and let her get in.

It was just as easy as that. The thing was, nobody back there ever thought anyone would want to get out. All their barbed wire and trick gates and sentry posts and alarm rigs—all of it was just to keep outsiders *out*. And except for a few things, like the gas and the ammo that really took some doing to get at, the supplies were no problem to store up, as long as you took a little bit at a time, and got out before Inventory, which wasn't till next month.

The real crazy part of it, though, was the car: the way they all sat around watching Tommy tinker with his old Ford every night for the last month and chatted about the fine thing he was doing for the Farm. And every time he wanted to try it out again, he'd get the keys for the gas pump, and every time he got the keys, he'd draw a couple gallons more than he wrote down. And just to top it all off, the big party tonight, to celebrate getting the car fixed . . . right on top of the demonstration trial that gave him the extra cans of gas.

All it took was timing. Timing and guts.

"Hey, Tommy?"

"Yeah?"

"You got the geiger, didn't you?"

"Sure, honey. We got everything. Listen, kid, you can relax now. Quit worrying. We got it made." He took his eyes off the ruinous road just long enough to smile at her, and reached out with his arm and pull her closer.

Contentedly, she let her head settle on his shoulder, and stayed there, feeling the wind in her hair, and listening to the sound of an automobile engine again. Funny how quick you forgot. It wasn't much more than a year since they used to drive back up the hill from the movies this way . . . a whole crowd together—or just two alone, like now.

Not like now at all, of course. That was fun; this was deeply exciting, this going out to find a new life in a new world. Drowsily she wondered how far they'd have to go, how hard they'd have to look to find good land with maybe a decent house on it, where they could settle. . .

She must have fallen asleep, or part-way at least, because she sat up with a jolt when he pulled the car to a skidding stop on wet gravel.

"Where are we?" She couldn't see anything in the blackness. "What . . . ?"

"Hobeyville," he said, and tried *to* pull her back against him. "That's a good twenty-nine mile. They'll never get this far. Take it—" She shook off his hand impatiently.

"You mean right in the middle of *town*?" she demanded, as the outline of a parking lot between buildings began to suggest itself, through the darkness.

"What's the matter? Take it easy, baby. We got it made now . . ."

"Keep your goddam hands off me! I don't know *what* you think you got made, but it aint gonna be *me*, brother. Not *here*."

"Now look, honey. . . . It's safer here than it would be up in the woods, or off the side of the road someplace, or . . ."

"It ain't safe anyplace," she said flatly. "Not till we get a chance to look around in daylight and see what's what. If you wanted something safe, you should of stayed with big old Uncle Steve on the farm. *He's safe!* . . . Oh I'm sorry, Tommy." Her anger was gone as suddenly as it had come. "I'm all on edge, I guess. Maybe I was asleep. What time is it, anyhow?"

He was right, of course. If it took them three hours to travel a lousy thirty miles, it made sense to wait till dawn here in town, and get some sleep, and then be able to pick their roads a little better in the light. Nobody would come this far after them. And even if they did, they wouldn't *start* till after the sun was up.

"I'm sorry," she said again. "Look, we better take turns sleeping. I had a kind of a nap already. You've been doing all the work. Why don't you go in back and stretch out, and I'll wake you up later . . ."

"There's other things I could use more than sleep," he said, and tried to get hold of her again.

"Oh, Tommy," she said, "not *now*. Here, I mean. Where *anybody* could be . . . oh you know!" And when he wouldn't stop, she said, "Besides, I'm *scared*. Listen, one of us *has* to keep watch. If anybody came up, we might not hear it, and maybe we'd both fall asleep . . . *please*, Tommy, can't you wait a little while?"

So he climbed over into the back seat, and she, sat there wide awake and waiting eagerly for dawn.

One hundred and eighteen miles from Hobeyville, about ten o'clock in the morning of their third day, the motor coughed feebly, and Tommy got out to unscrew their next-to-last spare can of gas.

"Nice-lookin' country here," he said wistfully, when he got back in, and this time she agreed with him.

"There's a river over that way," she reminded him. "If we can find a way to get over to it . . ."

"Okay, baby, you're the boss." He started the motor again, and they crept forward, bouncing and jumping as the two bare rims hit the potholed remnant of a highway. It was easier, actually, when he turned off onto a grassy strip between trees and brush, that looked like it might have been a dirt road once; here the new growth cushioned them a little. They emerged on a high cliff, overhanging the river bank.

He parked in the shelter of a tree, and got out to scout the woods a little ways in, while she covered him from the car with the Winchester.

"Don't see no signs of people," he announced when he came back. "Plenty of rabbits, though. Pretty lively-lookin', too."

She nodded, and got out and stretched. Then they both strapped on their packs, and picked up their rifles, and locked the car up tight.

Single-file, because there were bad chunks out of the road, they started walking down along the edge of the cliff. Below them, they could see a stretch of water for perhaps a mile in either direction.

On the opposite shore of the river there was no cliff: just a slow-rising hillside, with brown-leaved trees not turned near as far as the ones back home; and between the trees and the river a grey dry stretch of rubble and debris from the spring floods. Stones and boulders, twisted branches, a piece of somebody's roof standing on edge not twenty yards upstream from the dug-out foundations of what once must have been somebody's river-edge cottage or camp.

Outside of the river and themselves, and a few birds circling lazily near the cliff, nothing moved. It was hard to think of danger lurking in the painted landscape.

The girl nodded, smiling. "Just like home," she said, thinking of the creek down in the village, when the big dam went last spring.

"Yeah." Tommy stopped to sling his rifle over his shoulder, and shift the knife on his belt closer to his hand. "If I see another one o' them rabbits, I'm gonna try for 'im—what do you think?"

"Sure," he said. "Steve's crazy anyhow." Steve wouldn't let them hunt any farther than ten miles from the farm. He kept saying the animals anyplace around a bombed area would be poisonous, and there was no way to know how close you were to a fallout section, once you got away from the farm. But they'd have to start living off the land sooner or later, and this certainly *looked* like healthy country. "He's crazy," she said again. "He's got everybody up there so scared they won't blow their noses without asking. . ."

They got a rabbit for lunch, and made a fire and hot coffee and Tommy carried up water from the river for them to boil and fill the jugs again. He even made an extra trip for a bucket full to get washed with; and in spite of her kidding, he heated up a cupful for himself, and got out his father's old straight

razor, and shaved himself carefully.

"My beard might not look like so much," he said mildly, "but it sure can itch like hell."

After that he wanted to make love again. Naturally. But this time even he could see they ought to use the daylight to look around some more. They had to find some place to stay pretty soon now. This country looked good, but they'd have to find a house, or get started building one, if they were going to stay. . .

It was past the middle of the afternoon when they came out of the woods into a clearing, and saw the house. That wasn't what they noticed first, though, either of them. The way they came to it, the first thing they saw was the fields behind the hill, and the red barn on the top. And Ellen gave an involuntary low whistle of surprise when the house suddenly came into view around the edge of the barn.

It didn't look as if anybody had been near the place since spring. Everything just *empty*. But they had to play it careful anyway.

She covered him while he looked into the barn. "Nothing there," he said, but he was jumpy. "I don't know what it is," he said uneasily.

She felt it too, but *one* of them had to show some guts. "Want *me* to take the house?" she asked contemptuously.

"You better stay out front," he said. "And listen, honey—don't think twice before you shoot."

"All *right!*" she said. "I know what to do." She'd been covering him from the car and the woods and one place and another for three days now. "Yell out when it's okay."

She watched him go up to the door and push it open. There was a crash that made her jump, and then she felt ashamed, because she realized it wasn't a gun, it wasn't anything at all, it was just the door banging.

She turned around slowly, covering a half-circle with the rifle. Jumpy, she thought. *Both* of them. What the hell was *she* so jumpy about? . . . But she knew why . . . knew it because she was standing here waiting to go into the house they'd probably live in, and the thought of it gave her the creeps.

It was Tommy . . .

Tommy with his *Please, honey* . . . and his *Take it easy, baby*, and his *I'm sorry and better be careful and what do you think?*

Tommy with all the careful little safety rules Steve had taught him. But at least Steve was a man, and thought he knew what he was being careful for.

A good kid. . . . Sure. . . . All she ever heard was a whistle of air behind her.

After a while she realized she was lying on the ground, and ' couldn't find her gun. She patted the ground around her with her hand; got her eyes part way open, and became aware of sound. Grunts. Thrashing. Two men were fighting. She could see better now, and the first thing she saw dearly was the knife.

Flash. Thrash.

Men fighting. A man and a boy. Tommy . . .

She ought to do something. She tried to move, and lightning streaked through her head. *He hit me!* The other man, the bearded one with the filthy bloody clothes—he must have been here all the time. Came up behind, and knocked her out.

She saw the gun now, on the ground, two body-lengths away. She started toward it, and the movement made the lightning crack again, inside her head.

When she looked at the noises again, the boy was on top. She could lie still then. Tommy didn't need her. He could win. . .

Realization swept through her like the warmth of the sun in a mist-chilled dawn. It was *her* they were fighting for. She *had* to lie.

Grunt. Flash. Thrash. Grunt.

And the man was on top now. Reflexively, she inched forward again, but even before the pain hit, she stopped. *The best man* . . . best man always wins. So *that* was all right . . .

She lay still, waiting and watched the man, the *best man*, drive the knife home.

She lay there, watching, through slitted eyelids, while the best man, *brute, bloody-beard-bad-man*,



pawed with animal fingers through the dead man's pack. Watched while the bullets and blanket and beans went flying to the ground. Watched while the man, *best-brute-madman*, jumped to his feet with the razor blade and the strop and the mirror.

The long straight razor, old man Handley's, *he used to hit Tommy with the razor strop*. Crazy-beard best man, dancing in the wilderness, *yellow-dog-dingo, mama used to read me*, dancing like a maniac, flashing in the sunlight. Flash, blade, spin, strop, flash, dance. . . . *Ma!*

She lay still, as absolutely still as she could be. She did not even breathe. Her slitted eyelids closed, as the man with the beard, the blood, and the razor, *forever and ever, amen*, stepped over the dead man, over the tall grass, over the rifle, over to her.

Eyes closed; but she could see the razor still. If she moved, he would kill her. He would certainly kill her if she as much as moved.

Could he hear her heart beat?' Her lungs were bursting. If she breathed, would he kill her? If she didn't, she would die.

The shiver that ran through her body as she felt his approach was movement too. But for this, she knew that she would not be killed.

Slowly, with a sense of infinite relief, she let the air out of her bursting lungs. Her body went, limp, every muscle relaxed. She breathed in deeply, filling her chest with air, and her blood with the smell of him as he bent over her: the blood and the dirt and the sun and the wind and the male sweat smell went into her lungs and pumped through her veins, and the smell was foul, but it was not death.

Her eyes came open. She; stared into the crusted bearded face, the fierce eyes, the wild smile of delight. The razor dropped from his hand as he seized her shoulder and pressed it painfully into the ground.

He was strong.

He could fight.

He could conquer.

She forced herself to breathe in deeply once again, absorbing the rank stench, making it her own; and she felt her mouth curve in an answering smile of welcome. . . .

Ellen Reeves, mother of civilized man.

## DEATH CANNOT WITHER

Author's note: I should like to take this opportunity to thank A. J. Budrys for the work he did on this story. The revision and condensation he did on my own rambling earlier draft was so extensive that the story should properly carry a joint byline.

J. M.

EDNA COLBY awoke an hour after dawn, and after no more than three hours fitful sleep. In peignoir and mules she groped to the window, and looked out at her Dutchess County farm —hers and Jack's, she reminded herself dutifully—at orchard and field touched by a winter morning's first light. Just barely winter by the calendar, but winter . . . and Jack's bed beside her own, was still as smooth, as empty, as when she'd made it up the day before.

Separated by an authentic hand-tied rag rug and an Early American maple night-table, the two beds were gray in the light. She stared out the window at the apple trees, at the twisted barren-bare trunks, and whispered, "Like my own heart." She repeated the phrase, tasting each syllable, listening to the sound of a woman bereft. Then she went downstairs, a pink ribbon adding a wistful note to her handsomely cut hair.

She stood before the gleaming stove in the kitchen, making coffee, her eyes unseeing on the golden knotty-pine panelling of the walls. She was thinking over how to phrase her excuses to the farm help when they came to get Jack's instructions for the day. The coffee boiled over before she could decide on the proper wording. She pinched her lips and wiped the stove.

"He might at least have called," she whispered sharply. "The other times, he's at least tried to cover up." She realized suddenly that each of those only suspected other times had this morning become a certainty too long ignored. "I'm losing him," she thought with great intensity; then, in jealous anger: "I've lost him!" And then, finally, in purest rage, she cried out: "No!"

The kitchen door slammed loudly. "Coffee!" Jack's hearty voice cried out on a wave of cold sharp air. "Baby, that smells good!"

Before she could react, Jack had crossed the room, embraced her warmly from one side—avoiding the coffee pot in her other hand—and murmured fondly: "Happy anniversary, sweetheart!"

It was, indeed, eight years to the day since the cocktail party at which Edna Arkwright, Assistant Buyer in Ladies' Wear, had met Jack Colby, who was something-or-other on Madison Avenue. She at the age of thirty-five, chic if not specially pretty, trim-figured with the aid of a remarkable new bra, and he of roughly the same age (actually a trifle younger), amiable, friendly, personable in a downy sort of way, and pretty much at loose ends.

Pretty much at loose ends, and perfectly willing to have someone gather them up for him, if that someone showed the slightest tact in the gathering. He seemed to be completely unaware of what perfect raw material he was; content to drift, to meander pleasantly along—in short, to waste himself instead of assuming a settled, solid role in life of the sort for which his background obviously fitted him.

He had left his father's apple-country-squiredom at the usual time of youth to become an officer in either the Army or the Air Force—perhaps they had been one and the same thing at the time; Edna could not get it quite straight—and, after the war, had simply accepted a position in a distant relative's firm.

That was the thing—the thing about him that both attracted and angered Edna Arkwright, with her sense of greater things to be done with one's life, with her code of aspirations that had kept her firmly undistracted, steadfast in pursuit of her destiny. She conveyed to Jack, gradually but unflaggingly, that there was more in him than could ever be realized by a life of effortless progressions toward old age. What was he doing with his life, with himself? To this, of course, Jack had no ready answer.

It was plain to Edna that Jack Colby was not truly at home in the city; however much he might think he liked it, he was growing soft underneath and certainly drinking more than he should. In her complete sincerity of purpose, she saw in his eyes a hint of something that was, if not lost, then misplaced; she taught him to understand that she, of all people, could best remind him where he'd left it.

They were married five months and a few days after the cocktail party and, Jack's father having died and left him everything, went straight home to the ancestral manse in Dutchess County. There they lived comfortably and suitably, once Edna had wiped out the frowsty traces of Mr. Colby, Senior's, last years of bachelor living. There was, of course, a great deal of continuing work for Edna to do, a gradual transformation of both the house and the remainder of the property into a condition appropriate to genteel country living, as distinct from the functional but often starkly unpainted working farm she had found. For Jack, as a sort of gradually diminishing concession to his old habits, there were infrequent trips into the city to tend to the Colby investments and the business requirements of modern fructiculture. Except that, though all of Edna's other concerns prospered as if to prove the rightness of her planning, Jack's trips into town did not diminish as they ought to have. Despite her best efforts, some elusively stubborn streak in him would not relinquish its old ways, even after the passage of eight years.

And now, still circled by his mackinaw-sleeved arm, her neck prickled by the short brown beard he had at her behest grown since their marriage, she realized she had completely forgotten what day it was. Eight years—not long enough, it seemed, and yet perhaps already too long—and Jack had been out since dawn, it developed, doing something special for the occasion, He wanted her to come out with him after breakfast. Something to show her. A surprise ...

But he didn't immediately say where he'd been till dawn. As if he hadn't even seen the necessity to make up a good story beforehand, and needed time to extemporize one now.

Over breakfast, he told her at last about the late poker game in the city, and losing track of time . . . deciding not to phone and wake her up . . . the slow milk train ... getting home late, knowing he'd have to be up early . . . napping downstairs on the living room couch so as not to bother her . . . up early, and out ...

She listened to him with careful gravity, then touched her lips to his forehead and went upstairs to dress.

She dressed in a cold fury, putting on walking shoes and a bright red jacket—it was hunting season—and realized only then that she had forgotten even to order anything special for today's dinner. Well, the woods were full of rabbits. She knew a delightful recipe for rabbit, and it would add something if they shot a couple for themselves.

It was inexcusable to have forgotten, she thought in a sort of additional annoyance; she had always managed things so perfectly. The restoring and remodeling of the old house; the garden club and prize flower growing; urging Jack to write little pieces for the Farm Journal; arranging for Jack to become an advisor on farming and animal husbandry for the local 4-H club; having the house eventually selected for photographing by a national magazine—these gradual shapings of a hundred details toward an enduring whole of gracious living, firmly rooted in all the most admirable attitudes and ideals.

But: the bottle in the toolshed, though they'd agreed with utmost reason that alcohol, for some people, was a disease.

But: the late homecomings, and the excuses, the glib and at first believable phone calls from the city . . . and now not even a phone call.

She hadn't allowed for this continuing goatishness in him. Could it be that her careful management of things was going to be overcome by the very person who was intended to crown them all? Was the intended ideal husband suddenly going to destroy the intended perfection of her life's work as the ideal wife?

Edna Colby saw herself on the brink of disaster, all because Jack, for all his excellent potential, simply did not realize what a difficult thing she was trying to do—how few women had the singleness of purpose successfully to take a man and mold him into everything he should be, and to provide the proper mode of life to set him off, like a perfect work of art in a perfect frame.

There had been a lingering scent of alien perfume in Jack Colby's beard. Edna Colby clenched her fists. "Oh, no," she whispered. "Oh, no, you're not going to lose me now, Jack Colby." And then she turned and brightly went downstairs to look at Jack's surprise.

She found him waiting for her in the yard, gunning the motor of the jeep, a look of arch anticipation on his face. Obviously, he thought he'd gotten away with it again. Obviously, he expected that even if she were somehow suspicious, a little extra devotion on his part would smooth everything over.

She smiled, the perfect picture of the country matron, and got in beside him, sweeping her hands under the backs of her thighs to straighten her skirt. She pushed his hand away impatiently, her irritation breaking through long enough to snap: "Act your age, Jack!"

The little-boy playfulness flickered in his eyes, and for a moment she saw something else there.

"Really, Jack, didn't you get enough of that in the Air Corps?"

"It was the Army Air Force," Jack said, and put the jeep in gear. After a moment, he forced a rueful smile. By the time they were out of the neatly tended yard, in the center of the trim, freshly-painted outbuildings, she was a country gentlewoman again, and Jack was to all intents and outward purposes her devoted husband.

A two-mile jeep ride through the woods, and another half-mile's walking brought them in sight of a stand of fine young hemlocks. For three years, Jack had been promising her a hedge to shut off the pig-pens from the new sundeck view. Now he wanted only her approval of the trees before he started digging them out to transplant.

A pitchfork and spade, a pile of burlap, and a small hand-truck to take the young trees out to the road were already on the spot. Jack had his lunch—and a hidden pocket flask—along. He figured it would take him till midafternoon. Young Harold, the grown son of the farm foreman, already had instructions to get the trenches dug at the new location and come after Jack with the jeep when he was done.

The trees were perfect. Edna said as much with delight even while she smelled again that musky trace of foreign scent in his beard. Later, when he bent over to pick up the rabbits he'd shot for the anniversary stew, she saw a smudge of lipstick on his neck. She had worn none herself that morning. The spot was

covered by his jacket collar when she looked for it again. She smiled when he turned to wave goodbye. Her smile, she thought idly as she drove the jeep homeward to cook the special dinner, had been exactly right. He could never have guessed she was lost in contemplation of ways to make him behave from now on.

At four that afternoon, Edna took a spicy-smelling deep-dish pie out of the oven, checked the setting of the small table in front of the fireplace, and started upstairs to bathe and dress. That was when Young Harold came to tell her he'd been looking in the woods for an hour or more, and found no sign of Mr. Colby—nor any trace of work done on the trees. He had brought back with him the spade and pitchfork, the stack of burlap, and—though he did not tell her that at the time—Mr. Colby's red hunting cap.

"He must have walked down into town for some reason," Edna said as casually as she could, remembering the pocket flask. "I guess he'll phone if . . . maybe you'd better go down to the village and look around. He might have tried to phone . . ."

Harold went out, and Edna went upstairs. By the time she was bathed and dressed, and Harold had returned again alone, she was furious. Jack had never done anything quite this gauche before.

A half hour later, she was getting worried. By six o'clock she was sick with fear, and at six-fifteen, she phoned for the police. By seven o'clock, in spite of heavily falling snow, the woods were swarming with volunteer firemen, state troopers, and as many of the older teenage boys as could get loose to join the hunt. Edna answered the troopers' questions with as much presence of mind as she could summon. She told them what he had worn, and that she had brought the gun back herself. Young Harold, she said, had brought back the other equipment. She had gone out with Mr. Colby about half past eight. It might have taken half an hour to reach the site . . . probably less. They had selected the trees to move, had shot two rabbits, and walked up to a ridge with a favorite view before she left. She wasn't sure just what time she got back home; it was before noon. Mr. Colby had expected Young Harold to show up by midafternoon. And that was all she could think of that might help. Perhaps Young Harold could add something.

They had already talked with him. At midnight, they gave up searching until dawn. Next day, descriptions went out on police wires through the state, and across the country. By the end of the second day, the obvious assumption was already accepted, though the search continued: one more unfortunate hunting accident, with the body, somehow hastily disposed of.

There was talk of dragging the old quarry pool, but the township selectmen frowned, pointing out the considerable distance between the hemlock stand and the quarry. They nodded their heads toward the over-night snow thick on the ground, and said: "Likely it'll turn up, somewheres, come Spring thaw."

For Edna, on the week before Christmas, there was shock, and grief shading into sincere loneliness. But it was on the day before Christmas that she broke down, alone in the old house where she had planned the old-fashioned Christmas Eve dinner . . . the roast goose, the pudding, the log in the fireplace.

She fled to New York, to spend Christmas at a hotel. Right after New Year's she returned just long enough to engage a caretaking couple, and to promote Big Harold,

Mr. Vandervardt, Sr., to Farm Manager. Then she packed the few things from the old house she had to have—she could hardly bear to take even necessities with her—and went back to the city. It seemed to her that her own life was as good as finished. How could she ever hope to start, all over again, toward that at best difficult goal of complete happiness?

Still, she had to do something to keep occupied.

Ladies' Wear had no charms for her. She could still remember, quite clearly now that she had to think of it, the tearful interview with Selden's supervisor of personnel when she had, for the second time, been passed over when there had been an opening for a full-fledged Buyer.

"Look, Honey," the no-nonsense, severely tailored executive had said, impregnable behind her desk. "You're not going to stay with us forever."

"Oh, but I am, I am!" Edna had insisted.

"No, you're not. You're not the type. You got all your ideas of what you want out of life in the wrong

places, for us. You think Paradise is going to have its floor plan reproduced in Better Homes and Gardens any day now. One of these days you're going to run across some poor defenseless guy whose main attraction is he can give you that kind of life. When that happens, you'll be phfft, out of here so fast you'll break the door down. We've got to promote the people who're going to stay with us."

The memory of that interview was sharp enough so that Edna's first thought of going back was her last.

She settled, finally, on a specialty florist's shop. Somehow, it seemed a logical compromise between her status as a business-woman and the all-too-brief years of her recent past.

Like everything else to which she applied her diligent concern, Edna's shop flourished. She purchased the brownstone building in which it stood, and, allowing for business expansion to the second floor, began remodeling the upper stories as a town house. After the farm, she found a hotel apartment confining.

In the little spare time that remained, she betook herself dutifully, on the advice of friends and doctors, to parties and concerts and dinner engagements; she was introduced to a wide assortment of suitably eligible gentlemen, and was cynically pleased to discover that as a wealthy widow of forty-two she was patently more attractive to the male species than she had been as a bachelor girl of ten years' less. It all confirmed her suspicion that there were two main classes of men; those who were after her money, and those who were after Something Else.

Edna Arkwright had been seduced, once, under a lying promise of marriage, by a plausible gentleman with the wit to see that she could be seduced in no other way. The widowed Edna Colby remembered too well the anguish, the hideous, weeks-long fear afterwards that she might be That Way. She had no compensating memory of pleasure—the gentleman had been plausible, but he had done nothing to dispel the virgin impression that the girls who did It over-rated It in a spiteful effort to make their more strong-minded sisters feel jealous. And as for the rewards of motherhood, didn't she have her own mother's reiterated testimony, day after day through the years? Was the honor of living in the stink of diapers supposed to compensate for the horror of giving birth ... for the hours on the agonizing rack, for the whole dirty, humiliating mess that was, in fact, a blind animal response to the indiscriminate need of the brute organism indiscriminately to reproduce itself?

"Jack," she had said firmly, and more than once, "that sort of thing may be all right for some people. But you and I are presumably civilized."

There had been times, of course, when some of the bounds of civilization had had to give way. But Edna had always seen to it that even in those moments, it was clearly understood that a certain gentility must be preserved, as it was in everything else. Civilized people could hardly be blamed for the environment of their childhood—there was, indeed, a certain degree of merit in having risen from, for example, a two-room cold water flat on the Lower West Side to a charmingly restored farmhouse in Dutchess County—but it was certainly unthinkable to slip back into those discarded ways once they had been overcome.

So Edna spared very little time on gentlemen who did not remain impersonally friendly. She devoted herself to her shop and her new house with such energy that the one was a going concern and the other a completed work of the decorators' art in very short order. It was only then, with her social habits fixed and her workload diminishing, that Edna Colby had time on her hands.

She was not sure she liked that state of affairs. There were mysterious stirrings somewhere deep within her, and these speedily became a gnawing restlessness that no amount of late reading, exercise, or careful avoidance of afternoon coffee could keep from turning into a chronic insomnia.

There was something missing ... something ...

She turned and tossed on her bed at night until dawn came into the windows of her pink bedroom, and when it came it reminded her of Jack. Eventually, she found herself ridden with the notion that Jack was, somewhere, somehow, roisteringly alive.

It was a ridiculous obsession, she knew. But she could not allay it. She understood it to be a symptom of some private turmoil that was shut off from her conscious mind, and it frightened her.

Then spring came. The shop showed a disconcerting tendency to run itself. Daffodils and the first

forsythia reminded her of tulip bulbs she wanted to get from the farm. She could have them sent down, of course. . . .

But she wondered if anyone had trimmed the lilac. And the next thought—of apple blossoms—convinced her that she did want some of the dining room pieces from the big house for the duplex. So it came about that on a warm weekend in the middle of May, Edna packed slacks and a nightgown in a hatbox, took the little-used car out of the garage, and drove up along the river to the old farm, unannounced.

She arrived to find the driveway rutted and ungravelled, the lawn ragged, flower borders untended, and the house itself smelling of dust and must. She did not stay overnight, but gave the caretakers two weeks' notice, and drove straight back to town to make arrangements for an indefinitely prolonged absence.

When she returned a week later, she was expected. She had written ahead asking a friend in the Garden Club to engage some help for the work inside the house. She arrived to find the Club ladies had already started work on her flower borders. The man and two women she'd asked for arrived at ten thirty on the dot. One of the women carried a basket ("Miz Barron said from the Garden Club ladies, welcome home") with fresh farm milk and butter, salad vegetables, a still-warm home-baked loaf of bread, and a foil-wrapped roast chicken.

All day, the four of them scrubbed and rubbed and scoured. By evening, the house was clean, and Edna was gloriously tired. She soaked in a hot tub, went to bed, and was asleep before she had time even to think about the sleeplessness of the past four months.

"What a fool I've been!"

She thought it again as she awakened in the morning, with the sun pouring in through the sheer ivory curtains. And then it came to her, unaccountably, that she had once again failed to remember a date. For tomorrow, she realized with a pang, was her wedding anniversary. Was that, she wondered in surprise, could that have been what had brought her back here?

That day she was busy with visits and errands and arrangements. She had dinner out, with the Barrons; when she drove home it was nearly eleven. She went through the big empty house, checking doors and windows, then found herself oddly reluctant to go to bed. It was almost as if she were afraid last night's exhausted peace might not come again.

She went back downstairs in her negligee, made some cocoa, tried to read, and couldn't concentrate. In the end she turned on the television and watched it without interest. At the stroke of midnight, she turned her head and saw Jack sitting in his own favorite chair.

"Jack . . ." Edna whispered. "Oh, jack, no!"

He sat there, as ruddy and bearded as ever, wearing the clothes he had worn that day five months ago, except for the cap, and his smile was a curious mixture of the tender and the flippant, as though he felt some need to make his first words cheerful. "Happy anniversary, sweetheart," he said, the cheerfulness not quite successful.

"But, Jack—"

"Oh, I'm dead, Edna. We'd better make sure you understand that. Do you?"

She nodded, carefully. "How—have you been, Jack?"

He shrugged. "All right." He seemed listless. That was very little like him. Edna had learned to mistrust him when he acted out of character.

A host of thoughts went through Edna's mind. Suddenly, she was back to her mood of that earlier anniversary. Jack was here—in what way, made no immediate difference—he was here, and she could talk to him, see him, possibly even touch him. It was as if the intervening five months had never been. She wondered if that lipstick smudge might not be still faintly visible on his neck.

All this because of one unguarded tone of voice. But she knew him too well to let it escape her. Knew him too well not to understand what it meant.

"Jack—what happened to you?" The question popped out almost of its own will. She was teeming with things she urgently wanted to know, and she was still too numb to worry about the possibility of bad manners.

With the same forced lightness he had shown before, Jack confirmed her surmises of last December in a few halting sentences. A careless hunter had, indeed, shot the wrong game. Then, finding Jack dead with the bullet through his heart, the killer had chosen discretion before valor or honor. Wrapping the fresh corpse in some of the burlap, he had roped the whole bundle to the hand-truck, carted it cross-country for a quarter mile, and dumped the whole thing into the quarry pool, while the beginnings of the snowfall hid his tracks behind him. From there the hunter had vanished, presumably to his car and back to the city. Jack, in his typically careless way, seemed to bear him no particular ill will.

"The hand-truck!" Edna exclaimed. "My goodness, I forgot all about it and I suppose Young Harold didn't think to mention it, either. No wonder no one could see how your—that is, how he reached the quarry!" Another thought struck her. "But, that's terrible! Now your— That is," she corrected fumblingly, "They won't find you."

It was unthinkable—it was ghastly to know where Jack was, now, and to think that there had been no funeral and no proper interment. Jack . . . at the bottom of the quarry . . . roped to the hand-truck, in the black, frigid water.

"I'll have to tell them immediately. In the morning."

"Darling," Jack said in discomfort, "why should they believe you? How are you going to explain how you can be sure?"

"Why, I'll just . . ." Edna suddenly clapped her hand over her mouth. "Oh, darling, I haven't been thinking!" She flew across the room into Jack's lap, to throw her arms around his neck and hug herself to his chest. Only later did she stop to think it was only luck that Jack did, indeed, have the substance to receive her. At the moment, she was too occupied with holding and kissing him, having at last, and so abruptly, fully realized what a remarkable and wonderful thing had happened. "Oh, I'm so glad to see you! You don't know how lonely I've been!"

It was only gradually that she realized Jack was returning her embrace with perfect politeness but with an unmistakable desire to bring it to an end as soon as possible. "I do know, darling," he said uncomfortably. "You see, you're the one who's keeping me here."

She leaned back. "I'm the one who's ...?"

"It's—" Jack was plainly embarrassed. "Well, it's hard to explain about how things are. In some ways, it's a great deal like it was before I . . . well, you know. The countryside looks the same—but it's wild ... there aren't any buildings, or roads, though it's certainly pleasant. There's something very odd about the horizon, too. Sometimes I'm almost sure it's flat; I think I can see a lot farther than I ought to be able too. But it's hard to tell."

"Are there any other people?" Edna asked artlessly. Even in her most distracted moments, she had found long ago, she was able to keep her head about certain things—and the suspicion lurking in the back of her mind had to be satisfied.

"People? Oh, yes, there're quite a few. I can see them, off in the distance." There was a wistful note in his voice. "I'd like to go and talk to them . . . see what they're doing."

"And you can't? Go over to these men ... and women?" She traced one fingernail through the beard at the base of his jaw, studying his face.

"No, no, I can't. It's because you ... well, it's because I can't leave the boundaries of the farm—except as far as the quarry, of course." He was fidgeting nervously, she saw; the fingernail was distracting him. Substantial or something a shade less, Jack had kept his old reflexes. She wondered who was keeping them sharp for him, if anyone was.

"And can't these people come to you?"

Jack shook his head. "I think it's part of the rules. Or maybe they just haven't noticed me, yet. Maybe I'm not really one of them—maybe they can't see me. I wonder if you might not be the only person anywhere who knows I exist."

"What about those rules, Jack? Hasn't . . . well, Anyone . . . explained them to you? Didn't Anyone meet you?" Edna settled into a more comfortable position on Jack's lap.

"Oh, no!" Jack said as if repeating the most obvious thing in the world. "The only people who can meet you are people who care for you. They sort of welcome you, I think. I don't know—I'm not sure I

know—you seem to just feel the way things are supposed to be—but I think the amount of good that does you depends on how much you can trust your feelings." He shook his head, again, and Edna saw that there was much about his new life that troubled him. She considered that carefully.

"But, my dear, you have a number of relatives ... there ... It seems to me your father, at least, or your mother ..."

"Well, no, sweetheart," Jack said. "You see, they had no warning I was coming. It happened too fast. Unless they were right there on the spot—and, of course, they weren't ... And now I'm over there without anyone knowing about it, and I don't think they can find out about it, now. You see—" He patted her shoulder clumsily. "I don't think I'm really all the way over there. And that's because if no one knew I needed welcoming there, then it's necessary for someone over here, who loved me, to have said goodbye to me."

"Said goodbye!" Edna recoiled to arms' length, barely retaining her grip around Jack's neck. "I was so lonely I couldn't even stand to live here any longer!"

"Well, yes, sweetheart," Jack said tortuously, gathering her up in his own arms and holding her close. "Yes, of course you were. But couldn't you ... well ... let go of me? I am down in that quarry you know"

His choice of words was unfortunate Edna had a sudden graphic image of Jack, and the burlap wrapping, and the hand-truck, and the water, cold and black even this close to summer, and the weeds, and the fish—were there fish in the quarry? Someone might have put minnows in it, mightn't they? She prayed no one had.

She clung to the warm, substantial husband she had here, in the house with her, now.

"And let you wander away? To do I can imagine what?"

Jack winced. "But that's what it's for."

"What?"

"Not—not that—not what you're thinking," he said quickly. "I meant the wandering; the meeting people, talking to them, seeing what they do."

"Jack Colby, I've got you back and I'm not going to let you go."

Jack sighed. "Now, look, Edna," he said, "you can't keep me here against my will."

"You just said I could."

"Oh, you can keep me here around the farm. But you can't make me actually be here in the room with you, and talk to you, unless I help." And as if to prove his point, Jack suddenly seemed a shade less warm, a shade less substantial. His skin took on a curious transparency, and his chest did not seem to move with breath at all. His voice was distant, if rebellious. "If you feel that way about it, I can just make sure you never see me again, even while I'm looking over your shoulder."

"Jack!" Edna wailed. And at this point she was desperate. Her voice changed. "Jack?" Her negligee loosened a little at the shoulders.

"Edna, what in Heaven's name ... ?" It was there, in Jack's suddenly wide and quite substantial eyes; the roguish gleam, that had twisted her heart bitterly only five short months ago but was her ally now. "Edna?"

"Don't leave me, Jack. Not tonight."

"Well, I'll be—"

Damned?

One night passed after another, and Jack never failed to come to her. Edna Colby blossomed again, and the house and farm had never seemed so prosperously trim, so efficiently run. The Garden Club ladies remarked on the amazing way she had taken hold of herself again. Edna had never been happier. She knew some of them considered it hardly proper for her to be so content so soon, if ever. But she was proper. Not even the most vicious gossips could find anything with which to reproach her. Some of them, she suspected, were keeping close watch on the doors at night, to see if perhaps somebody might not be ...

But nobody was. ... Nobody who needed doors



Edna blossomed. She found, now that there was No Danger, that there was a certain element of . . .

Well, she said to herself occasionally with a certain kind of smile, Jack had never again made his ridiculous threat to leave her, had he? As a matter of fact, he seemed rather more . . . satisfied . . . than he had ever been, before.

There was, in fact only one problem. It was small at first, but it could not remain so. The future cannot be disregarded forever ...

Edna Colby sat in her living-room, and looked around her at the polished wood of the authentic Dutch Colonial furniture, the multi-paned casement windows opening to the rose garden in summer-time, the creamy-yellow walls and deep-napped carpet. She looked at the dying embers in the great stone fire-place.

Last of all she looked into the shining mirror opposite her on the wall.

Edna was now forty-three years old. Jack had been thirty-eight when he . . . died. He had of course not aged visibly in the short time between then and the time when he began appearing to her. From what he said, his body did age somewhat when he materialized—but at nothing like the metabolic rate of her own.

Jack was from long-lived country stock—the kind who looks young at fifty, and feels it still at sixty-five. Edna had once been trim and tiny; during her widowhood, she had begun to think of herself as skinny. The past months had put weight on her for the first time. She looked herself over carefully: beginning to show her age was one way to put it; dumpy was another.

And the end of summer brought another nagging worry. . . .

It was September before Edna became seriously concerned. Up 'til then she could still remind herself that she was after all, of a certain age.

It was ridiculous. Suddenly peevish, she stood alone before the big mirror and slowly turned from side to side, examining a figure that showed signs of a specialized sort of dumpiness.

It was absolutely ridiculous. Who would have thought of taking Certain Precautions in these circumstances?

She stirred as if waking from a dream and moved slowly toward the sunlit library, where she took the big medical encyclopedia from the shelf, opened it to Sterility, psychosomatic, and began reading carefully. When she had finished, she went back and examined her newly-rounded figure in the mirror again.

"Receptive, relaxed attitude." If Jack had seen fit to speak to her about such matters, instead of simply busying himself with what she now saw was desperate enthusiasm, he might have used those words to her. "Banishment of fear-tensions . . ." If she had found the words to tell him how she felt—not now, of course, not now that this awful thing had happened—but last week, last month, yesterday . . . those would have been the words.

For one brief moment, Edna had the feeling of something lost; something that might have been, with just a little more time.

Now her mouth was a hard, narrow line, and the crows' feet stood sharply outlined at the corners of her clenched eyes.

When Jack appeared from behind the turn in the upstairs hall that night, he found Edna waiting in the middle of the bedroom, a carefully packed bag at her feet.

"You brute!" she cried out in a high-pitched voice. "You nasty animal! Get out of my sight!"

Jack stared at her. Then, gradually, the surprise was erased by an expression of dawning relief.

Edna finished: "You just wait 'til I get back!"

The relief disappeared from Jack Colby's face.

Edna had already informed Big Harold that she had been called to the city suddenly for a few days. She left in the car and drove not to New York, but to Boston, where she knew no one and no one knew her. She checked into a hotel and, first thing in the morning, phoned for an appointment with a nationally famous obstetrician.

Doctor Martin's receptionist was quite firm, at first, about there being no time available for the next two weeks. But in this sort of jousting, Edna was in her element. She emerged triumphant from the Battle of the Telephone with an appointment for that afternoon. She spent an edifying morning inspecting the Common, and a few of the more prominent historic landmarks. She made mental notes about other places to see later in the day; she would be interested in attending a talk on Winter Protection, at the Boston Botanical Gardens . . .

She never did get there. The doctor, a cheerful, chubby type, told her exactly what she had been trying to pretend he would not.

His examination was both thorough and expert despite its speed. Smilingly, he assured her that her symptoms were indeed those of an increased, rather than a diminishing, fertility.

About four months, he thought . . . hard to tell without a definite date . . . and now, if "Mrs. Hartley" was planning to remain in Boston, he could recommend several excellent physicians. Unfortunately, his own time was full right now. . . .

In a dutiful daze, Edna copied down names and addresses. She accepted the little booklet of information he gave her, and murmured what she hoped were appropriate responses at proper intervals. She was halfway out of the consulting room before she thought to ask, "Isn't there some sort of a test, Doctor?"

"Rabbit test." He smiled, if possible even more heartily than before. "Yes, but hardly necessary at this stage."

"Oh?"

"Of course you can have it if you want it," he said patiently. "Any doctor you decide on will be able to do it for you. . . ."

At Dr. Elliott's, "Mrs. Grahame," having taken thought, insisted on a test. She filled a small sterilized bottle for the nurse, and departed. When she phoned the following day—she had not been able to leave a telephone number, since she was registered at the hotel under her own name—the results were, as she had expected, negative. In the intervening time, instead of visiting Boston's historical or horticultural wonders, she had procured several books of a specialized nature in a small shop on Huntington Avenue, and had perused them thoroughly. By the time she checked out of the hotel that afternoon, Edna Colby, who had looked up psychosomatic sterility in the encyclopedia at home, was now also something of an expert on psychosomatic pregnancy. Enough of an expert, and possessed of enough additional personal knowledge, to wonder a little about how much psychosomasis there might be to some of the case histories detailed in the books.

For four hours she drove carefully and attentively southbound through moderate traffic; it was not until she found herself approaching the end of the Wilbur Cross Parkway and the beginning of the Merritt, that she realized she had taken the turnoff for New York, rather than staying on Route Six for Dutchess County. That wouldn't help. She was no more prepared for chance meetings with friends and acquaintances than for any immediate steps with Jack.

Accordingly, she left the highway, and headed due south for the Connecticut shore. At some small town whose name she never knew, she found a motel with clean white, painted cabins, and a chintz-curtained dining-room. After a quiet dinner, she walked down to the shore, and sat for a long while in the shelter of a rocky ledge, ignoring the cold and the damp, doing her planning to the rhythm of the white-foam sea.

If she could not hold Jack, without paying this price, then she knew what her choice must be. As the daylight waned, she began to think in cold, carefully thought-out steps without reference to or remembrance of the very longing that had brought her to this situation.

Edna stood up and walked to the edge of the pounding surf, seeing in her mind's eye, instead, the still surface of the old quarry pool. The way was clear to her now: the one and only way.

She shivered abruptly on the cold empty beach.

In the morning, she continued toward New York. She would have liked to go home and close the house properly, collect her belongings, and provide suitable explanations for the neighbors; but she could

not risk letting Jack learn her plans. True, he could not leave the farm till she released him—but still, he might think of some way to upset her program. So she wrote letters instead, and arranged things by phone, telling everyone that urgent business required her to leave immediately. Three days later she embarked on a prolonged tour of South

America, where she thought she would be reasonably safe from chance encounter with anyone she knew.

When she returned to Dutchess County, it was four months, almost to the day, from the time she had left. She did not go to the farm, but took a room at an exceedingly middle-class resort hotel where she knew there was no possibility of meeting someone who knew her as the mistress of Colby Farm. In all probability, anyhow, none of her former friends would have recognized the fat-and-fortyish woman in the ill-fitting clothes, with the brooding face and the too-bright eyes.

She had tried to time her arrival so as not to have too much waiting, but she had not dared stay away too long. As it turned out, she spent almost two weeks in the dingy hotel room, waiting.

When the pains came at last, late one frozen afternoon, Edna bundled up, left the hotel without a word to anyone, and walked the full four miles to her destination, rather than hire a driver who would almost surely remember taking her out to the quarry. She walked haltingly, stopping to rest against trees and rocks for brief moments, then pressing on.

Fear and iron determination drove her. She was in a panic at the coming ordeal; the possibility of death, of some terrible crippling that would leave her alive, but helpless, freezing—with each fresh pain, her heart leaped so that she could hardly breathe.

But she would not give up. Jack had done this. He had returned all her devotion, all her dedication, in this monstrous way, and he would suffer for it.

Sobbing with effort and hysteria, she dragged the burden of her body up through the woods to the quarry's edge. And there, at last, she could stop, fighting for breath between waves of pain.

She swayed on the windrowed stone-chips near the quarry's rim, looking down at the ice below.

Jack was in there, she thought with wooden concentration. Down there, under the ice, wrapped in a rotting shroud.

"Jack," she croaked hoarsely. "Jack, I've got something for you."

As she said the words, the picture of the sodden bundle under the ice returned compellingly to her mind. For a moment, her resolution wavered. For a moment, it seemed easier to give in, to admit that it was her fault much more than Jack's. But she had come this far with immense determination and the courage of a martyr—if she gave in now, she would have wasted it all.

With a moan, she sank to the ground, struggling to arrange her clothes, flayed by the bitter cold. The contractions were nearly continual now. She raised her wristwatch to time them, in automatic accordance with the manuals she had pored over, but her eyes were misted with tears.

The pains were like nothing she had imagined—like nothing her mother had ever succeeded in describing. They were directional; great automatic spasms of her lower body that knotted her shoulders and thighs in sympathy, that surged like the sea turned to molten oil, that seemed to be trying to take control of her body away from her brain and relocate it somewhere in the depths of her spinal column.

She reached out frantically for comfort—she clutched the folds of her soft coat; she dug at the unyielding ground. She no longer thought of the danger in childbirth to even a hospitalized woman of her age.

"Jack," she moaned. "Jack."

From somewhere, strong hands were closed on her. "Bear down, sweetheart," the urging voice said; "push, Baby, push. Don't let it break you up. Push."

The knowledge of someone near—she barely recognized the voice as Jack's; the words were only sounds—was enough. One fraction of her panic ebbed away, and her body did the rest of its own accord. She was possessed by a sudden understanding of herself as a function, as a force; as an elemental, marvelously instinctive engine triumphantly meeting a resistance that was all the massive closure of extinction. Meeting it and, with a series of quick surges, suddenly relaxing so that her burden almost seemed to go forth and overcome it of its own volition.

"Take him—take him, Jack, quickly," she moaned. "Take him where he'll be warm, and safe."

She fumbled at her coat to cover herself. She was terribly cold. There was nothing on the ground—nothing that she could see; there was no sound, no cry.

"Jack? Jack—can you still hear me?" She had planned it all so well. Planned it on the basis that she would hate what came out of her torture. Planned it on the basis that it would be torture, planned on the assumption that it would be the best revenge of all to saddle Jack with the brat forever. "Jack—is it a boy? Please . . ."

She raised her arms. Silhouetted against the trees, she dimly made out a patch of russet color from Jack's beard, and the faint vertical tinge of his trousers. Sole shoes scraped very faintly on the stones beside her. And then she heard it—the faraway whimper of life—and she looked at the level of Jack's chest. There was something there . . . something . . . As the cry grew momentarily louder, swelled to a full-throated wail, she saw the boy, wrapped in his father's arms.

"Take good care of him, Jack," she whispered. She pitched herself up to her knees, somehow got to her feet. "I have to go. I'll freeze if I don't." She looked down into the quarry. "Goodbye, Jack. Goodbye—I'll miss you."

"Goodbye, honey," Jack said softly. "I'm sorry about the other girls," he added hurriedly, already gone from sight.

"It was my fault," Edna whispered. There were tears in her eyes as she thought of Jack and the boy, free to roam their world over, now, free to see what lay beyond the wide horizons. She turned sharply on the loose stones.

For one moment, she tried to balance herself. One thought passed through her mind, in a familiar female voice, a voice out of her childhood: "By God, if that little snip puts on any more airs about being too good for me, she's going to hear a thing or two about what it took to bring her here." But it was only a fragment of something —perhaps her first conscious memory, rounding out her days into an ellipse of beginning and of end.

There was a shock.

Edna Colby never knew if her body broke all the way through the ice to sink into company with that other abandoned shell. . . . She and Jack and the boy had gone to where the world was warm and green.

*"Survival Ship," back in 1951, had led JM into some explorations of sex-role behavior toward a novel that never got written entire, but some stories out of her future history appeared; e.g., F&SF—December, 1958.*

## Wish Upon a Star

I WISH, I WISH, I WISH . . .

Sheik sat under the shadow of a broad-leaf shrub, his head back, eyes closed against the glare from overhead, mouth open for a shout of protest he could never voice.

He stifled the thought with the sound, pushed it out of his head as he pushed his body backward, throwing his weight straight-armed on the flat palms of his hands behind him. Flexing his calves below bent knees, he pulled against the long thigh sinews and tightened the slanting muscles of his back, driving all tension from his mind into his body as he raised his buttocks up off the ground and hung suspended, arching from knees to elbows, hands and feet rooted to the soil. Wholly intent on the immediate physical effort, he stayed so till the blood rushing to his head choked in his throat, and arms and legs were trembling beyond control. Then with a last summoning of purpose, he flipped over and sprawled contentedly collapsed on chest and stomach, head turned so one cheek also rested on the resilient softness of the granular stuff that made the plant beds. With each great breath of air his nostrils sucked up the rich sweet damp aroma of the roots.

For a moment there was peace; and then, again, *I wish, I wish, I wish ...*

Tears filled his eyes. He sat up and angrily and brushed them off. He was too old for crying. Crying wouldn't help. He was too old to be sitting idle here, wasting time, wasting wishes on absurdities. Old enough not to be bothered by anything Naomi said or did . . . but not yet old enough (smart enough?) to know better than to try to tell her anything.

She had listened so meekly, watched so quietly, while he repaired the rootpack she had broken, holding the torn parts—just so—together, tamping the soil down—just so—around the fiber, explaining as he worked why it was just this way. He let her silence fool him; well, it was no one's fault but his own. He should have known better by now.

When he was finished, she smiled, very sweetly. "It', so *comforting* to know you'll be here, Sheik," she said, "when *I'm* in charge. You're so *efficient*." Then a quick glance at the chrono, which she must have been watching all the time from the corner of her eye, or she couldn't have timed it all so perfectly. "Oh-OOO! I better run! I'm late for Sessions now . . ." And she was off, flashing a hand free of dirt or work, leaving him, trowel in hand, to realize he had just finished doing her job for her.

It wasn't fair. Naomi was twelve and a half, more than a year younger than he was. In Standard School she was behind him in almost everything; and never, never as long as she lived, would she be able to handle a plant, to feel it and *understand* it, as he did. But she was the one in Special Sessions classes now, learning the things he ought to know. They'd make her read all the books he wanted, whether she cared or not, and put her to learn in the lab, mastering all the mysteries and intricacies of advanced Bichem. While he, Yashikazu, would go on day after day, trowel in hand, taking her jibes now, and later—much later, when he replaced Abdur in charge of the plantroom—taking her orders as Ab took his orders from Lieutenant Johnson.

It just wasn't *fair*!

*I wish, I wish I was ...*

He stopped it, cut it off sharply. He was not going to think that way any more. *I wish Sarah was here*, he finished the thought instead. Tonight, maybe, she would ask him again. He had nursery duty, but if he told Bob . . . *if* she asked him, that was . . . well, if she did, he'd get off duty somehow ...

Without even closing his eyes, he could see her there now, as she had been the night before last, sprawled on the rootpacks beside him, her shining long legs golden under the ultras, her face in the shadow of the leafy shrub a deep dark brown, but somehow giving out the gold-glow, too. Her eyes were closed and her hand, smooth and cool, soft and small, lay inside his as he watched her in warm and perfect comradeship.

For most of an hour, they had barely moved or talked: they just lay there together in the private shadow, sharing what had been his alone, thinking and dreaming silently but not separately at all.

Nothing Naomi said or did ought to matter now, because things-as-they-were had given him this special thing, a place and a significance, to share with Sarah. Never before had he told anyone about the shadows—how he felt about them. (No one but Ab, of course, but that was different; Ab *knew*.) She had seen them, naturally, most every day of her life; everyone in the ship had. The nursery-age children spent at least an hour each day hullside, for ultra exposure and exercise as well as their basic fichem. When they started with Standard School class-work, they were required to spend a half-hour of play-time every day under the lamps. But it was the light they came for; the shadows belonged to Sheik.

When he was just old enough to be allowed to go about alone, he started coming down hullside every chance he had; the shadows drew him. Later, the plants became important, too, and now he knew that they would be his work all his life. That was good in itself, but better because the shadows were part of the plants.

Nowhere else in the whole ship was there anything like it. Once in a while, the floorlight or one of the walls in the regular living and work rooms would go out of whack, and for a brief time the diffusion would be distorted and patches of dark-and-bright showed when people moved. But only here, where the thick rootpack lined the whole inner shell of the ship's hull, where then were only struts instead of walls, and the great ultra lamps glared day and night overhead, only here were there real *shadows*, under the plants, stationary, permanent, and shaped.

The ultras were never dimmed. They shone, Sheik thought, with the same brilliant fixity of time and

purpose as the pinpointed stars on the black satin of the lounge viewplate. And in the center of this same clump of shrubbery where he lay now there was a hollow spot where some of the oldest, tallest plants grew so thick no light could penetrate, where it was dark, *black*, almost as black as the space between the stars: the way, he thought, a planet's night must be.

And this spot, where he had taken Sarah, was—depending where you held your head—a moonlit planet night, a "twilight," "morning," or "afternoon" . . . all words in books, until they took on meaning here where the leaves and lights produced an infinitude of ever-changing shades and combinations of black, gray, green, brown, and gold.

He had never told anyone how he thought about that. Not Abdur; not even Sarah, yet. But if she asked him to take her here again, he thought, he could tell her; she would really understand.

He sat up sharply, the faint rustling sound like an answer to a prayer. *Sarah?*

Two plant stalks parted cautiously and a small, round, brown face stared into his own.

"What are *you* doing down here now?" Sheik demanded. How had the fool kid found him here?

"I *told* 'm I'd find you," Hari said triumphantly. "I told 'm I could. You better hurry. Ab's mad at you. He has to work onna mew-tay-shuns," the small boy said the new word carefully, "an' you're supposed to be our teacher this time."

Sheik scrambled to his feet. Nursery class here already? *That* late? He'd spent half the afternoon doing nothing, dreaming . . . Ab must be mad, all right!

"You forgot about us," Hari said.

He hadn't forgotten; he had just forgotten time. "Come on, shrimp," he told Harendra gruffly. "Better hop on if you want to get back *quick*." He squatted and Hari climbed on his shoulders—a rare and special treat; it would make up for his seeming to forget. He started for Abdur's workroom at a trot.

Harendra was three years old now, almost four, but he was Yoshikazu's favorite in the nursery still. He had been Sheik's first full-charge baby; sometimes he didn't seem too sure himself which one was his father, Abdur or Sheik. Certainly he didn't care; he loved them both with the same fierce intensity. And it upset him if Ab was angry with the Sheik.

Abdur had been spending all his time the past few days struggling to save a planting of mutant seedlings newly developed in the Bichem lab. It was a high-protein lentil with a new flavor, but some mysterious lack in root-pack nourishment—the kind of thing that showed up only in actual growth conditions—made it essential to nurse each plant with extra care while the lab techs tried to find the cause of the trouble.

The intricate, patient skill with which Abdur tended the delicate young plants was fascinating to Sheik. And the young children, he thought, would be interested in the luminous unfamiliar yellow of the sickly leaves.

Abdur agreed with evident satisfaction to having the children visit the sick patch. He rebuked Sheik only briefly and without heat for his forgetfulness, and set out immediately for his plants, taking the way cross-ship, through the central living section, to reach the area on the other side of the hull without further delay. Yoshikazu took his troupe of six around by the hufside route, routinely replying to the inevitable routine questions at each step: why was this plant taller, the other stalk thicker, a leaf a darker green or different shape. To most of the grown people on board, the endless rows of plants covering the whole inner surface of the ship's hull were monotonous and near identical. Abdur knew better; so did Sheik; and the nursery kids noticed things sometimes that Yoshikazu hadn't seen himself.

But this time he didn't want to stop at every plant. It was a slow enough trip with their short legs, and he hurried them past spots where he might otherwise have tried to show them something new or slightly changed. Then Dee, silly dimpled shrieking Dina, who, at barely two, should not (in Sheik's opinion) have come into the nursery class as yet, sat herself down on the rootpacks and refused to budge.

Yoshikazu bent to pick her up. He'd carry her, rather than waste time coaxing now. But she pointed to one root, growing wrong, malformed and upended, and stopped progress completely by-spilling out a spurt of only half-coherent but entirely fascinated inquiry.

Well, he had been wrong; she *was* old enough. Sheik sat down beside her and got to work, framing his answer, to her questions carefully, trying to give her a new mystery each time to provoke the next

useful question. He pulled packing away from around the upended root, dug down, and placed the root where it belonged, giving all the children a chance to see how the other roots lay in the pack before he covered it. He explained how the roots drank nourishment from the soil, and floundered attempting to explain the action of the ultraviolet lamps.

All the while, Hari hung over his shoulder, watching the boy had seen it all before, when Dina was too little to care, but he drank in every sight and every word as if it were the first time for him, too.

"It's like being tucked in," he broke in suddenly, offering his own level of lucidity in place of Sheik's complications. "Like when your daddy tucks you in at night and kisses you and you feel warm and good all over you and you grow in your sleep."

Dina's black eyes were shining with excitement. "I know," she said. "Every night when I sleep I grow." She lifted a hand to prove the point. "Way up!"

"Well, that's how it is," Hari nodded commendation to his pupil. "Only the lights don't have to go out for the plants to sleep, because they're asleep all the time. Underneath there. *That's* why they never go anywhere."

His voice lost some confidence at the end. He looked to Yoshikazu for approval, and Dina looked for confirmation.

Sheik hesitated, failed to find words for a more adequate explanation, and decided Hari had probably put across more than he could for right now. He nodded and smiled at them both. "Come on, now, or we won't have time to see the new plants." They all ran after him.

Lieutenant Johnson was on duty at the children's supper that evening. She strolled casually from one of the four tables to another, listening to a scrap of conversation here, answering a question there, correcting a younger child somewhere else, reminding Fritz—*who at eleven had just become a table leader*—to keep her group quieter.

At Sarah's table she paused only briefly; the officer on duty never had to stop there except for a greeting. Sarah and Sheik had seven in their group, more than anyone else, but they never had trouble. They were a good combination; Sheik glowed inwardly with his awareness of this, and with the feeling that the same thought was passing through Johnson's mind as she looked from one end of the table to the other. He didn't need any smiles from Johnson to keep him happy tonight, though. In the lounge, just before, Sarah *had* asked him. As soon as he could swap his evening duty, he was to meet her and take her down hullside again.

He caught her glance across the table as the Lieutenant walked away and saw her wink at him. With astonishment he thought, *She's as happy as I am! She wants to go, too!*

He knew, though he could not see as she bent over the carving, how her breasts had begun to swell under her shirt, and he knew by heart, though they were hidden behind the table, the long clean curves of those golden legs. Mechanically he added lentils to carrobeet top and passed a plate down, reminding Adolph Liebnitz that there was a fork at his place, and he should use it. He answered a question of Irma's without ever knowing what she asked, filled another plate, kept his eyes off Sarah thinking, *This time . . . this time I'll . . .* Added a little extra greens to Justin's plate, skimping on the carrobeets the kid hated . . . *This time I'll . . .* Looked up, caught Sarah's eye again, felt himself going hot and red, and dropped the thought.

He was in a warm daze still when Lieutenant Johnson mounted the rostrum to conclude the meal with the evening prayer. Sheik chanted the familiar words of thanksgiving, suddenly meaningful, and looked directly at Sarah as they finished, saying to her and her alone, "Survive in Peace!"

The Lieutenant read off the cleanup assignments, and then, just as casually as if she were making a routine announcement instead of delivering a stomach punch, added, "There will be gameroom play for Classes Three and Four till bedtime. Special Sessions girls are invited to attend a staff meeting in the wardroom immediate!" after senior supper."

Sarah threw him a look of mild disappointment. "Tomorrow?" she mouthed. He didn't answer, pretended not to see. Tomorrow? Sure. What difference did it make to her?

And then he was angry at himself. It wasn't Sarah's fault. And you couldn't blame her for being excited about a wardroom meeting. It had to be something big for the Sessions to get asked in to

wardroom. He tried to meet her eye again, but everyone was getting up; people were moving; he caught a glimpse of her back, and then couldn't see her at all. Desultorily, he drifted with the other older children to the lounge and stood staring at the big screen.

The sun was big now, filling one whole sixteenth sector. Maybe the meeting . . . ? He couldn't get excited. There'd been too many false alarms when they began decelerating almost a year ago, rumors and counter rumors and waves of excitement about how the tapes were coming out of the calckers, how it was the planet . . . No, it was poisonous, ammonia atmosphere . . . No, it was just a barren sun . . . It was the right one after all; it had a perfect earth-type atmosphere, one-third the mass . . .

Meaningless words, after all, to those who had been born on board *Survival*; words out of books. The older people had been more excited than the kids. "Earth-type meant something to them.

But that was a year ago, and every day since, the sun had grown bigger on the plate, and no day had brought any real news, except somewhere along the way it had been confirmed officially that there were planets—type as yet unknown. Bob said he thought it would be four or five more months before they came in close enough to give the calckers anything to work on.

Last year, when they first began decelerating, Bob had talked a lot to Sheik, times when they were by themselves in quarters, the little ones napping or asleep for the night. It was the first time, really, since Sheik's nursery years that he and his father had been close. From the time he was six, when he was assigned for training in the plant rooms, Abdur had grown to fill the role of father-advisor more and more. But when the bright sun started to grow faintly brighter on the viewscreen, Bob's excitement was uncontrollable; he poured it out on his son, a boy incredibly grown to where, by the time a landing was likely to take place, he would be in effect one of the men.

And the men, Bob told him, would have to work together when that happened. Things on a planet would not be quite the same as on board ship. For weeks, Bob reminisced and daydreamed, talking about Earth and its homes and families and governments, about the launching of the ship, *Survival*, and how and why things were set up on board ship as they were.

Some of it Sheik had heard in class; other parts he was cautioned to forget except in private. Everyone knew that the *Survival* was Earth's first starship, a colonizing expedition sent to find a planet—if there was one—suitable for the spillover of the world's crowded billions. Everyone knew the voyage might take years or decades; the ship was completely self-contained; the ion drive made it possible to carry fuel enough for a hundred years. There were living quarters on either side of those now in use that had never been unlocked; if a third or fourth generation grew up on board ship, they'd be needed.

But if it took that long, it would do Earth no good. If the ship could not return with news of an established colony within fifty years, then it was under orders not to return at all, but to remain and start over altogether in the new place.

This much was common knowledge, and one further fact: that the original crew of twenty-four had included twenty women and four men for obvious biological race-survival reasons.

What they didn't tell in classes was why all of the men were subordinates, none of them trained for astrogation, electronics, communications, or any of the skilled jobs of ship control; why all the officers were women. The children took it for granted as they grew; the ship was the way things were and always had been; the readers that spoke of families and pets and churches, towns and villages and lakes and oceans, aircraft and weather, were fascinating, and in a quaint way, true, no doubt; but reality was the ship with its four family units, domestic fathers, energetic women, school dorms, communal meals.

Bob's talk of men who "ran their own families" and ruled their homes, of male supremacy in the environment of a hostile world, of wives and husbands cleaving one to one faithfully, first intrigued Sheik, then excited him, while he regarded it as fairy-tale stuff. But when his father pointed out one day that there were just as many boys as girls among the children—a fact Yoshikazu somehow had not thought about before—everything the old man said struck home in a new way.

"Then *why* did they put the women in charge of everything?" he demanded for the first time.

Bob's answer was incoherent, angry and fantasizing. Later Sheik took his puzzlement to Ab, who explained, tight-lipped, that women were considered better suited to manage the psychological problems of an ingrown group, and to maintain with patience over many, many years, if needed, the functioning and



purpose of the trip.

"Then when we land . . . ?"

"*When* we land, there will be time enough to think about it! Who's been talking to you about all this?"

"Well, I was asking Bob," Sheik said cautiously. "But . . ."

"But nothing," Abdur said sharply. "If you're smart, Sheik, you'll forget it now. If anyone else hears this kind of talk from you, your father will be in trouble. Or I will. Forget it."

And for the most part, he did. Bob never spoke of it again. And Ab spoke only as he always had, of sun and rain, forests and gardens, sunsets and hillsides and farmlands *outdoors* on a planet.

Sheik stared at the giant sun on the viewscreen; if they had found their planet, if they landed here, he was almost a man . . .

No. He was a man. He could do everything a man could do, and he was very strong, stronger than any of the girls. And Sarah, he thought, was very close to womanhood. She was the oldest of the girls; it would be natural. One man and one woman, Bob had said . . . the thought was exciting. There was no other woman he would want to have. Naomi or Fritz or Beatrice, the other older girls, were *nasty*. As for the crew—Lieutenant Johnson, maybe, but—but when he thought of Sarah the idea of being at the call of four others besides was obscene somehow.

Sheik laughed abruptly and turned and left the lounge. He had spent enough time today dreaming fantasies. There was work to do.

Still, when the last of the little ones was tucked in bed, and the quarters were quiet, Sheik found himself pacing restlessly in the tiny pantry-service room. He had his schoolbooks with him, and had meant to study for the morning's class. But when he tried to read, plant shadows and Sarah's legs and all the things Bob had said raced through his mind, blurring the print. He wished Bob would come back from wherever he was. The kids were asleep; there was only one hour till he himself had to be in dorm, and he was obsessed with the need to go hull-side, to find his cool shadow-corner and lie there where peace was always to be found.

And obsessed, foolishly, with the idea that after the meeting Sarah might, just *might*, go down to look and see if he was there . . .

Bob didn't come. After a while Yoshikazu closed his book, wrote a quick note, "Hullside. Back in a minute," and went out.

He had never done such a thing before. He had broken rules, yes, but not when the children were in his care. But, really, what could happen? If one of them woke up, if anything went wrong, half an hour could not mean life or death. And ...

And he didn't care. He *had* to go.

Quickly and quietly, exhilarated beyond previous experience by the sense of his guilt, he went down companionways towards the hull. He closed the last hatch behind him and stood on the top step looking down into the shadowed vastness of hullside. He was above the lamps. Beneath them was bright yellow light; then pale green, new leaves at the top of the plant stalks. Darker green below. Brownish-green stalks, some slender swaying things, some thick as his own arm. And underneath, the shadows. He started down, quietly still, but beginning already to feel more at ease.

Then he heard the voice. Bob's voice. Urgent, persuasive.

"I tell you it's *true*. This time it's true. I got it straight."

"Hell, Bob, every time they send in a tech to film something secret, you think that's it. You said the same thing six months ago, and how many times before that?" That was Sean, Sarah's father, who ran the livestock rooms.

"This time I know I'm right," Bob said quietly. His voice was convincing, even to Sheik.

"Well, if it is, what do you want us to do, Bob?" Abdur, this time, also quiet. The voices were coming, Sheik realized, from Abby's little private room near the seedbeds.

"Just that I think it should have been announced. I want to know what they're up to, with that meeting. Ab, have you ever stopped to think that maybe when the time came, *the women wouldn't want to land?*"

Silence, shocked silence; Sheik stood like a statue on his step.

"Come off it, man." Sean. "They're not *that* crazy."

"It's not so crazy, Sean," Abdur said thoughtfully, and then: "But I don't see what we could do about it if they didn't. *And* I don't think they'd hold back, even if they wanted to."

"You got a lot of trust in human nature, Ab."

"No-o-o-o. Well, yes. I guess I do. But that's not why. Listen, Robert, what do you think kept you from going off your nut those first five years?"

"What do you want me to say?" Bob asked bitterly. "God?"

"Well, He may have helped. But that wasn't what I meant. You were in bad shape for a while. After Alice . . ."

"Watch yourself, Ab." Bob growled.

"Take it easy and listen a minute. After what happened—how come you didn't do the same thing?"

Sheik eased himself down to a sitting position on the top step and listened.

A lot of it made no sense. Alice had been one of the women, of course; there were nineteen now. Funny he'd never thought of that before! She must have died when he was still a baby. Most of the kids wouldn't even know the name.

And Bob, Bob had had something to do with Alice. The conversational scraps and fragmentary references were incomplete, but Sheik had a picture, suddenly, of something that had happened to his father, of something like what was, maybe, happening with him and Sarah, and wasn't *supposed* to happen.

He tried to think how he would feel, what he would do, if Sarah suddenly—were no more. He could not imagine it. Nobody ever died. Nobody on the ship was more than forty-five. If Bob had felt that way, and then Alice died, he could see why his father was—*funny*, sometimes. Why he imagined things and made up stories about the time on Earth.

The twin revelation—the knowledge that what he thought and felt for Sarah had happened to *other* people, often, and the shocked glimpse of grief inside his father—almost obscured the more immediate importance of what the men said down there.

"Indoctrination," Ab was saying.

Alice was the only one who hadn't had it. She had been the ship's doctor; "they," the planners, had thought someone on board, the "stablest" one, should be free of "post-hypno." Words, some new, some old but out of context here. *Indoctrinated* . . . the women were indoctrinated, too; they *couldn't* refuse to land the ship. Ab said so.

The others agreed with him. Bob didn't, at first, but after a while, though he kept arguing, Sheik knew even Bob was convinced.

Gradually, the voices turned more casual; the conversation slowed. Sheik thought it must be getting close to dorm curfew. He raised the hatch above him cautiously, hoisted himself up through it and let it down with silent care. He reached his own family quarters again without meeting anyone.

Inside, he put his note down the disposall, checked on the sleeping children, and arranged himself in the galley with a book on his lap, his feet on the counter, and a yawn of boredom on his face. When Bob returned, he hung around hopefully a little while, but Bob was not feeling talkative.

Sheik had a few minutes till curfew still; without planning it, he found himself in the nightlit empty lounge, at the big screen, watching the giant sun, almost imagining he could see it grow bigger and closer against the dead black, of space, straining his eyes absurdly for the planet . . .

*Planet!*

\*\*\*Proofed to Here\*\*\*

The pieces began to come together.

Voices came down the corridor, and a far part of his mind remembered the wardroom meeting, Sarah, the evening's plans. Just coming out now? Maybe he could see her still. That was silly—curfew

soon. Well, tomorrow . . . Just coming out now? That was some meeting ...

*Meeting!* And Bob said he knew for sure this time the tapes on the planet were through: It was a good one. They could land on it, and live.

Live on a planet.

His stomach felt funny for a minute, and he thought that was foolish, what was there to be *afraid* of?

Live on a planet. He thought the words slowly and purposefully. Planet. Plants. Plants on a planet.

On a planet, plants grew everywhere, by themselves, naturally. That's what Ab said. He said they grew all over, so you'd have to *tear them out* to make a place to build your house.

*House. Family. Inside-outside.* They were all words in the books. Hills, sunsets, animals. *Wild* animals. Danger. But now he wasn't afraid; he *liked* the thought. Wild animals, he thought again, savoring it. Houses, inside and outside; inside, the family; outside, the animals. And plants. The sunshine . . . daytime . . . and night ...

*Shadows!*

The light brightened around him. On a planet, there would be shadows all the time everywhere.

"Sheik . . ."

"Yes, ma'am." He turned. The response was automatic . . . "indoctrinated"; . . . even before his mind reoriented.

The room was daylit again. Five of the women were standing just inside the door. Lieutenant Johnson was smiling, watching him.

"Better hop, boy. Curfew."

"Yes, ma'am." He moved past the others. Johnson, closest to the doorway, reached out a hand and rumbled up his hair.

"Do your dreaming in bed, Sheik," she said tenderly, as if he were in the nursery still. But something was in her eyes that made him know she did not think he was a little boy. He felt better when he, got outside.

The girls' dorm was to the right; he could see the last of the senior class girls disappearing through the door. If he moved faster ...

He turned to the left, walked up to the boys' dorm, and almost missed hearing the sharp whispered noise from the cross-corridor beyond.

He looked back. No one in sight. Raced up the corridor, and she was there, waiting. Waiting for him.

"Sheik! Shhh . . . I just wanted to make sure . . . Tomorrow night?"

"Sure," he said.

Her eyes were shining. Like the Lieutenant, she was looking at him *differently*. But it was a different kind of difference, and he liked it. Very much.

"Sure," he said again. "Tomorrow night for sure." But neither one moved. A gong sounded softly. Curfew time.

"You better get back," she said. "I have a pass." Even her whispering voice was different. She was vibrating with excitement. It was *true*!

"Okay," he said. "Listen, Sarah. Let's not wait. What about tonight?"

"Tonight?"

"After inspection."

"You mean . . . ?"

"Sneak down. It's easy," he promised out of the practice of an hour ago, and lied. "I've done it lots of times."

"Who with?"

He smiled. From inside the lounge they heard voices. "Listen, I got to get back. Right now. I'll meet you in Cargo G in half an hour. Then I'll show you how."

"But, Sheik . . ."

He didn't wait for her answer. He didn't dare. Johnson or one of the others would be out for inspection any minute now. He ran on his toes, silently, back down the corridor, tore off his clothes,

jumped into bed, pulled covers up, and did not open his eyes even to peek and see what officer it was when she came in to inspect the row of beds. He just lay there, astonished at what he had said and what he was—beyond hesitation—going to do.

He thought of the times he had waited and wanted and hoped for Sarah to ask him, to notice him, to pick him to dance with or play with or for a work partner. Now, all of a sudden, he had thrown himself at her head, suggested ...

He began to be horrified. It wasn't the idea of breaking curfew rules. Yesterday, even this afternoon, that would have shocked him, but now—knowing about the planet changed all *that*. What bothered him now was the brazenness of it, the way he had practically begged her to come, and hadn't even waited to find out ...

He wouldn't go. She'd never go. He was crazy to think ...

She was laughing at him now.

*I wish*, he thought miserably, *I wish I was* . . .

Only he didn't. He didn't envy girls any more.

He lay very quietly in bed for fifteen minutes. Then he got up and pulled on his shorts. He looked at the six other beds in the schoolboys' dorm. Joel, the youngest, was nine, still a kid. The others were twelve, thirteen, eleven, eleven, twelve. Five of them who would soon be men. Like Bob and Ab, Bomba and Sean, and Sheik himself. He left the dorm, slipped down the corridor, thinking as he went of the words he had read somewhere, that he "moved like a shadow."

*I wish*, he thought, and turned round a corner to safety, *I wish that she comes*. And then: *I wish that we land on a planet very soon*.

## The Deep Down Dragon

The girl's one duty was to look — and understand:

White flatness of the wide wall dissolved into mist as the room dimmed. Then whiteness itself broke apart, from all-color to each component.

Pinpoints of brightness swirled and coalesced into new patterns of color and shape. Pinks and yellows here. Silver, blue, black there. Brown, gray, green. Rainbow stripes.

First flat, like a painted scene, then deepening to its own kind of reality, the scene glowed in the center of nothingness where the wall had been before.

The scene had been exactly the same before, she remembered. There was the strangely clear-air atmosphere, thin and sharp. The sketched-in effect of the background — hills, oddly shaped? a domed structure closer? — was simply a matter of her focused attention, not distance haze. Through this transparent air detailed vision would be possible at a far distance. And the background hills were far; for the moment, however, they were only background.

What counted was front-center, bright-colored . . . as real as when she had seen it the first time, for herself.

The three footprints. The shoe. The square of cloth. The three bushes. In color, focus and meaning they were identical. Her own shoe, with the silly spike heel and lacy strap unfastened, was lying where it dropped on the pink-hued sand, alongside the alien prints. The first time she had not known why, exactly, the prints were "alien." Now she saw it was the shoe that accomplished the effect. Plenty of three-toed things left prints in sand, but nothing exactly the length of her own foot was tripartite.

Nothing on Earth.

It was the same thing with the brown-gray-green thorn bushes ... planted, she suddenly realized, by some insane gardener, to landscape that circular blockhouse thing in the background! Or maybe not so insane. Nowhere else in sight was there a growing or green thing at all. Poor green was better than none. Spikes, spines and thorns did grow. They were alive, if still — alien? Why? Of course, the same thing. The patterned robe. A square of cloth, from the same bolt from which she had made the robe, only last week, hung impaled on the farthest bush.

Farthest? Nearest! Nearest to the door of the house, from which the strange footprints curved down and off-scene.

Half the wall was filled now. Inch by slow fraction of inch the scene widened. She sat forward, breathing almost not at all, tensed with knowing the next print, or the one beyond it, would contain the print-maker, the — alien.

Alien? What an odd thought! That was the second — the third? — time she'd thought it. She did not remember the thought from the first seeing of the same scene. "Strange," maybe. "Unknown." Not "alien."

Odd . . . odder still, as her eyes went unwillingly from the forming print at the far edge of the scene, she saw her own sandal alongside the trail, silly spike heel and lacy strap, still fastened as it had been on her foot.

That wasn't just odd. It was wrong! And the torn strip of fabric ripped from her robe by the thornbush —

"That's not how it was! That's not the way it went," she thought, and the scene faded out.

The light brightened in the room as the wall came back to normality, and she realized that she had not just thought it, but spoken aloud.

"*This is his*, remember?" Gordon was smiling. "Only the very first frame is identical. It starts branching off right away. The colors, for instance?"

Ruth thought back and of course he was right. *Hers* had been much yellower. Pink sand was absurd.

She laughed out loud, at the absurdity of thinking anything in the projection absurd. Then she explained. "Pink sand. I was thinking how silly that was, and then I remembered that *mine* had little pink clouds floating over my pure yellow desert! Why on Earth do you think he'd have pink sand, though?"

Gordon smiled again as she realized how her own question had answered itself. ". . . On Earth . . ." she had said. Of course. Why should it be Earth at all?

With the questioning thought came concern. Why had hers been on Earth? Did that mean . . .? Were they showing her Charles' sequence just to explain, in the kindest way, why she failed?

She wouldn't finish the thoughts, even in her own head. But Gordon was chuckling quietly as he watched her. Of course he knew what had been crossing her—face, she decided, as well as her mind! Other people had been through this whole thing before. Half of them must have gone through the same thoughts.

Half of them would have been worried ... and how many of them had good cause to be?

"Relax, Ruth," he said warmly. "You haven't failed or passed yet. There's a lot more to it than the sequence. But I can tell you that it makes no difference where you make the setting, or when. At least —" he frowned faintly, and she knew it was impatience with his own imprecision in a vital communication. "At least, it makes no more difference — and no less — than your choice of colors or textures. A good bit less difference than clothing, for instance."

She looked at him gratefully.

"All right," she said. "I'll try to forget my own sequence."

"The best way is just to let yourself go, as completely as you can. There's no harm in being aware of the difference, just so you aren't contrasting. It won't rationalize. But you don't have to stop being you to be *him* for a while, you know." He smiled again.

She nodded and grinned. Some things did not have to be verbalized.

She shivered and settled back, ready to watch — to feel, to know, be, exist — in *his* mind and body.

Gordon didn't say any more. The room dimmed again, and once more the misting wall focused the scene.

When it had covered the wall, Ruth had forgotten that there was a wall there at all. Or that she was herself.

More completely than ever before, or again (unless and until they fused to a new person, their child) she was one with the man who had made her his own.

The trail of prints led tantalizingly out of sight, curving away behind a low ridge of dunes. Unless the creature, whatever it was, moved much more swiftly than the prints promised, it had been more than a few minutes since it happened.

He looked again at her slipper dropped on its side in the sand. The first glimpse had been more incongruous than anything else. The alienness of the prints contrasted ridiculously with the spiced femininity of Ruth's shoe on the orange-pink sand. Now it seemed to him that the slipper was not dropped but thrown. Or kicked.

Kicked off her foot? For the first time, fear grabbed him, a clawed fist of ice in his belly that turned him to look again at the bright rainbow of stuff draped and torn on the edge of the bush near the door. It was part of the skirt of the new robe, the one she made herself last week, after he noticed the new fabric in the shop window. He had liked it; so she had bought it and fashioned it into a garment to please him. Now it hung cruelly torn by spiked thorns. And she

He tore himself loose from the immobility of anxiety, and ran for the house. Somewhere in back of his mind the question was registered: What shop? Where? The nearest shop was forty million miles away. The question was registered, filed, and ticketed for later thought.

Right now he could not even stop to wonder why he had not noticed the door before. He had to have seen it, when he saw the bush. How do you not notice that the thick door of a pressure hut has been torn loose from its hinges? What kind of wild man speculates about his wife's robe when his home, in which he left her safe and protected, no more than five hours ago, has been violated?

That was a dangerous word. He unthought it, and the red haze cleared away. He could see again.

"Ruth!" he shouted. "*Ruth!*"

No answer. He had known there could not be one. "Ruth!" he kept shouting to thin-aired emptiness inside the dome that had been — five short hours ago — rich with Earth air and scents, sounds and solidity: Ruth.

His gun hung by the door. It had been a joke, he remembered. Pioneers ought to keep a gun by the front door. Damn right they should! He grabbed it as he ran, stride unbroken. He tore off down the trail of the monstrous prints, past the bushes and the sandal, fifty feet more. His lungs were on fire inside him. He would have cursed in his futility, but there was no strength or breath for self-anger; not even, just now, for anger better placed. It was not even possible now to run back to the copter. He had wasted too much strength. He had to drag himself full length along the sand, catching and holding the thin concentration of lichen's oxygen at the sand surface.

Inside the copter, lungs full again, he was coasting along fifteen feet above the prints of horned three-toed feet. He had time enough, and more than he wanted, to think and to question his idiocies. As if he had forgotten where he was. At the first hint of danger they faced he went into shock. As if he were back on Earth, wrapped in her warm air, strong-armed gravity.

Ancestral memories reacting for him in moment of panic? He sneered back at himself for that kind of excuse. The only part that applied was the single word, "panic."

He'd panicked. Okay. Don't forget it, boy. But don't let it slow you down, either. File for future reference. Take it out and examine it — later. Meantime, what counts is down there. Right now, you're just a pair of eyes. Later you may get to be arms and legs, a back, if you're lucky a gun. Right now — just eyes. And a computer.

He studied the prints. Two-footed or four? He couldn't decide — and then he saw the pattern, and it was not two or four, but three. Three? Distribute  $N$  pounds of weight — divided at any time on two of three feet, in prints that each dug in deeper than his own foot would, with his full weight on it. The damn thing was big.  $N$  pounds was too many.

That didn't make sense. What kind of Thing made prints like that on Mars? On a planet whose largest life-form was adapted to breathing air no more than two feet above ground? And even those didn't cross desert dryness. They lived in the still thinly moist and green valley of old sea bottoms.

The error was obvious. What kind of creature could make a print like a man's, on Mars? Largest *native* life-form, he had meant. So this Thing, with three-toed, three-legged stride, hard-bottomed foot digging too deep in dry sand, had a stride barely more than a man's, one meter maybe from print to print

along the trail. It was not long enough to be that heavy. Not man, not Martian. Something else.

Alien.

He tried to think more, but either there were no more clues or the block was too great. Alien, from where? No way to know. What for? Where to? Why? When?

For the moment, the "when" was what counted the most. Whatever and whyever, It had Ruth with It. Was she still alive? Did she have an oxytank?

He tried to remember, aside from the door, what signs of violence, struggle or damage he'd seen in the house. He remembered none. The door, the robe and the slipper. That was all.

Ten minutes after the copter lifted, he came to the first rock outcroppings. For a while after that he could still follow the trail without too much trouble. The creature tended to stay on the sand-drifted crevices between hills. There were still plenty of prints clear enough to be seen from the height he had to maintain to stay clear of the jagged-edged, sand-scoured shapes of bare hilltops. But as the ground level rose, there was less and less sand between rocks to catch imprints, and it was more difficult to peer down and navigate at the same time.

Hard to say if he would be better off on the ground. He could spend hours trying wrong passages, backing and trying again, to search out the scattered prints that made the only trail now. Circling above, he could save time — maybe. Certainly, if he could stay in the air, he kept an advantage he'd never have face to face. (Face to chest? belly? thigh? No way at all to judge relative height.) Not to mention armament, general equipment. Inside the copter, he had the distilled and neatly packaged essence of Earth technology to fight for him. On foot in the hills, with whatever he could carry on his own back —?

It was obvious he had no choice. He had just noticed the time. Twilight would fall fast and dark across him in a half hour or less. Moonless, or as good as moonless, dark would follow short minutes after. The kind of cross-eyed trail-following and peak-hopping he could barely manage in sun light would then be impossible. Find a place where he could land, then. Now, quickly, while he still could.

The copter dropped, and he found a ledge just firm and wide enough. Charles went methodically through lockers, picking and choosing, till at last he had a pile he thought he could manage, with all the essentials, in one form or other.

Searchlight, rope, hand pickaxe, knife. Pistol-grip torch, which he thought of as a flame thrower. Plain old pistol. Extra airtank. Extra mask. Light warm blanket. Bullets, and gas for the torch. Food concentrates. Two water flasks. He climbed into his heat suit, discarded the blanket, and took her suit instead. He had thought to make a knapsack of the blanket, carrying the rest of the stuff on his back, but that was silly. He had to be able to get at whatever he needed, but fast. He got out a package of clip-back hooks and studded his suit with them, hanging himself like a grim Christmas tree inside-out: bright flame-red suit underneath; dull gray, brown and black tanks, handles, tools and weapons dangling all around.

He practiced bending over, sitting, squatting, reaching. He could climb. Okay. The weight was going to be hard to handle, but not impossible.

He added one more airtank, and one more flask. If it all got too heavy, he could leave a trail of his own behind him. At least the stuff would be nearer than here in the copter. He was half out of the hatch when he remembered it: The first aid kit.

He started into the hills with his searchlight flooding the pass at his feet just as darkness collapsed from the sky. He wondered as he stumbled forward and up — following an edge of toe here, of heel there — what else he had not thought to take.

Then the glare of light glinted off redness on rockside. A smear, that's all. Red blood. Not alien. Ruth's!

His gloved hand reached out, and the red smudged. Still wet? Impossible. In this atmosphere, the seconds they'd need to get out of sight would have dried blood. He looked closely at his gauntlet and moved forward more swiftly, with an exultation of knowledge and purpose he had not dared let himself hold until then. It was not blood. It was spilled red powder. Rouge! She was alive, able to think, to act! She knew he would have to come after, and she was helping by leaving a trail.

He no longer followed footprints. He followed the crimson trail blazes. And wondered how far back

they'd started, how much time he might have gained had he abandoned the copter sooner.

No use wondering. No use thinking back. Now it was only the next moment and the next. Was he gaining or losing? This he had to know. He was traveling at his best speed. He went faster. If he lost ground now, he had no chance. The creature was making a path as straight as the hard rockside hills would permit; It knew where It was headed. The Thing could not climb, that was clear, so It would not have gone through the hills without cause. But wherever It was headed, presumably that spot offered It some protection. He had to find It and head It off first.

He found he could go faster still. And then, suddenly, he knew he'd better slow down. It was nothing he'd seen — surely nothing he'd heard. Inside the suit hood, even such sounds as carried through the thin air were stilled. Well, then.

He opened the mask, and he did hear. Maybe it was some vibration of the Thing's tread through the rock that had warned him first. Well, he would not give himself away by the same carelessness. He knew he was very close to It now.

He moved so carefully after that, it seemed agonizingly as if he were once more crawling belly-flat. But he knew he was gaining on them. The Thing was really slow!

He was close. *Fool!* he thought angrily, as he switched his light off. Creep up on the Thing with a searchlight to flood the scene in advance! The suit had an infrascopescope in the visor. He'd have had to close it soon anyhow. Five minutes was about maximum breathing without a tank; unless you cared to drag yourself flat as he'd done earlier.

The black-light scope came on. Charles paused with a new certainty under an overhang of rock at the next bend. And saw the Thing. And his wife.

He noticed, in a detached and extremely calm way, that what happened next all happened in seconds. Maybe a minute at most. No more, because with the sharp self-awareness exploding inside him, he could count his breaths while he did all the rest.

He inhaled exactly three times — deeply, evenly — while it occurred.

Before the first breath, there was again the ice-fingered grip of fear twisting his gut, squeezing the strength and air out of him.

He inhaled then. And let the retinal image go to his brain, instead of his belly.

It was twice the height of a man, weirdly elongated, the tripod base all ropy tendon, thin and hard. The trunk — thorax? — chest? — well, whatever, shelled or spacesuited or something, but shiny-hard — bulked enormous, four feet around surely at the center. At least four. And the Thing's head was turned just far enough to the side so that Charles could see clearly that his wife's face was in the gaping, reptilian maw of the Thing.

It held her under one arm. Her feet kicked at It's side. It seemed not to notice. Her arm, with the bright metal cosmetic case clutched in her hand, swung wide, reaching to hit the canyon wall whenever it could. Her head was half into the creature's mouth, firmly held, chin and forehead, by It's enormous stretched lips.

While he drew in the first breath, he saw all this clearly and knew he dared not act in such a way as to make It bite down — from fear or anger, made no difference. Charles could not see inside the great maw. What kind of teeth, what harm had been done, what could be done, he did not know . . . and knew he could not risk. He thought through and rejected five separate plans, while his hands found the items he'd need. He drew a new breath, and his legs moved beneath him.

He could not shoot first. And he could not simply follow and learn more about the Thing. Because another image came through from somewhere — the same eyes that watched every move of the Thing? Unlikely, but it had to be — of the gleaming column of metal too close ahead. A Thing-ship. So: no time.

He leaped, knife in hand. Pricked the creature, and jumped back.

It worked, as he'd prayed; no; as he had known, not just hoped or prayed, that it must. The Thing jumped, turned to look — and released his wife's head.

He did not waste effort in looking, but saw anyhow that her face was unharmed. He jumped again, drawing the third breath, and pricked at the arm that held her. She squirmed and pushed, exactly on time, like a part of himself — which she was — and her body was clear of his as he emptied the pistol at It's



head.

He reached for the torch.

By that time he could not stop himself. He would have avoided the torch if he could. As it was he thundered at Ruth, above the explosion: *Down! Keep down, babe!*" And the blue flame of released oxygen missed her head by a foot . . .

He carried her back to the copter with strength he had not believed he could find. Nobody pursued.

She sat up, dazed, as the lights brightened slowly, and the white wall turned serenely opaque. She looked across at Gordon, and her face glowed with pleasure.

"No sillier than mine was," she said, laughing. "Was it?" "Not at all," Gordon said.

She sat politely, waiting.

Gordon stood up, grinned down at her, and offered his hand. "I think they must be done in there," he told her, nodding in the direction of the screenwall. "I imagine you'd like . . ." He let it trail off.

"You're a smart old thing, aren't you?" She took the hand and came to her feet. Then, on impulse, astonished at herself, she stood on tiptoe and placed a quick kiss on his cheek.

"What's more, you're a doll." She turned and ran, glad but embarrassed.

The door closed behind her. A mirrored door on the opposite wall opened, and a young man entered. Gordon greeted him warmly. "Well — what did you think?" His own enthusiasm was unmistakable.

"Outside of it being a great racket? Do they all react that way?"

"Well, not all. Matter of fact, this pair is practically classical. You don't often get a mesh like this one — you saw hers, didn't you?"

"I don't think so," the other said. "Unless it was one of the bunch you ran for us last night?"

"Could be. She worked out a sort of a junior-size Tyrannosaur. Out of Professor Challenger maybe? Future-past uncertainty, here on Earth. Had it threaten the children, and just when she was about to sacrifice herself to save them, old Charlie showed up in the nick of time to do the slaying."

The other nodded. "It's a fascinating technique," he said. "Damn glad to have this chance to see it work. One thing I don't follow — why do you show them each other's? That's pretty much against basic theory on joint therapy, isn't it?"

Gordon was smiling again. "Well," he said slowly. "This pair didn't really take the runs for therapy." He had a surprise to spring, and he was enjoying it. "You've heard about the new screening technique for colonists? You know the last expedition had only one broken couple and two psychotic collapses, out of fifty-six?"

The younger man whistled. Then he understood. "This is how you're doing it? Let them fantasy their own reactions? Well, hell. Sure! What's surprising is, nobody thought of using it before!"

"Of course not. It was right under our noses," Gordon said.

They both laughed.

"In this case," he added, "we've got everything. His sequence stressed readiness, thoughtful preparation, careful action. You saw that. Hers was strongest on instinct, physical wisdom, that whole set. He was moved to do things he couldn't possibly do — and knows he can't, by the way — in real life, because *she* was in danger. Her stimulus was a threat to home and children. And even then, she made sure *he* did the actual dragon-slaying job." He flicked a switch. Through the wall, now, they saw Ruth and Charles, standing, holding hands, smiling and squeezing a little. That was all.

The two doctors smiled as the paleskinned, ninety-five-pound, five-foot product of slum-crowded Earth threw a proud arm around his wife's narrow shoulder, and led her out.

"Doesn't look like much of a dragon-slayer," the younger one said.

"No. But as long as he *is* . . ." He paused, looked the visitor over with care, and said. "You asked about showing them to each other? Ever think how much more therapy there might be for him in knowing she *knows* he can handle a dragon? Or for her, knowing that he really *can*?"

*Ten years later, JM was into exceptional children, still. Lucky is bracketed with Henrietta for reasons of logic rather than chronology. JM's first story written around a cover: Fantastic Stories*

## The Shrine of Temptation

The name his own people called him was Lallayall. That was, of course, just his calling-name, and because it meant almost the same thing that he meant to us, we called him Lucky.

This was no transgression of courtesy, or culture-arrogance on our part. His true name, after the fashion of his people, was already long, and growing, a descriptive catalogue useful only for records and ritual occasions. A calling-name may be anything derived from the whole, so long as it suits, and the called one will answer it. Lucky was delighted to have a new nickname from us, in our language.

He was, when we came to the island, just eight years old as we reckon. His people count differently; to them, he was halfway through his Third Decade; in five more seasons, he would undergo the Apprenticeship Rites that would end his first age. Either way, he was just past the midpoint between babyhood and puberty. Like most of his race—and all others but us on the island—he was brown-skinned and dark-eyed, black-haired. Like most of his age, he was eager, questioning, rational, mystical, obedient, rebellious, -clumsy and courteous, graceful and quick. Like too few of them, he was generally happy and always healthy, serenely certain of parental love, highly intelligent and well-informed.

Certain of these things, and all of them to a degree, were the product of island culture. Lucky lived in a world he accepted as having been designed primarily for his own benefit and, largely, it had. Among his people, there were no fears, hungers, troubles, or questions that could not be voiced, and none—within the limits of the island's capacity—that would not be answered to the best extent of the child's understanding. All children were swift and bright; but among them, Lucky was especially blessed. Thus, his name.

He was the first in his age group to find his apprenticeship. When we came, he already knew what he wanted. A short time before that, he had spent his days, like the others, wandering from hunters to planners to makers to teachers to planters to singers, spreading' his wonders and askings impartially. The others still wandered, multiply curious, questioning the weavers and fishers and carpenters, healers and painters and crafters of food. It might be three or four seasons yet until, one by one, they singled out the preferred occupations to which they'd be bound in training at First Rites.

But Lucky already knew what he wanted. Before we came, he went, day after day, to the Shrine, or the House of Shrinemen, squatting patiently in the courtyard, waiting for the chance to carry sand (for stone scrubbing) or water or polishing cloths or firewood for a Shrineman, listening in silence to such talk as was carried on in his presence, storing up questions to ask them, *hallall*, when the time should be ripe. Part of each day he sat at the feet of the Figures, self-hypnotized by gleaming amber and blue, spinning out glorious fantasies of the Rebirth.

(His own fascination with the Shrine and Shrinemen, and the weight of mystery he gave to some words and phrases—which I have tried to translate with capitals and occasional sonorous phrases in this account—led us later to a misunderstanding of some proportion. But, *hallall* . . .)

His persistence was already recognized in the village.

The other children first, then his mothers and fathers, had noticed his absence from forest, fields, and shops. Then the Shrinemen began teasing him with familiar fondness at evening gatherings and rest-day games, so that everyone started to realize what he had chosen. And if it was something of a shock to parents and teachers, the boy did not know it.

Perhaps because we settled as close to the Shrine as we dared do—perhaps out of the same fascination with the unknown that had drawn him to the Shrine—Lucky was our first and most frequent visitor, and became, either in his own person or as interpreter, our chief source of information about both the Shrine and the islanders. He did not, at first, realize that our preoccupation with the Shrine was as great as his own; we did not share his confident artlessness in question-asking. I do not know just how he explained us to himself at first, or whether he even tried to. Perhaps he just waited to learn what he wanted to know—*hallall*.

It was not passive waiting. The first day, after his first attempt to speak with us, he sat in what must have been stunned bemusement for several hours, pondering the incredible fact of a second language. (We saw the squatting inward-turned boy as "a stolid impassive indigene." I blush to admit that the phrase is from my own notebook.) Then, having fully accepted that the phenomenon was not—obviously—impossible, but only previously unknown, it was he who approached us with the second overture.

We were just setting up the hand bellows for blowing foam into the camp wallforms. Lucky walked over, watched, walked away, and came back with a round stone, flattened, on one side, just right to prop up the foot that kept slipping.

He held it out. We all stopped and stared. George Lazslo was quickest. He reached out and took the stone, smiling. Lucky smiled back.

"Thank you," George said.

The boy touched the stone. "Sannacue?" His small brown face seemed to turn gold with joy of his smile. "Mertz," he said, tapping the stone. "Mertz-sannacue?"

Henry started to correct him, but Jenny and I both realized at the same time that it was better to let the error ride, and not confuse the issue. (Starting as a joke, we all got to where we found *sannacue* as natural a word as *stone*.)

The principle was established, and it was astonishing to us how rapidly he learned. Jenny was our linguist, and predictably proved quicker than the rest of us in learning the island language, but when they sat exchanging names and phrases, it was she, far more often than he, who had to be told twice. Once he heard it, and was sure he understood, he simply did not know how to forget. (For her fascinating account of the process, see pp. 324-359, in "Language in the Isolated Culture," Dr. Jennifer R. Boxill, S&S, 1985).

As scion as the bare minimum of mutual language was effective, Lucky (again) initiated the next step in cultural exchange. He had been showing up at the camp just after breakfast each morning; this day he came an hour earlier, with a basket of woven reeds on his arm. It was my day for KP, and I was opening a can of bacon when he came up and touched my arm, showing me the basket. "Try my food?" he said.

The basket was filled with fresh steamed fish, still hot, each on its own new-baked half-loaf of native meal bread. At the bottom, five small pots of blue clay—the same stuff the Guardian Figure was molded in—held a savory vegetable sauce to be poured over fish and bread.

It was very good, but that seemed, at the time, irrelevant. The greatest significance of the gift was learning that our self-appointed guide and mascot was, it seemed, fully accredited in his friendship by the—so far—invisible parents and elders of the village.

I should say, "parents *or* elders," because we were uncertain. When we asked if he'd prepared the food himself, he laughed uproariously and then said, with ostentatious patience, "*Mothers* cook food." Whether he meant mothers as a class (and in this case his mother), or several women of the class, mother, we did not know.

Both assumptions were wrong, as it happened. He meant *his mothers*.

It took us most of six months to reach a level of communication at which mistakes of this sort could be cleared up. And from that time on, it seemed as though most of our discussions consisted of substituting closer approximations for old misconceptions. The more we learned, the more complex was what we had to learn. As for Lucky's wrong assumptions about us, they took even longer for him to recognize, and more time yet for us to realize he'd had them. We had been on the island the best part of a year before we gained any comprehension of the extent to which our presence had affected the boy himself. And through all that time, we so carefully leaned over backwards to avoid showing special interest in the Shrine, that we had never learned of Lucky's particular infatuation with it!

All through our second season on the island (by their time reckoning), we were pumping a steady flow of information out of the boy. We learned the basic economy and social structure of the island; how to reckon seasons, and count age and status.

He explained the system of education and apprenticeship, the courtship and marriage customs. When he did not know answers to what we asked, he would say, "*Hallall*; *hallall* you will know." And next

day, or next week, or even next season, he would come back with the answer. Most answers, that is. Sometimes the second answer too was, *Hallall*. But then, he would add, "*Hallall*, I shall know, and then you too."

We worried, occasionally, about what was happening to Lucky, in his own village—whether his contact with us singled him out for better or worse. What we never imagined was the delight of his parents (He had nine at the time; Dr. Henry Cogswell's article in *Anthropological Review*, II, 1983, pp. 19-26, gives a brief comprehensive analysis of island family relationships) and teachers and the older people in general at the effect we had on him.

In the pursuit of the knowledge we asked, Lucky had gone back to learn himself all the things he had scorned to observe before we came; now he watched weavers and planters and netters of fish, masons and flutists and arrow-makers, with a concentrated attention that he had reserved before only for matters concerning the Shrine. The older people watched, and were pleased. They had always thought well of the boy. He was marked as lucky from birth. When it had seemed clear he would be a Shrineman, they had been not disappointed so much as surprised. It did not seem quite suitable for one so lavishly endowed. Now he was learning, as they had expected, all matters of concern to the people. If it were what he wished, he would of course be a Shrineman; but they began speaking of him now as a future Firstman.

The pinky strangers ("Pinkies" was what they called us.) whose advent was otherwise inexplicable and perhaps a bit disturbing, had perhaps been sent to train a leader among the people, as the people themselves had not known how to do.

So they reasoned; at least, they decided, we were causing Lucky to learn what they had hoped he would, whether that was our purpose on coming or not. At the very least, it was indirectly due to us that they had made sure of his extraordinary capacities, which had been indicated as probable by various features of his birth and growth, but had never before been fully displayed. (The eidetic memory was as impressive to them as to us; and his intelligence was high, even in that high-average society. Chapter X of Dr. G. M. Lazslo's "*Environment and Intelligence*," S&S, 1987, deals with our findings on the island, for those who are interested.)

Two of his fathers came to thank us.

It was the first visit we had from anyone but Lucky. Out of simple courtesy, no adult would have come into our camp without some such cause. Out of simple caution, we might never have entered their village without that prior visit. It was our opening contact with the group as a whole.

The fathers were overjoyed to discover that Jennie spoke their language with some proficiency. That made it possible to dismiss Lucky and thank us without requiring him to translate praise of himself or of his friends. We told them in return how much we admired and relied on the boy—and how very pleased we were to learn that our influence had helped him adjust to his own world, and not put him out of tune with it.

This is what we meant to say, but Jennie did not know any word in their language for "adjust" or "maladjusted." She tried "out of season," and got only smiling puzzlement. She made a long speech full of metaphor and analogy, and finally one of them said, "*Oklall*?"

*Oklall*, Lucky had told us, was the opposite of *hallall*. They seemed to think we were concerned about Lucky yesterday, but not tomorrow. We let well enough alone at that point, and offered food instead of conversation. Lucky rejoined us, and took obvious pride in piloting his fathers' way through the strange meal. When they left, we had our invitation to visit the village—paradoxical when we thought of it, since what had occasioned the thanks-paying was our previous inability to go in person.

If the fathers had the same thought, it would not have worried them. If we understood, as we thought we did, what *hallall* meant, we would have known they'd see no cause to worry. They had seen Lallayall's potential, displayed clearly, and were naturally content to let his nature take its own course. *Hallall*, he would learn all he needed to know. *Hallall* he would grow to his proper adult place. If he needed help or encouragement, they would provide it. The expectations they had begun to have before

his preoccupation with the Shrine, expectations based on his birth and early growth, now seemed once again probable. Perhaps, as time grew closer for a Rebirth, it was necessary for a future Firstman to know more of the Shrine than was usual. His unlikely interest in Shrinemen might then mean only that he would be Firstman at the time of a Rebirth. Lallayall—Lucky—indeed! He was well-called.

As for us, we were too busy and excited with our new observing privileges, and more than that, with the news of Lucky's special concern with the Shrine, to think of the oddity of that *tomorrow-yesterday* misunderstanding. We assumed, from his fathers' manner of mentioning it, that the Shrine was not in any way taboo. It began to seem more likely that we might eventually be allowed to examine it: if a child could spend his time there freely, when his parents disapproved, it was not unreasonable to hope that visitors might be invited.

One other assumption, based on our experience of Lucky's learning powers, proved unfounded: there was almost nothing he was able to tell us about the Shrine or Shrinemen, except just such visual descriptions as we now dared to hope might be redundant. He described the Figures, the blue Guardian on the Window of Light, and the amber Lifegiver on the scroll pedestal. He painted a vivid word picture of the reptiloid grace of the Lifegiver, the menacing power of the Guardian. About the Shrinemen and their lives he knew many minute details—but none of significance. They ate thus, slept so, conversed in the courtyard; they were celibate, wore brown robes with a design patterned on the Window of Light; they had daily rituals to say; they performed certain calculations. *Hallall*, they would officiate at the Recurrence, the Rebirth.

From the Oldest Men in the village, of whom there were three, in their Seventh Age, we learned more—if what we learned was fact. They could all recall, in young childhood, seeing the Life of the Shrine then extant. There had been no Recurrence since then, nor had it occurred in their lives, but before they were born.

In twenty-five decades, they said, the Life would Recur. It was soon, soon ...

And saying so, they glanced significantly at Lucky. *Hallall*, a Rebirth ...

That word again—*hallall*. In the village and fields, we heard it incessantly. It was the only no-answer a child evey got. No question was forbidden for young ones to ask—but some were not answered in First Age, and some not in Second. *Hallall*, they were told, *hallall*, ye shall know.

"When do we plant firstseed?" a child might ask.

"In the day following the third full moon of Seedfall," he would be told.

"Which seed is firstseed?"

And he would be shown.

"What comes of it?" "When do we harvest it?" "How is it stored?" "Who plants it?" "Who knows the full moon?"

All these would be answered and fully, readily. The people would lay down their work, if need be, to go with a questioning child and show him the answer.

But—"Why does it grow?" "How does the Firstman know which round moon is the *full* moon?" or "Why do people seed themselves all year round, but fawns and fish only in Greengrowth Season?"

Then the answer was always, "*Hallall*," given with a glad smile for the child who was thinking ahead of his years. First Age children were to learn only what could be seen, touched, smelled, or heard. *Why* and *Wherefore* were for Second Agers, the adolescent apprentices. So-

"*Hallall*, little one . . ."

It was listening to the teaching of the children that we finally came round to understand what the word meant. We had thought it was "tomorrow"—or "later," vaguely. Then for a while we thought it just an evasion, a sort of "I don't know either; perhaps some day we'll both find out." But what it meant, precisely, was, "In the fullness of time . . ."

The distinction is not nearly as much in the words as in the kind of thinking that must lie behind them. Shrine Islanders, for instance, fear death less than any society known—and' this with no trace of belief in discrete immortality. In the fullness of time one is born, grows and learns, loves, weds, and begets, rears children, teaches the younger ones, acquires status, grows feeble and dies. If death comes, then one's

time is full.

From the answers that were and were not given youngsters in Lucky's Age Group we also came to understand how we must have troubled him with our determined questioning about the Shrinemen. Here, too, we had progressed through a series of dead-wrong assumptions. Because Lucky told us of books and calculations, of ideographs on the Shrine (which he could reproduce flawlessly, but with no comprehension); because he had never seen books in the village, or never spoke of them; because he, the brightest of his Age Group, went daily to the House of Shrinemen, we first took for granted that the Shrinemen were priestly scholars, perhaps the guardians of an ancient culture, their role symbolized by the red-mated blue Guardian Figure protecting the "Lifegiver"—a goddess, clearly, but perhaps of wisdom rather than fertility. The reptilian appearance suggested this strongly. Henry got very enthusiastic about the correlation of snakes and divinely protected knowledge. "Rebirth" could imply a predictable renaissance—and that suggested the ugly thought that the secrecy of the Shrinemen's rites and formulae was that of an unplanned bureaucracy perpetuating itself by withholding the knowledge it had been set up to protect and disseminate . . .

When we understood what *hallall* meant, we had to revise this unhappy picture, for much of what Lucky did not know was not secret at all—just *hallall* at his age. By that time, also, we had heard from the three Oldest Men such mutually confirming details of the appearance and function of the Life of the Shrine, that the whole notion of a usurping bureaucracy became absurd. "Rebirth" was not symbol, but a literal incarnation of new wisdom, presented at intervals of roughly—by our time—eighty years. The incarnation took the form of a froglike creature at least roughly resembling the statue and relief Figures at the Shrine. (The old men recalled an identical appearance, except for color, which was gray—but they were old and remembering a strongly suggestible childhood.)

So the Shrinemen became shamans, half-ignorant half-wise witchdoctors applying without understanding some ancient formulae designed to release increments of knowledge slowly to a population reverted—for what strange intriguing reasons?—to barbarism. The near-idyllic society we saw was the planned result of this program; and the quiet patience of the *hallall* philosophy made sense now; *hallall*, all would be known. We need only wait; *hallall* . . .

But for witchdoctors, the Shrinemen were poor showmen. Neither did they do healing (any more than they governed; both of these were functions of all *other* people who lived into the Second Decade of the Sixth Age). The shaman theory began to fall apart the night George found out the man next to him at a haybringing dance was a "shaman," off duty for the party; the putative witchdoctor invited us all, very casually, to visit him at the Shrine. There had never been any taboo; no one suspected we might be interested.

We found the Shrinemen, as we had first assumed they would be, educated and cultured, in the bookish sense, far above the level of the other islanders. They were intelligent men devoted to a faith, or more, to a duty. When Rebirth occurred, it was necessary that they be on hand, trained in the formulae of sacrifice. Without their precise weights and measures and chants, the Life of the Shrine would be monstrous and harmful.

The Oldest Men, we suggested, were saying it was near Italian for Recurrence . . . ?

The Shrinemen nodded. They brought out a register, a long papyrus-like scroll. One fourth of its length was filled with ideographs—like those on the Shrine itself, tantalizingly like, but unlike, three different ancient languages Jenny did know . . .

On this scroll, they said, was the listing of dates and persons connected with Shrine Life. The first entry, in barely legible, long-faded ink, went back—they said—almost 350 decades, nearly 1200 years, as we reckon. One of them spread the scroll on a lectern, and began intoning with such singsong regularity it was evident he was reciting by rote, and not actually reading.

Yet there was an air of authenticity about their list; whether it was in the scroll or not, whether they could read the symbols or not, we somehow believed that the time intervals—ranging from nineteen to thirty decades between Recurrences—were legitimate history.

The question was—history of what?

The answer, of course, was—*hallall*.

If our supplies lasted until the Recurrence, we'd know what it was. Not *why*, or *wherefore*, but *how* and *what*, *when* and *who*. To the Life of the Shrine, it seemed, we were all as First Agers ..

Thus we arrived at our last misconception regarding the Shrinemen. They were—obviously—an especially non-virulent academic breed of priest, serving their temple with civilized pleasant lives devoted to learning, discussion, and ritual. *Hallall*, what they re-memorized every day would be of not just use, but great need ...

Happily, by that time we understood Lucky at least better than we did the Shrine; as a result, we did not plague him with our latest errors—and plaguing they would have been, to say the least. Religion, as we know it, had no words in the Shrine Island language. *Sin*, *priest*, *faith*, *morals*, were not only, in complexity, subjects suitable only for adults—they were concepts unknown to the people. We did not intend to introduce them.

Since it would have been. Lucky to whom we expressed these thoughts first, it is doubly fortunate we did not do so, for Lucky was lucky. From the time of his birth on, it was the outstanding trait of his young life.

In the calendar of the Shrine Islanders, there are three seasons to mark the year's circuit: first is Greengrowth, when the soil is renewed, when the creatures of forest and river renew life, a time of thriving for all young things. Then comes Ripening, when fawns, fish, and fruit come to full size and ripeness. Last, there is Seedfall, when pods and clouds burst to shower the land with the next season's new life, when bucks rage in combat throughout the forest, and such spawning fish as survived the nets of the Season of Ripening spawn by the thousands far up the river.

The calendar of events, of people's lives, is composed of these seasons, in sets of ten. Each Decade of Seasons has separate significance in the course of lifetime. Three Decades make up an Age of Life.

It is auspicious among the people to have Greengrowth for the ruling season of one's First Age. Lucky, born lucky in Greengrowth, would come to his First Rites, dividing childhood from apprenticeship, innocence from approaching courtship, just as the seasons changed from Greengrowth to the appropriate Ripening. Three decades later, his Full Manhood Rites would coincide with the change of the natural world from Ripening to Seedfall.

Such children were known to be fortunate in their growing, somehow in tune with the world more than others. In Lucky's case, each sign at every stage of development had confirmed the extraordinary augury of his birth on the first morning of a Greengrowth season.

And it was for the same reason that his early interest in the Shrine had so startled his elders: a child of his sort was seldom attracted by abstraction or mental mystery; certainly, the children of Greengrowth were too much in tune with the soil to make likely celibates.

There is a certain innocence, when you think of it, implicit in the idea of luck. A truly lucky person has, always, a certain natural and glorious naivete—a sort of superior unconsciousness, which can do for some people, in their acts and impulses, precisely what the well-trained, reflex reactions of a star athlete do for his body. The special ability to seize the right moment with the right hand is as vulnerable to conscious thought as the act of high-jumping would be to a man who tried to think each muscle separately into action.

So it is well that we did not force on Lucky an exercise of the metaphysical part of his mind that his keen intelligence could never have refused, once offered.

We had been almost five full seasons on the island when the second ship came. Lucky, of course, with his rare instinct, was walking in the woods when it landed, not half a mile from where it came down.

Three people emerged—three more Pinkies! Rejoicing, the boy ran to greet them, one thought predominant in his young mind: here at last was the making of a Pinkie family! (Seven is the minimum number of adults in an island household. We had never attempted to explain our marriage customs to him; frankly, living on the island, we had come to feel a little ashamed of confessing our one-to-one

possessiveness. We had simply allowed them to keep their first misimpression that we did not have children because we were too few in number for a proper household.)

With these thoughts in mind, he ran forward and greeted the strangers in clear pure English, offering to guide them immediately to our camp.

They seem to have managed a rapid recovery, when one considers the shock this must have provided. Politely, they excused themselves, and announced they had come, not to join us (whom they had never heard of, of course) but to pay their respects to the famous Shrine.

Lucky led them there. On the way, they talked pleasantly with him, pleasantly but wrongly. They did not sound like Pinkies—not like the Pinkies he knew. Vaguely, he sensed something *oklall*—unripe, green, out of place and time. Gradually, his answers to the oversweet probings of the female among them became less clear, so that by the time she asked the two crucial questions, he was almost incoherent.

They did not find out how many Pinkies were on the island, nor how many others spoke English. If they had known there were only four of us, unarmed academics, and only Lucky besides ourselves who would ever know how to tell the world outside what happened, they would surely have been less precipitate. As it was, they were on edge.

He took them directly to the Shrine Window. This in itself was odd; it was bad etiquette; he should have presented them first to the Shrinemen. But he was already acting under the impulse of that strange quality of luckiness that ruled his life.

Then he found himself staring at Lifegiver, terribly torn and uncertain, not knowing why he had done such a thing, or why he had spoken to them softly, in false friendship. The amber figure glowed in double light: sunlight cascading from the unroofed courtyard, and the golden glow from inside the Window.

He—I believe it was he—said later that he did what he did just because she was beautiful: a simple act of adoration. I suppose he was confused, aware of a responsibility too large for his young shoulders, and seeking guidance of some sort. That at least is more rational than the notion that he acted then out of the pure unconsciousness of his special—lucky—nature. I know, because I watched it happen, that he moved forward in an almost trancelike manner.

(Everything from the moment of the meeting in the forest up to this point I know only from having been told. What occurred in the courtyard I saw for myself. It was almost time for the Shrinemen's evening ritual, and Henry and I were on the hilltop, with binoculars, watching.)

This is what happened:

Lallayall stepped forward and fell to his knees before the statue of the Lifegiver. He reached up, and his lanky arms were just long enough to wrap around her smooth stone legs. He gazed up at her, and then bent his head, resting it against the carvings at the top of the scroll pedestal.

At the instant of contact, the mace fell from the hands of the Blue Guardian.

The two men were fast. One jumped for the mace, one for Lucky. While the second one held the boy still, the first studied the rod and the Figure, and then reached out with the red mace and seemed to be twisting it against something on the Window. (After much discussion and examination, we came to the conclusion that it was the Guardian's eye he was twisting. The open end of the rod is exactly the shape and size of the opal eye of the Guardian.)

We did not see the Window open. It opened inwards, and our angle of vision was wrong. But we knew what was happening from the oddly expressive way the three intruders stood and stared, at the Window and at each other—questioning, triumphant, frightened, uncertain. We also saw the Shrinemen coming, a split second before the woman did. We saw her point and heard her cry faintly from down below.

The others turned to look, and all three lost their irresolution. They moved as one, taking Lucky with them. All four vanished (from our angle of view) inside the Shrine.

The Shrinemen came to a full stop in front of the Window. Had it closed again? I looked at Henry for the first time, and found him turning to look at me; it occurred to us for the first time that we ought to be doing something to help.

"You stay," he said. "I'll get the others. Keep watching."

It was the sensible way to do it.



I nodded, and put the glasses back to my eyes. Incredibly, the Shrinemen were arranging themselves in their evening ritual position, as calmly as though it were any sundown; they formed their semicircle in front of the Window, and brought forth the shining silver-tipped quills that were their badge of office, held them up like dart-throwers, as they always did, and began their sundown chant!

Perhaps the Window had not closed before. If it had, it had opened again. My first thought was that the Guardian Figure had fallen. But it was not a Figure. It was alive.

It was blue and glistening, and it sprang down to the ground, crouched, alert, so clearly menacing in its intentions it was not necessary to see the face to understand the inherent malice. It had barely touched ground when a quill—a *dart*, rather—from the first Shrineman in the semicircle caught it in the face. (The eye, I have always assumed—the same left eye that must be the key to the Shrine?)

By that time, another had leaped out—and the next dart brought it down. It went so almost-casually, so rhythmically, so soundlessly, and with such economy of motion on both sides, that it seemed unreal. There were ten of the blue things altogether; at the sixth, I took my eyes from the glasses, blinked, shook my head, and looked back, unbelieving. I saw the same thing.

But remember—I did have that moment of doubt.

Without any break in the rhythm, the eleventh figure came out of the Shrine. It was not blue, or crouching or perilous; it was brown-gold of skin, and leaped like a dancer, and as it landed the Shrinemen who still held their darts poised, dropped them, and the whole semicircle burst into a chant of overwhelming joy and welcoming.

They faltered just once—when, still in the same timing, the twelfth creature came forth: then it rang out again, louder and more joyous.

But those who had dropped unused darts retrieved them.

They finished the song, the two Lives of the Shrine standing inside their circle, apart from the heap of lifeless blue bodies. Then—the Window must have closed meantime; they clearly knew the Rebirth was completed—four of them walked to the two shining creatures, bowed to them (in the islanders' bow of courtesy—not one of reverence), and led them into the House. The others approached the dead entities, picked them up, and carried them off, around the House, out of sight.

My stage was empty. I waited till dark, but saw no more. Not till I started down to the camp did I even wonder what had become of Henry and the others, who should have had time to arrive at the scene before the chant began. I found out when they joined me a few minutes after I got back to camp: the gates of the Shrine courtyard had been closed and barred; they had knocked and called out and waited—also till dark—without answer. They had heard the chant of rejoicing; they had seen nothing.

I told them what I had seen. I told it hesitantly; I did not completely believe my own memory. When, next day, and days after that, all our questions and probings produced only mildly startled or baffled replies from villagers and Shrinemen alike, we decided I had been the victim of some extraordinarily powerful hypnotic illusion.

We felt fairly sure of what part of it Henry and I had seen together; and this was further supported by the presence of a strange ship in the forest, with no passengers —and by Lucky's disappearance.

We left the island a few weeks later. Our supplies might have lasted another month, but we all felt restless, and we missed Lucky, both personally and in our work. We knew there were answers we could not get from anyone, about what had happened. But we saw no likelihood of getting them by staying longer. And we had to report the strange ship.

We agreed that as far as we knew—as far as four so-called scientists could claim to know anything—four people had entered the Shrine; a watcher on the hilltop (Henry's article so describes me) experienced an extraordinarily vivid hallucination of hypnotic illusion afterwards, during the ritual chant.

For the others, that agreement was sufficient. They hadn't had the "hallucination."

I went back. And of course, we had left too soon.

Our questions had been, naturally, *oklall*. The life of the Shrine is never revealed until the next Rites

...

This time it was a tremendous revelation; never before had twin Lives occurred.

I stayed two full seasons on the island, that second trip. This time, I lived, in a special visitor's capacity, with Lallayall's family. I learned to speak their language much better, and I spent many hours in talk with the Shrinemen and with the Lives.

The Lives told me about Lucky's meeting with the strange Pinkies; they told me how he felt when he fell on his knees before the Lifegiver; they told me they were reborn of him in the Shrine.

They told me how it felt, but could not tell me how or why it happened. They did not know. We all speculated—the Lives, the Shrinemen, and I—on what the Shrine itself might be, and what sort of force could produce ten glistening blue demons from three evil humans, and two golden angels from one lucky boy.

With all the speculation, and all I was told, I came back with not one shred of scientific evidence that anything of the sort happened. For all I know, the Lives may still be a hypnotic illusion produced by the Shrinemen; they may be some sort of periodic mutation. They may be Lucky Reborn.

They do not know, any more than I, how the Shrine came to be there, or what happened inside a chamber which they describe only as "filled with great light."

I tried approaching the Lifegiver, as Lucky had. The Shrinemen gave full permission, clearly amused. Nothing happened, though I tried it often, with minute variations of head and hand positions.

I may have missed the exact pressure points; I may have had the wrong attitude. I believe, myself, that I simply do not have the kind of unconsciousness Lucky had.

My own tendency, also, is to believe that the Shrine is a sort of outpost of some other planet—but why this should feel any more "scientific" to me than the Shrinemen's belief in an ancient lost magic, I don't know.

The Shrinemen, by the way, are still worried over some things. The weight of the entering bodies was never ascertained, they point out. If there was unused mass left inside the Shrine, they cannot say what may come forth the next time a pure innocent embraces goodness for her own sake.

These things must be done by the formulae, they say. (They feel this Rebirth was most unscientific, you see.) The embracer is not supposed to enter the Shrine. A fawn of so-and-so much weight, precisely, is the only proper sacrifice.

But these minor worries are unimportant, beside the double miracle of two Lives of the Shrine at one Rebirth. The islanders generally feel they are alive at a time of great good luck. They are creating dozens of songs and stories and paintings and dances about Lallayall, the lucky one who brought luck to his people.

I present this account of what I saw, what I heard, what I know, of the Shrine and its Rebirth Recurrence. I have no evidence to prove its validity.

*The basic subject of this story is binary sex; there are points of view from which two-sex creatures may seem pretty incomprehensible; this one appeared in Worlds of Tomorrow, —October, 1963.*

## The Lonely

TO: The Hon. Natarajan Roi Hennessy, Chairman, Committee on Intercultural Relations. Solar Council, Eros. FROM: Dr. Shlomo Mouna, Sr. Anthropologist, Project Ozma XII, Pluto Station.

DATE: 10/9/92, TC.

TRANSMISSION: VIA: Tight beam, scrambled. SENT: 1306 hrs, TST. RCDV: 1947 hrs, TST.

Dear Nat:

Herewith, a much condensed, heavily annotated, and top secret coded transcript of a program we just picked up. The official title is GU #79, and the content pretty well confirms some of our earlier

assumptions about the whole series, as this one concerns us directly, and we have enough background information, including specific dates, to get a much more complete and stylistic translation than before.

I'd say the hypotheses that these messages represent a "Galactic University" lecture series broadcast from somewhere near Galactic Center, through some medium a damn sight faster than light, now seems very reasonable.

This one seemed to come from Altair, which would date transmission from there only a few years after some incidents described in script. Some of the material also indicates probable nature of original format, and I find it uncomfortable. Also reraises question of whether Altair, Arcturus, Castor, etc., relay stations are aimed at us? Although the content makes that doubtful.

Full transcript, film, etc., will go out through channels, as soon as you let me know which channels. This time I am not pleading for declassification. I think of some Spaserve reactions and—frankly I wonder if it shouldn't be limited to SC Intercult Chairmen and Ozma Sr. Anthropoids—and sometimes I wonder about thee.

Cheery reading.

Shlomo

TRANSCRIPT, GU #79, Condensed Version, edited SM, 10/9/92, TC. (NRH: All material in parens is in my words—summarizing, commenting, and/or describing visual material where indicated. Straight text is verbatim, though cut as indicated. Times, measurements, etc., have been translated from Standard Galactic or Aldebaran local to Terran Standard; and bear in mind that words like "perceive" are often very rough translations for SG concepts more inclusive than our language provided for. —SM)

(Open with distance shot of Spaserve crew visiting Woman of Earth statue on Aldebaran VI. Closeup of reverent faces. Shots of old L-1, still in orbit, and jump-ship trailing it. Repeat first shot, then to Lecturer. You may have seen this one before. Sort of electric eel type. Actually makes sparks when he's being funny.)

The image you have just perceived is symbolic, in several senses. First, the statue was created by the Arlemites, the native race of Aldebaran VI (!! Yes, Virginia, there are aborigines!!) in an effort to use emotional symbols to bridge the gap in communications between two highly dissimilar species. Second: due to the farcical failure of this original intent, the structure has now become a vitally significant symbol—you perceived the impact—to the other species involved, the Terrans, a newly emerged race from Sol III. (Note that "you perceived." We must accept the implication that the original broadcasting format provides means of projecting emotional content.) Finally, this twofold symbol relates in one sense (Shooting sparks like mad here. Professional humor pretty much the same all over, hey?) to the phenomenon of the paradox of absolute universality and infinite variety inherent in the symbolism.

(Next section is a sort of refresher-review of earlier lectures. Subject of the whole course appears to be, roughly, "Problems of disparate symbolism in interspecies communications." This lecture—don't laugh—is "Symbols of Sexuality." Excerpts from review:—)

The phenomenon of symbolism is an integral part of the development of communicating intelligence. Distinctions of biological construction, ecological situation, atmospheric and other geophysical conditions, do of course profoundly influence the radically infantile phases of intellectual-emotional-social development in all cultures . . . (but) . . . from approximately that point in the linear development of a civilization at which it is likely to make contact with other cultures—that is, from the commencement of cultural maturity, following the typically adolescent outburst of energy in which first contact is generally accomplished . . . (He describes this level at some length in terms of a complex of: 1, astrophysical knowledge; 2, control of basic matter-energy conversions, "mechanical or psial;" 3, self-awareness of whole culture and of individuals in it; and 4, some sociological phenomena for which I have no referents.) . . . all cultures appear to progress through a known sequence of i-e-s patterns . . . (and) . . . despite

differences in the rate of development, the composite i-e-s curve for mature cultural development of all known species is familiar enough to permit reliable predictions for any civilization, once located on the curve.

(Then progresses to symbolism. Specific symbols, he says, vary even more, between cultures, than language or other means of conscious communication, as to wit—)

It is self-evident that the specific symbols utilized by, for instance, a septasexual, mechanophilic, auriphased species of freely locomotive discrete individuals, will vary greatly from those of, let us say, a mitotic, unicellular, intensely psioid, communal culture. (Which makes it all the more striking, that) it is specifically in the use of symbols, the general consciousness of their significance, the degree of sophistication of the popularly recognized symbols, and the uses to which they are put by the society as a whole, that we have found our most useful constant, so far, for purposes of locating a given culture on the curve.

(Much more here about other aspects of cultural development, some of which are cyclical, some linear—all fascinating but not essential to understanding of what follows.)

Sexuality has until recently been such a rare phenomenon among civilized species that we had casually assumed it to be something of a drawback to the development of intelligence. Such sexual races as we did know seemed to have developed in spite of their biological peculiarity, but usually not until after the mechanical flair that often seemed to accompany the phenomenon had enabled them to escape their planet of origin for a more favorable environment.

I say more favorable because sexuality does seem to develop as an evolutionary compensation where (some terms untranslatable, some very broad, but generally describing circumstances, like extra-dense atmosphere, in which the normal rate of cosmic radiation was reduced to, a degree that inhibited mutation and thus, evolution) . . .

As I said, this seemed almost a freak occurrence, and so it was, and is, here in the heart of the Galaxy. But in the more thinly populated spiral arms, the normal rate of radiation is considerably lower. It is only in the last centuries that we have begun to make contact with any considerable numbers of species from these sectors—and the incidence of sexuality among these peoples is markedly higher than before.

Recently, then, there has been fresh cause to investigate the causes and effects of sexuality; and there has been a comparative wealth of new material to work with.

(Here he goes into a review of the variety of sexual modes, ranging from two to seventeen sexes within a species, and more exotica-erotica of means, manners, and mores than a mere two-sexed biped can readily imagine. Restrain yourself. It's all in the full transcript.)

But let me for the moment confine myself to the simplest and most common situation, involving only two sexes. Recent investigations indicate that there is an apparently inevitable psychological effect of combining two, essentially distinct subspecies in one genetic unit. (Sparks like mad.) I perceive that many of you have just experienced the same delight-dismay the first researchers felt at recognizing this so-obvious and so-overlooked parallel with the familiar cases of symbiosis.

The Terrans, mentioned earlier, are in many ways prototypical of sexuality in an intelligent species, and the unusual and rather dramatic events on Aldebaran VI have added greatly to our insights into the psychology of sexuality in general.

In this culture, dualism is very deep-rooted, affecting every aspect of the i-e-s complex: not just philosophy and engineering, but mathematics, for instance, and mystique.

This cultural attitude starts with a duality, or two-sided symmetry, of body-structure. (Throughout this discussion he uses visual material—photos, diagrams, etc., of human bodies, anatomy, physiology, habitat, eating and mating habits, etc. Also goes off into some intriguing speculation of the chicken-or-egg type: is physical structure influenced by mental attitudes, or is it some inherent tendency of a chromosome

pattern with *pairs* of genes from *pairs* of parents?)

In this respect, the Terrans are almost perfect prototypes, with two pairs of limbs, for locomotion and manipulation, extending from a central—single—abdominal cavity, which, although containing some single organs as well as some in pairs, is so symmetrically proportioned that the first assumption from an exterior view would be that everything inside was equally mirror-imaged. Actually, the main breathing apparatus is paired; the digestive system is single—although food intake is through an orifice with paired lips and two rows of teeth. In both "male" and "female" types, the organ of sexual contact is single, whereas the gamete-producers are pairs. There is a single, roundish head set on top of the abdomen, containing the primary sensory organs, all of which occur in pairs. Even the brain is paired!

I mentioned earlier that it is typical of the sexual races that the flair for physical -engineering is rather stronger than the instinct for communication. This was an observed but little-understood fact for many centuries; it was not till this phenomenon of dualism (and triadism for the three-sexed, etc.) was studied that the earlier observation was clarified. If you will consider briefly the various sources of power and transport, you will realize that—outside of the psi-based techniques—most of these are involved with principles of symmetry and/or equivalence; these concepts are obvious to the two-sexed. On the other hand, the principle of unity, underlying all successful communication—physical, verbal, psial, or other—and which is also the basis for the application of psi to engineering problems—is for these species, in early stages, an almost mystical quality.

As with most life-forms, the reproductive act is, among sexual beings, both physically pleasurable and biologically compulsive, so that it is early equated with religio-mystic sensations. Among sexual species, these attitudes are intensified by the communicative aspects of the act. (Cartoon-type diagrams here which frankly gave me to think a bit!) We have much to learn yet about the psychology of this phenomenon, but enough has been established to make clear that the concept of unity for these races is initially almost entirely related to the use of their sexuality, and is later extended to other areas—religion and the arts of communication at first—with a mystical—indeed often reverent attitude!

I hardly need to remind you that the tendencies I have been discussing are the primitive and underlying ones. Obviously, at the point of contact, any species must have acquired at least enough sophistication in the field of physics—quanta, unified field theory, and atomic transmutation for a start—to have begun to look away from\_ the essentially blind alley of dualistic thinking. But the extent to which these Terrans were still limited by their early developmental pattern is indicated by the almost unbelievable fact that they developed ultra-dimensional transport before discovering any more effective channels of communication than the electromagnetic!

Thus their first contacts with older civilizations were physical; and, limited as they still are almost entirely to aural and visual communication, they were actually unable to perceive their very first contact on Aldebaran VI.

(Shot of Prof. Eel in absolute sparkling convulsions goes to distance shots of planet and antiquated Earth spaceship in orbit: L-1 again. Then suborb launch drops, spirals to surface. Twenty bulky spacesuited figures emerge—not the same as in opening shots. This looks like actual photographic record of landing, which seems unlikely. Beautiful damn reconstruction, if so. Narration commences with Aldebaran date. I substitute Terran Calendar date we know for same, and accept gift of one more Rosetta Stone.)

The time is the year 2053. For more than six decades, this primitive giant of space has plied its way through the restrictive medium of slow space. Twice before in its travels, the great ship has paused.

First at Procyon, where they found the system both uninhabited and uninviting; and at the time they did not yet know what urgent cause they had to make a landing. (Our date for Procyon exploration, from L-1 log, is 2016, which fits.)

Then at Saiph, two decades later, where they hoped for just a bare minimum of hospitality—no more than safe footing for their launches, in which they could live while they tried to ensure their future survival. But this system's planets offered little hope. One Earth-size enveloped in horror-film type gases and nasty moistures. (One more with dense atmosphere of high acid content: probe from ship corroded in

minutes.)

They limped on. A half decade later they came to a time of decision, and determined not to try for the next nearest star system, but for the closest one from which their radio had received signs of intelligent life: Aldebaran.

What they had learned between Procyon and Saiph was that those of their crew who were born in space were not viable. The ship had been planned to continue, if necessary, long beyond the lifespan of its first crew. The Terran planners had ingeniously bypassed their most acute psychosocial problem, and staffed the ship with a starting crew of just one sex. Forty females started the journey, with a supply of sperm from one hundred genetically selected males carefully preserved on board.

Sex determination in this species is in the male chromosome, and most of the supply had been selected for production of females. The plan was to maintain the ship in transit with single-sexed population and restore the normal balance only at the end of the journey.

The Terrans have apparently reached a level of self-awareness that enables them to avoid the worst dangers of their own divisive quality, while utilizing the advantages of this special (pun intended—Prof. Eel was sparking again) ambivalence. Their biological peculiarities have, among other things, developed a far greater tolerance in the females for the type of physical constraints and social pressures that were to accompany the long, slow voyage. Males, on the other hand, being more aggressive, and more responsive to hostile challenges, would be needed for colonizing a strange planet. (Dissertation on mammals here which says nothing new, but restates from an outsider's—rather admiring—viewpoint with some distinction. Should be a textbook classic—if we can ever release this thing.)

That was the plan. But when the first females born on the trip came to maturity, and could not conceive, the plan was changed. Three male infants were born to females of the original complement—less than half of whom, even then, were still alive and of child-bearing age.

(Well, he tells it effectively, but adds nothing to what we know from the log. Conflicts among the women led to death of one boy, eventual suicide of another at adolescence. Remaining mature male fails to impregnate known fertile women. Hope of landing while enough fertiles remained to start again pretty well frustrated at Saiph. Decision to try, for nearest system eight light years off—with Aldebaran still farther. Faint fantastic hope still at landing, with just one child-bearer left—the Matriarch, if you recall?)

Remembering the reasons for their choice of Aldebaran, you can imagine the reaction when that landing party, first, lost all radio signals as they descended; then, could find no trace whatsoever—to their senses—of habitation. The other planets were scouted, to no avail. The signals on the Mother Ship's more powerful radio continued to come from VI. One wild hypothesis was followed up by a thorough and fruitless search of the upper atmosphere. The atmosphere was barely adequate to sustain life at the surface. Beam tracing repeatedly located the signal beacon in a mountain of VI, which showed—to the Terrans—no other sign of intelligent life.

The only logical conclusion was that they had followed a "lighthouse beacon" to an empty world. The actual explanation, of course, was in the nature of the Arlemmites, the natives of Aldebaran VI.

Originating as a social-colonizing lichen, on a heavy planet, with—even at its prime—a barely adequate atmosphere, the Arlemmites combined smallness of individual size with limited locomotive powers and superior air and water retentive ability. They developed, inevitably, as a highly psioid culture—as far to one end of the psychophysical as the Terrans are to the other. (My spelling up there. I think it represents true meaning better than "psycho.") The constantly thinning choice was between physical relocation and a conscious evolutionary measure which this mature psioid race was far better equipped to undertake: the Arlemmites now exist as a planet-wide diffusion of single-celled entities, comprising just one individual, and a whole species.

(Visual stuff here helps establish concept—as if you or I just extended the space between cells.)

It seems especially ironic that the Arlemmites were not only one of the oldest and most psioid of peoples—so that they had virtually all the accumulated knowledge of the Galaxy at their disposal—but were also symbiote products. This background might have enabled them to comprehend the Terran mind

and the problems confronting the visitors—except for the accidental combination of almost total psi-blindness in the Terrans, and the single-sexed complement of the ship.

The visitors could not perceive their hosts. The hosts could find no way to communicate with the visitors. The full complement of the ship, eventually, came down in launches, and lived in them, hopelessly, while they learned that their viability had indeed been completely lost in space. There was no real effort to return to the ship and continue the voyage. The ranks thinned, discipline was lost, deaths proliferated. Finally, it was only a child's last act of rebelliousness that mitigated the futility of the tragedy.

The last child saw the last adult die, and saw this immobility as an opportunity to break the most inviolable of rules. She went out of the launch—into near-airlessness that killed her within minutes.

But minutes were more than enough, with the much longer time afterwards for examination of the dead brain. It was through the mind of this one child, young enough to be still partially free of the rigid mental framework that made adult Terrans so inaccessible to Arlemites, that the basis was gained for most of the knowledge we now have.

Sorrowingly, the Arlemites generated an organism to decompose the Terrans and their artifacts, removing all traces of tragedy from the planet's surface. Meanwhile, they studied what they had learned, against future needs.

The technological ingenuity of these young sexuals will be apparent when I tell you that only four decades after the departure of that ill-fated ship, they were experimenting with ultra-dimensional travel. Even at the time of the landing at Aldebaran, ultra-di scouts were already exploring the systems closest to Sol. Eventually—within a decade after the child's death—one of these came to Aldebaran, and sighted the still-orbiting Mother Ship.

A second landing was clearly imminent. The Arlemites had still devised no way to aid this species to live in safety on their planet, nor did they have any means to communicate adequately with psi-negatives whose primary perceptions were aural and visual. But they did have, from the child's mind, a working knowledge of the strongest emotional symbols the culture knew, and they had long since devised a warning sign they could erect for visual perception. The statue of the Woman of Earth was constructed in an incredibly brief time through the combined efforts of the whole Arlemite consciousness.

They had no way to know that the new ship, designed for exploration, not colonizing, and equipped with ultra-di drive, which obviated the long slow traveling, was crewed entirely by males. Even had they known, they did not yet comprehend the extreme duality of the two-sexed double-culture. So they built their warning to the shape of the strongest fear-and-hate symbols of—a female.

(Shot of statue, held for some time, angle moving slowly. No narration. Assuming that emotional-projection notion—and I think we must—the timing here is such that I believe they first project what they seem to think a human female would feel, looking at it. I tried women on staff here. They focused more on phallic than female component, but were just as positive in reactions as males.??? Anyhow, like I said, no narration. What follows, though out of parens, is my own reaction.)

It seems more a return than a venture.

The Woman waits, as she has waited . . . always? . . . to greet her sons, welcomes us . . . home? . . . She sits in beauty, in peacefulness, perfect, complete, clean and fresh-colored . . . new? . . . no, *forever* . . . open, welcoming, yet so impervious . . . warm and . . . untouchable? . . . rather, *untouched* . . . almost, but never, forgotten Goddess . . . Allmother, Woman of Earth . . . enveloped, enveloping, in warmth and peace . . .

One stands back a bit: this is the peace of loving insight, of unquesting womanhood, of great age and undying youth . . . the peace of the past, of life that is passed, of that immortality that nothing mortal can ever achieve except through the frozen impression of living consciousness that we call *art*.

The young men are deeply moved and they make jokes. "Allmother," one hears them say, sarcastically, "Old White Goddess, whaddya know?"

Then they look up and are quiet under the smiling stone eyes. Even the ancient obscenely placed

spaceship in her lap is not quite absurd, as it will seem in museum models—or tragic, as is the original overhead.

(Prof. Eel goes on to summarize the conclusions that seem obvious to him. Something is awfully wrong; that's obvious to me. How did they manage to build something so powerful out of total miscomprehension? What are we up against, anyhow? And, to get back to the matter of channels, what do you think this little story would do to Spaserve brass egos? Do you want to hold it top secret a while?)

### End of Transcript

TO: Dr. Shlomo Mouna, Sr. Anthropologist, Ozma XII, Pluto  
FROM: N. R. Hennessy, Solar Council Dome. Eros DATE: 10/10/92  
TRANSMISSION: VIA tight beam, scrambled. SENT: 0312 hrs. RCVD: 1027 hrs.

Dear Shlomo:

Absolutely, let me see the full package before we release it elsewhere. I've got a few more questions, like: Do they know we're receiving it? How do we straighten them out? Or should we? Instinct says yes. Tactics says it is advantageous to be underestimated. Think best you come with package, and we'll braintrust it. Meantime, in reply to your bafflement—

"L" class ships, you should have known, are for "Lysistrata." Five of them launched during brief Matriarchy at beginning of World Government on Terra, following Final War. So sort out your symbols now.

And good grief, where did the other four land?

NRH

Hallall. *An intensely personal exploration from a "curious creature"; first published in F&SF—October, 1974.*

## In the Land of Unblind

You know how it is  
*indown* you close your eye(s) and let take  
your self between a stumblecrawl and lazyfloat  
I mean when  
you get past the rubble really *indown* there's  
no seefeeltouch not  
the skinside *upout* way  
blindbalance cannot tell if a touching is over  
or under or on the feeling is inside your skin  
I mean  
*indown* you know in the land of unblind the one  
eyed woman is terribilified  
no light  
but the infires' flickerdimglow and  
they all keep their eyes closed so  
scrabbleswoop and stumblesoar fly  
creep in fearableautiful nolightno  
dark of eacheveryother's infires  
(No need to cover or to show  
they canwilinot looksee



except the one-eyed me  
I wonder what would happen if  
a person took a light *indown*)

Before  
I opened up one apple-eye I too  
flewstumbled graspgropegleaned  
in holystonemaskhunger then  
one time  
*indown* in that hell-eden innocence I touched  
a man and he touched me you know the way  
it happens some times later or before or inbe  
*tween we touched upout*

I mean  
where skins can touch and some  
place or other we remembered as  
in the other we felt fate upon us  
blindunblind future past which  
one is when  
*upout* his openwide eyes full of hunger and  
some kind of hate I tasting somehow hate  
fulhunger over all the skins inside my mouth

*I love you! he said*  
*Witchcraft! I had to come!*  
*You must come! Magic!*  
*I love you!*

so  
I came we loved our skins touched inside some  
times almost remembering *indown*  
not quite then  
oneanother soundless indown timestill blindun  
blind I touched a man and touching me he spoke  
words I c/wouldnot hear just scramble scared  
a way you know  
it happens some  
time in betweenafterbefore when meeting *upout*  
all our eyes and ears and mouths were open

*I love you! he said*  
*We had to come together!*  
*Remember! he said before words-*

I c/wouldnot  
I love you  
I said Witchcraft! all the skins inside my mouth tasting sweet sour terror as I ran he spoke  
(again?)  
Open your eyes! he said  
One time (soon?)  
indown still fearful  
(fearful still for still I do

not open more than one)  
I opened up my first indowneye seeing stir a  
livesome ghost of memory pastfutureinbetween  
that time I touched no man but  
(then?)  
one time  
upout you know before or after  
my first man was there (again?)  
skinsight airvoice was all we  
unshared how it waswouldbe to touch indown I  
did not know he did not know there was indown  
not to remember full of fear he went away but  
(then?)  
one time  
indown one eye just-slit open in dimglowing  
flickerdrift infires a man touched me and I  
could see indown the face I touchedspoketo of  
course he c/wouldnot hear  
so  
but  
when  
you know  
we met upouteyes open all the hungerskinside my mouth turned sweet remembering beforewords  
I love you! he said  
Witchcraft! I had to come!  
You made me come! Magic!  
I love you! he said with words  
but  
he did not know echopremonitions stirring from under upoutskintouch he couldwouldnot premember how  
indown we touched his hunger fear soured all the skins inside my mouth I had to go  
away  
(again?)  
one time indown I met a man with one eye  
open like my own in flickerdim  
infireglow seeing each how horribleautiful eachotherself fruit flower and fester touching so we spoke  
beforewords so  
you know  
the waysometime(s) you meet upout all eyes and ears and mouths wide open great new hungers  
pungentsweet  
on all the skins inside remembering indown bebackwords neverquite to know which place time was  
wherewhen or waswouldbe we first felt fate upon us so  
We love (we do not say) We had to come  
Witchcraft! (we laugh) we love skins touch upoutside premembering sometimesalmost like  
indowntouchtalk still  
and yet  
I wonder  
what it's like  
indown for the two-eyed?

## Survival Ship

Half a million people actually made the round trip to Space Station One that day to watch the take-off in person. And back on Earth a hundred million video screens flashed the picture of Captain Melnick's gloved hand waving a dramatic farewell at the port, while the other hand slowly pressed down the lever that would fire the ship out beyond the orbit of the artificial satellite, past the Moon and the planets, into unknown space.

From Station One, Earth, and Moon, a hundred million winged wishes added their power to the surge of the jets, as a rising spiral of fire inside the greatest rocket tower ever built marked the departure of the thrice-blessed ship, *Survival*. In the great churches, from pole to pole, services were held all day, speeding the giant vessel on its way, calling on the aid of the Lord for the Twenty and Four who manned the ship.

At mountain-top telescopes a dozen cameras faithfully transmitted the messages of great unblinking glass eyes. Small home sets and massive pulpit screens alike looked to the sky to follow the flare dimming in the distance, to watch the man-made star falling away.

Inside the great ship Melnick's hand left the firing lever, then began adjusting the chin rest and the earphones of the acceleration couch. The indicator dashboard, designed for prone eye level, leaped into focus.

Securing the couch straps with the swift competence of habit, the captain intently watched the sweep of the big second hand around the take-off timer, aware at the same time that green lights were beginning to glow at the other end of the board. The indicator reached the first red mark.

"The show's over, everybody. We're in business!" The mike built into the chin rest carried the captain's taut voice all over the ship. "Report, all stations!"

"Number one, all secure!" Melnick mentally ticked off the first green light, glowing to prove the astrogator's couch was in use.

"Number two, all secure!"

"Number three . . ." "Four . . ." "Five." The rhythmic sing-song of pinpoint timing in take-off was second nature by now to the whole crew. One after another, the green lights glowed for safety, punctuating the litany, and the gong from the timer put a period neatly in place after the final "All secure!"

"Eight seconds to black out," the captain's voice warned. "Seven . . . six . . . stand by." The first wave of acceleration shock reeled into twenty-four helmet-sheathed heads on twenty-four individually designed head rests. "Five—" *It's got to work*, Melnick was thinking, fighting off unconsciousness with fierce intensity. "Four—" *It's got to . . . got to . . .* "Three—" *got to . . . got to . . .* "two—" *got to . . .*

At the space station, a half-million watchers were slowly cleared from the giant take-off platform. They filed in long orderly lines down the ramps to the interior, and waited there for the smaller Earth rockets that would take them home. Waiting, they were at once elated and disappointed. They had seen no more than could be seen at the same place on any other day. The entire rocket area had been fenced off, with a double cordon of guards to make sure that too-curious visitors stayed out of range. Official explanations mentioned the new engine, the new fuel, the danger of escaping gases—but nobody believed it. Every one of the half-million visitors knew what the mystery was: the crew, and nothing else. Giant video screens all over the platform gave the crowd details and closeups, the same they would have seen had they stayed comfortably at home. They saw the captain's gloved hand, at the last, but not the captain's face.

There was muttering and complaining, but there was something else too. Each man, woman, and child who went to the station that day would be able to say, years later, "I was there when the *Survival* took off. You never saw anything so big in your life."

Because it wasn't just another planet hop. It wasn't just like the hundreds of other take-offs. It was the *Survival*, the greatest spaceship ever engineered. People didn't think of the *Survival* in terms of miles-per-second; they said, "Sirius in fifteen years!"

From Sunday supplements to dignified periodicals, nearly every medium of communication on Earth had carried the story. Brightly colored graphs made visibly simple the natural balance of life forces in which plants and animals could maintain a permanently fresh atmosphere as well as a self-perpetuating

food supply. Lecture demonstrations and videocasts showed how centrifugal force would replace gravity.

For months before take-off, the press and video followed the preparations with daily intimate accounts. The world over, people knew the nicknames of pigs, calves, chickens, and crew members—and even the proper botanical name of the latest minor masterpiece of the biochemists, a hybrid plant whose root, stems, leaves, buds, blossoms, and fruit were all edible, nourishing, and delicious, and which had the added advantage of being the thirstiest CO<sub>2</sub> drinker ever found.

The public knew the nicknames of the crew, and the proper name of the plant. But they never found out, not even the half million who went to the field to see for themselves, the real identity of the Twenty and Four who comprised the crew. They knew that thousands had applied; that it was necessary to be single, under twenty-five, and a graduate engineer in order to get as far as the physical exam; that the crew was mixed in sex, with the object of filling the specially equipped nursery and raising a second generation for the return trip, if, as was hoped, a lengthy stay on Sirius's planet proved possible. They knew, for that matter, all the small characteristics and personal idiosyncrasies of the crew members—what they ate, how they dressed, their favorite games, theaters, music, books, cigarettes, preachers, and political parties. There were only two things the public didn't know, and couldn't find out: the real names of the mysterious Twenty and Four, and the reason why those names were kept secret.

There were as many rumors as there were newsmen or radio reporters, of course. Hundreds of explanations were offered at one time or another. But still nobody knew—nobody except the half hundred Very Important Persons who had planned the project, and the Twenty and Four themselves.

And now, as the pinpoint of light faded out of the screens of televisions all over Earth, the linear and rotary acceleration of the great ship began to adjust to the needs of the human body. "Gravity" in the living quarters gradually approached Earth-normal. Tortured bodies relaxed in the acceleration couches, where the straps had held them securely positioned through the initial stage, so as to keep the blood and guts where they belonged, and to prevent the stomach from following its natural tendency to emerge through the backbone. Finally, stunned brain cells awoke to the recognition that danger signals were no longer coming through from shocked, excited tissues.

Captain Melnick was the first to awake. The row of lights on the board still glowed green. Fumbling a little with the straps, Melnick watched tensely to see if the indicator lights were functioning properly, sighing with relief as the one at the head of the board went dead, operated automatically by the removal of body weight from the couch.

It was right—it was essential—for the captain to wake up first. If any of the men had showed superior recuperative powers, it could be bad. Melnick thought wearily of the years and years ahead during which this artificial dominance had to be maintained in defiance of all Earth conditioning. But of course it would not be that bad, really. The crew had been picked for ability to conform to the unusual circumstances; they were all without strong family ties or prejudices. Habit would establish the new castes soon enough, but the beginning was crucial. Survival was more than a matter of plant-animal balance and automatic gravity.

While the captain watched, another light went out, and then another. Officers, both of them. Good. Three more lights died out together. Then men were beginning to awaken, and it was reassuring to know that their own couch panels would show them that the officers had revived first. In any case, there was no more time for worrying. There were things to be done.

A detail was sent off immediately to attend to the animals, release them from the confinement of the specially prepared acceleration pens, and check them for any possible damage incurred in spite of precautions. The proportions of human, animal, and plant life had been worked out carefully beforehand for maximum efficiency and for comfort. Now that the trip had started, the miniature world had to maintain its status quo or perish.

As soon as enough of the crew were awake, Lieutenant Johnson, the third officer, took a group of eight out to make an inspection of the hydroponic tanks that lined the hull. Nobody expected much trouble here. Being at the outermost part of the ship, the plants were exposed to high "gravity." The outward pull exerted on them by rotation should have held their roots in place, even through the tearing backward thrust of the acceleration. But there was certain to be a large amount of minor damage, to

stems and leaves and buds, and whatever there was would need immediate repair. In the ship's economy the plants had the most vital function of all—absorbing carbon dioxide from dead air already used by humans and animals, and deriving from it the nourishment that enabled their chlorophyll systems to release fresh oxygen for re-use in breathing.

There was a vast area to inspect. Row upon row of tanks marched solidly from stem to stern of the giant ship, all around the inner circumference of the hull. Johnson split the group of eight into four teams, each with a biochemist in charge to locate and make notes of the extent of the damage, and an unclassified man as helper, to do the actual dirty work, crawling out along the catwalks to mend each broken stalk.

Other squads were assigned to check the engines and control mechanisms, and the last two women to awake got stuck with the booby prize—first shift in the galley. Melnick squashed their immediate protests with a stern reminder that they had hardly earned the right to complain; but privately the captain was pleased at the way it had worked out. This first meal on board was going to have to be something of an occasion. A bit of ceremony always helped; and above all, social procedures would have to be established immediately. A speech was indicated—a speech Melnick did not want to have to make in the presence of all twenty-four crew members. As it worked out, the Four would almost certainly be kept busy longer than the others. If these women had not happened to wake up last . . .

The buzzing of the intercom broke into the captain's speculations. "Lieutenant Johnson reporting, sir." Behind the proper, crisp manner, the young lieutenant's voice was frightened. Johnson was third in command, supervising the inspection of the tanks.

"Having trouble down there?" Melnick was deliberately informal, knowing the men could hear over the intercom, and anxious to set up an immediate feeling of unity among the officers.

"One of the men complaining, sir." The young lieutenant sounded more confident already. "There seems to be some objection to the division of work."

Melnick thought it over quickly and decided against any more public discussion on the intercom. "Stand by. I'll be right down."

All over the ship airducts and companionways led from the inner-level living quarters "down" to the outer level of tanks; Melnick took the steps three at a time and reached the trouble zone within seconds after the conversation ended.

"Who's the troublemaker here?"

"Kennedy—on assignment with Petty Officer Giorgio for plant maintenance."

"You have a complaint?" Melnick asked the swarthy, dungareed man whose face bore a look of sullen dissatisfaction.

"Yeah." The man's voice was deliberately insolent. The others had never heard him speak that way before, and he seemed to gain confidence from the shocked surprise they displayed. "I thought I was supposed to be a pampered darling this trip. How come I do all the dirty work here, and Georgie gets to keep so clean?"

His humor was too heavy to be effective. "Captain's orders, that's why," Melnick snapped. "Everybody has to work double time till things are squared away. If you don't like the job here, I can fix you up fine in the brig. Don't worry about your soft quarters. You'll get 'em later and plenty of 'em. It's going to be a long trip, and don't forget it." The captain pointed significantly to the chronometer built into the overhead. "But it's not much longer to dinner. You'd better get back to work if you want to hit the chow while it's hot. Mess call in thirty minutes."

Melnick took a chance and turned abruptly away, terminating the interview. It worked. Sullen but defeated, Kennedy hoisted himself back up on the catwalk, and then began crawling out to the spot Giorgio pointed out. Not daring to express their relief, lieutenant and captain exchanged one swift look of triumph before Melnick walked wordlessly off.

In the big control room that would be mess hall, social hall, and general meeting place for all of them for fifteen years to come—or twice that time if Sirius's planet turned out to be uninhabitable—the captain waited for the crew members to finish their checkup assignments. Slowly they gathered in the lounge, ignoring the upholstered benches around the sides and the waiting table in the center, standing instead in

small awkward groups. An undercurrent of excitement ran through them all, evoking deadly silences and erupting in bursts of too-noisy conversation, destroying the joint attempt at an illusion of nonchalance. They all knew—or hoped they knew—what the subject of the captain's first speech would be, and behind the facade of bronzed faces and trimly muscled bodies they were all curious, even a little afraid.

Finally there were twenty of them in the room, and the captain rose and rapped for order.

"I suppose," Melnick began, "you will all want to know our present position and the results of the checkup." Nineteen heads turned as one, startled and disappointed at the opening. "However," the captain continued, smiling at the change of expressions the single word brought, "I imagine you're all as hungry and—er—impatient as I am, so I shall put off the more routine portions of my report until our other comrades have joined us. There is only one matter which should properly be discussed immediately."

Everyone in the room was acutely conscious of the Four. They had all known, of course, how it would be. But on Earth there had always been other, ordinary men around to make them less aware of it. Now the general effort to maintain an air of artificial ease and disinterest was entirely abandoned as the captain plunged into the subject most on everyone's mind.

"Our ship is called the *Survival*. You all know why. Back on Earth, people think they know why too; they think it's because of our plants and artificial gravity, and the hundreds of other engineering miracles that keep us going. Of course, they also know that our crew is mixed, and that our population is therefore"—the captain paused, letting an anticipatory titter circle the room—"is therefore by no means fixed. What they don't know, naturally, is the division of sexes in the crew.

"You're all aware of the reason for the secrecy. You know that our organization is in direct opposition to the ethical principles on which the peace was established after World War IV. And you know how the planners of this trip had to struggle with the authorities to get this project approved. When consent was granted, finally, it was only because the highest prelates clearly understood that the conditions of our small universe were in every way different from those on Earth—and that the division proposed was necessary for survival."

The captain paused, waiting for the last words to sink in, and studying the attitudes of the group. Even now, after a year's conditioning to counteract earthly mores, there were some present who listened to this public discussion of dangerous and intimate matters with flushed faces and embarrassed smiles.

"You all realize, of course, that this consent was based, finally, on the basic principle itself." Automatically, out of long habit unbroken by that year's intensive training, the captain made the sign of the olive branch. "*Survival of the race is the first duty of every ethical man and woman.*" The command was intoned meaningfully, almost pontifically, and brought its reward as confusion cleared from some of the flushed faces. "What we are doing, our way of life now, has the full approval of the authorities. We must never forget that.

"On Earth, survival of the race is best served by the increasing strength of family ties. It was not thought wise to endanger those ties by letting the general public become aware of our—unorthodox—system here on board. A general understanding, on Earth, of the true meaning of the phrase, 'the Twenty and the Four,' could only have aroused a furor of discussion and argument that would, in the end, have impeded survival both there and here.

"The knowledge that there are twenty of one sex on board, and only four of the other—that children will be born outside of normal family groups, and raised jointly—I need not tell you how disastrous that would have been." Melnick paused, raising a hand to dispel the muttering in the room.

"I wanted to let you know, before the Four arrive, that I have made some plans which I hope will carry us through the initial period in which difficulties might well arise. Later, when the groups of six—five of us, and one of them in each—have been assigned their permanent quarters, I think it will be possible, in fact necessary, to allow a greater amount of autonomy within those groups. But for the time being, I have arranged a—shall we call it a dating schedule?" Again the captain paused, waiting for tension to relieve itself in laughter. "I have arranged dates for all of you with each of them during convenient free periods over the next month. Perhaps at the end of that time we will be able to choose groups; perhaps it will take longer. Maternity schedules, of course, will not be started until I am certain that the grouping is

satisfactory to all. For the time being, remember this:

"We are not only more numerous than they, but we are stronger and, in our social placement here, more fortunate. We must become accustomed to the fact that they are our responsibility. It is because we are hardier, longer-lived, less susceptible to pain and illness, better able to withstand, mentally, the difficulties of a life of monotony, that we are placed as we are—and not alone because we are the bearers of children."

Over the sober silence of the crew, the captain's voice rang out. "Lieutenant Johnson," Melnick called to the golden-haired, sun-tanned woman near the door, "will you call the men in from the tank rooms now? They can finish their work after dinner."

The characters and the incidents in this book are entirely the product of the author's imagination and have no relation to any person or event in real life.

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First Edition

## FOR SHMUEL, THE TEACHER, WHO KEPT ASKING, "WHY?"

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### Veda

*Veda was sick that day. She woke up at seven, as always, but her joints ached, and even a cup of hot tea did not ease the queasy feeling. She waited till almost eight, so as not to wake anyone, then wrapped herself from collarbone to bony ankles in an ancient blanket bathrobe and made a labored descent to the telephone in the hall. She felt her way along the windowless stair well, feverishly angry at the landlady's refusal to light the landing during the day.*

*Ordinarily Veda was inclined to be, as she put it herself, "tolerant to a fault," so the poisonous black hatred Mrs. Kovan shocked her and confirmed her judgment in staying home that day. She called the Mitchell home, and the Missus answered right away.*

*Mrs. Mitchell was sincere in her sympathy. Her voice sounded sleepy and warm, and Veda could hear one of the kids yelling from another room. It made her feel bad about staying out.*

*"Now don't you touch the washin', Missus," she said plaintively. "I kin manage that fine tomorrer."*

*"Don't be silly, Veda. You take care of yourself, and don't worry about anything. And don't suffocate yourself in that room of yours, hear me?"*

*Veda hung up and climbed back to her room, smiling in spite of the dark landings and the ache in her joints. Missus Mitchell was a fine woman, but she had a lot of foolish notions. Veda inspected the windows and weatherstripping in her room, and stuffed an old stocking in the only crack she could find.*

*She brewed more tea in the curtained kitchenette and pulled the extra comforter over her bed. Then she checked the bolt on the door. She never could get to sleep in a public rooming house without making sure her door was locked shut.*

*Sealed off from the world, she took two pills from an old green bottle and pulled another stocking—a woolen one—over her head, to cover her ears. Finally she climbed in under the double comforter to sweat out the poison.*

*She had no way of knowing she had just saved a life.*

## ONE

Gladys Mitchell left the phone, and could not repress a small sigh. In the dining room Ginny was clamoring for breakfast. Upstairs Jon was loudly demanding some clean socks. Veda, she reflected, was a good worker and a fine person; but she did have her ailments, and there was no way out of it.

"Barbie," Gladys called over the noise, "see what Ginny wants, will you?" She passed the hall mirror and frowned in it; there ought to be some way to turn the thing off in the morning. She called up to Jon and told him where to find the socks, then listened to his footsteps as he followed her instructions. Ginny had stopped yelling, but that was not necessarily good. Gladys walked swiftly into the dining room and found the five-year-old contentedly stuffing herself with hot oatmeal.

Barbara came through the swinging door from the kitchen. She set down her own oatmeal and gave Gladys a cup of steaming coffee. "Everything was ready on the stove, so I just dished it out." She was defiant about it. At fifteen, she knew she ought to hate housework.

Touched, Gladys squeezed her daughter's arm and sipped gratefully from the hot cup. She thought of Veda, alone in her dark little boardinghouse room, and she looked from her two daughters to Tom's picture on the lowboy—a freckle-faced boy grinning out of an open-necked khaki shirt, his R.O.T.C. cap pushed back on his head, the world in his hands. He had sent it home from school two months before, proud testimonial to his homemade photo enlarger. Her eyes wandered on to the window and the big maple tree outside. Then Jon came in and dropped a kiss on the top of her head before he crossed to the other end of the table.

He surveyed the uneven edges of his grapefruit and asked with the first mouthful, "Veda out again?" He picked up his paper. "Maybe you ought to get someone else, Glad?"

He hid his smile behind the raised newspaper as three feminine voices answered immediately and firmly. He knew how they felt about Veda.

"I ought to do the wash," Gladys was thinking out loud, "but there's that luncheon today . . ."

"Oh, Mother! Isn't the laundry done yet? I've got to have those things for tonight."

Gladys surveyed her older daughter absently. "What's tonight?"

"The class! I don't see how you can forget it every time. And I gave you the jackets a week ago . . ."

"You gave them to me Monday night," Gladys pointed out. "We only do laundry once a week around here, you know."

"I can iron 'em myself when I get back from school," Barbie pleaded, "but they've got to be starched and everything—they have to be washed this morning, Mom."

She still calls me "Mom" when she wants something, Gladys noted with amused satisfaction. "Mother" had come into use some months back as part of Barbara's campaign to convince the whole family, and primarily herself, that she was now fully mature.

"Are we taking in wash now?" Jon looked up from his paper.

"Oh, Daddy, I told you all about it. It's the white jackets for the baby sitters, and I got them at a sale, and they were so dirty. I'd never have got the kids to use them if they weren't so cheap."

"I don't know which is worse," Jon grumbled contentedly. "First it was Tom trying to blow the house up with a basement lab, and now you've got us running rings around a batch of baby sitters. Who started that club anyhow? And in the name of all that's holy do baby sitters need white jackets?"

"I did," Barbie said defiantly. "And I already collected the money for the jackets, so I don't see what good it does to argue about that. I've just got to have them, that's all."

"Well, I ought to do the laundry anyhow. I think I can manage if you drive them to school. . . ." Gladys looked inquiringly at her husband. "You could take the car right into town. Barbie'll have to come straight home from school anyhow, so she could bring Ginny home on the bus."

"Okay." Jon nodded and went back to his paper. The headlines jumped at him, bearing threats of war and disaster; in the shaded room the warnings were ludicrous. He half heard Ginny babbling something about a loose tooth, and Barbara assuring her that she would have to wait at least another year. The news the paper spoke of existed in another world, not his home. Gladys never even read the front page; maybe she had the right idea. He gulped his coffee and called to the girls to hurry up if they were going with him.



"Mommy . . . Mommy, I can't find Pallo." Ginny stood in the center of the living room, fighting back tears, and waiting apparently, for the favorite horse to detach itself from the surroundings and walk up to her.

Gladys rescued the battered blue plush pony from behind the armchair. "If you'd ever remember where you put things—any of you!"

She pressed the toy into her daughter's arms, wiped away a lonely tear track, kissed the dry cheek, and propelled the child gently toward the door.

Jon's hat and brief case waited, as always, on the hall table, but she forestalled the inevitable question and held them ready for him as he strode through the dining room, shrugging into his jacket and straightening his tie.

"Busybody!" He grinned at her, planting a quick kiss to stop her retort. By the time she caught her breath and opened her mouth he was out the front door, racing Ginny to the gate. Barbara, sedate with a new ladylike pace she had read about in a magazine the week before, trailed after them. Gladys watched from the open window, torn by her older daughter's desperate reaching for maturity, and warmed again with tenderness as Jon slowed to let Ginny reach the car first.

"I won, Daddy—I'm the leader, I won, I won!" Then the car door slammed to shut out their voices.

She ought to get the laundry started, first thing, if she was going to make that luncheon. The bedrooms could wait, but surveying the damage wreaked by the family tornado on its way out, she decided she'd have to tidy up downstairs first.

In the living room she made do with a swift straightening up: a pile of things to be taken upstairs later and put away—Ginny's toys . . . Jon's necktie, pulled off last night . . . Barbie's "Sit-Kit," designed to take a baby sitter through an emergency, small or large, just finished last night and brought down for display, and of course never put away again. The dust rag and broom took care of the more conspicuous spots; she could vacuum later, or if she missed it altogether today wouldn't matter so much. The room looked clean, whether it really was or not. The dining room was littered with the breakfast dishes, last night's newspapers, some of Barbie's schoolbooks. The girl was getting more careless every day. She was so busy telling other people how to take care of other people's babies and get along in other people's houses that she didn't even have time to pick up after herself any more. That would have to stop. It had seemed like a good thing when Barbara first organized the baby sitters' club, but even a good thing could be carried too far.

Gladys piled things up and put them away—dirty dishes in the kitchen, pencils and papers in the desk drawer; the knitting she was trying—for the fourth time—to learn, she stuffed regretfully into the sideboard. There wouldn't be any time for that today.

Washing up the breakfast dishes, she opened the casement window over the sink. She could never look out this way across the clean green sweep of the broad back yards, hers and her neighbor's, without a sharp contrasting memory of the crowded dim-lit flats and furnished rooms in the city. There had been a time when Tom and Barbie were young, and before they were born, when Jon was not "Mitchell Associates, Consultants in Civil Engineering," but a junior partner in a small struggling firm; when every penny that wasn't spent for necessities went into clean shirts and ties for Jon, or into the bank to build the dreams that had since come true . . . this house among them. Now, looking up over the breakfast dishes, she could see out across the lawns, where the bread wagon was working its way along between the double row of houses. The un-named road was too pretty, with its white gravel set against green lawns, to be called an alley. She could see the Grahams' three-year-old boy playing across the way, digging a hole smack in the middle of the early garden his father had been planting. How was Annie Graham going to explain *that* one tonight? And if she kept on explaining things away to Tod, Sr., what was going to become of the child anyway?

Impatiently she cut off the train of thought and moved her eyes past the play pen in the next yard, letting them linger on the baby buggy out back of the Turners'. Peggy had finally had the baby she wanted; after three years of trying, and four solid months flat on her back, she'd done it. Now with little Meg already six weeks old, Peggy wasn't out of bed yet, and so far there was no sign that she would be. But with Jim back from the most recent of his "business trips," things should be easier for Peggy. . . .

Annoyed at herself again, Gladys bent sternly over the dishes; other people's troubles were easy to think about, she knew, when you had none of your own. Everything's almost too good. That was superstitious and silly, she knew, but she couldn't help it. How long could things go on, getting better all the time?

Scouring the last pot, she thought she heard her name called. Across the yard her next-door neighbor, Edie Crowell, was clipping the hedge against the budding of the first spring leaves, a tall graceful figure in tailored slacks, floppy hat, and worn gardening gloves, perfectly in place in the well-planned flower garden back of the big white colonial house.

"Good morning," Edie called across. Her polished voice carried clearly across the grass and arrived pleasant and well modulated, as if she were carrying on a tea-table conversation. By comparison, Gladys' own hearty hail always sounded

her like a fishwife's cry. But she couldn't go out; she wasn't dressed yet. She waved a reply to the greeting and Edie promptly left her hedge and started over.

Groaning inwardly and apologizing out loud for the wrapper she still wore, Gladys opened the kitchen door and stood talking to her neighbor on the back porch.

"I was just wondering," Edie explained, "if you'd mind terribly going to the luncheon alone. I'll be there of course, but Phil didn't get back last night, and I have to go to the bank this morning. I could come back, of course, but . . . well, the bank is so close to the Cortlands' . . . of course if you can get away early enough you could come along with me . . ."

Gladys explained rapidly about Veda and the laundry. It was going to be hard to get ready on time, let alone early.

Edie listened sympathetically, but of course she couldn't really understand. "You won't be late, will you? I've *reserved* a place for you."

Gladys was stung by the implied rebuke. She had an errant impulse to leave the laundry after all. The luncheon was something she'd been looking forward to for days—actually for months, but the invitation had not been forthcoming until two weeks ago. The luncheon was a monthly affair held at a different woman's home every time, and the circle was limited. It was the first chance she had had to meet any of the Crowells' friends, and if she were late today it might be the last.

But she couldn't let Barbie down. And Ginny really needed some clean socks. And Jon's field trip—was it tomorrow or Wednesday? He didn't have any clean khakis. If it was tomorrow, then they had to be done today. If she had to do that much she might just as well do all of it. Defiantly she thought that she had done more than that in a day's work before—two small babies on her hands and no washing machine.

Just a shade too sweetly she promised Edie that she'd be on time, and dashed off to answer the ringing of the telephone. Somebody wanted to speak to Miss Barbara Mitchell. Gladys took the woman's name and telephone number, jotted them down, and explained that the sitting service's hours were before eight-thirty and after three-thirty. Miss Mitchell, she said, would call back.

She finished up in the kitchen without any more dawdling and started downstairs. Of course this had to be the morning that she would get a splinter groping along the rough board for the cellar light. The switch was just too far out of reach, the stairs too precarious to manage in the dark. Jon had promised a hundred times to fix the switch—but now she had to take time out to remove the splinter and patch up her finger.

By the time she got down to the laundry she was saving seconds. She sorted things out swiftly, stuffed the first wash of white things into the machine, and let it run while she went back upstairs to tear through the bedrooms, whirling sheets, blankets, duster, and broom in a tornado of determined energy. Still, when she passed through the kitchen again on her way back downstairs, the toy clock on the wall told her it was after ten-thirty. She pulled towels and underwear out of the machine, and filled it again with light-colored wash clothes, compromising with conscience by deciding to leave the flatware for Veda to do when she got a chance. But by the time the first load was in the drier she realized there just weren't enough corners to cut. She couldn't bathe, dress, and get to the other side of town by twelve-thirty. She shouldn't have tried to do it all; she could have done Barbie's things, and Jon's, and let the rest go. But now she had started it, she couldn't very well leave it. And after the exchange with Edie this morning she would rather not go than risk being late.

It would be the better part of courtesy to let Edie know right away. She went upstairs to call but the Crowells' phone didn't answer. Of course—Edie was at the bank. Mrs. Cortland, luncheon hostess for the day, was formal and distant on the telephone. Apparently household emergencies did not come under the heading of acceptable excuses for these affairs.

With the polite phrases still lingering in her head, Gladys went back to the laundry and made a furious attack on the pieces that had to be done by hand. About to put the last load into the machine, she was suddenly ravenously hungry and went up to the kitchen for a sandwich. The phone rang again, but she ignored it. She didn't want to talk to Edie Crowell or to any of Barbie's babies' mothers. Dutifully swallowing a hated glass of milk, she tried to convince herself that she didn't really care about joining the Crowells' social circle. She finished eating, but stayed in her chair an extra moment to watch the painted porcelain figures parade out of the Swiss chalet on the toy clock, announcing that noon had come.

Even in the bitterness of the solitary lunch the clock made her feel good. She had had one like it in her room when she was a little girl, and had always wanted another. But Jon wouldn't have it; he said they were always breaking down and there weren't any watchmakers any more who could repair the delicate old mechanisms. He held out firmly, until the day Mitchell Associates got its first big commission—and then he never even told her the news till almost a week later, when he came home bearing a mysterious package which had to be unwrapped before he would tell his big secret. It was the clock the one she had watched in a store window for months, afraid it would be sold before she could persuade Jon—and just as the outside had been carefully worked over, all the bright colors restored and the chipped spots repaired, so the insides

been taken out bodily and replaced with a new electric mechanism.

Gladys went back to work with renewed energy, only a part of it from the food she had eaten. But, piling the last lot of heavy-duty clothing into the machine, she worked more slowly than she had in the morning, overcome by a nostalgia brought its own solace to banish the memory of cultivated, condescending tones. Jon's last remaining set of G.I. khakis, reserved for basement and garden work, were a humble contrast to the new field outfit that went in right afterward. And they brought back grim pictures of the washbasin in a rooming house near Fort Bragg; Ginny's utilitarian overalls brought a surge of memories even more remote, from the time before the war, when the depression had lifted to become merely "recession"—a series of Manhattan walkups, each with its identical small dark kitchen, each with the same stained double-duty sink, where Tom's and Barbie's well-worn corduroys had got their weekly scrubblings.

A factory whistle screamed in the distance and broke into her thoughts, setting her hands to flying faster and her head clearing. One o'clock already? She stopped a moment, altogether, to listen more closely. It couldn't be a factory whistle; the sound had fitted perfectly into her memories, but it had no place in lower Westchester. Even as she listened the sound died away, too short-lived for a factory call. And the timbre of it was different. In spite of its shrillness it could almost have been mistaken for thunder, if the brilliant sunshine streaming through the high window hadn't just then redoubled in its intensity, bathing the whitewashed cellar walls with a deluge of red-gold light. She shook her head and tried to dismiss the whole thing, but for some reason the sound, dead now in reality, lived on inside her head, eerie and almost frightening. Then, as if to fit her change of mood, the small window darkened and the reassuring brightness of the sun disappeared. Maybe it had been thunder after all, a freak electric storm, too early in the year.

Gladys snapped the light switch, and the glaring overhead bulb cleared away all kinds of shadows. She pulled fresh, sweet-smelling clothes out of the machine and sorted them rapidly for the drier, for the mangle, for starching.

Upstairs the phone was ringing, but she ignored it. One more inquiry about a baby sitter would be one too many. She stayed at the ironing board, trying to work out the strange mood that had descended on her. She had made up her mind to be through with this before the children came home. Veda would have been done long ago. The pile of flatwork, neglected in the corner, reproached her.

When she finished, finally, she was damp and disheveled, but triumphant; she still had more than half an hour to rest before she had to change her clothes before the children got home. While she washed, upstairs, the phone started in again. She dropped her towel to run and catch it, but got there just in time to hear the receiver on the other end click down in disappointment. As she was going back up, her tired feet and pounding heart protested and she had to take the stairs at a careful pace. Whatever she had been able to do ten years ago, she was out of practice now.

A little after three, she stood on the porch in a clean dress, washed and combed, and convinced that powder and lipstick hid the tired lines in her face. Her eyes were fixed on the corner where the streetcar stopped, watching to see the big girl and the little one get off together. Intent on the distance, she was startled when a car horn honked at the front gate. Ginny and Barbara tumbled out of opposite doors—the baby landing on the sidewalk, and Barbie forgetting to be sedate. Gladys she ran around from the street side.

Gladys recognized the car; it was that nice new teacher who some-times passed the house on her way home. She started down the walk, thinking, I ought to ask Miss Pollock in for a cup of tea—she's been so nice.

But before she could reach the gate Ginny piled on her, arms and legs flailing and small red lips puckered for a welcoming kiss. By the time they were disentangled the motor was starting up again and Gladys caught only a few words over the noise of the starter, something Miss Pollock was saying about "awfully good of you."

Barbie was pouring out eager conversation. "Miss Pollock thought it was so sensible of you not to call. All the other mothers did and she said to thank you specially." Dazed, Gladys realized that she never had spoken the invitation aloud. That the teach-er's polite thanks referred to something else entirely.

"Well, why would I call . . . ?"

"I don't *know*! Everybody did, though. *All* the mothers."

"I know, I know!" Ginny was dancing up and down. Gladys put her hand on the baby's bright hair, trying to quiet her for a minute. But she was too tired to think about it, and Ginny would not be quieted. "*I do* know, Mommy. Listen to me." She stopped jumping and tugged at Gladys' skirt. "Please listen, Mommy."

"All right, baby." Gladys gave up trying to straighten out the conversational mix-up. "You tell me all about *everything* that happened, Ginny."

"It was raining!"

Barbie gave a snort of disgust and stalked away, her shoulders set in studied contempt of Ginny's baby stories and

people who listened to them. "Maybe I can find out something on the radio," she flung over her shoulder, "if nobody else around here even *cares* when something important is happening."

"I don't know how important it is," Gladys called after her, "but there's a message for you on the phone pad. And I would tell those people what hours you're home. I'm getting tired of playing secretary for you."

Ginny was tugging at her impatiently. "Mommy, it was raining on *one* side of the street," she reported ecstatically. "First there was a funny noise like thunder, only different, and then the sun was shining bright like a sunset, sort of, and then it went dark all of a sudden, only the cloud was far away, and then after a while it began to really rain, only it was raining across the street and not in the yard." She frowned. "Only Pallo wanted to know if it was really raining, and Teacher wouldn't let me go out to see. It was all foggy on our side, but it was *raining* across the street."

Gladys struggled with a long buried memory—herself as a little girl, discovering that it didn't always rain every place at the same time. Maybe there had been some sort of freak storm after all. It was early in the year for an electric storm, but that could explain why people were calling the school. Maybe some lightning had struck near by. She laughed again and scooped Ginny up in her arms. "Since when," she asked, "does the sun shine bright at sunset? Do you know what sunset is?"

Ginny managed to look very unconcerned. "Oh sure," she said, "yeah."

"Yes," Gladys corrected automatically. "I don't know where you pick these things up." Ginny squirmed in her arms. Gladys felt something cold and damp pushed against her. "What in the world . . . ? *How* did you get that horse so wet?" She let the child down and followed her through the open door.

"She won't even let go of him long enough to get washed." Standing at the phone, Barbie covered the mouthpiece with her hand to offer the comment.

"Well, give it to me now," Gladys told the little girl. "I'll put it up on the shelf in the kitchen till it's dry."

Looking excessively guilty, Ginny thumped up the stairs to her room. Listening, Gladys marveled again at the persistence of the phrase about the "pitter-patter" of little feet.

"That's funny." Barbie put the phone down with a puzzled air. "I dialed twice and I can't get her."

"Maybe the lines are down somewhere," Gladys suggested.

"I don't know—but something's certainly going on. I'll let you know what I find out," Barbie offered generously, and followed Ginny up the stairs.

Gladys started toward the kitchen, thinking of the roast that had to be put on, refusing to think about how tired she was after a half day's honest work.

She was shelling peas when Barbie called from upstairs.

There are all sorts of noises children make—some to be ignored, some to be thought about, some to be tended to, and one in particular that must have immediate unhesitating attention. Gladys dropped the peas and took the stairs on the run.

Barbara's door was open and the girl sat huddled near her midget radio set, listening, not only with her ears, but with her dilated eyes and outstretched hands; her whole body was curiously intent. She didn't turn as Gladys came in but one hand motioned rapidly, "Come here," while her lips pursed in a half-aspirated "sh-h."

Gladys knew, of course. She had lived through the one war already; no one who had would ever forget that pose of horrified fascination in front of a radio. She crossed the rag rug, every color in it distinctly visible, every pattern of light and shadow in the room sharp and clear, every step a century long, before she was within hearing range of the radio. She stood immobile next to the girl on the bed as the impossible words hurled themselves at her.

". . . one-fifteen P.m., Eastern Standard Time, this afternoon. It is almost certain that equal damage was sustained throughout the country. The cities outside the radius of two hundred miles, roughly, have not yet been heard from. Transcontinental wires are down and radiations appear to be interfering with radio communications in all directions." Static crackled out of the set with every word. Listening was torture to the ears as to the mind.

"Flash! We have just received our first report, since the bombing, from Washington, D.C. The Capitol was hit by at least one bomb at about one-thirty today. The larger part of the governmental area has—" The voice cut off abruptly, replaced by a chattering flow of noisy interference. "For security reasons," the same voice, sounding less assured, returned, "it is necessary to condense the report from Washington, D.C. It is estimated that only one bomb exploded there."

"We repeat—we repeat, please don't leave your homes. If you are in a dangerous area you will receive orders for evacuation. Do not leave your homes. If you are near a bombed-out area you are safe only indoors. **DO NOT LEAVE YOUR HOMES.**"

"So far as we can determine, no damage has been done except in areas in and around the major cities. We do not yet

know who the aggressor was. We do not . . ."

The bland professional voice edged upward, strident and shrill, through the last half-dozen words, and broke at last a raucous scream of laughter. The radio went dead.

Another voice cut in. "You have just heard a report from Washington, D.C., received by teletype from a relay station on the outskirts of Philadelphia. For those who have just tuned in, we repeat: several atomic bombs of unknown origin landed in and near the harbor of New York City this afternoon. The first explosion occurred at about 1:15 P.M., Eastern Standard Time, and was followed by others over a period estimated to be approximately one half hour. It is known that no bombs were dropped after two o'clock. Eyewitnesses state that the first bomb exploded underwater at the mouth of the East River, affecting harbor shipping in New York and Brooklyn, and substantially damaging a large part of the lower tip of Manhattan Island. There is no official statement as yet..."

The words were clipped, staccato, rigidly controlled, shooting out of the little radio with penetrating, meaningless malevolence. "Although the attack was focused on Manhattan, bombs are known to have been dropped in outlying boroughs, and one at least in New Jersey. First reports from reconnaissance planes indicate that Manhattan itself is almost completely destroyed from the Battery up as far as Ninety-sixth Street, with only a narrow strip of land west of Ninth Avenue, along the Hudson, apparently intact. This damage appears to be the result of two air-exploded bombs, both of which were aimed at targets on the east side. But everywhere, except at the target centers of the explosions, some buildings are still standing, and it is believed that survivors will be found all over the bombed area."

". . . except at target centers. Gladys remembered a description, read and shuddered over, and set aside, she had thought, even from memory . . . the description of an atomic bomb landing at Twentieth Street and Third Avenue. . . . Times Square, El, Gramercy Park, the courthouse, the high school, City College, flattened, melted into a compound featureless surface of buildings that had not gone up into thin air at the instant of explosion, reduced by inconceivable heat to a glassy expanse of poisoned wasteland.

The words kept coming, swarming at her out of the radio, sting-ing, biting, bitter. The words kept coming, but Gladys no longer heard them. She knew she should be listening—there were things she had to know—for the children, for herself, for Jon.

*Jon was in the city all day!*

Somewhere inside her she heard the beginnings of a scream and then her ears heard it, and it was Barbara, not herself at all. There was no time to think about Jon now. The incredible words were attacking Barbie too. There was no time for thinking at all; Gladys' reflexes acted for her. Rocking back and forth, she cradled the girl's head on her breast, patting the wild curls—crooning a little, calm-ing, soothing. And when that didn't work she pulled the girl's face up and slapped her sharply.

Shock succeeded panic. Barbara fell back limply, long enough for Gladys to tell her in swift harsh tones, "We have to think of Ginny to think of. You'll have to help me. Barbie, stop it!"

The sound that would have been a scream came out as a sob, quiet, dull, and hopeless. And now there was another noise, a familiar one among the symphony of stranger sensations. The thump of small sturdy shoes on the stairs and the rattle of dangling roller skates brought Barbara jumping to her feet.

"I'll get her. She can't go *out*!" Horror came to a climax and broke loose in the last word.

She was halfway to the door when her mother called after her curtly, "No!"

"Ginny!" she called, breathing deep, searching for inner calm and for ordinary unfrighting words. "Virginia! Did you dust your room yet?"

Downstairs reluctant footsteps lagged.

"Virginia!" Just a note of sharpness—and this time the feet turned back.

"I was just getting the dust rag, Mommy." Ginny appeared at the foot of the stairs, guilty innocence in every line of her face, skates nowhere in evidence, and a large gray cloth in her hand. The scene had played itself out this way a hundred times before, and it had always been funny. Now it wound to a close like an old worn-out film. The two who stood at the top of the stairs watched with tortured senses the inevitable ending of the staled sequence.

From behind, Gladys heard an outpouring of breath, a jerky sign of finished fear. She waited in silence till Ginny had passed them and gone shamefaced into her room, then turned to the older girl. "Barbie, you'll have to get her playing something inside. Don't scare her. Don't tell her she *can't go out*. Just keep her interested in something *in here*." She turned again, started for the stairs.

"I can't," Barbara said hopelessly. "I can't. I don't know what . . ."

"Of course you can." Gladys didn't even look back. "You have to." Halfway down, she paused and called back. "I've got to do some phoning. Turn off your radio, Barbie, and I'll listen in downstairs. Remember what I said." Without waiting for a reply, she went on down, drawn by an instinctive need too strong to resist. She picked up the phone and had to wipe sudden futile tears from her eyes before she could dial.

"What number are you calling?"

"Atlas 9-4200. Mitchell Associates." Her voice was still clear, somehow untouched by the fear that clutched at her throat.

"I am sor-ry. That number has been disconnected . . . due to emergency."

"Thank you." The receiver dropped from her hand, and she marveled at the bored everyday efficiency of the operator. Perhaps she had been overfrightened. Maybe it was her own dread that had crept into the radio announcers' voices.

She switched on the radio, loud, and tuned it down again immediately, keeping the rush of words locked up in the room with her, not letting them get out to do their damage upstairs.

"Do *not* leave your homes. Stay indoors." It was the same man she had heard in Barbie's room, and even that small familiarity was welcome. "The governor has arrived at Emergency Headquarters in White Plains and will speak to you on this station at four-fifteen. The time is now three fifty-three. The governor's message will be heard in exactly twenty-two minutes. Stay at home and keep your radio tuned in. Citizens are requested not to use their telephones for personal conversations. All lines still up are needed for rescue work and emergency squads. All persons with medical or safety control training are asked to report to Emergency Headquarters immediately by telephone. Just call or dial the operator and ask for the nearest E.H.Q. All others will please refrain from use of the telephone. I repeat, keep your radio tuned in, and do not use your telephone. The governor will deliver his message in twenty minutes at four-fifteen, Eastern Standard Time. Stay tuned to this station."

Three fifty-five! This, all of this, in half an hour. It was already after three when she had stood on the front porch and watched for the children. And now—not yet four o'clock!

## TWO

Somewhere a siren was shrieking, off in the distance. It had been going on for a long time, sustained shrill background to the crazy words that spewed from the ceaseless, coughing static of the radio. Now as she listened it began to die, fading away until its shattering impact ceased to fall on bruised nerves, until its caustic cry was heard in memory alone. Memory held another siren, that was not a siren, that was thunder. That was not thunder; it was the warning scream of slaughter in the skies. And now again the sound, the dying sound, like a factory steam whistle left to blow itself out.

The smell of scorched metal roused her from nightmare. She ran through the dining room, and the swinging door to the kitchen flapped open and shut, open and shut, as she turned off the flame under the kettle, dry now and empty, blackened on the bottom and in one wide streak up the side. Sitting forlornly on the spout, the silenced robin returned her stare with one accusing eye.

Robins, Gladys thought, are supposed to say, "Cheer-up!" It seemed very funny. Laughing, she reached for the insulated handle, dropped it again as it burned her fingers. The sudden pain cleared her head. She folded a pot holder around the handle and carried the pot over to the sink. The hiss and sizzle of cold water hitting the bottom, spattering up against the dry-hot sides, was familiar, reassuring. She saw the peas still standing on the worktable, half shelled, and thought with a grateful start, We still have to eat.

She tackled the small task with a furious release of pent-up energy, her fingers working with accustomed speed and knowledge through the pile of unshelled pods; she finished just as the toy clock struck four. In fifteen minutes the governor would speak. She shook the peas loose in the colander, but her hand, halfway to the tap, stopped in mid-air.

The water—was the water all right?

The phone pealed urgently, and Jon's face swam before her, his voice sounded in her ears. She started running for the front of the house, but the pounding of her heart made her slow down. You couldn't keep on running, no matter what kind of emergency it was.

"Jon!" she breathed. There was no answer, only the tense silence of a telephone where someone waits to speak. "Jon," she cried again, "Jon, where are—"

"This is Telephone Central," a mechanical voice broke in, "calling to check your wire. Thank you for answering."

"But what . . . who . . . ?"

"This is Telephone Central," the voice said again, "calling to check your wire. Thank you for an-swer-ing."

"Operator!" Gladys demanded. "Operator, you cut into my—"

"This is Telephone Central," it began to repeat. They couldn't hear her at all. It was a one-way connection.

Gladys didn't believe it. She stood there, jiggling the hook futilely, until the phone went dead, buzzing monotonously her ear.

She dropped the receiver back on the cradle, then picked it up again and dialed the operator with a swift angry circle of her finger. Nothing happened; no inquiring voice, not even the comforting delay of a ring on the other end.

Angry at herself now, she hung up and tried again. This time she waited for the dial tone. Now at least it rang—on a loop, endlessly. She was ready to give up for the last time when the operator's precision-machined voice finally asked what she wanted.

"Emergency Headquarters, please." Miraculously the operator made the connection without questioning her need.

Then there was a man's voice at the other end, bored, weary, but human. Gladys tried to stay cool and rational, but the man's voice was too close to kindness and her purpose thawed. Horrified, she heard herself babbling about water, and her husband in the city, her son, and the bombs, until he interrupted sharply.

"This is a priority wire, lady. What do you want?"

One at a time, she told herself firmly, one thing at a time.

"My husband," she said quickly, "my husband is in the city. How can I find out—"

"You'll be notified if we get anything," he broke in. "It'll all be on the radio when the governor talks. You listen in to that."

A dozen urgent unanswered questions circled dizzily in Gladys' mind. She was terrified that the man would hang up. "My son," she threw at him hastily. "He's at school. He's away at Texas Tech."

"An engineering student?" The voice sounded faintly interested. "Yes," Gladys breathed hopefully.

"All technical students are being mobilized into the Army," he said.

Gladys gasped and recovered. "But he can't—I mean he's only seventeen . . ."

"All technical students are being mobilized," the man insisted. Gladys didn't believe it; it was absurd. "But there must be some way I can find out—"

"The Army will notify you."

"The school's in Houston," Gladys said hopefully. "Do you know anything . . . ?"

"I'm sorry, lady. That's all I can tell you." The phone clicked again and buzzed while she stood there holding it to her ear until finally another of the mechanical voices cut in.

"Num-ber, please?"

Gladys couldn't think. One immediate question filled her mind now. "The water," she implored. "I've got to know about the water. Is it all right? Can I use it?"

"I am sor-ry. We do not have that information at this exchange. You will be noti-fied by the prop-per author-ities."

A definite click at the other end broke the connection. Gladys put the receiver down slowly. Jon . . . Tom . . . what did she know that she hadn't known before? The water . . . "all technical students" . . . "proper authorities" . . . Phrases swirled around in her head and suddenly achieved meaning.

She had to remind herself again not to run up the stairs unnec-essarily. "Barbie," she called, and waited to hear the door of Ginny's room opened. "Barbie, you know where Tom's old schoolbooks are?"

A vague affirmative floated down the stairs.

"You go look and bring me down everything on physics. Right away."

"Mom, there's *two shelves* full of physics!"

"Well, you know what I want," Gladys said impatiently.

"I don't see how I'm to know what you want if you don't . . ."

The injured tones drifted down the stairs. "For heaven's sake, Barbara, just use your judgment for once." No answer, but footsteps marched down the hall. She called me Mom again! Gladys thought suddenly. I have to be careful . . . I have to watch myself.

The kettle began to whistle. Gladys couldn't remember why she had put it on again, but now she got down a big canning jar and filled it, running boiling water over the top and sealing it tight. She put it out on the window sill and filled the kettle once more. At least they would have drinking water if they needed it.

The clock said four-ten. Barbara pushed the door open, hugging a toppling stack of books to her bosom. "I hope th

are right," she said stiffly.

"I'm sure you chose better than I could," Gladys assured her. "Maybe you can find what I want. Do I have to boil the water or anything like that? Maybe I should have read up more before . . . but I don't know; I never could believe, really."

"It wouldn't do any good," Barbara said knowingly. "Even gas masks don't help." But she was trailing a finger down the contents pages, riffling open the most promising book. "Maybe some of the stories in those magazines he used to read would tell you more. Really, Mother"—she was upholding Tom's seven-year-old family argument—"they had some pretty good stuff in them . . . anyhow Tom said they did."

"We wouldn't know what to look for," Gladys told her. "We couldn't go through all the magazines. Anyhow, he was afraid I'd throw them out and he put them down in the cellar in a wooden crate. I don't even know which one it is."

"Mother," Barbara broke in suddenly, "who called up before?"

"They were just checking to find out if the phone was working." Gladys took a deep breath. *How much can I tell her? How much should she know?* After that panicky quarter hour at the radio upstairs it was hard to decide.

"But I called Emergency Headquarters and they said they didn't think Tom's school had been bombed. They said the Army would notify us; they're drafting all the technical students."

"Did they give you his address? Did they know what part of the Army he's in?"

Gladys shook her head. "They're supposed to notify us." She couldn't understand the easy excitement of this reaction.

"Here's something," Barbara was saying. "It tells about safety measures at Oak Ridge . . ." She stopped short at the look of dismay on her mother's face, and then comprehension flooded over her. "Oh, Mother, everybody knows we're the strongest country in the whole world—we've got a"—she struggled with the words, trying to get them straight—"a stockpile of bombs, and bases and planes and missiles, and—" She stopped. "Tom told me," she confided. "He always knew it would happen, but you never let him talk about it, and he was always wishing it would wait till he was old enough and now he's *in* it, don't you see? I'll bet he's so excited he can hardly—"

She stopped short, vaguely aware that she had said something wrong. "But, Mother, don't you see there's nothing to worry about? It's not like fighting in the old days. Tom won't have to go to the front or anything. He's a technician, and he works at the base, and—well, the danger is only in the big cities, and—well, they *must* have the radio or telegraph or something working all over the country already, or they wouldn't have known about Tom's school. Mom! *Where's Daddy?*"

With numbed lips Gladys framed the lie. "He's all right, honey. I'm sure he wasn't hurt, only they won't let him out of the—the danger zone, until everybody's checked. I don't understand, but the governor is—" Her eyes flew to the clock. "It's started already."

"Make sure Ginny's all right, will you, Babs? And then come down if you can." She flung it over her shoulder, already on her way to the radio.

The speaker was giving forth a low authoritative rumble, none of it distinguishable as words, but the sum total of it was clearly the governor's speech. She turned it up too far, and a bombardment of words filled the room.

"The Army is fully mobilized and there is nothing further to fear. There will be no more attacks. A screen of radar shields every inch of our borders, from below sea level to the far reaches of the stratosphere. Nothing can get through. We are living inside a great dome of safety, our whole nation protected by the radar sweep from bases prepared long ago."

But they didn't work. It didn't work before. Gladys tried to understand.

"Our entire energies now must be directed to rescue work in the bombed areas, and to safety measures in nearby zones. When I have finished, the emergency radiologist for the entire area will speak to you. For full information about safety measures, be sure to keep your radio tuned in. Several important announcements will be made by the radiologist. Closing, I want to comment on the remarkable courage—the heroism—displayed by all of you in this national emergency. In times of great crisis the true mettle of a people emerges; and I may say, without fear of exaggeration . . ."

For a moment she was aware of Barbie at her shoulder.

"The governor?" the girl asked, awed. Gladys nodded, motioning for silence. The governor—and he was only a tired man, trying to cover his own confusion with words.

Still, it was the words that mattered. She listened obediently, attentively. Barbie went off toward the stairs, lingering over each footstep to hear as much as she could.

". . . sustained so great an attack with such single-minded determination to carry on in the face of danger—never has any country on earth had better cause for pride in its fearless and co-operative citizenry."



More words—no courage, no confidence, no hope—only the voice of a weary salesman, suavely peddling unwanted wares.

"For reasons of security, it is impossible for me to tell you more at the present time, about the extent of the damage incurred, or our plans for retaliation. But you may carry on with your duties to home and country, assured that the enemy shall not go unpunished! At this moment plans that have lived only on paper for many years are grinding slowly but surely into action.

"Our enemies shall learn now to fear the eagle in its nest. Thank you, my friends. Courage and patience are all we need to win."

Gladys heard the last words with a sinking sensation of bewilderment. The man had said nothing, nothing at all. Nothing about the city, about the people trapped there . . . nothing but words. . . .

"That was Governor Cauldwell, speaking from Emergency Headquarters. Please do not turn your radio off. In one minute you will hear the district radiologist. While waiting, please supply yourself with writing equipment. You will hear information of vital importance. Get paper and pen or pencil now. The radiologist will be on the air in forty seconds."

"I'll get it, Mom." Gladys didn't know Barbara had come back until she spoke.

"Thanks, baby." She took the pad and pencil and looked up into her daughter's excited face. "I don't know what I'd do without you. I really—"

She stopped. The radio was clearing its throat and the announcer's voice had come through again.

"Here you are, ladies and gentlemen. The man who holds our safety—yours and mine—in his hands throughout this emergency—District Radiologist Harold F. Hennessy, speaking from Emergency Headquarters. Will you come in, please, Dr. Hennessy?"

A second's silence, broken only by the incessant low-pitched barking of the static—then one more void in the welter of voices.

"One hour and fifteen minutes ago you heard the first radio report of the bombing of New York City. You know now that our whole country has been attacked and severe damage has been inflicted in many major cities.

"For security reasons I cannot tell you the exact extent of the damage, but I can tell you that communications are being restored and that a national government will shortly be in operation.

"For the rest of you—you already know that the island of Manhattan, where the largest damage was inflicted, has been completely closed off. Washington Heights, where radioactivity is below danger level, including the entire area from 125th Street to the river, has been transformed into a gigantic emergency headquarters, field hospital, and Army base. Scores of radiologists are at work there, testing conditions to provide for the safety of suburban areas. Rescue squads are penetrating from the hospital base there to the lower part of the island, inspecting every building, subway, sewer, or shelter of any kind still standing where survivors may be holding out.

"At the present time fires are still burning in many parts of the city, but most of the larger buildings are still standing, many of these are fireproof. Outside the areas of direct hit, many survivors are expected."

The words were stern; there was no attempt to allay fear, but like the dentist who says, "This will hurt a little, but it won't take long," Hennessy renewed courage by the simple admission that things were bad. The knowledge, new to Gladys, that the national government had broken down, seemed credible and bearable, as long as something was being done.

"Another hospital base is now being established in the Pelham Bay section of the Bronx, to care for victims of the bomb burst in the lower riverside area of the East Bronx. Similar smaller bases will be set up as rapidly as possible in the outskirts of Brooklyn and Queens, and hospitals are already treating emergency cases in some suburban areas.

"No one at present is being allowed to leave the areas of heavy contamination except by way of the hospital bases and decontamination centers. A cordon of police and National Guardsmen is being thrown across Westchester County at Tarrytown and Rochelle and across Queens County at Jamaica. Similar patrols are being established by the local governments in New Jersey. We are anxious to release survivors as quickly as possible, but it is essential to prevent exposed individuals from leaving the area without a thorough examination. Special equipment and training are required to detect the presence of atomic radiations and many survivors within the danger zone may be unaware of their own condition.

"Remember—trained personnel are now at work directing rescue squads. Operations are being carried out in accordance with well-integrated plans developed and improved over many years. Unorganized attempts at assistance or escape can only result in panic and confusion. Our object is to move everyone as quickly as possible out of contaminated areas and away from any danger of infection.

"For the time being your first concern must be your own safety. Radioactive rain, resulting from the underwater explosion, as well as dust, smoke, and wind, may endanger large areas around New York City. The entire area of Greater New York, including Staten Island; Westchester County as far north as Pleasantville; the lower part of Fairfield County including Ridgefield and Wilton, in Connecticut; all of Suffolk County in Long Island; and all parts of New Jersey along Hudson from upper Middlesex County to the New York State line; and in Rockland County in New York State, as far north as New City—"

"If you live inside this district you will receive a visit within the next few hours from an emergency squad truck. Members of emergency squads will be prepared to answer your questions and to handle immediate difficulties.

"If you live outside the limits I have described you are requested to stay near your homes and hold yourselves ready to assist Emergency Headquarters. Your help is desperately needed in the danger zones.

"Further information and instructions for all will be broadcast over a local station in your vicinity. Please listen carefully and write down the information that is given you. But before you turn your dial, one last word of encouragement. We have been damaged but not destroyed. Local governments are functioning. Trains are running in most sectors. Local wire and telephone services are in operation. Emergency Headquarters are operating in the vicinity of every bombed area. Amateur radio operators are already filling in nationwide gaps in communication. Everything that can humanly be done to save lives and prevent further disaster is being done."

Abruptly the voice stopped and it was hard to tell whether the sound that followed was a snort of disgust or just more static.

"In order to conserve power and to prevent this information from reaching the enemy, this broadcast will be continued over a low-power short-range station. Please tune your radio now to 980—that is number 980 on your radio—number 980—please tune your radio to number 980 . . ."

Gladys got up stiffly and handed the pad and pencil to Barbara. Will you listen carefully, Barbie? I want to take a lot at Ginny—she's too quiet." Barbara nodded raptly, already turning the dial, intent on finding the station.

"I'm *not* too quiet." It was a high-pitched indignant voice, immediately behind Gladys' elbow. Perched on Jon's big lounging chair, legs straddling the fat armrest, Ginny rested one foot defiantly on the forbidden upholstery. A tense smile tried to deny round frightened eyes in her white face—a shockingly mature face from which curved baby contours had vanished in an hour's time. Gladys scooped the little girl into her arms, feeling the nervous resistance of thin wiry muscles. Ginny's head burrowed into her shoulder.

"I don't *like* that man, Mommy. Turn him off." The words were muffled, and Gladys could feel the moist mouth moving against her throat. She sat down in the big chair, cradling Ginny in her lap.

"I can't turn him off, baby. We have to listen and find out something. See how Barbie's going to write it down!"

Ginny obstinately buried her eyes against her mother's face. "I don't want to look. I want to turn him off."

"Why, honey? Why don't you like the man?"

"He won't let my daddy come home. Turn him off and make him let my daddy come home!" At last the tears came. Gladys didn't try to stop the convulsive sobs. She held Ginny on her lap quietly, soothed her with firm hands and wordless comforting sounds.

Barbie looked up from the radio, annoyed, gesturing from Ginny to the loudspeaker, and Gladys stood up, stumbling a little with the weight of the child in her arms. In the kitchen they could sit together in the big old rocker until the shock wore off and Ginny quieted down.

### THREE

The sobs came fewer and further between, until finally Ginny picked up her head and stared at her mother out of gray doleful eyes. Gladys reached for a paper napkin to wipe away the tears, but Ginny pushed her hand away and began rubbing at her own eyes with crayon-stained fists. The final effect made it easy for Gladys to laugh, and when she carried Ginny over to the mirror the little girl joined in.

But the question had not been forgotten.

"*Why* won't that man let Daddy come home?"

Gladys wondered how long Ginny had been in there listening, and how much she had understood. It was a continuous source of astonishment to her, the ability of small children to comprehend anything frightening or misleading, while

presenting a blank re-lecting surface to all useful forms of knowledge.

"Well," she began, "there was a big explosion in the city today, and everybody has to be extra careful for a little while. Did Daddy get hurt?"

"I don't think so. Daddy had to go way uptown to see a man today, and the accident was all the way downtown."

"Well, why won't they let him come home?"

Well, why don't they? I don't know. "I guess they need all the strong men to help the people who are hurt, darling."

That was inspired; Gladys wished she could satisfy herself as easily. The little girl broke her stiff stance and ran to wipe her eyes formally on the kitchen towel.

"Can I go out and play now?" she demanded. Gladys glanced dubiously at the clock.

"It's too late, Ginny." She didn't wait to find out if the act was convincing. "Did you finish your drawing?"

"I'm tired of it."

"What did you make?" Gladys repressed a sigh. "May I see it?"

The little girl was thoughtful. "I guess I'll have to finish it first." She started toward the door and then stopped and went back to the sink. The water glass was standing where it always did, well within reach for Ginny and her smaller-sized friends. It took Gladys a moment to realize what was happening.

"No, honey." She snatched the glass from her daughter's hand and got the sealed jar of water. "Drink this instead."

But her own fear was in her voice, in her face, in the way she took the glass.

"I don't want to. What is it?" Ginny responded promptly.

"Water."

"Why can't I drink the other water?"

"Just because."

Ginny recognized the note of finality. She took the glass and pouted. "It's warm."

"I'll put an ice cube in."

"I don't want an ice cube." She was dangerously close to tears again. "I just want a drink of water."

To save her life, Gladys couldn't think what to do next; then the door burst open, and Barbara came in, waving the pencil and pad with wild excitement.

"I've got it all, Mom. They're starting to repeat it now, but they said to keep the radio on and they said if there are any flashes they'll ring a gong or something so people will come back and listen."

Gladys took the pad and glanced at the penciled scrawl. Barbara had recently been affecting a sophisticated backhand penmanship, but today she seemed to be growing rapidly back toward childhood in every way.

"The emergency trucks are starting around now," Barbie was rattling on. "And they're going to give us equipment and sheets of information and everything—"

"Hold on a minute." Gladys turned to Ginny, so absorbed in her big sister's report that she was sipping the warm water without a murmur. "Aren't you going to show me your picture?"

"For heaven's sake, Mother," Barbie broke in, "don't you want to hear—"

Gladys quelled her with a look.

"For 'evan's sake, Mommy," Ginny imitated her sister.

Gladys smiled and added a firm push on the small behind to a one-word dismissal. "Scoot!" It was emphatic.

With enormous dignity Ginny put down the glass of warm water and walked slowly out of the kitchen. Gladys held her warning hand until the footsteps had passed the dining room.

"Now"—she turned to Barbara—"tell me first, did they say anything about the water?"

Barbie shook her head impatiently. "No, they didn't say anything about things like that. They said we should ask the emergency truck people about anything that worried us. All they said was the trucks would come around and we should stay indoors and not go out till after the trucks come—and they want blood donations, but I don't think from us—and there's information you're supposed to have ready for the trucks when they come."

"What do they want to know?"

"You have to write everything about Daddy—his name and description and everything. Everyone who has anybody in the city is supposed to do that. A whole description so they can identify him in case "

She stopped, and cast a worried look at her mother, but Gladys seemed calm.

"Well, anyhow, they want a description and they said be sure and write it clearly. Then you have to do another sheet for us—one for each, I mean. You're supposed to write down our names and ages and put the address on, and then put down

where we were during the day. Every place anybody went, and what time it was. You have to do a separate sheet for each one and put them on the bottles—"

"Bottles? What did they say about bottles? What for?"

"Oh, that's for the urin—urinas—" She took the scribbled note sheets from Gladys' hand and skimmed through them till she found the word. "Urinalysis," she pronounced triumphantly. "They want everybody to give them a sample. You're supposed to sterilize bottles and put it in, and then put the paper with the information about each person on the bottle. I mean—well, when I say it," she finished defensively, "it sounds all confused, but it isn't, really."

"Are you sure you got that straight? What would they want the samples *for*?"

"I don't know. I don't know *what* they want them for, but that's what they said." Barbie's tone was aggrieved. She handed the papers back to her mother and pointed to the spot she had been studying. With the verbal report to help her, Gladys found it easier to make out what Barbie had written. Apparently that *was* what they wanted.

"I think I understand," she murmured. But she didn't. "What's this?"

"Oh—that's about the phone. They kept saying not to use it for anything except emergencies."

"Thanks, dear," Gladys said absently. "You did a fine job." She checked through the pages again, then pulled her chair up to the table and tore a fresh piece of paper off the pad.

"Mom . . ."

Gladys was having trouble with the sheet. Her eyes didn't seem to focus right when she had to put down the necessary statistics. She tried to brush aside Barbie's intruding voice and concentrate on the pencil and paper.

"Mom, I guess it's all right to drink fruit juice or something out of the refrigerator, isn't it?"

"Yes, of course." The refrigerator door slammed and she heard the noise of pouring absurdly loud, as if whatever had gone wrong with her eyes was making her ears work better.

She didn't hear the footsteps, though, because the sudden touch on her arm made her jump.

"Mom—would you like me to do it for you?" The shy politeness in her daughter's voice almost pushed Gladys over the edge into tears, shameful and revealing. She managed to smile an equally polite and almost as shy, "Thanks," and pushed the pad across the table.

She sat there until things came back into focus again and then she continued to sit, watching Barbara fill the sheet with a meticulously legible description of her father.

They understand so much, she kept thinking. You don't know it until something happens, but they're so grown up inside.

She got up and went over to the bright-colored Tyrolean plaque on the wall that held a tiny pad of paper for market lists. The top sheet bore notations from another world: "soap flakes," "soda," "call cleaner." She tucked the slip of paper in an apron pocket and began jotting down on a fresh sheet the things she wanted to re-member for the emergency squad.

In the front room the phone came to strident life again.

Barbara looked up, but Gladys was already through the door. This time she didn't let herself think at all about what might be; but still her hand hung hesitantly over the receiver. When she finally brought the phone to her ear she had no chance even to say hello.

"Gladys?" a voice demanded. For a moment she couldn't identify it and then the voice rushed on. "This is Edie Crowell."

Of course, Gladys thought. But what's wrong with her voice?

"Hi," she said with forced brightness. "Are we allowed to use the phone now?"

"I don't know—we're not supposed to, but I couldn't stand it any more. Phil was on his regular route up in Peekskill when it happened and they called me up and said he was drafted for rescue work. I'm here all alone and I keep thinking about him and—I tell you, I'm going crazy, Glad!"

Why, she's hysterical. Gladys could see the Crowells' big white house through the hall window. It had a lot of room for a worried woman to rattle around in.

"It must be awfully lonely," Gladys said, trying to get used to this sudden rush of pity for Edie Crowell. "But listen, Edie, is it all right to use the phone now? Didn't they say something about leaving the wires clear?"

"Gladys, you're inhuman!" Edith shrieked. "I only called to find out if I could come over. I just can't stay here any more by myself."

"Well, we're not supposed to go out." Gladys hesitated. "Why don't you wait for the emergency truck to come around?"

and maybe they'll say it's all right. You know we'd be glad to have you here. Oh, Edie," she burst out, "*why* won't they get them out of the city?"

"Let them out?" The voice rose to a shrill crescendo of panic. "You want them to let people out to spread radiation disease everywhere? Every living soul in the city is as good as dead. *Let them out?*" She was practically screaming now. "What I want to know is why do they waste more lives sending rescue squads *in?*"

Gladys' head was very light. It was spinning around, trying to get up enough momentum to free itself from the lead weight of her body. She groped for the chair, telling herself that Edith was half crazed with worry, that she didn't know what she was talking about.

"But," she said feebly, "they said on the radio—"

"Lies!" Edie stormed. "They haven't told us the truth all these years, do you think they'll tell it now? They said it could happen, didn't they? All that nonsense about radar screens!"

"Edith!" Gladys broke in against the current of mania. "Stop it! You've got to stop it! Right now! They're *not* lying to me. I don't know what happened before, but this is real, this time. Jon's in the city, and he was there all day, and at least they're doing something to try and get him out. The other time, in Japan, they saved a lot of people."

"Japan!" Edith raved. "That was nothing. They didn't even—"

"Edie, you shut up—shut up! Shut up!" She repeated it savagely, so deep in her throat it came out like a whisper. "You won't listen. I'm going to hang up."

Ginny was coming down the stairs, carrying her picture in one hand. Gladys kept her voice low, turned her head so the child couldn't hear.

"You stay off the phone, do you hear me? If Jon and Phil can stand it in the city, you can stand it there by yourself!" Gladys slammed the receiver down viciously, not trying to control the surge of anger. It seemed to make her stronger, helped her throw off the permeating weariness.

"What's the matter, Mommy? Why are you mad?" Ginny had come up behind her.

"Because I was talking to a very, very silly woman." Cleansed by fury, she found she could even be gay now. She admired the drawing enthusiastically and saw the child relax before her eyes, as her own manner returned to normal. "Ginny, now." She shooed Ginny into the kitchen before her. "We're all going to make supper together, and you can help. How do you do, Babsy?"

"Mother, I've *asked* you . . ." Barbara said coldly, straightening up over her work.

"I'm sorry, darling." The baby name, forbidden for almost two years now, had popped out irrepressibly at the sight of the young shoulders hunched over the kitchen table, the tightly clenched pencil laboriously covering fresh paper. It was so that a younger Barbara had sat over her homework at the same table, night after night, in the last of the city apartment.

Gladys laughed, and saw it was wrong, then couldn't stop herself. "I'm sorry, but you looked so . . . so . . ." There was no way to explain. "Well, I'm sorry!"

Unassuaged, Barbara held up three finished sheets of paper. "These are done, if you want to look at them," she said stiffly.

"If, you think they're all right I won't bother," Gladys answered hastily. "I want to get those bottles ready, and get started on .upper—sec if we can get done before the truck gets here. You make the salad, Barbie, and Ginny can set the table." But she couldn't help adding, "Just be sure you've got down everything about the times you and Ginny went out during the day. I didn't go out at all."

"That's what I'm *trying* to do." Barbara was still on her dignity. If you think Virginia can spare a moment before she starts setting the table, maybe I can do this one right."

Gladys kept herself very busy pulling mason jars off the top shelf, until she could stop smiling. Then she climbed down and commanded Ginny to answer her sister's questions. She got out the big pot that had once sterilized the babies' bottles and filled it with water for boiling.

The roast was still standing on the table where she had left it hours before. There wouldn't be time to cook that now. She put it back in the refrigerator and got out some of the cube steaks she kept for Jon's midnight raids. Outside the sun was beginning to set and she turned on the lights. The steaks sputtering on the broiler and the children's voices in the lamplight brought life suddenly back to a familiar, livable plane.

She issued brisk orders, and the two girls obeyed swiftly, happy to seize on a pattern of behavior that they knew. It was a victory when Barbara so far forgot the world outside that she squabbled briefly with Ginny over the proper placement of the forks.

It all went quickly—too quickly, because when they were done the three of them had to sit down around the kitchen table, as they always did, when Jon stayed in the city too late to come home for supper.

## FOUR

The mood that had sustained them through the bustling preparations for dinner fell rapidly away. Nobody mentioned Jon; but not wanting to mention him, they didn't talk at all. Once tires screeched on the street out in front, sending Barbara and Ginny both dashing to the door.

Gladys heard the door open, and fear shot through her, raised her out of her chair and after them to bang it closed again. She turned on them with flaming sudden anger.

"Barbara, you ought to be ashamed of yourself! You knew better than that! Ginny, next time you leave the table you're going straight up to bed!" Shame reddened in the older girl's face, and a tremulous underlip shaped itself into a pout on the five-year-old's. Without a word Barbara turned on her heel and started back to the kitchen. Ginny just stood still, facing her mother. Her small red lip curled outward as if it wanted to wrap itself around her chin, and the visible reaction, finally, transformed itself into a vocal one.

"I want my daddy," she sobbed. "I hate you. I hate you and I want my daddy!"

Impulsively Gladys bent down to the child, now seated squarely on the floor, and tried to fold the stubborn baby flat against her arms.

I want him too. Oh, Ginny, if you knew how I want him!

The words were in her mouth, in the tears that lay ready behind her eyes, in the lump of loneliness growing in her breast but she didn't say them. The child was frightened enough already. She satisfied her own yearning arms with a quick hug.

"I want my daddy!" Ginny shook off the embrace.

Gladys straightened up stiffly. "Well, you'll have to be a big girl and wait till he comes home." The words were pathetic in their weakness, but they were all she could offer.

"I won't. I want my daddy. I'll run away and find him." The little girl did not move to make good her threat, but the words stopped Gladys, already halfway through the room. She went back and locked the door and windows, bolted the too, firm against small hands . . . and proof against invaders from outside. It should have been done anyhow.

"I hate you! I hate you! I hate you!" The words of controlled rebellion faltered as she went out. By the time she reached the kitchen she could already hear the first sobs shaking the little girl in a convulsive release of violent emotion.

Barbie stood at the table, looking down silently at her half-eaten supper. "Aren't you going to do anything?" the girl demanded.

"No. Sit down and eat your supper. She'll come in when she's ready." Every impulse urged Gladys to go back, but she knew that any other day Ginny's squalling would leave her unperturbed. Special sympathy now would only get the child more upset. She couldn't be placated; she just had to cry it out.

"But, Mother, you can't just . . ."

"I said, sit down and eat your supper," Gladys repeated slowly. "I thought you were old enough to know better, Barbara."

Blushing again, and miserably aware that she had started the whole thing by running to the door, Barbara pulled back from her chair, the legs scraping against the linoleum in a long-drawn-out screech that set off their nerves to skittering frenzy again. Dog-gedly Gladys attacked lukewarm peas and potatoes.

The crying stopped. There was no sound in the house except the determined scraping of Gladys' fork across her plate. Barbara sat with downcast eyes, staring at her plate.

"Mother, I . . . I don't feel so well. May I be excused?" The formality of the request left Gladys no alternative.

"Certainly, Barbara," she said coldly. "Perhaps you'd better go upstairs and lie down?"

"I think I'd better." Barbie robbed her of the victory, accepting the proposal as willingly as though it were not a command.

"I don't feel good either." The swinging door edged noiselessly open to permit the entry of a small red nose, tight white lips, and a stray lock of soft brown hair. Ginny herself stayed hidden behind the door.

More relieved than she wanted to admit, Gladys unashamedly reversed her tactics. "Well," she announced blithely, "let's fix us all up, because I feel perfectly rotten. Let's throw out all this junk and have some good hot tea."

The red nose snuffled once rapidly, and the waving strand of brown hair advanced through the door, followed by a transformed child. "*Tea?*" she asked. "Really truly *tea?*"

"Really truly, goopy." Barbara relaxed immediately. "I'll fix it, Mother." She got up, with plates in each hand, in a flurry of activity. Gladys would cheerfully have traded places with her daughter, but she forced herself to sit still and wait while Ginny made a casual sidewise advance to the table. Finally one small hand came to rest on her knee. Then with a sudden scramble the little girl was on her lap, hugging her in a passionate frenzy of reformation, nestling and nuzzling against her until, communion achieved, the small head came bolt upright again. Then red-streaked eyes watched anxiously, still not entirely convinced, as Barbara poured steaming water over tea leaves and brought the covered pot to the table.

"Tea!" In her own seat at last, Ginny cuddled the warm cup in both hands and took a great noisy sip of the milky stuff. "Tea!" she marveled, and Barbara smiled at her mother again.

It was a hiatus in the storm, a valley of safety where they were safe and peaceful together for ten minutes that night. Later Gladys remembered it, relived every one of those minutes in the warm, bright kitchen, with both her girls trusting her secure, mysteriously confident in her power to fix things, somehow.

Then Barbara was pushing her chair abruptly back and reaching for one of the jars Gladys had ready. She shouted something through the flying door. ". . . while I can." And it was strange enough behavior for a grown girl. But emotional highs and downs could do these things, as Gladys suddenly realized with painful acuteness. Apparently the youngest one was alone in her freedom from reaction to too great tension.

Gladys gave Ginny a smaller bottle and sent her after her sister, to the upstairs bathroom, no less amused than she was astonished that for once her own urgency was more compelling than her young daughter's. Barbara could take care of the little one. She herself needed a moment alone to mend her defenses.

She left the dishes for the time being, half aware that they would be a welcome task later, and when she was done labeling her own jar she went into the living room. There was music coming over the radio, and upstairs the sounds of footsteps and running water. Gladys moved about straightening things from long habit putting the room to rights for the evening, switching on lights.

It was all so normal, so usual, so like every other day. Against her will she was drawn to the window, where street lights should be casting shadows from the spring-greened maples. But out there it was dark and only the cloud-cased moon sent an occasional waver-ing shape or shadow around the street.

The noises upstairs were not normal or usual. Barbara wasn't getting ready for a date; Ginny wasn't undressing for a boy. They were busy filling mysterious jars for strange men to take away. She realized that the noise of combat and persuasion had died away upstairs. The girls were taking a long time for a simple job. Maybe she'd better go up.

Gladys stood at the foot of the stairs, and familiar sounds and shadows grouped themselves into a pattern. The light on in Ginny's room. A low rhythmic murmur revealed itself as Barbara's voice when it rose to a dramatic word or phrase. Barbara was reading aloud to Ginny.

One light went out, and footsteps measured the length of the hall, toe-steps, really, cautious and quiet, walking away from the room of a child just fallen asleep. The bathroom door closed, shutting out the remaining light. Gladys hesitated at the first step. She wanted to go upstairs, to tuck Ginny in, to see what Barbara was doing. But she had an obscure feeling that something important was happening, something she shouldn't interfere with. Something that had started in the kitchen at dinner . . . or before that, upstairs, in front of the little radio. Something that had made Barbie offer to write the report about Jon, had made her put Ginny to bed without being told.

Whatever it was, it belonged to Barbara. Gladys went back to the living room and sat down, made herself stay there until the girl came into view on the bottom steps.

She was holding the two glass jars, big and little, carefully balanced in her hands.

"Ginny's in bed." She went straight across the living room toward the kitchen, carrying the jars. "I told her you'd come and look in on her later." She disappeared into the dining room and reappeared a moment later, carrying all three jars on a kitchen tray. She took the tray out to the hall table and stood there, wrapping each one carefully in its labeling sheet.

"It'll be all ready when they come." She was elaborately ex-planatory, as if she knew her mother would never otherwise understand why she had bothered.

*But I do . . . I do . . .* Only there was no way to say it, no gesture she knew how to make.

Impulsively she went over to the china closet in the corner and opened the cupboard in the bottom where they kept their rarely used liquor. Jon wasn't much of a drinker. She pulled out a couple of bottles and held them up, studying the labels.

"I'm going to have a drink," she announced, and now the whole thing seemed silly. Was this a symbol for maturity?

tried to sound natural. "Would you like something, Barbie? A little wine or"—she couldn't help hesitating—"perhaps some brandy?"

"Mother!" Barbara was clearly shocked.

Gladys held up the bottle. "Well," she asked a little sharply, "do you want it or don't you?" She watched the struggle of conscience and curiosity on her daughter's face. Barbie's new-found maturity might be fundamental, but it had not yet begun to affect her superficial reactions and attitudes.

"We could make some eggnog." Gladys proposed a compromise. "It might settle your stomach a little." She started toward the kitchen, but Barbara jumped up to intercept her. She wondered if she had the same look of foolish guilt on her own face.

"I'll do it, Mother. Francie's mother taught us how, once." She grinned then. "I guess I never told you about that."

The bright smile twinkled familiarly until the girl vanished through the dining-room door. Gladys turned the radio up louder, wondering how many other things she would learn about her children in the days ahead.

". . . rioting and panic in some sectors." The brutal words from the loudspeaker drove everything else out of her head. "However, Emergency Headquarters in all districts are carrying on a determined effort to maintain order. If you have not been visited by an emergency squad truck, please do not become alarmed. There has been no trouble in this section and emergency measures are proceeding as scheduled. All of you will have been visited by trained squadmen before midnight tonight. Stay indoors. Do not use the telephone unnecessarily. Assistance is coming to you.

"We repeat our news broadcast. Amateur radio communication lines are now operating throughout the country. The amount of damage done to major cities is still unknown, but government is functioning from secure headquarters, and the Army is already mobilized for retaliation."

Gladys listened dutifully, knowing these things should concern her. But they never said anything about the city, about survivors, about evacuation . . . *about Jon!*

Her attention wandered back to the radio. "There have been reports of rioting and panic in some sectors, however. The announcer was repeating what she had heard before.

"Do not become alarmed," he said.

Gladys caught a glimpse of her own face in the mirror over the mantel, and the long lines of haggard middle age shocked her. It seemed frivolous, in the face of the fear that hung about them, to go upstairs for powder and lipstick. But she had to go up and look at Ginny anyhow, and she felt dirty, spoiled. She could at least wash her face.

The bright light in the bathroom hurt her eyes—gleaming polished porcelain and paint. The evening mess was all cleaned up; Barbara was certainly going through a change. Tenderness rushed over her again, and compassion, for the girl who was too young to grow up so much. Gladys doused her face in cold water and pulled a stiff-bristled brush through her hair. Combing it, she took a good long look in the mirror and added fresh powder and lipstick after all. Then she stopped in the room long enough to remove the confining girdle, stockings and shoes, and padded downstairs again in soft furred slippers, cherry red to match the warm wool robe Jon had given her for Christmas.

Barbara had the foaming pitcher already set down on the coffee table and was reaching for two of the hand-painted glasses from the top shelf of the china closet. Formally, like a child's tea party, Gladys poured the drinks. Then she curled up on the sofa and let tiredness claim her. Gradually warmth penetrated downward and spread out inside her. She could feel the tension in all her muscles flowing away; now there was nothing to do but wait. She sipped at the drink, and the glass in her hand grew heavy, until she put it down on the end table, unfinished, and remembered to pick it up for another sip with difficulty. Nothing to do but wait . . .

## The City

*There was no way out of it; he'd have to go all the way uptown to see McMahon before he could close the Kellogg deal. He grabbed a cab, irritated at the unlooked-for expense; irritated at himself for not bothering to take the car, for not even thinking of the subway; irritated at all the shouldering, shoving people who—like himself—didn't have sense enough to get out before it was too late.*

*Out of what? Too late for what? He didn't know. He thought of the headlines in the morning paper, but that was foolish. You didn't take those things seriously, personally. It was just—too many people, not enough time. There used to be more time.*



*He paid off the driver, and as soon as he walked into McMahon's dining room he realized what was wrong with him. He was hungry, that was all. He accepted a cup of coffee and watched the old hypochondriac finish off lunch enough for twelve healthy men.*

*Mack was surprisingly reasonable. They got everything cleared up in a few minutes, except the paragraph he knew there would be trouble about. He could get out and get soon. Then they saw it.*

*The big window across the room faced east; at first all they saw was a darkening of the sun, a funny color in the sky. They went over to the window, and there it was, blossoming out in the sky away downtown, so beautiful you forgot to be scared . . . or else you were so scared it wasn't like any fear you could recognize.*

*They watched the big cloud form in the sky over the bay: white, then tan, muddy, and at last a swirling pink mass. They began to believe it, really, when the swirling stopped and the climbing column of steam turned back on itself and became a pounding pillar of rain, falling out of the giant cloud like a trick shot in a movie.*

*They didn't say anything, except just Mack's one word, "Well!" Then they turned and headed for the door, walking, not running, because that was the way McMahon was. But he noticed Mack had forgotten to limp. He edged past the older man, being polite but determined about it. Then he flung himself down the staircase, leaping and running, taking two, three steps at a time. He was on the second landing when the blast shook him.*

*The house shuddered, but it stood. He kept going down, more carefully now. Another blast, and he could hear windows breaking, but not the sound of the bombs. He felt the blast; he didn't hear it. Then there was one he heard different, close by.*

*A gas tank going up, a real old-fashioned explosion; he had time to recognize it before a flying beam found his head.*

*He couldn't have been out long, because it was still light when he dug himself out. Up the block three different fires were burning clouds hung over the city in every direction, but they weren't using that trick movie shot any more. The clouds were gray, good old honest gray, no rosy linings . . . or was it glasses? Did you use smoked glasses to make the color show? He couldn't remember. Someone was running down the street, passing him.*

*"Mister!" he shouted. "Mister, I'm lost!" He began running, too, running after the other man, trying to catch him and find out how to get home.*

## FIVE

"Wake up, Mother." It was Barbara bending over her, shaking her shoulder. "Mother, please don't go back to sleep. The face was pale and drawn, sharply in focus now.

"What is it?" Immediately Gladys was wide awake. Then, as Barbara relaxed, she realized there was no immediate crisis. "I must have dozed off."

The girl nodded her head. "I wanted to let you sleep, but I guess the eggnog . . . and all that stuff on the radio . . . I don't feel so good, I've got kind of a headache and—"

"Of course, baby." This was easy. Among all the strange new things these words came automatically. "You go upstairs and take an aspirin and get into bed." It was wonderful not to have to *think* what to say. "If you can't get to sleep, call me." She managed an encouraging smile, and Barbara responded with a watery imitation of her own grin.

"I'm sorry," the girl fumbled. "I don't like to walk out on you . . ."

"Go on," Gladys told her. "Shoo! Get to bed."

The old formula was still good. Barbie turned obediently and went up the stairs.

Gladys glanced at her watch. It was only a little after nine. She hadn't slept long, and she was stiff all over, but she felt better. She walked around the room, getting the kinks out of her joints.

She could hear Barbara splashing in the bathroom. Once a door opened, and once she thought she heard Ginny's voice pleading outside the bathroom, then the click of the latch and the two voices raised a little in minor altercation, quiet now and then arguing again. After a while there were footsteps going down the hall, and finally Barbara returning to her room alone.

Gladys turned the radio up a little louder and sat down in the big armchair where Jon listened to the baseball game, Saturday after-noons. Her fingers rubbed the worn upholstery, wandered of their own accord to the table that held his pipes and tobacco, riffled the pages of the big, bright-colored merchandising magazine in the rack underneath. Frightened

by the longing that crept up on her, she tried to concentrate on the radio.

"Evacuation is already beginning in some sections. Please do not call Emergency Headquarters for information. If you are to be evacuated, you will receive instructions . . ."

Something was thumping at the door. It was heavy, authoritative, but strange. She hesitated, trying to make it out, and came again, imperatively. She went to the front window that gave a clear view of the porch and pulled back the drape.

She had forgotten to turn on the porch light, and the street lamps were off. In the moonlight only the bulky outline of a man was dimly visible. Another bang on the door: Gladys almost ran to un-bolt it, opened it hastily, and stepped back a pace in sudden panic.

The visitors took her reaction for invitation. They stepped inside and closed the door behind them. Not until then did either one of them lift the visor set into the helmet top of the bulky one-piece suit that covered each completely, shoes, hands, head, and all.

The simple act of revealing their faces changed them from fictional monsters to human beings. Gladys breathed again and recognized one of the men, with surprise, as Peggy Turner's husband, Jim. The man with him was young and serious-looking.

"This here is Dr. Spinelli, Miz Mitchell," Turner introduced him. "He's an intern over at the new V. A. Hospital."

Gladys tried to acknowledge the introduction with a smile but her mouth was still stiff from the moment of fear.

"Sorry if I gave you a turn, Miz Mitchell," the big man apolo-gized, "but I knew you had kids here, so I thought it would be better to knock instead of ringing the bell. I know it makes a funny sound with these gloves on."

"Oh, it wasn't that. It was just—well, you look so strange."

"You should hear the kids, some places we go," he broke in, grinning. "They think we're Martians or something. So of 'em never quit bawlin' till we go." He laughed, a loud sounding masculine laugh that made her worries seem silly.

"Do you . . ." She hesitated. "Is it dangerous outside? Is that why you have to wear *them*?" she blurted out defiantly.

"Now don't you get yourself upset, Miz Mitchell," he reassured her. "We got to wear these things because we go out so much in different neighborhoods. Some places could be dangerous, and we never know till we get there. But this street here, you could go out for a pleasure walk and never get hurt."

Dr. Spinelli cleared his throat uncomfortably. Gladys turned to him, questioning, and he said hastily, "Mr. Turner's absolutely right, Mrs. Mitchell. But just the same, you better not try it." He produced an apologetic smile. "This neighborhood's been perfectly safe all along as far as we know, but there are still clouds of hot stuff blowing around. You shouldn't go outdoors until you get word it's all right—maybe sometime tomorrow."

Jim Turner bent on the younger man a glance of amusement that brought a slow flush up over the bony features. Gladys remembered the urine samples and reached for the tray.

"Do you take these now?" she asked, too brightly, breaking the silence.

The young doctor accepted them eagerly. "I'll take them right out to the truck," he said. "I have to ask you a few questions later, but I can get these checked meanwhile."

She noticed that he stowed the jars away carefully in a big pouch pocket built into one side of his suit, and fastened the zipper securely before he opened the door.

Turner followed her into the living room. "Don't let the young feller worry you, Miz Mitchell," he repeated. "He's a nice kid, but he's fresh out of school—all he knows is out of books, and he thinks that's all there is to know. We got to wear these outfits just because we're out so much," he insisted. "No real danger anyplace around here now, but you know how it is—a little bit here and a little bit there . . ."

He opened up the bulging pouch on his own suit, exposing a sheaf of rough white paper, and counted off several sheets. "Now this'll tell you more about everything than I could do myself," he said. "You can study it up after we're gone, and tell me if there's anything still bothering you, we'll be around again tomorrow, and I can explain it to you."

Gladys took the papers from him. They were numbered in sequence, as if they were meant to be fastened together like a booklet. On top of the first page it said in big block letters:

#### VITAL FACTS FOR CIVILIANS-ATOMIC WAR-RADIATION EFFECTS-EVACUATION

Underneath, everything was in close black type, blurred slightly from rapid mimeographing. She tore her eyes from the page, trying to get her thoughts together, to remember all the things she had to ask. Turner was saying something, but she didn't listen. She had written everything down someplace. Of course, it was all in her apron pocket, upstairs.

"Listen," she said, "some things have got me worried." There was one special thing that couldn't wait till morning. What was it?

Then she remembered. "Is there anything in here about the water?"

"Water?" He didn't understand.

"Is it all right?" she persisted. "Do we have to boil it or anything?"

"Nothing to worry about there." He seemed very confident. "The water's okay. They've got a gang of Geigers on it at the time. Anything went wrong, they'd cut off the supply."

He saw her mouth open for a horrified protest. "I mean, just the supply from the local reservoir," he amended quickly. "There's some way they can bring the water straight through and bypass this reservoir altogether. Might be without for a couple of hours, but no more than that. Boiling wouldn't help anyhow," he added. "You can't get hot stuff out that way. just relax and take it as easy as you can. I'll be around again on the truck, and when you read through those papers you'll see we didn't leave much out."

"But how . . . who's doing it all?" For the first time Gladys was curious. "Who's running everything? Who put these out?" She rustled the papers in her hand.

"Oh, we've been getting ready for this a long time." He smiled knowingly. "Our country wasn't so dumb."

"I know," she said impatiently, "the bombs and planes and all that. You can't read a newspaper without knowing about those things," she added bitterly. "But I didn't know about anything else—the trucks you're using, and those—diving-suit things you wear."

"Well, nobody else knew either," he assured her. "Nobody who wasn't in it. When you want to win you got to keep a poker face and play it close to the vest. And any time the government let out any information about what we were doing some scientist would start yelling about warmongers, or some reds would have a demon-stration."

"Well, when did *you* . . . ?" Then she realized: Of course—the "business trips"! She sat down on the edge of the sofa, thinking, and looked up at Turner with a new respect. *I wonder if Peggy knew?*

"I was in the Reserves," he said, "and I guess I had the right kind of background or record. They sort of cased me in slow. They had to be pretty careful about picking people who could keep their mouths shut. Now," he changed the subject firmly, "let's see, is there anything else you got to know? They're gonna be wanting blood donations, but I don't think they'll take 'em from folks this close to the city. Not till after the lab boys get them samples checked, anyhow."

When she wanted to know what the blood was for he pointed again to the papers he'd given her.

"It's all in there—in that part about radiation disease," he said. "You read that good, and you'll know practically as much about it as I do. Now there's one other thing I got to tell you, about evacuation. If—"

A muffled pounding at the door interrupted him. This time Gladys flew to open it. The young doctor came in and went straight into the living room, waiting until Gladys had closed the door again before he raised his visor and nodded curtly at Turner.

"Looks okay. The Geiger doesn't show anything," he told Gladys. A peculiar feeling of antagonism between the two men seemed to fill the room. It was upsetting; she almost didn't hear the question the doctor was asking.

"I'm sorry." She tried to cover up the wave of irrational resentment. "I'm afraid I didn't . . ."

"Just a routine question," he explained. "Has anyone in your family been ill any time during the evening?"

"Well, none of us felt too good." She didn't know whether it counted, really, but she started to tell him about the incident at supper. The doorbell buzzed sharply. Turner waved her to go on and answered it himself.

He was back almost immediately, explaining, "They need me there." There was an edge of triumph in his voice that Gladys didn't understand. But he couldn't go yet; there were too many things she still had to know.

"Will you be back?"

His visor was already halfway down, but he opened it again and turned back to her.

"I think I told you just about everything," he said. He was reassuring again, but impatient too. Whatever was waiting for him outside, he wanted to get to it.

Why, he likes this! Gladys thought suddenly. He's having fun! "Anything special on your mind?" He was waiting, restlessly polite.

"About the water," she said urgently, remembering her fear. "I know you said it was all right, but . . ." She felt foolish pressing the matter, but she had to ask. "Didn't I hear something about germs that could be put in the water supply? Wouldn't boiling help that?"

"They're checking that too," he told her impatiently. "You don't have to go looking for extra work, Miz Mitchell. You have plenty to do, just following instructions. If there's anything dangerous, we'll let you know. Now . . ." His voice was warm and genial again, reassuring her. "If that's all that was on your mind . . ."

He wouldn't wait any longer.

"No!" she exploded. "No, that's not all! There are a million things on my mind. I want to know why my husband can't come home, and what to do for my children, and where my son is, and whether my house is safe. How long is this whole impossible thing going to go on? How long do I have to wait to find out if my husband's alive or dead?" The involuntary violence of the declaration left her startled and ashamed. She sat down again weakly. "I'm sorry." Her voice was dull. "I know you can't tell me any of those things."

He made the faintest motion toward the door. "There's nothing else, then?"

"No," she agreed, "there isn't anything else."

The doctor was nice. He waited until the door was closed and said, as if nothing had happened, "You all felt better about the tea, though?" He smiled for the first time, really, a smile that used his whole face. It was unexpectedly sweet, and totally disarming.

"Yes . . . oh yes." She wanted to thank him, but she didn't know how. It was hard to concentrate on the story. She heard the motor start up outside and was suddenly panic-stricken. He was going away; she knew he wouldn't come back. He thought she was just another hysterical woman.

The doctor was asking her to go on. Of course—they couldn't go without him! But she could see he was worried too. She told him about Barbie feeling bad again after the egg nog.

"That doesn't sound so bad," he told her. "I think everybody in the country must have lost his appetite tonight." He smiled again, that surprisingly charming smile in his long, sober face. "Of course we won't know anything for sure until we get real lab analyses on all the samples, but so far there is no reason to believe that your children were exposed to anything. Your girls' symptoms don't sound too serious—you *would* know if either of them had been really sick? I mean real nausea with vomiting."

"Good Lord, yes!" She found it was possible to laugh. "I'd have had to clean it up."

"Well, I guess that takes care of everything." He paced restlessly to the window and tried to look out. Then he stood still, his head cocked to one side. What was he listening for? "Look," he said suddenly, "there's one question of yours that I can answer." He stopped, hesitated, and then explained, "I don't think I'm supposed to tell you. I'd rather Turner didn't walk in on it. . . . But you shouldn't count too much on your husband getting back here soon. There's some talk about evacuating this whole section—and I know they've stopped sending patients through to the hospital here. It's the same thing I told you before: we won't really know how safe this neighborhood is until after the analyses are finished at the lab."

"You mean you don't even know yet whether it's all right out there?" She stared at the soft drapes closed across the windows, as if she could see through to the unknown danger.

"Oh, I'm sorry—I didn't mean to make you think *that*. We know it's okay right now. What we have to find out is whether it was all right all day—and whether it'll still be all right tomorrow."

"But the bombs were miles away! How could there be any danger around here?" she demanded.

"It's not that simple," he explained. "There's dust and smoke from the city—God knows what a freak wind could do. And with the underwater bombs, there's the rain—and then we don't even know yet what kind of bombs they used. I mean what they had in them—there are different kinds of fission materials, you know. They need different treatment. And we don't even know how the damn things came over—excuse me, Mrs. Mitchell. I get—"

"Don't be silly." She wanted him to go on. "I'm a big girl."

"Well, we don't know whether they were bombs or guided mis-siles. Our radar didn't catch any airplanes overhead and that looks bad. The war heads could have been on self-propelled missiles with atomic engines, and that would mean—"

Gladys made a helpless gesture of protest. "I'd like to explain it all, Mrs. Mitchell," he wound up ruefully, "but I'm afraid it would take too long, if you don't understand that part. You'll just have to take my word for it. Until we know more about the nature of the bombs we have to double-check everybody and everything anywhere near a bombed area. And these urinalyses will give us a safe check—at least as long as the lab equipment holds out."

"I guess T should have read more about it before," Gladys said diffidently. "I . . . well, I just couldn't believe it. I never really believed any nation would *use* it this way."

"We did," he said harshly. "We used it in 1945. In Japan. Why wouldn't somebody else use it on us? God knows—" He stopped himself. "I'm sorry," he said shortly. "After all, it isn't *your* fault. I'm just blowing off steam."

"Well, it was your turn," Gladys smiled. "I blew my top a while back."

He looked bewildered and then remembered. "That was nothing! You should see some of the women we run into. I think it was probably just because you've been behaving so well that I forgot *I* was supposed to be helping *you*. Anyhow—"

he resumed briskly—and Gladys thought suddenly, He's so young!—"the thing to remember about radiation disease is that it can be treated and cured just like any other disease . . . just so we catch it early enough."

"What do you mean? How early?"

He didn't answer right away; he was listening again. Faintly, now, Gladys heard the motor starting up again, but far away, as if it were down at the other end of the block.

"I'll explain that later," he said hastily. "They'll be back in a minute now, and there's one other thing I wanted to tell you. *Please* don't let it alarm you—but that wasn't a bad idea you had about the water—just to make extra sure. We don't know whether they're going to try any bacteriological—"

The ringing of the telephone aggravated an already heightened imagination.

"Hello," she breathed into the mouthpiece, hope and fear fighting for possession of the syllables.

"Oh, Gladys, I'm so glad you're still up. Did that squad truck get to your house yet?"

Edie Crowell again. "They're here now." Gladys was annoyed. "I mean, the doctor is. Do you need him?"

"How could I possibly know whether I need him? They won't tell us anything, so we have no way of knowing if there's anything wrong. I just thought I heard a motor outside, and I wondered if the truck was getting near the house yet." A sob came over the line. "Gladys, can't you understand? I'm here all alone, and I keep hearing about these rioters and looters and maniacs out in the streets

"What on earth are you talking about?" Fear tightened in her throat again. "What's *wrong* with you, Edie?" She was dimly aware of the doctor crossing the room to answer another muffled thump-ing at the door.

"Well, Betsy called me up and told me all about it," Edith rushed on defensively. "She got the information because she works for the *Telegraph*. There are all kinds of people wandering around who escaped from the city, and they're crazy because they know they're going to die, and they're breaking into people's houses, and drink-ing, and attacking women too. And I'm all—"

*Oh, my God!* Helplessly Gladys moved the receiver a little further from her ear to protect herself from the penetrating shrill-ness. Finally, unable to listen any longer or even to find words to end the conversation, she dropped it unceremoniously back on the hook. The doctor had returned, bringing Turner with him. Flushed and frightened, she repeated what Edith had told her.

"We better get over there," Dr. Spinelli said wearily.

Turner nodded agreement. "I know that one. Thinks she owns the whole town. Give her something to knock her out. Doc, or she'll be making trouble all night." He turned to Gladys. "You'll be all right, Miz Mitchell," he promised. "Just don't get panicky. If you have any trouble, remember I'll be around again tomorrow."

He laid a gauntleted hand on her shoulder, and she knew it was meant to be reassuring. But something in the touch of the heavy glove sent chills chasing down her spine. She was glad when he wheeled his bulk around, pulled his visor smartly down, and headed for the door.

A soldier off to the wars! It was funny, until she realized that was just exactly what he was.

## SIX

She was still shivering. Her hands were icy, and the teapot on the table offered no warmth when she touched it. She picked it up and carried it back to the kitchen. It was while she sat waiting for the fresh water to boil that she realized neither of them had answered her question about the things Edie said on the phone. She remembered the doctor's shrug, Turner's impatience to be gone—but they had never once said whether it was true.

She tried to fight down panic, telling herself she was as bad as Edie Crowell, that she couldn't afford to give in to the fears and vapors that a childless woman could have. Still the thought persisted, and even as she sipped at the comfort of hot tea in a brightly lit room she couldn't throw off the newly aroused fear—the age-old fear—of wild men lurking in the dark. Every noise outside was a skulking footstep, and every familiar creak in the house a stealthy intruder.

Hastily she picked up the teapot, and took it into the living room, where the radio was producing music. She listened incredulously to the pulsing rhythm of a song she had danced to with Jon—when was it? A week ago? Four days? In another lifetime? Standing there alone, in the middle of the room, she could feel his arms around her, and the still firm lean of his body against hers, their legs moving together, his head bent toward her, so she could see the gray that was beginning to touch the edges of his hair—and the urgent pressure of his hand on her back that made her forget the gray.

The music changed, drifted into an old, old song, played without words, taunting her memory. The yearning conviction of Jon's nearness left her, but, eyes still closed, she managed to keep him in the room. He was in his leather jacket, the brown suede; he had taken the trash can outside and a gust of cool night air came in before he locked the back door again. He was bent over his desk, plowing grimly through a piled-up stack of papers. On the ash tray at his hand a cigarette burned monotonously, offering up incense at midnight to the gods of success. He was down on his back on the floor, m wrestling with Ginny, scrambling and rolling around, his uneven white teeth parted in a shout of good will toward the world. He was, best remembered of all, standing legs akimbo in the bedroom, his hair still damp from the shower. The fresh white lightly starched shirt bloused out smartly as he buckled his belt flat across his narrow waist and hips. The smell of talc and shaving lotion was so real, the billowing white shirt so crisp and right, that Gladys knew, suddenly and surely, that Jon was there with her; this whole thing, this impossible afternoon and evening, was a nightmare, a sick dream, and in a moment her husband's hand would be on her shoulder; his voice would be bantering, refusing to take serious stock in woman's ills, but just the same he would ask her, "Tea make you feel better, honey?"

On the radio the announcer's voice broke in over the fading strains of the music.

"Until there is further news we will continue our selections of favorite songs. Stay tuned in to this station; we will interrupt this program to announce any new developments. Next we have an old favorite—'Stardust.' Stay tuned in." The music began again. The haunting, nostalgic strain. The song of her own adolescence. This was no nightmare. Jon wasn't in the kitchen. He might never be in the kitchen again.

The songs changed, and every now and then the announcer spoke for a few extra minutes between selections, with news designed to be reassuring. "Our radar screen has now been pronounced impenetrable by Army experts," they kept saying, and, "Survivors have been found on the island of Manhattan, even on the narrow strip of land west of the main explosion."

She picked up the sheaf of rough-paper mimeographed sheets Turner had given her and tried to read. She put aside one on radiation sickness and found one labeled "General Instructions and Information."

**BLOOD DONATIONS**—required of all citizens not resident in danger zones or in areas immediately adjoining danger zones. Well, she had given blood before; if they came for it she could do that much.

**DANGER ZONES**—those where the bomb blast had been visible and those that had been swept by radioactivity following the blasts. Well, this was neither . . . and then she remembered that moment in the laundry, the instant of brilliant blinding sunlight, and then the cloud and darkness. Was that the bomb blast? What time had that been? Was that what it meant by "visible"? But if it were, surely, she'd have known sooner than she did. The neighborhood would have been alive with talk and fear and rumor.

"It must have been something awfully important," Barbara had said. "Everybody called up; all the mothers." And the phone kept ringing—the phone at home. She'd never answered; she thought they were all for Barbie. And that nice young teacher: ". . . so good of you," Miss Pollock had said. Because she hadn't called up, of course.

She riffled unenthusiastically through the sheets. She knew she should read them through and she didn't want to. She was too tired; it was too easy to get scared. On the radio, music and announcements repeated themselves, old songs, generation old; old news, an hour, almost a day old. The sheets of information that she didn't want were a blur of black and white, turning gray. The cherry-red robe held her warm as if, being a present from Jon, it still held the feel of his arms in its fiber.

His arms, and his mouth . . .

How silly, she thought drowsily. How silly to feel this way now: a respectable old married woman wanting her husband as she had wanted him almost twenty years before, feeling the same desperate urgency for him. She stroked the soft wool of the robe and shrugged down inside the collar, rubbing chin and cheek on the comfort of it.

Resolutely she picked up the sheet about radiation sickness. She stumbled through a prefatory paragraph. It was nothing to become alarmed about, the pamphlet assured her; it was no mystery; it could be cured. Adequate supplies of blood for transfusions were already being collected. "Injections of toluidine blue restore the ray-impaired ability of the blood to clot. Phenylhydrazine is an antidote for anemia. . . . Urinalysis will readily detect the presence of more dangerous faster-working fission products. Alpha emitters such as plutonium . . ."

She skipped the introduction, wondering why every effort they made to reassure her, with radio announcements and music, scientific phrases and soothing words, did nothing but frighten her all over, again. There . . . "SYMPTOMS. After first general malaise and period of apparent good health, victim will be subject to a variety of symptoms. Hair may fall out, itching, burning, or skin discomforts, including boils and blisters, skin hemorrhages, etc., may develop. Weakness . . .

nausea . . ."

The sheet dropped from her hands. Out of the jumble of un-familiar words and phrases the only thing that made sense was the sudden memory of dinner, of Barbara, picking at her plate. "I . . . I don't feel so well." And Ginny, repeating, "I don't feel so good." Barbara, rushing so suddenly from the kitchen . . .

That was nonsense; the doctor knew all about that, and he said it was all right. The doctor would have known.

She picked up the sheet again and held onto that thought. He would have told her. She stood up restlessly. Her watch said twelve forty-seven. That was impossible; it must be later than that. On the way through the dining room the big oak clock said twelve forty-eight. They couldn't both be that far wrong.

The music on the radio gave way again to the announcer's molasses tones. "All residents of lower Westchester County are urged to be prepared for evacuation," he said, and it didn't make sense. *This* was lower Westchester. She listened and he repeated it and went on. "Spotty danger zones have been located, along the banks of the Hudson, and in the Larchmont-New Rochelle area. Residents of these areas are already being evacuated. Please do not become alarmed. If your neighborhood is in a danger zone you have already been informed. However, *all* residents in the lower part of the county are urged to be prepared for an evacuation order any time in the next few days. For further information, please read your instruction sheet carefully." Gladys found the mimeographed pages on the sofa where she had thrown them down. She searched through the close-typed pages.

EVACUATION. There it was. "If you receive a warning to prepare for evacuation, by radio or telephone, do not become alarmed. The measure is taken to protect you. It does not necessarily mean that you are in a danger zone or that you have been exposed to dangerous radiations. Many people who have not been exposed will be evacuated for their own future safety. Wherever possible, the plan is to evacuate all persons within a ten-mile radius of any known danger zones. DO NOT MISTAKE *warning* for an *evacuation order*. Orders for evacuation can come *only* from Emergency Headquarters. The radio or telephone warning will come first.

"If you receive an *evacuation order*, after the warning, you will still have time to prepare your family and possessions. If you do receive such an *order*, study the suggestions below carefully, and start preparing immediately. Remember, no one will be allowed to take more than he can carry himself. Take only those things that you are certain you will *need*. If there are valuables in your home, which you are forced to leave behind, give a list to your squadman to be filed at Emergency Headquarters. Small items of jewelry and similar valuables may be given to the squadman, if well wrapped and clearly labeled. . . ."

Gladys put the sheet down. All kinds of people wandering around, Edie Crowell had said, crazy, drinking, housebreaking . . . You could think about your home and possessions, you could plan on hiding things, on saving and packing. People had done that before; that was what war meant. It was the other part you couldn't think about: strange and deadly radiations, silent, invisible killers.

The announcer finished repeating his message, and some idiot in the broadcasting station started playing cowboy songs. Gladys turned the radio down as low as she dared and set about making up a list of all the things they'd need. Ginny wouldn't be able to carry anything—not much at least. She'd want a toy, probably Pallo, and she might be able to handle a small suitcase, the tiny one she used playing around the house. Barbie was strong; she could take a big bag. And another big one for herself. She thought of substituting two smaller cases, to make balancing easier, but she'd have to keep a hand free, with Ginny along. The things to go in: pajamas, bathrobe, slippers, toothbrush, hairbrushes and combs . . . She stopped herself. This was the wrong kind of thinking. One brush and comb could do for all of them. Towels? A couple of them there was room. She thought of stories of the last great war in Europe, and added soap, toilet paper.

Blankets? No. She could wear her fur coat, and Barbie the heavy camel's hair, in spite of the warm weather. They could sleep under them if they had to, and Ginny could use the bathrobes. One set of decent clothes for each of them, dress, stockings, slip, everything, but they'd better wear slacks and shirts traveling. She tried to remember where she'd put the blue corduroys.

Upstairs, in the attic, maybe, something creaked, and the wind blew the branches of the old elm against the house. *Thud, rattle, thud, rattle*—the branches of the elm, and a loose window rattling.

Gladys sat bolt upright. Her watch said one-twenty. She ducked around swiftly, to the peeping window, but there was no one on the porch. *Thud, rattle*. Not a man knocking. No one banging at the door. Just the tree and a window, nothing more. She was glad now that she had locked up everything downstairs, when Ginny had her tantrum.

But that was only downstairs.

She started at the top, in the attic. She had to force herself to open the trap door and reach for the light string, then

prying around with the flashlight, into all the dark corners where an invader could hide. She checked the small windows made sure they were locked.

It was easier when the attic was done. On the second floor there was the familiar big bedroom, Tom's room, and the guest room. Carefully she locked the only window that was open.

She hesitated to use the overhead light in Ginny's room, but if she left a shadow unexplored she'd worry all night. Resolutely she switched it on and scanned the room, then turned it quickly off again, as Ginny started burrowing under the covers to escape the light.

Under the gentler beam of the flashlight the child slept in her favorite position, knees drawn up under her, arms sheltering her head. Her breathing was even and regular. Her cheek, when Gladys touched it, was warm with sleep, and nothing more. Most assuredly her hair was not falling out, nor was her soft baby skin marred with angry rough blotches.

In Barbie's big back room, only recently converted from bright-colored washables to adolescent chintz and frills, it was perfectly safe to keep the light on. Nothing short of mayhem could ordinarily wake Barbara before she had slept her fill—and at that, it would have to be a noisy kind of mayhem. Now pink-pajamaed limbs sprawled out in every possible direction from the tangled knot of bedclothes; wavy dark hair tumbled over the wrinkled pillow slip; the gently curved young breast rose and fell evenly.

Gladys went over and dropped a kiss lightly on her daughter's untroubled forehead. She made a futile attempt at straightening out the blankets, but gave up when Barbara stirred restively. She turned to go, and a sleep-soaked, half-aspirated word followed her.

"Mommy?"

"Yes, baby," she whispered. "I'm sorry I woke you. Go back to sleep."

"Is Daddy home yet?"

"Not yet, darling. Go back to sleep." Now that the girl was half roused anyhow, Gladys bent again to smooth the blankets. Automatically Barbara lifted a leg to let the sheet be unwrapped.

"I *wish* Daddy would come home," she said.

"I know, baby. I do too. He will." She sat on the edge of the bed, stroking the girl's head, knowing she wasn't really awake. Barbara had been known to carry on conversations for as long as half an hour in the middle of the night, and never remember a word of it in the morning. She whispered, low enough so Barbara wouldn't hear if she was asleep, "Do you all right now, Barbie?"

"Sure." There was healthy irritation in the answer. "There's nothing wrong with me. You go to bed, Mom." She turned over, away from the stroking fingers, and was immediately asleep.

Bed? Gladys thought. Why not? She had never gone to bed before, until Jon was home, but tonight—tonight it would be silly to wait up for him. She thought of the bed, cold and empty and alone. Not alone as it was when Jon was working late downstairs, nor as it was when on a rare Sunday morning he crept out to let her sleep, and fixed breakfast to bring to her later. But now a different kind of alone, something she'd never thought about without a shudder that drove the thought away—alone, perhaps, and cold for the rest of her life. No.

She might curl up on the couch in the living room. Then if the phone rang, or if anything at all happened . . . "People wandering . . . crazy . . . home-breaking, drinking . . . attacking . . ." If anything at all happened, she would be there, ready, and not in her empty bed.

She had to do something. She would never stay awake if she didn't find something to do. She couldn't go down the empty living room and the terrifying radio.

She opened up the big upstairs closet, the one she'd been meaning to clean out for years, and began exploring for things they might need.

There was Jon's camping stuff, unused since he had given up fishing in favor of golf. The nested pans and utensils would be useful. And maybe the knapsack. She slid the straps over her shoulders and stifled a giggle, remembering her one disastrous attempt to tramp through the woods alongside her new husband with one of these things on her back. Maybe Barbie could use it; she was a more athletic type.

Then, with half the things on her list collected, and as many more that weren't on the list at all, weariness fell on her like a smothering blanket. The wind must have started up again, because she could hear the tree and the window once more *Thud, rattle . . . thud, rattle*. She wasn't imagining it. *Thud. Rattle. Thud*. She glanced again at her watch. Almost four. Well, she could try to wake Barbie, in another hour. But somebody had to stay up.

Down in the living room she found the cold teapot and took it back to the kitchen, then decided on coffee instead.



The electric clock said three fifty-six. Outside there was a gray hint of dawn approaching—not enough to make any light, just enough to make the shadows seem darker. She sat at the gleaming white-topped table, struggling to keep awake until the robin on the kettle whistled for her, and once more the noises and imagined footsteps assailed her. The rattle and thump of the wind sounded for all the world like someone trying to force the door. The porch creaked, and she was sure someone was out there, but she wouldn't look. Again it creaked, and still she wouldn't look—but she did.

There was a man outside the glass panes of the door. She shut her eyes to blot out the image. When she opened them again the man was still there. He knocked on the doorframe—thud; he shook the doorknob—rattle. Gladys couldn't understand why she was no longer afraid. *Thud . . . rattle; thud . . . rattle.*

Hope sped through her mind and was gone almost before it came; Jon had a key. And the squadmen used the front door. A neighbor? Edie Crowell, driven at last to leave home in spite of all the warnings? No, the shadowy bulk was definitely masculine. Of course, it was the hat; there was no mistaking the outlines of a man's hat.

*Thud, rattle.* He was at it again. Fascinated, Gladys sat at the table and watched the door shake. She couldn't think of anything to do about it. The noise stopped, and the man, whoever he was, moved off a little.

He's going away, Gladys thought, almost disappointed.

The robin began to emit a low preparatory whistle, and she reached for a pot holder and pulled the little bird off its perch at the end of the spout. She kept watching the door. A vague shape moved outside; the man hadn't gone away at all. He seemed to bend down, and then something slithered through the crack between the threshold and the door. A piece of paper lay on the floor, small, close-lined, with three ripped round holes to show where it had been torn out of a loose-leaf memo book. She took a single step forward to pick it up, then instinctive caution stopped her from exposing herself in front of the glass pane in the door.

The pot holder was still clenched in her hand. Inspired, she picked up the kettleful of boiling water and approached the door, slowly, from the side, until she could reach out one foot and slide the paper closer to her. She bent over to pick it up, convinced with every move that she was about to drench herself with scalding water. But when she straightened up again shakily, she had kettle and paper both clutched safe.

She remembered to back away to a safe angle before she put the kettle down and pinned her attention on the note. The scrawl was hasty and barely legible, the characters small and crabbed, reminiscent of nothing so much as notes taken in college lecture halls, quick small letters written rapidly in an ill-lit room. It was oddly reassuring; you couldn't picture a fear-crazed housebreaker forming such dry, concise letters. She read, with difficulty, "Please let me in. Have something important to tell you. Explain everything—too much to write. Don't worry—I am not dangerous."

Almost, she opened the door; it was completely convincing in its terse simplicity. *Maybe he had a message from Jon.* She started toward the door, and halfway there thought better of it. She got a sheet from the marketing pad and scribbled on it hurriedly, "Who are you?"

Then she was stopped. She couldn't slip it back under the door. The crack was too narrow. Pushing anything through would take careful maneuvering, and while she was bent down at the threshold the man could break the glass pane over her head, or push the whole door in on her. If he *was* dangerous it would almost be safer to let him in than to take that chance.

The window over the sink opened out on the back porch. Still watching the door, she opened the right-hand casement a half inch and let the paper flutter down, then banged the window hard to attract his attention, and locked it securely.

It worked. Footsteps creaked on the porch, and the shadow disappeared from the doorway. She couldn't see anything out of the window. He must be reaching from the side as she had, not taking chances either. Looking into the well-lighted kitchen, he had probably seen the hot-water kettle in her hand. She crossed over to the door and waited until the shape reappeared on the other side of the glass pane, and then disappeared again briefly, bending down to slide the same paper back under. Edging it over with her foot, she got well out of range before she stooped to pick it up. She was beginning to feel very silly, balancing the kettle all this time, but she held onto it, grimly reminding herself that it was better to be foolishly careful than just plain foolish.

"Dr. Levy—teacher at Burl's—your daughter Barbara is in my math class," she deciphered under the smudges made on the sole of her slipper.

Dr. Levy . . . The name was familiar, but she couldn't recall Barbie talking about him. Who was it? Where did she remember it from?

She stood there, staring at the note. I've got to decide what to do, she thought. Right now! She saw another sheet from the same memo book come through under the door and, less cautious this time, retrieved it more rapidly.

"Please let me in," it said briefly. "Can't stay here. Getting light. Will be caught."

If she didn't let him in he'd go away. And she didn't want him to go away. It was as simple as that. She didn't give herself a chance to reconsider. The door key was in the lock; she turned it quickly and opened the door enough to let him slip through, but she kept the kettle ready.

The man paid no attention to the steaming water. "Turn out the light," he commanded, and turned his back on both Gladys and her improvised weapon. A thrill of alarm went through her as she saw him lock the door.

His face was shadowed by stubble and streaked with dust. The rough tweed suit, baggy on his thin frame, might have been good once; now the pants were spattered with mud and grime, and one sleeve was ripped halfway up.

Terror-stricken, Gladys watched his right hand slide inside his jacket to the spot below the shoulder where she knew—from the movies—a holster could hang. Her hand, on the kettle, tensed and drew back.

"For God's sake, woman," he said again, "turn the light out! And put that pot down before you hurt somebody."

Jon, oh, Jon, she prayed, I need you! She stood there, holding the kettle she knew she wouldn't use, and watched him back away to the far corner of the kitchen, out of range of door and windows.

"Look, if you won't turn the light out, isn't there some other room where people can't see in so easily?" At last his hand was coming out from under the jacket.

*Jon . . . Jon, come home!*

Incongruously the man brought forth a spectacle case from which he removed a spotless pair of glasses, and placed them tenderly on the bridge of his nose.

In spite of his rough urgency, his voice was modulated, his speech educated, his words rational.

I'm a fool, she thought. He's crazy. I'm being such a fool. But she put the kettle down and motioned silently to the swinging door.

## SEVEN

"Mrs. Mitchell, I came to warn you . . . about your children. You better sit down," he interjected, "and listen carefully. I can't stay long."

It was like something out of a bad play—the man, dirty, torn, and battered, standing in that cheerful room. Gladys tried to remember whether Barbie ever had, really, mentioned his name.

"Of course," she murmured, "go on."

At first the words and phrases kept jumbling together in her mind, full of things she didn't understand, and, like the information sheets and the radio, filling her with formless fears.

After a while the fear took form. She knew what he was going to say. She felt herself beginning to shiver.

"I wish you'd sit down," he interrupted himself again. She shook her head stubbornly, but he wasn't waiting anyhow. "Possibly I am wrong," he said. "I pray God that I am. But I think your daughter was exposed to radiation today, perhaps to a dangerous extent."

He's crazy, she told herself again . . . certainly half crazed with worry and fatigue. He must have been out all night; that would explain the stubble and grime, and the wild shining eyes.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Levy." She was very cool, fire in her head and ice in her voice. "I'm sure you're trying to tell me something, but I guess I'm too tired to follow it very well. What radiations do you mean? I didn't know there was a bomb near here. I'm afraid I really know so little about all this . . ." She looked across at him, hopefully, politely.

"You're too tired!" Scorn wiped the weariness out of his voice. "My dear woman, don't you realize . . . ? No, of course you wouldn't. You and all the others! You—"

When he spoke again his eyes were still wild, but not his voice. "That doesn't matter; you don't have to understand—just listen. I have good reason to believe that the school was in a danger zone. The bomb, as you put it, must have passed directly overhead. Certainly there was radioactive rain in this vicinity."

"But it said over and over on the radio," she objected reasonably, "that the government would notify us if we lived in a danger zone. Are you sure?"

"Yes, I'm sure!" he snapped. "Why in God's name do you think I came here? I'm sorry, Mrs. Mitchell, but I've met the same thing everywhere tonight—people who didn't understand before and refuse to believe now." He took a step forward, too close to her. Her first quick fear gave way to a fantastic notion that he was about to shake a finger in her face.

"Now listen, will you? They couldn't have told you if they don't know yet themselves." Who? she wondered, and tried

not to let her thoughts stray; she really ought to listen. "I just happened to be there, but I don't have all the facts either. I don't know how wide a range it covered . . ."

What? What covered what?

"And I don't know how penetrating it was. Not everybody in the dangerous area was necessarily affected. People were indoors, for instance—I think your little one was—"

"Well, weren't you indoors, Mr. Levy?" The more he spoke, the less convincing he was.

"No! The bombs fell in the city between one-fifteen and one-thirty. It just happens that during the one o'clock hour I took a group of ninth-graders out to Belsen's—the aircraft plant, About fifteen minutes' walk from the school, We got back just about two, and it was starting to rain. That's when I noticed your little one—she's in the kindergarten group, isn't she? He didn't wait for her to answer, didn't give her a chance to stop him. "They were outside playing in the yard when we came back, but they were hustled indoors as soon as the rain started. I think they were inside at the other crucial time, but you should check on that. At any rate I'm certain they weren't exposed to the rain, because I distinctly recall what an unfuss they made about going in. It wasn't actually raining in the yard, you see, just across the street. But there was fog around the school."

"Yes, I know all about that," Gladys stopped him.

"You do?"

Why was he so startled? "Please go on," she said clearly. "I can't imagine that you came here to tell me my little girl didn't catch cold in the rain."

"*Catch cold?*" His face was carefully devoid of expression, his manner infuriatingly patient, as if she were a particularly dull small child. "Look, I want you to sit down now and listen carefully, once all the way through, while I explain it. Go on," he repeated grimly, "you better sit down."

Gladys became conscious of her hand gripping the chair in front of her. With complete astonishment she stared at the whitened knuckles, as if they belonged to someone else, saw the fingernails biting into the rough fabric of the chair.

"If *you* will," she bargained.

"All right." Impatiently he started to sit down on the sofa in back of him and became painfully aware of the mud cake on his clothes.

"Don't worry about it." But she was pleased and surprised at his hesitation.

He took a deep breath. "I was outside at a time when I believe there were bombs overhead," he began. "Your daughter. Barbara was with me. We were also, for a very short time, exposed to rain that may have been radioactive. At one of those times Barbara received radiations that may have been serious enough to make her sick. I've been—"

"Mr. Levy!" Gladys caught her breath between her teeth. "Do you know what you're saying?" He was too controlled that was a kind of hysteria too. "Can you prove any of it?"

"God damn it, yes! Yes, I have proof—the best proof there is! I know I was exposed because I've tested myself. At I was about to tell you that two of the other children I saw tonight have already shown symptoms of radiation disease. At do you understand?"

She was rooted to the chair, her legs and arms, like her throat, paralyzed with disaster.

*Oh, Jon, come and help me!*

The man's face went through a total transformation from fury to abject apology. "I *am* sorry, Mrs. Mitchell," he said. "I shouldn't have told you that way. . ."

"Don't." She found her voice at last. "No, don't touch me!" He drew back his hand; it had almost reached her shoulder. He's crazy! He is!

"No, I'm not crazy." His laugh was tired and bitter. She must have said it out loud. "You want me to go away," he said. "Well, I have to go. I've spent too much time here already. There are other people . . . Maybe Barbara escaped." He started toward the din-ing-room door. "If she hasn't shown any symptoms yet . . ."

"Of course she hasn't!" But now that he was going, a million doubts had to be pushed aside. "Don't you think I'd have done something about it before now? The doctor was here, you know. He said there was nothing wrong with her."

"The doctor?" He stopped and looked back.

"Of course. On that squad truck they have." Then she remembered. "And what's more, he did a urinalysis, and *that* was all right."

"Urinalysis? You mean you got a report already?"

"Right away, while the truck was here." She felt smug. They're all right. They're both all right. Now he'll see they are

"The truck? Why, the fools!" he exploded. "They're actually letting people believe . . . Look, Mrs. Mitchell, did they make an *analysis* in the truck? How long did it take?"

"Not long." She simply would not answer any more questions. You said you were going, she thought fiercely. Now out of here! "They didn't say what they did. They just said the checkup was all right." Then she remembered. "They said they were taking samples to a laboratory for analysis, but they checked it, and it was all right." He had to believe her.

"They must have Geiger-checked it. Well, that helps. Look, are you *sure* Barbara hasn't been sick?"

"Of course I'm sure."

"Have you asked her?"

"I don't need to ask her. It wasn't anything but nerves."

He *had* to believe her. Hopefully she looked up at his impatient brown eyes, but there was no comfort there. Jon would have soothed her, would have taken the burden on his own broad shoulders. Jon's eyes were gray. Why did this man have brown eyes? Why didn't he *help* instead of making things worse?

"I hope you're right," he said. "At any rate, if I haven't convinced you of any danger by now, I never will." He started for the door again. Thank God, thank God, he's going. "You will do as you like, of course," he finished. "But if I were you, I'd wake Barbara up and ask her—right now."

But she was all right when I looked at her. She was sleeping all right. Maybe she'd just had a touch. Maybe she was over it already. Maybe . . .

He was going. Maybe . . .

"Wait!" she cried, suddenly frantic. "Wait, please don't go." What would I do if she had it? "I'll wake her right now; it won't take long." She walked faster. "Please," she said again, and saw he was standing there, waiting.

Even with the overhead light shining in her eyes, Barbara didn't want to wake up. "Umm-hmm," she said emphatically and pulled the crumpled heap of bedding off her legs, over her head.

Just like her father!

"Wake up, Barbie. Barbie, you've got to wake up and tell me something."

"Ummh? What?" She sat up, abruptly and startlingly awake, shedding the blankets and blinking. "What is it, Mother? *Has anything happened?*"

"No, honey. Nothing's happened. Only there's something I have to know. Listen, Barbie, last night—"

"What time is it? Did Daddy come home yet?"

"A quarter past five. Listen, Barbie, last night, when you didn't feel well, did you . . ." She was taken aback at the awkwardness of the question. Why, it was insulting! "Did you throw up or anything last night?"

"Well, gosh, I just felt a little sick, that's all." Barbara flopped back on the bed and pulled the sheet disgustedly over her head. "You're sure that's all?"

From under the sheet she muffled, "Sure."

Gladys stood up dizzily, smoothed the sheet, straightened the cover. "I'm sorry I woke you, Babsy, but someone came from the school and got me all worried. You can go back to sleep."

"From school?" Sleepy but curious. "Who?"

"A Mr. Levy. He says he's your math teacher."

"Doc Levy? Is he still here?" Barbara sat bolt upright, ignoring the bright light. "Why did he want to . . . Is he on the emergency squad?"

"No. Should he be?" *Doc Levy!* Now she knew where she'd heard the name. Not from Barbie at all, but from Tom—incessantly, for two years, before he went away.

"He knows everything about atom bombs," Barbara told her. "He was at Oak Ridge and everything." She was struggling with the zipper on her bathrobe. "Only he got blacklisted or something on account of refusing to do war work and making a lot of speeches and being on committees, so he had to go be a teacher. It's supposed to be a secret. If he's not on a squad or anything, what did he come for, Mom?"

"He just came by himself. It was really awfully nice of him, I guess, but he nearly scared the wits out of me." Going down the stairs, she kept throwing words carelessly over her shoulder, chattering with relief. "He thought you'd been exposed to something, and he made me wake you up to find out how sick you were last night."

Barefoot, Barbie padded noiselessly behind her; Gladys couldn't know when one silent foot stopped suddenly and hovered over the stair tread, in the middle of a step. Nor could she hear the quick frightened intake of breath.

"It was awfully nice of him to come, but I did get scared. . . . You didn't really have to get up, you know. He has to

leave right away. Dr. Levy . . ."

She came around the turn of the stairs, through the hall, into the living room. "Here's Barbara herself. You can ask her anything you want to. I'm sure you'll see she's all right!" She was gay in her victory.

"I'm so glad." He'd been sitting on the sofa. Now he got up, tossed aside the sheaf of mimeographed sheets he'd been studying. Gladys' last doubts about him vanished at the sincerity of his smile.

"I don't need to tell you how worried I was. I've been called an alarmist before," he admitted ruefully. "Unfortunately, I *wasn't* wrong that time. Anyhow, these sheets . . ." He pointed to the instructions and information Gladys had struggled with the night before. "I didn't see them before. Is everybody getting them? They seem quite complete—"

His sentence broke off sharply. Gladys turned to see what he was staring at, and Barbie stepped through from the hall, white-faced and shaken.

"Barbie. Barbie, baby!" Gladys didn't have to think; she knew. And there was nothing she could do. She took the girl's two hands and held them in her own, trying to reenact a miracle, to pass life and health through her own flesh into her daughter. But . . .

"Oh, Babsy darling, why didn't you tell me? Why?"

The hands in hers trembled violently, and for just a moment her shoulders shook convulsively. Then, before it went so far to stop, Barbara stiffened, straightened, and lifted her head.

"I didn't want to"—she had to stop and steady her voice—"to worry you. I didn't know it mattered." She shook off Gladys' protests and braced herself to meet the teacher's eyes. "Doc, is it very bad if I did throw up?"

"I don't know, Barbara." He was painstakingly honest. "It might not mean anything at all. There's no way to tell until we have a blood count."

"I mean, if I am sick, if I *have* got it . . ."

"I don't know, Barbara. There just isn't any way to know." There were pain and regret in his words, but no pity, no sympathy at all.

Barbara sat down in her father's big armchair. Her fingers stroked the worn armrest; her back was ramrod-stiff. "But I am," she demanded, "what's the *worst* thing? Will I—do people die from it?"

There was nothing to mark the impact of those words but Gladys' involuntary gasp. Barbara's voice, like the teacher's, was painstakingly impersonal. Only the little pauses, the trouble finding words, betrayed either of them.

"You'd have a good chance, Barbara. More than good. It's not like Hiroshima. We . . . They know how to handle it now. And they seem to have things pretty well in hand."

"But—people *do* die from it, don't they?"

"Sometimes." He answered the question as bluntly, this time, as it had been put.

*It's not natural!* Gladys tried to interrupt. "Don't you think—"

"Just a minute. I think you ought to phone these people and tell them . . ." He picked up the sheet headed "Radiation Disease." "Here, you've read this." He let his indictment of her negligence come at her askance. "Tell them that your daughter's symptoms check with this description. And that you're calling *as instructed*."

She held the sheet, reading, as the night before: "Malaise . . . nausea . . . vomiting . . ."

"But I saw this. And I didn't know . . ." Her eyes dropped to the next paragraph.

"Do not be misled if the patient appears to recover perfect health after the initial attack. Many cases of stomach disorder will prove to be superficial, but *all* should be reported. The serial number at the top of this sheet is your family identification. Use it when you make your report. *Do not delay!*"

Dr. Levy moved restlessly. "You'll be able to take care of everything now, Mrs. Mitchell, and you'll be having these Emergency Headquarters people here. I'm not exactly . . . popular . . . with them."

She tried to phrase an objection to his leaving, and found herself saying instead, "Well, if you really *have* to go . . ."

Astonishingly Barbie had rushed up to him and was clinging to his arm. "Please, Dr. Levy," she begged, "you don't have to let her chase you away."

"Barbara!" He took his arm sternly away. "Your mother's quite correct. I do have to go."

"But you don't realize—Mom's been up all night and she—" Anguished, the girl paused, then turned around to face Gladys. "I'm sorry, Mother, but it's true!" She turned back to the teacher, "She just doesn't want to believe that there is anything wrong with me. *Please* don't go!"

"Naturally your mother's upset," he answered. "She wants to be alone with you for a while, and it will probably be good for both of you. If you're not scared she won't be."

Gladys felt fury burning within her and didn't know whom to be angry at. She turned swiftly to the telephone.

## EIGHT

The operator didn't seem to *want* to understand her. Gladys talked urgently into the phone, pouring out her trouble to a half-dozen unidentified switchboards, until someone finally connected her with the clerk at the Emergency Headquarters laboratory.

All the time she was aware of muted conversation, of footsteps coming and going, in the room behind her. She spoke into the mouthpiece, reading off the serial number from the top of the sheet, repeating the exact symptoms as Barbara had told them to her.

"She began to feel ill about five-thirty, became acutely nauseous, thought she was going to vomit, but didn't. Later on she says, she was sick—about nine o'clock." Why, that was . . . No wonder she didn't tell me, Gladys thought, she must have thought the egg-nog did it!

"Yes, they checked it on the truck. They *said* it was all right." And I heard her in the bathroom, and I never knew! "Slept well . . . feels all right this morning . . . Barbara Mitchell . . . B-a-r-b-a-r-a Mitchell, M-i-t-c-h-e-l-1, 2036 . . . that's right . . . Have you any idea how long it will take? I see. . . . *Please*, if you can. . . . Thank you.

"They're going to do the analysis," she said to the room at large. "They said it might take several hours. They didn't seem to think it was too serious, Dr. Levy. They said—"

He wasn't there. Barbara alone sat in the center of the big chair, slender, fragile, and erect. She didn't look like a girl condemned to...

Stop it! Gladys screamed at herself.

"Where . . . ?" she asked out loud.

"He's gone." Barbara licked her lips to ease the numbness out of them. "Did they say anything else?"

"No. They just said they'd notify our squadman and call us back if they could. Maybe . . ." She couldn't stand by any longer, without offering the child some hope. "Maybe it's a false alarm, honey. Maybe you're all right. It could have been egg-nog, you know. It really could. They said it was kind of late for you to get sick. That teacher can't be sure, you know. You *feel* all right, don't you?"

Under the flood of sympathy Barbie's dam of tears broke. Gladys soothed and patted, feeling sanity return with the touch of the tense young fingers. She had to keep going; Barbie still needed her.

"There, baby," she whispered, "you go ahead and cry. You'll feel better afterwards. Don't you believe for a minute that a man knows everything. He's been wandering around like a maniac all night, and if he was really so sure he'd be in the hospital himself, wouldn't he? There, baby . . ."

Her voice went on in its soothing, monotonous reassurance, even after Barbie had pulled away.

"Hospital?" She sniffled and groped in her pocket for a handkerchief. "Why should *he* be in the hospital?"

"Didn't he tell you? That's why he was going around to all the houses. He says he got it while he was taking a walk with some of you in the afternoon."

Barbie's eyes, dry now and wide, were fascinated. "But how does he *know*?"

"He doesn't!" Gladys insisted. "He just thinks so, and he's been going around scaring everyone half to death."

The word seemed to linger on her lips, tasting bad, feeling wrong.

*Death*. It bounced around the room, hurled itself back at her. "But I mean, is *he* sure? Does he really think he has it?"

"He *thinks so*."

"Oh, Mom, you shouldn't have let him go out! We should have asked him to stay here—"

"He wouldn't have stayed, baby. There were other people he wanted to see."

"No, there weren't." Barbara shook her head. "He said it was too late to go anywhere else—it was too light out. He said he was going to try and get back to his room. But—"

"Look, Barbie," Gladys interrupted briskly, "if he was going home, then that's the best thing he could have done. I don't know why he didn't go to the hospital anyway if he thought he was sick. He didn't have to go around all night telling people—he could have told the squad."

"But he couldn't! He's on a list of—well, he didn't tell me much, but I know he couldn't go to Emergency Headquarters because they would have arrested him. Didn't he tell you?"

Gladys shook her head. There was something wrong with the man! It was better to have him out of the house.

"He tried to call Emergency Headquarters first," Barbie said, "but as soon as they heard his name they started stalling around, and . . . I told you about that blacklist he was on for making speeches and everything . . . and they wouldn't listen when he tried to tell them about us kids. They just said to wait where he was, and they sent some men out to arrest him. Well, anyway," she consoled herself, "I told him to come back if he needed someplace to stay. I'm glad I did that much."

"Why should you do anything?"

"Well, he might have saved my life, that's all!"

"Oh, darling . . ."

Barbara broke away from her mother's hand and stalked dramatically to the window. She pulled back the drape and stood there, staring out into the empty street. Her blue-robed back faced the room with a passive defiance that Gladys could not penetrate.

The phone was ringing. It would wake Ginny up.

She picked up the receiver and cut off a ring in the middle. She could hold it like that, keep her hand firm over the earphone, never hear what they wanted to tell her.

She raised the receiver to her ear. "Hello." The flat word was no greeting, but an acknowledgment of the expected disaster. "Gladys!" Somebody was shrieking at her, somebody alive, personal, not the controlled inhumanity of an official dealing out death. A woman.

"Hello, Edie." Recognition was curious; it was like waking up. "How are you? I mean, Edie, have you heard anything?"

"*Heard* anything?" The harsh laughter hurt her ears. "How could I hear anything? They won't let us find out. They won't tell us anything. They've got hillbilly songs on the radio now!"

"What do you mean, Edie?" Nothing about Jon; nothing about the city. The excitement drained out of her, left her too tired to talk. "What did you call for?"

"Because I'm a damn fool!" Edie snapped. "Because I thought you could—" She broke off, stifling something that sounded like a sob. "I don't know why," she finished dully. "There's nothing you can do. I'm sorry. I shouldn't have . . ." Gladys had to strain to hear; the words seemed to crumble away before they reached her.

"Well, maybe *I can* do something. What's wrong? You've got to tell me what's wrong first." She felt a perverse gratitude to Edie, for being so weak, weaker than she was.

"There's nothing you can do."

"Well, what's the matter?"

"No. They wouldn't do anything, and there's nothing you can do. I'm sick, that's all, and they wouldn't believe me. I knew them I was sick, and they didn't care. They just went away."

"But, Edie, if they *said* you're all right . . . ?"

"What do they care? How do they know how sick I was? I read all about it in those papers they left, and I was right! I tell you I was right! I was sick, Gladys. I never get sick, and I was so sick. They could have—Glad, they gave me a sedative. My God, I was sick all over the house and they gave me a pill to quiet my nerves."

"Did you take it?" The doctor said Edie was all right. The doctor said Barbie was all right. The doctor knew.

"No, I didn't take it. Go to sleep and die in your sleep, and make it easy for them! They just don't want to bother. My God, Gladys, my hair! I'll lose my hair. Do you realize it says—"

"Look, Edie, you take that pill they gave you." Gladys tried to sound sympathetic, but it came out cold and stern instead. "You'll be all right."

A muttering sound in the living room behind her made her sharply aware of Barbie's presence. Barbara could hear everything she said. Edie was talking again, but Gladys didn't listen to it. "You take that pill!" she said again, fiercely. She heard the receiver on the other end banged down, a furious impotent gesture of defiance. Edie would be all right. She had to be. The doctor said so.

"What do you want, Barbie?" She turned back to the living room, but it wasn't Barbie who was talking. The muttering sound came from the radio, the first news report of the morning.

"Reprisals are being made. There is little or no further danger of attack. Our radar screen is now constantly in operation and all large centers are under the protection of military government. Many saboteurs have been apprehended, and any at liberty will no longer be able to operate under new military restrictions. The type of missile used by the enemy is worthless without the co-operation of an agent at the point of attack. If all citizens co-operate with the emergency government, there is no further danger of enemy attack. Stay tuned to this station for further news in twenty minutes."

Meanwhile, some recorded music . . ."

Impatiently Barbie turned the radio down. "They didn't say anything at all," she complained angrily. "Nothing but a lot of stuff about rioting and panics. It's quiet enough here, heaven knows!" She went back to the window.

"Barbie." Gladys' voice tugged at her back. "Barbie, did they say anything about the city—anything at all about what was happening there?"

"No. Nothing new."

"What about the panics? What kind of rioting?" She didn't really want to know, but, whatever happened, she couldn't let the silence grow between them again.

"It's nothing important," Barbie said impatiently. "Fires and stuff, just the same thing they said last night. Oh," she remembered something, "if we see any strangers wandering around we're supposed to report them to Emergency Headquarters right away, and not let them into the house, whatever happens, because some of them are looting and robbing and stuff like that."

She stopped suddenly. "Dr. Levy!" she said, aghast. "They said the squadmen had been instructed to shoot if necessary. Oh, Mom, we shouldn't have let him go!"

Gladys held back her anger. "He'll probably come back," she offered, "if it turns out to be too hard to get where he wanted to go."

"He didn't *have* anyplace to go," Barbie insisted.

She was not going to argue about the man. Maybe after she had some coffee she could do something about Barbie. She went back to the kitchen and waited once again for the water to boil. But now the sun was beginning to stream through the window. The white enamel was shining and familiar, and the porch was empty. All outdoors was empty of any sound. There was nobody outside this morning—no one emptying a garbage can or trying to start a re-calcitrant car, no dogs whining at back doors for admittance, no babies being put out for the first morning sun.

The robin let out a soft preparatory whistle, and Gladys got up wearily and poured the steaming water into the coffeepot. She let it drip and went back to the window to stare out into the silence.

It was so quiet. Not even birds . . . *No birds!*

She looked out now, eagerly scouring the trees and telegraph poles with her eyes. Then she saw them on the ground right in back of the house—three sparrows on their backs with toothpick legs turned pleading to the sky; another across the lawn; a few more farther away. Those that hadn't died had gone. Where?

"Daddy, where's Daddy?" The swinging doors slammed against the wall under the impact of flying small fists and feet. Ginny stood breathless in the middle of the room, her pajama pants hiked above her waist to free her legs, the top dangling from her other hand to the floor. "Where's Daddy? I heard him talking. Where is he?"

"That wasn't Daddy, darling. Daddy didn't come home yet. That was a man who came to tell us Daddy was all right," she improvised. "He said Daddy will come home as soon as he can."

Ginny shook her head. "No," she said firmly. "That was my daddy. He came home. I heard him last night, and he never came up to say good night. I want my breakfast." She backed to a chair and sat down next to the kitchen table.

Gladys poured a cup of coffee. "I know what," she said. "We'll have a special Sunday breakfast."

"With French toast?"

"Yes. And all the trimmings."

Ginny was thinking. "We can't have a Sunday breakfast because it's Tuesday, because I went to school yesterday, and I didn't go the day before."

"Well, we'll pretend it's Sunday. Barbie!" she called into the front room.

"But if we pretend it's Sunday, then I don't have to go to school." Gladys hid her relief behind her coffee cup—one item to explain. "Right. Barbie!" she called again. "Don't you want your breakfast?"

No reply. Gladys shoved her cup regretfully away. She started for the door and found her younger daughter trailing puppylike, behind her.

"Sit down, Ginny. I'll be right back."

"I want my breakfast."

"I said I'll be right back."

"I want my breakfast now."

There was nothing to do about it. Gladys scooped a can of frozen orange juice out of the freezer, opened it, and mixed it with absent ease, then set the glass in front of her pouting daughter and said sternly, "You sit right there until I come back."



And finish that juice."

Barbie was prepared for her. "I'm not hungry," she said as soon as Gladys walked in.

"I don't care whether you're hungry or not. We're going to have breakfast, and a decent breakfast, too," Gladys told her. "If you don't want to eat you don't have to, but you do have to sit there and behave yourself."

With the whole world shaking around her, Gladys was still firm in one faith—the effects of the smell of French toast on her children's appetites and tempers. All she had to do was get Barbie in there.

"Listen, Barbie," she said quietly, "Ginny heard voices down here before, and she thought it was Daddy. I told her it was a man who came to tell us Daddy was all right. You've got to help me, Barbie," she pleaded desperately. "I know I know you must be feeling, but there's nothing we can do till we find out, one way or the other. There's no reason to get Ginny upset until we're sure. If I have to have trouble with her right now I just don't know what I'll do."

There was no answer still, but when she turned back to the kitchen Barbie followed her. And when she looked she found the girl's face fixed in a determined pattern of good humor. She set herself to getting breakfast with a concentration of energy that drove all thought of the children from her mind for a few minutes.

But when she sat down she discovered that Barbara was confining her facsimile of conversation to the little girl. On infrequent occasions when Gladys forced attention to herself she could evoke nothing but a furious glare. The silence outside was a constant oppressive lack in the background. Sooner or later Ginny was going to look out the window and see the birds. She couldn't put off explaining things to the little girl much longer. She'd have to find some way.

Against the general silence the one small noise was an uproar. The children began to jump up, then hesitated, remembering what had happened the night before. But this time Gladys was no less curious than they. All three of them rushed to the front room and stared out of the windows, watching the truck grind to a halt in front of the house.

"It's Daddy coming home!"

Gladys knew why the truck was there; so did Barbie. Across the little girl's head they stared at each other, while Gladys hunted dumbly for the words she felt she ought to find.

"But they said it would take hours . . ."

Barbie's protest was so much an echo of her own futile will to resist—with a choked cry, half of pity, half of relief, she threw out her arms to her daughter. And with a headlong rush of escape Barbara's contorted face came to rest on her mother's shoulder.

"It isn't my daddy—it's a lady in pants and she's got a washing machine. Mammy, she's got two of them and they can walk."

It was impossible to sustain the drama of the moment in the face of Ginny's announcement. Barbie had to look too.

"They are not washing machines, silly!" she told Ginny. "They're diving suits. But, Mother, why? . . . Oh!" The explanation dawned on her.

## NINE

"Mother, it's Veda! Ginny! Ginny, hurry, it's Veda! They've brought her home."

She struggled with bolts and latches and flung the door open just as Gladys came up from behind.

Coming up the front steps, flanked by the massive suits of the squadron, was Veda indeed—but a strange, unfamiliar Veda. Her face was pale, her eyes swollen, and she was covered from head to foot in a rough, flapping suit of men's overalls. Her tightly braided hair had come undone on one side and dangled in stiff iron-gray waves on her shoulder. The overall shirt, several sizes too large for her, was tucked bulkily inside the sagging denim bib. On her feet she wore nothing but a pair of cheap straw scuffs.

Gladys pulled Barbie back from the door as the strange trio approached. But she forgot about Ginny, who launched herself at Veda, with a violent sidewise attack that seriously upset the dignity of the squadman on the left and made him let go his hold on Veda's arm. Gladys thought he was going to be knocked off his feet, and wondered hysterically if they could get up by themselves when they fell in those suits. But nothing catastrophic happened. Veda disentangled herself from the clasp and the men both, the door shut, and they were all standing in an ill-assorted circle in the small front hall. There was a jumble of talk from the two children, mixed with indignant voicings from Veda and an attempt at explanation from one of the men. Gladys couldn't understand anything. She shook her head impatiently and motioned toward the living room.

They trooped in together, but when Veda tried to cross to the other side of the room one of the men took her firmly

the arm again.

Gladys turned on him indignantly. "Would you mind explain-ing " she began, and then interrupted herself. "Will you *please* be quiet"—she turned on the children sharply—"so I can hear what's going on?"

In the lull the man spoke up. "You Mrs. Mitchell?" Gladys nodded. "Sorry to bust in on you like this," he said, "but t woman here says she works for you and we have to get some information about her. Now if you'll just answer a few questions we won't take much time."

"I'll be happy to answer your questions"—Gladys was still in-dignant—"as soon as your friend takes his hands off m maid."

"She does work for you, then? I'm sorry, lady, but we can't let her go. She might be dangerous."

Dangerous? Veda? "I've never *heard* anything so ridiculous!" Gladys told him heatedly. "If you expect to find out anything at all from me you'll let her sit down decently right now." For the first time since the whole mess started she had found someone on whom she could righteously vent some of her wrath.

"Listen, lady"—the man who had been holding Veda's arm spoke for the first time—"this woman talked us into com over here to corroborate her story. If you don't feel like co-oper-atin'—"

Gladys ignored him. "Now, Veda." She took the offensive. "You sit down, and if they bother you any more I'll repo them im-mediately."

"Mrs. Mitchell." It was the first man again, and he seemed to be trying not to laugh. "You probably don't realize that what you're doing is obstructing the path of justice. This woman is a suspected saboteur."

"Suspected *what*?"

"That's what I said. You got a radio; you know how the bombs came over. Well, every one of them bombs had a r beacon set to bring it in to its target, and every one of them beacons was set by an enemy agent. We have to find the people who did it, and find 'em fast. Now do you want to help, or don't you?"

"All right," Gladys sighed. But she still protested weakly. "Only I don't see why he has to hang onto her arm like tha

"First of all, what's her name?" The man overrode her objection smoothly. He took a notebook out of the zippered pocket in his suit and dug for a pencil.

"Veda Klopak."

"Age?"

Gladys saw a look of alarm chase across Veda's face and heard Barbic, behind her, snickering. Veda had been an official thirty-nine ever since she came to work for them. Some rapid mental figuring produced a doubtful answer. "I do know for sure, but I think about fifty-six or -seven." Veda stopped shaking her head and looked relieved.

The squadman hadn't missed Veda's vigorous negatives or Barbara's snicker, either. He was smiling when he said, "That checks close enough. Address?"

"I'd have to look it up," Gladys said. "I know it's in the East Bronx, but I don't remember the number since the last t she moved."

"Know how long she's been there?"

"Oh yes." Gladys thought back quickly. "It was just after Christ-mas she moved in . . ." The year Tom broke his arm . that was the year before we got the washing machine . . . "Four years ago," she finished triumphantly.

"You don't know the present address?"

"I have it written down someplace. I don't know exactly where." Gladys was increasingly flustered. This wasn't a jo or a silly misunderstanding. They were *serious*!

Barbie was tugging at her sleeve, but she waved the girl aside and looked frantically for the telephone pad.

"Mother --"

"Just a minute, darling ..."

"But, Mother, here—"

"Barbie, I *said* wait a minute. I'm busy. Where in the world did I . . . ?" The pad was nowhere near the telephone.

"But, Mother . . . Mom . . . are you looking for the pad?" Gladys whirled around. "For heaven's sake! I've been loo all over for that. Where—"

"Well, I've been trying to give it to you."

Gladys riffled through the pages, trying to hide her confusion. Everything that happened this morning seemed to mak her feel more foolish. And now she couldn't find the street number in the book.

"I have the phone number here," she said finally, avoiding the amused eyes of the man with the notebook. "I don't

know *where* I've put the address, but I know I have it someplace. I can look in my bag upstairs; sometimes I just keep things in there on scraps of paper, I—"

"No need to do that. The phone number's enough. We can check it against the address we have."

"Well, I'd be glad to run up and find it for you," she assured him. It would be a pleasure to get out of that room for a moment, to have a chance to make sure her hair was combed, and to get hold of herself again. She took a step back.

"It don't look so good, lady." The other man, the one who had been holding onto Veda all along, spoke up again. "You bein' so anxious to get out of this here room. Mebbe you just better stick around here. My buddy told you the phone number was good enough."

Gladys found the number in the pad again and discovered that her fingers were trembling. The man's hard eyes and face, his expressionless voice, and even his choice of words were all straight out of a grade-B gangster picture. But he was real. It was all real.

"Why don't you ladies just sit down and make yourselves com-fortable?" the man with the notebook asked. "No need to get all bothered. All we want to do is ask a few questions."

"Sure, go ahead," his companion offered dryly, clearly excepting Veda, by his tone of voice as well as by his continuing tight grasp on her arm. "Make yourselves comfortable. I can see this is going to take some time."

It did. Endlessly Gladys repeated vital statistics about Veda, her household, herself, and events over the fifteen years during which Veda had worked for her.

But they were never satisfied. Over and over they went back and forth, covering the same ground from different directions, shooting an occasional question at Barbara, and even one or two, that she could answer, at Ginny, trusting more to the children's lack of dissimulation than to Gladys' greater knowledge.

She told them about old Mr. Klopak, whom she still firmly be-lieved had been the last real carpenter alive, about how Veda had come to work for her, part time, when Tommy was two, and Barbie just born, and old Mr. Klopak, repairing Tommy's old baby furniture for them, mentioned that his daughter was out of a job. Then Barbie got to play-pen age just as the recession struck, and Veda worked elsewhere for a couple of years. When Jon began making money in the early war years Veda had come back to them, and in one way or another had been with them ever since.

After her father died she had thought about coming to live with them, but never could make up her mind to do it. She had her own ways, and she was set in them; she knew they didn't fit into Gladys' household. Finally she had found a boardinghouse in the Bronx where she could sleep and fix herself an early breakfast, and keep her own things the way she liked them to be.

"I'll tell you, ma'am," he said finally, "we found this woman under suspicious circumstances. The whole neighborhood where she lived got a big dose of hot rain—"

Barbie sat up on the edge of her chair and opened her mouth to question him, but he went right on without giving her a chance.

"Everybody else around there—you understand, everybody for at least five blocks either way—is either dead right now or pretty sick. This one never got a drop on her. She had herself all wrapped up and shut in that room, like she had a pre-good idea what was going to happen. That don't look so good—especially when you know that there had to be somebody around there to set that gimmick in place in the river."

"I don't know anything about the gimmick you're talking about," Gladys protested for what seemed the hundredth time. "But I've already told you that's what Veda always does when she's sick. I've argued with her about it for years, but she's been doing it ever since I've known her. Besides which"—wearily she tried to hit a lighter note—"she couldn't possibly be an enemy agent. She just works too hard. She wouldn't have time."

She won a feeble smile from the friendlier of the two men, but nothing could prevail over the stony mask of the other. The ques-tioning was resumed, and now they wanted to know in detail everything Gladys could tell them about Veda's personal and medical idiosyncrasies.

But in the end they were satisfied; they had to be. And even then it seemed to Gladys that they were reluctant to give up a suspect.

"We'll leave the woman in your custody, Missus," Flinty Eyes said finally. He loosened his grasp on Veda's tortured arm. She stood there, rubbing the spot he'd been holding, angrily silent.

"But that means she stays here. You don't let her out of this house for any reason whatsoever, without clearance from the Security Office," he added. "I can't say I'm sure about her yet, but we can't waste time on cases like this one. Right now we got to prove, and double-prove, every accusation we make. Things get a little worse, they're going to realize security

more important than jury trials."

"Things get *worse*?" Gladys gasped. "But it said on the radio—you—the squadman in the truck told me—things c  
get worse."

"The radio isn't telling everything," the other man put in. "But you'll be okay as long as you're telling the truth. Things  
a lot better when they give our office some leeway—better than if it gets to the vigilante point, anyways."

"You just keep a close watch on her," his partner said. "We might be coming back to check. Can't say for sure."

Once more Gladys felt herself burning with a passion of indigna-tion, but this time she contained it. There was no  
purpose in flaring up now, when they were ready to go.

At the door the friendlier of the two paused. "You can call us through the Emergency Headquarters if you need us,  
Mitchell. Just ask for Security." His smile did not include Veda.

For a long time, it seemed, they stood there, after the final closing of the door, mother and daughters staring at the  
rumpled, ruffled woman whom they had known so long and so well, and were now really seeing for the first time.

At last Veda broke the silence.

"Coffee's boffin'," she said, sniffing.

## TEN

Gladys' hand leaped to her mouth. "I had it on to stay hot," she breathed. "I'll—"

She had to stop talking. She had to blink back tears and it washard to keep her mouth straight. Her voice promised  
quaver babyishly if she said another word.

She couldn't let the children see this; she couldn't act this way in front of Veda. She couldn't understand it either. Ve  
was back, and she wasn't alone any more, and here she was ready to cry because her coffee was spoiled.

She made a muffled noise that she hoped they would interpret as an apology or explanation, and dashed for the kitch  
She stood there, over the stove, staring down into the muddy remains of the steaming fresh pot of an hour ago—the pot  
had started to make when Dr. Levy came creaking and rattling the boards of the back porch, and finished making when  
left.

She filled the kettle once more and took the coffeepot over to the sink, letting hot water flow into it. She picked up  
plastic robin that went on the kettle spout. Cheer up! she thought hysterically. Cheer up! Cheer up!

Veda came through the swinging door and brushed past her, the ridiculous overalls flapping as she walked. Almost  
the door of the little back room, she turned back to the sink and deliberately turned off the hot-water faucet.

"I was rinsing that pot!" Gladys said too sharply, and immedi-ately regretted it. There was no sense taking out her  
feelings on Veda.

"Thought you might be wanting to save yer hot water." Veda's stony assurance was so normal it was incredible.  
"There's no tellin' how long you'll have it," she finished patiently, as if explaining matters to a small child.

"No telling . . . ? Yes, of course." Gladys looked curiously at the other woman. "Veda, how are things . . . outside?"

"Purty bad," she said laconically. "If you don't mind, Missus Mitchell, I'd like to kinder change my things, an' we kin  
afterwards."

"Oh—is there anything you need? I don't know if my things would fit . . ."

"Thank you jest the same, Missus Mitchell, but I got everything I need. Lucky thing I allus kept some things here."

"Well, go ahead." Gladys smiled. She surveyed the cold food and scattered dishes on the table. "I'll start some more  
breakfast. You must be hungry too."

"I could use a bite to eat." She disappeared into the back room.

It was a shock, on this strange morning, to see Veda emerge, ten minutes later, looking exactly as always: cotton ho  
dress, white apron, shiny black shoes, gray cotton stockings, smooth hair severely pinned back in a braided bun—no  
different from a thousand other mornings.

Gladys became acutely conscious, once more, of her own di-sheveled appearance, remembering the unbelievable  
moment when the man had interpreted her desire to escape upstairs as part of a deep-dyed plot. And now Veda would  
let her escape. She started off with a vague murmur about washing up, and Veda reminded her tartly that there was a si  
right in front of her.

"Who you fixin' up fer?" she demanded pointedly. "You sit right down an' have some of that fresh coffee. Plenty of t

fer primpin' all the rest of your life. You look about beat right now, 'an' you need a little coffee in you more'n you need comb."

Gladys lacked the will to disagree. She rinsed her face in clear cold water and sat down once again at the white-enameled table, letting Veda take over at the stove.

"I don't know how you do it," she said plaintively, watching the older woman move briskly around the room. "You must have had a worse night than I did."

"I dunno." She cleared off dirty plates swiftly and replaced them with clean settings. "Look like you been up all night, you must of had a hard day yestidday, with me not in." She set bacon to sizzling on the stove, cracked an egg in the white bowl. "You want more French toast, I guess? I'll mix up a little cinnamon sugar. The little one goes crazy for it. All I did was sleep all day," she went on, "right up until them men come an' dragged me out of bed, an' that wasn't till the middle of the night. Had myself three days' sleep before that happened."

"Dragged you out of bed?"

Barbie was standing at the door, holding it open, and Gladys saw Ginny's head peeking out around her. Both children were clearly enthralled by the picture of the two heavily suited men invading that prim boardinghouse bedroom and *dragging* her out. Gladys thought she saw the older woman's face crimson, too, but Veda was turned away.

"Some people are never happy without they're asking questions," Veda told the wall. "Good way to get into trouble, too," she informed the frying pan. Finally, turning to Barbie, she finished, "I'll tell you everything you want to know. Was that for your mother, and you too, the Lord knows where I'd be now. But I ain't goin' to tell it more'n once, so you better wait till I got my breakfast on the table, an' then I'll tell you once and fer all." She slid the spatula under a piece of egg-puffed bread and flopped it over to expose a thick golden crust. "Once I finish up, I ain't answerin' *no more questions*. That clear?"

"Um-humh." Barbie knew when to mollify Veda. "Okay. Only you have to really tell us the whole story."

"She'll tell you," Gladys said firmly, "just exactly as much as she wants to, not one word more. Is *that* clear?" She was watching Ginny, who was standing there soaking it all in, wondering how much the little girl had already understood, how much she would understand of Veda's story, how much Veda would say in front of her.

While she wondered Ginny found her tongue. "Did my daddy save you from the accident in the city?" she demanded.

"Your daddy?" Veda turned around, surprised, then shocked. "You mean your daddy never come—" She caught herself, then finished the sentence. "He never come after me at all, he didn't. Can you imagine him savin' other people and never thinking about poor old Veda?"

"Mr. Mitchell ain't home yet, then?" Veda chose her words carefully, and Gladys was grateful, but she couldn't play along. Not now, not any more. Later maybe. All she could do was sit there and think about the dead birds in the grass, about the squadmen's heavy suits and Veda's airtight room. And Jon, Jon who was in the city . . . still in the city.

"No," she said, "no, no, he didn't come home yet. No, he—"

"Missus Mitchell." She felt Veda's hand firm on her elbow; the coffee cup in her other hand was shaking. "Missus Mitchell, you must be jest about wore out. Think you kids'd have more sense an' consideration fer your mother . . ." She directed a scathing, un-warranted attack on the children, transforming their uncomfortable wonder promptly to outraged defense. "Poor woman's been up all this time, all wore out, and never one of you had sense enough to know she'd need some rest. Come on now." She took Gladys' arm and steered her toward the door.

"But I don't want to --"

"You stop that now, Missus Mitchell. You sound jest like Ginny. You got to get some sleep."

"I can't . . ." Somehow they were in the living room. She *couldn't* go to bed. Something she had to find out. About Barbie. She pulled her arm loose from Veda's guiding grasp and headed for the couch. "I'll just rest awhile in here," she said as firmly as she could. "I'll be fine right here."

Veda tried to make her get up, but she wouldn't. After a while the other woman relented and even brought her her half-finished coffee. She had to stay up; she *had* to.

Regretfully she put the empty coffee cup down. She wanted more, but the kitchen was an endless number of steps away. She shrugged down in the corner of the sofa, inside the red wool robe, away from the invading chill in the air, away from loneliness and fear, inside the warm wool present from Jon.

She wanted more coffee, and she wanted a blanket, but it was too much effort to get up for either. She had started shivering, and now it was increasing. She called out, but something was wrong with her voice. She tried again and this time it worked, but a burst of laughter from the kitchen drowned out her efforts. She felt infinitely sorry for herself.

"Oh, Jon, I need you," she whispered out loud. "Jon darling, please come home. Come home quick. I can't stand any more." Tears welled up in her eyes, and she dabbed them furiously away. They were all laughing in there. Everybody else was all right; they had slept and rested, and she alone had lived through every minute of this horrible night. Barbie was all right too. She couldn't imagine, now, what had possessed her to let that crazy teacher in. She hoped someone caught him before he got into any real trouble. With her own daughter safe, she felt sorry for him. She hoped he wasn't really sick and that he would be all right.

She got up to get the blanket from the chest in the corner, and the tears still standing in her eyes made it hard for her to see; she stopped where she was and wiped them away, glancing guiltily toward the door, relieved to find nobody had witnessed her foolish scene.

She heard the radio droning on, turned down low. It was right in front of her. Once more she brushed away the tears until she could see the dial, and made it a little louder, to catch the evasive words that had been tickling her ears since she sat down on the sofa.

They were reading off a list of names. She sank down in Jon's big chair near the radio and tucked the blanket around her shoulders, and under her feet. Warmth flowed over her. The names stopped on the radio, and the announcer repeated what she had not quite heard before.

"We will continue to deliver personal messages of importance on this station, and to give out lists of survivors and casualties. Keep tuned to this station, and keep listening. There will be no more telephone messages to relatives of survivors and casualties. If you live in middle Westchester and are waiting for news of someone in your home, you will receive it on this station. Keep listening.

"Mrs. Hanson Delaney, of 104 Bracklane Street, to her son, John Delaney. Mrs. Delaney is safe at her sister's home on West Hope Street.

"Bob Bellows, to his wife, Nita Bellows. Mr. Bellows is an emergency squadman and is safe and at work but unable to come home.

"Message to Mrs. Lydia Johnson. Your two daughters, Jenny and Ruth, are in the Emergency Hospital in this area, being treated for radiation disease symptoms.

"To Mrs. R. L. Petronelli. Your son, Peter, is in the hospital in this area, being treated for radiation disease.

"To Mrs. Harlan Frame, of Purchase Street. Your sister, Amy, and her daughter, Gladys, are in the hospital, being treated for radiation disease and shock.

"To Mrs. Emory Bar . . . We interrupt these messages for the latest list of survivors from this area, rescued in the city. All of the following persons have been checked into an emergency station and will be evacuated as soon as their condition is diagnosed.

"Please listen carefully. Someone you know may be among the persons found. John Damien, 1413 Broad Street; Alexander Emory, 105 Haimes Street; Cynthia Evy, 1214 St. Clare Avenue; Michael Foucek, 479 North . . ."

Gladys listened curiously as the names, foreign and familiar, harsh and melodious, individual and undistinguishable, rolled out of the radio in a steady procession. From time to time a thrill of compassion or of sympathetic joy would move her, when the name of a friend or neighbor penetrated the gray haze in which she was wrapped, inside the warm blanket on the soft chair.

The butcher's son (in the city buying meat?) was reported safe at a checking-out station. Old Mrs. Cross, down the street, was dead of a heart attack, found in the street by a rescue truck. Tim Claragh, who was Peggy Turner's cousin, was doing rescue work in the city. "Watch out for looters and rioters. Refugees have gotten through part of the barricade around the city. Admit no strangers. There will be music for fifteen minutes. . . ."

They never said Jon's name. They never said anything.

*Jon! Jon!* It was like a knife, cutting the soft protective haze, cutting away the fog and fuzziness too. She struggled out of the suffocating blanket, reached over, and twirled the dial frantically.

All she could get was static. She managed to climb out of the chair and crouched, shivering, in front of the radio.

"Mother!" The surprise in Barbie's voice was fresh and almost amused; then immediately it was terrified. "Mom! What is it? What's the matter, Mom?"

"Nothing." Gladys was irritated. She must look ridiculous.

She stood up, trying to do it easily and gracefully, almost lost her balance, and had to grab the arm of Jon's big chair for support. She saw Barbie's face, drawn into a tense peak of fear.

"Mom, what is it? What did they say, what did it say on the radio now?"

"Nothing. I'm all ri—" Then the sense of the girl's question penetrated. "Nothing, it's nothing at all. They were reading things off, and I lost the station. I was trying—"

"Lost the station?" Barbie was incredulous. "But you couldn't! They—"

"Well, I'm sorry." Even to herself, Gladys sounded peevish, but she couldn't think how to do anything about it. "I'm sorry, but I couldn't help it. They started playing music, and I tried to get another station, and then I couldn't find anything all." It was all so perfectly simple.

"But you couldn't lose it," Barbie repeated too patiently, "because it's the only one we can get. All you can get on the others is static."

Well, I know that, all right, Gladys thought. She looked across the vast space to the sofa, thinking how many footsteps it would take to get there, and that she would have to let go of the chair arm to do it.

"What made you think . . . ?"

"I don't know," she answered shortly. Why didn't Barbie leave her alone? "I guess I'm just too tired to think." She couldn't remember now why she had wanted to keep hearing names. Somebody wasn't going to call up. She sat down again in the chair. "It's chilly in here, isn't it?" she asked, marveling at how her voice had cleared up. It was normal and distinct now.

"Mom . . . Mom, are you all right? Mom, you're not—" Barbie was terrified about something. Her voice sounded pulled out, tight, like a rubber band about to snap. "You're not . . . sick?"

"Don't be silly!" Gladys didn't want to be annoyed. She laughed, but it didn't sound right.

"But, Mom, it's not cold in here at all. It's warm, and . . . you seem so funny. Mom, you're not sick, are you?"

Someone was tugging determinedly at her arm—Veda.

"C'mon, you're goin' upstairs, and wash your face and go to bed." Resisting, her fingers tightened on Jon's chair, and she remembered, her fingers remembered for her, what her dazed mind refused to hold.

Personal information no longer by telephone. They would not call. They'd never call. It would be on the radio. They would tell her about Jon on the radio.

"Somebody will have to listen all the time . . ."

Veda tugged again, and Gladys stopped trying to explain or protest. She'd told them now; she'd remembered. Obediently, childishly, she let herself be led up the stairs.

"Come on now," Veda urged her. "You wash your face, and we'll get you into bed."

She floated through the bathroom door and kept on floating. She was in bed, but she remembered she was in the bathroom. No, in bed. Floating.

He was walking toward her and he kept coming, very slowly coming on, but he never got any closer; she couldn't see him clearly, although the light was very bright, red and bright, but she saw a shape, not his shape, and still she knew who was; he was coming on all the time, walking toward her, and if she waited long enough, if she could keep her eyes on him on the shape that had to be him, everything would be all right.

She was floating, but he was coming, Jon was coming. It was hard for him, and she didn't understand why, until the clouds cleared away. The red light was on everything, and she saw the treadmill in between shredded wisps of pink marshmallow-fluff clouds. He was walking on the treadmill and trying as hard as he could not to let it pull him backward.

## ELEVEN

The cries got closer, ringing in her ear, and the treadmill let out a wailing screech as it disappeared from sight. Gladys sat up in bed, still holding the twisted damp sheet in her hand.

"There now, Missus Mitchell, you're awake all right now." Veda tugged the sheet gently away from her perspiring hair and smoothed it out. She started to lie back again, but Veda plumped out the pillows and put one in back of the other for support, then fitted the breakfast tray neatly over her knees.

"Now *there*," she said again, and lifted the coffeepot to pour it where the beckoning aroma would rise right under her nose. "You drink that an' you'll feel fine."

Gladys picked up the coffee cup and had to put it down on the tray again to steady it. She tried both hands next time. The cup was hot, but it felt good.

"You could of used a little more sleep, but that telephone never stopped ringin', and I heard you thrashin' around up

here. Can't hardly seem that kind of sleep would do you much good."

The telephone kept ringing. Then part of the dream wasn't a dream. Jon . . . that part wasn't a dream either. Barbie

"Who called?" She remembered too much now, she could tell just where the dream began and ended.

"Yer friend, Missus Crowell. She's been callin' all day. Seems mighty worried—"

"Who else?" She had no mind for Edie Crowell's worries now.

"Wasn't nobody else."

"Not even the laboratory? Didn't they call up? About Barbie?"

"Nope. Ain't nobody called about Barbie."

"What time is it?"

"Must be close on four o'clock. It was more'n half past three when I was in the kitchen."

So late! She didn't feel as if she'd slept that long.

"Did the truck come?"

Veda looked puzzled.

"Didn't they come yet?" Gladys asked again. "The squad truck, with the doctor?"

"Oh, them! With that Mr. Turner from across the way? They come . . . let's see . . . aroun' noontime. Ginny was takin' a nap. She was so cranky, with all the goings on this mornin', I fixed her lunch early—she didn't hardly eat a thing at that—it was right after I got her into bed that Mr. Turner come in."

"Did they have any news—about Barbie? Did they tell you anything?"

"Couldn't rightly say, Missus. The doctor, he talked to Barbie some, and Mr. Turner, he jest wanted to talk to you. There wasn't nobody else good enough."

"They didn't say anything about the analysis?"

Veda just looked blank. I never told her, Gladys realized. All that time, when she was so tired, she had been trying to remember something, something she had to tell Veda. She had remembered something, but it wasn't the right thing. I never told her about Barbie!

"Didn't Barbie tell you?"

"Mom!" A shout of joy vibrated through the house, and Barbara came pounding up the stairs and skidded to a halt inside the door. "Mom, it was on the radio. Just now! About Tom!"

Gladys sat up so suddenly she almost spilled her coffee. "What?"

"He's all right!" Barbie had caught her breath. "He's in the Army. It didn't say where, but it gave a serial number. I wrote it down." She waved a scrap of paper triumphantly under her mother's nose. "Oh, Mom, he's all right!"

"Thank God!" It wasn't just something to say, a symbol of relief. It was a deeply religious thanksgiving. She put the coffee down on the bed table and let Barbie wrap her in an exuberant embrace.

"Mummmmmmmmy—y." Barbie disentangled herself and dropped the scrap of paper on the blanket. "Here, you keep this. I'll go take care of Ginny. I got so excited, I forgot she was sleeping." She was gone almost as swiftly as she had come.

"Is Ginny just getting up? When did she go to sleep?" Her mouth put the question, but her ears hardly heard the reply because of the whirling thoughts in her mind.

"She was all wore out. Jest couldn't keep up with ever'thing goin' on."

Thank God, thank God! He's safe! Gladys answered Veda with a smile, but inside she prayed. Tom's safe; now Barbie. Please, God. Please . . . She couldn't remember praying for years and years, not really praying. She went to church and said the words, but this feeling, this—believing . . . Tom was all right. God could hear her prayers. Barbie, and . . . stopped the thought, half formed. Maybe it was silly, but she thought God had enough to do, watching out for the children, she would have to worry out the part about Jon by herself. Prayers and thanks and fears swirled around in her mind, pushing Jon out, with only an instant's terrified half memory of seeing him disappear, once before, into shapeless, formless terror, on a road that moved forever away.

Veda was saying something. She wiped her hands on the sticky sheet and made herself think of Tom, nothing else. Thank God, *thank God*. She smiled brilliantly at Veda. Everybody'll be all right.

"Excuse me, Missus Mitchell, I don't mean to ask questions . . . but all this time you been so worried about Tom wanting to go in the Army. An' now he's gone an' done it, you're practically crying from joy."

"But he's alive, Veda! Of course I don't want him in the Army. He's all right, don't you understand?" Gladys stared at the other woman incredulously. It was so silly to have to explain. "He's all right," she repeated. "He didn't get *hurt*!"

Veda's mouth opened, but no word came out. "You mean," she said finally, "it's . . . *all over*? It's every place?"



"You didn't *know*?"

"All I knew was here in New York. You mean there was bombs all over? In all the cities?"

Rapidly Gladys filled in all she had heard the day before, most of it news to Veda, who had known only of the disaster in the city.

"Didn't Barbara tell you anything?" Gladys demanded.

"Didn't have much chance for talking," Veda explained. "Barbie jest hung onto that radio all day, except when she was tellin' stories to Ginny in the morning, and a little while in the afternoon when the doctor come." Veda smiled. "She sure enough told me ever' time they got some new rules out for what we had to do, but I guess she wore out her voice jest tellin' me that. She was kind of mad at me—I wouldn't tell nothin' about what happened to me, not till you got up. Seemed like you was kind of worried about that before you went to sleep." She smiled again. "So I jest told the kids I wasn't goin' to tell that story more'n once, and it'd have to wait till you got up. Guess she was kind of gettin' even. Anyways, I was too busy doin' so much doin' so much talkin'." She explained that she had spent the day trying to do everything she could to prepare for emergencies. She had washed all the dirty linens, except those on Gladys' bed, and boiled as much water as she could get into the available jars.

Her voice went on, reciting a narrative of the day's activities, but Gladys was only half listening. Barbie had never even told Veda about herself! She interrupted Veda's report to explain about Barbie. "And the laboratory never called?" she asked.

"Ain't nobody called but Missus Crowell."

"Did she want anything special? She kept calling last night. First she wanted to come over, and then she was afraid to."

"Says she's sick," Veda answered laconically. "I kind of thought I might run over and take a look at her, but I ain't had time up till now. You think . . . ?"

"Sick?" Gladys demanded. "What kind of sick? *What's the matter with her?*"

"Couldn't make out. Didn't know she was such a *particular* friend"—Veda clearly did not approve of Edie Crowell—"or I'd of found out more'n I did."

"She's not such a particular friend." Gladys pushed the tray away and reached for her robe. "I told you she kept calling up yesterday and . . ." She faltered. And what? If she has it, that doesn't mean Barbie does. "And I feel kind of responsible if she is sick," she finished weakly. "I kept telling her she was imagining it all; I kept telling her she didn't have it. *What's the matter with her?*"

"Told you, I couldn't make out, she kept talkin' so much. Nothin' serious, I don't think, but soon's you get up, mebbe jest run over there an' see fer myself."

"Is it all right to go out?"

"Long as you stay near yer own house. They got some kind of curfew goin', though. Nobody allowed out after eight o'clock. Barbie kin tell you better. She heard it on the radio. When she told me, I thought we could mebbe lay in some supplies, and I went down to Monnassey's, but they got a big sign printed up, 'No Business.' Said it was under the protection of the Emergency Headquarters."

Gladys shrugged into her robe, feeling again the familiar comfort of the soft wool. It was silly, having it mean so much to her, but in some way it had come almost to replace Jon in her mind. She pulled it tight around her waist and knotted the belt. She was fully awake now; there were things she had to think about.

"How can we get food?" she asked briskly. "There must be some way."

"The sign didn't say. Seems like Mr. Turner would know, but he jest couldn't be bothered talkin' to me."

"Did he say when they were coming back? Why didn't you wake me up?"

"You needed your sleep," Veda insisted.

"You don't think he had anything important to tell me, do you?" Gladys controlled her irritation with Veda. Veda was probably right. She had needed the sleep.

"No'm, I don't," Veda said sharply. It was too respectful. Gladys waited, knowing there was more coming.

"Tell you, Missus Mitchell, this ain't none of my business, an' I know I oughter likely as not keep my mouth shut, but I don't like that Mr. Turner. I jest plain don't like the way he was askin' fer you, or the way he couldn't talk to nobody else. Never did think much, though I ain't one to gossip, the way he treats that nice wife of his. I hear plenty," she added as Gladys, surprised, started to protest, "that ain't talked about except in the kitchen, an' I ain't passed it all on to you neitha. Like I said, it's none o' my business, but it wouldn't hurt you to keep an eye on him."

"Veda," Gladys protested, "I don't know what kind of talk you've heard—" It was surprising enough to have her ad-

she had ever listened to idle gossip; in Veda's book, loose talk and aimless questioning were cardinal sins. "But I don't think you should say things like that about Mr. Turner. He's been very nice and—"

"That's jest what I'm talkin' about."

"He's been very nice," Gladys repeated firmly, "and you have to remember that those other men might have told him I might have said something to him . . . well . . ." Why did I ever get into this? "Well, they *could* have said something about you being under suspicion." She saw hurt bewilderment on Veda's face. "After all," she added hastily, "just because you know I know that you didn't do anything, that doesn't mean *they* believe it. And what's more," she beat a hasty retreat to the original subject, "I suppose it's all those trips of his you were thinking of. Well, they weren't as mysterious as they seemed. He was—"

"No'm," Veda broke in again. "Mebbe I listened to some talk I shouldn't of, but I got some sense. What I'm talkin' about ain't what happened when he *wasn't* there—"

"Mommy!"

A flying wedge of five-year-old burst through the door and clambered into her arms, dripping large wet kisses all the way.

"Mommy . . ." Ginny voiced her grievance promptly. "They didn't let me go out *all day*!"

"Didn't they? I know what." Gladys freed herself from the smothering embrace. "I know something you can do—something you like."

"What is it, Mommy?" Ginny tagged after her to the closet. "What can I do? Can I go outside, Mommy? I'm tired of stories."

"Oh, something much better than that," Gladys teased. "Something that's much more fun."

"What is it? Please tell me. Please, Mommy, please."

"Well . . ." There it was, last year's dinner gown; and the black sandals that were beginning to be too worn. She reached for a box on the shelf and found a filmy silk scarf with only two or three little holes in it. Another box produced an elegant sequined bag, shiny with silver and purple. And sequins to pick up all over the house, too!

"Well . . ." she temporized, not letting Ginny look past her. There—the big hat with the long pink feather.

"There." She turned and dumped the glamorous pile at Ginny's feet. "*That's* what!"

Ginny was, briefly, speechless. But she recovered before Gladys could get out into the bathroom, in time to ask, "Can I put on lipstick too? And *powder*?"

"And," Gladys finished for her, nodding, "perfume too—the little blue bottle, and don't use more than half of it!" Going into the bathroom, she wondered if the last bit of humor might have been too subtle, and almost went back. Oh, it doesn't matter! she decided recklessly.

Rinsing her face, Veda's worried words came back to her, and she chuckled at herself in the mirror, enjoying the picture of Gladys Mitchell, settled mother of three, being wickedly pursued by Jim Turner—beefy face, bedrock convictions and all. Veda really thinks things like that happen! She tried to imagine herself cowering before an amorous airtight suit. "No, no, a thousand times . . ."

The muffled ringing of the phone downstairs interrupted her private melodrama. She pushed the door open and saw Veda, loaded down with dirty linens, presumably from her own bed, going by on her way to the stairs.

"That woman again!" she tossed over her shoulder to Gladys. "I'll jest bet it's that woman again. . . ." She disappeared down the staircase, still muttering.

Gladys took the time to dry her face and run a comb through her hair, glad now that she had finally had it cut short. She glanced quickly in the mirror, surprised to find that her face was still the same as it had been when she started down to answer Veda's phone call just—thirty-six hours ago. A day and a half . . . two days and a night since Jon had kissed her good-by.

She was downstairs while Veda was still waiting for a connection to be made.

"It's some switchboard operator." She handed over the phone happily enough. "She said, 'Wait a minnit,' and then nothin' happened at all."

"Hello?" Gladys spoke sharply into unresponsive silence; but the phone wasn't dead. "Don't you know who it was? What kind of operator was it?"

Veda only shook her head.

"Hello, is this 1439 Maple Avenue?"

"Yes." Gladys hastily uncovered the mouthpiece. "Yes, who is this, please?"

"Emergency Headquarters lab," the young man's voice said concisely. "We got a report here on an analysis from your house. You want to take the report?"

"Yes, please." Gladys pulled open the little drawer in the table, rummaged for a pencil, and found the back of an envelope to write on. "Go ahead."

"We performed an analysis on Sample No. 2036C, on request of Mrs. Gladys Mitchell, and of James Turner, squadman for the area," he reeled off monotonously. "Sample was of fifteen-year-old girl, briefly exposed to radioactive rain, reported ill . . ." Briefly exposed to radioactive rain . . . radioactive . . . active rain . . . radioactive rain . . . The words kept ringing in her ears. ". . . quantity of alpha emitters present in the sample, probably residual plutonium, apparently inhaled or swallowed. Insufficient evidence—"

"Excuse me." Gladys struggled for breath to form the words. "Could you repeat that, please? please, I'm sorry, but I didn't get all

"Okay. Try and get it this time." He didn't mind showing his irritation. "Analysis showed a small quantity of alpha emitters present in the sample, probably residual . . ."

Small quantity! She allowed herself the space of the words she'd already heard to savor that, knowing it probably didn't matter, that a little was likely as bad as a lot, but holding on, while she could, to the idea that Barbie might, after all, be all right.

". . . ficient evidence of lethal or dangerous dose. No hospitalization required." She had to hold onto the table for support, dropping the pencil from her free hand, as her tensed body went limp with relief. She almost missed the rest. "Blood count will be necessary for final diagnosis. Please request the medical assistant on your squad truck to take blood counts as indicated, and submit to lab."

"But . . . I don't understand." This last threat was meaningless, absurd. He'd just said Barbie was all right. "What are blood counts for? Why

"You got all that information handed out to you in mimeographed sheets," he told her acridly. "Don't *any* of you take any trouble to read 'em?"

"I'm sorry," she appeased; he had to answer one more question. "I should have seen that, I guess, but could you just tell me, please, whether this means that she's . . . *sick* . . . or not?"

"It means I don't know. It looks like not; but she still could be. If you don't understand what it says on that sheet you've got, the doctor will explain it to you when he comes around. I can't give courses in radiation disease over the telephone. I wouldn't even have called, except that your squadman specially asked me to. He'll explain everything to you."

The phone clicked emphatically at the other end.

"It's okay, Mom." Barbie's voice, so close by, startled her out of all relation to its timid tones. "I read up all about it. Dr. Spinelli—that young doctor in the truck," she reminded Gladys anxiously, "explained it all to me; probably we won't know anything till tomorrow—" She stopped, alarmed by the horrified look on her mother's face.

"You read . . . ?" Gladys began, then realized the more urgent part of what her daughter had said. "What did Dr. Spinelli explain to you?"

"About radiation sickness." Defiance tinged the hesitation in her voice; she had known Gladys wouldn't like this. "When he took the blood count he told me just what I should—"

"Took the blood count?" Gladys demanded. "But they just called now to tell me he should take it. What made him call?"

"I told him, that's why," Barbara retorted. "I told him all about being sick last night, and how I didn't tell you when I should have, and how you called Emergency Headquarters when you found out, but we hadn't heard anything, and I couldn't find the information sheets they kept talking about on the radio, and I asked him how come we didn't have any. He said he was sure we did, but anyhow, he gave me another one about radiation disease, and told me just what would happen to me if I was sick, what they'd do at the hospital and everything." She stopped, out of breath, and watched for her mother's reaction.

Gladys stood still, silent. She remembered seeing the sheets on the sofa in those hectic sleepy moments in the morning and hiding them. She remembered how they had frightened her when she read them. If Barbie had read . . . "hair may fall out . . . itching, burning, skin discomforts . . ." That's what it said on that sheet. ". . . hemorrhages . . . boils, blisters . . ."

Maybe Barbie thought she knew a lot more than she really did; the doctor couldn't have told her too much. In any case it was ridiculous to get angry now.

"Well!" She searched for, and found, a small smile. "So you're an expert on radiation disease, are you?" She managed to turn it from sarcasm to a friendly joke in mid-sentence. "Come and tell me about it while I get something to eat."

She could smell bacon on the stove in the kitchen, and found her anger and bewilderment both melting under the sudden attack of ravenous hunger.

She almost made it, but not quite. The pounding on the front door was both loud and urgent.

Gladys turned, took one step forward. But they can't! They can't be here already!

That was foolish. It didn't even sound like the way the squadman knocked. It could be—it could be *good!*

The pounding didn't stop even at the noise of the bolt shooting out, not until the door was actually opened. Even then the woman at the door had her hand raised to knock again, and almost fell against Gladys before she grabbed the door and managed to stop the swing of her own momentum.

"Tried to call," she said. "Tried and tried. Couldn't call, so I came." A caricature of a smile said clearly, "Wasn't that clever of me?"

She withdrew her hand from the doorpost and steadied herself on high-heeled gray satin mules. "*May I come in?*" she enunciated elegantly.

"Edie! My God!" Gladys stared, uncomprehending, at the mud on the little satin slippers, at the dusty train of flowing gray chiffon gown, at the stains that chased down the front. "For God's sake, come in!" Automatically, now, she locked and bolted the door before she turned around to find Edie wavering unsteadily, right behind her in the hall. In the living room Barbie and Veda both stood watching.

Edie stayed where she was, waiting—for what Gladys didn't know; but she seized the opportunity.

"Edie!" She slipped in between the visitor and her family, and breathed one quick horrified question. "Are you . . . sick? Is it the *disease*?"

"Of course it is!" Edie answered shrilly.

She's got to keep quiet! Gladys took Edie's arm, tried to lead her toward the stairs, away from the living room. Don't let her say anything else, not yet! She'd find some way to explain it to Barbie.

"I told you I was. I told you and told you, and I told them, and nobody would believe me." Still that elegant painstaking enunciation of each syllable. "Nobody!" She sat down abruptly on the bottom step, almost tripping on the hem of the gown as she turned. "Nobody!" Then she covered her face with her hands and proceeded to cry, in staccato, articulated bursts of sound. It was the first time Gladys had ever heard anybody really cry, "Boo-hoo."

At just that moment a strange vision appeared on the stairs over Edie's head. Small feet in wobbling high-heeled shoes came first, reaching uncertainly for placement on the treads; voluminous wine velvet folds of skirt swayed precariously above the bare ankles, and finally small, clenched fists came into sight, struggling to hold the bunched velvet fabric high above the shaky footing. Eventually Ginny was completely visible, all the way to the tipmost peak of the plumed hat.

She was so preoccupied with the problem of the descent that she almost tripped over the woman on the stairs. But as soon as she became aware of the obstruction she forgot all about her fabulous finery. Dropping one whole fistful of velvet she pointed an inquiring index finger and opened her mouth wide.

"Who?"

Gladys turned appealingly to Veda, who had made no move throughout the scene, but stood grimly sniffing and disapproving. Now, apparently determined to misunderstand, she did nothing about the children. Instead she took a step forward.

"You leave that one to me, Missus Mitchell," she said almost menacingly. "I know what to do for the likes of her."

Gladys turned to the child on the stairs. "Will you stop staring your eyes out?" she demanded. "It's none of your business, Barbie!" Inspiration hit her. "Run downstairs and get some clean linens. I want to put Mrs. Crowell to bed. And take Ginny with you," she added as the older girl started off reluctantly.

"Veda." Gladys turned back to the maid angrily. "For heaven's sake, she's—"

"She's nothin' but stupid drunk," Veda finished for her.

## TWELVE

"Mommy . . . will Miss Crole die?" Ginny perched on a favorite chair by the kitchen table, munching a cracker and waving her feathered hat in front of the window.

"Why, baby, don't be silly!" Gladys dumped the contents of a can of soup into a pot and measured out a canful of boiled water from a pitcher on the table. I've got to stop jumping every time one of them says anything. I ought to be used to it by now. She put the pot down on the stove, sniffing. The reek of alcohol still seemed to cling to her nose, but through it there was a faint odor of gas.

"But, Mommy, will she be dead—like the birdies?"

"Like the . . . ?" Oh! She had forgotten, forgotten all about that. "No," she said sensibly. "Of course not. She just isn't feeling well. She'll be all right."

"Will they take her away to the hospital?"

"No, I don't think so. I don't think she's really very sick."

"Did she throw up?" Ginny climbed down and moved closer to her mother. "She smelled funny, like she threw up."

The stove wouldn't light either. That accounted for the smell; the pilot was out. Gladys reached for a match, struck it, and had trouble getting the flame to light. She kept hunting for the right answer to Ginny's questions and struggling with the stove at the same time.

"Did she throw up like Barbie?"

Gladys forgot all about the stove. "What do you mean, like Barbie?" She put down the blackened match and reached for the little girl's face, turned it up so their eyes met. "What do *you* know about Barbie being sick?"

"She throwed up—threw up," the little girl corrected herself hastily. "In the middle of the night." Any time after dark she would go to the middle of the night to Ginny. "I had to go to the bathroom, to make Number One," she added, explicit as always, "and she wouldn't let me come in, and I said I'd holler, because I never wet my pants any more, do I? I knowed you didn't want me to wet my pants, and I told Barbie I'd holler so she let me in." It was all coming out fast now, in a virtuous rush of confession. "And I looked and looked to see what made such a funny smell, it was like part of the smell on Miss Crole. Was she going to the hospital and die like the birdies?"

"Of course not." She couldn't stop to consider niceties of the answer now. "Why didn't you call me when you woke up? Why didn't you tell me Barbie was sick? How do you know she was?"

"She didn't clean up good. I looked and looked and then I saw some on the floor, and she made me cross my heart. I didn't hope to die, but I could tell you now, because she told herself, didn't she, Mommy? Mommy, how do you *know* Miss Crole isn't going to be dead?"

"I *don't* know it," Gladys had to admit. "I don't know anything like that, but I don't see any reason why she should be. She isn't even very sick." Thoughtfully Gladys turned back to the stove. The soup still sat, lumpy and solid, in the lukewarm water; underneath the pot the flame was weak and blue. She reached to turn the burner up and found it was already turned all the way. That didn't make sense. She turned it off and tried lighting another one. Somewhere she could remember a stove that acted that way. Of course, the one in the Quonset hut, where they used bottled gas. Whenever the pressure got low . . .

"Mommy."

"Just a minute, baby." Worried now, she tried the other burners. They were all the same. She lit the pilot again, waited to see that it stayed lit, and turned on the weak flame under the soup again. It would just take a little longer, that was all. Why should the pressure be so low?

"Mommy, please . . ."

She recognized urgency, but she could still smell gas from the pilot. Should she open a window? Maybe just for a little while. If people could go out now it must be all right.

"Mommy, you won't answer me!"

"Of course I will, dear." She patted the small head abstractedly and pushed the window casement out a little. "What is it?" The pilot flame sputtered in the small breeze.

"Mommy, will *Barbie* be dead?"

"Will *what*?" Instinctively she bent down and wrapped her arms around her baby. "You silly, silly girl." The child was shaking, now that the question was out at last. "Who's been putting ideas like that in my girl's head?"

"Nobody," she said. "I thought it for myself. Mommy, are you sure, Mommy? Even if they take her away to the hospital?"

"Who said she was going to the hospital?" Gladys was furious. She tried not to show her anger, aware that the child would take it as directed against herself. But she *had* to know.

"Nobody," Ginny insisted. "Nobody said so, only I know. If you throw up you have to go away to the hospital. The

were all talk-ing about it, all the people, the funny men and Barbie and Veda, they was all talking about it."

"When?" She could straighten out Ginny's ideas later. Right now she had to find out who'd been talking to the child.

"Well, I couldn't sleep," Ginny said defensively, "'cause they made so much noise. It wasn't my fault if I couldn't go to sleep." In a minute she'd start crying.

"No, baby," Gladys said wearily, "it wasn't your fault. Was it nap time?"

The child nodded dumbly.

"And you were listening? You were up on the stairs?"

She shook her head. "No, I wasn't. I just had to go to the bathroom, I had to make *Number Two!*" It was triumph.

"It must have taken you a long time to get there," Gladys commented dryly. Well, that was that, and nothing anyone could do about it. But they'd all have to be more careful what they said and where they said it. She let Ginny go and stood up again. The room still smelled of gas, but she'd have to close the window or the tiny flame would never stay on. There ought to be some way to disconnect the pilot. She sighed and closed the window. The soup was just beginning to steam a little bit, not yet simmering. She stirred it automatically, her mind on Ginny, who sat now, contentedly chewing on her cracker. How much did the child understand? Or misunderstand?

Steady, solid footsteps approaching. The swinging door opened to let Veda in, her arms piled with towels, a basin, soiled linens.

"Finished changin' all the beds while I was at it." She headed for the cellar door. "Thought I might's well get these washed while we still got water."

That's what's doing it, Gladys thought, that kind of talk. But she couldn't say anything then, not with Ginny right in the room.

"Got yer flame on?" Veda maneuvered the basin onto the table and stood still, sniffing. "Mighty smell o' gas in here."

*Don't you think I can smell?* Gladys dropped the spoon into the soup and had to get the tongs to fish it out. "I know it!" She tried not to snap. It was silly to be so upset. "The pilot was out," she explained, stirring furiously. Veda shrugged and declined to quarrel. She started for the door.

"Is Mrs. Crowell feeling better now?" Gladys asked meaningfully.

"She's one sick lady." Veda refused to understand or co-operate. "There'll be questions." Gladys inclined her head and so slightly in the direction of her daughter.

"And I've got answers!" Gladys lifted one eyebrow inquiringly. "Never saw the time yet the truth wasn't good enough." Veda said sharply.

Gladys was fuming inwardly, but there was nothing she could say, not in front of Ginny. Veda stood still, waiting for a reply. When she got none she sniffed audibly and started once again for the cellar door. With both hands full, she had to struggle to open it. Gladys made no offer to help, but stayed at the stove, monotonously stirring her soup.

Then the door came flying open, and she forgot the whole ridiculous quarrel.

She had presence of mind enough to turn off the flame on the stove first, before a spark could catch. Then, even when she was thinking, realizing that the gas escaping from the pilot light couldn't possibly have smelled so much, she shrielled at her daughter.

"Ginny! Get out of here! Upstairs quick! Tell Barbie!" She pulled at the catch on the casement, flinging both windows wide open.

Ginny didn't stop to ask questions. Only four or five times in her memory had her mother screamed at her that way. She ran.

Gladys turned from the window to see Veda pulling open the door to the porch, a trail of dirty linen marking her rush from the cellar door. She got to the window over the table, the one that always stuck. Without waiting to find if it would open this time, she banged the frame heavily, with a pot picked up on the way. It rattled satisfactorily loose, and she heaved it violently upward.

Together they headed for the swinging door. Gladys was almost through the dining room to the front, where the living-room door could be closed tight against the foul-smelling poison, when she saw Veda stop and go to one of the dining-room windows.

I wouldn't have thought of that! She went back to the other one herself. She remembered she had been angry with Veda about something, but the memory itself didn't last long enough for her to do or say anything about it.

They slammed the living-room door behind them, and it became possible to think about what had happened.

"Mom!" Barbie called from upstairs. "What happened? What's the matter?" Her voice was small and scared. Behind

they could hear Ginny whimpering quietly.

"Gas," Gladys called up. "The cellar's full of gas."

"Should we come down?" Ginny had stopped crying. The explanation would carry no meaning to her, Gladys realized, but Barbie understood.

"You might as well come down," she decided. "We've got the door shut. You'll be just as safe here." The radio was making too much noise. She went over to turn it down.

"Don't," Barbie called from the foot of the stairs. "Don't turn it off, Mother."

"Well, we're not listening to it. I can't think with all that noise."

"They're reading the names again," Barbara insisted. "If you just leave it on low we'll hear it, if they say any name we know. I was reading before, and I heard it every time they said anything that mattered."

"Well . . ." She let it go; there was no time to argue. Now they had to do something, quickly. Why, the house could explode! The whole house!

She almost dropped the receiver, trying to pick the phone up too quickly. She had to wait forever for a dial tone, but this time she didn't try to dial. She whirled around the red 0 for the operator, and waited again while it rang five, six, eight, nine times, before a tired voice answered.

She didn't have to think what to do: Jon had told her over and over. "I want the Fire Department," she said.

"Lady," the operator said with a bright interest that overcame her weariness, "are you nuts?"

"Am I . . . ? No!" Gladys said indignantly. "I want the Fire--"

"Mother—Mom." Barbie was shaking her head vigorously. "Mom, there *isn't any* Fire Department. They're all in the city—"

"I'm sorry. Give me Emergency Headquarters," Gladys told the operator. Jon had told her, over and over, what to do in anything like that ever happened, so she wouldn't have to stop and think, so she could act right away. And now she had stopped to think. In a curious way she was almost angry at Jon.

"Hello!" It was the switchboard again, and she couldn't think whom to ask for, so she explained her trouble to the bored young man who answered.

"Just a minute, lady."

She got another connection, an older, deeper masculine voice, and repeated her story.

"Address?" he asked brusquely.

Thank God! They're actually going to do something! She told it to him and listened to paper rustling in the silence that followed. "No trouble in that neighborhood, lady," he said at last.

"But there's trouble right here!" she exploded. "I'm right in the house, and I *know* there's—"

"Yeah, I know, you just told me. But we can't send a repair truck out for just one house. I mean the mains are okay."

"That's nice to know! What am I supposed to do?"

"Wait till your squad truck comes. They'll help you if they can."

"But the house could explode! We—anything could happen!"

"You said you opened up the windows, didn't you? The house won't explode. Just watch out for fire and you'll be okay. Did you turn off your electric equipment?"

"No, I didn't. I opened all the windows I could, and shut off the gas from the rest of the house, before we all passed out, that's what I did. Maybe you don't understand. I've got *a cellar full of gas*. Am I just supposed to stay here, with my children, and just let it keep leaking?"

"You could try and fix it," he suggested. "Or you could go stay with a neighbor. Don't take it out on me, lady. There's nothing I can do. Your squadman'll have to fix it." It was decisive.

"Thank you!" Gladys said bitterly, and hung up.

"What did he say, Mom?"

"Nothing. He said we should fix it. Or go to the neighbors'."

"Why don't we?" Barbie liked the idea. "We could all go over to the Crowells'—and take Mrs. Crowell along. We could all stay there till we got somebody to fix it."

"Well . . . I don't know." Gladys tried to think.

"Then, if anything happened"—Barbie was increasingly excited—"you know, if the house blew up or something, we'd all be okay."

"No! We'll try fixing it first. If that doesn't work we'll have to get out. But I'm not leaving this house till I know I have

to." Her mind was made up now. If the house blew up! And even if it didn't, everything would be ruined by gas.

"I'm going down and see what I can do," she announced. "I'll get the windows open, anyhow. And the cellar door. They should clear it out enough so I can look around."

"Daddy was always saying something about the valve," Barbie suggested. "And we could break the windows, could we? From outside? That's what the Fire Department does. That's why they have those axes. Then you wouldn't have to go down till—"

"I don't know that's such a good idea," Veda broke in. "They been warning us all day on the radio about these crazy folks run-ning around, an' the curfew and all. We wouldn't be able to lock up ..."

Gladys didn't give anybody, including herself, any more time to think about it. Whatever was done had to be done fast.

She ran up the stairs to her room, shed the red wool robe, and went out to the hall closet for the slacks she had piled there the night before.

She found a work shirt of Jon's, much too big; but, buttoned up, and tucked into the slacks, it covered her all over. In the bathroom she soaked a big towel in cold water. That's what they do, isn't it? She tried to remember, to think of stories, movies, newsreels where people had to fight gas. All she could remember was wet towels over your face.

## THIRTEEN

Of course there wouldn't be anything to see. She kept telling herself that. She held the sopping towel close against her face. Through it the air had a laundry smell and nothing else. And the haze she had expected wasn't there.

She went straight across and through the furnace room to the outside cellar door. At the nearest window Veda's legs were clearly visible out in the grass. There was nothing to it, she kept reminding herself. Just push back the bolt, and after that the rest is simple.

It was an ordinary slanted double door at the top of a small flight of stairs. She strained at the bolt overhead until the muscles in her arm ached, clear to the shoulder, but she couldn't budge it. She tried to remember whether it had been opened since they had painted. But whitewash didn't make things stick, did it? She didn't know.

She needed both hands, she found. Maybe she could release one by tying the towel around her face. She stopped pulling at the stubborn bolt and fumbled behind her head with the bulky ends of the heavy towel. It wouldn't knot, and cold drops began trickling down her spine. Veda rapped on the window, bending down to give her a worried, questioning look, but she shook her head.

The whole thing was ridiculous. Even through the towel she'd smell gas if it was so bad she really needed the towel. She wriggled to dislodge a clammy rivulet playing waterfall down her spine, and impulsively ripped the towel from her face, tossed it on the win-dow sill, and used both hands to pull back hard on the bolt.

She must have been holding her breath at first, because she didn't notice anything right away; but, using all her strength on the door, she took a deep breath and got it all at once.

Choking and gasping, she grabbed for the towel again and bunched it up against her face till she couldn't breathe at all. Veda was rapping at the window again. She shook her head, which made her feel dizzy. She stopped and concentrated on getting the towel straightened out. This time she paid no attention to the chill trickles under her collar. She knotted the towel firmly behind her head, covering her whole face up to her eyes.

Her head began to clear. The dizziness was going away, but the faint sour odor remained; it seemed to be right in the towel now. Grimly she reached up again. Why wouldn't it open? They'd never had any trouble with it before. Some light would help, but she didn't dare turn one on. "Don't use your electric equipment," the man had said.

She ran her fingers all around the bolt, trying to make them see for her.

There was, of course, a safety catch. She felt her face flush warmly under the damp towel. She turned the small knob on the bolt, out of the locked position. When she pulled on it this time she almost fell over backward, it opened so easily.

The towel seemed to be soaked in gas instead of water. She pushed the double doors open and stumbled up the stairs.

She sat down on the grass in the sun and didn't ever want to get up again. But the job wasn't finished yet.

"Are you all done? Did you fix it already?" Barbie danced around her with questions.

She shrugged the girl away and started up to the bathroom. Then she thought better of it and explained to Barbie what she wanted: a fresh towel, soaked through, but only in the middle.

". . . and leave the ends dry, so I can tie it."



Barbie got back almost too soon. Gladys' back and shoulders ached all over, and she was still drawing in great gulps of air.

She didn't want to go down there again; she didn't want to. She had to force herself to go down the stairs, one step at a time, without thinking about anything but the necessity for getting to the bottom.

She went to the first window along the wall and carefully turned the latch first. It stuck, just a little, but it wasn't too hard to do. Then suddenly it was all very easy again. Just one window at a time, take it easy, don't get panicky.

It was done. She went up and dropped into a chair to rest while she waited for the air to clear. She hadn't done much but it seemed as if she'd been down there for hours. She got a fresh towel and the biggest wrench she could find in Jon's toolbox.

He had said something about a valve. Which valve? She didn't see anything that looked like a valve. The meter was smooth-surfaced. Whatever was supposed to turn the gas on and off must be inside, but how did you get to it? She remembered seeing the man do it once—or was that the electric meter? *That* one opened up; she could see the little door on it. She hit the front of the meter box with the wrench. Nothing happened, except that she dented the smooth metal front. She was surprised that she could hit so hard.

The towel was beginning to smell of gas.

Up above the meter the pipe turned, and at the elbow a thick screw jutted out. It wasn't a valve; she knew what a valve looked like. But maybe it did something. She reached up and tried to turn it with her fingers, but it was set firmly in place. Maybe she could knock it loose with the wrench.

It couldn't do any harm anyway. She hit it once, a glancing blow, and thought it moved a little. She hit at it again. It moved—just enough to show it could. But hitting wasn't the right way.

She got a box to stand on and looked at it more closely. It stuck out of the pipe about an inch, and wasn't more than a half inch through, probably less. The part in the pipe was smoothly round, except for the thread of the screw, and she couldn't just see the edge of that, where it met the pipe. But the end near her wasn't round; it was squared off, and she remembered that was the kind of thing they used a tire wrench on. She tried the wrench she had, but it was too big; it wouldn't grasp the screw at all.

She'd have to go back upstairs and find something else. The towel was soaked with gas now.

She couldn't come back again; she just couldn't.

On top of the oil burner she found an ordinary small pliers and grabbed it up. She was beginning to be dizzy again. She should have gone back upstairs for a new towel.

She got the jaws of the pliers around the square end of the screw, but every time she tried to turn it, it slipped off. Once she had felt it move; she knew she had. It must be what Jon had meant by a valve.

She held the jaws onto the screw with her fingers and pulled down hard with her other hand. It moved. Just a little.

She hung on, straining down. The smell kept getting stronger, and she had to get out of there. With every bit of strength she had left she pulled down on the pliers handles.

This time, when it gave, she was expecting the reaction, but she had been pulling too hard. She couldn't stop herself and for a moment her arms waved wildly, then she was on the floor, and the towel had slipped out of place.

She heard Barbie calling from upstairs, and Veda from outside. The box had made a lot of noise. She couldn't answer them; the towel was off her mouth, but she was afraid to open it. She got her arms out from under her and yanked the towel back over her face. It didn't seem to do any good at all any more. Gas was in her nostrils and her throat. Strangely enough she wasn't dizzy any more, but her eyes were tearing and they smarted. She set the box back in place. She seemed to be moving very slowly, but everything was getting done, quicker than she expected, too. She didn't quite understand it, but she supposed it was all right. She knew she had to turn that screw some more. It had been in one way, now she had to get it the way the other way.

She had to stop and remember which way she had turned it. This time it responded easily. She kept turning until the whole length of the round part had disappeared inside the hole in the pipe. When she couldn't make it go in any more at all she got down off the box and went upstairs. She felt very calm in spite of the awful smell. She was surprised to find she was sobbing.

## FOURTEEN

She was still dizzy. She sipped once more at the whisky, but it tasted awful. Ginny was crying monotonously on Veda's lap. Barbie squatted in front of the radio. Gladys lay still on the sofa, wanting to get off and remove the dirty slacks, wondering if there would be grease stains on the pale green upholstery.

She tried to lift her head, but it made her feel woozy again. The radio was forcing itself on her consciousness. She didn't want to hear it.

"Do you know where the hot plate is?" she asked Veda. "I don't remember seeing it around."

"That little one from the Silex is right in the kitchen cabinet." Veda kept on rocking Ginny, answering Gladys without changing the tone of voice she used to soothe the little girl.

"I mean the big one, the two-burner."

"Ain't seen that one in a long time."

"Daddy took it to the office once," Barbie contributed over her shoulder. "Did he bring it back?"

"Don't know as he did," Veda said thoughtfully. "We got the electric broiler, though, could work like a hot plate upside down."

"The waffle iron?" Barbie threw in.

How can she listen to two things at the same time? Gladys was having trouble focusing her attention on one conversation.

"There's a Sterno stove in Mr. Mitchell's camping kit," she told Veda.

"I dunno. We might need the Sterno stove worse later on."

"For heaven's sake, Veda!" Gladys protested. "How much worse can it be?"

"Waffles." The word had penetrated slowly into Ginny's sleep-sodden head. "I want waffles for supper."

Veda looked questioning, and Gladys shrugged.

"Might's well," the maid said. "Waffles on the iron, an' coffee in the Silex, an' we ain't got no problems at all."

"Are we *really* gonna have waffles?" Ginny sat bolt upright. "Right now?"

"As soon as we can get in the kitchen," Gladys promised.

"I'll go see." Barbie jumped up restlessly, but she didn't have to do any more than open the door. The smell made her slam it shut again.

Ginny surveyed her suspiciously. "I want waffles *now*."

"Well, you can't get them *now*, so quit being a baby about it." Barbie was feeling intoxicated with adventure and a whiff of gas. Ginny, feeling only sleepy and hungry, promptly burst into a fresh flow of tears.

"Come here, baby." Gladys found she could sit up now, and she stretched her arms. Still crying, Ginny made her way across the room to her mother, stumbling on the hem of the velvet gown she still wore. Safe on Gladys' lap, she defied the world.

"Am *not* a baby!"

Barbie opened her mouth and closed it as promptly when she saw Gladys' emphatic headshake. Her challenge having gone un-answered, Ginny gathered courage for another sally. "I'm hungry," she said firmly. "Want my waffles."

"Shush." Gladys patted the defiant shoulder absently, ignoring the repeated demand.

"I want my—"

"Oh, shush up, Ginny." Barbara, still listening with one ear to the radio, turned it up so they could all hear.

"... special police are constantly patrolling the area. There is no danger, except through carelessness. Keep your doors and windows locked and admit *no unauthorized strangers* to your homes after curfew hour. These precautions are concerned *only* with protection from acts of larceny and violence. There is no foundation in fact for any rumors you may have heard to the effect that these gangs of lawbreakers are made up of contaminated refugees from within the city limits. It is virtually impossible for anyone to leave the city area now, except by way of the decontamination stations.

"Evacuees from the city are not entering the Westchester residential area. They are being sent directly to evacuation camps up-state, on special trains already in operation.

"This station will continue to announce the names of persons released from the city through decontamination centers."

Veda snorted with rich contempt but refrained from any comment. Gladys was grateful. Whatever Veda had seen of the city, Gladys didn't want it discussed just then.

"Mommy, what's commamminashun?"

"Contamination," she corrected automatically. "It's—well, it's being hurt. The people who were hurt by the accident"

the city are contaminated—"

"Mother!" Barbie was shocked. "That's no—"

"Barbara! I am perfectly capable of answering Ginny's ques-tions. You pay attention to the radio, and let me—"

"Listen!" Barbara had already returned her attention to the radio.

". . . still need homes for a number of children whose parents are in the city, or whose homes have been broken up an indirect result of the attack. Adequate supplies for the care of the children will be issued to you. If you have an extra in your house, and any adult capable of providing supervision for a small child, please get in touch with Emergency Wel Headquarters *now*. Pick up the telephone and ask for Emergency Welfare. The operator will connect you.

"We have just received a new list of evacuated persons from the Washington Heights Headquarters. The following persons . . ." "Mom—Mother, we've *got* to take some of them."

"Take some children, take some children!" Ginny chanted gleefully.

"We got room, anyhow," Veda pointed out. "Can't say I'd want to depend on them food supplies they're promising—but we could make do with what we got."

"We've got plenty!" Barbara insisted. "We can manage. You said yourself," she appealed to Gladys, "that it couldn't very well get any worse. We'll be able to get food, even if they *don't* bring it along."

"That's enough," Gladys said flatly. "I'll have to think about it."

"Children, children, gonna take some children," Ginny chanted.

"See?" Gladys demanded. "We'll talk about it later."

"But, Mother—"

"I said *later*!" She saw the bright red color suffuse her daughter's face and added quickly, "Do you want to take a l now, Barbie, and see how the kitchen is?"

Wordlessly the girl got up.

"You set still, Missus Mitchell." Veda got up stiffly. "I'll bring the makin's right in here. Save a lot of fuss and trouble. She nod-ded toward the little girl, curled up on her mother's lap, hypnotiz-ing herself with a barely audible chant, "Child children, gonna take the children . . ."

Gladys smiled thankfully and let Veda follow Barbara out to the kitchen.

The radio chattered on. Names and addresses, this one evacu-ated, that one hospitalized, another safe at a friend's home. Three dead in the city, one rescued, a whole family found alive under a burned building. The names went endless on, and they meant nothing. Ginny's chant turned into a quiet sleepy murmuring. It was beginning to get dark outside. Gladys wondered what time it was, and thought of turning on a light, but the gloaming was too restful. She wouldn't liste she *wouldn't* . . .

"Mrs. Tod Graham, and son, Tod Graham, Jr., three years old, of 1482 Orchard Boulevard, found trapped in burni building in midtown Manhattan . . ."

Mrs. Tod Graham! Annie!

`"Mrs. Graham is being treated for shock and burns at the hos-pital base in Washington Heights. Tod, Jr., is being treated for radiation and minor injuries . . ."

But they were home. I saw Tod in the garden. With difficulty she brought that morning back to her mind, remember Annie's chagrin at not being invited to that luncheon, the luncheon Gladys herself hadn't gone to. Annie had said she alw had lunch in town on Mondays, anyhow, with her husband.

". . . now repeat a list of the identified casualties in the city today. Please listen carefully. There may be no way of notifying the friends and relatives of these persons except by radio announce-ments. Dead: John Anderson, Main Street White Plains; Hilda Allderick, 42 Green Lane, Henley; Anthony Ameranto, 2205 Hartley . . ."

Now she couldn't stop listening. Every name, every syllable, penetrated her senses. She didn't feel Ginny's weight o her lap; she didn't know whether it was dark or light in the room. She just listened.

". . . friends and relatives may not be notified . . . today's casualties . . ." Annie Graham . . . hospital base . . . Jon!

She was only dimly aware of it when Veda and Barbara came back in, arms loaded with food and equipment.

". . . Alden Gramercy, Hope Street, Tappan . . ."

Veda snapped on the big lamp on the reading table.

". . . R. Jardiniere, Marley Avenue, Plainstown . . ."

They got through the list. Somehow, finally, they finished read-ing the roll call of the slaughtered.

". . . hospitalized for today. For the sake of speed we will read only the names and not the addresses of these perso

Avery Ab-bott, James Abbott, Kenneth Abbott . . ."

She realized she could stop listening. It was alphabetical. She didn't have to listen any more until the M's.

"Barbie, you forgot the syrup." Veda looked up from the bowl where she was mixing waffle flour and milk. Barbara ran out to the kitchen and came back with the syrup, already opened.

"Smells okay," she announced.

"Better leave me have a taste before we use it," Veda offered. Barbie immersed a finger delicately in the sticky stuff.

"I said *me*, not you. Now give that here."

"It's fine," Barbara insisted, licking off her little finger with evi-dent relish.

"You give that here," Veda said angrily. "Got no more sense than that little one. Done everything you wanted all your life, an' now we got real trouble you can't stop. Well, believe you me, you'll be learning to do what yer' told the next few days. Like to see you act that way jest once with that young doctor 't was here stick-ing needles in you."

"Veda!" Barbara's face blanched at the reminder, and Gladys got angrily to her feet, easing Ginny, now asleep, onto the couch.

"Lissen, Missus Mitchell." The maid stopped stirring and turned to her purposefully. "I think we could use some plain talkin' around here. You keep tryin' to make out nothin's the matter, when we all know there's plenty that's the matter. Every which way I turn somebody's trying to keep something back from the next person. And some of the lies I heard on that radio! They got no business—"

"What lies, Veda?" Barbie broke in excitedly. "What did they say on the radio that—"

"Keep quiet, Barbara. Don't interrupt. I don't know what you think you heard on the radio that wasn't so, Veda, but I'm sure the people up there know more about what's going on than you do."

"Mebbe so—an' mebbe there's plenty they ain't tellin'. I keep tryin' to do like you want—an' don't think," she added stiffly, "that I ain't grateful fer you helpin' me out when them men came draggin' me in here. I ain't fergot that, nor I won't. But it jest ain't in my nature to keep coverin' things up that ought to be aired out."

"Well, *I'd* be grateful," Gladys retorted, "if you'd leave it to me to decide what needs airing and what doesn't. Barbie," she added as she saw the girl prepare to speak again, "Veda was perfectly right about your being too careless, and about how important it is for you to do what you're told right now. There's probably nothing to worry about any more, but until Daddy comes home I'd rather be a little extra careful. When he gets here he'll know what we should do."

"You goin' to keep right on—" Veda clamped her mouth on the words and vented her feelings on the waffle batter. Barbie went sulkily over to the radio and squatted down again in front of it.

". . . Andreas Popoulisk, June Quest, B. K. Quiller, Lionel Quist . . ."

They've passed it, she thought. They went right by M, and I wasn't listening.

She cleared her throat. "Barbie," she called quietly, "Barbie." The face that turned to her was still sullen. "What do you want?"

"Please keep your voice down. I want to know . . . were you listening? I mean, when they read the names."

The girl motioned impatiently toward the radio.

"I know, they're reading them now, but . . ." *Why* wouldn't she understand? "When they read the M's, was . . . Daddy's name there?" Barbara shook her head. "No *what*? You weren't listening or the name wasn't there?"

"I was listening," Barbara said briefly, and turned her attention back to the radio.

Gladys forced herself to stay calm. There was no sense in letting the quarrel enlarge itself. She walked back across the room, to where Veda had established the temporary kitchen on the hall table.

"What can I do?" she asked, trying to sound as if nothing had happened.

"Everything's done." Veda pointed to the indicator on the waffle iron. "One of 'em'll be ready for Ginny in a minute."

Gladys went back again across the room and roused the little girl. "Waffles!" she announced as soon as Ginny had opened her eye. That brought the other one wide open right away.

"Come on, we'll get washed up" She led the little girl up the stairs, past the enticing odor that was beginning to bubble out of the top of the waffle iron. When they got down again Veda was pouring fresh batter, and Barbie was already settling with a plate and cup.

"Waffles?" Ginny called from halfway down.

"And cocoa too." Veda answered her.

"That was a good idea." Gladys smiled at the other woman.

"Thought I'd try an' save the milk. That hot chocolate you got, it's got powdered milk already in. Seems to me like v

could keep what fresh we got for the mornin'."

They got Ginny settled next to her sister, with a syrup-laden waffle and a cup of steaming cocoa.

"Now that's hot," Veda warned. "Don't you try an' drink it too fast." She went back to the waffle iron and brought out a crisp new one. "There's fer you, Missus Mitchell."

"You take it," Gladys urged her. "I'll wait for the next one."

"Now you ain't had a thing to eat since you woke up," Veda protested. "You take this one. I'll have another one ready in a jiffy."

"We'll split it," Gladys decided, and cut it down the middle as she spoke. She moved one half to an empty plate and found a cup of coffee waiting for her. Veda poured a second cup for herself.

"Good thing you got used to drinking it black when you was on your diet," Veda said, almost with a smile. "We got to hang onto our milk now."

And suddenly it was all right. The quarreling and confusion were over. She sat down next to the children, and Veda came to join them a moment later, with a fresh waffle to divide among them.

"I'll watch the next one." Barbie had already finished her first and refused any part of the reinforcements. She felt the change in the atmosphere too. Passing in back of Gladys, on her way to the improvised kitchen in the hall, she stooped suddenly to hug her mother, for no reason at all. Then she turned on another light. There was music on the radio again. Ginny looked up and smiled a sticky, syrup-encased smile at the world in general.

"This is fun, Mommy," she announced. "Why doesn't Daddy come home?"

## the rescue

*"I'm lost," he said. "I've got to get home." They couldn't hear him; they wouldn't listen. It was like a dream, trying to say something and never getting it out.*

*It was a dream. He remembered, in the dream, that he'd had them before, times when he had to talk about it, but he'd bust, and there was nobody to talk to. Nobody wanted to talk about it. Nobody wanted to think about it. Then he'd go to bed and dream. Great pink clouds and searing fires exploding. He'd wake up in a sweat and reach out to touch her. He'd feel her breathing evenly under his hand, and see the shadow of the trees outside, and everything would be all right.*

*"Just tell me how to get home," he said in the dream. "I'm all right. I'm lost, that's all. Listen, bud, how do I get home from here?"*

*They kept dragging him along, pulling him when he didn't walk. They wore suits like divers, but more like asbestos than rubber, and they had helmets closed over their faces. They couldn't answer him; they couldn't talk through the helmets. Maybe they couldn't hear him either.*

*They pushed him into a big truck and shut the door behind him. There were a lot of other men inside, standing up, and sitting on the floor. Some were lying down, stretched out on the floor. One of them looked dead, maybe only unconscious. Some of the men were talking, and some were swearing. A lot of them had burns or cuts. There was blood on everything, and a bad smell. Somebody was crying.*

*A little light came through the truck from a pane of glass set in front, near the driver's cab. He edged his way through the crowd to the pane of glass and began tapping on it. A man on the seat turned around and shook a jar at him, but he kept tapping, patiently, till the man turned around again.*

*"I've got to get home," he said then. "Let me out. I have to go home."*

## FIFTEEN

It was already dark when Gladys left Ginny asleep upstairs. She came down to find Barbie lying flat on her stomach in front of the radio, intent on the pages of a heavy volume she had found in Tom's room. From time to time she flipped a page with one languid finger, moving no other muscle except her bare calf, which waved with pendulum regularity in the air. She abandoned the book long enough to greet her mother with the news that the fifteen-minute curfew warning had just been announced.

"I guess we better get the door and windows closed in the cellar," Gladys decided. "I hope it's all right down there

now."

Veda came in, drying her hands on her apron. "Kitchen's okay," she said. "I was washing up, an' I shet up ever'thing there. Got the door down to the cellar open, an' it smells like it'd be all right to go down."

"Well, I guess I might as well get it over with."

After that she could go up and change. She wondered why she hadn't thought of it before she came down, and decided it was just as well. She hadn't looked in a mirror since she'd got out of bed; out of long habit she raised her hand to her hair, trying to smooth it into place, but it was too tangled; it felt gritty and nasty under her fingers.

"I could go down, Missus Mitchell," Veda offered. "Don't matter if I get a bit dusty, this bein' a work dress."

"Don't be silly. I'm all dirty anyway."

She left Veda at the head of the cellar steps and groped for the light switch. He never did fix it! she thought, and went cautiously down the stairs, planting each foot in the precise center of the narrow tread, sniffing at every step for traces of gas.

She put foot at last on solid cement flooring and flipped another switch, flooding the whitewashed laundry room with light. That wasn't very smart, she thought. Suppose there was still some gas . . .

But she didn't smell anything, and nothing had happened when she used the light. It must be all right.

The door that led through to the meter, in the furnace room, was closed. She was sure she'd left it open. The latch was rusty, and she had to struggle with it. They never used that door. I'd remember if I'd closed it, she thought.

She stopped fighting the latch and stood still a minute to drive the tenseness from her muscles. She tried to think back to the last time she left the cellar, but all she could remember was the wonderful moment when the outside door opened and she stumbled up the stairs to breathe sweet air again. The rest was a blur.

Suppose she had closed it then? It was almost worse that way. The door was tight; it would keep out the gas. If she hadn't really got it turned off before, if it was still leaking, then when she opened the door, there'd be that sickening smell again.

*Oh, Jon!* Jon wasn't there. He was in the city, and he couldn't help her. In the city! It was a shock to realize she could think that much now, think it in so many words, without trying to deny it.

She put her hand firmly on the latch and pushed down. Something made a scuttling noise, and instinctively she stepped back.

I told him there were mice down here, she thought angrily, and forgot to be afraid. She tried once more and ignored the noise when it came again. Maybe it was something the latch did. Anyhow, it was silly to be scared by a fleeing mouse. She shoved the door open before she had a chance to become frightened again.

Bracing herself against the doorframe, she reached her arm around to the light switch.

Scraping, scuttling noise, and something fell loudly. No mouse did that!

"Who's there?" she called, knowing it was the wrong thing to do, standing there in the lighted doorway.

"Me—it's just me, Mrs. Mitchell."

A man's voice . . . a stranger . . . but he knew her name! With the light at her back, she couldn't see more than a few feet in front of her. From every object in the room, small or large, a deepening shadow stretched to inky gloom in the far corners. Over all, her own shadow bulked. She tried to find him by his voice, but muted echoes spread the sound too much.

A dark shape detached itself from the looming black furnace and turned gradually into the figure of a man. She wanted to scream, to run, but, without knowing why, she knew she had to stay quiet.

He was close now, and she couldn't see his face. There was nothing familiar about him.

"Who are you?" The panic-sharp whisper bounced back at her from the echoing walls.

"Don't be alarmed, Mrs. Mitchell, it's just me—Garson Levy."

Of course! The voice had awakened recognition, even before she could fit a name to it.

"What are you doing here? How did you—" That was silly. It was perfectly obvious how he had got in. "I was just coming down to lock everything up," she finished.

"I'm terribly sorry." Gladys was startled to see her own distress honestly mirrored on his face. "I didn't mean to frighten you. I shouldn't have broken in this way, but I had to get in someplace during the curfew patrol."

"I better get things closed up here before someone else gets the same idea," Gladys said dryly. She walked over to the nearest window and slammed it down.

Silently he went to the next one and closed it himself. When the door was closed and bolted and all the windows

locked, he turned to her again.

"I can leave now if you prefer, Mrs. Mitchell," he said stiffly. "I'm afraid I rather took advantage of Barbara's offer. I hope you understand that I didn't expect to stay here."

"Barbara's offer?" she broke in.

"Yes, to come ba—oh, I see. Of course I thought you knew. I *am* sorry." He hesitated. "I can go right away, but if you don't mind too much, I'd like to wait until the patrol is over. It's just another twenty minutes or so—and for your sake as well as mine it's better if I'm not caught leaving here."

"Well, why on earth did you come out again?" Gladys asked irritably. "If you keep wandering around when you're not supposed to you're bound to get caught sooner or later."

"I didn't have much choice. My landlady was under strict orders to notify the Security Office when I came in. She gave me a bed in her own apartment instead, and got some clothes from my room, but she could hardly keep me there."

"You mean you don't have anyplace to stay?"

"I'm afraid not," he admitted.

It was hard to stay angry at him. If he hadn't come to warn them about Barbie . . .

If he hadn't come the urinalysis would have told them anyhow—a little later. Perhaps too late.

She studied the man in front of her. Nothing extraordinary about him. Nothing, that is, except the fact that he was in the cellar. He didn't look like a madman, or a hero either. He looked like a scholarly middle-aged man who never remembered to have his suit pressed.

He ran his hand nervously through the thick gray waves of his hair and she saw why he always had a slightly wild look.

"What are you going to do when you leave here?" She tried to be stern. "Where are you going to go?"

He shrugged. "Try to find a place to stay . . . try to get some papers . . . try to get into the hospital." He dismissed the subject. "Have you heard anything about Barbara yet?"

"They're taking a blood test," she told him briefly. "They called up about the analysis and said she was exposed, but they didn't seem to know whether she's sick yet. Why shouldn't you be able to get into the hospital?"

"A matter of identity. When they found out who I was they decided they'd rather have me in jail. I'm dangerous," he added bitterly. "Because I kept saying this was going to happen. Worse yet, I tried to prevent it. That makes me a public enemy."

"Well, surely they won't refuse to take care of you!"

"Maybe not," he agreed. "But, frankly, I don't care to make the experiment. From my earlier experiences, I think the best way is shooting first and asking questions afterwards."

Gladys remembered the men who had brought Veda in that morning. The one with the notebook might ask questions. The other one—there was no way to tell what the other one would do.

Suddenly she wanted to help him. But she *couldn't* keep him in the house.

"Are you . . . hungry?" she asked inadequately. "If there's anything at all I can do for you before you go . . . ?" She was ashamed, but she couldn't help it.

Surprisingly, he smiled. "That's very kind of you, Mrs. Mitchell, but I had something to eat just before I left . . . home."

"Well, if there's anything at all ..." Anything, anything, she promised him silently. Anything except staying here.

"There's really nothing." He glanced at his watch. "I can leave in a few minutes now. Tell me about Barbara."

"They have to wait and make two tests before they can tell."

Levy nodded. "Did they say anything else about the urinalysis?"

"They said there was some alpha emitter present," she quoted carefully, "but it didn't seem to be a sufficient quantity to make her sick." A question came to her mind. "But if it takes two blood counts, how could *you* tell right away? Is there some other way?"

"I don't know for sure how sick I am," he explained. "But I could tell I'd been exposed to heavy radiation because I know what my normal blood count is. And I also know I haven't been exposed recently to any other diseases or infections that would cause a drop in the white-cell count—flu or a strop infection, for instance. The doctor doesn't --"

"Missus Mitchell!" The call, shrill and imperative, came from far away. Veda was in the living room, Gladys thought, and then heard the approaching footsteps. "Missus Mitchell!"

"Get back there." She pointed to the far corner of the furnace room, where she had found him. "Hurry, please. Where she can't see you."

She turned and ran for the stairs. Hot and breathless, she met Veda at the kitchen door.

"What is it?"

"That Mr. Turner jest come in, an' the doctor with him. Mr. Turner's about ready to take a fit, he's that hot on talkin' you."

What am I going to do? Veda in the kitchen, Edith Crowell sleeping upstairs, and now the squadmen in the living room—with a hunted man hiding in the basement!

"Somethin' wrong, Missus Mitchell? You run up here like the devil was after you, an' now you can't catch yer breath to walk in there."

"Oh . . . one of the windows," she improvised. "I couldn't get it closed, and I got mad at it." She smiled. "Then I got scared when I heard you call. You sounded so *urgent*. I didn't know what—" She had to think of something to do; she had to think fast.

"It ain't me that's so urgent," Veda retorted. "Only I don't think that Mr. Turner'll last the day if he don't see you soon. You better go on in. I'll fix the window."

"I guess I better." But she didn't move. She stood solidly where she was, blocking the doorway and the stairs.

"Barbie!" she called wildly. She couldn't think of anything better; this would have to do. Barbie wanted to help the man. Here was her chance. "Barbara!"

"Mom, it's the squad truck," the answer floated back. "Mr. Turner and Dr. Spinelli. They're waiting for you."

"I'll be right out. Come here a minute, will you?" Veda was watching her with a puzzled frown. "Barbie can fix the window," she explained hastily. "I don't want her around when I talk to the doctor." *That's* true enough, Lord knows.

She ignored Veda's silent stare of disapproval. One thing at a time.

"Barbie, there's a window down there I couldn't shut. Will you see what you can do?"

"But, Mom, I *told* you—they're here, and they want another blood sample."

"I'll go see Mr. Turner." Gladys overrode her protests. "That window's got to be closed."

"But I have to give Pete some more blood—I mean Dr. Spinelli." The slip tended to spoil the patiently tolerant quality of her explanation, but it didn't stop her. "Veda can—"

"*Pete* can wait a minute. You go fix that window," Gladys said firmly. "I want to talk to your Dr. Spinelli too."

"Oh, Mom, I wish you'd stop worrying so much." Barbara was sure she understood now. "He doesn't know anything yet. He would have told me if he did." There was a tinge of pride in her assurance, just enough to bring Gladys' earlier irritation at the doctor back into focus.

He would, would he? I'm going to have a few words with that young man, she promised herself. "I'll worry just as much as I want to," she told her daughter blithely. In spite of all its dangers, there was a certain relish in the situation.

"As a matter of fact that's not what I was worried about. Perhaps you'll understand when you're older." A few minutes older, I mean. "Can't you manage the window by yourself?" She was being deliberately provoking, making it essential for the girl to do the job herself. But she had to give some sort of warning too. How, in front of Veda?

"Be careful," she called as Barbie started angrily down the stairs. "I think there are"—the word popped into her mind of its own accord—"mice down there."

## SIXTEEN

"Hello." The two men waited for her in the living room, ominous in their heavy suits, their faces shadowed by the rain visors of their helmets. "I was just downstairs, closing the cellar windows."

She couldn't keep her hands quiet. Nervously she straightened lamps and ash trays, patted cushions into place.

Neither of them said anything. Even Jim Turner's hail-fellow was missing.

What's wrong? She stopped bustling and turned to face them. Fear gave way to amusement and then to acute self-consciousness, as she realized why they were staring. I never did go up and change! She yearned for a mirror and glad she couldn't see one. Aggressively she turned to the doctor.

"I don't suppose you have any news yet about my daughter?" She was pleased to hear her voice stay steady, not too intense, not too worried.

"Not really," he said. "If she were sick enough for the first count to show anything the analysis would have looked worse than it did. I want to take another sample now. We should have a definite answer for you tomorrow."

"Well then . . ." It wasn't so easy to keep her voice steady this time. "The first sample wasn't too encouraging?"



"In a sense it was," he hedged. "But I'd rather not raise your hopes—or hers either—until we know more. I hope Barbara's not getting panicky. I explained it all to her this morning, and I think she understands."

"Well, as long as *she* understands . . ."

He didn't miss the edge in her voice. "I hope she didn't get too worried by what I told her," he said unhappily. "She seemed to take it all right, didn't get flustered by the needle or anything, and then she began asking questions. You were around"—he was floundering now—"and the lady who was there—I think Barbie called her Veda—" Barbie! Barbie and Pete. Gladys raised mental eyebrows and lost her grip on the mood of irritation.

He felt the change and gathered assurance. "She said you were sleeping and she thought you shouldn't be awakened. I didn't want to wait to take the sample, and I just explained as much as I thought Barbara could understand."

Turner was getting impatient. "That's okay, *Doc*," he said, and turned to Gladys. "I told him to go ahead, soon as the kid told us her story." The subject was closed now; he made that clear. She had lost the initiative as soon as she stopped being angry, and the squadman was taking over.

"Where'd the kid go to?" he asked. "We got to be running along in a minute. Just finished curfew patrol, and we have to check in at headquarters. I figured it would speed things up some for you if we took another sample back to the lab on the way."

"Barbie's just finishing up in the cellar," Gladys said quickly. "I'll get her right away."

"Don't you bother. Doc'll find her," Turner insisted. "I want to talk to you a minute. They wouldn't wake you up when you were here before. You stay up all night?"

"No—that is, yes." She edged toward the door, staying in front of Spinelli.

"Oh, Doctor, I wanted to tell you—"

"Yes?"

"I'm worried about Ginny," she blurted out. "Veda said she didn't eat any lunch, and she seems so listless—it's probably just nerves—being shut in and no one to play with, but . . . I don't know. Maybe I'm just getting jittery now?"

"It doesn't hurt to be a little extra careful. I could take a blood count now," he said doubtfully, "but there's no sense bothering her unless we have something definite to go on. Suppose I check with the lab on her urinalysis?" he suggested. "Then we'll know whether there's anything to worry about."

"Thank you. I'll go get Barbie now," she said breathlessly. "I'll be right back."

"Ain't that just like a woman!" Turner's laugh boomed good-naturedly. "Up all night, slept all day, and now I bet she's worried how her kitchen looks. You sit down an' take it easy, Miz Mitchell." He took her arm and led her to a chair.

"Go on, *Doc*." He threw the words over his shoulder impatiently. "You can find the kid, can't you?" He settled Gladys in the chair and turned to face the younger man. "You'll be using the kitchen to take that sample, won't you?" he asked meaningfully. The doctor nodded, but still hesitated, standing irresolute in the dining-room door.

Gladys had a sudden horrified memory of the moment that morning when the Security man thought she had some nefarious reason for wanting to go upstairs. Was that why Jim Turner made her stay here now? Were they suspicious? Had anyone seen that man come in?

"Barbie!" she called.

There was no answer. And under the pressure of Turner's will the doctor started slowly through the door. She *had* to warn Barbara.

"Veda!" It was a risk, but less than the other. "Veda, will you tell Barbie the doctor wants her?"

It was all she could do. She had to pay attention to Turner now. "How come your cellar windows were open?" he asked. Was it interest or suspicion? There was no way to tell.

Belatedly she explained about the gas and about what she had done. "I don't know if that was the best thing to do," she wound up, "but maybe you could take a look at it later on? Next time you come. I know you're in a hurry now."

"I guess we could take time to look at it right now," the big man decided.

"It could wait," she said doubtfully, trying to sound as if she didn't care. Why did *everything* have to lead to the cellar?

"I'm not so busy I can't do that much for a neighbor," he said, waving aside her protests. "I'll just take a look. Might as well. You shouldn't stay here. And I don't know if I'll have a chance to get back tonight. I was wondering," he chuckled, eyeing her greasy slacks again as she stood up, "what you got yourself up in that rig for. You look like you could be Barbie's sister instead of her ma."

"I'll have to wear it more often." She produced a smile and raised her arm again in the futile habitual gesture, patting her hair, pushing with her fingers at the tangled waves of her hair. Turner stood still, staring at her, and she didn't know why she

blushing.

She couldn't see, as the big squadman did, how the motion of her arm accentuated the curve of her body inside Jon's big work shirt; or how the loose shirt, tucked tightly into her slacks, flared out above the waist; she didn't know how the rough clothes and rolled-up sleeves, the grease stain on her leg, the smudges on her arms, created an absurd and delightful effect of femininity on masquerade—or how the uninvited color, flooding up under her clear skin, heightened the contrast of her clothing.

She saw only the dust on her hands after she had touched her hair, and felt the steady eyes of her neighbor's husband staring at her. And she knew it was not suspicion that made him so anxious to help.

She took a step forward, for the first time with assurance. She could hear Barbie and the doctor in the kitchen. Surely any danger was past. Barbie must have gotten the man out.

Turner stepped forward as she did, brushing close to her, too close, before either of them could check the momentum of the stride. Even as he stopped and balanced himself, waiting for her to go ahead, something far below the conscious level of her mind leaped up in frenzy.

*Jon, oh, Jon! Come home!*

With heavy footsteps following at her heels, she went into the kitchen, forced the cry of need from her mind. She had known Jim Turner for years, and there were more real things to worry about right now. Veda had started it, Veda with her silly talk in the bedroom, when she was only half awake. A man had brushed against her—not, she told herself, purposely. He had stopped as soon as he could. That was that. Forget it.

But the self-assurance she had gained in the moment at the doorway didn't leave her. Going through the kitchen, she questioned Barbie casually.

"It's okay, Mom, I got it fixed."

Gladys went on to the stairs with no show of hesitation. She was again acutely aware of Turner's bulk right behind her and just before the light flashed on, she had an instant's fright as to what it might reveal. But both fears passed, and after only the hastiest eye-sweeping, she led the way into the furnace room.

The squadman sniffed the air and went over to study the meter. "How'd you know what to do?" he asked. "I couldn't hardly do it better myself."

"You mean I did the right thing?" Approval tasted very sweet after the day's frustrations. "I was just guessing," she told him. "Well, you guessed good. You got nothing to worry about." "But what about getting it turned *on* again? Would it be safe?" "That depends. Did you find out where the leak is?"

"No." She couldn't see how it would matter, but she told him about the pilot light on the stove.

"Out, was it?" He pulled at his lip thoughtfully. "I'll tell you," he said finally. "They haven't got it on the radio yet, because they don't want to get people worried, but there ain't going to be any gas pretty soon. As long as you got it turned off, you might just as well leave it that way."

"No gas? But what happened?"

"The way I heard it, they had an explosion in one of the mains, that cut off the—"

"Explosion!" she broke in. "I didn't know anything was hit near here. When did it happen?"

"Now don't go getting worried," he said hastily. "No bombs up here in our neck of the woods. It was some kind of accident they had, that's all. The real trouble is manpower. They just can't make repairs and keep the gas going. Pressure's pretty low already. How're you fixed for something to cook on? I could get you—"

"We have a hot plate we've been using," she told him quickly. "We can manage with that all right. But our hot-water heater is gas too," she remembered.

"Well now," he sympathized, "that could make it kind of tough on you, but one thing, it won't be for long. That's what I wanted to see you about. It's classified stuff, really, but I know you can keep your mouth shut. Thing is, we're making plans right now for evacuation—cleaning out this whole section."

"There *were* bombs!" she breathed.

"Now, Gladys, *I told* you there weren't. It's supplies and manpower where the trouble is. Food's too hard to bring in. And we can't use the men we got to fix gas mains and things like that, when we need every one of them to work in the city. Matter of fact, phone service might be out, too, pretty soon."

She shook her head doubtfully, and remembered that Dr. Levy had said something about bombs directly overhead. What connection was there?

"Now don't you worry about it," he said, misreading her troubled expression. "Things won't get too bad. It looks like

the move'll start Thursday—Friday at the latest. There's plenty of food till then. An' I can see to it," he promised, "that y folks get onto the first train out."

"But . . ." She stopped. But I don't want to go. That would be a silly thing to say. It wasn't a matter of what she wan

"I can get you settled up at the camp too," he added. "We're taking over the Navy base up at Sampson. Beautiful country up there. I think I can work it for you to get into the staff quarters. Find something to put you in charge of, and I would give you a priority for the train scats too. That way, you won't be too crowded, and you won't have to wait arou down here if things get had."

"But—" she began again. "That's very kind of you, but there's really no need to take all that trouble. We'll manage."

"A man ought to at least look out for his friends!" Turner broke in indignantly. "It's no trouble anyhow. All I have to is put in your name for some kind of supervisor's job, and the resell take care of itself."

"But there's nothing I can do," she protested. "I don't have any kind of training."

"You just leave that part of it up to me." He smiled and winked. "I'll figure something out."

I won't go. I won't. She almost said it out loud.

"Now, you understand," he reminded her, "you got to keep this to yourself. Even the boys on the truck don't know about it yet. We'll put out a warning on the radio pretty soon, but even then you better not say I told you. This is strictly confidential. Meanwhile," he went on, "you're better off not to bother with the gas or anything."

She couldn't listen any more. She thought she'd smother if she didn't get out of there, but he kept talking, rambling o about preparations and baggage limits, offering warnings and reassur-ances, to which she replied with forced monosyllables.

I won't go. I won't!

"Wouldn't hurt to get these windows boarded up, either," he was saying. He had gone over to look at the locks. "TI maid of yours could do it for you. You got some lumber?"

She nodded, and he came back and looked down to see, for the first time, the horror in her face.

"Now, Gladys," he urged, "you got to be sensible. It's only a couple more days, and there's probably no danger at a But if you board up the windows, then you're *sure*. No sense asking for trouble."

"You mean those gangs they've been talking about?"

"Well, what'd you think I meant?"

She shook her head. Everything was too confusing.

"Now you come on upstairs," he said. "There's nothing to get so scared about. Come on."

She nodded gratefully. That was what she wanted, to get out of the cellar, up to where the other people were, to w she could breathe again. When he reached out his hand to pat her shoulder reassuringly she turned swiftly, before he co feel the shudder his touch evoked. She ran all the way upstairs.

## SEVENTEEN

Veda was in the kitchen, cleaning up, but Gladys didn't stop there. The heavy footsteps were too close behind her, she swept through to the living room where Barbie and the doctor were waiting. Blessedly the footsteps paused in their pur-suit. She dropped into the big armchair and pressed her fingers hard against the rubbed nap of the upholstery. She safe.

Muted conversation from the kitchen. She smiled a little, think-ing he must be telling Veda about those windows, wanting to make sure it got done without frightening her any more. Then he came in, and through the hasty good-bys sh used weariness as a defense, stayed in her chair, and let them go without a word.

Then Veda came in, stared at her curiously, and called Barbie out to the kitchen. She heard again the snatches of a quiet conver-sation, and then her daughter's careless feet on the cellar stairs. Then for a few long minutes there was absolute peace, and nothing to think about, time for her tortured mind to rest.

Too soon, Barbie was back again, dancing around the room with a suppressed excitement Gladys couldn't understa Pete, she remembered. Barbie and Pete. Maybe it wasn't so funny. Maybe she should take it more seriously.

"Mom!" Barbie saw her eyes were open now. "Mom, I'm going down the cellar to fix the windows. Do you want to come down?"

"I can't, darling. I'm too tired."

"But, Mom, I'm going *down the cellar!*"

"Well, you've been there before!" She didn't want to sound cross. She smiled. "Very recently." It was something she shared. "I'm worn out, Babsy. You go down." She closed her eyes again, but Barbara didn't go.

Instead the girl came over and took both her hands, pulling a little, playfully.

"Please come down with me, Mom. You don't have to do anything."

Gladys opened her eyes in astonishment. Why should it mean so much?

"Please, Mom, it's . . ." She lowered her voice to almost a whisper. "It's Doc!" she said.

For a moment it didn't make sense, then Barbie added, "Doc Levy!"

Gladys was instantly fully awake. "What about him?" she demanded.

"He wants to talk to you."

"Where is he?"

"In the cellar, of course," Barbie said impatiently.

"Did he come *back*? When?"

"Come back?" The girl was bewildered. "He never *went* anywhere."

"But when I sent you down—before they first came—didn't you *warn* him?" That was impossible too. "He wasn't there when I went down with Mr. Turner," she finished.

"Oh, wasn't he?" Barbara was clearly delighted with the effect she was producing. "Of course I warned him," she teased, and added more soberly, "That's what he wanted to do—go away. But he didn't even know where he was going and the truck was right in front of the house, so

"You mean he's still down there?"

"Sure!" Barbie totally misunderstood her mother's horrified in-tonation. "Now will you come down?"

"I certainly will!" Grimly Gladys followed her daughter through the dining room and into the kitchen. When she got down to the bottom of the cellar steps the air was already crackling with questions and confusion.

"But you told me you didn't have any place to—"

"Just a minute, Barbara," the teacher interposed. He turned to Gladys. "I'm sorry, Mrs. Mitchell. I'm afraid I didn't make things quite clear enough to Barbara. I shouldn't have come in at all, I suppose, but I really thought it would be all right."

"Well, it was all right," Barbie insisted.

"It just happened to be," he said wearily. "Or rather, your mother made it so. But she can't keep on hiding me from Mr. Turner indefinitely. This time he was in a hurry. Next time he might not be."

"Well, next time you won't be in the cellar."

"Barbara, *will* you stop arguing? Dr. Levy knows what he wants to do."

The girl stared at her incredulously. "Well, don't you *want* him to—"

"You heard what your mother said, Barbara!" His tone was sharp. Gladys saw hurt succeed surprise on her daughter's face. "I'm sorry I chose such a bad time for my—visit, Mrs. Mitchell," he went on. "I didn't mean to endanger you, or even to cause a family upset." He was, oddly, being suavely polite, here in the basement, with his clothes dirty, a hammer dangling from his hand—and the police after him.

"I really meant to leave as soon as the patrol was over, but Barbara convinced me it was unwise to go out while the truck was parked in front of the house. Then when she came down again . . ." He smiled a little sheepishly and waved the hammer in his hand to indicate the one boarded-up window. "Maybe I just took the first excuse I could find to stay a while longer, but—"

"Mother, he did *everything*," Barbie insisted. "All I did was hand him nails. I *tried* to do it myself, but everything kept going wrong."

The man's apologetic smile broke into a grin that gave his broad face, under the thatch of gray hair, a look of impish merriment. "I'm afraid Barbara's quite right," he said. "I couldn't stand watching the way she held that hammer, and I stayed out just to show her how. Then it seemed the least I could do, to pay for my keep, as it were, was to stay and finish the job. But"—he was serious again—"when I realized you didn't know I was still here I sent her up to get you."

Well, what am I supposed to say now? Gladys wondered. How could he take it all so casually, make jokes, and find cause for laughter? His own life was forfeit, and he was endangering theirs every minute he stayed. Get out of my house, her mind screamed at him, but she couldn't say it out loud.

"I see," she managed. "That was very thoughtful of you."

"Well, what are you going to do, Mother?" Barbara demanded coldly. "Are you going to make him go away after all he—"

"I think," he smiled ruefully, ignoring the girl, "I'd better go now. But there was another reason I wanted to talk to you, Mrs. Mitchell. I took a grand tour of your gas pipes while Barbara was upstairs, and I think I found your trouble. I don't know if you'll want to bother with it now, but it's just possible you could get it going again."

"Why, that would be wonderful! Is it safe, you think?"

"If I've diagnosed it right, it is." He walked over to the hot-water heater. "I have a hunch all your trouble was in here. Of course it could be in the pipes," he added, "but I just don't think so."

"What could the heater have to do with it?" Gladys wanted to know.

"I think that's where the gas was escaping from. It occurred to me when you mentioned the pilot light went out. From what Mr. Turner said—"

"You heard all that?" Gladys interrupted. "*Where were you?*"

"Oh, I never told you!" Barbara seized the opening. "I ought to make you guess!" Delightedly she stretched out the moment. "You'd never think of it. He was in the clothes drier!"

"And a very dry, clean drier, too," he put in. "I'm afraid I *did* overhear most of your conversation—or rather," he smiled, "Mr. Turner's."

Gladys flushed, remembering the nature of Turner's conversation. But Dr. Levy went on without giving her a chance to be embarrassed.

"From what he said about trouble in the mains, and from the way you described your trouble with the stove upstairs, I think that when the pilot light went out, upstairs, the one down here in the heater must have done the same. Only the big flame in the heater was on at the time, and that stayed open. It shouldn't," he added. "These gadgets are supposed to be foolproof. But something didn't work when it should have, and as soon as the gas came through again it began pouring out of the burner. If I'm right, then it's perfectly safe to turn the gas on again, just so the heater's off first."

He walked over to the meter and examined Gladys' handiwork.

"Will it go on again?" she asked. "Frankly, I don't know just what I did to it."

"You did the right thing anyhow. And a thorough job, too," he told her. "What did you use to turn it off?"

"There was a pliers." She looked around, trying to remember what she'd done with it.

He was back at the heater, fooling with handles and knobs.

"That should do it," he said finally. "This thing's off tight now. You can turn on the gas any time. All you have to do is screw that valve out—the one you closed before—but you better check up carefully after you turn it on, and make sure it's right. If you come down every half hour or so you'll be able to notice the smell long before there's any danger, just in case there really is a leak somewhere."

"I don't know . . ." Gladys hesitated. "I'd— isn't there any other way to tell?"

"No safe way," he said, "unless you're sure you know what you're doing. You'd have to crawl all over the place to follow the pipes."

"Well," she said doubtfully, "we'll see. But thank you, anyhow. It was very kind of you."

"Of course," Barbara said coldly, "it wouldn't occur to you that Doc—oh, never mind," she finished helplessly.

Gladys looked wearily from her daughter to the teacher. The man ran his hand through his hair, brushed off the dust from his sleeves of his jacket, and straightened his tie.

"I—" It was his turn now to be embarrassed. "In spite of my perhaps ill-placed humor before, Mrs. Mitchell, I hope you realize I wasn't really looking for an—excuse. I've stayed too long already."

"You've been . . . very kind," Gladys repeated inadequately. There must be something she could say or do, something that would help. "I'm afraid," she said weakly, "I haven't exactly—well, I certainly haven't thanked you for all you've done."

"Please, Mrs. Mitchell," he said uncomfortably, "that's not necessary. Believe me, I realize just how difficult it's been."

"The only difficult thing anybody's done," Barbara said bitterly, "was your coming here last night to warn us."

Gladys felt miserably ashamed of her own fears. She was tired and mixed up, torn between pity for the man and terror of having him in the house. And things would only be more complicated if she admitted to herself that she was beginning to like him. What Barbara wanted wasn't really so unreasonable. What if he did stay a little longer? Turner certainly would be back again soon. In the end it was her weariness that won.

"It might be a good idea if you took a look outside, Barbara," Dr. Levy said. "I'd hate to add any more to my sins by involving you people now."

Wordlessly the girl started for the stairs, but Gladys put out a hand to stop her.

"Dr. Levy." She turned to the man and gave him a pleading look, begging him to understand just what she meant. "I want you to know," she began cautiously, "that I really do appreciate all you've done. I'm awfully tired, and I'm not sure being very clear, but if—well, if you would like to stay awhile, I'm sure it would be a big help to us. I . . ." She tried to make it easier. "I know I could never manage the gas myself," she added.

She was grateful when Barbara took it upon herself to override his protests, leaving her to escape to the comfort of Jon's big chair upstairs. She could rest now, without quarrels or exertions. She didn't have to think about windows or gas; she didn't have to argue with Barbie.

There was music on the radio again. She closed her eyes, trying to bring Jon back into the room, as she had tried the night before. But he wouldn't come; she couldn't imagine him there at all. He was gone.

In the last war there had been a day when, suddenly, she couldn't remember what he looked like. She had stared at a picture and the face on it had been a stranger's. But that was after months of separation. This was just . . . not even . . . two days.

Veda came in, and Gladys opened her eyes in greeting, then closed them again when she saw nothing was required of her. Veda picked out a magazine and sat down on the sofa. She must be tired too.

Everything was extraordinarily peaceful. Music on the radio, down low, pages turning once in a while, Ginny asleep upstairs.

*Edie Crowell is asleep up there too.* Ginny asleep. Barbie, board-ing up windows . . . a stranger hiding in the cellar . . . She wouldn't think of those things. A man fixing the gas, she corrected herself. Turner couldn't fix it, she thought, but Jim Turner was one more person she didn't want to think about.

She wouldn't answer the phone either. She'd just let it ring. But it made too much noise.

"Missus Mitchell!" She was supposed to get up now. Veda had answered it.

"I don't want to talk to anybody."

"Yes, you do. You come talk now."

It was something good. *It was good news!* She ran to the phone and took it from Veda's extended hand.

"Yes?"

"This is Peter Spinelli, Mrs. Mitchell. I had a minute before we left headquarters, so I thought I'd let you know. Barbie's all right."

## EIGHTEEN

"But how could they know so *soon*?" Barbie left a thoroughly embraced Veda brushing off cellar dust and spun back to her mother. "I thought it took hours!"

"He said it didn't take long to make the count—just waiting for them to get around to it. But Dr. Peter Spinelli, for some unknown reason, wanted to find out about Miss Barbara Mitchell right away, so he went right in and did it himself."

She did not add that Squadman James Turner had been so concerned about Mrs. Gladys Mitchell that he had procured the difficult lab pass that made the quick test possible. Watching Barbie's glee, she dismissed the disquieting obligation. Time enough to think of that later. She felt as if she had just awakened from a long, long sleep—far more refreshed than when she had actually got out of bed, five hours earlier.

"Hey, I've got to finish those windows! It's getting late." Barbara stopped prancing. "Come with me, Mom. Keep me company."

"All right," Gladys agreed.

"Missus Mitchell." Veda restored her magazine to its precise spot in the rack. "If there's nothin' special you want me to do, I think mebbe I'll get to bed now." She covered a yawn. "Looks like there ain't no call fer me to set up no more."

"Do you mean to say you were staying up just on account of me?" Gladys asked indignantly. "You shouldn't have."

"Yer' feelin' pretty chipper now," Veda stopped her, "but you didn't look so hot a ways back. Anyways, Mr. Turner gave me strict orders to look out fer you. I jest didn't dare do nothin' else."

The remark brought a general laugh, but made Gladys acutely aware of another worry she had deferred. Something would have to be done about Jim Turner.

The music on the radio ended with a noisy flourish, and a man's voice announced the ten o'clock news. For the first

time since the speeches the afternoon before, Gladys found she really wanted to hear a broadcast all the way through.

"Let's go downstairs after the news is over," she suggested. The two of them settled down together in front of the radio and Barbie accepted the decision willingly.

To Gladys' surprise, most of the news was encouraging. No further attempts at bombing attacks had been made. Retaliation was already in effect. Then the startling, unexpected information that all action against the enemy was by means of remote-control aircraft; land forces would be used only for mopping up.

Tom was safe! Whatever they had him doing at address unknown, he was not landing in enemy territory or fighting a dread sort of man-to-man battle they'd had in the last war.

There were reports of communication hookups to all parts of the country, of trains and rails repaired for evacuation purposes, of supplies being brought into big-city areas.

The national news was followed by a series of brief reports on local matters. There was something about the explosion in the gas main that Turner had mentioned; and there was also a report about the preparation of the Navy base for use as an evacuation camp. There were new hospitals opened up, railroad lines put in use, telephone services repaired.

The broadcast ended with a repetition of the request for temporary homes for homeless children.

Impulsively Gladys got up and went to the phone. When she came back, after the now familiar struggle with operators and switchboards, she felt obscurely pleased, even while she reckoned up the new difficulties the decision would bring upon her. But now that she knew Barbie was all right the whole thing seemed much easier. It might, in fact, give Barbara something to do when boredom and confinement began to tell on them all. And certainly it would be wonderful for Ginny. All in all, it might save more trouble than it made.

They started reading off the long lists of victims and survivors found in the city, and Gladys let her thoughts drift away. The news all sounded so good, she reflected, things seemed to be improving every hour. Then it occurred to her that nothing had been said about the imminent failure of the gas supply or about the possible discontinuance of telephone service. The news of the evacuation camp's preparation did not include any mention of the projected mass evacuation. It wasn't all quite as good as it sounded after all; maybe the other part, the big news about the whole country, was working out the same way.

"Mother?" Gladys raised her eyes from the tufted carpet and looked at Barbie inquiringly.

"I just wanted to tell you, I think it was awfully nice of you to change your mind about those kids—and about Doc Levy."

"I didn't exactly change my mind about him," Gladys told her. "It bothers me, just having him in the house. Maybe I'll feel better if I knew what it was that he did that makes him have to hide, but—well, I just don't like the whole thing!"

"But you *said* --"

"I know what I said. I said that if he wanted to stay awhile it would be a big help to us. It was perfectly true, and I can't see what else I could have said at that point. I know he's done a lot for us, but frankly I'll be a lot happier when he's gone."

"You mean you're still going to make him go? You're not going to let him stay here?"

"Suppose *you* tell me where we'd keep him—if not in the clothes drier? And how we'd keep Ginny from finding out? Or Veda?"

"He could stay up in the attic," Barbie insisted. "You know how Tom and I used to play up there when we were kids. There's plenty of room for a man to hide behind those boards, too, if he had to."

*When we were kids!* Staring at her daughter in mingled shock and amusement, Gladys almost missed the rest of what Barbie said.

"Anyhow," the girl finished, "I don't see why they shouldn't know."

"Barbie, you know Ginny would never be able to keep quiet about it. Even if we could make her understand it was a secret she couldn't keep it. And now," she added as inspiration struck her, "with those children coming—well, it's just impossible."

"And what about *Veda*?" The question did not come from Barbie.

Fully dressed, and not looking the least bit sleepy, Veda was firmly planted in the dining-room door, arms folded on her chest, eyes flashing.

"How long . . . ?" Gladys started.

"Not long enough," she said. "I don't yet know his name or what he's doing down there."

"Have you *seen him*?"

"Yes, I seen him. Crawl'n' all over the floor down there like an animal. This one," she said, pointing a long arm

accusingly at Barbie, "tryin' to tell me she fixed that gas up her own self. *You're* right smart at keepin' things to yerself," she accused Gladys. "But if Miss Snippity here wants to know your secrets, my advice is, don't tell her. She can't keep 'em."

One baleful glare stopped Barbara's retort before it got fairly started. "Now, lissen, Missus Mitchell, I ain't forgettin' you did me a favor this mornin'. But I've had to do some fancy remindin' myself the last couple of hours. Mebbe you think what them fellers said about me is true, an' so I'll put up with anything. Well, it ain't true. I never did a thing in my life I'd be afraid to admit out loud, an' up till right now I thought the same about you. But if it's got so you'd set your own daughter lyin'—"

"Veda!" Gladys protested. "I know perfectly well you haven't done anything wrong. And neither have I. You ought to realize that."

"Well, I'm right glad to hear you say so. But just don't you mind, I want to have my say out this once. If you folks kin make up yer minds to let me know what's goin' on around here, and if it don't seem wrong to me, that's one thing. But if you can't see fit to tell me what that man is doin' here I don't see nothin' for it but to get out even if it means I got to call up the Security men an'—"

"Veda!" Barbara, appalled, forgot to be cowed. "You wouldn't *tell* them! You wouldn't tell about Dr. Levy?"

"No'm." Veda directed her answer to Gladys, seeing the same question in her eyes. "No'm, I wouldn't. I told you I forgot about this mornin' and ain't like to. Only I jest can't stay here unless we get things straightened up. I'm sorry, Miss Mitchell, but it ain't *jest* that man. I tried to talk to you before and didn't get nowhere. But it ain't in me to keep on—"

"Of course you're going to stay, Veda." Gladys had finally recovered her self-possession. "You know we wouldn't let you go. Now sit down, will you, and give me a chance to tell you about it?"

Reluctantly the maid crossed the room and sat down. She listened, stiffly at first, while Gladys went over the whole story, some parts of which Barbara, too, was hearing for the first time. In the course of the tale Veda's indignation died away, but by the time it was done she was afire once more.

"You mean to set there an' tell me you let that man stay down in thit cellar all this time," she demanded fiercely, "and you sick, too?" She got up and headed briskly for the kitchen.

After that Gladys felt she had lost all ability to be surprised. If she were still capable of it, nothing could have been stranger than the immediate warmth of the friendship between Veda and Garson Levy.

The woman, almost uneducated, opinionated, practical, and warmly emotional; the man, well informed, scientific, precise of speech and mannerism, a little too erudite, almost pedantic—it seemed there could hardly be two people with less in common.

Gladys sat and marveled, while the teacher weeded out his vocabulary, choosing words Veda would be sure to understand, taking care not to offend her, drawing her out. He wanted to know everything that had happened to her, what she'd seen and heard in the city and in the decontamination center.

It took a long time for the whole story to come out. Some of it they heard while Levy tested the kitchen range, and some while Veda filled all the remaining empty containers with boiling water. The teacher kept her talking while he devised airtight seals for jars and pitchers that had no tops, and longer still while they all sat drinking coffee and cocoa in the living room.

Veda told them how she had turned away the first people who tried to rouse her—two of the roomers who had taken upon themselves to get everyone out of the house. She even told, with a deprecatory smile, how she stood cowering in the corner of the room, wrapped in her bathrobe, angrily convinced that her fellow tenants were drunk and violent in the middle of the afternoon.

She had steadfastly refused to open the door, and apparently the neighbors' interest in her welfare had not extended to knocking it down. She went back to bed with a firm resolution to have a long talk with the landlady, and went promptly back to sleep. The steady downpour of radioactive rain all that afternoon did not disturb her. It was after two o'clock in the morning when an official rescue crew came through the building, broke down the door, and dragged her out of bed and out of the house, with barely time to get her bathrobe on.

The rain was over by then and the street was bright with fires, raging in defiance of the lingering wetness. She didn't get much outside, however, because she was led directly from the house door to a big closed truck only a few feet away.

She shared the interior of the truck for more than an hour with the few other female survivors rescued in that neighborhood. She was the second one in, and when the truck started rolling steadily westward there were nine altogether—three cripples, one idiot, two drunks, two senile old ladies, and herself. As near as she could make out, everyone who was conscious and capable, as well as most of those who weren't, had fled the poisoned streets long ago.



The nine of them were unloaded in front of a big stone building that might have been a college, a library, or a museum and taken through a little side entrance to a series of small rooms where they were subjected to indignities which Veda passed over without detail. These Gladys shrewdly guessed to be connected with a change of clothing and an assembly medical examination.

They had then been led through a series of rooms where un-familiar machines, big and little, quiet and noisy, were aimed at her.

Levy explained that these must have been the testing devices for radiations and fission products. He seemed impressed at the number and size Veda reported, but Gladys was inclined to discount some of it. She was familiar with Veda's impressionability where machinery was concerned.

In any case she had been separated from her truck companions immediately afterward. Something was said about a hospital, so she assumed that was where the others were taken. She herself, it seemed, was in excellent health—considerably better than she had ever thought. She was taken to another large building, located within the same roped-off area of several city blocks. This one was easily identifiable as a public school.

The entire place, Dr. Levy said, was undoubtedly the Washington Heights Decontamination Center.

In the school she was taken to a brightly lit room where several men questioned her, over and over again, about her reasons for sealing her room. In endless embarrassed succession she repeated the same answers to the same questions, until eventually one of them decided on the trip to the Mitchells' to check on her story.

It was almost midnight by the time Veda finished. Then, when Levy found out how long she'd been without sleep, he did something Gladys would have sworn to be impossible, and persuaded her to go off to bed, leaving the dishes for him to do.

Barbara was half asleep, too, but reluctant to leave a gathering where she had acquired such a wealth of information. Gladys let her stay up for the twelve o'clock news, then sent the girl off to bed. She herself went up to the attic to fix a cot for Dr. Levy. There was no longer any question that he had become a semipermanent guest.

When she had finished she called down to let him know it was ready, but she didn't go back to the living room.

For all his redeeming traits, she still found the teacher hard to talk to. Perhaps it was because, even now, she felt so strongly the indefinite menace that his presence in the house implied, perhaps because everything connected with him continued to be so un-realistically melodramatic. She wanted to know more about him—a great deal more—but she could not bring herself to go down and question him.

She opened up the hall closet again and began working through a pile she had started the night before, reflecting uncomfortably on the fact that while he was drawing out Veda's story Levy had told little or nothing of his own.

She dug down among the old work clothes and camping things, refusing to think about the extra baggage she would be allowed if she took Jim Turner's offer. She was going to *have* to do something about that.

Ruefully she wondered which man was more of a problem. Then, underneath Tom's old tennis racket, she found *Joe Camper's Manual* and opened it curiously.

## NINETEEN

The crash caught her in the middle of the chapter on first aid. She dropped the book and flew downstairs before she could think about it and get too frightened to go down at all. It was not loud enough to be an explosion; it was too loud to be furniture or a lamp. There was a battering sound to it and, mixed with it, the tinkling shatter of glass. Everything was all right in the living room, but Dr. Levy was nowhere in sight.

Gladys went back to the kitchen and pushed open the swinging door into darkness.

"Close it!" That was Dr. Levy. "For God's sake, shut the door. Don't let the light in." He was shouting in a whisper, and she tried to do what was possible. He seemed to be across the room, down near the floor, and moving around. It felt as if she stood in a lighted doorway forever, but she realized that she must have acted quickly to close it when she heard his grunted "Good."

"Get down," he ordered, still whispering, and she obeyed. On the other side of the room the door to Veda's bedroom was creaked cautiously open, but no light showed through.

"It's all right, Veda," Gladys called. "We're out here." Another thundering crash at the kitchen door and the little glass pane that was left in the panes fell tinkling to the floor. It's all right . . . what made her say a thing like that?

"What's the matter? What's happening?" Veda's voice was a hoarse whisper.

"Come over here," Levy told Gladys. He was moving around again. "And keep low. Stay down as close to the floor as you can." Something hit the door again, and the whole room shook.

Veda came up next to Gladys. "Is it that gang they was talking about on the radio?"

Gladys nodded, then realized it was too dark for Veda to see her. "Yes."

She felt something being put into her hand. "Give it to Veda," Levy said. Dutifully she passed on the heavy iron skillet. He kept handing her things. Another skillet, a carving knife, the iron and, ludicrously, a rolling pin—anything he could lay hands on that could possibly be a weapon.

"Pile them up in front of you."

Gladys did as she was told, simply because she knew nothing better to do.

"I'm going over behind the door on the other side," Levy whispered. He was kneeling down right in back of them, they could both hear. "You stay here together and when the door comes down throw the lighter things first, as fast as you can, and as much as you can. If there aren't many of them the confusion might be enough to stop them. If that doesn't work use the heavier things, but you haven't got many of those, so don't waste them. If you do have to use them, aim to hit."

He started crawling across the floor, rattling some unknown kitchen utensils behind him. A few feet away he stopped.

"Just try not to hit me," he pleaded, and continued his slow progress across the floor.

It had been a long time since the last crash. Were they reconsidering the plan of attack? Or going away? Or gathering strength for the final blow?

"Dr. Levy!" It was absolutely quiet outside, and even her whisper sounded *loud*.

"Yes?"

"What do we do with the knives?"

"Nothing more than you can help," he said tersely. "If they get in, you may need them."

He had barely finished making his way to his self-appointed station on the far side of the door when the crash came louder and more violent than any before. It hit the door and continued hitting it, until the frame, boards and all, shook, shivered, and fell.

Gladys' rolling pin flew from her hand toward the first shape that loomed in the doorway. By a miracle of bad aim, it went straight by him to bring forth a yell of pain from someone right in back. A moment later Levy brought a heavy skillet down on the foot of the man in front, putting him out of the battle completely.

Later on Gladys remembered those two opening incidents clearly, but the rest was a chaos of flying fists and kitchenware, from which only an occasional incident stood out. The first flurry of flying objects from Gladys and Veda caused a hesitation in the ranks that made it clear the intruders had not expected resistance. But they rallied quickly and surged into the room. One of them had a flashlight.

"Oh, it's just a couple of dames," he shouted, and the others rushed through. The swath of light had completely missed Levy, crouching beside the door. The teacher stood up, raised his arms over his head, reached forward, and brought down the pot in his hands—upside down. He snatched the light easily, while its former owner struggled out of the tight-fitting helmet he had acquired. Gladys was aware of herself springing up from the floor with a skillet in one hand and a carving fork in the other; afterward, also, she remembered Veda breathing heavily, jumping forward and, later, shouting. She knew that she hit out blindly in front of her, over and over again. And she knew that after a while the noise and movement stopped, and the intruders were gone—all but one.

Someone turned the light on then, and she was standing in the middle of what had been a clean, orderly kitchen, looking down at a motionless body on the floor in front of her, memorizing it.

Dr. Levy was moving the kitchen table in front of the broken door. Veda held the door in place until the table was set to brace it.

The man had blond hair, beginning to go bald at the temples. He was very thin and his suit had been light gray when it was clean.

Levy said something about wood and went off down the cellar stairs.

There was a clean cut on the man's forehead, not a very big one. Just a little bit of blood trickling off into the blond hair. It didn't seem like enough to kill a . . .

"Missus Mitchell, stop that now, Missus Mitchell! It ain't goin' to do no good, havin' you stand over him like that. You go on and sit down."

The words broke the spell. "I don't have to sit down," Gladys said. "What are you doing?" Then she looked. "Fixing the door?"

"Doc Levy went after some wood so we kin nail it shut. Seems to me we ought to shut up all the windows on this floor, same as in the cellar."

Gladys nodded and bent down to pick up a pot, feeling herself unpleasantly close to the body she didn't want to think about. Not looking to that side at all, she crossed the room and began picking up scattered utensils near the door. Everything was lightly spattered with blood and mud and sprinkled with splinters of wood and bits of plaster. She straightened up and let Veda take the arm-ful of utensils from her, her eyes searching for the spot the plaster had come from. She found it finally, clear across the room, near Veda's door, where someone had aimed wild with a food chopper.

She walked over and picked up the chopper, trying to remember whether it had been hers, wondering if she had reached such a pitch of excitement that she could have thrown it unawares. The worst thing was being unable to remember. She didn't know what she had done in those minutes. She didn't know whether she had used a knife. She raised her finger to the hole in the wall, exploring its contours curiously, feeling what the chopper would have done if it had hit the man.

The teacher came back, loaded down with pieces of board, a hammer, and nails. He dumped everything on the kitchen table in front of the door and went back again to survey the man on the floor.

"We'll have to do something about him."

Gladys and Veda looked to each other and to the two men.

"We can't just leave him there," Gladys stated foolishly. "The children will be coming down in the morning."

"Well, we could start by bringing him to," Levy proposed. "Do you have any ammonia in the house?"

"Bring him to?"

"You mean he's not . . . ?"

Both women spoke at once with a swift return of vitality. It was Levy's turn now to look from one face to another, uncomprehending.

"I mean," he said when he finally understood, "that he's quite enough alive so that you'd better have something ready to tie him up with before you get the ammonia."

Veda produced a quantity of rope from a hidden hoard, and Levy put aside the problem of nailing up the door while he secured the knots around the unconscious body. When he was certain the man was safely tied he picked up the hammer and nails and started for the door again. He climbed up on the table and got the board into position while Veda fished out the bottle of ammonia from the back of the cleaning closet. Gladys went over to hold the board in place for him, but he changed his mind just as he was about to start.

"Wait a minute," he called to Veda, who was already bending over the prostrate form. "You can put that down," he said to Gladys. She lowered the board onto the flat surface of the table, and watched, puzzled, as he bent over the blond man. He moved the ropes so that the hands no longer covered the suit pockets. Neatly he turned the pockets inside out, one after another, turning up a grand miscellany of items from brass knuckles to half a sandwich.

Speechless, Gladys continued to watch as he stood up, triumphantly holding a battered wallet, and went systematically through the contents of the billfold.

Veda was anything but speechless. "Now, listen here, Doc," she said indignantly, "you kin go too far. There's some things a man shouldn't do."

Levy smiled more than ever like an imp and, ignoring the money in the wallet, slid a small white card out of a cellophane pocket.

"Veda," he said sternly, "you're too suspicious. You should have more faith in human nature."

She didn't want to be joked with. "I know what's right," she said stubbornly, "and I know what's wrong, and what you're doin' ain't right."

"What do you think, Mrs. Mitchell?" The teacher turned to her. "Are you voting against me too?"

"Why, I don't know." She watched him fold the wallet closed, still holding the little white card in his other hand, and at last she realized what it was. "No," she smiled, "but you might introduce us."

"I see by the little card," he said, "that my name is Albert Carney. I live at 5813 Grand Concourse, in the Bronx. I have served two years of compulsory military training and am a member of the Reserve Army Corps."

That was when Veda stopped looking stonily disapproving and understood what he was doing.

"And furthermore," he finished, reading the draft card, "I have had a very sad life."

"I'll bite," Gladys smiled. "Why have you had a sad life, Mr. Bones?"

"Bones?" he asked. "Bones, indeed! In my heyday I used to be referred to as skin-and! The reason why I have had such a sad life is that I am only"—he had to check the card again—"only thirty-two years old, and *most* prematurely gray."

In the reaction to the strain, all three of them went off in shouts of raucous laughter. They laughed till it hurt, till all the strain and tension were gone out of them. Then they set to work boarding up the door, meanwhile considering what to do with their victim.

Gladys didn't want to keep him in the house, for the children to find in the morning. Veda objected strenuously to the risks involved in reviving and releasing him. They thought of just putting him out on the porch, out of sight, and calling Emergency Headquarters to pick him up, but it was a heartless procedure, and one by one they found excuses not to do it.

"Seems to me, with Doc here in the house, we're a sight better off not askin' any extra cops inside," Veda added.

"We could untie him," Levy proposed, "and put him outside. Then when he comes to, he'll be free."

The last thing Gladys remembered of that incredible night was Levy-Carney leaning out of the dining-room window cautiously lowering an unconscious man into the soft earth of the flower bed below.

## TWENTY

"... simplified system of distribution. Your neighborhood food stores are now open, under the supervision of emergency squadmen. Supplies are being distributed to the stores by emergency squad trucks. No money is necessary to receive ..."

The announcer's voice rushed up the stairs to greet her with the day's new problems—the third day of the third war in her life. Gladys didn't want problems. She wanted breakfast. Even more, she wanted to go back to bed.

"... birth certificates if possible. Driver's licenses or Social Security cards will also be acceptable. But remember, you must have absolute proof of the number of persons in your household."

Edie Crowell sat on the living-room sofa, desultorily turning the pages of a magazine. She was wrapped unbecomingly in Gladys' old pink nylon robe. When she looked up to nod, her face was unnaturally pallid. Her general appearance finished the job the radio announcer had started, and removed the last vestige of relaxation left over from the long night's sleep.

"Good morning," Gladys said quickly, and turned to the radio as an excuse to postpone further conversation.

"... may be some delay, but there is enough for all. Remember, others are also waiting for supplies. This concludes the eleven o'clock news broadcast. We will continue to ..."

"Hello!" Edie stood up, stretching, and dispersing some of the gloom settled around her. "I thought you were never going to get up!" She smiled and looked more like herself.

Memory came into focus, and the events of the day before lined themselves up for Gladys' inspection. A wave of relief swept her as she realized that Edith had, incredibly, slept through all the excitement of the night.

"I slept so late yesterday, I couldn't get to sleep last night," Gladys lied happily. "You must have been up early. What has been happening around here?"

"Nothing," Edith laughed. "Nothing at all. It's the most *peaceful* morning I've had in ages! I haven't seen a living soul since breakfast. If I had anything to put on I'd have gone home, but I understand my dress isn't exactly ..."

She let it drop off.

"It's not in very good shape," Gladys admitted, "but Veda could have got you something of mine. I don't know why."

"I'm afraid your Veda doesn't exactly approve of me." Edith began to look better as animation returned to her. "I was given to understand it would be perfectly all right for me to wear your robe home"—she plucked at the worn pink material humorously—"provided I did it quickly. I decided to be a difficult guest instead, and wait around till you got up, in hope of a better offer."

"Oh, of course. Anything you want. I'm sorry about Veda. I hope she wasn't—unpleasant?" But Gladys couldn't help smiling; she was too familiar with Veda's uncompromising attitude toward alcohol.

"She wasn't." It was a relief to see Edie's answering smile. "She was just ... uninterested. So I kept out of her way. She left me alone. Anyhow, I think I agree with her. When this mess is over I'm going to join the anti-liquor league. Or at least a temperance society. I had enough of it yesterday to last the rest of my life!"

At least she'd mentioned it first. "Don't be silly," Gladys said weakly, and was saved from having to think of anything else to say.

"That you out there, Missus Mitchell?" Veda emerged from the dining room. "You comin' in to eat now? Ought to get yer breakfast before lunchtime." She smiled, pointedly ignoring the other woman.

"Have you eaten yet?" Gladys hesitated, looking from one to the other.

"Hours ago," Edith told her.

"You're sure? You won't join me?"

Veda shifted her weight impatiently. "I got the coffee heatin'," she told no one in particular. "Mebbe I better go turn off." She turned on her heel and marched off.

"Well, if you're sure?" Gladys apologized to her guest. "I am awfully hungry." The swinging door wafted the smell of bacon from the kitchen. "I'll get you something to wear as soon as I'm done. Veda seems to have everything all ready, I fumbled.

"That's perfectly all right. You go ahead. I don't want to put you out."

Why can't I send her up to get it for herself? Somehow that was impossible. Irritated at Edie and at herself, Gladys started for the door.

"Oh, by the way, Glad." The other woman's voice called her back. "I'm sorry—I don't want to keep you. But I was wondering if you had any cigarettes around? I know you don't smoke much, but your husband does, doesn't he?"

"They're in the drawer," Gladys broke in.

It was hopeless. No matter how firmly she made up her mind, she couldn't keep from playing hostess for Edie. To his intense chagrin, Gladys found herself recrossing the room, opening the drawer in Jon's desk, and bringing forth a fresh pack of cigarettes. She hunted for matches and found them pushed away in the back.

"Thank you. I'm sorry to be such a nuisance, but you don't have to worry about me now. I've been sitting around all morning, dreaming about a cigarette, but I didn't see any, and I didn't want to go hunting through your things. That's half the reason why I wanted to get home." She held up the full pack, smiling. "This is making me feel positively luxurious."

In the kitchen Gladys found her place already set. She sat down at the white table and felt the sun streaming in the window over her shoulder.

"Where are the kids?" she asked.

"Up the attic. I could call them," Veda offered, "only I thought mebbe you'd want to eat yer meal in peace, without t to bother."

"You couldn't have had a better thought," Gladys agreed. She had planned to send Barbie for the dress, but it could wait. Right now she was hungry. When had she last eaten a decent meal? Not Tuesday. Monday, supper was spoiled; she'd had a sandwich for lunch. That was a long time.

It didn't matter if Edie Crowell spent a few more minutes in the house. Just concentrate on the table, the sun, the smell of the bacon, and the tall glass of orange juice that was waiting for her. Time enough for problems later.

She picked up the juice and took a long drink. It was canned. Veda smiled at the face she made.

"None of the frozen left," she explained. "Ain't done a big marketing since last week. That's jest as good for you," she added. "You drink it up."

"I don't want to," Gladys pouted, in imitation of her youngest daughter. "*Will* you stop taking such good care of me Veda? Ever since I got a little gas into my system yesterday you've been acting as if I was likely to fall apart."

"Well, you sound more like yerself now," Veda admitted. "I was thinkin', if you kin manage all right with lunch for the kids, it would mebbe be a smart idea fer me to get down to Monnassey's, right away, an' try to get up at the front of the line."

"I think I can probably muddle through," Gladys smiled at her. "But don't stay away too long," she warned. "I could easily melt."

She finished the juice and worked her way happily through pancakes and bacon, while Veda got ready to go. By the time she got to her coffee Gladys was beginning to feel prepared to face some of her problems.

"Is Mr.—Carney upstairs?" she asked.

"No, he went out a couple hours ago. Said he'd likely be back around three. Said he had to get some things fer hims an' pick up some parts for the kerosene stove."

Gladys looked up, startled. "What on earth is he going to do with that?"

"He got a plan figured out to rig up that kerosene stove under-neath the hot-water burner where the gas went out. So he kin fix it so's we'll have runnin' hot water again. He's a right handy man around a house, Missus Mitchell," Veda said with satisfaction. "Never would've thought it of a teacher like that."

Dr. Levy, Gladys reflected, was getting to be a household prop. She wished she could resolve her mixed feelings about the man. Mr. Fix-it . . . in a fix!

"Did *she* see him?" Gladys nodded toward the living room. Veda shook her head. "He told Barbie to watch out fer when she went in her room, an' then went out."

"And Ginny? Did she see him?"

"Couldn't help that. That's why I thought mebber it was jest as good if she stayed up the attic till yer friend goes home, told 'er he was a friend o' mine, jest in case."

Gladys looked doubtful. "We'll have to try and think of something to keep her from talking about him."

"Don't really matter too much," Veda pointed out. "If he kin go out, he kin come here. Jest so she don't know he's sleepin' here."

"That's true." Gladys sipped thoughtfully at her coffee.

"I'm about ready to go now, Missus Mitchell. I got lunch all fixed on the stove there. All you got to do is warm it up. I think they said on the radio I got to take some kind of identification with me. You know where I kin find something?"

Gladys got up and started for the living room. "I didn't mean fer you to get up."

"Well, I am up. Will you stop babying me, Veda?" It didn't seem funny any more.

Barbie was in the living room, talking to Edith Crowell and looking superbly secretive. I'll have to speak to her about that, Gladys thought, and remembered about the dress.

"Barbie, could you take Mrs. Crowell up to my room and help her pick out something to wear?" Veda could feel bad or disprove or just ignore it. "Take whatever you want, Edie. We can offer you a complete assortment. Barbara knows where everything is."

Veda said pointedly, "Mehber Barbie would know where—"

Where what?" Barbara turned back from the stairs.

"I came in to get the birth certificates," Gladys explained shortly.

"I'm sure I can find them."

"For heaven's sake, Mother, don't you ever remember where you put anything? They're in the bottom drawer in Daddy's desk. That's where they always were."

There was no use hoping Barbie was wrong. Gladys had long ago stopped trying to compete with her daughter's memory. Rebel-liously she went to the drawer and found all the family birth certificates in a neat pile, probably put away by Jon, not, as Barbie said, by herself. She was sure she would have tucked them in a cookbook, or in a vanity drawer for easier reference.

She bolted the door after Veda and went back to her rapidly cooling coffee. Ginny came running down a few minutes later, de-manding to know why no one had told her her mother was up. She seemed in better spirits than she had been the day before, and certainly her appetite had returned. Not until she had stuffed down the last mouthful of dessert did she stop to ask the burning question.

"When are the children coming?"

"Soon, I think." She'd completely forgotten about that. They had told her twelve o'clock on the phone, but it was after twelve already. Better not to be too definite about it with Ginny.

"How soon?"

"They'll probably be here when you wake up from your nap," Gladys told her.

"I don't want a nap."

"Of course you do. You want to be wide awake to play with the children, don't you?"

"No, I don't." Ginny shook her head vigorously. "I'll be asleep when they come."

"Maybe I'll wake you up."

"Maybe, if what?"

"Maybe, if you go to sleep *right away*." It was half promise, half threat. In any case it was adequate inducement. Meekly Ginny let herself be led upstairs, washed and de-shoed, and put to bed.

And then there was nothing to do. It was astonishing how a house that had always kept two women busy now seemed to take care of itself. She thought of getting lunch for the others, but Barbara came down and fixed a sandwich for herself and Gladys didn't know whether Edith would want to eat before she left. She had another cup of coffee while Barbara ate her quick lunch, and the dishes were being cleaned when they heard the gauntlet-muffled knock of authority on the front door.

Gladys left Barbie in the kitchen and flew to open it.

But instead of the appealing small faces she had expected, she found only the impersonal surface of Jim Turner's square

suit. By the time he came in, and the doctor behind him, she had covered her disappointment, and greeted them cheerfully.

"I didn't have a chance to thank you last night, but I'm sure you know how much it meant to us to get the news so soon." She turned to Spinelli. "I'm afraid I didn't thank you properly either. I was so excited and I wanted to tell Barbie."

"There's nothing to thank me for. I wanted to find out too. By the way, I brought you some more good news. We got the check on Ginny's urinalysis today—nothing in that one at all. It's perfectly all right. Yours hasn't come through yet, but don't see how there could be anything wrong there."

Gladys laughed. "I suppose I'm not supposed to thank you now either. I know," she forestalled him, "I didn't do anything." Well, I have to thank somebody, and it might as well be you."

Jim Turner took a step forward impatiently. "Well now, that's all cleared up, how are you making out with your other troubles? Didn't have any more trouble with the gas, did you? I could take a better look at it now, if it's still leaking. Wouldn't have come back last night if I could, but they kept me busy up at headquarters almost all evening. Can't get anything done up there without six conferences first."

He sounded very important. Gladys asked demurely, "Don't you ever get any rest? They keep you so busy."

"Well, we've got a big job to do," he responded happily. "There'll be plenty of time to take it easy afterward. There's something big in the air right now," he added meaningfully. Gladys refused to let him catch her eye. "You'll be hearing about it pretty soon on your radio, I guess, but the only thing released so far is, the regular squad routes are breaking up. Now that it's okay to go out, you're supposed to file some kind of notice at your neighborhood food store, if you have any troubles. Then the squadman comes around later on to check up."

"Oh, then you won't be making regular visits any more?" She tried to sound unhappy about it.

"Now, Gladys," he reassured her promptly, "I'm not so busy I can't stop by here once in a while. I told you I'd look for you, didn't I?"

Barbara was directing frantic questioning looks at the young doctor. Gladys, watching her, almost missed her cue to murmur an appropriate, "Thank you," and missed entirely Turner's sudden look of astonishment.

"Well, I'll be God damned!" she heard him say. "Pardon me, ma'am, but we been looking for that lady all over town since last night." He was staring over Gladys' head and into the hall. "How long've you been here?" he demanded.

Gladys turned to see Edie Crowell looking spruce, if startled. Combed and washed, dressed in Gladys' new spring shoes and Barbie's freshly cleaned brown and white pumps, she seemed prepared to face down any quantity of Jim Turners.

"She came over yesterday," Gladys explained quickly. "She didn't want to stay all alone in that big house, so I asked her over here." She laughed inwardly as Edith nodded a stiff assent.

"You mean to say she was here all the time last night and you never said a word?"

"Let's see, I don't know whether she came before you did or not . . . yes, I guess she must have. You came after curfew, didn't you? I guess I just didn't think about it. I had so much on my mind."

"I went to bed early," Edith added. "I didn't have a wink of sleep the night before."

"Well, we were just about ready to bust your door down this time, Miz Crowell. You could've let us know."

"I wasn't aware that I had to keep you informed."

"You mean you never heard anything? I told them to put it on the radio. Now, Miz Crowell"—he turned suddenly and exceedingly solicitous—"just don't you get all wrought up."

"I'm sure we don't have to worry about how Mrs. Crowell takes the news." The interruption by the young doctor was startling. Gladys realized it was the first time, since she had seen the two together, that young Spinelli had taken the initiative from the older man.

"Of course you really knew it all along, Mrs. Crowell," he added. "It's a good thing you persuaded me to take that blood count. We realized you were right as soon as we checked it."

Gladys forgot to be surprised by the news, she was so flabbergasted by the combination of blatant flattery and forthright brutality in the doctor's brief speech.

Jim Turner was shocked and disapproving, both. "Now, Miz Crowell," he picked up where he had been interrupted. "there's no need to get all wrought up."

"I am not the least bit likely"—this time Edith didn't let him finish—"to become, as you put it, wrought up." She turned to Gladys with just a hint of her old arrogance. "I told you all along," she accused. "But you didn't believe me; none of you believed me."

"You don't have to worry about a thing," the squadman repeated doggedly, and Gladys thought, I have never seen anyone less worried in my life! "They'll take fine care of you up at the hospital. Won't they, Doc?" Turner appealed to the

younger man.

"They tell me our hospital is one of the best equipped in the country for this kind of thing," Spinelli told her.

"I'm perfectly well aware that the hospital is well equipped, young man." Edith was completely herself again. "I've certainly done my share to make it so, and I assume that since everyone in authority seemed to know this was going to happen"—she turned to the big squadman with a look that made clear her opinion of him and of the authority he represented—"some of the funds raised for the hospital were used to purchase the necessary equipment."

It didn't make sense. Monday night Edie Crowell had had screaming mimis on the telephone because she was afraid of just this thing. Yesterday she had walked into the house dead drunk and ready to pass out because she wasn't able to face the worry. Even this morning, before she got the news, she had been a little sub-due. Now that she knew for sure, she was entirely restored.

"If there's nothing else you have to tell me," Edith addressed Jim Turner coldly, "perhaps I'd better go on home and get ready to go. When do you suppose they'll be ready to take me to the hospital?"

"Well, if you're in such a hurry to get in there"—he was very obviously annoyed—"we can take you along to headquarters in the truck right now. They'll send you along with the next load."

"Do they ship us by freight or parcel post, Mr. Turner?" Her voice was venomously saccharine. "I should tell you, by the way, that I intend to see to it the proper people are notified of the dangerous delay I suffered." She turned to the young doctor and went smoothly on. "I want you to know that I am aware it was not *your* fault."

Without waiting for a reply from either of the men, she turned her attention to Gladys. "I wish I knew some way to thank you properly. I do realize that I must have inconvenienced all of you, and"—impulsively she took Gladys' hand—"I think I ought to thank Veda before I go, too. In her own way, she was good to me also."

"She's not back yet." Gladys was still too dazed to attempt any more complicated reply.

She followed Edith to the door, bolted it behind her, and returned to the living room.

"Well, I'll be God damned! Excuse me, ma'am." That was Turner, of course. "I just can't figure that woman out." He shook his head in heavy bewilderment. "Listen, before I forget. Did you say something about your maid not being *back*? Did you let her go out?"

"Why, yes, she went down to the store when we heard the announcement on the radio." Out of the corner of her eye Gladys saw the doctor incline his head ever so slightly toward the far corner of the room. Barbie began drifting slowly off there.

"Well now, you know you shouldn't have done that, Gladys. I can understand it's hard for you to believe she couldn't do anything, but you got to remember she's still under suspicion. You know they told you she wasn't allowed out without a clearance from Security."

"How did *you* know about that?"

"That's my job around here. I'm responsible for the safety of this whole neighborhood. It's only natural I'd get reports on anybody under suspicion. Matter of fact, if it was anyone else I'd feel like I had to take some action right now, but because it's you," he smiled beneficently, "I'll just pretend I never heard a thing. Only you got to remember after this, she can't go anywhere out of the house without a clearance. You can get it from the Security Office, or from me, either one."

The whole thing was fantastic. "Well then, why don't you give me a clearance now? That would take care of the whole nonsensical business."

"I can't do that." He looked horrified. "You got to understand, she needs a special written pass to go out anywhere. Right now she could get picked up any minute by a Security officer. Now, I'm sure you're going to be more careful about that." He looked around and found that Barbara and the young doctor were clear across the room, out of earshot. Lowering his voice, he went on, "You remember what I told you yesterday? About the evacuation?"

"Yes." She nodded. "I've thought a lot about it, Mr. Turner, but I haven't made up my mind—"

"Just call me Jim," he said. "No need to be formal now. We've been neighbors all these years. It's high time we got to know each other a little. Now, what I wanted to tell you . . . I've got everything just about lined up. Turned out to be easier than I figured, because I'm gonna be in charge of that train myself."

"But, Mr. Turner," she broke in, aware of the other two drifting back toward them. She had to make him understand quickly.

"I told you you should call me Jim."

It was useless. He just wouldn't listen, and now Barbie and the doctor were right next to them.

"You bear in mind what I told you," Turner admonished cheerfully, "and don't start worrying again. Just let me take



of everything."

"Mother."

Gladys looked questioningly at her daughter, but Turner said, "You tell your ma after we go, Barbie. We got to get moving now if we're gonna get Miz Crowell back to headquarters in time for the next truck."

"I only wanted to ask," Barbara said stiffly, "whether you knew anything about those children."

"Oh, that's right." Gladys turned back to the man. "We called up last night and offered to take two of those homeless children they've been talking about on the radio. They were supposed to come at noon, and we were wondering if anything was wrong."

"Oh, now, I don't think that's such a good idea, Gladys. They sent me in a form to check off whether your house was okay. Of course I know it would be nice for the kids here, but you got to remember what I told you before. It wouldn't make things any easier to have a couple of extra kids here."

"Maybe not," she said firmly, "but I do want to have them. Did you—check off the form yet?"

"Haven't really had a minute to do it so far today," he admitted.

"That must be what held it up, then," Gladys persisted. "Do you think you'd have a chance to take care of it when you get back to headquarters? I would like to have them here for supper, so I can get them settled."

"I'll fix it up the best way I can," he promised. "Come on, Doc." He turned a good-natured smile on Spinelli. "Say good-bye to the girl. We got to go."

Barbara's angry blush was clearly visible, but the young doctor was unperturbed. He walked back the few steps' distance to Barbara, took her hand, and said, "Good-bye, girl. We got to go."

Delightedly Gladys watched him pat Barbara's shoulder in sober imitation of Turner's reassuring gesture. He seemed to have some perspective on the whole crazy business that she wished she could share. She was still smiling when she closed the door after him.

"I don't like that man!"

"Why, Babsy, what's the—"

"He's got you doing it too!" Barbara burst out miserably, her voice trembling on the brink of a sob. "First he treats me like a baby, and then he has to make a nasty crack—"

"Oh, *him!*" Gladys put her hand on Barbara's shoulder. "I was thinking about Dr. Spinelli. He certainly handled Edith Crowell. I didn't know he had it in him. He seemed so—diffident." She laughed. "Maybe that's how he handles *me*."

There was no more fortunate choice of subject where Barbie was concerned. She forgot her resentment immediately in contempla-tion of the young doctor's many virtues. "Wasn't that terrific, the way he figured her out? It all sounded crazy at first—I couldn't understand how she could take it that way. It was easy enough to understand afterwards, but Pete had figured out beforehand."

"Well," Gladys smiled, "it's really not too difficult to figure out that Edith Crowell likes to have her own way. But I should think it would take a certain amount of courage to take advantage of the fact the way he did. Of course, you know it all along, Mrs. Crow-ell! That's my idea of bravery under fire. You better watch out for that young man, Barbara," she teased. "If he could talk Edie into thinking radiation sickness was her very own idea, I hate to think of the effect he must have on the younger generation of females."

"Oh, don't be silly, Mother. He's old!" she disclaimed him completely. Barbara was obviously delighted at the thought that Peter Spinelli might sometime try to talk her into anything at all. "Any-how"—she cast loyalty to the winds—"I don't think it was *just* what he said that made Mrs. Crowell change so much. I was think-ing about that when she was telling Turner off, and I remember how I felt—before."

Gladys looked at her curiously. The girl was dead serious now.

"It seems to me," she went on, "that it wouldn't be nearly as bad to *know* you had it as to worry about whether you had it or not. It's like—well, like the jokes they always make about going to the dentist. When you get there and something's being done, it's not nearly as bad as when you're thinking about it before you go. I think," she finished with an air of ultimate discovery, "the worst thing in the whole world is not knowing—about something impor-tant, I mean—or, well, I'm getting all mixed up, but you know what I mean, don't you?"

"You sound just like your father," Gladys laughed. "I mean your father with two drinks in him at a cocktail party. He gets very serious about the state of the world. Once he made a half-hour speech on the subject of ignorance."

"Well, I hope Daddy likes it when you laugh at *him*," Barbara cried, and ran from the room. But at the foot of the stairs she turned back to aim a bombshell at her mother. "I suppose you're not interested either that Pete told me she's probab-

going to *die!*"

## TWENTY-ONE

She knew where it had happened. She knew where Edie had been at the critical time.

If Veda hadn't been sick . . .

If Barbie hadn't insisted on the laundry . . .

If Edie hadn't refused to understand the difficulty . . . *If I had gone to the luncheon . . . !*

It was silly to think about it. She hadn't gone, and there were other, far more pressing problems. Jim Turner and Gail Levy, Barbie, Veda, Edie Crowell, the Security officers, and the evacuation. And those children. Ginny was going to be impossible if the children didn't come.

If Jon were here . . . That was silly too. All the ifs were silly. Jon wasn't there. For more than two days Jon hadn't been there. The other time, the other war, it was different. Then she wrote him cheerful, encouraging letters, telling him all the troubles that came up each day, the little things he customarily solved, that she had to learn to cope with. But these were little problems now, nor were they the kind that anyone customarily solved.

What would Jon do?

That was the old formula, the way it had worked in the last war. She'd ask herself and get the answer. Now there was no answer. If Jon never came back ...

Another if!

She had longed for a few minutes of solitude, for time to think. Now it was a relief when she heard Ginny, waking, coming up her upstairs. She ran up, afraid Barbie might get there first. Then she would have nothing to do again.

Ginny was grumpy. "You said they'd be here when I woke up. You said they would."

"Well, darling, I can't help it if they're late."

"Yes, you can, too." Ginny was definitely being unreasonable.

"Come on," Gladys said as gaily as she could. "We'll put your shoes on and go downstairs and see what there is to play with."

"Well, I don't want to play by myself. There isn't anything to play with."

"I'll play with you. Where's your other foot? Did it get lost?" She tried an old game, casting her eyes around the room searching for the other foot, which had supposedly vanished.

"Can't find it," Ginny announced. "It isn't anywhere. I'll have to hop all day."

"That would be a terrible, terrible tragedy, wouldn't it? I'll tell you what we'll do. I'll just pretend to put the shoe on and when you find the foot the shoe will be on it already."

Ginny didn't co-operate, but she did submit, and the shoe was laced on the missing foot.

"I don't want to play with you either," she decided. "You're no fun. Why *didn't* the children come yet?"

"I don't know." But she was afraid she did. "Maybe they found their own homes again," she said hopefully. "Wouldn't that be nice?"

"No, it wouldn't."

Gladys gave up. "Let's go down and have some cocoa," she suggested brightly.

"Don't want cocoa. I want the children. I don't want them to find their own homes. I want them to come here."

Downstairs the front door banged.

"Come on, we'll go see what Veda brought home." Ginny followed her silently, not wanting to admit any interest in Veda's activities or in anything at all except the coming of the other children. But when they came in sight of the hall she objected violently.

"You said it was Veda."

"Well, I thought it was Veda," Gladys said wearily. "Hello, Mr. Carney. I didn't think you'd get back so soon."

"It was simpler than I expected. There are a lot of people outside with bundles from the stores, so my bundle wasn't terribly conspicuous." He pulled up an ancient shopping bag from the hall table and displayed it proudly. "Doesn't it look convincing?" He started up the stairs.

"Didn't you bring me anything?" Ginny was incredulous.

"What sort of cad do you take me for?" he asked, outraged. "Of course I brought you something. But you can't have

yet. If you come up to my very private room in about half an hour I shall make a formal presentation."

"You mean you'll give it to me?"

"You understand me perfectly," he told her, "but remember, you have to wait half an hour."

Out in the kitchen Ginny studied the toy clock soberly, and finally made up her mind to ask for help.

"Will you tell me when a half an hour is?" she demanded suspiciously. "Will you tell me right?"

"Of course I'll tell you right. What's got into you?"

"Well, you didn't tell me right about the children."

Again! "Do you want cocoa or juice?"

"Don't want anything." Then, after a moment's reflection, "Co-coa."

The stove didn't light. For just an instant Gladys had a nightmare sensation that all this had happened before. Then her mind separated the sequence of events in an orderly manner. This was simply the gas failure Turner had predicted.

She tried the other burners to make sure and, with the memory of the last time still entirely too clear, couldn't resist opening the cellar door just a crack.

There was no smell of gas. It was all right. She got out the hot plate again and fixed the cocoa for Ginny.

"Well, why don't they call up if they're late? You told Barbie people should always call up if they're going to be late."

"Maybe they're someplace where they can't call."

"You mean they really and truly don't have any homes? They're not anyplace at all except outside?"

"That's not exactly what I mean. They're staying at a place like a school, but if they were on their way here they could call up. Anyhow, nobody's supposed to use the phone except if they really have to."

"Why not?"

"Well, because—because it said on the radio that we shouldn't."

"Why?"

This could go on forever if she let it. "Just because," she said firmly. "I don't know why. It just said we shouldn't, so don't."

For fifteen minutes after, that she managed by dint of concentrated effort to keep Ginny from mentioning the children again. Then at last it was time to send her upstairs.

Barbara came down with her when she returned to display the promised present—a big, brightly painted toy car which looked oddly familiar to Gladys.

"Mr. Carney bought it home for me," Ginny announced proudly. "It really runs. Look." She began winding busily.

"Brought, darling, not bought."

She kept trying to remember why the car looked so familiar. Then it came back to her, and she waited to see what would happen when Ginny tried to make it go. To her surprise the car worked perfectly—but she could have sworn it was the same one that had been given to Tom at Christmas the first year they moved in there. He was—she stopped to think—ten years old at the time, and his first act after sending it on a trial spin around the room was to find a quiet corner where he could take it apart. Jon had firmly refused to fix it for him, informing him that when he took things apart it was smarter to be sure beforehand that he knew how to put them together again. The car had gone up to the attic, and by the time Tom knew how to fix it he was no longer interested in toy cars. Gladys wondered whether the car had already been fixed when Dr. Levy answered Ginny's question on the stairs.

"Did you show it to Pallo yet?"

"I forgot!"

That was Barbie, trying to get rid of Ginny. What next? Gladys wondered. She was determined not to have any more bickering with the girl.

"'Scuse me, Mommy, I'll come back. Only I forgot to show Pallo my car, and he'll feel bad."

"Mother!" Barbie could hardly wait till the little girl was gone before she burst out with her news. "You ought to see things he brought back! He's got a Geiger counter, a little one that they used to make for prospectors, and

"Isn't that interesting!" No quarrel, thank goodness. Maybe she could get an answer to the question in her mind.

"Barbie, do you know when Dr. Levy fixed that car? Was it after he told Ginny he had something? Or did he have it already?"

"I don't know. I guess maybe he was fooling around with it while I was looking at his stuff. He's got everything, Mommy. He said he packed it all up at the school before he left on Monday. And he's got a gadget . . . Oh, he wants some boiling water. That's what he sent me down for."

She got a pot from the closet and filled it. "You know, he's got everything he needs to—"

"You better use the hot plate," Gladys told her. "The stove isn't working any more. I guess the gas really is all gone now."

"Mother, I wish you wouldn't keep interrupting me. I've been trying to tell you about all the things he brought, and you just won't listen!"

"All right," Gladys said wearily. "You just pretend I didn't in-terrupt you, and go ahead and use the stove instead."

"I didn't mean that. Anyhow, you could have waited just a min-ute." She plugged in the electric plate and put the water on. "I don't understand you, Mother. Aren't you even *interested*?"

"Of course I'm interested, darling. But I've got so many things to think about right now—and you know I don't know anything about Geiger counters and all that technical part of it. Now look." She did want to make friends with Barbie again. "Suppose you fix his cup of tea, or whatever you're making, and take it up, and then when you come down you can tell me all about it. We can—"

"His cup of tea! I'm boiling this water for—Oh, never mind! You don't understand. You don't know much about the technical things," she parroted.

"Barbie, I'm sorry if I hurt your feelings."

"You didn't hurt *my* feelings."

"I—" She didn't know what else to say. She fell silent, and the silence lasted till Barbie went upstairs with the boiling water.

After that the girl just kept out of sight. She didn't even come down when Veda returned, laden with provisions, new clothes, and wor-ries.

"Never saw such a time!" She went through to the kitchen to get rid of her bundles and Gladys went with her.

"People thought it was hard to get food in the last war," Veda said. "But there never was anything like this before. I had to stand in line near three hours before I got inside that store and then I tried to tell about them kids that are coming, but the squadman wouldn't listen to nobody. He said I had proof fer five people, and five people was all I was goin' to get food for. Never even thought to ask was all five home. He took a look to see all the names was different, an' told Mr. Monnasse to give me fer five."

"You didn't have to tell him your name?" Gladys asked.

"No'm, I never did." She put down her bundles and found a seat on one of the white-painted kitchen chairs. "I'll get the stuff put away in a minute," she promised. "Jest want to catch my breath. That was real heavy carryin' home."

"You sit still," Gladys told her. "I'll put it away." She began unloading shopping bags, talking at the same time, telling Veda about all that had happened while she was gone. She skimmed over Turner's references to Veda as lightly as possible.

"The whole thing's a lot of nonsense," she insisted, "but I guess for the time being I better make any outside trips. Meanwhile we'll get this clearance he was talking about." Then she went into the story about Edie Crowell and drew it out for its fullest effect.

"But don't forget," she wound up, "that if I'd listened to you I'd be just as bad off as Mrs. Crowell right now."

"And what do you think you mean by that?" Veda demanded. " `Now don't you worry about the washin', Missus Mitchell,' " Gladys mimicked. " `I kin take care of that fine tomo—"

Veda laughed with embarrassment. "I kin remember something else, too, proves you were tryin' jest as hard to get me sick." "What did I do?"

"I kin remember clear as day, hearin' you say, `Don't you suffo-cate yourself in that room of yours, Veda.' Mebbe I saved your life an' mebbe not—but I sure took care o' my own."

They were both laughing when Ginny came back with her car to show off to Veda.

Gladys finished putting things away while the toy was being admired.

"I don't see what you're worried about," she told Veda. "Seems to me you've got all the food we can eat in a week."

"I jest wish I knew fer sure would they bring some along with them kids," Veda said. "I don't see how we'll make out if they don't."

It was a tactical error. Ginny, reminded, wanted to know once more why the children didn't call up if they were late.

"They're supposed to call," she insisted stubbornly. "They *are*!"

"All right." Gladys surrendered at last. "I shouldn't do it, but I'll call up. Only remember this, Virginia Mitchell. After I call I don't want to hear it talked about any more. Whatever they tell us is final. That clear?"

Ginny nodded happily. But the bargain proved more difficult to keep than Gladys had expected.

She picked up the receiver, but no dial tone came through, and when she jiggled the hook nothing happened either. Forcing her-self to a patience she did not feel, she hung up, let it stay down a moment, and tried again.

Ten minutes of trying convinced her. She put the phone down and turned around to find Barbara on the stairs in back of her.

"The phone too?"

Gladys nodded and turned tiredly to Ginny. "I'm sorry, darling," she said. "I can't call up. It isn't working."

Unexpectedly there was no fuss. With the sudden sympathy that little children sometimes show for adult troubles, Gladys offered her best reassurance.

"That's all right, Mommy," she promised. "They'll come."

Barbara laughed. "Time for the news," she said. "Let's all go in the living room and see what good news they have on the radio *now*."

"Come on, Ginny," Veda snorted. "We don't want to hear no news, good *or* bad. You an' me are goin' to go in the kitchen an' make some supper for these folks."

Gladys followed her older daughter slowly into the living room.

"Don't tell me you think those kids are still coming?" Barbara demanded bitterly. "Didn't Mr. Turner promise to fix it for you?"

"I told him I wanted them," Gladys answered sharply. "I don't see what more I could do."

"I don't know." Barbara turned the radio up, and news of hospitals, trains, and armies filled the room. "I don't know," she repeated miserably, "but you should have been able to do something."

The radio intruded: "... since the official evacuation warning was issued for lower and middle Westchester. There is no cause for alarm because of the warning. You are not in danger from any kind of radiations. All danger zones within this county have already been evacuated. The new decision is due to scarcity of food supplies and imminent failure of utilities.

"Please remember, this is an evacuation *warning*. An evacuation *order* may come at any time within the next forty-eight hours. You will be assigned to an evacuation train by your neighborhood squad-man. There is no other way to get a seat. There is no quicker way to leave.

"We have just received a list of persons rescued. . . ." "They can't *make* us go, can they, Mother?"

Gladys turned unhappily to her daughter. "No," she said, "not exactly, but they can make it awfully uncomfortable to stay here." How much can I tell her? Jim Turner had said not to tell anyone, but now it was on the radio.

"Well, we could manage," Barbie said stubbornly.

"I don't want to go either," Gladys told her. "But . . ." gas ... *phone* . . . *electric power* . . . *water* . . . "I'm afraid it's going to be up to us." Never mind what he said. Barbie had a right to know. "Mr. Turner told me

"Oh, you and your Mr. Turner!" Barbara faced her mother furiously. "You'll do anything *he* says, won't you? Well, no, not going," she announced. "You can decide for Ginny and yourself, but I won't be going."

"You'll be doing what you're told to do, young woman." Gladys was exasperated. "What do you mean, you won't be going?"

"I mean I'm staying here. I'm—going to go to work in the hospital."

"You're *what*?"

"They said on the radio they need volunteer workers," she defended herself.

"Barbara, for heaven's sake." Gladys controlled her temper with an effort. "What makes you think they're taking children of fifteen to work in the hospital?"

"I'm not a child, and anyway, you only have to be seventeen to volunteer. Lots of people think I'm older than I am, and I can do just as much as anybody seventeen years old can do. I can tell them I'm seventeen, and I bet Pete'll back me up."

"Barbie! What kind of romantic nonsense are you building up? Dr. Spinelli's been nice to you—all right, that's how a good doctor has to be. It's obvious that he likes you too—he went to a good deal of trouble last night for your sake. But he's not a boy you can wrap around your finger. And he's not very likely to lie to the hospital authorities, just to help you get into trouble!"

"I happen to know he will. I asked him."

"Do you mean to say you asked him before you said anything to me?" Gladys was getting very annoyed. "Well, I still don't believe he'd do it. You're not going to work in any hospital full of people with radiation disease and heaven knows how many things you could catch. You just aren't going to do it. You may think you're not a child any more, but you'll find

the people at the hospital will agree with *me*."

"And you can't understand why I talked to him first!" Barbie retorted bitterly. "At least he *listened* to me. All right, I'll do it your way. I'll just stay here and play with Ginny, like a nice girl—"

"Wait a minute, Babsy," Gladys pleaded. "Don't get

"That's another thing!" The girl was working herself up to a fury. "I've told you over and over and over I don't want to be called Babsy. If you don't want to call me Barbie you could at least call me by my right name, instead of a baby nickname. You just don't ever want me to grow up! You want me to be a baby all my life! That's why you never tell me anything; you're afraid I'll know as much as you do!"

"Bab—Barbie," she corrected herself hastily, "listen, darling, there's nothing to get all upset about *now*. You're all right, and Tom seems to be. The bombing's all over. Everything will get better now. You'll see, and . . ." There was one thing she couldn't promise, one reassurance she dare not give. She compromised with, "And we'll hear something about Daddy soon. I'm sure we will. Is that what was bothering you?"

"No, it isn't!" the girl contradicted. "See, you're doing the same thing again right now. You try to make me think everything's all right when I know it isn't. I just wish you'd stop trying to hide things from me. You did the same thing with the information sheets you didn't want me to read, and when you tried to tell me Doc Levy was crazy. . . . And please don't try to shut me up by telling me Daddy's coming home. I'm too old for lullabies, Mother. You know he can't come home even if he is all right. Yes, Pete told me that too. *He* doesn't think I'm a kid who can't understand anything!"

"Oh, for heaven's sake, Barbara!" Gladys stopped trying to control her growing irritation. "Perhaps it hasn't occurred to you that if I've tried to spare you at all it was because I knew you were just on the verge of hysteria. And the way you're acting now proves it. You get a little information, *some* of which is *partly* correct, and look what happens!"

Barbie's head shot up and her eyes widened at the preposterous charge. "I am not hysterical—Mom! *Listen!*"

" . . . Apple Avenue, Purchase Village, being treated for shock and minor injuries. Bliss Mizzen, Central Street, Yonkers, held for observation in . . ."

"They said Mitchell!" Barbie broke the dazed concentration. "They said Mitchell! They did! I didn't hear the first part but I know they said Mitchell. Oh, Mom, it's Daddy! Daddy's all right!"

## the escape

*He was lying down, and the cots stretched in a row out of sight in front of his eyes. He was on a cot too. It had been dark when he turned his head, but there weren't as many cots in the other direction. He could see the door. Somebody would have to come through the door sooner or later.*

*He discovered his hands, and began exploring his body. He had no clothes. There was a sheet over him and it wasn't cold, but he couldn't get home without clothes. There was a bandage on his head. That made sense; it hurt so much when he turned it.*

*A man got off the cot next to him, and he realized he could get up too. He sat up and waited for the dizziness to go away. Then he stood up. He was naked. Down the row of cots he saw that the other man was naked too. Nobody seemed to care.*

*He followed the other man and went through the door. An old man was sitting right outside. The man who got up first had turned to the right. He looked both ways, and the old man told him, "Down that way," pointing to the left. Right.*

*He followed again, and the other man went through a door marked "Men." He went in, too, but when he came out he kept on down the corridor. He found another door, and tried it, but it was another room full of cots. After a while, trying doors, he found a closet with overalls and shirts in it. He still needed shoes.*

*He went down some stairs, and some more, and he was in a cellar. He found some boots and put them on his bare feet. There was a little door that led out into the street. He walked a long time, carefully reading the street numbers to make sure he was going the right way.*

*190 . . . 191 . . . 192 . . . that was right. That was the way home. He had to get home.*

## TWENTY-TWO

"Wake up, Mommy. Please, Mommy, wake up."

"Hello, baby." Gladys edged over in the bed and patted the empty space beside her, hoping Ginny would lie down and snuggle up, but the hands kept tugging at her.

"All right, I'm awake." Obstinate she refused to open her eyes. "I'm awake. Now just let me rest a minute."

"You'll go back to sleep," the child accused.

"No, I won't. I'm wide awake."

"Open up your eyes. If you're awake, why don't you open up your eyes?" Ginny demanded triumphantly. "You are either awake," she concluded.

Face it, Gladys told herself, and tried letting a little light into one eye. The sun wasn't too bright. It must be early. She had her eye open far enough to include a vision of her daughter's ink-stained hand tugging at the blanket.

"What happened to you?" she demanded. "And, anyhow, who told you you could wake me up?"

Ginny studied her mother's face and decided she wasn't really angry. "Barbie let me use her fountain pen," she confessed. "Veda said I should wake you up. Somebody's knocking at the door." Ginny read the curiosity on her mother's face for disbelief. "She did, too, say so."

"I'm sure she did, baby." Gladys pulled back the covers and sat up gingerly. To her own surprise, she felt fine. Then she remembered . . . Jon was all right! "Who is it? Did she tell you? What do they want? Is it Mr. Turner?"

"They want to come in. Who's Mr. Turner?"

"You know perfectly well who Mr. Turner is. He lives right next door, and he has a little baby."

"A brand-new baby?"

"That's right." She stood up and wrapped the cherry robe snugly around her. It was eight o'clock. She'd slept for eleven hours. She felt fine.

"Listen," she told the little girl. "I want you to do something for me. I want you to go downstairs and ask Veda who they want and what they want, and then come right back up without stopping and knock on the bathroom door and tell me what she said. Can you remember all that?"

"Sure." Ginny was disdainful. "That's easy. I can remember lots more."

"Well, you don't have to remember any more. Just remember that much and don't forget to come back up right away." Gladys headed for the empty bathroom. She washed quickly, wondering who it was. She was brushing her hair when Ginny knocked.

"Veda don't know what he wants," she yelled.

"Doesn't," Gladys corrected automatically.

"Wasn't what?"

"I said doesn't."

"I can't hear you, Mommy. What did you say?"

Impatiently Gladys went to the door. "Never mind what I said. What did Veda say?"

"I told you. She doesn't know what he wants."

"Well, who is it?"

"Mr. Turner," Ginny replied. "Just like you said."

"All right. Thank you, baby." Gladys went back for a last once-over in front of the mirror. "Will you tell him I'm coming right down?"

"Mommy's coming right down," Ginny obligingly shouted down the stairs. Hastily Gladys pulled her robe tight around her and ran down.

"Well now, you're looking a little more chipper today," Turner boomed.

"Oh, did you hear the announcement?"

"Now, there've been a whole lot of announcements, Gladys. Just which one did you have in mind?"

"I guess you didn't, or you'd know," she said. "About Jon! He's all right! They had it on the list of people admitted to the Washington Heights Hospital last night. They said he was suffering from shock and minor injuries, and they never mentioned radiation disease at all."

"Well, that's sure good news," he said, but it seemed to Gladys his tone was just a little less hearty than usual. "I guess you won't feel so bad about leaving," he added, "now that you know your hubby's in good hands."

"Leaving?" She had actually forgotten about it. "Oh yes, I wanted to ask you about that. Does an evacuation order mean that we *have* to go? I mean, what happens if I decide I want to stay?"

"What happens," he told her, "is, I talk you out of it. Understand, headquarters ain't going to force anybody to go. Folks that want to stick around without food or gas or electricity, and maybe without water, are welcome to do so. That's many less to take care of at the camps. But as far as you folks are concerned, headquarters has nothing to do with it. I'm not going to let you stay here. I told you I'd watch out for you, and as a matter of fact that's just what I came by to tell you now."

He moved closer and lowered his voice. "This is strictly on the q.t., Gladys, but they already got it fixed up that the train is leaving tomorrow morning. It's a special for staff and families. I got seats for you and your girls, and I'm working on a fancy title for you now. So you just hold tight and get your things packed up. You got nothing to worry about at all."

Her impulse was to refuse, outright. She remembered laughing in the bathroom at the notion of telling Jim Turner, "No, no, a thousand times no." She might yet have to do it. But he had said without gas or electricity or maybe water. . . . She tried a less direct approach.

"For me and the *girls*? What about Veda?" she demanded. "You know I can't go and leave her here."

"Looks like she'll just have to go to the detention camp. Now don't get all upset, Gladys. I told you yesterday about that, and I checked up on it for you since then. They won't give her a clearance to go with you, and that's that. You'll have plenty help up there, don't you worry."

"I'm not worried about *help*!" Politic or not, she had passed the point of self-control. "I'm worried about Veda! And what's more, I'm not leaving without her. I don't want to leave anyhow. I think we'll just make out as best we can until Jim gets home."

"Now, Gladys," he pleaded. "You got to calm down. Why don't you just sit down and take it easy a minute? I got everything all arranged, you know. You can't just stay here. I already told you that. And you got to get over thinking your hubby'll come back here. You'll get to see him a lot sooner at Sampson," he promised. "You just leave it up to me."

How could she stay angry when she wanted to laugh? He was trying to soothe her and, perversely, succeeding because of the very clumsiness of his attempts.

"And you'll fix it?" she asked. She remembered something else and found she could still be angry after all. "Just like you fixed it about those children?"

"Now, how'd you know what I did about that?"

"That's easy. They didn't come."

"It's too bad," he said. "I know your girl was pestering you about that, but you got to see I had to decide according to what was best for everybody concerned."

"I'm afraid I don't see what it was you had to decide," she said stiffly. "I thought you said the form just asked you whether my house was adequate?"

"You sure do remember every little thing," he chuckled. "But you can't blame a man for doing his best. After all, if the kids were here now we'd have to be figuring on them going along with you when—"

"You mean *if*," she broke in. "I'm not at all sure I'm going anywhere."

"Well, one thing I can tell you for sure," he laughed. "You couldn't keep them kids here after an evacuation order. No look, Gladys, I got to be getting on. Just stopped in to let you know things were comin' along all right, but I guess I kind of barged in on you too early. You get yourself some breakfast, and things'll look brighter to you."

It was infuriating, being treated like a spoiled baby. But what could she say?

"Kind of gloomy in here, too, with your windows all boarded up," he added. "It was a smart thing to do, though," he approved, moving toward the door. "I'll come back later if I get a chance," he promised, "but I couldn't say for sure. I wouldn't of come so early if I was sure I could make it later on."

It seemed as if he would never go, as though he would stay there at the door and ramble on forever. But at last she pushed the bolt to behind him and turned back to the dim interior of the living room.

The boards did make the place gloomy, she thought. She'd forgotten all about them until Turner noticed. Maybe that did account *for* some of her rapid depression and trigger temper. She'd been feeling so *good* when she got up.

She found Veda, Barbie, and Ginny all in the kitchen.

They all had breakfast together, and then Gladys escaped upstairs to the incredible luxury of a real bath with hot water out of the tap. Gar Levy had worked on his kerosene burner the evening before, while she and Barbie did the first-floor windows.

Now she could lie in the tub, and for a little while at least think about inconsequentials. Amused, she caught herself in the act of shifting her attitude toward the teacher. He had been Dr. Levy, and then Doc to all the others. And now she



found herself getting used to a first-name basis by her old expedient of thinking both names together. It was foolish, perhaps, to resent Jim Turner's calling her "Gladys," and still be amused when she caught her subconscious mind scheming to have Carson Levy do the same thing. But Turner . . .

No problems in the bathtub, she told herself firmly, and concentrated on Jon's chagrin when he came home and found all the wood for the new garage on the living-room windows, and the things that had happened to the plaster in the porch.

But no bath lasts forever. She had to get out, finally, and get dressed. In the bedrooms, at least, there were no boards, and the sun was bright through the sheer curtains. She decided she could stay upstairs most of the day.

Gar Levy came by her open door and waved a greeting. His tie was knotted, and his hair was freshly combed.

"Are you going out again?" she asked, smiling. "You're getting to be pretty sure of yourself, aren't you?"

"Frankly," he told her, "I tremble and quake every time I have to take a step on the other side of that door. But it looks like I'll have to go this time. And if I'm lucky I won't be back—at least not until this mess is over and I can come to thank you with a box of candy, or some such small consideration, for saving my life."

"Oh, stop it! What do you mean, if you're lucky? Haven't you found the accommodations satisfactory?"

"Very much so. When you decide to take in permanent boarders, put me first on the list. I'm headed for the hospital, which I don't expect to be nearly so pleasant."

"The *hospital*? I thought you said you'd treated yourself with something. And Barbie told me about all that stuff you brought home yesterday."

"That was mostly equipment to find out if I was getting better or worse. I found out," he finished with a wry smile, "so today I'm going to see if I can get into the hospital under my nom de plume."

"I hate to see you go," Gladys said slowly. "You've gotten to be almost part of the family. If there's—I don't know what—but if there's anything at all we can do . . ."

"As a matter of fact, there is." He smiled. "I haven't wanted to bring it up before, but just before I go—I've been wondering whether you've had any news at all about Tom. I've always been very fond of him—"

"No more than he was of you." She told him about the only news they'd had, on the radio, and he seemed almost as happy as she herself had been. "You know," she added, "when you first came in that morning, I couldn't place you at all. I didn't know whether you were a—well, a maniac or what. The name was vaguely familiar, but it just didn't connect. Not until Barbie woke up and said *Doc* Levy. *That* name I'd heard—approximately every third sentence, for a year or so, from Tom."

"I never thought I'd be glad to hear Tom was in the Army," he said thoughtfully. "We used to have long talks about Math and Science in the afternoons, and I think I spent more time trying to talk him out of joining up than I did teaching him anything."

Gladys was startled. Tom had never admitted to her that the beloved Dr. Levy shared her feelings about the Army. Of course he did. That's what he was in trouble about.

"Look, Gar—" She hesitated, not knowing just how to put it. "I don't know exactly why it's necessary for you to go. You realize how little I understand about all this. But I know you feel rest is important, and it occurs to me," she smiled, "that you haven't had much here. If it's any reason like that—I mean if there's anything we can do that would make it unnecessary for you to go—you know we'd be glad to have you stay, all of us. When you first came I—"

"When I first came," he said for her, "you were most sensibly disturbed about the danger I represented. But once you made up your mind to let me stay, and realized I wasn't going to politely refuse, you did everything you could to make me comfortable. If there were any more you could do I might very well feel it was asking too much—but as it happens, there isn't. You don't have the equipment, and the hospital does. So, much as I prefer the company of your family to that of a bunch of overtired, disagreeable nurses, I'm going to do everything I can to get in there. But don't be *too* surprised if you find me sneaking back into the clothes drier tonight. I don't know how it will turn out."

"Well . . . just be sure you do come back, if you want to."

"I've already made sure I had an excuse. I didn't leave my gloves, but my Geiger counter. Barbara hid all my stuff away in what she assures me is a safe place upstairs. You're not supposed to have things like that around, you know—it's all been commandeered. See?" The gentle grin broke across his broad face. "I may take my charming presence away, but I'll leave my menace with you. I hope I don't have to add that if you think it advisable you are perfectly free to dispose of the stuff at any time."

"You know," she laughed, "every time I forget you're a teacher, and decide to treat you just like other people, you come out with a sentence like that. 'If you think it advisable,' " she mimicked. "I wish I could talk you into staying."

"Not a chance. Anyhow"—he took her hand between both of his—"what do you suppose your husband would say if he came home and found you were keeping a man in the attic?"

"At my age?" She smiled. "He'd be right proud of me."

"Not after he saw the man, he wouldn't. At least, not unless I get to that hospital soon and persuade them to patch me up a little. Good-bye, Gladys, and . . . 'thank you' is pretty inadequate. I'll try to find something better for when I come back."

She walked downstairs with him and waited while he said good-bye to Veda. He had already taken his leave of the girls upstairs, and asked them to stay up there till he was gone. He did not, he explained, want to have to warn them about loud good-bys.

Gladys thought to step out, before he left, and make sure there was no patrol truck in sight. Then he slipped out of the house, and possibly out of her life, very quietly, and with much less drama than anything he had done before.

## TWENTY-THREE

The house felt strangely empty when he was gone. Gladys remembered how glad she would have been to see the last of him only two days ago, and thought, Now there's no man in the house again.

Knowing where that kind of thought could lead, she banished it by plunging into a fury of housework.

"We better use the hot water while we've got it," she told Veda. "Lord knows if we can keep that stove going by ourselves."

The two of them washed, scrubbed, and cleaned, with Ginny's dubious assistance, while Barbie took her turn at the bathtub. Then Gladys sent Veda off for her share of their greatest luxury—hot water—and found it was already time for lunch. She scouted the contents of the refrigerator and found, next to the roast she had planned for Monday, a lone lamb chop which would do nicely for Ginny.

Moving around the kitchen, pulling things out, rearranging them, she felt busy and useful and almost happy. Then, from force of habit, she tried to turn on the gas range, and the happy illusion vanished when she had to take her pan over to the hot plate instead.

She sat with Ginny at the table while the little girl ate—or, more accurately, refused to eat—her lunch. Inactivity and confinement were beginning to tell on her. Maybe I could just take her for a walk, Gladys thought. Really, there was no reason not to. But she hesitated, and decided not to say anything yet.

Spurning her vegetables, Ginny bit ferociously into the chop. But after an experimental chew she returned the bite promptly to the plate.

"Ginny, I've told you about that, over and over again!"

"But itsh got stonesh in it," Ginny complained, and they both realized what had happened. "Mommy, my tooth!"

"Let me see," Gladys demanded.

Small fingers plowed through the mess on the plate and came up with ivory. Then Ginny opened her mouth proudly and pulled back her lip to show the hole. "I 'old 'oo . . ." She discovered that talking with her mouth open was even more difficult. "*I told* you it was loosh."

"I guess you did."

"And you didn't believe me. I told you, didn't I? You wouldn't even feel it." She was learning to negotiate the air holes.

But I did feel it. It was puzzling, till she realized that wasn't the one she had, after all, felt. She must have misunderstood when Ginny pointed it out.

The loss of a tooth at the age of five and not quite a half is a memorable occasion, but not one conducive to hearty eating. When Ginny refused to stay at the table any longer Gladys had to scrape a half-filled plate of food into the garbage pail.

Clutching the precious tooth in her hand, Ginny went off for her nap, and Gladys had her own lunch, together with Barbara, in the darkened kitchen. She wanted to get upstairs again, where the sun still came through the windows, but the inexhaustible radio stopped her on her way through the living room.

"The news for today in the lower Westchester area. All residents are requested to discontinue any unnecessary use of electric power. Electricity must be conserved. You are being asked to use electric power in your house for none but essential purposes. In those areas where the gas supply has failed, cooking by electricity will be permitted. You may

continue to use your radio, but broadcasts will no longer be continuous. News broadcasts will be made once an hour or less, and you are requested to turn your set off when the broadcast is concluded, and leave it off until the following hour.

"There are to be no electric lights used during daylight hours. Heating devices of any kind are not to be used unless authorized in writing by an emergency squadman. I repeat: if you wish to use special heating devices, or any kind of special electric equipment, you must obtain written authorization from your squadman. This restriction applies also to electric irons, mixers, toasters, and similar household equipment. A squadman or emergency policeman may visit your home at any time to check on the equipment in use. Please understand that this action is necessary in order to conserve power during the emergency. Violations reported by inspectors will be severely penalized.

"Emergency Headquarters for the lower Westchester area reports that plans for evacuation are now being completed. An evacuation order is expected momentarily, and it is reported that the first special train to the Civilian Evacuation Camp at the Sampson Navy Base, will leave sometime tomorrow.

"Your squadman will notify you when you are to be evacuated, and you will receive notice in ample time to prepare to leave your homes. You are urged, however, to consult your information sheets now and plan your preparations ahead of time. If you co-operate with Emergency Headquarters the evacuation can be conducted in a safe and orderly manner.

"News has been received here from Denver, Colorado, by way of amateur radio relay stations, to the effect that . . .

"I guess it's no use asking how you feel about it," Barbie said. "This morning I thought for a little while maybe you'd decide to stay here, but if the news yesterday made you want to go ... "

"I don't know, darling."

Barbara looked at her with quick surprise. "You mean you're not sure? You *might* . . ."

"That's right. Jim Turner was here this morning," she began. "I saw him. I didn't want to talk to him."

"Neither did I. He said we can't get a clearance for Veda to go with us. He also . . . I just don't know, Barbie, I don't know what to do."

She got up, paced around the room, and came back to where her daughter still sat on the floor. "Things are going to be bad here. I don't see how we can stay. And I don't see how we can go."

"Maybe . . ." Barbara stood up to face her. "Maybe it would be better to go—for you and Ginny. Mother!" Excitement flared in her eyes. "Mother, I'll bet Veda could go to work in the hospital! Then you wouldn't have to worry about me, if she was there. That would take care of everything."

"Not quite," Gladys said. "Barbie, please don't make me quarrel with you. I don't want to. But as far as the hospital is concerned, that's out, for you. I don't want to hear it discussed again. For Veda, it might not be such a bad idea. I don't know. I just *don't know*."

She turned and clenched her fists, fighting against weariness and fear. When she turned back Barbara was walking silently away. Maybe that was better, better than quarreling anyway. What you didn't say you didn't have to explain away.

She went to find Ginny. The little girl had to have a bath. She had to be ready, in case . . .

I don't know. How can I know what to do?

Ginny had gotten over her cranky spell of the day before. She seemed to have accepted solitude and had taken over the attic, since that morning, as her own domain.

Gladys found her there and whisked her through a tub, then buttoned the shiny-clean child into a freshly starched frock.

"And when," she demanded, looking the little girl over, "did you last brush your hair?"

"I don't know." Ginny refused to take it seriously until she saw her mother pick up the brush and comb. "Not the comb," she said firmly. "Just the brush."

"The brush," Gladys repeated, "*and* the comb. The way it is, you'll have birds building nests in your hair soon."

"Can't," Ginny pointed out with cheerful logic. "All the birds went away." She smiled hopefully at her mother, deciding the argument hadn't worked, and set her face again in firm resistance. "No comb," she said stubbornly.

"Well, we'll see." Gladys began pulling gently with her fingers to separate the tangled mat in back before she brushed. "For heaven's sake, hold still, Ginny."

"But you're pulling."

"I am not pulling. *Will* you stay still?"

"Ouch!" Ginny jerked her head to the side, away from Gladys' probing fingers. Gladys couldn't let go in time.

"I'm sorry, baby," she started to say, "but I have to—" Then she stopped. Ginny had jerked her head away. Ginny's head was no longer in her hands, but Ginny's hair was.

Gladys stared with speechless fascination at the mat of hair between her fingers. Her eyes followed the wisps of hair

out in all directions from the central tangle. Down here—the ends; up there—the roots.

"Ginny!" she cried. "Baby!"

Ginny promptly burst into tears. "I'm sorry, Mommy. I'm sorry. I didn't do it on purpose. I couldn't help it, 'cause it hurt."

"Oh no, baby. No, that's all right. Ginny darling, stop crying. Please stop crying," Gladys begged. "Stop crying and tell me something. It's very important."

But the little girl didn't, or couldn't, stop. She put her head on her mother's lap and let the tears flow.

"There, baby, there." Gladys started to pat the shaking head and hastily moved her hand down to the shuddering small shoulders.

She had to get control of herself before she could stop Ginny, she knew that. "There, baby, it's all right. There's nothing to cry about."

Slowly the sobs diminished and the tears dried up. Bit by bit the child grew calmer. Finally Gladys picked her up and settled the little girl on her lap.

"Now listen, baby." She tried to talk quietly. "I want to know just what happened. Whatever it was, it's going to be all right, but I do have to know. Listen carefully now. You remember when Barbie got sick?"

Ginny nodded her head.

"You do remember? And you remember how she told you not to tell me? Remember how you promised?"

Again Ginny nodded.

"And then you remember afterwards it was all right to tell?"

"Uh-huh."

"Well, now I want you to tell me whether you were sick too. Even if it wasn't all right to tell me before, it's all right now. You have to understand that. But if you were sick I've got to know."

She must have let too much urgency creep into her voice. She got no answer, but only a fresh flood of tears and protests.

"I'm a good girl, Mommy. I'm a good girl. I didn't do nothin' bad."

"You're sure you didn't throw up? Are you *sure* you didn't?"

"Mommy, don't make me go away. Don't let them take me away like Mrs. Crowell. Please, Mommy, I don't want to go away. I'm a good girl. I didn't do nothing—anything—bad!"

There was no use trying to find out any more. "All right, baby." Gladys gave up. "You go show Barbie how pretty you look."

"You mean I don't have to get my hair brushed?" Immediately the tears gave way to a bright smile.

"No, darling." The words were hard to pronounce. "You don't have to get your hair brushed. You go ahead and play."

She waited until Ginny had vanished into Barbara's room, and then headed straight for the telephone. She must have stood there, holding the unresponsive receiver to her ear for several minutes, before she remembered that there would be no answer. The phone was still dead.

She found Veda in the kitchen, cooking supper.

"That child kin make more noise'n any ten men I ever heard," Veda commented as Gladys walked in. "She was screamin' so's you could hear 'er a block away."

"Veda," Gladys blurted out, "I think Ginny's—sick. I think she has *it*."

The spoon dropped into the stew.

"You ain't—you—now, there just ain't no way she could've got it," Veda protested. "She's been safe in this house for days."

"I know. I know that," Gladys said. "But . . ." She didn't know how to start.

"What's that you got in your hand?" Veda asked. And Gladys realized that she was still holding the matted strands of hair clenched in her fist. She opened the fingers to let Veda see. Then, bit by bit, she got the story out—everything that happened, how Ginny had acted, and all her own fears and worries.

"We don't know nothin' fer sure," Veda said doubtfully when she had finished.

"I tried to call up," Gladys told her. "I forgot the phone wasn't working." Helplessly they stood there and looked at each other.

"We're supposed to go to Monnassey's," Gladys remembered at last, "and file a complaint."

"I'll go right now." Veda began taking her apron off. "An' I got an idea, too. Mebbe if I jest stop by Mrs. Turner's

house she'd have some idea where Mr. Turner an' that doctor would be, an' I could fetch them."

"That's a good idea. You stay here, Veda. I'll go."

But Veda wouldn't hear of it. "You start running around askin' questions, you're goin' to go crazy," Veda told her. "You what. You jest settle down here an' fish that spoon out of the stew an' finish makin' supper. That'll give you a little somethin' to do, without you goin' to talk to people. I'll go right over there an' be back in a minute." She had her coat, and she was already out of the kitchen.

Gladys retrieved the spoon and set to work, stirring the stew. When Veda came back to say that Monnassey's was closed, and there was no one at home at the Turners', Gladys received the information without surprise or apparent disappointment. She accepted, with equal lack of enthusiasm, Veda's offer to go out and look for the truck itself. There was nothing she could do, nothing —until the doctor came.

The front door banged behind Veda, and Gladys still stood at the hot plate, stirring as if her sanity depended on it.

## TWENTY-FOUR

Six o'clock, and Veda not yet back.

She didn't come. The truck didn't come; the doctor didn't come.

There wasn't enough to do. Supper was all ready, and too easy to serve. The children ate well. Ginny's appetite had returned, and she was being determinedly angelic. She was out from under the spotlight and wanted to stay that way. Barbie insisted on doing the dishes. There was no way to keep busy.

Seven o'clock.

She would have to put Ginny to bed. It was getting late, and sleep could be important.

She did everything slowly, stalling for time, trying to convince herself that Veda would be there any minute with the doctor. But in the end she had to tuck Ginny in with the blue plush Pallo, kiss her, and turn out the light, just like any other night.

Seven-thirty, and she sat with Barbie in the living room again, in front of the radio, waiting.

"I wonder what's taking Veda so long?"

Gladys looked up from the little crystal circle on her wrist with its graceful mocking hands.

"She hasn't got much time before curfew. You wouldn't think the stores would stay open so late."

"The stores?" Of course, Barbie would have wondered about Veda's absence. Or had Veda told her that? The girl was waiting for an answer. What was it she had started to say? The stores? That gave it away, of course.

She looked down again, trying to think, and the hands of her watch were glittering spears, piercing her reserve. She hadn't wanted to say anything to Barbie, not till she knew for sure. But she couldn't keep it to herself any longer.

Barbara heard the story out with a combination of horror and suppressed excitement.

"Look, Mom," she burst out as soon as Gladys was finished, "I bet I could get her to tell me what happened. When she got sick she found out, and I made her promise not to tell. If I promised her I bet she'd believe me."

Gladys wished she'd thought of it before. It just might work. "It's too late," she pointed out to Barbara. "She ought to be asleep now. I don't think we should wake her up."

"I'll go see if she's really asleep. I won't get her upset. I can handle that kid."

"Sit *down*, Barbie! I said no, didn't I?"

"Well, don't you want to know?" she demanded.

"What I don't want is to wake her up. She has to have rest."

"Well, but that's—" Barbara looked pleadingly at her mother. "You should have told me before anyway," she complained. "Then I could have talked to her before she went to bed." Barbie went back to her seat on the floor and picked up her book with a great display of concentration on the printed page. Gladys made no effort to reopen the conversation. She just sat, now, waiting.

The radio announced the fifteen-minute curfew warning and, still in silence, the two of them made the rounds, checking windows and doors. That didn't take long enough either; everything was all right, closed, tight, secure; danger was locked out and fear sealed in.

She didn't hear a truck pull up, but at the first knock she flew to the door.

"Doctor!"

"Thought I'd never make it." Garson Levy pushed the door closed behind him and leaned against it, resting a minute. "Got held up by a patrol truck a few blocks away." He was breathing hard. "They start questioning people just before curfew, and then they let you go just in time to be picked up by another one for being out late." He straightened up and walked toward the living room, peeling off his dusty jacket and smoothing his wild hair as he went. Then the tension in the house caught at him.

"What did you say?" He turned back to Gladys. "Before, at the door? What's wrong?"

"Ginny. She's got—I mean I think—her hair—" The words kept getting mixed up in her throat. "Her hair came out. I was brushing it, and it came out in my hand, and I think she's—"

"Has the doctor been here?"

Gladys shook her head. "Veda went out. The phone isn't work-ing, and Veda went to find the truck. That was hours ago, and she isn't back yet. I don't know *what* to do."

"Where's Ginny now?"

"In bed. You said, I think you said once, that sleep would help. She didn't act sick or anything; she felt fine except for the fuss when it happened. I was brushing her hair, and some of it came out, and she started crying when I asked her if she'd throw up. It came out right in my hand."

"Is she asleep?" He wasted no time on sympathy.

"I think so. I don't know. Why?"

"I could take a blood count while we're waiting," he suggested. "It wouldn't prove anything of course. But if it's gone that far already . . . I don't know. I don't see how it could. But we might find out something."

Gone so far? She remembered the doctor saying ". . . if we catch it early enough . . ." but he had never told her how early that was.

"Did you say you can take a blood count yourself? Don't you need all those things, the little tubes and—"

"I told you, Mom." Barbie had been waiting for a chance to get into the conversation. "I told you he brought all those things home yesterday: the Geiger counter and blood-count gadget and all that stuff. You just never listen to anything I say."

"But don't you have to be a doctor?" Gladys looked from one to the other with growing comprehension. "You mean anybody can take a blood count?"

"Not anybody, but anyone with a little training in lab work can do it easily." Levy loosened his tie and ran his fingers restlessly through his unruly hair. "It's just a matter of equipment, and I have everything here already. That's how I've been keeping track of myself. You remember when I asked you for the boiling water last night, don't you? That was for sterilizing the stuff. There's nothing difficult about doing it," he repeated. "If you put some water on to boil now, we could have some kind of result in less than an hour, I think."

"I don't think Mother would want you to wake Ginny up," Barbie put in primly, still nursing her grievance.

"Barbara, I don't believe you were asked . . ."

"Oh, Barbara! I'm glad you reminded me," he said briskly, treating Gladys' anger and her daughter's petulance with equal indifference. "There's one big thing somebody's got to do right away: the patrol trucks are still out now. If you go out and watch, maybe you can stop one and ask the patrolman to get a message to the doctor. That should be about the quickest way to get him here. They call in to headquarters at regular intervals, I think."

"But Veda—" Gladys stopped herself and turned to her daughter. "Would you start the water first, please, Barbie? I want to go up and see if Ginny is sleeping."

Gladys ran up the stairs after the teacher and caught up to him in the hall.

"Veda went out to look for the truck," she told him. "I don't know why it's taking her so long, but what good do you think it would do for Barbie to send the same message?"

"I don't know if it would do any good at all," he answered. "But I do think Barbara ought to have something to do, and it just might help."

"Do you really think it's safe for her to go out?" Gladys demanded.

"I really couldn't say," he retorted. "Is she easily damaged by fresh air?" Gladys flushed with anger and saw his face relent immediately. "I'm sorry," he said. "I shouldn't be sarcastic right now, but that was pretty silly. If it's all right for me to go out, and for Veda, why wouldn't it be all right for Barbara?"

"I don't know," Gladys admitted. "I just feel as if nobody should go out unless it's necessary. That's what they keep saying on the radio anyhow," she added stubbornly.

"You're right, of course, up to a point. But what I said before was not strictly true, as long as we're splitting hairs. H

oc-curred to you that something might have happened to Veda? The curfew patrol is remarkably efficient, and I expect is on her way to some sort of trouble right now, for violating the curfew. Stopping a patrol truck might be our last chance to get a message to the doctor until the squad truck comes around—whenever that may be."

There was no possible answer to his array of arguments. Gladys simply absorbed the succession of shocks and reminded herself that it didn't pay to challenge this man. Every time she backed him into a corner he turned around and hit her with some new unpleasant information.

"Before you wake Ginny up," he said, "there's one thing I wanted to tell you. I didn't think of it when I first offered to make the blood count, but the only good it will do is to let you know the worst—if it is the worst—a little sooner. All the kind of equipment has been commandeered, you know. It's illegal to have any of the stuff in your house. You won't be able to tell the doctor that a blood count was already made, and it won't save any time in his diagnosis. About the only concrete thing you can hope to get out of it is a personal knowledge of just how urgent it is to get the doctor here. Do you still want to do it?"

"I think so." She stared at the closed door to Ginny's room. "Suppose I go see how easy it is to wake her up? If she's sleeping soundly, maybe we oughtn't to bother."

"That sounds sensible," he agreed. "I'll get the things together meanwhile, just in case."

Gladys crossed the darkened threshold into Ginny's room and groped for the chain to the soft night light.

A gentle glow diffused the room, just as a cheerful high voice announced that Ginny was, after all, wide awake.

"Hello, Mommy. Did you come to tuck me in again?"

"No, baby. Doc—Mr. Carney just came home, and he wanted to say hello to you, so I came to see if you were asleep yet."

Ginny puzzled over that. "Why?" she demanded finally.

"Why *what*?"

"Why does Mr. Carney want to say hello when I'm s'posed to be *asleep*?" The young voice was prim and virtuous.

"Well, he—" She's not afraid of needles. Did she see the doctor take the blood from Barbie? Gladys wondered. "He wants to play a kind of game with you." She saw her daughter's startled disbelief and realized her own nervousness was helping matters any. "He wants to take a kind of test."

"When I'm s'posed to be *asleep*?" Ginny asked again incredulously. Virtue was rapidly turning to suspicion.

"Well, it's kind of important. And he didn't get home before."

Ginny sat bolt upright, hugging faithful Pallo tight against her

cheek. "I don't want to. I want to go to sleep." Oh dear! Now what?

"I'm sleepy. Turn my light out." The child suited the histrionics to the words and lay down again, burrowing under her blanket. What in the world . . . ?

"Mom!" A door banged loudly, downstairs. Barbara's voice was breathless and excited. "Mother! Mom, c'mere!"

"I'll be right back, baby." She dropped a kiss on the tiny patch of Ginny's forehead that still showed above the covers. The patch promptly disappeared, and something emerged from under the covers about turning the light out, but Gladys didn't stop to listen.

"The truck's outside, Mom," Barbie greeted her on the stairs. The front door was wide open. "They wouldn't listen to me, but I told them I'd get my mother."

"All right, I'll talk to them."

"I'll go take care of Ginny."

"You better leave her alone. She's all upset." *I hope Gar doesn't get down there before I get back. I hope . . .* There was no use thinking about it. "You stay here," she called again, to Barbie, and went out the door.

The big squadman stood at the porch steps, his visor down, his foot rocking impatiently on the flagstone. It was as close as he could come to impatient tapping in the heavy shoes. At the back entrance to the truck another man looked curiously, visor open for a clearer view. Gladys didn't recognize him at a distance.

"Come in," she told the squadman impatiently. "Isn't the doctor with you?" She had to stop to catch her breath. Her voice wasn't working right again.

"Sorry, ma'am, I can't come in. We're on patrol."

"Oh!" She was startled. Standing above him on the porch, she hadn't been able to see his face, shielded as it was by the raised visor. But his voice was that of a total stranger. "I thought you were . . ."

"If you want your regular squadman, he'll be around later on," he said. "They're changing off the regular schedule, so . . ."

can't say just when—but you watch out for him; he'll be here."

"Wait a minute. Please wait!" He was going away. He didn't understand.

"Lady, I can't wait. I've got a job to do."

"But my daughter—please! Listen to me!"

He didn't stop, but he started and half turned back. It was all the time she needed. "I can't wait for the regular squadman," she told him quickly. "I have to get a message to the doctor right away. We sent somebody out to find the truck, to get the doctor, but that was five o'clock and she's not back yet. All I want to do is let the doctor know."

At last he was showing some interest. Gladys stopped to catch her breath and he filled in the pause with a swift question of his own. "Still out? What's her name?" She told him Veda's name and, on demand, produced a brief description. "If we pick her up now, we'll know who she is," he explained, tucking away the notebook in which he had scribbled the information.

"But I need *a doctor!*" Gladys protested. "That's what I stopped you for."

"Who's the doctor on duty here?"

"Dr. Spinelli, Peter Spinelli. He's an intern at the new Veterans' Hospital. The squadman is Jim T—"

"Hey, Spinelli's the kid on duty this evening at headquarters, ain't he?" That was from the man in the back of the truck. For the first time Gladys realized how loud she must have been talking.

"Yeah, I think so. I'll leave a call for him when I check in."

"Please let him know as soon as you can," she pleaded, knowing it was useless. The man just didn't care. "It's my little girl," she explained again. "Her hair—"

"I'll tell him, but your kid ain't the only sick one, you know." He had lost all interest.

There had to be some way. "Do you know Jim Turner?" she asked, trying to keep him there until she could find something that would work. Unexpectedly Turner's name had an immediate effect.

"You a friend of his?" the man asked.

"Well . . . yes."

He caught her hesitation. "He's your squadman, uh? Not a personal friend?"

"No, that is, yes." She forced confidence into her voice. "He's the squadman here, but he's an old friend too. He said anything went wrong to be sure and let him know right away. If you—"

"Well, look, Miss—Mrs.—I mean, I'm only trying to do my duty. I'm not supposed to handle anything but violation curfew patrol, but I said I'd get the doctor for you, didn't I? Look." He fished out the notebook again. "Maybe you better give me more details. What's the kid's name? Age? He'll know who she is, won't he?" He wrote rapidly. "I'll leave a call for the doctor, like I said, but he's on duty right now, I know. Can't say when he'll get here. Mr. Turner could probably get quicker for you. Tell you what, suppose I call Mr. Turner for you, how's that?"

"That's not— Yes, of course, that's a good idea." It dawned on her just in time that the man was trying to keep her from calling Turner. It didn't make sense. If she had a phone working she wouldn't have had to stop him in the first place. But she kept herself from asking questions or saying anything more that might modify his incomprehensible change of attitude.

She watched him fill in the house number in his little book and turn back to his truck.

Why should Jim Turner's name have such a startling effect? It certainly wasn't a matter of personal liking. The man's attitude had been one of respect or . . .

The full significance of the patrolman's change of mind finally struck her. He'd been afraid. Was it possible that Turner was actually as important in the new scheme of things as he would have her believe?

She wished there had been some way to keep the patrolman from calling Turner.

She almost wished she had never mentioned Turner's name. But if it meant getting the doctor sooner . . .

"What did he say? Didn't they have a doctor? Are they going to get Pete—Dr. Spinelli?" Barbara flew down the stairs toward her.

"What? Oh." She pulled her thoughts away from the mystery of Jim Turner's name. "He's going to call the doctor and Mr. Turner both. They're just the curfew patrol truck. They don't have a doctor with them, but they said Dr. Spinelli's on duty at headquarters, and they'll call him."

"Well, what do they have to call Mr. Turner for?"

"I don't know." *I wish I did.* She started up the stairs. "Mom."

"What? Oh, is the water ready yet, Barbie?"



"I was just coming down to start some more. He's got some on the hot plate upstairs for sterilizing things. I thought make some tea or coffee or something, and Doc didn't eat anything yet, so I figured I'd heat up the stew. There's still some left."

"That's fine." She's really such a good girl. Gladys reached out and squeezed her daughter's arm with sudden tenderness. It was terrible to be so young and not able to do anything, when the world turned upside down like this. "I know. There just weren't any *right* words. "I don't know what I'd do without you, Barbie," she finished lamely.

"Mom, listen."

Gladys stopped, her foot already on the first step. Barbara hadn't moved toward the kitchen at all.

"Listen, Mom, don't go up."

"What do you mean, don't go up? For heaven's sake, why not? After all, Gritty hardly even knows him and—of course I'm going up." Impatiently she shook off the girl's hand.

"Well, listen, Mom. It's just well, you know how Ginny's al-ways better at the doctor's if you don't go into the room with her. Little kids just are that way. You told me that yourself, and I know it's true. Anyhow, you're all—well, you're all nervous and every-thing. Don't get mad at me again, Mother, please. Only I think it's better if you don't, honest."

Gladys could only stare at the girl, amazed.

"Besides, she isn't upset, and anyhow, he's in there with her already, and—please don't be mad at me, Mom—but I was sitting with her awhile, before Doc Levy came down, while he was getting his stuff together, so I asked her about—about it—know—if she was—sick."

Gladys took her foot off the stairs and followed her daughter through the living room.

"What—what did she say?" That was silly; she knew the answer. "*When* was it?"

"Well, that's what I don't understand. She says it was Tuesday, when you were sleeping. It must have been when she was taking her nap—come to think of it, she didn't feel so good at lunch-time—but that's practically impossible because Pete said it's always within a few hours after exposure. It was about eight hours for me and they said that seemed like a long time. Tuesday afternoon would make it a whole day, or even the morning would be an awful long time."

"Are you sure she didn't go outside Tuesday morning?"

"I was with her myself practically every minute," Barbie insisted, "and anyhow, the door was locked up on top. She can't open that. *I know* she wasn't out."

"Well, she must have been. I don't know how, but she must have been."

"Well, there's another thing too. Listen, Mom, Doc says sometimes it's much quicker with little kids, and if her hair is coming out so soon, in just a couple of days, that would mean she would have had to be sick just about right away. So maybe—maybe it's something else. Maybe she hasn't really got it."

Gladys looked away from the pleading eyes and shook her head. "No." There was no way out of it. "She's got it. I know you didn't, and I know she does." She could feel the matted strands of hair again, as if she still held them in her hand. She wiped the damp palm against her apron.

"I promised," Barbie said suddenly. "I promised not to tell." She turned and pushed through the dining-room door, letting it slam behind her. Gladys started after her and stopped. Leave her alone, leave her alone. She has to be alone.

She started again for Ginny's room. Out of old habit she stopped at the bottom step to listen. There wasn't a sound from upstairs, no voices, no footsteps. He must have the door closed. Except for the ceaseless, senseless chatter of the radio, the whole house was silent, deadly silent. What is he doing up there? Gladys went back into the living room, made herself sit down, forced herself to stay there, to sit and wait.

## TWENTY-FIVE

Gaily carved in the kitchen, oak-framed black on the dining-room wall, tiny gilded stripes in the watch on her wrist, unremitting patience the hands completed and renewed their circles. And still they didn't come. No sign, no word, from Veda, from Turner, from the doctor.

Alone in her room again, Ginny cried a little bit in sleepy protest, then fell asleep in the middle of a sob.

Downstairs Gladys heard the news without surprise when Garson Levy explained that the blood count made it certain Ginny was sick, and almost as certain what the nature of her illness was. The white-blood-cell count was drastically low and checked too well with the symptoms they already knew. Gladys tightened her grip on the arms of Jon's big chair and

thanked him quietly.

"Of course, I'm not sure. I can't be sure. Another count . . ."

"Yes, of course." Gladys cut him off. She was sure; she didn't need another count.

*When is the doctor coming?*

Levy went back upstairs, to dismantle his makeshift laboratory and put his things back in the attic hideaway. Barbara went quietly out to the kitchen to get the warmed-up supper she had fixed for him. Gladys sat alone, studying the unchanging pace of the little gold hands on her wrist.

Afterward, when the dishes were put away and there was nothing to do again, they gathered in the living room and to talk. But every subject led, by a devious route of its own, to the one thing Gladys could not, would not, talk about.

Unworried and unhurried, the little hands on the watch, the big ones on the clocks moved steadily past nine and ten toward eleven. Somewhere in those rounds of time Jim Turner came. They all heard the car in front of the house, and the sound pulled Gladys blindly from her chair, drew her unthinking to the door. It was Barbie who remembered and made stop and wait, to let Levy get out of sight upstairs before she opened the door.

And then it was only the squadman. The doctor wasn't with him, and he knew nothing about Veda. He had come straight to the house when he got the patrolman's message, and knew only that there was trouble at the Mitchell house.

Gladys listened impatiently to his explanations, and once again she told the story of Ginny's hair. But now it was maddening when he tried to reassure her, when he urged her to wait for the blood count before she worried too much, when he stood there *talking* instead of doing something, and she couldn't tell him a blood count had already been made.

And when she told him about Veda his only answer was a knowing shrug. "She couldn't get very far. The boys have probably picked her up already. I'll let you know if she turns up at headquarters, but I don't think they'll let her go again. Don't make much difference. I'll get the doctor for you, and I already told you she'd probably be pulled in before evacuation anyhow."

The door closed behind him, and there was another chilling thought to add to the sum of fear in the household. She asked Dr. Levy, but he could not, or would not, add anything to what Gladys knew about the Security Office. She felt he talked that there was much he was not saying, and that none of it was good, but she did not press him. She knew already that if anything in his own experience would help, however unpleasant it might be, he would tell. If he was holding back, it was because he saw no useful purpose in adding to her fears.

When the desultory conversation died out entirely Barbie suggested cards. But Gladys couldn't keep her mind on a three-handed bridge, and she broke away to find a corner where she could bend unseeing over a magazine and not have to talk. She was grateful when the others went off upstairs and left her to nurse her worries alone. Barbara explained that they'd be within earshot, but far enough so she could open the door without waiting, and she nodded in reply, never raising her eyes from the blurred page on her lap.

Once in a while she looked at her watch, but time went on forever, and the hands barely moved. She knew it was a midnight, though, when a car pulled up again in front of the house.

"Oh, thank God, thank God you're here!" Gladys was almost as relieved at the sight of Veda's familiar face as she was at the doctor. "You're all right?" she asked Veda. "What happened to you? We were so worried." Without waiting for an answer she turned to Spinelli. "She's upstairs, Doctor, do you want to see her right away? They told you, didn't they—about Ginny?"

He nodded. "I'll go right up. As soon as I can get this thing off." He was fumbling with the heavy helmet of his suit.

"Can I help?" Barbie came down the stairs, across the hall, and reached up shyly but efficiently to unfasten the metal closing that held the helmet to the suit.

"Thank you." He let her take the heavy headpiece. "Is she sleeping?" he asked Gladys.

"She was last time I looked. I don't understand it; she seems so healthy."

He nodded. "That can happen. Just a minute, will you? Barbie, will you take care of Veda while we go up? She's had a bad time tonight. She ought to go straight to bed."

"What . . . ?" Startled, Gladys saw Barbara help Veda out of the chair near the door. "What happened? Is it serious?" She saw Veda try to protest and then give in weakly. "What happened to her, Doctor?"

"The Security Office," he said briefly. "I'll tell you about it later."

Or Veda will. It's not serious—she just needs a good rest. You go ahead." He turned to the maid, standing in the doorway, leaning on Barbie's arm. "Get into bed before I put you in myself."

She smiled weakly. "I was just thinking," she pleaded, "I'd rather wait till there's some word about Ginny. I couldn't

good not knowin'."

"I'll come in and tell you," Barbara promised. "Come on, you heard what the doctor said."

Veda shook her head. "I'd a sight ruther lay down in here awhile, if Missus Mitchell don't mind. Then I'd know fer sure." "Of course I don't mind."

"Well, I do." The doctor was firm. "You get her into bed right now, Barbie. And don't take any back talk. I'd have been here an hour ago," he told Gladys when they were gone, "if I'd left her there. Those boys had it all figured out she a dangerous enemy agent."

He started up the stairs as he talked, taking two steps at a time, so Gladys had to run to keep up and hear what he saying.

"They picked her up after curfew, without identification, and she kept asking for me. She told them who she was, and when they checked they found out she was supposed to have a clearance to be out at all. Of course they didn't believe word she said about why she was out, and—

They were at Ginny's door. He stopped and lowered his voice to finish the story. "They never thought of finding out who I was. They just took it for granted she was lying. She was getting a pretty rugged third degree—polite American variety—bright lights and lots of questions, for about two hours, till Turner's call came in, and I was paged on the speak system. When they realized I was right in the building, they called me in to identify her. Then it took me about an hour, and I verified her story, to get them to release her. They just couldn't stand the idea of giving up a suspect."

"Is she—will she be all right?" Gladys asked.

"Sure. They didn't hurt her. I told you it was the polite type. But she's beat. She ought to take it easy tomorrow too."

"I'll see to it," she promised.

"Okay." He grinned at her. "Now I've got that out of my system and said enough to be damn near court-martialed, suppose we take a look at the kid."

Gladys led the way. She switched on the overhead light, and they saw Ginny pried peacefully around her friend Pall nuzzling the worn fuzziness of his plush hide.

"Wake up, baby." Gladys nudged the small shoulder and leaned over to drop a kiss on the flushed cheek. "Wake up. You have to wake up now. You've got some company."

Ginny transferred her embrace from the blue horse and twined her arms sleepily around Gladys' neck to pull herself up. Then she looked over her mother's shoulder and her eyes flew open.

"Hello." She seemed to find it perfectly natural that the doctor should be standing by her bed. "I know who you are, and she an-nounced. "You're Pete. You was talking to Babsy. I remember you."

Gladys saw the rare, sweet smile spread across his face, and immediately everything seemed easier and less fearsome.

"That's very clever of you," he told Ginny gravely. "This time I came to talk to *you*."

Ginny promptly released her strangle hold on her mother and patted the side of her bed invitingly.

"Sit down," she offered.

"That's a nice horse you've got," he complimented her. "You know your mother thinks you're sick?"

Ginny nodded. "Only I ain't. Amn't," she assured him. "You feel pretty good?" he asked.

"Sure I feel good. What's that for?" She was pointing to the long zipper on the back flap pocket that held his medical equipment. He pulled it open and let her peer in at the jumbled assortment of tubes and jars and implements. "See?" he said. "All the things you need to be a doctor with."

"You gonna stick a needle in me and make me bleed like before?"

"I never did it to you before, though," he said. "Just Barbie. I only do that to big girls and you were too little before."

"I'm big enough now," she assured him. "Because Mr. Car—"

"Ginny's used to needles," Gladys broke in hastily. "She's had all kinds of shots at the doctor's."

The doctor didn't seem to notice anything. "All right," he said. "If you'll get me some alcohol we can start right in and do it just the same way I did for Barbie."

"With the funny thing you squeeze?" Ginny asked. "Like a horn, only no noise?"

"You've got the idea." He turned to Gladys. "If you don't mind . . ."

She did mind. There was no telling what Ginny might say while she was out of the room. But there was nothing else to do. "No, of course not. I'll be right back."

She fairly flew to the bathroom and back, but when she got there Spinelli met her at the door and took the bottle from her hands. "Thank you," he said politely. "This won't take long." Then he stepped back into the room and very firmly shut

the door in her face.

Angry and worried both, still she lacked the courage to open the door and go in. He was the doctor. She stood where she was and tried to distinguish words from the murmur of voices that came through the wall, until at last he opened the door to admit her.

"That's a good girl you've got there, Mrs. Mitchell," he said. "She did everything just right." He was holding a thin tube of pinkish liquid corked at either end. It didn't look much like blood to Gladys.

"Look, Mommy." Ginny was wide awake and cheerful. "Look what Dr. Pete gave me." She waved a wooden tongue depressor gleefully in the air. "Look."

"I see, baby. That's very nice." Gladys walked past the doctor, afraid to look at him. Over her shoulder she asked him, "Can she go back to sleep now?"

"She might as well."

"I don't want to go back to sleep. I'm all woke up."

"Well now, it's the middle of the night, Ginny. You have to go back to sleep." Gladys tried to make her lie down, without success. "Don't want to go back to sleep. Want to get up."

"Don't be silly, darling, you can't get up now. I told you it's the middle of the night." She couldn't quite keep an edge of sharpness out of her voice. She *had* to talk to the doctor.

Spinelli left the room while she tried futilely to quiet the child. When he came back Barbie was with him.

"Barbie's going to read to you till you fall asleep, Ginny," he said firmly.

She was perfectly willing to make a good bargain. "Will you read the *whole* mouse book?"

"Every single word of it," Barbara promised.

But when Gladys faced the young doctor out in the hall he was no longer smiling. His face was once again as she had first seen it, long and bony and too sober.

"Who is Mr. Carney, Mrs. Mitchell?" He came straight to the point.

"Mr. Carney?" Gladys was prepared. "Why do you ask?" She turned her back on him and started walking down the hall. "Don't you think we'd be more comfortable in the living room?"

"I don't really care. If you don't mind, Mrs. Mitchell, I'd like to discuss it right now. It's important. Who is Mr. Carney?"

It was silly even to try, because she knew it couldn't work, but she tried to make it sound convincing. "He's a friend of Veda's," she lied. "He's—Ginny is crazy about him. He was over here yes-terday."

"What would make Ginny say he took a blood sample from her?"

"I don't know. I guess he heard some talk about Barbie, so maybe he pretended to give Ginny a blood test. He's always playing make-believe games with her." She looked straight into his eyes and tried to fill her own with innocence. "That's the only thing I can think of that would account for it."

The doctor shook his head. "It's hard to believe your little girl could know as much as she does, unless she's really had a sample taken before," he said stubbornly.

"But, Doctor," Gladys objected, "you must realize I'd tell you if she had. Why should I try to keep it from you?"

"Because you know as well as I do that any man with the knowl-edge and equipment to take a blood count had no other business being here. Now who is Mr. Carney? Where is he?"

"I told you," Gladys said slowly. "He's a friend. A friend of Veda's."

"Where is he? I want to see him."

"Well . . . he's not here now. I don't know where he lives."

"Look here, Mrs. Mitchell!" It was hard to believe he could be so angry. He had been so even-tempered all the time. "I'm willing to concede that you must have some good reason for lying to me. It would have to be a pretty dam good reason to weigh in the balance with your daughter's life. Or perhaps if you understood fully that the previous blood count could make all the difference in the world, you'd change your story."

Ginny's life?

Ginny, lying in the room behind the closed door, listening to a story and dying as she listened. Dying, dying, dying every minute.

She thought of Garson Levy, coming through the night to warn her about Barbara's danger, fighting off invaders in the darkened kitchen, repairing the terrifying gas leak, boarding up the win-dows, fixing a toy for Ginny, bringing courage and hope back into the house.

"I don't want to turn anybody in to the Security Office, Mrs. Mitchell. After the way I blew my top before, I should

think you'd realize that. All I want is to find out the results of that last blood count. Anyhow"—he smiled a little grimly—"you've got nothing to worry about. Any friend of Mr. Turner's is a friend of the Security Office. I don't care who your mystery man is or what he's done; I just want to avoid any further wait in diagnosing Ginny's case."

Any further wait . . . They had waited to hear about Barbie. She had waited for the doctor to come. She knew the poisonous fear of waiting. She knew it too well.

She couldn't wait any more; she could do anything but wait. She looked up. The good-natured young man wasn't smiling; his face was set and determined. He saw surrender in her eyes and pounced on it.

"If you won't tell me, the only thing I can do is take her in to the hospital right away. I'll just have to assume it's as bad as it looks."

There was no way out.

"I . . ." *Forgive me, please forgive me.* She breathed a silent prayer, whether to God or Garson Levy, she didn't know. "I . . ." It was harder to do because she knew he would forgive her—Doc Levy would. She wet her dry lips.

"It's all right, Gladys." The door to the attic stairs stood open, and the teacher took a step forward to join them. She hadn't heard it open; how long had he been there? "You're Dr. Spinelli?" He turned to the younger man courteously and extended his hand. "Mrs. Mitchell and her daughter have both told me a great deal about you. I'm sorry I had no chance to speak to you before, but there were circumstances . . ." As if there were nothing to explain, as if it were the most common everyday sort of meeting. "I'm Albert Carney. You want to see the results on the little girl's blood count, don't you?"

## TWENTY-SIX

"Oh, there you are."

Gladys scrambled to her feet as the doctor pushed through the swinging door.

"How is—can you tell—I mean, do you know anything yet?" "Not really. I just came down to ask you—" His eyes took in the bubbling pot on the hot plate. "Oh—I see you knew what we'd need."

"What?" She followed his glance, and understood. "No," she admitted. "I should have, I guess, but I was just boiling water to keep. Really," she added, "just to have something to do. Are you going to make the blood count right here?"

"It seems like the best thing—certainly a lot quicker than taking it back to the lab. Levy's got everything I need. He's setting it up in the bathroom now. I was going to help, but that water's almost ready; I might as well wait here for it."

"What did you say?"

"When?"

"Just now—about Mr. Cam—"

"Oh, that." Amused, he leaned against the kitchen cabinet, where he could watch the water, and told her, "I knew him as soon as I got a good look at him. Well, what's so surprising about that?" he demanded. "After all, I was a high school senior, and a science major in Year One of the atom bomb. And I was a college freshman the year Gar Levy was making big noises in the papers with his Survival Kit. I heard him talk several times, and I gave money to his committees. I even managed to get introduced to him at a dinner once. He didn't remember me, of course, but I'd know him anywhere."

The water was boiling. He felt the pot handle gingerly, and Gladys handed him two pot holders, one for each side.

"I could hardly forget him," Spinelli added, "seeing that the money I gave and the petitions I signed were largely responsible for making me a doctor. I had planned on biochemistry," he explained, "in connection with radiation therapy. Unfortunately the work you can do in that field is negligible unless you can pass a loyalty check. I got turned down for an atomic scholarship because of my—ah—unfavorable associations, Gar Levy among others."

He lifted the pot, tested the weight of the scalding water, and began walking carefully toward the door. "At any rate, I don't have to worry about my turning him in, believe me. Thanks."

Gladys was holding the swinging door open for him to go through with the steaming pot. She moved ahead to open the other door, into the living room. He paused a minute before he went through and showered her with the warmth of his singular smile. "And thanks again," he said. "Not for the doors. It—means a lot to me, knowing that somebody took him seriously. He's important."

He went through the door and on to the stairs. Gladys almost followed him, and then remembered that she hadn't turned the hot plate off.

Back in the kitchen she decided to put another pot on, instead of turning the stove off. She found a jar that would hold

the boiled water, in case the doctor didn't need it, and left the problem of sealing the jar, which had no top, to the inventiveness of her im-*portant* guest. Barbara's teacher . . . Tom's teacher . . . Doctor . . . Doc . . . Gar Levy. . .

She left the water heating up and went up to look in at Ginny. But as she passed the bathroom the young doctor called to her through the half-open door.

"Mrs. Mitchell?"

"Yes?" She peered in and saw a strange-looking machine plugged in to the outlet Jon had installed for his electric razor. The sink was full of little tubes and rubber pieces and needles and glass slides. Spinelli had his sleeve rolled up and was busy sticking one of the little needled tubes into his own arm.

"He wants to check the accuracy of the counter," Levy explained, answering the question in her eyes. "Take his own count first, and check it against what it should be. These things are delicate and they can get out of adjustment pretty easily—and I had no way of checking it."

The doctor's hand relaxed on the little rubber bulb, and he pulled the needle neatly from his arm, swabbed the puncture and corked the tube, almost with one gesture.

"I just wanted to suggest"—he turned to Gladys—"maybe it would be just as well if Ginny didn't go to sleep right away. I won't know till I finish this, but it might be best to take her to the hospital tonight. Look, don't—well, it's silly to say, don't get upset. But if Levy's count is right, then the quicker we do something, the better off she'll be."

"Yes . . . yes, of course." She ought to do something. She shouldn't just stand there. She watched him doing swift, competent things with tubes and liquids and slides, but she didn't really see anything. "Yes, I was just going in there anyhow."

The hospital?

He used a walkie-talkie on a squad truck to call headquarters when he was done.

Wisely, Gladys allowed Barbara to dress the child. She herself was strung to a high pitch of nervousness that would have infected Ginny immediately. It gave her a chance, too, for a few minutes alone with the young doctor.

"Do you want to come along?" he asked. "It won't be very pleasant for you, but maybe you'd rather?"

All she could do was nod. There was something she wanted to ask, but she had to wait for her voice to come back.

"How bad is it, Doctor?" Why did they always make you ask? Why couldn't they just tell you? "How did it happen?"

"I don't know. How it happened, that is. When we get her to the hospital the diagnosis might give us a clue. There are all kinds of radiation disease, Mrs. Mitchell, and they've got instruments there that will show just what she's got. Then we can guess how she got it."

"But how bad is it? You're in such a hurry to get her there . . ."

"Well, it's hard to answer that. The disease has obviously taken a rapid course. . . . But that can happen with children. In an adult the hair falling out so soon might indicate something serious. In a child—there's no telling. I'd really rather not say anything until we see what the testing machines say. How bad it is depends partly on the type of radiation too. I don't want to give you any false hopes, Mrs. Mitchell, but the fact that she's feeling all right is encouraging. The white-cell count I saw must be pretty recent."

Gladys waited for him to go on and then closed her mouth on another question. He'd tell her when he had something to tell. There was no reason to torment him with futile questions.

"Thanks." It sounded bitter. She summoned up a ghost of a smile to show she didn't mean it. "I guess I better wash my face if I'm going. Will she—need anything along with her? Clothes or a toothbrush or anything?"

"No." He was thoughtful. "Well, maybe you better take along a pair of pajamas, just in case, but I don't think we'll be there more than an hour or two."

"You mean . . . ?" She couldn't believe it. "You mean we don't have to *leave* her there? You mean she's coming home?"

"Oh, I'm sorry! I thought—didn't Levy tell you? About the hospital?"

"Oh, I never even asked him. I forgot all about it. I was so worried about Ginny."

"I haven't been at the hospital since it happened, myself," he told her. "But if things are anywhere near as bad in the children's section as he says they are in the rest of the place, I think she'll be better off here at home. We can draw supplies from the pharmacy there and bring them back to the house for treatments."

"Then she can stay with me? I can take care of her myself?" Now she could think about Doc Levy. "Is that why he came back? I never even asked him," she repeated. "What's he going to do? Did he get a—treatment, or anything?"

"He got a diagnosis. He couldn't be treated without waiting till it was too late to come back today, and he didn't want

stay there. He says his case isn't too serious—a medium dose of gamma, so he's probably just as well off here. I'm going to bring back some stuff for him, too, if I can."

"What's gamma? What does that mean?"

"Oh. Well, as far as treatment is concerned, it means what he needs is rest, and if he could get some blood, that would help too, but—Oh, hello," he broke off. "Ginny's all ready. You better get started, Mrs. Mitchell, if you want to wash up."

Barbie was bringing Ginny, dressed in her best, down the stairs, and Gladys passed them on the run, going up.

"Don't we look pretty?" She saw that Barbie was dressed too. Levy was in the bathroom, clearing away equipment.

"Oh, Gar . . ." She paused on the flight to her room. "I—Dr. Spinelli was just telling me about you, about this afternoon. I never even asked you before. I just couldn't think about anything but Ginny, and

"Of course not." He dismissed the subject. "You want to get in here? Are they waiting for you?"

"I'll go change my dress while you finish. The car's not here yet." She had to hurry. "I seem to owe you a whole new set of thanks, Gar. I don't think I've even realized, half the time, how much you were doing. You just keep . . . stepping in, when we need you. But—"

"Has it occurred to you that you very likely saved my life when you took me in here?"

"I? That's nonsense! What I wanted to say was, Dr. Spinelli says he's going to try and bring back some stuff for you, but I don't know just what it is, but he also said what you need most is rest. All this time you've been doing everything for us, and I just wanted you to know that it won't be that way any more. If there's anything any of us can do—"

"You may get your chance, but I'm not that sick yet." It was the first time she had seen him really embarrassed. "No, no, go ahead and get dressed. I'll be out of here in a minute."

But when she got downstairs there was a new problem to face. Barbara had made up her mind she was going along. For just a moment Gladys hesitated. Then she remembered the mysterious "conditions" Spinelli had referred to. "*It won't be pleasant.*" And things had been too bad there for Levy to stay.

"No," she said firmly, and the battle was joined. That was how Ginny heard the word "hospital" and found out where she was going.

"I don't want to go to the hospital."

"But, baby, you're not going to stay."

"I don't want to go to the hospital. I won't go to the hospital."

She sat down on the floor, spread her hands flat on the rug as if she could cling to the hairs of the nap, and repeated her defiance.

"Darling," Gladys explained patiently, "we're going to take a ride there with the doctor and come right back. We're not—"

But Ginny had found a single sentence that perfectly expressed her feelings, and stuck to it. She stopped repeating it only to try the effects of an occasional sob. They tried ignoring her, and for a while it seemed as if it was going to work. Ginny was tired, after all, and within a few minutes she had almost fallen asleep, had actually dozed off, only to come awake, screaming and kicking, when Gladys tried to pick her up. The noise brought Veda out of her room, bundled in a bathrobe, pale and frightened.

She tried her hand, too, but her "No nonsense!" attitude had no more effect on Ginny than Gladys' explanations or Barbie's promises. Eventually, under the doctor's stern injunctions, she went back to bed, leaving Ginny still in possession of the floor.

"Not gonna go. Not gonna go."

In the ensuing hour the little girl was alternately coaxed, threatened, ignored, patted, pacified, and pulled at. But when the car came she still clearly had no intention of going anywhere.

Spinelli solved the problem then by simply wading in and picking her up, bodily. With his heavy suit on, he could afford to ignore nails, teeth, and shoes. He dumped her unceremoniously in the car, and Gladys followed meekly. Barbie had lost all interest in arguing. She watched them go and made no effort to push her plea again.

## TWENTY-SEVEN

Nightmare rode with them through the empty streets in the speeding car. Every familiar pattern of the suburban night was gone. There were no late cars coming back from town, no lonely men out walking in the night, no hastily dressed

women pulling on the leashes of their dogs.

Throughout the five-mile drive, there was nothing to stop the car, hardly anything to slow it down. The headlights pushed a golden fan ahead, to underscore the darkness all around, picking out blind street lamps and dead traffic lights in their glare. The only signs of life they passed were squad cars and trucks parked here and there on neighborhood patrol. And when they hit the highway, even the trucks were gone.

The noise of the motor made a roaring world of its own inside the car, and the only other sound in the night was the steady wailing of the terrified child.

It was a nightmare from which they woke only to face the white-lighted horror of the hospital. And this horror was no dream; this was such reality as Gladys had never known before. The sight, the sound, and above all, the smell, of pain and fear, not hidden discreetly behind closed doors, not closed away in back of neatly folded screens, not quieted by starched white, rubber-soled nurses, not, in any way, the civilized sadness of a hospital.

This was pain on parade, fear on exhibition. All doors stood open, so tired nurses and doctors could hoard what energy they had. Basins and bedpans stood by the beds; no one had time to fetch and carry. Inside each room the floor was crowded with cots, begged, borrowed, improvised from stretchers and wooden blocks. And in the heart of the building, away from the traffic of the outside doors, mattresses lined the floor along the corridor walls. They passed a wagon piled high with dirty dishes outside a ward; a little farther on, an attendant in rumpled khaki coveralls was serving to corridor patients. Each one in turn held up a cup or glass, or a small basin, to be filled from a soup ladle out of the bucket she wheeled along.

A young man with a bandage on his head got up and walked along beside her, picking up the cups of those too weak to sit. After a little way the attendant spoke to him, shaking her head, and he went back to lie down on his mattress. There was a small crimson spot on his bandage. A middle-aged woman with one arm in a sling took his place. She wore a torn sweater over the cotton operating gown the hospital had given her. The flapping of the gown on her legs annoyed her, so she draped it to one side with her good arm, then looped the long end over her sling to keep it out of the way.

They reached the children's section by walking through endless corridors and climbing interminable stairs. The elevators were not running, whether for lack of power or personnel, they did not know.

Here bigger rooms and smaller beds made overcrowding less of a problem. The rooms were lined with rows of cots which Gladys recognized as standard nursery school equipment. Different-colored canvas and different types of legs marked their varied origins. She pointed out to Ginny the familiar square green legs and the yellow canvas of the cots at her father's, but the little girl wouldn't look.

Again Gladys tried to explain to her that she would not have to stay. Ginny only shook her head wisely, refusing to be fooled. She had long ago stopped crying, but ever since they entered the harshly lit white corridors she had been using her own legs and her mother's eyes to walk with. Her two hands clung fiercely to Gladys' skirt, and her head was turned in toward its folds. She would look up only when they were ascending the stairs, where the lights were dimmer, and there were no frightening rows of cots and mattresses.

Now, when her mother's interest in the cots informed her they had reached the children's section, she still refused to show any interest in her surroundings. But when the doctor, looking down at the disheveled curls, remarked kindly, "Well, almost there—just around the corner," she responded immediately.

With a howl of protest she flung herself away from Gladys and ran back to the head of the stairs. Too tired and confused to attempt an escape by descent, she seized the doorknob and clung with all her might.

"I won't go!" she shrieked, and the noise echoed down the corridor. "I won't! I won't go!"

"Ginny!" Gladys swept down the corridor after the child. "Ginny, you ab-so-lute-ly-have-to-keep-quiet! There are children sleeping—sick children. Now you behave yourself. If you don't want to get well, *they do*. Now stop it, once and for all!"

To her complete surprise, the shrieking stopped. Gladys seized the opportunity. "Get your hands off that knob," she commanded, "and walk down this corridor like a lady. I'm sick and tired of your nonsense."

Meekly the child did as she was told. And belatedly Gladys understood. Every effort they had made, in the house on the way, had been with the consciousness of Ginny's trouble in their minds. Now for the first time she had gotten angry enough to forget to be sorry for the little girl—and Ginny had promptly stopped being sorry for herself.

They went around the bend in the corridor, down to a little room labeled "Dispensary."

"If you wait right here"—Spinelli pointed to a bench—"I'll be right out." He knocked on the door and entered without waiting for a reply. Gladys and Ginny sat down on the bench in silence and stayed that way. Determinedly Gladys



controlled an impulse to pet the little girl, to apologize to her. Her hand kept trying to move that way, and she kept pulling back. But the effort was worth while. After minutes of utter silence a little voice whispered, "Mommy?"

"Yes?" She tried to make it sound still annoyed.

"Mommy, will I really not have to stay? Can *I really* go home again?"

"Of course you can, Ginny. I told you so over and over again."

"Mommy." The little voice was honeyed with an appeal Gladys recognized only too well. Ginny had learned the art of a successful apology early, but Gladys never had been able to resist the sweet contriteness of the tone. She looked down at her daughter and allowed herself a very small smile.

"What?"

"Mommy, I'm sorry. I'm sorry I was bad."

"All right, baby." She squeezed the small hand that wriggled into hers. "Now forget it and behave yourself." The poor little tyke. *She's too little. It isn't fair!*

Promptly Ginny dropped her head in her mother's lap, and the tears began to flow afresh, more quietly this time, but no less fluently.

"Ginny, I said *stop it!*"

"Will you come in now?" A nurse, this one in crumpled white, opened the dispensary door.

Gladys stood up and prayed that Ginny would follow without more emotion. When she looked she found the cheeks still wet, but the eyes were dry and, miraculously, alert.

"What's that?"

"That's a very smart machine," the nurse told her. "It knows all about everybody who sits in that chair, and we're going to sit you in that chair, and then we'll know all about you without asking you anything at all."

Gladys braced herself for the resistance and watched her daughter walk over, examine the chair, and announce happily, "You don't have to sit me in it. I can sit in it myself." She scrambled up promptly, and the nurse moved to a switch on the wall and threw a lever. Nothing happened but a gentle humming. Then lights began to flash on the machine. The nurse watched closely, at the same time guiding a piece of tape through a gadget near her side, with one hand, and with the other moving a small lever. Curiously Gladys followed the connections to the lever with her eye and finally located a small glass-tipped tube on the big machine that kept moving in response to the nurse's motions.

Abruptly the nurse switched it off, pulled out the tape, and studied it briefly.

"Pete."

Dr. Spinelli came through a door in the side wall, and the small incident shook Gladys more than anything else. You read about floods and earthquakes and emergencies. You heard of overcrowded hospitals, saw newsreels of corridors the one outside, but one of the unchangeable things in life, somehow, was that a nurse never, never called a doctor by anything but his title in front of a patient. It was such a little thing, but it told so much more than the soiled uniform, the linenless mattresses, the dirty dishes, or the tired lines on the nurse's face. Gladys remembered the woman's unhurried patience, explaining the machine to Ginny, and marveled at it.

"I think the photoindicator would be a good idea." She showed the doctor the tape, and he examined the little punch on it carefully. "Oh, you haven't used these much, have you? There's a chart someplace." She found it under a pile of discarded tape, a heavy cardboard intricately diagrammed; she fitted the tape across it pre-cisely and handed it back to him. This time he looked it over swiftly and nodded.

"Looks that way. Come on, Ginny, we're going to take some pictures of you." He picked up his helmet and the nurse helped him fasten it back onto his suit.

Docilely the child jumped down from the chair, cast one dubious glance at Gladys, and took a step forward.

"Like at the dentist?" She didn't like the idea of the helmet. "Same general idea, only more so." He had the visor working now.

She decided in favor of it, and followed him through another door in the opposite wall. Gladys started to get up, but the nurse motioned her back.

"Sorry," she said briefly, "you can't go in there."

"But why? What are they going to do?"

"Just another test." She explained no more.

Gladys went back to her seat. *She didn't have to say it that way!* She watched angrily while the nurse looked around and decided there was nothing that had to be done immediately, and sat down. Scientifically and deliberately the woman

relaxed in the straight white chair, shifting her position to rest each weary muscle separately, and closing her eyes for a blessed moment of escape from the white light overhead. Gladys' protest died unspoken. "*Pete*," she remembered, and marveled again at the sustained cheerfulness with which the nurse had treated Ginny. She had to let go sometime.

"I *am* sorry."

She hadn't meant to say it out loud. The nurse's eyes opened to regard her with embarrassing surprise. Then the eyes softened and warmed, and she saw that the woman understood what had impelled the remark. They smiled at each other, and Gladys had an impulse to thank her for being so nice to Ginny, but she left it unsaid. It wasn't necessary.

The girl closed her eyes again, and Gladys sat there, studying her. "*Pete*," she thought again, and tried to imagine the nurse, fresh and untired, dressed up, out on a date with the strange young man who was so sober and so unexpectedly warm. She smiled inside now, thinking how Barbie's new-found love would have flared into jealousy.

The door opened, and Ginny came out, chattering and blinking at the strong light. Gladys caught a glimpse of a screen and a bulky machine in a darkened room, and then the door was closed again.

"If you'll wait just a few minutes," Spinelli told Gladys, "I'll collect the stuff we need." The nurse came to help him with the helmet, but he shook his head.

"Never mind, Jan." He was scribbling something on a pad of paper. "I won't be here much longer." He tore off the paper he'd written on. "Could you do me a favor? Put this through to Supply for me?"

She took the sheet, glanced at it, and looked up, puzzled.

"I wouldn't ask you," he apologized, "but I've got to talk to old man Kallen before I go, and I have to get out fast." He looked significantly at Ginny, and Gladys began herding the child toward the door.

"That's okay. But all this . . ." Gladys had the door almost closed; the nurse must have thought she couldn't hear. "What are you putting over, Pete? I don't get it."

"Tell you later, kid. It's important, that's all." Gladys was too curious to feel guilty about eavesdropping. "They *need* that stuff."

The nurse wasn't convinced. "What the hell do you think I want it for?" There was silence for a second, a kind of whispering silence, and then Spinelli's voice again. "For God's sake, keep it under your hat. That's what I have to see the old man about. Now be a good girl and see how fast you can make them move down there."

"Right." All the tiredness had gone out of her voice. Gladys heard footsteps and moved unhurriedly away from the door toward the bench, once more aware of what Ginny was telling her.

"Mommy, he said they were my *bones*, but they didn't look like bones. It was all dark, and shadows . . ."

Gladys tried to keep her mind on Ginny's prattle, but she kept thinking about the conversation she had overheard. What was it all about? What was wrong with the supplies he wanted? Why did he have to talk to "the old man"? Who was the old man?

Peter Spinelli was so young, so terribly young, to carry the responsibility that had been suddenly thrust upon him. For just a moment Gladys felt panic, wondering if he knew what he was doing, whether Ginny was safe in his care.

But what can I do? What else can I possibly do? If she only knew more about it . . . You could tell when a doctor was no good if your child had measles or pimples or a rash. You knew something about those things. But how could you tell now? What was he planning anyhow?

"Lady, do ya know where the toilet is? I gotta go to the toilet, an' I can't find it."

The little boy's voice reached her first. When she saw him she was shocked into silence. She could only shake her head, to show she didn't know. Ginny was equally silent—until the child stretched his hand out from under the rolled-up sleeve of the man's shirt he was wearing.

"Pretty," he said. "So pretty," and reached for the furry muff that dangled from Ginny's coat sleeve.

"Mommy!" It was a whisper, and it was a scream. "Don't let him touch me. Don't, don't! Mommy!"

Bandages covered the boy's arm, but on the active hands they couldn't stay in place. Blood and pus ran from a visible open sore; inside, his sleeve the bandage was stained with the accumulation from others unseen. His hair wasn't shaved, she realized then. There just wasn't any. And there was something wrong with his face, something that made him look a much younger than his four years as the bald pate made him look older. She placed it at last. No eyebrows. None at all.

Ginny was drawing in close to her, shrinking away from the child's touch.

"Are you her mama?" He ignored Ginny. "She's a baby. She acts like a baby. You seen my mama any place?"

"I am not a baby. You're dirty. Go away."

"Shush, Ginny. Would you like me to find the nurse for you?" she appealed to the little boy.

"No, I want my mama. Do you know where the toilet is? I gotta go real bad."

"You wait a minute," she told him. "I'll get the nurse."

"I don't want any old nurse. I want—"

"Don't go away. Mommy, don't *go away!*"

"I . . ." She didn't want to leave Ginny alone with the little boy, not with that open sore, not with . . .

She sat down again. The door opened, and the doctor came out. "Hey! What're you doing out of bed?" He surveyed the child. "Which room are you in? Where's your bed?"

But the little boy was no longer there. He paused just long enough to take in the bulky suit the doctor wore and skittered away down the corridor for dear life.

Around the corner he stopped and peered back, showing only enough of himself to be able to see.

"Can't catch me," he shouted defiantly. "Bogeyman can't catch me!" Then he was off again.

When they went down the stairs the nurse was following the youngster's path of flight down the hall. Ginny was sobbing uncontrollably, and they made no effort to stop her. They had to wait again, down in the main hall, while Spinelli collected an armload of apparatus, the things he had asked the nurse to order for him. Then they were outside, and the empty darkness that had been so frightening before was a blessed relief.

## TWENTY-EIGHT

The door flew open while they were still coining up the walk in front of the house, and a breathless Barbie ran out to meet them. As soon as they were inside, with the door shut behind them, Gar Levy appeared on the stairs and came down to join them.

"How'd it go?"

"About what we thought," Spinelli told him briefly. "I got everything we needed."

So that was it, Gladys thought. Something for him.

"You find the trouble?" Levy asked.

"Um-hmh." He nodded, and didn't explain. Mystery upon mystery. Why did they have to talk in code? Maybe when Ginny wasn't there . . .

She hung up coats in the hall closet and turned to find the doctor stripping out of his big suit again, with Barbie's help.

"Can I sit on your lap?" Ginny approached the older man. "That's what I've got one for," he admitted. "How did you like your trip?"

She shook her head vigorously, made what she fancied to be a horrible face, and confessed, "They took pictures. It was dark. He said it was a picture of my bones. But it was all dark. It didn't look like bones." She snuggled into the warmth of his lap, and he looked up at Spinelli questioningly. The doctor answered with a nod, and Levy pursed his lips.

*I wish I knew what was going on!*

"It was nice riding in the car." Ginny sat up now. "It went fast—wheeee—all the way home."

"You must be all tired out."

"Nope." She snuggled down again with a sigh of contentment. "Your lap is almost as nice as my daddy's. Do you know my daddy? Where is he?"

"Doctor," Gladys asked hastily, "should she go to bed now, or . . . what?"

"Not just yet," he said thoughtfully. "I think we better take agglutination samples first," he told Levy, "and we can arrange everything else while they wait." The older man nodded agreement. "For transfusions," Spinelli explained to Gladys, "to test blood types."

Transfusions!

"Is there anything I should do?"

"I don't think so. We'll need boiling water of course."

"What for?" Ginny had been following the conversation as well as she could. Now she was suspicious.

"To wash things in," Gar told her. "You wouldn't want to take any medicine from a dirty spoon, would you?"

"I don't want to take any medicine."

She's so tired, Gladys thought. This was going to be a struggle. But the teacher was laughing, as if the child had said something outrageously funny, and Ginny, finally convinced, joined him. The subject of medicine was, temporarily at least, disposed of.

"I'll start the water," Barbie offered. "Would you like me to make some coffee, too, Mother?"

"Why, yes, I guess we could use it." Gladys quelled her own restlessness and let the girl go out alone. Barbie wanted to be efficient and helpful while the doctor was around to see it. There would be plenty for her to do later, Gladys realized.

Barbara was back to keep Ginny entertained, too, while the men set up their bathroom laboratory again. Surprisingly quickly the young doctor was coming around with alcohol, cotton, and hypo-dermic needle, collecting neat little samples of blood from each of them. Barbie proudly announced that it wasn't necessary to take hers, because she knew her type, but Spinelli explained that that wouldn't help if they didn't know Ginny's.

"I'm AB," she told him gratuitously.

"Oh." He finished swabbing her arm but didn't stick the needle in. "Are you sure?"

"That's what the school doctor said when they tested us there." "Well . . ." He hesitated. "We might as well take a sample anyway. In case you made a—Ginny's might be the same anyhow." "What's wrong with AB?" She offered her arm. "Why wouldn't you take—"

"AB's pretty rare," he explained, "and it means you can't give blood to anybody except another AB. Do you know your husband's type is, Mrs. Mitchell? If he was in the last war it must have been on his dog tag."

"B," she answered automatically, without having to think about it. She remembered the dog tag, she could see it around his neck. She hadn't thought about Jon for a long time. How long? Never mind how long. This was no time to start. She could see the metal chain, with the flat coin at the end, swinging forward when he leaned over the sink in the flat near the camp . . . *Stop it!*

The doctor started upstairs with his collection of tubes. "Oh, Mrs. Mitchell, I think you could get Ginny undressed now. Levy's fixing up some stuff for her. It ought to be ready any minute."

"What is it, Mommy? What's gonna be ready? What is it?"

"Just some things to keep you from getting sick. Let's go up and get into your pajamas, so you'll be all ready to go to bed afterwards."

"I'm not sick," Ginny insisted. "Not sleepy either." But she came along docilely. She was unnaturally quiet while Gladys took her clothes off, then, with her pajama half on, she suddenly twisted around to face her mother.

"Mommy?"

The child was terrified again.

"What is it, baby?"

"Is it—is the medicine—to keep me from being sick like that boy? So I won't get like him?"

She was glad enough to escape when Spinelli remembered they had no blood sample from Veda, and asked Gladys to wake her. She turned Ginny and Ginny's difficult questions over to Barbara and went downstairs to knock on the door of the little room.

Veda wouldn't wake up, and she finally had to try the door. Surprisingly it was unlocked. But where tapping had failed to waken her, the lightest footstep brought her bolt upright immediately.

"What is it, Missus Mitchell? Is Ginny bad?" She was reaching for the robe on the chair beside her when Gladys turned on the light, trying to wrap it around herself under the blanket.

"Ginny's all right, and you lie down," Gladys told her promptly. "Go on, now. The doctor said you weren't to get up." She stopped talking and refused to say any more until the woman put the robe away and lay back under the covers again. "Dr. Spinelli wants to take a sample of your blood," she explained. "He's taking them from all of us, to find out who can give transfusions to Ginny. But he said you're not to get out of bed. He's—"

"*Transfusions?*" Veda stared at her in horror. "Ginny didn't look near that sick. She take a turn for the worse?" She was reaching for the robe.

"Put that back and lie down. She's no worse than she was. That's just what they do for this kind of sickness. Please, Veda, the doctor specially said you shouldn't get up. You've got to take care of yourself. I can't have *you* sick too."

That did it. Veda lay back again, frowning. "But how's he goin' to take that sample? You jest now said he had to have some of my blood."

"Yes, I did." Gladys tried to sound firm. "But he's coming right down here as soon as I tell him you're ready, and you don't have to budge out of bed."

"No'm. I'd ruther get up."

"Well, he ought to know what he's doing. He says you should stay in bed. Now for heaven's sake, Veda, don't be foolish. All you have to do is stick an arm out. I'm going to get him, and I want to find you right where you are when I get

back." She turned and left before there could be any argument, but when she got back with the doctor she found Veda struggled into the robe while she was gone. True enough, she was in bed, but sitting up, and bundled up to her ears. Gladys refrained from comment and wisely did not try to leave the room till the doctor was done. Then she let him go out first and did not close the door till she had given Veda a last warning about staying put.

"We don't need you for anything now, but we probably will tomorrow," she pointed out. "You go back to sleep. I can always come and get you if anything happens."

In the living room she found the doctor waiting for her. There was time now to ask some of the questions she'd been saving up.

"You see, we can't really treat the disease at all," he told her. "There's no way to deactivate an ionized cell. But if we treat the symptoms, just help the body through the worst of it, the damaged cells are eventually replaced, and the patient is all right again. There are several different drugs that are useful. I'm leaving some dramamine in case she gets nauseous again, and Gar has some other stuff."

He rattled off a series of things, most of which, she gathered, affected the blood in some way, and none of which was familiar, except one called toluidine. "That was on the information sheet, wasn't it?" she asked.

"That's right. Gar has all the stuff, and I've given him complete instructions. If I had more time I'd rather show you everything myself, but Gar's familiar with the techniques, and I think it's better to space the treatments—give each drug a little while to work before we shoot her full of a new one. She should get regular doses, and he has it all written down. You don't have to worry about that part of it at all right now."

"Will—will she be very sick? How long does it take?"

"It's hard to answer either one. They're really the same question. It'll take months before she's completely healed—before her hair grows back and her blood count is entirely normal. But how long it will take her to start recovering or how sick she'll get . . . it's different with everybody. So far the disease seems to be taking a rapid course, and she has shown much evidence of being affected by it. But when the blood count drops this way—well, we just don't know."

"You said, till her hair grows back. Is it—that is, will it all come out? Like that little boy, the one in the hospital?" She was being as foolish as Ginny.

"No telling." He smiled slightly. "If that was all we had to worry about . . . As a matter of fact," he went on briskly, "I'm not even trying to do anything about that. I'm worried about her teeth. The hair'll grow back by itself when she gets better. The teeth—I don't know. It doesn't matter about these first ones coming out, but I wish I knew what would happen to the second teeth. Well, a good dentist can worry about that later on. I don't know anything to do about it right now."

"You mean, that tooth that came out . . . That's part of it too?" She was so proud!

"Oh, didn't you know? I guess that wasn't on the information sheet. It's usually a much later symptom. Anyhow, the thing we have to concentrate on is the blood. That's where the greatest damage occurs, especially in the type of disease she's got."

"What type? What's the difference?" There's so much I don't know.

"That's a tough one," he said. "The diagnosis is inhalation of a fission product, with an alpha emitter lodged in the bone marrow. In plain English, that means she breathed in some particles resulting from the explosion of the bomb, and that the particles were deposited inside her body, in her bone marrow. They're still there, and until they burn themselves out there's no way of getting rid of them. What complicates things is that we don't even know what isotope it is. It doesn't behave like anything I know. It might not even be a uranium derivative, although God knows what else . . . Anyhow, we'll be able to find that out later on."

"Meanwhile, at least we know what it's doing. An alpha emitter lodged in the bone destroys the marrow and stops production of blood cells. Later on we may have to worry about anemia; that's not serious yet, and we might be able to forestall it with liver extract. I'm leaving some of that too. But the white-cell count is dangerously low right now. The first thing for that is transfusion; after that the stuff I'm leaving will help too. I'll give one transfusion before I go, and they should be repeated regularly—say, every ten or twelve hours. You could give her one tomorrow morning, and another before bedtime, and after that it would be regularly twice a day. Got everything clear now?"

"Practically nothing," she admitted, "but I guess Dr. Levy can explain most of it later on, when there's more time."

He had already risen from his chair, impatient to get started.

"Wait a minute," she asked. "There's just one thing I've got to understand now. Do you mean I'm supposed to give her transfusions?"

Why should he look so surprised?

"Well, of course," he said, "some of them. Unless your type's not right. That's what I took the samples for. Levy can give any, of course; he'll have to get some. I almost forgot I wanted to tell you about that too." He stopped edging toward the stairs and rested his weight against the edge of the table. "You and Barbie and Veda ought to take turns—if everybody's blood's all right, that is. You won't have to give much anyhow. I guess I made it sound like a lot when I said twice a day. After this first one it won't be more than about half a pint for Ginny each time. You could give that much yourself each time for a couple of days and not have it bother you. Unless .. ." A new thought struck him. "Unless there's some reason you thought you shouldn't—the time of month, or anything like that?"

"What? Oh no! I didn't mean . . . It wasn't giving the blood I was worried about, it was giving the *transfusion*, you know, *doing* it. Isn't it awfully delicate?"

His smile was warm again. "Don't worry about that. You have to be careful of course," he explained, "but it's not the major operation it used to be in young Dr. Kildare's day. I'll show you how to do it when I give Ginny hers. And I think better give Gar some, too, before I go. Then, for him, the day after tomorrow would be soon enough for the next. That's tomorrow, really—Saturday. It's Friday by now, isn't it?"

"I guess so." She hadn't looked at her watch since just before he came, around midnight. Now the hour hand was almost four.

"Look," he said, "Ginny ought to get some sleep. Let's finish up with her first, and fill in anything you want to know afterwards. I think the samples should be ready by now."

But when he had examined the samples he was less cheerful. Levy explained it to Gladys.

"Barbie was right. She is an AB, or it looks that way. And Ginny isn't. Anyhow, whatever the classifications are, we can't use Barbie's blood at all. But I wouldn't worry. You'll be able to give Ginny all she needs if Veda's doesn't turn out right."

"Mine is all right?"

"Yours is fine. There's really nothing to worry about. I was just thinking about Barbie, though. She's going to feel bad about this. She wants to help so much, and she's got this bee in her bonnet about going to the hospital to help out there."

"Has she been bothering you about that too?"

"It wasn't any bother. She has to talk about things. Then Veda's not in such good shape, and you'll need some rest. Barbie can't give any blood herself, why don't you put her in charge of the sick-room? Let her do the transfusions and take charge of Ginny's shots and general care? I think it might make her feel more a part of things, and take a load off your shoulders at the same time."

"But—she can't manage all that."

"I thought she was doing some kind of child care. She had a baby sitters' club, didn't she? Something like that. She's forever asking about first aid and such in school. That's why she had her blood tested, I believe. She had some notion of being prepared for emergencies. Why shouldn't she be able to handle it?"

"Well, naturally she can help. But I don't think she ought to do anything as complicated as a blood transfusion. She isn't old enough for that kind of responsibility!"

"I was thinking just the other way round," he urged. "Let her take the responsibility and *I'll* do the helping, if there's anything too difficult for her."

Gladys shook her head doubtfully.

"You ready now, Mrs. Mitchell?" the doctor asked. "We can give her the transfusion and let her go to sleep. Looks like you're elected as donor in chief."

"Think it over." Levy put in a last word.

"All right." She let herself be led away.

The transfusion itself turned out to be simpler than she had imagined possible. The doctor drained blood out of her arm exactly as he had done before for the sample, with the difference that he had her lie down beforehand, and that it flowed into a larger container, in which a small amount of some fluid had already been placed. When he had as much as he wanted he changed the needle and rubber tubing on the jar and took the apparatus into Ginny's room.

"Maybe you'd like to hold her on your lap, Mrs. Mitchell?"

Ginny let the doctor take her arm and wipe it off, and watched him suspiciously while he inserted the needle and taped it down. Explaining each step carefully, he flicked a valve, and the blood began, very slowly, to drain from the upended arm. Ginny squirmed a little and giggled.

"It tickles," she announced when the doctor checked the tape to make sure her squirming had not dislodged it.

Then it was done, and Ginny had only to be tucked into bed, with a scrap of adhesive on her arm, to show where blood had flowed in. It seemed a much more serious matter that Pallo had mysteriously disappeared. Gladys hunted under the bed and all over the room, but the horse had vanished. Ginny called his name in vain, decided he had run away because he hadn't taken him along to the hospital, and dropped off promptly into a deep normal sleep.

"You mean that's all there is to it?" Gladys demanded when she was out in the hall again. "I was so worried about your transfusions: It seemed so—technical."

"The only part that's even a little delicate is getting the needle in just right. And on a child that's easy, as long as you have small needles. The veins are so easy to see." The doctor was doing mysterious things again, with a little tube of blood in the bathroom lab. He put it down and turned to Levy. "Looks like Veda's a type O, too, so you'll be okay. She ought to be able to spare some by Saturday afternoon, if she takes it easy till then. You don't think she'll have any objections, do you, Mrs. Mitchell? She was very anxious to give some to Ginny, I know, but yours is all right for Ginny, and Veda seems to be the only one who can give anything to Gar—except me, and I don't know when I'll be around."

"No, I'm sure she won't mind." Now it began to penetrate why he had been so upset about the failure of Barbie's sample. He'd been worried about Levy, not Ginny. She was so wrapped up in her own problem, she kept forgetting . . .

"I'm sure she won't," Gladys repeated. "She's—almost as devoted to him as we are."

"While we're on the subject of admiring me," Gar broke in, "remember what I was talking about before? I was trying to convince Gladys," he told Spinelli, "that we should make Barbie nurse in chief. I think she could handle the techniques all right, don't you?"

"That's a good idea." He kept working while he talked, sterilizing the jar he had used for Ginny's transfusion. "She could do it all right," he added easily. "Might get her mind off the hospital, too. This place is rapidly turning into a hospital annex anyway."

He was silent a moment, concentrating on the work in his hands. "You were right about conditions there," he went on to Levy. "But I don't know what else we could have expected, the way they were piling them in there the first few hours."

"Do you really think she can do it, Doctor?" Gladys asked. "She's so young. I'd hate to have anything go wrong."

"She's not that young. She's good with her hands. And she can certainly manage both patients. She's got this one"—pointed to Levy—"wrapped around her manicured toenail." The two men smiled at each other, with an understanding that left Gladys out. How could they be so cheerful, at this hour of the morning, with horrors just past still in mind, and the future holding nothing but fear?

"Anyhow, we can find out," the doctor finished. "Let her practice on the boss over here, tonight, and I'll be around to see how she does."

"Anybody want that coffee?" Barbie's voice floated up the stairs.

"Do you need more proof?" The doctor grinned at Gladys. "The girl's not only competent—she's clairvoyant." He put the jar carefully into the boiling water.

"Not anybody!" he called down. "Everybody!"

## pursuit

*He was very thirsty. He wasn't hungry any more, and his head had stopped hurting a long time ago, but he was afraid to drink from pools, and afraid to go into a house. He'd had a drink somewhere, but he didn't remember when. He was very thirsty.*

*It didn't matter, because he was almost home. He knew he could wait for a drink till he got there. The road ahead looked like home. It was pretty white gravel, and now that the sun was coming up the lawns were green on either side.*

*He had to find someplace to hide. It was getting too light, and now he'd come this far, he couldn't take chances. He was too tired to dodge, and being so thirsty made him dizzy. He didn't always see people coming soon enough. He'd have to hide, and he didn't want to. He was so close now, he didn't want to wait another day to get home.*

*"Halt!"*

*His eyes searched the road ahead, the trees, the lawns, the houses. He needed someplace to hide, to dodge.*

*"Halt!"*

*There was someplace up ahead. He began running.*

*"Halt or I'll shoot!"*

*He couldn't stop running. A hot poker went through his shoulder. There was a terrifying loud noise, and he tripped and fell.*

*He lay still. A man's boot nudged him, but he didn't move. The man walked away and said something to another man. He didn't move for a long time, until he was sure the men were gone. Even then he was afraid to stand up. He crawled forward slowly, not caring about the dampness of the ground or the gravelly stones.*

## TWENTY-NINE

"What about those—sores?" Gladys asked.

"Well . . ."

In the pause while the doctor considered his answer they all heard distinctly the sound of the shot outside. It was no longer a novelty, nor even uncommon, but Gladys could not get used to it.

"I know they look awful." Peter Spinelli sipped his coffee and tried to ignore the interruption. "Gar is going to be a gruesome sight in another week or so, unless this stuff I'm giving him takes hold faster than it has any reason to. You were thinking about that kid in the hospital?"

Gladys nodded. All night her voice had been playing tricks on her; now she only used it when she had to.

"Well, if it's any comfort, Gar's won't look so bad, for the simple reason that they'll be properly cared for. You've treated pus sores before, haven't you? This is just more of them all at once. It's an inevitable result of the drop in the white-cell count. There just isn't any way for the body to fight off minor infections. As far as Ginny's concerned . . . I don't know. We haven't had too much experience with the kind of radiations she got, and if they haven't shown up yet . . . I just don't know."

He fell silent, and they all waited for him to go on.

"I keep saying that, don't I? 'I don't know.' I wish there was some other answer. You just *fix* your mind firmly on the fact that those repulsive red blotches are unimportant secondary symptoms. They only become important if they're not kept clean. In the hospital, without enough nurses, that's a problem—particularly with the youngsters, who don't keep their bandages in place and won't lie still. But here . . . You might have to lance one occasionally. Do you know how to do that?"

Gladys nodded again. "I think so," she added.

"Just like an ordinary boil," he told her. "Aside from that, just keep them clean—by which I mean antiseptically clean, not just free from dirt. And I think I brought some salve in with the other stuff, but I'm not sure."

"We have some penicillin ointment," Barbie put in, "from when I had acne." Even in the middle of the more important conversations, Gladys was startled at Barbara's casual reference to a forbidden *topic*—and in front of the attractive young doctor.

"That should be all right if it's still good," he said. "Or anything else you'd use for a pus pimple or a boil."

"You keep talking about boils." Gladys essayed a full sentence. "Do you think Job got irradiated in the whirlwind?"

The gale of laughter that greeted the small joke was out of all proportion. It must have covered the first knock on the door, because when it died down they heard a steady determined banging from in front.

"Ten past five," Barbie announced. "Who in the world?"

But Gladys knew. "It's Jim Turner," she told them. "He—" It seemed very funny, and she had to control an impulse to giggle before she finished. "He has seats for us on the *priority* train this morning. He's going to be very annoyed that we can't come." She got up.

"I better get up to my castle in the air." Levy rose with her. "You stay here, Mr. Carney," the doctor told him. "Let's see. Can you drive a car?"

"Haven't driven one for years, but I used to."

"All right, you're my driver, if anything comes up. You better go let him in, Mrs. Mitchell." The thumping had started again. "Keep him in front if you can. I'll join you if I can think of anything to say that might help. But frankly, I think you can handle Turner better than I can."

The trip to the front door was like walking in a dream. From time to time she would look around and discover she had traversed five or six feet after all; each time it was a fresh surprise.

The banging stopped while she was making the long passage through the front hall. She didn't quite dare to hope that he had gone away. When she opened the door he had his gloved fist raised to knock again.



"Well now, I'm glad to see *you*," he boomed. "Couldn't see a light on anywheres in the front of the house, and I didn't know if your kid was home sleeping or in the hospital or what. You look like they put you through the wringer tonight all right. What happened?"

One thing about Jim Turner, she thought, I don't have to talk. She didn't answer, and he went right on.

"They take her in to the hospital yet?" he asked.

Gladys shook her head.

"Well, I can see just to look at you it wasn't no false alarm.

What did the kid say? I called in to him right after I saw you, around eleven. Told the clerk there to get him a relief and let him come right over here. You better sit, down, Gladys. You look beat."

He took her arm and led her to the armchair, almost pushed her down into it.

"Now you take it easy," he said, "an' I'll get everything cleared up. But first you got to tell me what the Doc said. I been looking all over for him, but he never got back to headquarters tonight, so I don't know what happened at all."

"Ginny's sick," she said. "We took her to the hospital and found out what it is." Even that much was an effort.

"Well now, I know she's sick, Gladys, but you said just before she didn't go to the hospital."

"No, I meant they didn't—we brought her back."

"Now that don't make sense. You sure she's sick?"

She was too tired to be indignant. Bit by bit, in half sentences, and mostly in small corrections of his statements, she told him most of the story.

"I wish I knew where the kid got to," he said finally. "I don't know what he wanted to bring her back home for. Now we got to get a truck and take her in again. Maybe I can get a car; that would be quicker. That train goes at six-thirty. There ain't too much time."

"But I can't "

"You can make it," he assured her. "I can get a car here in ten minutes, if I have to, and we can get her all settled at the hospital in plenty of time. You could even go along if you want to, and get back in time. I'll tell the driver to stick with you."

"You don't understand," she said clearly. Now I have to tell him. Spinelli . . . no hospital . . . no train. She listed the things carefully in her mind.

"You're not worrying about your things, are you?" he asked. "If you're not packed up, don't give it another thought. We'll find you everything you need, and with the place boarded up like it is, you don't have to worry about anybody breaking in."

He was trying to anticipate everything. Why, he's being kind, she thought. It wasn't even fair to be so surprised. He'd been kind all along.

"No," she said firmly, out loud. "I'm tired, and I'm not—I guess I haven't been too clear. It's hard to talk," she explained, and added a smile, apologetically. "Just give me a minute and I'll get it straight," she promised.

He waited, and she went over her mental list again.

"Dr. Spinelli's here," she said, "if you want him. He's been with us all night. That's the first thing." She paused to form her next thought into words, and he filled in the silence.

"I kind of thought he'd be here when he wasn't at headquarters, but then I didn't see a car out front, so I figured he'd gone."

"He sent the car away. He said he'd get another one when he was done." She remembered. How is he going to say that to Gar's his driver? He must have forgotten, too, about the car. Now she *had* to keep Turner out of the kitchen.

"I got a bone or two to pick with that young man," Turner said. "Where is he?"

"I don't know. Upstairs, I guess. Wait a minute. Please."

He had already risen. Now he paused. She pointed to his chair, and he sat down again reluctantly.

"Let me finish, please. I have to tell you. I'm not going. I'm going to stay here. I'm going to keep Ginny home and take care of her. She isn't going to the hospital."

"You can't do that," he explained patiently. "You just can't do it, Gladys. How're you gonna take care of a sick kid without gas or electric? What're you going to do for food? How do you even know the water'll keep running?"

"I don't know. I don't know anything, except I won't send her to that hospital!"

"Now, you're getting too excited, Gladys. You got to calm down. I can see how you wouldn't want to send your little girl away from you, but for her own sake, you got to think where she'll be best off. You can't take care of her."

"Where she'll be best off?" At last her voice had come back. "I saw that hospital! If you think I'd let a child of mine

"Now, there's no call to yell at me, Gladys. I told you, you got to calm down. I know just as good as you that hospitals are crowded, and things ain't all they might be. Maybe if you saw some of the other places you'd realize how good that one is. We had a good outfit in this district. We were all set up, and we kept things run-ning smooth. But you got to understand, it won't be that way after tomorrow. The only place around here that we're hanging onto is the hospital. They'll get supplies and the folks there'll be taken care of."

*"I am not going to send my child to that hospital!"*

"Gladys, do you think I'd ask you to do anything I wouldn't do myself? I never told you, because I figured you got enough troubles of your own, but I had to send my own wife and baby there, on account of not having anybody to take care of them at home. They didn't even get exposed, but you know Peggy's been laid up a long time. She couldn't take care of herself, and whether I like it or not, she's better off at the hospital. That's true for your kid too."

"You sent Peggy . . . ?" Gladys stared at him incredulously. "That's right. Now you see what I mean."

"Have you *seen* that place?"

"I ain't had the chance to get up there, but I was figuring on going up before I transfer to the camp."

She didn't know what she might have said, or what she could have said, if Spinelli hadn't come in then. For a while she just sat still, not even really listening. The men were arguing about Veda, she realized, and about the hospital.

Then abruptly Turner announced that he had to go. "There's still time for you to make that train, Gladys," he told her, ignoring the doctor. "I can arrange for Ginny to get to the hospital, and you could come down and see her as soon as the train gets running a little smoother." He wasn't pleading or arguing. He just made the statement and waited for her answer.

Exhausted, she shook her head stubbornly and said nothing.

"You sure now? All right, then, I hope you don't mind me telling you a thing or two before I go. I think you're being a damn fool, if you'll pardon my saying so, to listen to this kid. Neither one of you has any idea what's going on in this country. You hear what it says on the radio, and you think everything's hunky-dory. Well, it ain't. Maybe you don't think much of the way we run that hospital," he told Spinelli, "but wait till we're not here, and see how the doctors do it!"

"And if *you* think sending Peggy up there was so bad"—he turned back to Gladys—"wait till you get a taste of what it's like around here when there's no more controls and no more supplies." He headed briskly for the door. "When you come to your senses," he added, "maybe when you get some sleep"—he softened it a little—"there'll still be patrols around here till Saturday night. Any one of 'em can fix you up with seats on some other train."

He was gone.

The young doctor helped Gladys out of the deep chair. "In my professional opinion," he said gravely, "you need some more coffee."

Gratefully she accepted his arm and went back to the kitchen. She didn't want to talk about Jim Turner. She was glad when he returned to his instructions for Ginny's care, as if there had been no interruption.

"The most important thing is to keep her in bed—aside from the treatments, of course. In a way it would almost be better if she felt worse. Her body needs all the rest it can get. If you have to hold her down by main force, you do it. With three able-bodied adults in the house, that shouldn't be too hard."

"Four," Levy corrected with a meaningful look at Barbie.

"Three," the doctor repeated grimly. "It would be better for *you* if you felt worse too." He turned to Barbara thoughtfully. "A lot of this is going to be up to you," he told her. "Suppose for a start you see to it that the patients stay in bed—I mean both of them."

Do you think you can keep your kid sister under your thumb, and the boss here too?"

"I'll try," she promised happily..

He studied her eager face and reached a decision. "Your mother is worn out," he added. "And Veda—well, I'll come back to that. But all in all, it kind of leaves you holding the bag for the next day or two. I'd like to show you how to give transfusions. Then you could take care of the most delicate jobs, until your mother and Veda are ready to help."

"I'm all right," Gladys started to protest, but her voice had stopped working right again, and she had to laugh herself at the feeble sound of the statement.

"Do you really think I can do it?" Barbara was starry-eyed.

*"I know* you can. It only depends on whether *you* believe it."

"I . . ." She hesitated. "I wouldn't want to take a chance on doing anything wrong."

"You won't have a chance," he assured her. "You can give one to Gar tonight, under my eagle eye. If it goes all right, and I don't see why not, he'll watch you do Ginny's tomorrow. If you feel shaky about it he can do it himself. But he ought

to stay put as much as possible, not even exert himself that much. How about it? You want to try bleeding me now?"

"Come on." Levy pushed his chair back and got up, without giving the girl any time for doubts. "I need my pint of blood."

They were milling around, getting ready to go, but there was something else Gladys wanted to ask about.

"Wait a minute," she pleaded. They were quieter, waiting, and it was easier to get everything clear in her mind. I am tired. . . . "I was wondering, about what Jim Turner said," she told the doctor. "How *are* we going to manage? We've got food for a week, so we don't have to worry about that right away." She forced her-self to keep talking coherently. "But what about the electricity and the water—what can we do without water?"

"I think that was mostly bluff," Spinelli said slowly. "They can't stop the water. It would be silly to bother, for one thing, and they'll have to keep it running for the hospital. The electricity might go, though. I don't know . . ."

"I could probably do something about that," Levy said. "We might have to use candles for light, but I have plenty of batteries in the lab at school, that would run any electric equipment you want to use. Or I could rig up something."

*Mr. Fix-it!* She smiled.

"*You*," the doctor said again, "will stay in bed and do nothing. My God, man, what do you think you're made of? Impregnated lead? You can tell somebody else where the stuff is, how to get it, and what to do with it. Doctor's orders, added brusquely. "Is there anything else on your mind?" he asked Gladys.

"Veda," she said. "What about Veda?"

"Oh yes . . . Look." He turned to the others. "You two go upstairs and get things started, will you? I want to talk to Mrs. Mitchell a minute anyhow. As far as Veda's concerned," he went on, "I told you she needs to take it easy a day or two, but there's no special care required. There is one thing that worries me, though. I have a hunch the Security officer is going to be here looking for her, either this morning or tomorrow when Turner gets back. He's—a little annoyed at the way I walked out with her. It wouldn't hurt to keep her out of sight until they move their office to the camp. Maybe Gar could share his hide-out with her whenever company comes. If you tell them she just walked out on you and disappeared they will be very ready to believe it, you know."

She tried to smile. Her face was stiff and didn't want to bend.

"What I wanted to tell you," he went on, and she realized the others were gone, "was about Barbie. I hope you don't think I took too much on myself. It just seemed like the best thing to do." He took her arm and began propelling her through the door, toward the living room. She didn't have the energy to question him or to resist.

"After all," he was saying, "I'm supposed to be the doctor here. You know, a couple of days ago, I wouldn't have had the nerve to take over like that. The very idea of telling Gar Levy what to do!"

They were in the living room, and he steered her to the couch. "But these last few days—well, I'm not the only one. Barbie's been growing up too. You have to realize that. Wasn't there a quilt around here?" he broke off, looking for it.

"I'm not trying to make you go to bed," he explained, wrapping it around her legs, "because I know it wouldn't do any good. But if you don't get some rest you'll be on the sick list too."

Under his warmth she relaxed. What *was* it about that smile?

"Doctor," she asked dreamily, "why are you doing all this? You don't have to take so much trouble. There are other people . . . so many people . . ." She thought of the hospital, and a shudder ran through her.

"Why? I don't know." He smiled at the recurrent phrase, but he wasn't joking now. She tried to concentrate on what he said, because it mattered.

"Partly because you took Gar Levy in. Maybe mostly because of that. You don't know what that means to me. I've been going around with Turner from house to house, going back to head-quarters, calming hysterics, taking urine samples, making blood tests, giving first aid—and all the time knowing it's come at last—the whole bloody mess is really here, and we've all just been sitting on our backsides all this time, letting it come. All of us except people like Turner, that is. *They* were ready—all set to pick up their big sticks and wave them around playing soldier."

He broke off sharply. "I shouldn't be talking this way," he said. "You're tired, and I've got work to do. Gar Levy is a special person to me, that's all. But even if it weren't for him I'd want to help you. That first evening, when we came in here—honestly, I can't remember anything you did or said that should have made any difference."

He half smiled. "That was four days ago. I'm not the same person now. I can't remember what happened. I do know that I'd had a bellyful of Turner by that time. He went out for a while, looking for someone they spotted in the trees, and the time he was out I was listening for a shot—like the shot tonight. I know I blew my top, and gave you a lecture for no good reason, and you didn't get angry. I think I blew off because you didn't understand something I said, and I don't know

why I should have expected you to. It was something . . . but it all happened too long ago. I don't know now what it was. I know, she thought, I know what it was. But it would take too many words to explain.

". . . playing soldier," she repeated, and hoped he would understand. "It wasn't funny," she remembered out loud. She wanted to make it clear to him that they had shared the same distaste, that she had been thinking the same thing.

"Mrs. Mitchell," he said suddenly, "this is a silly thing to ask now, but—would you mind telling me how old you are?" "Thirty-seven." She looked at him quizzically.

He nodded, thoughtful again. "I'm just about halfway, you see—between you and Barbie," he said, as if it explained something. "You go to sleep now, if you can." He was brisk and medical again. "I'll wake you up before I go if there's anything at all to tell you." He took the stairs three steps at a time.

## THIRTY

She must have dozed off right away, because she remembered he was still in sight going up, and when she looked at him he was standing at the foot of the stairs. He had his suit on, and Barbie was holding out his helmet. He seemed to be putting Ginny's blue horse in his pocket. She saw him close the zipper, and Barbie handed him the helmet. They were talking all the time; at least they were moving their mouths, but she couldn't hear anything.

She came all the way awake, trying to decide when she had stopped dreaming. That was silly about the blue horse. They were talking in low voices so as not to wake her.

"You did fine, Barbara," he said. "I know you won't believe it, but I couldn't have done any better."

She turned her face up eagerly to his smile. "Do you really think so? It'll be all right with Ginny too?"

"That's easier," he assured her. "Just be careful about sterilizing—ask Levy if you forget anything—and that's all there is to it."

"Will you—do you know when you'll be back?" She seemed to be standing on tiptoe, her whole body poised toward him, tense and completely worshipful.

He shook his head, keeping his eyes on her face. "I couldn't say. God knows what's going on back there. But I'll get back here, one way or another, before you people have to get out. I don't know just what I can do about it, but there are a lot of people who'd be willing to help Gar. Maybe they'll have some ideas."

Barbara nodded, looking up to him, waiting.

"He's pretty sick, Barbie—sicker than he says. Take good care of him."

Again she nodded, and silence hung between them. He fumbled with his helmet. "I have to go now. But I'll get back. She didn't move.

"Pete," she said, and then with a rush, "oh, Pete, I'm so young!"

His free hand cupped her chin and raised her face closer to his. Then, with the fierce swiftness of self-conscious youth, he bent his head and pressed his lips against hers.

She didn't touch him. Her hands stayed at her sides, but her mouth clung to him until he wrenched away.

"Cut it out! Oh, God, cut it out!" He didn't say it to her or to anybody. He said it to the world. Gladys knew that; she hoped Barbara knew it too.

Something went *burp* on the radio no one had remembered to turn off. Gladys managed a convincing start. Barbie covered the minute by running into the room to adjust the volume. The doctor had his helmet to keep him busy.

"Five thirty-seven A.M., Friday, May seventh," a hoarse voice intoned. "That is the historic moment. We have just received the official news from General Headquarters. The war is over! The enemy conceded at 5:37 A.M., Eastern Standard Time, just five minutes ago. Ladies and gentlemen, the national anthem!"

Gladys could hardly hear the scratchy record because Barbie was laughing so hard. She sat in the big armchair, helped by laughter, until it was done. Spinelli went out in the middle, closing the door very quietly behind him.

When she was spent with laughter Barbara went over to turn the radio off. Then they heard the announcer's voice again.

"An important notice: all evacuation orders for suburban areas are temporarily suspended. There will be no evacuation trains leaving for suburban residents until further notice. The war is over, ladies and gentlemen. At five thirty-seven—" Barbie's hand closed on the switch.

"Hurray for the red, white, and blue!" she said. "Red for courage and white for purity and blue for Pallo."

*Pallo?* Then it wasn't a dream.

"What about *Pallo*?" Gladys sat up and shoved the blanket away.

"What about *Pallo*? You know perfectly—" Hysteria drained slowly out of her face. "Didn't anyone tell you?" she asked. "Doc found it with his little Geiger counter. *Patio's* a Trojan horse, atomic style. He's hot—a one-man radioactive rodeo." A travesty of a smile crossed her face. "Ginny should have known better." The smile twisted. "She left him out in the *rain!*"

Gladys stood up uncertainly, rubbing her arm where it was stiff from sleeping on it.

"*Pallo*?" She tried the sound of the word, but that hadn't changed. "It was *Pallo*." She left it out in the rain . . . she brought it home and went to bed with it. . . .

There was a clear picture in her mind—the worn blue horse and the pink and white girl safe on the pillow together, morning after night. *Isn't anything safe? Not the rain or the house? Not even a little blue horse?*

"But the war's *over*," she said out loud.

Would anything ever be safe again?

Heavy, pounding footsteps on the porch, heavy, pounding hand on the door. She crossed the room and pulled back the bolt, numb to all further shock.

Peter Spinelli pushed past her to the living-room sofa, carefully deposited the limp form he carried over his shoulder.

Gladys took one curious step forward.

"Keep away," Spinelli warned. "I think he's out of decontam. Barbie, go up and get Doe's Geiger." He closed his visor and turned back to the unconscious man, feeling through his heavy gloves for broken bones, aligning the flaccid limbs in more normal positions.

When Barbie came back with the counter he opened his visor to speak briefly again. "Better get some water boiling. He's been shot, I think."

Barbara ran off again, and Gladys watched from across the room while the doctor set up the small machine and angled it every way from the man's body.

"Okay," he said at last. "He's not hot anyway. Poor beggar looks like he's come a long way, though." He took off his gloves and helmet, set to work ripping off the bloodstained shirt. He studied the shoulder wound and grunted, "They just grazed him."

He began pulling things out of his pocket, instruments familiar and unfamiliar to Gladys. Briefly he vanished into the kitchen, to wash his hands and give Barbie the things that needed sterilizing.

Gladys stayed behind, staring with painful fascination at the man on the couch. Step by slow step she went closer, till she could see clearly. She found herself curiously unsurprised. Just once she rested her hand softly on the man's head and felt him stir in re-sponse. Then she heard the doctor returning, and retreated to where she would be out of the way.

She waited patiently while he finished his examination. He turned to her at last, relief clearly written on his face.

"I think he'll be all right. I'll clean out that wound as soon as Barbara brings the things, and I don't think there's anything else very serious. They just left him lying there," the young man said sourly. "Shot at him and drove off. They—" He stopped and looked questioningly at Gladys. "He'll need care. He's in bad shape; but he can pull through with care. Of course he might turn out to be another radiation case. The Geiger wouldn't show that. If he is, I'm afraid there's no hope."

He's not. She knew that much at least.

"We'll take care of him," she told the doctor. *Shock and minor injuries*, the radio said. "We'll take very good care of him." Then she explained.

"It's Jon, you know. He came home."

Far below the sleeping loft, in ancient cellars of reinforced concrete, a relay closed in perfect silent automaton adjustment; up through the Chapter House, the tiny noises multiplied and increased. The soft whirl of machinery in the walls; the gurgle of condensing fluid in conditioners; the thumping of cookers, where giant ladles stirred the breakfast mash; the beat of pistons pumping water to the top.

Gunner Cade, consecrate Brother in the Order of Armsmen, compliant student of the Klin Philosophy, and loyal citizen of the Realm of Man, stirred in his sleepbag on the scrubbed plastic floor. He half-heard the rising sounds of the machinery of the House, and recognized the almost imperceptible change in the rhythm of the air blowers. Not quite awake, he listened for the final sound of morning, the scraping noise of the bars at windows and gates, as they drew back reluctantly into the stone walls.

It is fitting that the Emperor rules.

It is fitting that the Armsmen serve the Emperor through the Power Master and our particular Stars.

While this is so, all will be well, to the end of time.

The words came to his mind without effort, before he opened his eyes. He had not fumbled for them since his sixth year, when, between his parents and himself, it had been somehow settled that he would become a Brother of the Order. For at least the six thousandth time, his day began with the conscious affirmation of Klin.

The bars grated in their grooves, and at the instant, the first light struck through the slits of windows overhead. Cade shivered inside the scanty insulation of his bag and came fully awake, at once aware of the meaning of the chill. This was a Battle Morn.

The air blew steadily stronger and colder from the conditioners, tingling against his skin as Cade slipped from his sleepbag and folded it, deflated, into the precise small package that would fit the pocket of his cloak. Timing each action by the habits of thirteen years, he unbuckled his gunbelt, removed the gun, and closed away the belt and sleepbag in the locker that held his neatly folded uniform. It was by now reflexive action to open the gun and check the charge, then close the waterproof seal.

Battle Morn! With mounting elation, Cade performed each meticulous detail of the morning routine, his body operating like the smooth machine it was, while his mind woke gradually to the new day. He thought vaguely of commoners lolling late in bed, mumbling a morning thought of the Emperor, and breaking their fast at a grossly laden table. He thought vaguely of Klin teachers waking with subtle and elaborate propositions that proved what any Gunner feels in his bones. He thought vaguely of his own Star of France, doubtless haggard this morning after a night vigil of meditation on the fitting course.

He thought, too, of the Emperor--the Given Healer, the Given Teacher, the Given Ruler--but, like a gun's blast came the thought: That is not fitting.

Guiltily he brought his attention back to the bare room, and saw with dismay that Gunner Harrow still lay in his bag, yawning and stretching.

The indecent gaping was infectious; Cade's mouth opened first with amazement, then to say sharply: "Battle Morn, Brother!"

"How does it find you?" Harrow replied courteously, unashamed.

"Awake," Cade answered coolly, "and ready for a good death if that is fitting--or a decorous life if I am spared today."

The Marsman seemed to miss the reprimand entirely, but he climbed out of his bag and began to deflate it. What kind of Chapter House did they have on Mars?

"How long till shower?" he asked, unconcerned.

"Seconds," was Cade's contemptuous answer. "Perhaps twenty or thirty:"

The Marsman sprang to life with a speed that would have done him credit under other circumstances. Cade watched with disgust as the other Gunner rushed for the wall cabinet and stuffed away his sleepbag, still unfolded, not yet fully drained of last night's air. The gunbelt was thrown in on top, and the cabinet door slammed shut, with only an instant left to seal the waterclosures of the gun. Then the ceiling vents opened, and the needle spray showered down and around the room. A cool invigorating stream of water splattered against the naked bodies of the men, cascaded down the three walls of the room, and drained out through the floor vent, leaving just enough dampness for the scouring by novices when the

Gunners had left the room.

Cade took his eyes from the Marsman and tried to tear away his thoughts as well. He watched devoutly while the swirling waters struck each wall in turn, touching his gun to his lips, For the Teacher, at the first impact; to his chest, For the Healer, at the next; and at the last, the long wall, to his brow, with awe, For the Ruler, the Emperor.

He tried not to think of Harrow in the room beside him, saluting the cleansing waters with an unchecked charge in his gun. It was true, then, what they said about conditions on Mars. Laxity at any time was bad enough, but to let the peril of sloth pass from the previous day through the purifying waters of a Battle Morn was more than Cade could understand. A novice might meet the shower unprepared; an armiger might fail to check his charge beforehand; but how did Harrow ever rise to the rank of Gunner? And why was such a one sent to Cade on the eve of battle? Even now, his own Battle Morn meditations were disturbed.

Anger is a peril at all times. And anger is acutely unfitting on Battle Morn before the Klin teacher's lesson. Cade refused to think of it further. The water vents closed, and he dressed without regard for the Marsman.

Each garment had its thought, soothing and enfolding: they brought peace.

UNDERSUIT: Like this the Order embraces the Realm.

SHIRT: The Order protects the Power Master, slave of the brain, loyal heart of the Realm.

HOSE: Armsmen are sturdy pillars; without them the

Realm cannot stand, but without the Realm the Order can not live.

BOOTS: Gunners march where the Emperor wills; that is their glory.

HELMET: The Order protects the Emperor--the Given Teacher, the Given Healer, the Given Ruler--the brain and life of the Realm.

CLOAK: Like this the Order wraps the Realm and shields it.

Again he touched his gun to his lips, For the Teacher; to his chest, For the Healer, to his brow, with awe, For the Ruler, the Emperor.

Briskly he released the waterclosures and dropped the gun into the belt on his hip. A gong sounded in the wall, and Cade went to a cabinet for two steaming bowls of concentrate, freshly prepared in the giant mash cookers far below. "Brother?" Harrow called across the open door.

Silence at this time was customary but not mandatory, Cade reminded himself--and Harrow was new to this Chapter.

"Yes, Brother," he said.

"Are there other Marsmen among us?"

"I know no others," Cade said, and congratulated himself on that fact. "How would it concern you?"

"It would please me," Harrow said formally. "A man likes to be among his own people in time of battle."

Cade could not answer him at first. What sort of talk was this? One didn't call himself a man in the Order. There were novices, armigers, Gunners, the Gunners Superior, and Arle himself, the Gunner Supreme. They were your brothers, elder or younger.

"You are among your own people," he said gently, refusing to allow himself to be tempted into the peril of anger. "We are your brothers all."

"But I am new among you," the other said. "My brothers here are strangers to me."

That was more reasonable. Cade could still remember his first battle for the Star of France, after he left the Denver Chapter, where he spent his youth. "Your brothers will soon be beside you in battle," he reminded the newcomer. "An Armsman who has fought by your side is no stranger."

"That will be tomorrow," Harrow smiled. "And if I live through today, I shall not be here long after."

"Where, then?"

"Back to Mars!"

"How can that be?" Cade demanded. "Mars-born Gunners fight for Earthly Stars. Earth-born Gunners fight for the Star of Mars. That's fitting."

"Perhaps so, Brother; perhaps so. But a letter from my father at home says our Star has petitioned the

Emperor to allow him all Mars-born Armsmen, and I would be one of them."

"Your Star is the Star of France," said Cade sharply. He himself had received Harrow's assignment yesterday, sealed by the Power Master, and counter sealed by the Gunner Supreme. He was silent a moment, then could contain himself no longer. "By all that's fitting," he asked, "what sort of talk is this? Why does an Armsman speak of himself as a man? And how can you think of your `own people,' other than your brothers in arms?"

The Mars-born Gunner hesitated. "It's newer on Mars. Six hundred years isn't a long time. We have a proverb--'Earth is changeless, but Mars is young.' Families--I am descended from Erik Hogness and Mary Lara, who mapped the Northern Hemisphere long ago. I know my cousins because of that. We all are descended from Erik Hogness and Mary Lara, who mapped the Northern Hemisphere. I don't suppose you know anything about your eight-times great-grandfather or what he may have done?"

"I presume," said Cade stiffly, "that he did what was fitting to his station, as I will do what is fitting to mine."

"Exactly," said Harrow, and fell silent--disconcertingly resembling a man who had wrung an admission from an opponent and won an argument by it.

Cade went stiffly to the door and opened it, leaving the empty bowls for Harrow to return. The line of Armsmen came in sight down the corridor, and they waited at attention to take their place among the Gunners, marching in silence and with downcast eyes along the route of procession to the lectory.

Seated on the front row of benches, with twenty rows apiece of armigers and novices behind, Cade was grateful that the Klin teacher had not yet arrived. It left time for him to dispel the perilous mood of irritation and suspicion. By the time the man did appear, Cade's troubled spirits had resolved into the proper quiet glow of appreciation.

It was fitting to be a Gunner; it was fitting to be a Klin teacher; they were almost brothers in their dedication. The glow nearly vanished when the man began to speak.

Cade had heard many teachers who'd been worse; it made not a particle of difference in the Klin Philosophy whether it was expounded by a subtle, able teacher or a half-trained younger son of a Star, as this fellow appeared to be; what was fitting was fitting and would be until the end of time. But on a Battle Morn, Cade thought, a senior teacher might have been a reasonable tribute. The peril of pride, came a thought like a gun's blast, and he recoiled. In contrition he listened carefully, marking the youngster's words.

"Since the creation of the worlds ten thousand years ago the Order of Armsmen has existed and served the Emperor through the Power Master and the Stars. Klin says of armed men: They must be poor, because riches make men fear to lose them, and fear is unfitting in an Armsman. They must be chaste, because love of woman makes men love their rulers--the word rulers here means, as always, with Klin, the Emperor--less. They must be obedient, because the consequence of disobedience is to make men refuse even the most gloriously profitable death. These are the words of Klin, set down ten thousand years ago at the creation of the worlds."

It was wonderful, thought Cade, wonderful how it had all occurred together: the creation of the worlds, the Emperor to rule them, the Order to serve him, and the Klin Philosophy to teach them how to serve. The fitness and beautiful economy of it never failed to awe him. He wondered if this creation was somehow The Fitness, the original of which all others were reflections.

The teacher leaned forward, speaking directly to those in the front row. "You Gunners are envied, but you do not envy. Klin says of you Gunners: 'They must be always occupied with fiddling details'--I should perhaps explain that a fiddle was a musical instrument; fiddling hence means harmonious, or proper. Another possibility is that fiddling is an error for fitting, but our earliest copies fail to bear this out--'with fiddling details so they will have no time to think. Let armed men think, and the fat's in the fire.'"

Good old Klin! thought Cade affectionately. He liked the occasional earthy metaphors met within the Reflections on Government. Stars and their courts sometimes diverted themselves for a day or two by playing at commoners' life; the same playfulness appeared in Klin when he took an image from the kitchen or the factory. The teacher was explaining the way Klin's usage of think as applied to anybody



below the rank of a Star was equated with the peril of pride, and how the homely kitchen metaphor meant nothing less than universal ruin. "For Klin, as usual, softens the blow."

Irresistibly Cade's thoughts wandered to a subject he loved. As the young teacher earnestly expounded, the Gunner thought of the grandeur of the Klin Philosophy: how copies of the Reflections were cherished in all the Chapter Houses of the Order, in all the cities of all the Stars of Earth, on sparsely settled Venus, the cold moons of the monster outer planets, on three manmade planetoids, and on Mars. What could be wrong with Harrow? How could he have gone awry with the Klin Philosophy to guide him? Was it possible that the teachers on Mars failed to explain Klin adequately? Even commoners on Earth heard teachers expound the suitable portion of the Philosophy. But Cade was warmly aware that the Armsmen's study of Klin was more profound and pure than the commoners'.

"...so I come to a subject which causes me some pain." Cade brought his mind back sharply to the words of the teacher. This was the crucial part, the thing he had been waiting to hear. "It is not easy to contemplate willful wickedness, but I must tell you that unfit deeds fill the heart of the Star of Muscovy. Through certain sources our Star of France has learned that pride and greed possess his brother to the north. With sorrow he discovered that the Star of Muscovy intends to occupy Alsace-Lorraine with his Gunners. With sorrow he ordered your Superior to make ready for whatever countermeasures may be fit, and it has been done. As you know, this is Battle Morn."

Cade's heart thumped with rage at the proud and greedy Star of Muscovy.

"Klin says of such as the Star of Muscovy: 'The wicked you have always with you. Make them your governors. Governors is used metaphorically, in the obsolete sense of a device to regulate the speed of a heat engine--hence, the passage means that when a wicked person is bent on unfit deeds, you should increase your efforts toward fit and glorious deeds to counter him. There are many interesting images in the Reflections drawn from the world of pre-electronic--but that is by the way. I was saying that this is Battle Morn, and that before the sun has set, many of you may have died. So I say to all of you, not knowing which will have the fortune: go on your fitting and glorious task without the peril of pride, and remember that there is nobody in the Realm of Man who would not eagerly change places with you.'"

He stepped down, and Cade bowed his head for the thought: The Klin Philosophy in a Gunner is like the charge in his gun. It was a favorite of his, saying so much in so little if you had only a moment, but if you had more time, it went on and on, drawing beautifully precise parallels for every circuit and element of the gun. But there was no time for that; the Superior, the Gunner Superior to the Star of France, had appeared. He cast a worried glance at a window, through which the sun could be seen, and began at once:

"Brothers, our intelligence is that one hundred Gunners, more or less, are now flying from an unknown Muscovite base to occupy the Forbach-Sarralbe triangle on the border of our Star's realm. Time of arrival--I can only say 'this afternoon or evening' and hope I am correct. The importance of the area is incalculable. It was a top secret until the information evidently got to Muscovy. There is iron ore in the district."

A murmur swept the lectory, and Cade murmured with the rest in astonishment. Iron ore on Earth! Power metal still to be found on the ten-thousand-year-old planet after ten thousand years of mining for the stuff that drove engines and charged guns! All reserves were supposed to have been exhausted four hundred years ago; that was why rust-red Mars had been colonized, and from rust-red Mars for four hundred years had come Earth's iron.

"Enough, Brothers! Enough! Our plan will be roughly the same as that employed in our raid last month on Aachen--two divisions to the front, one in reserve. The first company, under me, will be based at Dieuze, about forty kilometers south of the triangle. The second company, under Gunner Cade, will be based at Metz, fifty kilometers west of the triangle. The third company will be in reserve, based at Nancy, seventy kilometers southwest of the triangle. The companies will proceed to their bases in two-man fliers immediately after this briefing.

"After arrival and the establishment of communication, my company and Gunner Cade's will send out air scouts to reconnoiter the triangle. If no enemy action is discovered from the air, scouts will parachute for recon on foot. The orders I will issue from that point on will depend on their reports. Man your fliers

and take off at once, Brothers. May your deeds today be fitting and glorious."

## CHAPTER 2

Cade, icily calm, ran from the Chapter House two hundred meters to the flying field. He was not panting when he swung himself easily into his little craft. His fingers flew over the unlabeled switches and dials of the control panel. It had been many years since he'd relied on mnemonic jingles to recall the order and setting of the more than two hundred controls. As the red electronic warm-up fog misted from the tail of the flier, his passenger, Armiger Kemble, vaulted in and was immediately slammed back against his uncushioned seat by a 3.25-G takeoff.

Paris was a blur beneath them, the Paris that Cade, Denver-born, had seen only from the air and the windows of the Chapter House. Minutes later Reims flashed past to their left. The braking and landing in the square at Metz were as cruel as the takeoff. Cade had never spared himself or anybody else on service, though he did not know that he was famous for it.

"Brother," he said to the battered armiger, "line up the command set on Dieuze and Nancy." To his disgust, Kemble juggled with the map, the compass, and the verniers of the aiming circle for two minutes, until he had laid beams on the fields at the reserve base and the other front-line command post. The peril of pride, he guiltily thought, choking down his annoyance. The twelve other ships of his company had landed by then.

"Brother Cade," said the voice of the Superior. "Scouts out!"

"Scouts out, Brother," he said, and waved two fliers aloft. From them a monotonous drone of "No enemy action" began over the command set.

The tune changed after five minutes: "Rendezvous with first company scouts over Forbach. No enemy action."

"Brother Cade," said the Superior, "order your scouts to jump. My fliers will provide cover."

Cade ordered: "Second-company scouts--Gunner Orris, take over Gunner Meynall's flier on slave circuit. Brother Meynall, parachute into Forbach for recon on foot. Armiger Raymond, recon Sarreguemines. Armiger Bonfils, recon Sarralbe."

Brothers Meynall, Raymond, and Bonfils reported successful landings. The Gunner in Forbach said, "No commoners about at all. As usual. I'm in the village square headed for the phone exchange. No en--" There was the sound of a gun and no further report.

Cade opened the Raymond-Bonfils circuit to the Superior and reserve company and snapped: "Take cover. Forbach is occupied. Gunner Orris, return to base with fliers immediately."

The Superior's voice said: "First-company fliers return to base immediately. Brothers Raymond and Bonfils, report!"

Armiger Raymond's voice said: "Sarreguemines is empty of commoners. I've taken cover in the basement of a bakery whose windows command the square. I see movement at the windows of a building across the square--the town hall, phone exchange, water department, and I don't know what else. It's just a village."

"Brother Bonfils, report!" There was no answer.

"Brother Raymond, stand fast. We shall mount an attack. Hold your fire until the enemy is engaged, and then select targets of opportunity. You will regard yourself as expendable."

"Yes, Brother."

"Third company at Nancy, you are alerted. Second company and third company, rendezvous with first company in ten minutes, at ten-thirty-six hours, two kilometers south of the Sarralbe town square. Align your fliers for unloading to fight on foot; we shall conduct a frontal assault on Sarralbe and clear it of the enemy. The third company will be on the left wing, the second company will be our center, and the first company will be on the right wing. Gunner Cade, you will detail one flier to amuse the enemy with a parachute attack on the town hall as our skirmishers reach the square. Into action, Brothers."

"Load!" yelled Cade to his company, and they tumbled into their craft. On the slave circuit he took the fliers up in dress-parade style, hurled them to the rendezvous, and released the ships for individual

landings. The first company was aligned straight as a string to his right, and moments later the third company touched down.

His armiger Kemble had done a most unsatisfactory job lining up the communications, Cade reflected, but it was not fitting in a Gunner to hold a grievance. "Brother," he said, "I've chosen you to conduct the diversion our Superior ordered."

The youngster straightened proudly. "Yes, Brother," he said, repressing a pleased grin.

Cade spoke into his command set: "Gunner Orris. You will remain here in your flier during the attack, with Armiger Kemble as a passenger. On my signal, you will take off and fly over the Sarralbe town hall, dropping Brother Kemble by parachute to create a diversion. After dropping him, return your flier to its present position and dismount to join the attack on foot."

The armiger climbed out of Cade's flier to head for Orris' craft, but hesitated on the ground and turned to brag: "I'll bet I get a dozen of them before they get me."

"Well, perhaps, Brother," said Cade, and this time the grin did break out as the armiger marched down the line. Cade hadn't wanted to discourage him, but the only Muscovite gunman he had a chance of killing before he was picked off in midair was their roof spotter. But how could he be expected to understand? Thirty seconds of confusion among the enemy could be vastly more important than killing thirty of their best Gunners.

The clock said 1036; men boiled out of the fliers and formed a skirmish line carefully ragged. The raised right arm of the Superior, far on the right of the line, went down, and the Brothers began to trudge forward, all with the same solid, deliberate style....

Cade's eyes were on anywhere but his boots; they were scanning bushes for untoward movements, the ground for new dirt cast up in the digging of a foxhole, trees for unnatural man-sized clumps of foliage among the branches. But somehow he felt his feet in his boots, not painfully but happily. Gunners march where the Emperor wills; that is their glory.

Off to the right a gun blasted. The Superior's voice said in his Hemet: "Enemy observation post, one novice. We got him, but now they're alerted in town." He told the man flanking him: "Enemy O.P. spotted us. Pass the word, Brothers." It murmured down the line. Brothers who had absently let themselves drift into a dress-parade rank noticed it and lagged or heel-and-toed until the line was properly irregular again.

It was done none too soon. Some thirty meters to the left of Cade the excellently camouflaged lid of a firing pit flipped up as the line passed. The Muscovite blasted two armigers with a single shot before he was killed. Defilading fire into a straight rank would have netted him twenty. The wood grew thicker, and direct flank contact was lost. "Scouts out," said the Superior's voice, and Cade waved two Gunners forward.

Their eloquent arms were the eyes of the company. One upraised, and the company saw possible danger; it halted. The upraised arm down and forward, and the company saw safety; it trudged on. Both arms moved forward in a gesture like clasping a great bundle of straw, and the company was alarmed by something inexplicable; it inched forward with guns drawn, faces tingling. Both arms beating down like vultures' wings, and the company was face-to-face with grinning death; it hurled its fifty bodies to the ground to dodge the whistling scythe.

Grinding himself into the ground while his eyes methodically scanned before him for the well-concealed Muscovite combat patrol that had been harassing them, Cade thought: It is fitting that we Gunmen serve. He saw the unnatural movement of a bush and incinerated it. In the heart of the blaze was a black thing that capered and gibbered like a large ape: one more of the enemy charred to nonexistence. His blast had given away his position; automatically he snap-rolled two meters and saw flame blaze from a tree's lower branches to the spot he'd fired from. Before the blast from the tree expired he had answered it.

He thought: While this is so, all will be well to the end of time.

The surviving scout's arm went up with an air of finality. The company halted, and the scout trotted back to Cade. "Ten meters of scrub and underbrush, and then the town. Three rows of four-story stone houses, and then the square, as I recall. The underbrush is clear. But those windows looking down on it!"

"Plunging fire," Cade muttered, and he heard a sharp intake of breath from beside him. He turned to look sternly on the young armiger with the stricken face, but before he could reprove the lad, he heard

Harrow, the Marsman, intervene.

"I hate it too," the Gunner said, and the unexpected note of sympathy broke the youngster completely.

"I can't stand it," he babbled hysterically. "That feeling you get when it's coming at you from above, and all the ground cover in the world won't help--all you can do is run! I can't stand it!"

"Quiet him," Cade said with disgust, and someone led the armiger away, but not before Cade noted his name. He would deal with it later.

"Brother," Harrow spoke in his ear earnestly.

"What is it?" Cade snapped.

"Brother, I have an idea." He hesitated, but as Cade turned impatiently away, he rushed on: "Brother, let's give them plunging fire. No one would have to know."

"What are you talking about?" Cade asked blankly. "There aren't any trees high enough or near enough."

The Marsman said wildly: "Cade, don't pretend to me. I can't be the only Gunner who ever thought of it! Who's going to know the difference? I mean--" His throat sealed; he couldn't get the words out.

"I'm glad to see you have some shame left," Cade said disgustedly. "I know what you mean." He turned aside and called out: "Bring back the coward armiger! Now," he went on as soon as the youngster was with them, "I want you to learn for yourself the consequences of submitting to the peril of fear. Your outburst made Gunner Harrow propose that we--we fire on the houses from our fliers."

The armiger looked down at his feet for a long moment and then faced his commander. He said hoarsely, "I didn't know there were people like that, sir. Sir, I should like to request the honor of being permitted to draw fire for our men."

"You have earned no honors," Cade snapped. "Nor does your rank entitle you to privileged requests." He looked meaningfully at the Mars-born Gunner.

Harrow wiped sweat from his face. "I would have got back to Mars," he said bitterly, "back with my own people, if I'd lived through this one."

"You deserve less than this, Gunner Harrow," Cade pronounced sternly into a sudden listening silence. The firing was momentarily stilled; the enemy was awaiting their action. All the Armsmen of France within hearing distance of the episode had edged closer to be in on the final outcome. Cade seized the moment to impress an unforgettable lesson on his men. He said loudly:

"Klin wrote: 'Always assume mankind is essentially merciful; nothing else explains why crooks are regularly returned to office.' If you know as little of the Philosophy as you do of decency, Brother, I should explain that a crook is an implement formerly used by good shepherds and in this case stands, by a figure of speech, for the good shepherd himself. I shall obey Klin's precept of mercy. We need a Gunner to draw fire from the house windows so we can spot those which are--are you listening to me?"

The Mars-born Gunner was mumbling to himself; he looked up and said clearly, "Yes, Brother, I'm listening." But his lips kept moving as Cade went on: "We have to draw fire from the house windows so we can see which are manned, blast them with a volley, and take the house in a rush."

"Yes, Brother, I'll draw their fire," said Harrow.

Cade wheeled suddenly and confronted the rest of his company. "Are you Armsmen," he demanded fiercely, "or commoner kitchen gossips? Back to your posts before the enemy discovers your weakness! And may the fighting scourge your minds of this memory. Such things are better forgotten."

He called the first and third companies on his helmet phone and filled them in--saying nothing of the disgraceful episode.

"Well done," the Superior told him. "Rush the first row of houses immediately; we have your coordinates and will follow behind after you have secured a house or two."

Harrow's muttering had started again and became loud enough during the conversation to be a nuisance. He was repeating to himself:

"It is fitting that the Emperor rules."

"It is fitting that the Power Master serves him."

"It is fitting that we Gunmen serve the Emperor through the Power Master and our particular Stars."

"While this is so, all will be well until the end of time."

Cade could not very well rebuke him.

Harrow distinguished himself in drawing fire from the house windows. In such an operation there is the risk that--well, call him the target--that the target will walk out in a state of exaltation, thinking more of the supreme service he is rendering than the actual job of rendering it. Cade was pleased and surprised at the desperate speed with which Harrow broke from the end of the wood and sped through the brush, his cloak flaring out behind him, displaying the two wide Gunner's bands at the hem: a new brown one above for France, an old red one below for Mars.

A bolt from one window missed him.

"Mark," snapped the first in a row of picked shots.

A bolt from another window blasted Harrow's left arm, and he kept running and even began to dodge.

"Mark," said the second of the sharpshooters.

A third window spat fire at the dodging Gunner and hit the same burned arm.

"Mark."

Another bolt from another window smashed his legs from under him.

"Mark."

There was a little surge forward in the line of waiting Stormers. Cade threw his arm up, hard and fast. "He's crawling," he said. "They'll finish him off."

From a small and innocent-looking stairwell window fire jetted.

"Mark."

"He's done," said Cade. "While this is so, all will be well...Marksmen ready; Stormers ready. Marksmen, fire. Stormers, charge." He led the way, crashing through the brush, with a torrent of flame gushing over his head: his marksmen, with the initiative of fire, pinning down the Muscovites at their windows--almost all of them. From two unsuspected windows fire blazed, chopping down two of the storming party. They were met with immediate counterfire from waiting marksmen in the wood. And by then there were ten Gunners in the dead ground against the house wall. With Cade in the lead, the Armsmen of France swarmed down a narrow alley that separated house from house and blasted down a side door.

Like coursing hounds they flowed through the house, burning down five Muscovite Armsmen already wounded by the neutralizing fire from the woods, finding two others dead at their windows. They lost one armiger of France to the desperate dying fire of a wounded Muscovite. The house was theirs.

The rest of the company, except for a pair of guards, trudged across the brush and entered.

Cade stationed men at the vital upper windows and sat, panting, on the floor of a bare second-story room. All the rooms were more or less bare. It was probably so through all three villages. He had seen commoners migrating.

Clots of them, oozing slowly along the roads. Their chief people in ground cars, cursing at the foot-sloggers who wouldn't get aside. The carts, piled high with household goods. The sniveling, shrieking children. And yet--and yet--there was a puzzle in it. Not always, but almost always, they knew in advance. The Muscovites, in possession of the great secret of the iron ore, had arrived to find that at least part of the secret was known to the lowliest commoner--enough at least to send him out on the road.

They were into the afternoon now, with nothing to do but wait for the first and third companies. This would last a week, easily: three villages to clear. Perhaps the feint at the city hall--if it came off today--would crumple the Muscovites. And when they got to Sarreguemines, there would be Brother Raymond in the cellar...

He sat up with a guilty start. Nobody had checked the cellar in this very house, if it had one, probably because cellars didn't have windows. He got wearily to his feet and limped downstairs to the first floor. There seemed to be no further steps down, and then he saw a gap between the wall and an immense cherry-wood cabinet bare of its dishes and mementos. It creaked open when he tried it, and these were his cellar steps with a guttering light at the bottom.

An old, old face, brown and wrinkled and ugly, was peering at him by the flickering light.

"Come up, commoner," he said. "I wish to look at you."

"No, sir," the wrinkled face squeaked in the voice of a woman. "No, sir, I cannot, sir, to my shame. My daughter, the lazy slut, put me and my dear brother down here when the armed men were about to come, for she said she and her great fat husband couldn't be bothered with us. I cannot come up, sir, because my legs won't go, to my shame."

"Then send up your brother, commoner."

"No, sir," the hag squeaked. "My dear brother cannot come up, to my shame. My lazy slut of a daughter and her great fat husband did not leave the right food for him--he suffers from the wasting sickness, and he must have the livers of animals every day--and so he died. Are you an armed man, sir?"

"I am a Gunner of the Order of Armsmen, commoner. Did you say you had food down there?" Cade suddenly realized he was ravenous.

"I did, sir, but not the right kind for my dear brother. I have the bottled foods, and the foods in boxes, and sweet cakes; will you come down, armed man, sir?"

Cade prudently swung the great cherry-wood chest wide open and descended the stairs. The woman lighted his way to a corner with the candle; he expected to find a table or larder, but the light, to his disgust, flickered on the wasted body of a tall man propped against the cellar wall.

"That's no concern of mine, commoner," he said. "Where is the food? I'll take it and eat it upstairs."

"Armed man, sir, I must unlock three locks on this chest"--she gestured with the candle--"to get you that, and my hands are old and slow, sir. Let me pour you a bit for your thirst first, sir. You are truly an armed man, sir?"

He ignored her babble as she poured him cider from a jug. "So that on your hip is a gun, sir? Is it true, sir, that you only have to point it at a person and he is shriveled and black at once?"

Cade nodded, suppressing his irritation with effort. She was old and foolish--but she was feeding him.

"And is it true, sir," she asked eagerly, "that a shriveled and black commoner cannot be told from a shriveled and black armed man?"

That it was impossible to let pass. He struck her mouth, wishing furiously that she would get the food and be done with it. And truly enough she did begin to fumble with the clanking old locks in the dark, but kept up her muttering: "I see it is true. I see it is true. That is what happens when something is true. I call my daughter a lazy slut, and she strikes me on the mouth. I call her husband a greedy hog, and he strikes me on the mouth. That is what happens..."

Rage is a peril, he told himself furiously. Rage is a peril. He gulped down the cider and repressed an impulse to throw the mug at the old fool's head or smash it on the old fool's floor while she fumbled endlessly with the clanking locks. He bent over to put it precisely on the floor, and toppled like a felled oak.

At once he knew what had happened and was appalled by the stupidity of it. He, a Gunner, was dying, poisoned by a babbling idiot of a commoner. Cade dragged feebly at his gun, and found the squeaking old woman had taken it first. Better to die that way, he thought in agony, though still a shameful horror. He hoped desperately as he felt consciousness slipping away that it would never become known. Some things were better forgotten.

The old woman was standing in front of him, making a sign, a detestable sign he half-remembered, like a parody of something you were dedicated to. And she skipped nimbly up and down the stairs with shrill, batlike laughter. "I tricked you!" she squealed. "I tricked them all! I tricked my slut of a daughter and her greedy fat husband. I didn't want to go with them!" She stopped at last, grunting with animal effort as she tugged the body of her brother, an inch or less at a time, to the foot of the stairs. Cade's gun was in the waistband of her skirt.

As the last light glimmered out, he thought he saw the deep-etched leather lines of her face close to his. "I wanted an armed man, sir, that's what I wanted. And I have one!"

### CHAPTER 3

Peril...peril...rage is a peril, and vanity, and love of ease...This death was fraught with perils. Cade groaned in the endless dark, and the still-living flesh shrank with revulsion as the evil vision persisted, and

his limbs were logs of stone.

To come to this end, this useless end! He who had lived decorously, who had served fittingly, he, a sturdy pillar of the Emperor, Gunner Cade! This end is not fitting! He would have cried out bitterly, but his lips were icy barriers, frozen shut. He could not breathe a word of protest or command.

And still his heart beat pitilessly, pumping gall and fury through his veins.

Rage is a peril. Cade turned his anger inward, seeking to bludgeon his spirit into a fit frame of mind before death came. Armsmen march where the Emperor wills. Peril flees in the face of fitting service.

Two visions filled his inner eye. He turned from the ancient ugly face of evil to the fair countenance of service and found at last the fitness that he sought. This death was proper. If She appeared, then all was well and would be till the end of time, for She came only at the last to the Armsman who marched where the Emperor willed and died in the service of his Star.

Then this was a fitting end and the perils of rage and vanity had been only a trial. He looked again upon the ugly grinning face and found it had lost all power over him. The pure features of The Lady floated above and behind it, and exaltation coursed through him as his heart beat on.

The heart beat on, and it was fitting, but it was not the end. The serene countenance of The Lady bent over him, and yet he lived. All Armsmen knew She came only at the last, and only to those who were fitted, yet...

He lived. He was not dead. The frozen lips moved as he muttered, "Vanity is a peril." He was alive, and the lined old leather face was only a hag he had seen before; the lady was a flower-faced commoner girl, beautiful to look on, but soullessly mortal.

"Very well," the crimson lips said clearly, not to him, but across his recumbent body to the hag. "Leave us now. They will be waiting for you in the chamber."

"The armed man lives," the old voice rasped in reply. "I served the armed man well, and he still lives. My slut of a daughter would never believe I could do it. She left me behind for dead, she and her greedy..."

"Leave us now!" The younger woman was dressed in the gaudy rough cloth of a commoner, but her voice betrayed her habit of command. "Go to the chamber, and go quickly, or they may forget to wait."

Cade shuddered as the pincer fingers of the hag creased the flesh of his forearm. "He lives," she said again, and chuckled. "The armed man lives and his skin is warm." Her touch was a horror. Not as the touch of woman, for there was nothing womanish about her; she was past the age of peril. But his skin crawled, as with vermin, at the unclean fingering. He lashed out to strike her arm away, and discovered his hands were bound. The old woman shuffled slowly away toward a door, and while the young one watched her go, he pulled against the bonds, testing his strength.

Then the hag was gone, and he was alone with the young female commoner, who looked most unfittingly like a vision of glory and spoke most presumptuously like a man of power.

The bonds were not too tight. He stopped pulling before she could discover that he might free himself.

She was watching him, and perversely he refused to look at her. His eyes took in every detail of the featureless room: the unbroken elliptical curve of the ceiling and walls; the curved door, fitting into the shape of the wall, and almost indistinguishable from it; the bed on which he lay; a table beside him where the girl's long clean fingers played with a vial of colored fluid.

He watched, while she idly turned the cork in the vial to expose the needle end. He watched while she plucked a swab of cotton from a bowl and doused it in colorless fluid from the only other object in the room, a small bottle on the table. He kept watching, even when the girl began to speak, his gaze obstinately fastened on her hands, away from the perilous beauty of her face.

"Cade," she said urgently, "Can you hear me? Can you understand what I tell you?" There was no command in her voice now; it was low-pitched and melodious. It teased his memory, tugged at him till he stiffened with the remembrance. Only once before had a woman called him by his Armsman's given name. That was the day he entered the Order, before he took his vows. His mother had kissed him, he remembered now, kissed him, and whispered the new name softly, as this girl was saying it. Since that day, his eleventh birthday, no woman had dared to tempt him to peril with a familiar address.

He lay still, thrusting aside the memory, refusing to reply.

"Cade," she said again. "There's not much time. They'll be coming soon. Can you understand me?"

The hands on the table moved, put down the needle and the swab, and floated toward him. She placed her palms on his cheeks, and turned his face up toward hers. Cade could not remember, even from childhood, the touch of hands like these. They were silken, but smooth--soft, resilient, unbelievably good to feel. They felt, he thought--and blushed as he thought--like the billowing stuff of the Emperor's ceremonial robe, when it brushed his face as he knelt at devotions on Audience Day.

This was no Audience Day. The hands of a commoner were on him, and contact with any female was forbidden. The blood receded from his face, and he shook his head violently, releasing himself from the perilous touch.

"I'm sorry," she said; "I'm sorry, Armsman, sir." Then, incredibly, she laughed. "I'm sorry I failed to address you properly, sir, and profaned your chastity with my touch. Has it occurred to you that you are in trouble? What do you place first? The ritual of your Order, or your loyalty to the Emperor?"

"Armsmen march where the Emperor wills," he intoned. "That is their glory. Armsmen are sturdy pillars; without them the Realm cannot stand, but without the Realm the Order cannot..."

Boots, he thought. Hose. They were gone. He lifted his head a little, and pain stabbed at the back of his neck as he did so, but before he dropped back, he saw it all: garish crimson-patterned pajamas of a commoner; soft-sole sandals of a city worker. No boots, no hose, no cloak, no gun!

"What unfit place is this?" he exploded. "In the name of the Order of which I am a member, I demand that I be released and my gun returned before..."

"Quiet, you fool!" There was something in the command that stopped him. "You'll have them all here if you shout. Now, listen quickly, if there's still time. You are the captive of a group that plots against the Emperor. I cannot tell you more now, but I am instructed to inject you with a substance which will..."

She stopped suddenly, and he too heard the steady footsteps coming nearer from--where? A corridor outside?

Something pressed against his lips, something smooth and slippery.

"Open your mouth, you idiot! Swallow it, quick! It will..."

The door opened smoothly from the wall, and the footsteps never lost a beat. They advanced to the center of the room and stopped precisely, while their maker stared about him with an odd bemusement.

"I seek my cousin," he announced, to no one in particular.

"Your cousin is not here," the girl answered smoothly. "I am the helper of your cousin, and I will take you to him." Three steps took her to the rigidly erect figure, and she touched him lightly on the nape of the neck. "Follow me," she commanded.

With no change of expression on his pale face, the man turned and went after her, his uncannily steady footsteps marking time toward the door. But before they got there, it opened again, and a sharp-featured, worried face peered in. The newcomer was small and wiry, dressed in the gray uniform of the Klin Service, tunic belted properly over the creased trousers, domed hat set squarely on his head, bootwraps neatly wound around his calves; he was breathing hard, and he closed the door hastily behind him, leaning against it till he regained composure.

"Here is your cousin," the girl said coldly. "He will take you in charge now."

Lying still on the bed, Cade instinctively stopped struggling with the bonds on his wrists and let his eyelids drop closed, just as the man in gray looked toward him and asked: "How is he? Any trouble?"

"He's no trouble." The girl's tone was contemptuous. "He's just coming to."

"Good." Cade heard the sharp intake of breath, and then the nervous edginess went out of the man's voice. "I am your cousin," he said evenly. "You will come with me."

"You are my cousin," answered the toneless voice of the sleepwalker. "I am to report that my mission is accomplished. I have succeeded in killing..."

"Come with me now. You will make your report in..."

"...killing the Deskman in Charge of..."

"...in another room. You will report to me priv..."

"...of the third district of Klin Serv..."

"...privately. In another room."



Cade let his eyelids flicker open enough to observe the agitation of the man in gray as the droning report went on unmindful of the efforts at control.

"...Service. Am I to destroy myself now? The mission is successfully accomplished." It stopped at last.

And not a moment too soon. Cade's hands, now free, were safely at rest again when the man in gray turned back to look at him.

"Seems to be all right still," Cousin said stiffly, surveying him. Deliberately, Cade let his eyelids flutter. "He's coming out of it, though. I better get this fellow out of the way."

"Perhaps you'd better." The girl's voice now expressed infinite disgust. "Is he one of yours?"

"No, I'm just taking his report. Larter put him under."

"Larter's new," she admitted, and fell silent.

"Well..." There was a moment's embarrassed silence, and Cade let his eyes open all the way, to find Cousin standing, hesitant, in the doorway. "Maybe I better stay around. He's a Gunman, you know. He might..."

"I said I can handle him," she replied. "Suppose you take care of your man before he gets...watch out!"

The sleepwalker's eyes were large and brilliant, fascinated by the needle on the table. He saw Cade, stretched out on the bed, and sudden animation flooded his face.

"Don't let them do it to you!" he screamed. "Don't let them touch you! They'll make you like me."

While the other man stood ashen-faced and horrified, the girl acted so swiftly that Cade might almost have admired her, if it were possible to use the word in connection with a female commoner. She was across the small room, and back again with the needle in her hand even as the man screamed his warning to Cade. Before the commoner could lift his arm to brush it aside, she drove the needle home, and the plunger after it.

"S-s-s-s-s-t!"

The man in gray was ready when she hissed at him.

"You will come with me," he intoned. "You will come with me now. You will come with me."

Cade had seen hypnotists at work before, but never with the aid of a drug so swift as this. He felt the capsule the girl had given him getting warm and moist between his lips. Horror seized him, but he waited, as he knew he must, till the door was closed behind those inhumanly even footsteps.

He knew exactly how fast the girl could move. Gunners are sturdy pillars. It is fitting that we serve. His timing was perfection itself as he spat the dangerous pill from his mouth and leaped from the bed. She had hardly time to turn from the door before his fist caught her a round blow on the side of the head, and she crumpled silently to the floor.

## CHAPTER 4

He had to get out of here.

He had to get back to the Chapter House. He looked at the girl, sprawled on her face on the floor, and was uncomfortably aware of the feel of the rough commoner clothes against his own skin, and then acutely conscious of a blank feeling on his right hip, where his gun should be.

The Klin Philosophy in a Gunner is like the charge in his gun.

He remembered, and shuddered as he remembered, the awful calmness with which she had admitted plotting against the Emperor. It is fitting that the Emperor rules. While this is so, a!! will be well till the end of time.

Cade took his eyes from the crumpled figure of the girl and examined the strangely featureless room once more. There was nothing new to be seen. He approached the inconspicuous door. Beyond it there was a way out. This place of horrors, whatever and wherever it was, would have to be burned from the face of the earth, and the sooner he escaped, the sooner it would happen. Without pride but with solid thankfulness he was glad that he, a full Gunner, was here instead of a novice or an armiger.

Beyond the door was an empty corridor whose only purpose seemed to be the connection of the featureless room with other rooms fifty meters away. He was suddenly sure that he was underground.

There were six doors at the end of the fifty-meter corridor, and he heard voices when he listened at five of them. Calmly he opened the sixth and walked into an empty room about ten by twenty meters, well lit, equipped with simple benches and a little elevated platform at one end. Along one wall were three curtained booths whose purpose he could not fathom. But he dived into one with desperate speed at the sound of approaching voices.

The booth was in two sections separated by a thin curtain. In the rear section, against the wall, you could look out and not be looked in on. It was an arrangement apparently as insane as the gray, egg-shaped room, but it was a perfect observation post. Through the gauzelike inside curtain and the half-drawn heavier outside curtain, he saw half a dozen commoners enter the place, chatting in low voices. Their clothes were of the usual cut, but a uniform drab brown instead of the ordinary gaudy particolor.

The drab-clad commoners fell silent and seated themselves on a front bench as others in more customary clothing began to straggle in. There were about fifty of them. One of the front-benches rose, and standing in front of the little stage, did something that Cade recognized; he made the same detestable sign with which the old poisoner had mocked him. Watching carefully, the Gunner saw that it was an X overlaid with a P. The right hand touched the left shoulder, right hipbone, right shoulder, left hipbone, and then traced a line up from the navel to end in a curlicue over the face. It was manifestly a mockery of the Gunner's ten-thousand-year-old ritual when donning his gun. Cade coldly thought: They'll pay for that.

All the seated commoners repeated the sign, and the standing man began to speak in a resonant, well-trained voice: "The first of the first of the good Cairo." He began making intricate signs involving much arm-waving. It went on for minutes, and Cade quickly lost interest, though the seated commoners were, as far as he could make out, following raptly. At last the commoner said: "That is how you shall be known. The first of the first."

Idiotically, twenty commoners from the back benches got up and filed out. Cade was astonished to see that some of them were silently weeping.

The speaker said when they had left: "The first of the first of the good Cairo in the second degree," and the lights went out, except for a blue spot on the platform. The speaker, standing a little to one side, went through the same signs as before, but much more slowly. The signs were coordinated with a playlet enacted on the stage by the other drab-clad commoners. It started with the speaker spreading his palms on his chest and an "actor" standing alone in the center of the platform. Both speaker and actor then made a sweeping gesture with the right hand waist-high and palm down, and a second actor crawled onto the platform...and so on until the first actor, who had never moved, laid his hand successively on the heads of six persons, two of them women, who seemed pleased by the gesture.

About midway through the rigmarole Cade suddenly realized where he was and what it was all about. He was in a Place of Mystery! He knew little about the Mystery Cults. There were, he recalled, four or five of them, all making ridiculous pretensions to antiquity. Above all, they were ridiculous when you thought of them: commoners' institutions where fools paid to learn the "esoteric meaning" of gibberish phrases, mystic gestures, and symbolic dramas. Presumably a few clever souls had made a good thing of it. They were always raiding each other for converts, and often with success. Frequenters of Mysteries were failures, stupid even for commoners, simply unable to grasp the propositions of the Klin Philosophy.

There were--let's see--the Joosh Mystery, which had invented a whole language called something like Hibber; the Scientific Mystery, which despised science and sometimes made a little trouble at the opening of new hospitals; and there were others, but he couldn't recall anything called the Cairo Mystery.

But it was frightening. If they could swallow the Mysteries, these weak-minded commoners could accept anything else--even a plot against the Realm of Man.

The lights were on again, and the ridiculous proceedings outside apparently were drawing to a close, when two more commoners entered. One of them was the man in gray--Cousin.

He murmured something to the drab-clad speaker--Cade could guess what. The Gunner burst from the booth toward the door at a dead run.

"Stop him!"

"Sacrilege!"

"A spy!"

"Get him! Get him!"

But of course they didn't. They just milled and babbled while Cade plowed through them, made the door--and found it locked.

Cousin announced loudly as Cade turned his back to the wall, "Seize him, beloved. It is a spy trying to steal our most secret rituals."

"He's lying," yelled Cade. "I am Gunner Cade of the Order of Armsmen. My Star is the Star of France. Commoners, I command you to open the door and make way for me."

"A ridiculous pose, spy," said Cousin smoothly. "If you are a Gunner, where is your gun? If you are of the Star of France, what are you doing here in Baltimore?"

The commoners were impressed. Cade was confused. In Baltimore?

"Bear him down, my beloved!" shouted Cousin. "Bear down the spy and bring him to me!" The commoners muttered and surged, and Cade was buried beneath their numbers. He saw the keen face of Cousin close to him, felt the stab of a needle in his arm. For the first time, he wondered how long he had been drugged. Baltimore! Of course, the Mysteries were worldwide. He could as easily have been in Zanzibar by now, or his native Denver, instead of France...or Baltimore.

There was no doubt about it; the Mysteries would have to be suppressed. Up to now they had been tolerated, for every Mystery solemnly claimed it was merely a minor auxiliary of the Klin Philosophy and that all adherents were primarily followers of Klin. Nobody had ever been fooled--until now.

"He'll be all right now," said Cousin. "Two of you pick him up and carry him. He won't struggle anymore."

Gunners march where the Emperor wills; that is their glory. Cade struck out violently with arms and legs at once as the commoners attempted to lift him from the floor. Nothing happened--nothing except that they lifted him easily and carried him out of the big room. Vanity is a peril. An emotion flooded Cade, an unfamiliar feeling that identified itself with nothing since earliest childhood. He was frog-marched down the corridor, ignominiously helpless in the hands of two commoners, and understood that what he felt was shame.

They carried him into the featureless room again and strapped him to the bed on which he had awakened--how long?--before. He heard Cousin say: "Thank you, my beloved, in the name of the good Cairo," and the door closed. Rage drove out shame and vanity both as a woman's voice said clearly: "You bloody fool!"

"He is, my dear," said Cousin unctuously. "But quite clever enough for us. Or he will be shortly, when he understands how to use the limited intelligence his Order has left him." Gleeful satisfaction trickled through the man's voice. "He is quite clever enough--he knows how to kill. And he is strong--strong enough to kill. Let me see the bruise he gave you...."

"Take your busy little hands off me, Cousin. I'm all right. Where will you start him from?"

"He can come to in any park; it doesn't matter."

"If he fell off a bench, he might be arrested. Someplace with a table for him to lean on?..."

"You're right. We could dump him at Mistress Cannon's! How's that? A chaste Gunner at Mistress Cannon's!"

The girl's laughter was silvery. "I must go now," she said.

"Very well. Thank you, my beloved, in the name of the good Cairo." The door closed.

Cade felt his shoulders being adjusted on the table where he lay. He looked at gray nothingness. There was a click, and he was looking at a black spot.

Cousin's voice said: "You notice that this room has little to distract the attention. It has no proper corners, no angles, nothing in the range of your sight for your eye to wander to. Either you look at that black dot or you close your eyes. It doesn't matter which to me. As you look at the black dot, you will notice after a while that it seems to swing toward you and away from you, toward you and away from you. This is no mechanical trickery; it is simply your eye muscles at work making the dot seem to swing toward you and away, first toward you and then away. You may close your eyes, but you will find it difficult to visualize anything but the dot swinging toward you and away, first toward you and then away.

You can see nothing but the dot swinging toward you and away..."

It was true; it was true. Whether Cade's eyes were open or closed, the black dot swung and melted at the edges, and seemed to grow and swallow the grayness and then melt again. He tried to cling to what was fitting--like this the Order wraps the Realm and shields it--but the diabolical hypnotist seemed to be reading his thoughts.

"Why fight me, master Cade? You have no boots. You have no hose. You have no shirt. You have no cloak. You have no gun. Only the dot swinging toward you and away; why fight me; why fight the dot swinging toward you and away? Why fight me? I'm your friend. I'll tell you what to do. You have no boots. You have no hose. You have no cloak. You have no gun. Why fight your friend? You only have the dot swinging toward you and away. Why fight me? I'll tell you what to do. Watch the dot swinging toward you and away..."

He had no boots. He had no hose. He had no cloak. He had no gun. Why fight his friend? That girl, that evil girl, had brought him to this. He hated her for making him, a Gunner--but he was not a gunner, he had no gun, he had nothing, he had nothing.

"You don't know. You don't know. You don't know. You don't know. You don't know. You don't know. You don't know. You don't know."

The self-awareness of Cade was no longer a burning fire that filled him from his scalp to his toes. It was fading at his extremities, the lights going out in his toes and fingers and skin, retreating, retreating.

"You will go to the palace and kill the Power Master with your hands. You will go to the palace and kill the Power Master with your hands."

He would go...his self-awareness, a dim light in his mind, watched it happen and cried out too feebly. He would go to the palace and kill the Power Master with his hands. Who was he? He didn't know. He would go to the palace and kill the Power Master with his hands. Why would he? He didn't know. He would go to the palace and kill the Power Master with his hands. He didn't know. The spark of ego left to him watched it happen and was powerless to prevent it.

## CHAPTER 5

Blackness and a bumping...rest and a sensation of acceleration...a passage of time and the emergence of sounds...a motor, and wind noise, and voices.

Laughter.

"Will he make it, do you think?"

"Who knows?"

"He's a Gunner. They can break your back in a second."

"I don't believe that stuff."

"Well, look at him! Muscles like iron."

"They pick 'em that way."

"Naw, it's the training they get. A Gunner can do it if anybody can."

"I don't know."

"Well, if he doesn't, the next one will. Or the next. Now we know we can do it. We'll take as many as we need."

"It's risky. It's too dangerous."

"Not the way we did it. The old lady came along with him."

A jolt.

"You've got to walk him to Cannon's."

"Two blocks! And he must weigh..."

"I know, but you've got to. I'm in my grays. What would a Klin Service officer be doing in Cannon's?"

"But--oh, al! right. I wonder if he'll make it?"

Lurching progress down a dark street, kept from falling by a panting, cursing blur. A dim place with clinking noises and bright-colored blurs moving in it.

"E-e-easy, boy. Steady there--here's a nice corner table. You like this one? All righty, into the chair.

Fold, curse you. Fold." A dull blow in the stomach. "Tha-a-at's better. Two whiskies, dear."

"What's the matter witcha friend?"

"A little drunkie. I'm gonna leave him here after I have my shot. He always straightens up after a little nap."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah. I don't wanta see any change out of this, dear."

"Thass different."

"Back so quick, dear?"

"Here's ya whisky."

"Righto. Mud in your eye and dribbling down your left cheek, dear. You hear me, fella? I'm going bye-bye now. I'll see you on the front page. Haw! I'll see you on the front page!" The talking blur went away, and another, bright-colored one, came.

"Buy me a drink? You're pretty stiff, ain't you? Mind if I have yours? You look like you got enough. I'm Arlene. I'm from the south. You like girls from the south? What's the matter with you, anyway? If you're asleep, why don't you close your eyes, big fella? Is this some kind of funny, funny joke? Oh, fall down dead. Comic!"

Another bright-colored blur: "Hello; you want company? I noticed you chased away Arlene, and for that I don't blame you. All she knows is 'Buy-me-a-drink'; I ain't like that. I like a nice, quiet talk myself once in a while. What do you do for fun, big fella--follow the horses? Play cards? Follow the wars? I'm a fighting fan myself. I go for Zanzibar. That Gunner Golos--man! This year already he's got seventeen raids and nine kills. That what you call a Gunner. Hey, big fella, wanna buy me a drink while we talk? Hey, what's the matter with you anyway? Oh, cripe. Out with his eyes open."

The blur went away. Vitality began to steal through sodden limbs, and urgent clarity flashed through the mind. Go to the palace and kill the Power Master. The hands on the table stirred faintly, and the mind inside whirled into motion, tabulating knowledge with easy familiarity.

You killed people with your hands by smashing them on the side of the neck with the side of the hand below the little finger--sudden but not positive. If you had time to work for thirty seconds without interruption, you took them by the throat and smashed the tracheal cartilage with your thumbs.

Go to the palace and kill the Power Master with your hands.

One hand crawled around the emptied whisky glass and crushed it to fragments and powder. If you come up from behind, you can break a back by locking one foot around the instep, putting your knee in the right place, and falling forward as you grasp the shoulders.

A gaudily dressed girl stood across the table. "I'm going to buy you a little drink, big fella. I won't take no for an answer. I got it right here."

His throat made a noise which was not speech, and his hands lifted off the table as she stood beside him with a small bottle. His arms would not lift more than an inch from the table. The drink in his mouth burned like fire.

"Listen to me, Cade," said the girl into his ear. "No scenes. No noise. No trouble. As you come to, just sit still and listen to me."

Like waking up. Automatically the morning thought began to go through his mind. It is fitting that the Emperor rules. It is fitting that the Power Master...

"The Power Master!" he said hoarsely.

"It's all right," said the girl. "I gave you an antidote. You're not going to--do anything you don't want to."

Cade tried to stand but couldn't.

"You'll be all right in a couple of minutes," she said.

He saw her more clearly now. She was heavily made up, and the thick waves of her hair reflected the bright purple of her gossamer-sheer pajamas. That didn't make sense. Only the Star-born wore sheer; commoners' clothes were of heavy stuffs. But only commoner females wore pajamas; Star-born ladies dressed in gowns and robes. He shook his head, trying to clear it, and tore his eyes from the perfection of her body, clearly visible through the bizarre clothing.

Following his eyes, she flushed a little. "That's part of the act," she said. "I'm not."

Cade didn't try to understand what she was talking about. Her face was incredibly beautiful. "You're the same one," he said. "You're the commoner from that place."

"Lower your voice," she said coolly. "And this time, listen to me."

"You were with them before," he accused her. His speech was almost clear. His arms worked all right now.

"Not really. Don't you understand? If you'd swallowed the capsule I gave you in the hypnosis room, you'd never have gone under. But you had to bash me and make it on your own. See how far you got?"

She was right about that. He hadn't succeeded in getting out of the place.

"All right," she went on when he didn't reply. "Maybe you're going to be reasonable after all. You're feeling better, aren't you? The--compulsion is gone? Try to remember that I came after you to give you the release drug."

Cade found he could move his legs. "Thank you for your assistance," he said stiffly. "I'm all right now. I have to get to--to the nearest Chapter House, I suppose, and make my report. I..." It went against all training and was perhaps even disobedient, but she had helped him. "I will neglect to include your description in my report."

"Still spouting high-and-mighty?" she said wearily. "Cade, you still don't understand it all. There are things you don't know. You can't..."

"Give me any further information you may have," he interrupted. "After that, may it please the Ruler we two shall never meet again."

The words surprised him, even as he spoke them. Why should he be willing to protect this--creature--from her just punishment? Very well, she had helped him; that was only her duty as a common citizen of the Realm. He was a sworn Armsman. There was no reason to sit here listening to her insolence; the City Watch would deal with her.

"Cade..." She was giggling. That was intolerable. "Cade, have you ever had a drink before?"

"A drink? Certainly I have quenched my thirst many times." She was unfitting, upsetting, and insolent as well.

"No, I mean a drink--a strong alcoholic beverage."

"It is forbidden..." He stopped, appalled. Forbidden!...for love of woman makes men love their rulers less...

"See here, commoner!" he began in a rage.

"Oh, Cade! Now you've done it. We've got to get out of here." Her voice changed to a nasal wheedle. "Let's get out of this place, honey, and come on home with me. I'll show you a real good time..."

She was cut off by the arrival of a massive woman. "I'm Mistress Cannon," said the newcomer.

"What're you doing here, girlie? You ain't one of mine."

"We was just leaving, honest--wasn't we, big fella?"

"I was," said Cade; he swayed as he rose to his feet. The girl followed, sticking close to him.

Mistress Cannon saw them grimly to the door. "If you come back, girlie," she said, "I may wrap a bar stool around your neck."

Outside, Cade peered curiously down the narrow darkness of the city street. How did commoners get places? There was no way even to orient himself. How had they expected him to get to the palace?

He turned abruptly to the girl. "What city is this?" he demanded.

"Aberdeen."

That made sense. The ancient Proving Grounds where he himself and all the Armsmen for ten thousands of years had won their guns in trial and combat. The city of the palace, the awesome Capitol of the Emperor himself. And in the palace, the High Office of the Power Master, the grim executive.

"There is a Chapter House," he remembered. "How do I get there?"

"Gunner, understand me. You aren't going to any Chapter House. That's the best and quickest way to get yourself killed."

A typical commoner's reaction, he thought, and found himself saddened to have had it from her. She had, after all, incurred some risk in defying the plotters.

"I assure you," he said kindly, "that the prospect of my eventual death in battle does not frighten me. You commoners don't understand it, but it is so. All I want to do is get this information into the proper hands and resume my fitting task as Gunner."

She made a puzzling, strangled noise and said after a long pause: "That's not what I meant. I'll speak more plainly. You had an alcoholic drink tonight--two of them, in fact. You're not accustomed to them. You are what is known, among us commoners..." She paused again, swallowing what seemed inexplicably like laughter. "...among us commoners as blasted, birdy, polluted, or drunk. I'll be merciful and assume that your being blasted, birdy, polluted, or drunk accounts for your pompous stupidity. But you are not going anywhere by yourself. You're going to come with me, because that's the only safe place for you. Now, please stop being foolish." Her face was turned up to his, pleading, and in the wandering rays of light from a distant street lamp, even under the thick coating of cosmetics, she seemed more than ever the perfect likeness of The Lady, the perfection of womanhood that could never be achieved by mortal females. Her hand slipped easily around his arm, and she clung to him, tugging at him, urging him to follow her.

Cade didn't strike her. He had every reason to, and yet, for some reason, he could not bring himself to shake her off as he should have done, to throw her to the ground, and leave her and be rid of her peril forever. Instead he stood there, and the flesh of his arm crawled at the soft touch of her hand through the commoner's cloth he wore.

"If you have nothing more to tell me," he said coldly, "I'll leave you now." They were at a corner; he turned up the side street and noticed that there were brighter lights and taller buildings ahead.

The girl didn't let go. She ran along at his side, holding on and talking in a furious undertone. "I'm trying to save your life, you bloody idiot. Will you stop this nonsense? You don't know what you're getting into!"

There was a watchman standing across the street on the opposite corner, a symbol of familiar security in immaculate Service gray. Cade hesitated only an instant, remembering where he had last seen that uniform desecrated. But surely, surely, that was not cause enough to lose all faith.

He turned to the girl at his side. The touch of her hand was like fire against his arm. "Leave me now," he told her, "or I cannot promise for your safety."

"Cade, you mustn't!"

That was intolerable. Love of woman, he thought again, and shook off her arm as he would have brushed away an insect.

He strode out into the street. "Watchman!"

The man in grays lolled idly on his corner.

"Watchman!" Cade called again. "I desire to be directed to the Chapter House of the Order of Armsmen."

"Your desires are no concern of mine, citizen."

Cade remembered his commoner's clothing and swallowed his ire. "Can you direct me...sir?"

"If I see fit. And if your purpose is more fitting than your manner. What business have you there?"

"That is no concern..." He stopped himself. "I cannot tell you...sir. It is an affair of utmost privacy."

"Very well, then, citizen." The Serviceman laughed tolerantly. "Find your own way...privately." He was looking past Cade, over the Gunner's shoulder. "She with you?" he asked with alerted interest.

Cade turned, to find the girl right behind him again. "No," he said sharply.

"O.K., girlie," the watchman demanded. "What're you doing out of the district?"

"The district..." For the first time, Cade saw the girl fumble and falter. "What do you...?"

"You know what I mean. You're not wearing that garter for jewelry, are you, girlie? You know you can't solicit outside the district. If you was with this citizen, now..." He looked meaningfully at Cade.

"She is not with me," the Gunner said firmly. "She followed me here, but..."

"That's a dirty lie," the girl whined, suddenly voluble. "This fella picks me up in a bar, we was in Cannon's place, you can ask anybody there, and he kicks up such a rumpus, they tossed us out, and then he says we're goin' to his place, and then we get out here to the corner, and all of a sudden he remembers something else he wants to do, and leaves me flat. These guys that come in and get loaded

and then don't know what they want...!" She wound up with a note of disgust.

"How about it, citizen? Was she with you?"

"She was not," Cade said emphatically. He was staring at the garter the Serviceman seemed concerned about. It was a slender chain of silver links fastened high on the girl's thigh, pulling the thin folds of her pajamas tight against her flesh.

"Sorry, girlie," the watchman said, firmly but not unkindly. "You know the rules. We're going to the Watch House."

"There, you see?" She turned on Cade in a fury. "See what you did? Now they'll cage me for soliciting, and I can't pay, so it means sitting it out in a cell, all on account of you don't know what you want. Come on, now, admit it how you made me come with you. Just tell him, that's all I ask."

Cade shook her off with disgust. "You were following me," he said. "I told you I'd keep you out of trouble if I could, but if you're going to insist on..."

"All right now," the Serviceman said, suddenly decisive. "That'll be enough out of both of you. You both come along, and you can get it straightened out in the Watch House."

"I see no reason..." Cade began, and stopped even before the watchman began to reach for the light club in his belt. He did see a reason, a good one: at a Watch House, he would be able to get transportation to the Chapter House. "Very well," he said coldly. "I shall be glad to come along."

"You bloody idiot," said the girl.

## CHAPTER 6

"Well, which one of you is making the complaint?" The bored officer behind the desk looked from the girl to Cade and back again.

Neither replied.

"She was out of her district," the other watchman explained, "and they couldn't get together on whether she was with him or not, so I took 'em both along in case you wanted to hear it all."

"Official infringement on the girl, huh?" the deskman muttered. "If she don't want to make a complaint, we got nothing against the man. All right. Matron!" A stout, clean-looking woman in gray got off a bench along the wall and approached the desk. "Take her along and get her name and registration. Fine is ten greens..."

"Ten greens!" the girl broke in miserably. "I haven't even got a blue on me. He was the first one tonight..."

"Ten greens," he said implacably, "or five days' detention. Tell your troubles to the matron. Take her away. Now..." He turned to Cade as the stout woman led the girl away. "We'll take your name and address for the record, and you can go. Those girls are getting out of hand. They'd be all over town if we let 'em get away with it."

It was too much to attempt to unravel now. Cade dismissed the puzzle from his mind and said in a low voice: "May I speak to you alone?"

"You out of your head, man? Speak up, what do you want?"

The Gunner looked around. No one was too close. He kept his voice low. "It would be well if you speak more respectfully, watchman. I am not a commoner."

Comprehension came over the man's face. He stood up promptly, and led the Gunner into a small side room. "I'm sorry, sir," he said hastily. "I had no idea. The gentlemen usually identify to the watchman on street duty when such incidents occur. You're a young gentleman, sir, and perhaps this is your first...little visit to the other half? You understand, sir, you needn't have been bothered by coming here at all. Next time, sir, if you'll just identify to..."

"I don't believe you quite understand." Cade stopped the meaningless flow. "I desired to come here. There is a service you can do for me and for the Realm."

"Yes, sir. I know my duty, sir, and I'll be glad to assist you in any way you deem fitting. If you'll just identify first, sir, you understand I have to ask it, we can't chance ordinary citizens passing themselves off as..."



"Identify? How do I do that?"

"Your badge of rank, sir." He hesitated, and saw confusion still on Cade's face. "Surely, sir, you didn't come out without it?"

The Gunner understood at last. "You misunderstand, watchman," he said indignantly. "And you presume too much. I have heard of the degenerates among our nobility who indulge in the--kind of escapade you seem to have in mind. I am not one of them. I am a Gunner in the Order of Armsmen, and I require your immediate assistance to reach the nearest Chapter House."

"You have no badge of rank?" the watchman said grimly.

"Armsmen carry no prideful badges."

"Armsmen carry guns."

Cade kept his temper. "All you have to do is get in touch with the Chapter House. They can check my fingerprints, or there might be a Gunner there who can identify me personally."

The deskman made no answer; he walked to the door and pushed it open.

"Hey, Bruge!" The watchman of the street got to his feet and came toward them. "You want to put a drunk-and-disorderly on this fella? He's either cockeyed drunk or out of his head. Was he acting up outside?"

"The girl said he was drinking," the other man remembered.

"Well, you're the one'll have to register the complaint. I'm not letting him out of here tonight. He's been telling me in deepest confidence that he's really a Gunner in the Order..."

"Say, that's how the whole thing started," Bruge remembered. "He came up to me asking where was the Chapter House. I figured he was just a little crooked, and I wouldn't of pulled him in at all except for the argument with the girl. You think he's off his rocker?"

"I don't know." The deskman was silent for a moment, then made up his mind. "I'll tell you what, you sign a d-and-d, and we'll see how he talks in the morning."

Cade could endure no more of it. He strode angrily between the two men. "I tell you," he announced loudly, "that I am Gunner Cade of the Order of Armsmen, and my Star is the Star of France. If you do not do what is necessary to identify me immediately, you will pay dearly for it later."

"Say, now..." Another watchman, who had listened idly from the bench, stood up and joined them. "I'm a fighting fan myself. It's a real privilege to meet up with a real Gunner, first-hand." He was short and stout, and there was an idiotic smile on his beaming moon face, but at least he seemed more alert than the others. "I hate to bother you, sir, at a time like this, but I was having a little argument just yesterday with Bruge here, and you could settle it for us. Could you tell me, sir, for instance, how many times you've been in action this year? Or, say, your five-year total?"

"I really don't remember," said Cade impatiently. "This is hardly a fitting time for talk of past actions. I must report immediately to the nearest Chapter House. If your superior sees fit to do his duty now and call the House for identification, I shall endeavor to forget the inconvenience I have suffered so far."

"How about it, Chief?" the moon-faced one appealed to the deskman, turning his face away from Cade. "Why don't you let Bruge here make a call for the Gunner? It's only sporting, isn't it?"

There was an unexpected smile on the deskman's face when he replied. "O.K.--go on, Bruge, you go call up." He winked in a friendly fashion.

"All right," said Bruge disappointedly and left the room.

"I wonder, Gunner Cade," Moon-face said easily, "how many men you've killed since you became armiger? Say, in offensive actions compared with defensive actions?"

"Eh? Oh, I've never kept count, watchman. No Gunner would." This fellow at least was civil. There was no harm in answering the man's questions while he waited. "Numbers killed don't mean everything in war. I've been in engagements where we'd have given half of our men to get control of a swell in the ground so unnoticeable that you or you probably wouldn't see it if you were looking at it."

"Think of that!" marveled one of the watchmen. "Did you hear that? Just for a little swell in the ground that slobs like us wouldn't even notice. Hello, Jardin..." He hailed another man in gray who had just entered. "Here's the man you want," he told Moon-face. "Jardin can give you facts and figures on the Gunner."

"You mean Cade?" the new man said unhappily. "Yeah, I sure can. It's only eight kills for the second quarter. He would have hit twelve, sure, only..."

"Yeah, it's a shame all right," Moon-face broke in. "Jardin, I've got a real treat for you. A France fan like you, and Gunner Cade is your favorite, too. Well, here's the thrill of a lifetime, man. Gunner Cade, himself, in person. Jardin, meet the Gunner, Gunner Cade, sir, this is a long-standing fan of yours."

Two more men had come in, and another was at the door. They were all standing around listening. Cade regretted his earlier impulse to answer the man's question. A distasteful familiarity was developing in Moon-face's attitude.

"Quit your kidding," Jardin was saying almost angrily. "I don't see what's so funny when a good Gunner dies."

"I tell you, the man says he's Gunner Cade. Isn't that true?" Moon-face appealed to the Gunner.

"I am Gunner Cade," he replied with what dignity he could muster.

"Why, you...!"

The outburst from Jardin was stopped abruptly by the deskman.

"All right, that's enough now," he said sharply. "This farce is no longer fitting to our honored dead. Jardin is right. Fellow," he said to Cade, "you picked the wrong Gunner and the wrong watchman. Gunner Cade is dead. I know, because Jardin here lost twenty greens to me on him. He was silly enough to bet on Cade for a better second-quarter total of kills than Golos of Zanzibar. Golos topped him with--but never mind that. Who are you, and what do you think you're doing impersonating a Gunner?"

"But I am Gunner Cade," he said, stupefied.

"Gunner Cade," said the officer patiently, "was killed last week in the kitchen of a house in some French town his company was attacking. They found his body. Now, fellow, who are you? Impersonating a Gunner is a serious offense."

For the first time, Cade realized that Bruge had left, not to call the Chapter House, but to collect the crowd of watchmen who had assembled while they talked. There were eleven of them in the room now--too many to overpower. He remained silent; insisting on the truth seemed hopeless.

"That's no d-and-d," the deskman said in the silence. "We'll hold him for psych."

"Want me to sign the complaint?" It was Bruge, grinning like an ape.

"Yeah. Put him in a cage until morning, and then to the psych."

"Watchman," said Cade steadily. "Will I be able to convince the psych, or is he just another commoner like you?"

"Hold him," somebody said. Two of them expertly caught Cade's arms. The questioner flicked a rubber truncheon across Cade's face. "Maybe you're crazy," he said, "but you'll show respect to officers of the Klin Service."

Cade stood there, the side of his jaw growing numb. He knew he could break loose from the watchman holding him, or disable the man with the truncheon by one well-placed kick. But what would be the good of it? There were too many of them there. It is fitting that we Gunmen serve...But the thought trailed off into apathy.

"All right," said the man with the truncheon. "Put him in with Fledwick."

The Gunner let himself be led to a cell and locked in. He ignored his cellmate until the man said nervously: "Hello. What are you in for?"

"Never mind."

"Oh. Oh. I'm in here by mistake. My name is Fledwick Zisz. I'm a Klin teacher...attached to the lectory at the Glory of the Realm ground-car works. There was some mix-up in the collections, and in the confusion they concluded I was responsible. I should be out of here in a day or two."

Cade glanced uninterestedly at the man. "Thief" was written all over him. So Klin teachers could be thieves.

"What does a silver garter on a girl mean?" he suddenly demanded.

"Oh," said Fledwick. "I wouldn't know personally, of course." He told him.

Curse her, thought Cade. He wondered what had happened to her. She'd said she couldn't pay the fine. Probably she was locked up with a real prostitute. Curse them, you'd think they could tell the

difference!

"My real vocation, of course, was military," said Fledwick.

"What?" said Cade.

Fledwick hastily changed his story. "I should have said, 'the military teachership.' I was never really happy at the Glory shop. I'd rather serve humbly as a teacher in an obscure Chapter House of the Order." He raptly misquoted: "It is fitting for the Emperor to rule. It is fitting for the Power Master to serve the Emperor."

"Interested in the Order, eh? Do you know Gunner Cade?"

"Oh, everybody knows Gunner Cade. There wasn't a smile in the Glory shop the day we heard the news. The factory pool drew Cade in the stakes, and it's play or pay. Not that I know much about gambling, but I--uh--happened to have organized the pool. It was so good for the employee morale. When I get out of here, though, I think I'll stick to dog bets. You get nice odds in a play-or-pay deal, but there's a perfectly human tendency to think you've been swindled when your Gunner is--so to speak--scratched and you don't get your money back. I've always thought..."

"Shut up," said Cade. You'd think the fools could tell the difference between her and--oh, curse her. He had worries of his own. For one thing, he seemed to be dead. He grinned without mirth. He had to get to the Chapter House and report on the Cairo Mystery, but he was in effect a commoner without even a name. A Gunner had no wife or family, no one to notify, no one to identify him except his Brothers in the Order--and the watchmen were not going to bother the Order. They knew Cade was dead.

He wondered if this were happening for the first time in the ten thousand years since creation.

Everything was all wrong; he couldn't think straight. He stretched out on the jail cot and longed for his harder, narrower sleepbag. It is fitting that the Emperor rules...He hoped she wouldn't antagonize them with her disrespectful way of talking. Curse her! Why hadn't she stayed in her own district? But that went to prove that she didn't really know anything about the trade, didn't it?

"You!" he growled at Fledwick. "Did you ever hear of a prostitute wandering out of her district by mistake?"

"Oh. Oh, no. Certainly not. Everybody knows where to go when he wants one. Or so I'm told."

A crazy thought came to Cade that if he were dead, he was released from his vows. That was nonsense. He wished he could talk to a real Klin teacher, not this sniveling thief. A good Klin teacher could always explain your perplexities, or find you one who could. He wanted to know how it happened that he had done all the right things and everything had turned out all wrong.

"You," he said. "What's the penalty for impersonating a Gunner?"

Fledwick scratched his nose and mused: "You picked a bad one, sir. It's twenty years!" He was jolted out of his apathy. "I'm sorry to be the one to tell you, but..."

"Shut up. I've got to think."

He thought--and realized with twisted amusement that one week ago he would have been equally horrified, but for another reason. He would have thought the penalty all too light.

Fledwick turned his face to the wall and sighed comfortably. Going to sleep, was he?

"You," said Cade. "Do you know who I am?"

"You didn't say, sir." The Klin teacher yawned.

"I'm Gunner Cade, of the Order of Gunmen; my Star is the Star of France."

"But..." The teacher sat up on the bed and looked worriedly into Cade's angry face. "Oh. Of course," he said. "Of course you are, sir. I'm sorry I didn't recognize you." Thereafter he sat on the edge of his bed, stealing an occasional nervous glance at his cellmate. It made Cade feel a little better, but not much.

It is fitting that the Emperor rules...He hoped that leaving the 'district' was not too serious an offense.

## CHAPTER 7

Cade opened his eyes.

Dingy walls, locked door, and the little Klin teacher still sitting on the side of his bunk across the cage, fast asleep. At the thought of the man's futile determination to hold an all-night vigil over the maniac who

had claimed to be a dead Gunner, Cade grinned--and realized abruptly that a grin was no way for a Gunner of the Order to start his day. He hastily began his Morning Thoughts of the Order, but somewhere, far down inside him, there was a small wish that the Thoughts were not quite so long. He had a plan.

Seconds after completing the familiar meditation, he was leaning over the other bunk, shaking the Klin teacher's shoulder. Fledwick almost toppled to the floor and then sprang to his feet in a terrified awakening. He was about to shriek when the Gunner's big hand sealed his mouth.

"No noise," Cade told him. "Listen to me." He sat on Fledwick's bunk and urged the little crook down beside him. "I'm going to get out of here, and I'll need your help to do it. Are you going to make trouble?"

"Oh, no, sir," the teacher answered too promptly and too heartily. "I'll be glad to help, sir."

"Good." Cade glanced at the lock on the cage door--an ordinary two-way guarded radionic. "I'll set the lock to open fifteen seconds after it is next opened from the outside. You'll have to raise some sort of noise to get a watchman in here."

"You can set the lock?" Fledwick broke in. "Where did you learn...?"

"I told you. I am a Gunner of the Order. I expect your full cooperation because of that. I have a message of great importance which must be delivered to the Chapter House at once. Your service to me, by the way, should win you a pardon."

Cade read on the little man's face the collapse of a brief hope. Fledwick said brightly: "The pardon is immaterial. Whatever I can do to serve the Realm, I will do."

"Very well, you don't believe me. Then I will expect your full cooperation on the grounds that I must be a dangerous maniac who might tear you limb from limb for disobedience. Is that clear--and believable?"

"Yes," said Fledwick miserably.

"Excellent. Now, listen: you will attract a guard's attention. Say you're ill or that I'm trying to murder you--anything to get him inside. He will come in, close the door, and look at you. I will overpower him, the door will open, and I will leave."

"May I ask what I am to do then? The City Watch has been known to mistreat prisoners who aided in escapes."

"Save your wit and call me sir! You may come along if you like. You would be useful, because I know nothing of the city, of course."

He got up and went over to the lock.

Fledwick was next to him, peering over his shoulder. "You mean you're really going to try it? Sir?" There was awe in his voice.

"Of course, fool. That's what I've been saying." Under the teacher's dubious stare he got to work on the lock. The cage-side half of its casing was off in less than a minute. It took no longer for his trained eye to analyze the circuits inside. Fledwick nervously sucked in his breath as the Gunner's sure fingers probed at tubes, relays, and printed "wires." But it was child's play to avoid the temper-triggers that would have set alarms ringing, and the more sinister contacts designed to send lethal charges of electricity through meddlers--child's play for anybody who could rewire a flier's control panel in a drizzly dawn.

Cade snapped the cover back on and told Fledwick: "Begin!"

The little man was near tears. "Sir, couldn't we wait until after breakfast?"

"What would they give us?"

"Bread and fried sausage today," said the teacher hopefully.

Cade pretended to consider, and decided: "No. I don't eat meat until nightfall. Did you forget that I am a Gunner of the Realm?"

The little man pulled himself together and said evenly: "I am beginning to wonder. I had been thinking of warning the watchman when he came in."

"Don't! I can silence both of you, if I must."

"Yes, of course. But you needn't worry about me. Your work with the lock...If we get out, I know of a clothing warehouse and a certain person who's interested in its contents--and to be frank, perhaps I was overoptimistic when I said the misunderstanding that brought me here was a minor one. There are

certain complications."

"Such as being guilty?" suggested Cade. "Never mind. You should have a pardon from the Gunner Supreme for this morning's work. Meanwhile, think me burglar, lunatic, or what you please, but start howling. It will be daylight soon."

Fledwick practiced with a couple of embarrassed groans and then cut loose with a ten-decibel shriek for help on the grounds that he was dying in agony.

Two watchmen appeared, looking just waked up and annoyed. To Fledwick, writhing on his bunk, one demanded: "What's wrong with you now?"

"Cramps!" yelled Fledwick. "Unendurable pain! My belly is on fire; my limbs are breaking!"

"Yes, yes," said the watchman. He addressed Cade with exquisite politeness. "Oh, Star-born one, go sit on your bunk and put your hands on your knees. My mate's going to be watching you. One move, and sleep gas fills the block. We'll all have a little nap, but when you wake up the desk chief will pound you like a Gunner never was pounded before, O Star-born one."

He nodded to the other watchman, who took his stand by a handle that obviously controlled the gas. Cade rejoiced behind an impassive face; the outside watchman was a slow-moving, doltish-looking fellow.

Fingers played a clicking code on the lock's outside buttons, and the door sprang open in a satisfactorily lively manner. The watchman bent over Fledwick, now moaning faintly, as Cade counted seconds. As the door sprang open again, Cade was on his feet; before it had completed its arc, the Gunner's fist was tingling and the inside watchman lay crumpled half on Fledwick and half on the floor. Cade was through the open door and on the too solid fellow outside after the man realized there was something badly wrong, but before he could do anything about it.

Fledwick was in the corridor by then. "Follow me," Cade ordered. It was odd, he fleetingly thought, to have somebody under your command who couldn't half-read your mind through endless training, somebody whose skills were a guess and whose fighting heart was a gamble. They passed empty cells on their way to the guard room. Its door was stout, equipped with a peephole, and firmly locked in case of just such an emergency as this.

Through the peephole Cade saw three drowsy watchmen. The liveliest was at a facsimile machine reading the early-morning edition of a news sheet as it oozed out.

"Boyer," called the newshound. "Grey Dasher won the last at Baltimore. That's one green you owe--where's Boyer?"

"Cellblock. Fledwick was yelling again."

"How long ago?"

"Keep calm. Just a second before you came in. He went with Marshal; they haven't been more than a minute."

Cade ducked as the newshound strode to the door and put his own eye to the peephole. "A minute's too long," he heard him say. "Marshal's the biggest fool in the Klin Service, and that big maniac's in there with Fledwick....Put on your gas guns."

There were groans of protest. "Ah, can't we flood the block?"

"If we did, I'd have to fill out fifty pages of reports. Move, curse you!"

"Can you fire a gas gun?" whispered Cade. The Klin teacher, trembling, shook his head.

"Then stay out of the way," Cade ordered. He was excited himself by the novelty and his unarmed state. They say we don't know fear, he thought, but they're wrong. Arle, Gunner Supreme, safely dwelling in a fearful place, I pledge that you'll have no shame for me in this action. Tuned to battle pitch, he thought of the good old man, the Gunner of Gunners, who would accept even the coming scuffle as another fit deed by another of his fit sons in the Order.

The stout door unlocked and the newshound came through first. Like a machine that couldn't help itself, Cade smashed him paralyzingly with his right arm where the ribs and sternum meet and a great ganglion is unguarded. Cade's left hand took the watchman's gun and fired two gas pellets through the half-opened door. One of the watchmen outside had time to shoot before he went down, but his pellet burst harmlessly against a wall.

Fledwick muttered something despairing about "up to our necks," but Cade waved him along into the guard room. The Gunner reconnoitered the street, found it empty, and returned for the teacher.

"Come along," he said, pitching the gas gun onto the chest of a prostrate watchman.

Fledwick promptly picked it up. "What did you do that for?" he demanded. Cade glared at him, and he hastily added: "Sir."

"Put it back," said Cade. "It's no fit weapon for a Gunner. I used it only because I had to."

There was a look on Fledwick's face that the Gunner had seen before. It was partly puzzled resignation, partly kindness and affection, and--something else that was suspiciously like condescension. Cade had seen it from the Star-borns of the Courts, and especially the ladies. He had seen it often and was puzzled as always.

"Don't you think, sir," said the Klin teacher carefully, "that we might take the gas gun along in case another emergency arises? I can carry it for you if you find it too distasteful."

"Suit yourself," said Cade shortly, "but hurry." Fledwick dropped the weapon inside his blouse, securing it underneath the waistband.

"Sir," said the Klin teacher again, "don't you think we should do something about these watchmen? Roll them behind a door and lock it?"

Cade shrugged irritably. "Nonsense," he said. "We'll be at the Chapter House with everything well again before they're discovered." Fledwick sighed and followed him down the steps and along the empty streets. There was a light mist and a hint of dawn in the sky; the two green lights of the Watch House cast the shadows of the Gunner and the Klin teacher before them on the pavement, long and thin.

"How far is the Chapter House?"

"Past the outskirts of Aberdeen, to the north. Five kilometers, say, on the Realm Highway--wide street two blocks west of here."

"I'll need a ground car."

"Car theft too!"

"Requisition in the service of the Realm," said Cade austere. "You need have no part in it." Theft--requisition. Requisition--theft. How odd things were outside the Order! And sometimes how oddly interesting! He felt a little shame at the thought, and hastily reminded himself: Gunners march where the Emperor wills--that is their glory. Yes; march in soft-soled commoners' shoes, in a requisitioned ground car.

It would be easy--a pang went through him. How easy had it been for the girl? He would investigate with the greatest care. She might suffer from her association with him now that he had broken out. The Klin Servicemen would undoubtedly mistreat her unless they were made aware that his eye was on them. He had seen last night that they were not above petty personal vengeance. Not teachers, they were nevertheless supposed to be the Arm of Klin; as the teachers kept order in men's minds, the watchmen kept order in the body politic. But what, after all, could you expect from commoners? He would have to let them know that his eye was on them in the matter of the girl.

"Here's a good one," said Fledwick. "From my own shop." Cade surveyed a Glory of the Realm ground car, parked and empty. Fledwick was peering through the window and announced with satisfaction: "Gauge says full-charged. It will get us there."

"Locked?" asked Cade. "I'll take care of..."

Fledwick waved him back calmly. "I happen to be able to handle this myself, because of my, well, familiarity with the model." The little man took off his belt, a regulation Klin uniform belt, to all appearances, until, surprisingly, it turned out to be of very thin leather, folded triple. From within the folds he took a flat metal object and applied it to the Glory car's lock. There were clicks, and the door swung open.

Cade stared at the Klin teacher as he carefully replaced the object in his belt. Fledwick cleared his throat and explained: "I was planning to get one of the Glories out of savings from my meager stipend. There's a clever fellow in the lock shop who makes these, uh, door openers, and I thought how convenient it would be to have one if I should ever mislay my combination."

"For the car you hadn't bought yet," said Cade.

"Oh. Oh, yes. Prudence, eh, sir? Prudence."

"That may be. I shall leave you now; there is no need for you to accompany me further, and you know, I suppose, that Gunners may consort with those outside the Order only if it is unavoidable. I thank you for your services. You may find pleasure in the knowledge that you have been of service to the Realm." Cade prepared to enter the car.

"Sir," said Fledwick urgently, "I'd find more pleasure in accompanying you. That pardon you mentioned..."

"It will be sent to you."

"Sir, I ask you to think that it might be a little difficult to find me. Al! I desire is to see my humble lectory again, to serve fittingly in expounding the truth of Klin to the simple, honest working folk of the Glory shop, but until I get the pardon I'll be--perforce inaccessible."

"Get in," said Cade. "No, I'll drive. You might absent mindedly pocket the steering panel." He started the car and gunned it down the street toward the Realm Highway.

"Hold it at fifteen per," Fledwick warned. "The radar meters kick up a barrier ahead if you speed."

Cade kept the car at fifteen, with his eyes peeled for trouble--and open as well to a host of curious sights. The broad highway was lined with merchandising shops. Shops and shops selling foodstuffs in small quantities to individuals. Shops and shops selling commoners' garb, each only slightly different from the next. Shops and shops, selling furniture for homes. It seemed such folly!

Fledwick turned on the ground car's radio; through the corner of his eye Cade saw him tuning carefully to a particular frequency not automatically served by the tap plates.

Why, Cade wondered, couldn't they all be sensible like the Order? A single garb--not, he hastily told himself, resembling in any way the uniform of the Armsmen. Why not refectories where a thousand of them at a time could eat simple, standardized foods? His mental stereotype of a commoner returned to him: lax, flabby, gorging himself morning, noon, and night.

How good it would be to get into the Chapter House in time for a plain breakfast, and to let the beloved routine flow over him. He knew it would quench the disturbing thoughts he had suffered during the last days. It was all a wonderful proof that the Rule of the Order was wise. Nor shall any Brother be exposed to the perils of what lies without his Chapter House or the Field of Battle. Let Brothers be transported, by ground if need be, by air if possible, swiftly from Chapter House to Chapter House, and swiftly from Chapter House to the Field of Battle.

How right and fitting it was! The perils were many. Uncounted times he had let his mind be swayed from the Order and his duty in it. When he woke today he had almost willfully chafed at the morning meditation. He could feel the warmth of the Order that would soon enfold him....

"Cade!" shrilled Fledwick. "Listen!"

The radio was saying on what must be the official band: "...claiming to be the late Gunner Cade of France and the unbooked Klin teacher Fledwick Zisz. Use medium-range gas guns. The Cade impostor is known to be armed with a gas gun, and has the strength of a maniac. Zisz is unarmed and not dangerous. Repeat, all-watch alert: bring in two men escaped this morning from Seventh District Watch House. They are an unidentified man claiming to be the late Gunner Cade of France..." It droned through a repeat and fell silent.

"They haven't missed the car yet," said Cade.

"They will," Fledwick assured him mournfully. "Or they have missed it and haven't connected it with us yet." He was gloomily silent for three blocks and then muttered angrily: "Unarmed and not dangerous!" He fingered the gas gun through his blouse. "Unarmed indeed! Sir, a little way more, and we're out of the city. If they haven't got the noose tight yet..."

"Noose?"

"Blocking of exits from the city by watchers. They'll have every gate covered soon enough, but if they don't know about the car, they'll cover the public transports first. We do have a chance." It was the first faint note of hope Fledwick had permitted himself.

Cade drove on at a steady fifteen per. The sun was up, and traffic moving in the opposite direction, toward the city, grew heavier by the minute. Once they passed a city-bound car trapped by speed bars

that had risen, cagelike, from the paving to hold the speeder for the Watch.

"They stop at the city gates," said Fledwick. "After that, you can speed up. The watchers have nothing faster than this."

The noose was not yet tight. They rolled easily past a sleepy watchman at the gate. Either he hadn't received the alert, or he assumed District Seven was no worry of his. Gunner's instinct kept Cade from taking Fledwick's advice and speeding. He rolled the car on at an inconspicuous twenty per, and the decision was sound. A green-topped Watch car from the city passed them, and Fledwick shriveled where he sat. But it kept going on its way, never noticing the fugitives.

The highway was now dotted with cars. Just ahead, and off to the left, was a gray crag. "Chapter House," said Fledwick, pointing, and Cade sighed. The whole insanely unfitting episode at last was drawing to a close.

The radio spoke again: "To all Armsmen and watchmen." The voice was vibrant and commanding. "To all watchmen and Armsmen," said the voice again slowly. "This command supersedes the previous all-watch alert concerning the Cade impostor and the unbooked Klin teacher Fledwick Zisz. Both these men are heavily armed, and both are dangerous. They are to be shot on sight. Armsmen: shoot to kill. Watchmen: use long-range gas guns. New orders for watchmen and Armsmen both are: Shoot on sight! These men are both dangerous. There is to be no parleying, no calls to surrender, no offer or granting of quarter. Your orders are to shoot on sight. No explanation of any Armsman or watchman who fails to shoot on sight will be accepted.

"Description and records follow..."

Cade, in frozen shock, had slowed the car to a crawl, not daring to make a conspicuous stop. He listened to fair physical descriptions of both of them. His "record" was criminal insanity, homicidal mania. Fledwick's was an interminable list of petty and not-so-petty offenses of the something-for-nothing kind. He too was described as a homicidal maniac.

"You're armed and are dangerous now," Cade said stupidly.

His answer was a volley of wild curses. "You got me into this!" raved the little man. "What a fool I was! I could have done my five years standing on one foot! I had friends who could have raised my fine. And you had to bully me into making a break!"

Cade shook his head dazedly. Fledwick's flood of rage poured over him and drained away, powerless to affect him after the impact of the radio announcement.

"But I am Gunner Cade," he said quietly, aloud, as much to himself as to the unbooked teacher.

## CHAPTER 8

"It's a mistake--that's all," Cade said numbly.

"Very well." The little man's voice was acid. "Before we are killed because of this curious mistake, will you decide on a course of action? We're still approaching your Brothers' House, and I want none of their hospitality."

"You're right," said Cade. "The Brothers," he said, feeling an unwarranted note of apology creeping into his voice, "the Brothers would obey the official-frequency command. It's their duty. I would myself, though the command was most--unusual. I don't think I've ever heard its like, not even for the worst criminal."

Fledwick was past his first fury. He studied Cade's bewilderment and said slowly: "Back in the cage, when I saw you fix the lock, I thought you were either a Gunner or a master burglar--the greatest master I ever heard of. And when you laid out five watchers without working up a sweat, I thought you were either a Gunner or a master burglar and the greatest strong-arm bucko I ever saw. But when you tossed away that gas gun because it wasn't fitting, I knew you were a Gunner. Cade or not, you're a Gunner. So it's a mistake, but what can we do, and where can we go?"

Cade suddenly laughed. The Order was perfect after all; the answer was so easy. He sent the car swinging in a bumpy U-turn over the parkway strips. "To the Gunner Supreme!" he said.

"The Gunner Supreme," echoed Fledwick blankly. "The chief of all the Gunners. Wouldn't he shoot us



twice as fast as an ordinary Gunner? I don't understand."

"No, you don't," said Cade. He tried to think of some way to make the wonderful presence clear, knowing he would fail. Of all things in the Order, the meaning and being of the Gunner Supreme had most of all to be felt. "We in the Order are Brothers," he carefully began. "He is the father. The Power Master disposes of us to the several Stars, but the assignment is without force until it has been sealed with the seal that is in the gun hilt of the Gunner Supreme."

"He touches his gun to ours before we first put them on as armigers. If he didn't touch them, we wouldn't be actual members of the Order. The memory of him touching our guns steadies our hands and makes our eyes keen and our wits quick in battle."

And there was more he could never tell to anybody. Those in the Order knew it without telling; those outside would never know. There were the times you didn't like to remember, times when your knees trembled and you sweated advancing into fire. Then you thought of him, watching you with concern clouding his brow, and you stopped trembling and sweating. You felt warm and sure advancing into fire to play your fitting part.

"This paragon of Gunners..." began Fledwick ironically.

"Silence, thief! I will not tolerate disrespect."

"I'm sorry...may I speak?"

"With decorum."

"You were right to rebuke me." His voice didn't sound quite sincere, but he had, Cade reflected, been through a lot. And, being what he was, he didn't realize that the problem was solved--that the Gunner Supreme would understand, and everything would be all right again. "Where," Fledwick asked, "does the Gunner Supreme live?"

From beloved ritual Cade quoted the answer: "Near by to the Caves of Washington, across the River Potomac to the south, in a mighty Cave that is not a Cave, it is called Alexandria."

"The Caves of Washington!" squalled Fledwick. "I'll take my chances with the watchers. Let me out! Stop the car and let me out!"

"Be still!" Cade yelled at him. "You ought to be ashamed. An educated man like you mouthing the follies of ignorant commoners. You were a teacher of Klin, weren't you?"

Fledwick shuddered and subsided for a moment. Then he muttered: "I'm not such a fool. You know yourself it's dangerous. And don't forget, I was born 'an ignorant commoner.' You sprang it at me before I had time to think, that's all. I felt as if I were a child again, with my mother telling me: 'You be good or I'll take you to the Caves.' I can remember her very words." He shuddered. "How could I forget them?"

"I'll take you to the Caves."

"And the Beetu-Nine will come and tear your fingers and toes off with white-hot knives of metal."

"And the Beetu-Five will come and pepper you with white-hot balls of metal."

"And the Beefai-voh will come and grate your arms and legs with white-hot metal graters."

"And last, if you are not a good boy, the Beethrie-Six will come in the dark and will hunt you out though you run from Cave to Cave in the darkness, screaming. The Beethrie-Six, which lumbers and grumbles, will breathe on you with its poison breath, and that is the most horrible of all, for your bones will turn to water and you will burn forever."

Fledwick shuddered and said feebly: "The old bitch. I should have kicked her in the belly." He was sweating greasily from his forehead. "I'm not a fool," he said belligerently, "but you don't deny there's something about the Caves, do you?"

Cade said shortly: "I wouldn't care to spend a night there, but we're not going to." Fledwick's reminiscence of his mother's threat had shocked him. No wonder, he thought, commoners were what they were. There was nothing in the Caves--he supposed. One simply, as a matter of course, calmly and rationally avoided the horrible things.

"Alert, all Armsmen and watchmen!" said the radio. It wasn't the same vibrant, commanding voice that had issued the "Shoot-on-sight" order, but it was bad news--the bad news Cade had been expecting since then. "The Cade impostor and the unbooked Klin teacher Fledwick Zisz are now known to have stolen Glory of the Realm ground car AB-779. That is Glory of the Realm ground car AB-779."

Watchmen are to shoot the occupants of this car on sight with long-range gas guns. When the occupants are paralyzed, watchmen are to take them with all possible speed to the nearest Chapter House of the Order for immediate execution by Armsmen. Armsmen's orders are unchanged. Shoot to kill; destroy the ground car on sight; kill the occupants if seen outside the car. That is Glory of the Realm ground car AB-779."

The broadcast cut off, and the only sound in Glory of the Realm ground car AB-779 was the soft whimpering of Fledwick.

"Keep your nerve, man," Cade urged. "We'll be out of here in a moment." He stopped the car and rummaged through its map case for the Washington area sheet. Then he stepped out of the car and yanked Fledwick out bodily after him. Finally, Cade set the car's panel on self-steering at twenty per and opaqued the windows before he started it cityward on the highway.

Standing in the roadside scrub, the little thief followed the vanishing car with his eyes. "Now what are we going to do?" he asked sympathically.

"Walk," said Cade grimly. "That way we may live to reach the Supreme. And stop sniveling. There's a good chance that an Armsman will spot the car and burn it without knowing it's empty. And then they won't have any easy time deciding that we got away."

The little man wouldn't stop sobbing.

"See here," said Cade. "If you're going to be like this all the way, it'll be better for both of us if you dig in somewhere and take care of yourself for a few days while I make it alone."

The unbooked teacher gave a last tremendous sniff and declared shakily: "No cursed chance of that, Gunner. Lead the way."

Cade led the way across a stubbly field for a starter.

For the Gunner the five days of overland march were refreshing and reassuring. Here at last was something familiar, something his years of training had fitted him for, something he understood completely. And to his surprise, Fledwick was no burden.

On the first day, for instance, they crawled on their bellies up to the chicken yard of a food factory through its great outlying vegetable fields. Cade was suddenly chagrined to discover that he didn't know what to do next. In action, if there was food, you demanded it or took it; if there was none, you went without. Here there was food--and it would be self-destruction to seize it in his usual fashion. But Fledwick's unusual belt gave up another instrument that sheared easily through the aluminum wire. Fledwick's pockets gave up peas he had picked and shelled along the way, and he scattered a few through the gap in the wire. A few repetitions, and there were clucking chickens on their side of the barrier. The little man pounced silently four times, and they crawled back through the vegetable field with a brace of fowl each at their belts.

After that Cade left the commissary to Fledwick, only reminding him that he wouldn't look kindly on Fledwick devouring a chicken while he chewed carrots.

Once they thought they were in danger of discovery. At an isolated paper mill on the second day, they saw watchmen, a dozen of them, drive up and fan out to beat a field--the wrong one. If they had picked the right one, Cade could have slipped through them with laughable ease, and so perhaps could Fledwick. Cade guessed he would be expert enough at slipping across an unfamiliar room in the dark without betraying himself by squeaks and bumps. From that to a polished job of scouting and patrolling was not as far a cry as he would have thought a few days earlier.

After the incident at the paper mill Cade surrendered to the ex-teacher's pleading that he be taught the use of the gas gun. Disdainfully, for he still disliked handling the weapon, Cade stripped it a few times, showed Fledwick the correct sight-picture, and told him that the rest was practice--necessarily dry runs, since the number of pellets was limited. Fledwick practiced faithfully for a day, which was enough for the ignoble weapon in Cade's eyes. He went to some pains to explain to the ex-teacher that gas gun and Gun were two entirely different things--that there was a complex symbolism and ceremony about the Gun of the Order which the gas gun, weapon of commoners, could not claim.

Cade learned as well as taught. In five days, it seemed to him, the cheerful conversation of the little

man told him more about the world outside the Order than he had learned in the past thirteen years. He knew it was none of his affair to listen as Fledwick told of the life in shops and factories or the uses of restaurants, theaters, entertainment, radio, and dives. He consoled himself with occasional self-reminders that he didn't ask--he just listened. And there was a good half that he didn't understand because of linguistic difficulty. Fledwick had a twinned vocabulary. Half of it was respectable, and the other half was a lively argot, richly anatomical, whose roots were in a shady world Cade had never known. Here and there a word was inescapably clear because of context.

Less articulate himself, Cade still tried to interpret to the ex-teacher the meaning that the Order and its life had for him, a Gunner. But he found that although Fledwick sincerely admired the Order, he did so for all the wrong reasons. He seemed incapable of understanding the interior life--the rich complexity of ritual, the appropriateness of each formal thought, the way each Armsman molded his life to Klin. Cade sadly suspected that the ex-teacher saw the Gunner Supreme as a sort of glorified Klin Service deskman. He could not seem to realize that, merely by being himself, the Gunner Supreme made the interior life of the Order tangible, that he was the personification of fitness and decorum. But Cade decided he could forgive Fledwick a lot after he had snared a plump turkey without a single gobble an hour before sundown.

The third afternoon Cade spent a full hour over his maps trying to avoid an inevitable decision. That night he insisted on a march of five kilometers by starlight alone. They woke at dawn, and Fledwick gasped at what he saw to the south.

"Is it...?" he asked hoarsely.

"It's the Caves of Washington. Skirting them fairly closely--three kilometers or so--is the only way we can avoid a huge detour around thickly populated areas. I was afraid you'd balk if you saw them first by daylight." Cade did not add that he had feared he would have balked himself. He cheerily asked: "Did you ever think you'd spend a night this close to the Caves?"

"No." Fledwick shuddered.

They breakfasted on stolen--or requisitioned--fruit while Cade, less calm than he appeared, studied the battered skyline to the south. It was a horrible thing: a rambling mound of gray stone, with black gapings in it like eyes and mouths. Toward the peak there was a thing like the vertebrae of a man's backbone outlined against the morning sky. It was as though some great, square shaft had toppled and shattered where it struck. It was a horrible thing, and Arle, the Gunner Supreme, lived in a mighty Cave that was not a Cave. In the shadow of Washington, not even the negative was reassuring. Washington was a horror. It made him think of obscenities like firing from a flier. Or the women at Mistress Cannon's.

Cade found himself unable to swallow the fruit pulp. "Let's march," he growled at Fledwick, and the little man scrambled to his feet fast. They skirted the Caves with a generous margin, and Fledwick kept up a running stream of nervous chatter--about places like Mistress Cannon's, it happened.

For once, in his nervousness, Cade asked a direct question. Had Fledwick ever heard of a woman wearing the garter who spoke unlike a commoner and had such-and-such eyes, hair, and manner? The ex-teacher badly misunderstood. He assured Cade that after this mess was cleared up, any time the Gunner was in Aberdeen he could fix him up with the nicest little piece who ever wore the garter, and he would personally guarantee that Cade would never notice if she spoke like a commoner or a Star-born...

Cade thundered at him, and there was total silence until they reached the shining Potomac.

Fledwick couldn't swim. Cade made him waterwings by tying his trouser cuffs, whipping them through the air until they ballooned, and drawing the belt tight. He had to push the half-naked little thief into the river and toss the wings to him before he'd believe that the elementary field expedient, trusted by Armsmen for ten thousand years, would work. Cade towed him across, and they dried out on the south bank as the Gunner oriented his map.

"That's it," he said, pointing to the east. And he felt covered with dirt for having given a thought to the commoner girl while he was this close to the Gunner Supreme.

Fledwick only grunted doubtfully. But when ten minutes of brisk walking brought them to a clearer view of the pile, he stopped and said flatly: "It's more Caves."

"Oh, you fool!" snapped Cade. "A mighty Cave that is no Cave are the words. And you used to be a

Klin teacher! It obviously means that it looks like a Cave but isn't to be feared like one."

"Obvious to you, perhaps," Fledwick retorted. "But then so many things are perfectly clear to you."

"This is not one of them," the Gunner answered stiffly. "I intend to walk around it at a reasonable distance. Are you coming or aren't you?" Fledwick sat down obstinately, and Cade started off to circumnavigate the gloomy, dome-shaped mound that should be the residence of Arle. It looked like Caves, right enough...He heard Fledwick pattering after him and declined to notice the little man when he caught up.

They marched around the crumbling dome, about three hundred meters from its rim--and it began to assume a shape on its western front that exactly justified the traditional description. The Cave that was no Cave was a gigantic building from one side and a moldering ruin from the other.

"Fives," murmured Cade abstractedly, studying it.

"Eh?" asked Fledwick, and the Gunner forgave him for the sake of someone to tell his puzzling discovery to.

"Fives--five floors, five sides, a regular pentagon if it were not half-cave, and I think five rings of construction, of which we see only the outermost."

"Drop!" snapped Fledwick, and Cade dropped. "Guards," muttered the ex-teacher. "Armsmen? Watchmen?"

Cade studied the insignificantly small figures against the huge facade.

"Armsmen," he said, heavyhearted. "We must assume they have received the order to kill us. We will have to wait until night to slip in and bring this before the Gunner Supreme himself. I would trust no one below him."

## CHAPTER 9

They settled themselves in good cover on a grassy mound half a kilometer from the Building of Fives. Fledwick turned face-down and dozed off. The five days had taken a lot out of the city-bred man, Cade thought, but he'd been a good companion through it all: clever and quick, though no Armsman, useless only when his sharp mind raced ahead of his courage and petrified him with expected terrors.

For Cade there was no sleep. With his eyes trained steadily on the Building of Fives, one part of his mind accumulated and stored the information he needed--the pattern of patrol, the number of guards, time between meetings at sentry posts, the structure of the building, and the flesh and bones of the terrain around it. And all the while he pondered the deeper problem he had to solve.

Their chances of getting in were good. Without pride--pride is a peril--Cade knew he was among the best of the Emperor's Armsmen, but the necessary feat savored of the impossible. It was too much to expect that he, practically alone, could outwit or overcome a company of sentries. If he failed to pass them and so did not come into the presence of Arle, the Supreme, there had to be a way of getting him the word, whether Cade lived or died.

He ripped off a square of his ragged shirt for writing paper--and there was a flexible little knife Fledwick had casually extracted from his belt and lent him to eat with. A tiny puncture in the middle of each fingertip of his left hand. Then carefully, painfully, one finger at a time, he squeezed the drops of blood out until the friction pads were smeared with red. He pressed each finger to a once-white diamond in the patterned fabric of the shirt.

With a few more drops on the knife point he could write, one letter to a diamond:

CADE DID

NOT DIE

AT

SARRALBE

CAIRO

MYSTERY

BALTIMORE

That was enough. They could identify the prints, and perhaps even the blood. They could go to the

house of the hag who had poisoned him, raid the Mystery with its underground corridors, check on the Watch House's "impostor," piece together the story--a thing he might not live to do.

Cade wiped the blade and his fingers to leave no signs that would puzzle or frighten Fledwick. The ragged cloth from his shirt he knotted about a small stone and dropped in his pocket.

With the last light of the sun the guard was changed at the House of Fives. Cade breathed easier when he saw that the night guard was no heavier than the day. It was a guard of honor, nothing more. All around the side that was not ruins paced single sentries on lonely fifty-meter posts, meeting under arclights, turning to march through the dark until they met at the light marking the other end of the patrol. It was understandable. The staring Cave mouths were fearsome enough to need little guarding.

Cade nudged his partner awake with his bare toes, broken through the ruins of commoners' sandals.

"Is it time?" Fledwick asked.

The Gunner nodded and explained. In two more hours the first alertness of the guards would have worn off, and the lassitude of a ceremonial guard mount would be creeping on...not yet strong enough for them to fight against it. Every commander knew that time of night, the time to take green or lazy troops by surprise and teach them a lesson in alertness those who lived would never forget.

They would use their two hours until then to make the approach to the building. Fledwick chewed on a stolen turnip and finally asked: "And then? When we're there?"

Cade pointed to one particular arclight. Behind it, to the right, gaped the black emptiness of a Cave mouth, barely distinguishable from shadows the arclights cast of jagged rock on smoother rock. As they watched, two Gunners came in view, approaching with metrical precision from opposite sides, to meet exactly under the light, saluted--gun to brow--and wheeled and marched off like synchronized puppets.

"Watch him." Cade pointed. "The one with the red stripe." Together they watched while the Gunner disappeared again into the blackness and waited until he emerged again, thirty meters beyond, in the brightness of the next sentry post. Here the arclights showed not gaping ruins but the smooth surface of the building proper. Somewhere in between, invisible, was the junction of ruins and building.

"He's our man," said Cade simply.

"A friend of yours, sir?" asked Fledwick over politely.

"He's a Marsman," said Cade, ignoring the flippancy. "The Marsman has not been born who can meet an Earth Gunner in combat and win. Their training is lax, and their devotion is lacking. We will take him in the dark, halfway between posts, silently. If we work swiftly and all goes well, I will have time to take his cloak, boots, and helmet and make his next round to the sentry post. If there is no time for that, I am afraid we will have to use the--gas gun--to stun the approaching sentry. Then," he concluded with a shrug, "we have the full pacing time to make our entrance."

Fledwick spat out a fibrous bit of turnip and stared across the field at the sputtering lights. At last he looked up at the Gunner.

"The full pacing time? Almost a whole minute?"

"Fifty-three seconds. Even you can move that fast," Cade said scornfully.

"You noticed there were bars on the gates--sir?"

Cade was losing his temper. "I noticed," he growled. "I'm not a fool of a commoner."

"No, sir. I'm very much aware of that. Would you tell a fool of a commoner how we'll get through the barred gates in fifty-three seconds?"

"Serve you right if I didn't. But I can't expect you to show the courage of a Brother. We won't enter the barred gates at all. We'll go through the unbarred Cave. It's got to lead into the building." Cade's impassive face betrayed nothing--not that he was sure he lied; not that he knew death was minutes away for both of them. "We're starting now." He began to work his way down the hillock, ignoring frantic whispers from behind. At last rustling grass and heavy breathing told him that Fledwick was following. He smiled.

The noise, he suspected, was to worry him and make him angry. But he knew that when silent sneaking was needed, Fledwick would deliver.

Ten meters down he paused. "You may stay behind if you like," he whispered. "I shall not think ill of you."

He waited in the dark and grinned at a sound between a curse and a sob, followed by more of the rustling and heavy breathing.

"Quiet!" he whispered sternly, and they began the passage.

A full two hours later they crept up to the very edge of the patrol posts and separated. Cade, crouching, thrilled to the awareness of all his muscles tensing for the spring. It was almost disappointingly easy when the split-second came and the Marsman fell silently, perhaps forever, on the concrete path. The neck blow was never certain--either way. Cade had tried not to hit too hard. To kill a Brother in combat was fit and glorious, but never had he heard of any precedent for what he did.

He stripped the silent figure with desperate haste and threw the garments onto himself. Cloak and the Order wraps the Realm; Helmet and protects the Emperor; Boots and march where the Emperor wills.

But the cursed boots wouldn't fit. He look up and saw in the distance the opposite sentry approaching, almost in the circle of light. With infinite relief he heard the small hiss of the gas gun and saw the sentry drop, with only one arm in the pool of light beneath the arc. Now Cade no longer needed boots. He buckled on the Marsman's gunbelt and felt sudden wild optimism come with the familiar weight on his hip. He flipped the message-wrapped stone from the pocket of his commoner's shirt under the cloak and dropped it by the felled Marsman. From somewhere Fledwick crept up beside him, and together they raced for the yawning black hole in the ragged, moldering wall.

Cade leaped clear of the Cave mouth's jagged edge and found sure footing on the rubble inside. Fledwick couldn't make it. Cade hauled him in, shaking violently and gasping for breath. But Fledwick picked himself up and stumbled after Cade into the deepening darkness of the interior.

They heard voices and tramping boots, and a clear shout, "In here--loose rock--they went inside!"

There was anger in the voice, but something else too: awe.

Cade had not let himself think until now of the enormity of this campaign. He had attacked a Brother off the Field of Battle, and perhaps killed him. He had assisted a commoner, and worse, an unbooked teacher, into classified ground. If successful, he would invade without request or warning the private dwelling of the Supreme. But somehow overshadowing all this was the realization: You are in a Cave, and you are none the worse for it.

A blast of hot air rolled through the Cave, followed by pungent ozone. "They're shooting into the--the Cave," he told Fledwick. "Stay down, and nothing will happen."

For minutes afterward the air crackled above them, and Cade lay motionless, waiting and hoping to be spared to complete his mission. He thought again of the terrible roster of his crimes, but they had been the only possible answer to crimes worse than he knew could exist. That men should plot against the Emperor...

The firing stopped. The two or three bends they had rounded were ample protection from the direct effects of the fire, it appeared. Voices echoed down the Cave again, and Cade had a mind's-eye picture of Gunners peering in cautiously, but never considering pursuit.

"...wasting fire. Get torches..."

"...we'll smoke them out--gone inside."

Cade groped along the floor with one hand and then pulled himself cautiously over to Fledwick. "Get up," he whispered. "We can't stay here."

"I can't move," a broken voice whimpered too noisily. "You go ahead."

Wounded, Cade realized--or hurt when they hit the ground. He scooped up the little man and tossed him over his shoulder. He did not groan, Cade noted with surprise and respect. The Gunner started forward.

First, get away from the light. They had food in their pockets, a full-charged gun, a dozen gas-gun pellets, and a knife apiece. If they could find a spring for water, a place to put their backs against, they could hold out for a long time; and a flood of new energy came with the mounting excitement of the thought that they might yet come out of this alive!

They turned a corner of some sort that cut off the last light from the entrance. Cade's eyes adjusted to the gloom; he could make out a little of the shape and structure of the Cave. And his eyes confirmed what his feet and groping hands had told him...what he had known before, and told to Fledwick, but had

not dared believe: the Cave was artificial, a disused corridor in a decayed old building.

Cave and Building were one!

What was Washington?

He wished he could tell Fledwick, and examine the idea in the light of his quick, acquisitive intelligence. But the little thief was taking his injury nobly; this was no time for explanations.

The Cave--he couldn't think of it as anything else yet--seemed endless; doors were on either side. Any one of the dust-choked rooms might do for a stand, but there was no need to choose one until the sounds of pursuit were heard.

On his shoulder the limp bundle wriggled and came alive.

"You can put me down now."

"Can you walk?"

"I think so."

Cade lowered the man to the ground and waited while Fledwick found his footing.

"You mean," the Gunner demanded with as much outrage as he could pack into a whisper, "you're not hurt?"

"I don't think so." Fledwick was unashamed. "No, not a scratch."

Cade kept a contemptuous silence.

"Where do we go?" asked Fledwick.

"I think," he said slowly, "if we keep on going we'll find our way to the other part of the building."

"The other part? You really meant it?" The little man darted from one side of the corridor to the other, feeling the regularity of the walls, clutching the door jamb. "It is part of the building! But it was a Cave?"

"I told you--a Cave that is not a Cave. But you chose to believe in your beasts and horrors and other commoners' tales. Keep moving." His brusqueness covered a churning confusion in his mind. If the Cave was simply a disused part of a building, why weren't they being followed by the sentries.

They rounded an angle in the corridor--an angle of Fives--and saw at the end of the new corridor, far ahead, a dim, luminous rectangle, like the light around the edges of a closed door.

## CHAPTER 10

Fledwick redeemed himself.

There was no radionic lock in existence, Cade was certain, that he could not open. But this door was locked in a manner the Gunner had never seen before, with an ancient mechanical device no longer in use anywhere--except among commoners.

The ex-Teacher seemed perfectly familiar with it. He removed from inside his surprising belt a bit of metal that he twisted in an opening in the lock.

Cade stepped up first, as was his due. The door opened easily an inch or two, and then, before the Gunner could adjust his eyes to the light, there was a voice.

"Who is it? Who's there?"

Cade almost laughed aloud. He had been ready for a challenge, the blast of a gun, conquest or defeat or even emptiness. He had been ready for almost anything except a startled question in a feminine voice. He pushed the door open, and Fledwick followed him into the room.

Only two things were certain about her: she was Star-born, a Lady of the Court; and she was just as surprised as he.

She stood erect beside a couch on which, he guessed, she had been resting when the door opened. Her eyes were wide with surprise, fast turning to anger, and their brilliance was intensified by the color of her hair, expertly tinted to a subtly matching blue-green shade. Only the Star-born would or could wear that elaborate coif: soft coils of hair piled high on the crown of her head and scattered with seemingly random drifts of golden dust. As her anger grew, her eyes, too, seemed to flash with cold metallic glints.

The headdress marked her rank, and her clothes confirmed it. She wore the privileged sheer of the nobility, not fashioned into obscene pajamas as he had seen it once before, but a fluid draping of cobweb stuff whose color echoed just a trace of hair and eyes...as seafoam carries the faintest vestige of the

ocean hue. The same golden specks that dusted her hair were looped in fairy patterns through the fabric of the gown, and here and there, where the designer's scheme planned to attract the eye, the flowing robe was caught and held by artful encrustations of the dust.

Cade stood speechless. He had seen Ladies of the Court in such attire before, though not so close or so informally. But the vision itself was responsible for only part of his consternation. It was her presence here, in the private dwelling of the Gunner Supreme, that took his breath away.

The woman raised a delicately fashioned tube of gold to her lips and sucked on it. In a small bowl at the other end a coal seemed to glow, and when she dropped her hand again, a cloud of pale-blue smoke came from her lips and drifted lazily across the room to where Cade stood. Its heavy fragrance dizzied him.

"Well?" demanded the woman.

The Gunner formally began: "We come in Klin's service..." and could think of nothing more to say. Something was terribly wrong. Was it possible that he had mistaken the ritual description of the place? Had the slow afternoon of planning and the violence of the night gone for nothing? It seemed, from the furnishings and the woman, to be the palace of a foreign Star. And what could he tell the lady of such a one?

Fledwick leaped into the breach. Words began to pour from him with practiced ease: "Oh, Star-born Lady, if you have mercy to match even the smallest part of your beauty, hear me before you condemn us out of hand! We are your lowly servants! We throw ourselves at your feet..."

"Silence, fool!" the Gunner growled. "Lady! This commoner speaks only for himself. I am the servant of no woman but of my Emperor and my Star. Tell me who is the master of this house?"

She scanned him coldly, her eyes lingering on the discrepancies of his gear. "It is enough for you to know that I am its mistress," she said. "I see you wear stolen garments while you speak of loyalty."

There was no possibility at all that she would believe him, but Cade was suddenly and unspeakably weary of subterfuge. "I am no usurper," he said quietly. "I am Gunner Cade of the Order of Armsmen; my Star is the Star of France. They say I died in battle for my Star at Sarralbe, but I did not. I came here for audience with my father in the Order, Gunner Supreme Arle; if you are the mistress here, I must have come wrongly. Whatever place this is, I demand assistance in the name of the Order. You will earn the thanks of the Supreme himself if..."

She was laughing a low, throat chuckle of honest mirth. "So," she said at last, her voice catching to the tag ends of her laughter, "you are Gunner Cade. Then you..." She turned to the little thief. "You must be the unbooked Klin teacher. And to think that you two sorry creatures are the...the dangerous homicidal maniacs the whole world is searching for! How did you find your way in here? And where did you get those uniforms?" She was a Lady with commoners; unthinkable that they would not obey if her voice had the proper whipcrack in it.

"The cloak and helmet that I wear are stolen," Cade told her flatly. "I got them less than an hour ago from a sentry at your gate. I also stole..."

"Star-born, have mercy!" shrieked Fledwick suddenly. "I am frightened. I am only a poor thief, but they are right about him. Call your master! Quickly! Give us in his power, Star-born Lady, before he...oh, Lady, he has a gun!"

"Stupid!" she chided him, still smiling. "If he has, he can't use it. Do you suppose that an Armsman's gun is such a simple affair that any madman can fire it?" She took a step backward.

"I don't know," Fledwick shrieked with fear. "I don't know! But I beg you, Star-born, call your Lord! Call him now, before he kills us both!"

Cade listened to it all, incredulous and immobile: that this miserable, sniveling little creature, whose life he had saved more than once, should turn against him now...betray him after the danger was over! It was unbelievable.

The woman was watching him, he realized, out of the corner of her eye. She stepped back once more. Well, let her call her Lord, then, Cade thought angrily. That would serve his purpose; that was what he wanted...

The Lady took another backward step, as Fledwick went on pouring out his gibberish fright, and at



last Cade understood what the little man was really up to.

He reached beneath his stolen cloak and drew the Marsman's gun. He did not aim it at the woman, but pointed it instead at Fledwick's quivering head. "Traitor!" he shouted. "For this you die!"

The woman's nerve broke at last. She hurled herself across the room to a silk-hung wall and stabbed frantically at a rosette.

"Don't shoot!" wailed Fledwick, finally permitting himself a broad wink. "Please don't shoot! I'm only a poor thief..."

While he babbled, Cade made a menacing grimace or two and wondered who would turn up. Any Star at all would do. He'd have his gun on him, Fledwick could barricade the place, and a message would be sent at last to the Gunner Supreme, with the life of the Star, or whoever was this Lady's master, as hostage for its delivery.

The woman took a hand. "Stop this brawling!" she screamed. Fledwick stopped. Her face was white but proud. "Hear me," she said. "I've summoned--help. If there is bloodshed in my chambers, your death is certain. It will not be a pleasant one. But I have a powerful protector." Good; good, thought Cade. The more powerful, the better. We'll soon get this farce over with.

"If you surrender now," the woman went on, fighting for calm, "you will get justice, whatever that may be in your case." She stood composedly, waiting for a gunblast or a plea for mercy.

There was no need to continue play-acting. Cade holstered the gun, confident that he could outdraw whatever retainers the master of the place might appear with. Out of admiration for her he swallowed a smile of triumph before he said: "Thank you, Lady. And thank you, Fledwick. You know strategies that I have never been forced to practice."

Mopping his brow, the little thief said from the soul: "I suppose you think I wasn't afraid of that gun?"

"What nonsense is this...?" the woman began indignantly, but she went no further. The door opened, and someone strode into the room.

"Moia!" the man called, seeing only the woman against the silk-hung wall. "What is it? You called..."

He followed her eyes to the two strangers, and they stared back, Fledwick with curiosity and apprehension and Cade with astonishment and veneration. He had automatically drawn the gun. Just as automatically, when he saw the proud, straight head, the gold band on the swirling cloak, the gun with a great seal on its hilt, he performed the Grand Salute of the Order, which is rendered only to the Gunner Supreme.

Abased on the floor, Cade heard the sonorous voice ask with concern: "You are unharmed?"

"Up to now." The Lady's shaky reassurance ended with a forced laugh.

"Good. You may rise, Gunner. Show me your face."

"He's no Gunner!" the woman cried. "He's the commoner posing as Cade! And he has a gun!"

Calmly, the Supreme said: "Do not fear. He is a Gunner, though the cloak he wears is not his own. Speak, Brother. What brings you here in this unseemly manner?"

Cade rose and holstered the gun he had proffered in the salute. With downcast eyes he said: "Sir, I am Gunner Cade of France. I come with an urgent message..."

"I have already received it. A most dramatic message, most effectively delivered. I was studying it when the Lady Moia's signal reached me. It was your work?"

"Yes, sir. I was not sure I could reach your person alive. Sir, I must warn you that there is a conspiracy, perhaps a dangerously powerful one, against..."

"You will tell me of it shortly. Your...the cloak you wear. It seems familiar. Or have you become a Marsman?"

"It was the property of a Brother in your service, sir. I hope I did not kill him. I knew no other way to come to you."

"He is dead. I owe you thanks for that. He guarded an important post and guarded it badly. I shall see to it that a better man replaces him, before others less friendly than you find their way to this room." He turned from Cade and addressed the Lady Moia: "We shall leave you now to rest and recover from this upsetting incident. I promise you the guards will be taught an unforgettable lesson. I will be back when I have heard this Brother's story." Their eyes met, and Cade saw them smile as no Armsman should smile

at a woman, and no woman should smile at an Armsman.

"Your story will be better told in my own quarters," Arle spoke, without self-consciousness, to Cade. "The Lady Moia's apartment is no place for gory tales." He looked absently about the room until his eyes fell on the open corridor door. "Yes," he muttered. "We must change that lock. You." For the first time he seemed to notice Fledwick.

"Close the door and bolt it. There will be a new lock tomorrow, my dear," he added to the Lady Moia. "Meanwhile, the bolt will serve. Will you be all right by yourself for a while?" His fingers dipped into a carved gold box on the table and took out a golden smoking pipe, like the one she herself held, and placed it absently between his lips.

"I'm all right now," she assured him with sudden nervousness. "You needn't worry, and the lock may be replaced whenever it's convenient. The pipe, sir!" The Gunner Supreme started. "It's a new plaything of mine," she said with self-deprecating humor. "I doubt that you would care for it."

Arle took the tube from his lips and studied it as though he had never seen it before. "A strange plaything," he said disapprovingly. "Come along, Gunner. And you too, I suppose." That was for Fledwick.

The room he took them to was the first reassuring thing Cade had seen in the place. It was a lesson room like those you could find in any Chapter House. The walls were bare, with standard storage space; there was a table in the center and Order benches all around. Cade sat down on Arle's permissive signal; Fledwick remained standing.

"Now," said the Supreme, "let me hear your story."

Cade started. The mad business had gone through his mind so often that it was like a verbatim recitation: doping and capture by a hag in Sarralbe; resurrection in Baltimore; the Cairo Mystery. He had waited so long to tell it and gone through so much for the opportunity that somehow now the whole business was a disappointment. And there was one final lunatic touch: the Gunner Supreme appeared little more interested in hearing the tale than Cade was in telling it. From time to time Arle asked a question or made a comment: "How many were there? Did they seem to be local people or from overseas? A wicked business, Brother! No recognizable Armsmen, of course?" But his eyes were glazed with boredom.

Could he lie to the incarnate Order? He stumbled in his story; the question burned in his mind, and then the fire went out. He was lying to Arle by omission. He was leaving out the girl of the Cairo Mystery, who had twice tried, the second time with success, to save him from hypnosis. He let the Gunner Supreme understand that he had automatically come to his senses on the street and then gone on to his arrest--"with some wearer of the garter who was following me"--for impersonating an Armsman. The rest was straightforward, including the attack on the guard and the long trip through the corridor. He told how Fledwick had forced the lock, and the Supreme examined the ex-teacher's curious key with more interest than he had shown up to that point.

"Very well," he said finally, tossing the key to the table. "And then?"

"Then we entered the...the Lady Moia's apartment." Cade choked on the words.

The Lady Moia's apartment. I am its mistress. The Lady Moia rang...and the Gunner Supreme, the incarnation of the Order of Armsmen, answered her call. And quickly! Cade raised his eyes to the fine, proud old face.

"You're troubled, Brother," said the Supreme. "If it will ease your mind, I should tell you that the Lady Moia is one of the graces of this place. Visiting Stars and their Courts are not exposed to the rigors of an Armsman's life in Chapter House. It is the Lady Moia's task to prepare fitting apartments for them and to treat them with the ceremony that I, of course, cannot extend."

To be sure. It was so sensible. But the smile he had seen was unexplained, and it was unexplained why the Lady Moia, hostess and social aide, could summon the personification of the Order by a push on a concealed button.

His mind a dazed whirl, Cade said hoarsely: "I thank you, sir. There is no more to tell. You know the rest." Then, at a nervous cough from Fledwick, he hastened to emphasize his virtual promise to the little man of a pardon on grounds of service to the Realm.

"Quite right," said the Supreme, and Fledwick relaxed with a sigh.

Three Gunners entered on a summons from Arle. He told them: "This is the former Klin teacher, Fledwick Zisz. You recall that there is an order out to kill him on sight as a homicidal maniac. I find that order was a gross error. He is a worthy member of the Realm who appears to have committed some trifling indiscretions. Bring me materials for writing him a pardon on grounds of Service."

Cade stole a look at the unbooked teacher and felt inexplicable shame as Fledwick avoided his eyes. He could not forget Lady Moia's apartment himself; how could Fledwick? He wished he could take the little man aside to tell him earnestly that it was still all right, that the Supreme's outward forms didn't count, that his inner life must be in complete harmony with Klin, that the relationship between the Supreme and the Lady Moia wasn't--what it obviously was.

Cade sat silently as the Supreme wrote the pardon and signed it in the flowing script that had been on all his own assignments. One of the Gunners dripped a blob of clear thermoplastic on the signature, and Arle rapped it smartly with the hilt of his gun. The Seal.

The same seal Cade had sometimes, in secret excess of sentimental zeal, pressed ritually to his chest, mouth, and brow because it had been touched by the Gun of the Supreme. He felt himself flushing scarlet, and turned his eyes away. Abruptly he rose, without a permissive sign, and went to Fledwick. "You're out of it," he said. "I've kept my promise. You weren't a bad companion."

The little man managed to look directly at him. "It's good of you to say so. And it's been worth it. How I wish I could have a picture of your face when I got us those chickens!" It was insolence, but Cade didn't mind. And Fledwick said gently, with that puzzling look Cade had got used to but could never understand: "I'm sorry."

That was all. The Supreme handed him the pardon and waited impatiently through the little man's lavish protestations of gratitude. "My Gunners here," he said, "will take you in a ground car to Aberdeen. I think you'll have no trouble with them for an escort. There you should present your pardon to the Watch House, and that absurd order will be withdrawn. Doubtless you wish to leave at once.

"And you, Gunner," Arle continued, "it's long since you've been in a sleeping loft." He summoned a novice and ordered: "Take this Brother to the night guard's sleeping loft. He will need a complete uniform in the morning."

Cade performed the abject Grand Salute before he left; the Gunner Supreme acknowledged it with an absentminded nod.

## CHAPTER 11

The empty sleeping loft at least was real and fitting. Cade took a sleepbag from the wall, undressed, belted on his gun, and inflated the bag. For weeks he had been thinking that this was the night he would sleep well. Now he knew it would not be so. What had he said to Fledwick? "You're out of it." A puzzling thing for him to say. Cade paced to the window. Five floors below was a courtyard formed by the outer ring of the Building of Fives, the next ring, and two connecting spokes. All the many windows on the court were dark, but a thin sliver of new moon showed white concrete down below. It seemed to be an isolated wing. Cade stared down into the moonlit courtyard as though he could hypnotize himself into numbness.

All right, he told himself angrily. Think about it. Think about the look they exchanged. The bare pretense of interest on the Supreme's face. The absentminded, habitual air with which he picked up the smoking tube. What do you know about it? What do you know except that you're a Gunner, and how to be one?

Maybe that's the way a Gunner Supreme is supposed to be. Maybe they tell you the things they do for your own good, because you're too much of a fool to understand that it's got to be this way because...because of good reasons. Maybe there's a time when they do tell you in secret and show you how it all fits in the Klin Philosophy, like everything else. Maybe the whole thing, from the poisoned cider on down to this sleeping loft, was a great secret test of your conduct. What do you know about it?

It was too frightening. He recoiled from the brink of such thoughts. They had no business in his head,

curse them! He was a Gunner, and he knew how to be a Gunner. He tried to think shop-talk, the best kind of talk there is. What kind of duty you had here, how long a tour they gave you, whether there was ever a chance of action or whether it was all ceremony and errands.

Think about the Cave that is not a Cave--a curious place.

It made you nervous to think that you had been in a Cave and that it had just been a corridor, without lumbering, grumbling beasts prowling its dark lengths. This Building of Fives--had it been created ten thousand years ago like the Caves of Washington, building half and all? Or had there first been the Caves and then the building constructed against it? A filthy thought crept into his mind. Half-formed, it said to him that if there was such a building and you were up in a flier and--no! What was wrong with him? He'd have to go to a corrective teacher if this went on! Was this churning confusion what lunacy was like?

He crawled into his sleepbag. That, at least, was good. Some six thousand daily repetitions had formed a powerful habit pattern. Gratefully he let some of the brief meditations drift soothingly into his mind and across it, ironing out the perplexities. And tomorrow he'd have a proper uniform again. Undersuit, shirt, hose, boots--where the Emperor wills--cape, helmet...Cade was asleep in the empty loft.

He dreamed of the Gunner Supreme threatening the Lady Moia with a gun, and the Lady Moia turned into the girl of the Cairo Mystery. He tried to explain respectfully to the Supreme that it wasn't the Lady Moia anymore and that he had no business shooting her. "Cade!" the girl called faintly. "Cade! Cade!"

The Gunner sat up abruptly. That call was no dream. He ripped open the quick release of his sleepbag and peered through the window into the courtyard. Four figures were dark against the concrete, one of them smaller than the others.

There was some sort of flurry down there, and he saw the smaller figure in full, no longer foreshortened. Somebody had fallen or been knocked down. Now he got up, expostulating and waving something white, and was knocked down again. He struggled to his feet and held out the white thing with a desperate, pleading gesture, not only in the arm but in every curve of his small, expressive body.

Fledwick!

Cade needed no more interpretation of the scene below. It was all there in the little thief's offer of the paper. Cade knew the white scrap was the pardon, written and sealed by the Gunner Supreme. And he saw one of the three other men snatch it impatiently from Fledwick and tear it across.

As if he were remembering the scene instead of seeing it enacted, Cade stood helplessly at his window, waiting. He saw Fledwick shoved against a blank wall and saw the other three draw guns. He saw the partner of his five-day march burned, down by three guns of the Order, fired simultaneously at low aperture. And last he saw the three remaining figures separate, two to a door in the inner ring, one through a door directly below, into the building where he himself stood watching.

He was sick, then and there, and after the spasm passed he realized that he had seen murder: murder with guns of the Order, wielded by Armsmen at the command of the Gunner Supreme, after Arle himself had lyingly granted and sealed a pardon.

This was no secret into which he would someday be initiated; this was no test of courage or belief. This was no less than lies, treachery, and murder at the command of the Order, incarnate, the Gunner Supreme!

The door to the loft opened silently and a figure slipped without noise across the floor to Cade's inflated sleepbag.

"Were you looking for me, Brother?"

The assassin spun to face the harsh whisper, gun in hand. He was burned down before he fully realized that his intended victim was not helplessly asleep.

Cade's thoughts were crystal-clear and cold. His burned body had been found once before in Sarralbe; it would now be found again, to buy him precious time until the assassin-Armsman was found missing. He rolled the charred body into the sleepbag he had occupied and slowly burned the flimsy fabric to a cinder with a noiseless discharge at minimum aperture. Presumably anybody within earshot had been alerted for the crash of one lethal blast, but not two.

Cade donned his medley of commoner's garb and ill-fitting uniform and slipped out along the way he

had been led, through empty corridors, down empty ramps. He knew only one way out. The wing seemed to be deserted, and he wondered if it was because it held the apartment of the Lady Moia or because it was where murder was done.

The lock on the inner door to the Lady's apartment was radionic. Cade solved it quickly and slipped through to the cushioned outer chamber. The room was dimly night-lit, still fragrant with the smoke of the golden pipes and the subtler scent that the Lady wore herself. He saw the glitter of golden trinkets on the table--boxes, pipes, things whose use he couldn't guess at--and realized that he had not yet plumbed the depths of the impossible. He was about to become a thief.

He did not know where he was going or how he would get there, but clearly the Houses of the Order were barred to him. For the first time in his life he would need money. Gold, he remembered from childhood, could be exchanged for money, or directly for goods. He reached for the glittering display and filled all the big pockets of the commoner's cloak. The sum of trifling metal objects made a surprising weight.

There was a third door to the room, and it stood ajar. He tiptoed across the floor and peered through to the Lady Moia's bedroom. She was asleep, alone, and Cade felt somehow relieved. The beautiful dark head stirred on the white pillow, and he drew back. Unskillfully, he worked the mechanical latch of the door to the Cave, nervous at each scratching clicking sound it made. But in the room beyond, the Lady slept on, and at last the door swung open.

When he had come in with Fledwick, fleeing through dark corridors at midnight, his terrain-wise eyes had automatically measured and his brain recorded every turn and distance. He was able to retrace his steps and find the Cave opening in a matter of minutes.

The ceremonious patrol was not yet changed. He saw, crossing the Cave mouth at intervals, a new man instead of the Mars-born gunner whose cloak was now on Cade's back, but Arle's promise to the frightened Lady had otherwise not been acted on. Clearly, the Gunner Supreme had every confidence in his assassins. Cade stood within the shadow of the Cave mouth and watched the Gunners on their sentry-go, silhouetted by starlight and arclight as they met and marched and met again.

The fools! he thought, and then remembered what a prince of fools he was himself, and had been since the day of his decision in his sixth year--until less than an hour ago.

Leaving the Cave mouth was infinitely easier than entering. This time he knew what waited on the other side: nothing but acres of high grass in which a man could hide forever. A man. The thought had come that way, unbidden: a man. Not a Gunner.

Cade was only one more shadow between the sputtering lights, a streak of darkness that the routine-fuddled minds of the sentries never saw. Safe in the tall grass, he lay still for long minutes, until he was certain there had been no alarm. Then, cautiously, he began to inch along. At last, over a fair-sized rise of ground, he rose and walked, heading for the river.

Soon, very soon, he would have to decide where he was going and what he would do. For now, he knew that Aberdeen and Baltimore were to the north. He was at the Potomac River again in a matter of minutes, but he could not cross by swimming, or even with the aid of waterwings like the pair he had made for Fledwick only yesterday. The gold would have weighed him down, and he was stubbornly determined not to abandon it.

He trudged on along the southern bank of the river, looking for a log big enough to float him and small enough to steer, or for an unguarded bridge. The first dawn light was creeping into the sky when he heard angry voices over the brow of a knoll. Cade dropped and crawled through the rank grass to listen.

"Easy with it, curse you!"

"You can do better? Do it and shut your mouth!"

"You shut your own mouth. Yell like that, and we'll both wind up in the crock on a sump tap."

"I can do a sump tap standing on one foot."

"I hope you have to someday, curse you, if I'm not in on it. I got better things to do with my time than standing on one foot in the crock for two years."

"Just go easy on the smokers is all I asked..."

Phrases were familiar. "Standing on one foot through a tap in a crock" meant "serving a short prison

term with ease." That much he had learned from Fledwick. The talkers were criminals--like him. Cade stood up and saw two commoners in the hollow below, loading a small raft with flat boxes.

It was a moment before they realized that they were not alone. They saw him on the knoll and stood paralyzed while he strode down on them.

"What're you up to?" he demanded.

"Sir, we're...we're..." stammered one. The other had sharper eyes. "Hey!" he said coldly after studying Cade for a moment. "What is this--the shake? You're no Armsman."

"It's not the shake," Cade said. Another phrase from Fledwick.

"Well, what is it? A man doesn't take a chance on twenty years for nothing. You're in half a uniform, and even that doesn't fit. And the gun's a fake if ever I saw one," the commoner pronounced proudly.

The other was disgusted. "Me falling for a phony uniform and a fake gun. On your way, big fellow. I don't want to know you before you get crocked for twenty."

"I want a ride on your raft. I can pay." Cade took a gold smoking-pipe box from a pocket. He was about to ask: "Is that enough?" but he saw from their faces that it was, and more. "I also want some commoner's clothes," he added, and then cursed himself silently for the betraying "commoner's"--but they didn't notice.

"Sure," said the man who couldn't be taken in by a fake gun. "We can take you across. But I don't know about clothes."

"I can fix that," the other man said hastily. "You're about my size. I'll be glad to sell what I'm wearing. Of course, I ought to get something extra for selling you the blouse off my back...?"

Cade hefted the box. There seemed to be a lot of gold in it, but how much gold was a suit of clothes?

The man took his silence as refusal. "All right," he said "I tried," and stripped down to his undersuit. He wasn't, nearly as big as Cade, but his clothes were baggy enough to cover him. As Cade methodically transferred his plunder from one set of garments to the other, their eyes bulged.

"You'd better bury your toy," one of them warned. "A fake gun's the same as impersonating."

"I'll keep it," said Cade, dropping the skirt of his tunic over the gun. "Now get me across."

Watching the last gold ornament disappear, the unbluffable commoner said tentatively: "We have some more transportation."

"Hey," said the other.

"Oh, shut your mouth. Can't you tell when a gaff's on the scramble?"

So, Cade reflected, he was a gaff on the scramble, who needed transportation. "What have you got?" he asked.

"Well, my rog, we're on the distribution end for a smoker works. To a gaff that won't sound like much, but a sump tap is a tap same as for gaffing. We get them from...from the manufacturer and put them across the river. A ground car picks them up there. The driver could..."

"For two gaudies like that last one," his partner interrupted determinedly, "we'll take you to the driver, vouch for you, and tell him to drop you off anywhere along his route."

"One gaudy," Cade offered cautiously, wondering what a smoker was.

"Done," the friendlier one said promptly. Cade fished for and handed over a box about like the last one. The commoner caressed it and said: "Let's have a smoker on the bargain. They'll never miss 'em." Without waiting for an answer, he opened one of the flat boxes on the raft and took three pellets from it. The two commoners dropped theirs into aluminum tubes, lit up, and puffed, and Cade realized at last that "smokers" went into smoking pipes like those fancied by the Lady Moia.

"Thanks," he said, dropping his pellet into a pocket. "I'll save mine." They gave him a disgusted look and didn't answer. He realized he had made a more-or-less serious blunder. There were fit and unfit things among commoners too, and he didn't know how many more unfit things he could get away with.

The pellets lasted only a minute or so, leaving the men relaxed and gently talkative, while Cade strained his ears and wits for usable information.

"I smoker too much," one of the men said regretfully. "I suppose it's the temptation from handling the stuff."

"It doesn't do you any harm."

"I don't feel right about it. Shoving the stuff's a living, but if the Emperor says we shouldn't, we shouldn't."

"What's the Emperor got to do with it?"

"Well, the first Emperor must have made the sump tables about what you can do and what you can't do."

"Oh, no. The first Emperor and the sump tables were made at the same time. Ask any teacher."

"You better ask a teacher yourself...but even if the first Emperor and the sump tables did get made at the same time, I wouldn't feel right about it."

"That's what I told my girl. With her it's buy me this and buy me that, and now she wants a sheer dress from a sump shop, and I told her even if she got it she couldn't wear it where anybody would see her, and even if she wore it in private she wouldn't feel right about it."

"Women," said the other one, shaking his head. "The sump tables are a fine thing for them. Otherwise they'd all be going around like Star-borns, and you wouldn't have a green in your nick...there's the car. Let's get across."

Cade had seen the blink of lights across the bank. The raft shoved off, with Cade sitting on the cases, one man poling, and the other, in his underwear, hanging on to the edge. The car, on a highway that paralleled the river bank for a kilometer, was a large passenger car of nondescript color and peculiarly dirty identification numbers.

"Who's that?" demanded the driver, joining them. He was a big man run to fat, and had a section of three-centimeter bronze pipe in his fist.

"Gaff on the scramble. A real rog. We said you might drop him along the route."

"Would, not might," Cade said.

"Got troubles enough," said the driver. "Scramble on, duff." Duff was obviously a ripe insult. The driver hefted his bronze pipe hopefully. Cade sighed and flattened him with a medium-hard left into his belly. To the others he said: "Look, you...you duffs. Give me back one of those boxes. And if you make any trouble, I'll take them both back."

They conferred by glances and handed one of the boxes over. Cade showed it to the driver, who was sitting up and shaking his head dazedly. "This is for you if you drop me off where I want."

"Sure, rog," the driver said agreeably. "But I can't go off my route, you understand. I can't lose my job for a little extra clink."

"I'm going to Aberdeen," said Cade with abrupt decision.

"Sure thing. Now, if you'll wait while we load..."

The flat boxes of smokers went into a surprising variety of places in the car--under the seats, inside the cushions, behind removable panels.

Cade watched, and wondered why he had chosen Aberdeen. After a minute he stopped trying. He had to begin somewhere, and it might as well be with the girl. She knew something--more than he did, anyhow. And with Fledwick murdered, she remained the only person who had not betrayed him at any time since he plunged into the month-long nightmare of conspiracy and disillusion. Besides, he assured himself, it was sound doctrine. The last place they would expect him to go would be the one place he'd been caught before.

Still musing, he sat beside the driver. "Where in Aberdeen?" the man asked when they were on the road.

"You know Mistress Cannon's?"

"Yuh. I deliver there," said the driver, obviously disapproving.

Cade risked asking: "What's the matter with the place?" It might be a nest of spies.

"Nothing. The old woman's all right. I don't care what kind of a dive you go to. I said I'd take you, and I will."

Thirteen years of conditioning do not vanish overnight. Cade was guilty and defensive: "I'm looking for somebody. A girl."

"What else? You don't have to tell me about it. I'll take you there, I said. Myself, I'm a family man. I don't go to lectory every day like some people, but I know what's fitting and what isn't."

"You're running smokers," Cade said indignantly.

"I don't have to feel good about it, and maybe I don't. I don't smoker myself. It's not my fault if a lot of ignorant duffs that got born common can't rest without smoking like a Star and his court. Say, 'The Emperor wouldn't like it,' and they pull a long face and say, 'Oh, it can't matter much, and I'll give twice as much to the lectory, and the Emperor'll like that, won't he?' Fools!"

Cade feebly agreed, and the conversation died. As the moralistic evader of the sumptuary laws covered his route, Cade let himself doze off. He knew a man who would keep a bargain once it was made.

## CHAPTER 12

At each start and stop Cade half-opened an eye and went back to sleep again. But finally the driver shook his shoulder. Cade woke with a start. Through the window, across three feet of sun-splashed, dirty paving he could see stone steps leading down to a heavy door. Ahead, another set of steps apparently led up to another door that remained out of his vision.

They were in a narrow alley, barely wide enough for the slightly oversized car. On either side, continuous walls of soot-dusted cement rose to a height of three or four stories above the ground. There were no windows, no clearly marked building lines, nothing to mark the one spot from another but dirt and scars on the aging concrete, and the indentations of steps at regular intervals along both sides.

The driver took three neatly packaged bundles from inside the armrest of the front seat, closed it, and held them expectantly.

"Well?" he demanded. "Sitting there all day? Open it."

Cade stiffened, and then made himself relax. He was among commoners now and would be treated as one himself. It was a lesson he would have to learn as thoroughly as any back in Novice School. His life depended on these lessons too. "Sorry," he mumbled. "Cannon's?"

"Don't you know it?"

Cade opened the door and muttered: "Looks different by daylight." He followed the driver down the stone steps. The man knocked rhythmically, and the door opened a little. Cade knew the beefy face at once.

Elaborately ignoring the driver, Mistress Cannon said hoarsely: "The drinking room doesn't open until nightfall, stranger. Glad to see you then."

The driver said, with interest: "I thought he was a friend of yours. Gaff on the scramble. Some people I know said he's a rog."

Her faded blue eyes swung slowly from Cade's face down his multistriped clothes to the ragged sandals he still wore, and returned as slowly to his face.

"Might have seen him before," she admitted at last grudgingly.

"Me, and my...clinks too," Cade said quickly. The rest was inspired: "Last time I was here one of your girls took everything you left."

The woman placed him at last. "She was no girl of mine," she insisted defensively.

The driver had had enough. "That'll do," he said. "Fix it up any way you want to between you. I'm behind time now."

The door creaked farther open.

"You wait here," the woman told Cade, and led the driver out of the room. It was the kitchen of the establishment. Cade wandered about, touching nothing, but examining with intense curiosity the unfamiliar miscellany of supplies and equipment.

The big food rooms of Chapter Houses where Cade had spent hundreds of hours as a novice were no more like this place than...than an Armsman's sleepbag was like the Lady Moia's couch. The single thing he could identify was a giant infrabroiler in one wall; it was identical with those used in the preparation of the evening meat meal in the Houses. But there the similarity ended. Through the transparent doors of the cooler he saw not an orderly procession of joints and roasts but a wild assortment of poultry, fish, meat, and seafood, jammed in helter-skelter. Along the opposite wall were more fruits and vegetables than he



had known existed--pulpy luxuries, he thought, for degenerate tastes.

There was to be recognized, at last, a cooker designed to mix and warm in one operation the nutritious basic mash on which Armsmen mainly subsisted. But here, instead of being a gleaming, giant structure, it was a battered old machine perched on a high shelf almost out of reach. For some reason, Cade concluded, mash wasn't popular at Cannon's.

On other shelves around the room there were hundreds of bright-faced packages containing unknown ingredients for use in a dozen or more specialized mixers and heaters whose equal Cade had never seen before. Over it all was an air of cheerful disorder, jumbled but purposeful comfort that struck for Cade a haunting note of reminiscence.

So many things these last few days had stirred old memories: memories of a childhood he had dismissed forever when he took his vows. Already, he realized, he was unfitted for the Order. The ritual and routine that had been as much a part of life as breathing had proved itself dispensable. At times it had even seemed like folly. A corrective teacher, he thought, and then wondered whether he wanted to be corrected. Of course he wanted to get back into the Order. But the Gunner Supreme...

He coldly dismissed his personal tangle of loyalties. The first thing he needed was information, and that meant the girl.

"No girl of mine," Mistress Cannon had said. And long ago: "If you come back, girlie, I may wrap a bar stool around your neck." That didn't matter. He needed a starting point, one well down into the criminal half-world in which the girl had moved with such assurance. You went from one person to the next in that world: from the smugglers to the driver to Mistress Cannon's. A smile spread over his face. What would he have said not long ago if someone had told him he'd need the goodwill of a minor crook to gain admission to a--what did he call it--a dive? He, a Gunner among the best?

"Man," said the hoarse voice, "don't smile like that: I'm not as young as I used to be, and my figure ain't all it once was, but I'm not so old either I don't get butterflies in the belly once in a while." Mistress Cannon stood in the doorway, eyeing him with an absurd mixture of good fellowship and flirtatiousness. "And by the Power," she chortled, "he can blush too! Big as a house, and built like an armed man, and a smile to give you goosebumps, and he can blush yet! Well, we got some girls that like 'em that way. Me, I like 'em loaded." There was an abrupt change in her manner. "Lazar says you're on the scramble. What're you carrying?"

He opened his mouth to answer but didn't have a chance.

"Big fellow, there's plenty of rogs before you who spent a day or a month upstairs and no questions asked or answered. No safer place in East Coast until--trouble--blows over. But I can't do it cheap. Lazar brought you in, and I like your face myself, or I wouldn't do it for all the clink in Aberdeen. Protection comes high anyplace. Here you get it with a nice room, three meals, and all the..."

The woman liked to talk, Cade thought weakly, and let her go on. What she was saying amounted to good luck. He could stay here--and the driver had assumed that this was just what he'd wanted.

The woman stopped for breath, wheezing a little, and Cade seized the chance: "You don't have to worry about money. I'm...I'm loaded. I can pay whatever you ask." In all the colorful flow of words, that much had been clear.

"What with?"

He pulled out the first thing his fingers touched in an outer pocket. It was a tiny, glittering piece of jeweled uselessness, five tiny bells hung on a thin wire loop. It tinkled distantly with almost inaudible music as he put it on a table. The woman's eyes were glued on the golden bauble.

"Practically valueless," she said composedly when she looked up. "Too hard to get rid of."

"I didn't know," Cade said apologetically, reaching for it. "Maybe something else..."

"All right!" she exploded, shaken again by heaves of flabby laughter. "Outbluffed on the first try. You have the other one, of course?" Cade, searching his pockets for a mate to the bauble, realized vaguely that he was supposed to have done something clever. He turned out on the table all he had and poked through it.

"I'm sorry," he said at last. "It doesn't seem to be here."

The woman looked up dazedly from the array. "You're sorry," she echoed. "It doesn't seem to be

here." She looked at him again, searchingly and for a long minute. "What made you come here?" she asked quietly.

"First place I thought of," he said. Something was wrong. What commoner notion of fitness and unfitness had he violated now?

"Or the only place," she said musingly. "And don't tell me it was liquor you were out on that other night. Maybe the tart you were with couldn't tell the difference, but I've been around for a lot of years. I know drunk when I see it, and I know dope too. A youngster like you...well, now I know you're good for your room. But wandering around loaded with gaudies you don't half know the value of...didn't anybody ever tell you not to jab up until the job was through? And that means selling it after the pick, too."

Cade could make nothing of it. "If you have a room for me," he said patiently, "you'll be well paid. That's all I'm asking of you."

For some reason she was angry. "Then that's all you'll get! And when you start to yell for the stuff, don't expect me to run it for you. Come on!" She jerked open a door and led the way up dark stairs. To herself she was grumbling: "You can't make a man talk if he doesn't want to, not even to somebody who wants to help. Think they'd have more sense!"

At the stair head she produced a ring of keys like the one Fledwick had used. She opened a door with one and handed it to Cade.

"That's the only one there is," she said. "You're safe up here. If you get hungry or if you get off your darby perch and want some fun, you can try the drinking room.."

He closed the door on her and studied his quarters. The room was not light or clean. The shelves in the storage wall were stuck. It didn't matter; there was nothing to store. The bed was an ancient foldable such as he had seen only in commoners' houses entered during action.

It was hard to remember: he was in a commoner's house now, and living as one. He turned the key, locking himself in. Then he dumped his treasure trove on the cot, fingering the pieces thoughtfully. He hadn't made much of her talk, but her face had shown she was immensely excited over the...the gaudies. Or did that just mean boxes? Why had she been excited? They could be exchanged for money, or food. Money could be exchanged for clothes, food, shelter, entertainment. Fledwick, too, had been that way about money, if he had understood correctly. The little man had habitually run great risk of imprisonment and shame for its sake. And the men on the raft--they had tried to get extra gaudies from him. It all meant that he had something commoners wanted badly, and a lot of it.

He lay down on the bed and found its pulpy lumps unbearable. The floor was better than the mattress. To find the girl he would have to face the drinking room. Recalling the night he had been there, he remembered the noise, the smells, the drink he had been given, the close air, the foolish women. But the bar was his reason for being there. The girl of the Cairo Mystery had found him there before; there he might find her now. He thought about clothes--he would need some. And boots--slippers, rather. As a commoner he could not wear boots. And clean clothes. Even a commoner would not wear the same things all the time, he supposed.

Mistress Cannon had anticipated him. She was waiting in the drinking room below with news.

"Wish you'd come down a little sooner. I had old man Carlin hanging around, then he said he had to hit. But he'll be around first thing in the morning. I would've sent him up, only I figured you were sleeping the jab off."

Was he supposed to know who old man Carlin was? He asked.

"Carlin? He runs the shop around here: sells court clothes on the side. Why those tramps are willing to pay such crazy prices for it, I never knew. To give the boyfriends a thrill behind locked doors, I guess. Back when I had it, I would've beat a man's ears off if he couldn't get a thrill out of me without fancy-pantsy court sheers on. You aren't from the District, are you?"

He hesitated, startled by the gunblast suddenness of the question.

"That's what I figured," she said soberly, lowering her voice. "Listen." She bent across the table toward him, and a too musky, too strong scent issued from the deep cleft between her breasts. "You want some good advice, I can give it to you. Even if you don't want it. You're on the scramble, and you jab--a bad

combination--and you don't want to get pumped, not by me or any other old bat. All right, that's smart enough, and you got sense enough not to try to lie when you're jabbed up. But you don't have to get up on the darby perch either, like you did with me. Listen..."

She stopped to wheeze, and went on earnestly: "I come into my kitchen this afternoon, and found you standing there grinning at yourself, and you could of had the whole house with a gold ribbon tied around it. Ten minutes later, you're giving me your high-and-mighty Star-born act, and you come damn near not having any room here at all. A fella with a face like yours, and that build, he's a fool not to make some use of it. You don't want to talk man...smile!" She straightened up and waved to a newcomer farther down the bar. "I got to tend to customers," she said. "You got a handle I can call you by, in case they ask?"

Cade smiled inwardly at the absurd advice--and at the question that came fast after it. For the first time since he'd met the Mistress, he looked her fully in the eye. She was hardly a perilous female, after all, in spite of her loose talk. He remained silent, but slowly and deliberately he let the inner smile spread on his face.

"That's it!" she crowed delightedly. "You're no fool! Hey, Jana!"

A willowy brunette detached herself from a group of girls talking in a corner while they waited for the place to fill. She walked with studied languor toward them; the silvery garter on her thigh pulled the filmy stuff of her trousers tight against her at each step.

"Jana, I want you to meet a friend of mine," Mistress Cannon said. "Nothing's too good for my friend, Smiley!" She winked at him, a lewd and terrifying wink as massive as a shrug, and bustled off.

"That's some send-off you got, Smiley," said the girl. Her voice was husky, and quite automatically she assumed the same position Mistress Cannon had, leaning far forward and compressing her shoulders. Some commoner notion, he thought uneasily, as he observed that it exposed quite a lot of her to a tablemate.

"Yes," he said stiffly. "She's been very good to me."

"Say, I remember you!" Jana said abruptly. "You were in here last week. And were you troubled, brother! Were you troubled!"

Suddenly she frowned. "What's the matter, Smiley?"

He couldn't help it. The shock of being addressed as brother in this place by this woman showed on him.

"Nothing," he said.

"Nothing?" she asked wisely. "Listen, I see you're not drinking..." Cade followed her glance and noticed there was a small glass of vile-smelling stuff on the table. He pushed it away. "...and I've been arguing with Arlene about it ever since--you remember her? The little blond over there in the corner?" Hope flared wildly and vanished as he saw the girl she meant. "Anyhow, she says it wasn't liquor, and I say I never saw a man your size and age out where he sat like you were. Not on liquor. You don't have to tell me if you don't want to, but...?"

She let it linger on a questioning note.

Cade, profiting by instruction, smiled directly at her, and held the smile until he felt foolish.

The results were unexpected and dramatic. She whistled, a long, low whistle that made half a dozen heads turn their way inquiringly. And she looked at him with such adoration as he had seen only a few times before, from new armigers on the Field of Battle.

"Bro-ther!" she sighed.

"Excuse me," said Cade in a strangled voice. He ran from the enemy, leaving her in complete and bewildered possession of the field.

## CHAPTER 13

Cade learned fast at Cannon's. He had to. His eyes and ears, trained for life-or-death differences in action, picked up words, glances, and gestures; his battle-sharpened wits evaluated them. He survived.

And Cannon's learned about Cade, as much as was necessary. He was Smiley, and Cannon's

etiquette permitted no further prying into his name or rank. He was talked about. Some said he was Star-born, but no one asked. His full pockets and Jana's wagging tongue gave him the introduction and reputation he needed.

His build? He was obviously a strong-arm bucko. His rumored golden trinkets? He was obviously a master gaff--a burglar. His occasional lapses of memory and manners? He was obviously addicted to the most powerful narcotics. That too explained his otherwise inexplicable lack of interest in alcohol and women.

As a bucko and gaff he outranked most other habitués of the place: the ratty little pickpockets, the jumpy gamblers, the thoroughly detestable pimps. As a jabber of unknown drugs, he even outranked the friendly, interesting, neatly dressed confidence men who occasionally passed through. Drugs were a romantic, desperate slap in the face of things as they were. Mistress Cannon disapproved--there had been a man of hers; she wouldn't talk about it. But to her hostesses it was the ultimate attraction.

Nightly Cade sat in the barroom at a corner table near the stairs with an untasted drink before him. Carlin, who dressed commoner girls and tramps secretly in court gowns, had taken his measure and provided him with blues and greens for as much of his plunder as he had chosen to display. The old man had dickered endlessly over each item, but with Mistress Cannon loudly supervising the transaction, Cade emerged with two full sets of clothes made to order for him, two weeks of exorbitant "board" paid, and a surplus of clink. In his room, behind one of the storage shelves, he had found a hiding place for his remaining gaudies: one last golden box containing half a dozen smaller trifles.

With this much security--a place to live, new clothes, good food, clink in his pocket, an enviable reputation, and a hidden reserve--he could turn his full attention to his quest for the girl of the Cairo Mystery. He asked few questions, but he listened always for a word that might lead to her. Every night he sat at his table, his chair turned to the door, watching every new arrival, buying drink for anyone who would talk--and that was everyone.

First there were Mistress Cannon and her girls. Then he could ask openly after he learned that it was not strange to seek renewal of acquaintance with a girl who had struck one's fancy. But none of them knew her, none remembered seeing her except that night when he had met her there.

It was a setback, but there was no other place to look except Baltimore--and they'd had no trouble handling him there once. If nothing at Cannon's led him to the girl he would act without her, and gradually an alternative plan formed. While it was growing, over the course of his two weeks' stay, he drank in everything he heard from the endless procession of people willing to talk while Smiley bought.

There was a Martian who had jumped ship and taken to liquor and petty thievery. For two nights Cade listened to him curse the misstep: he babbled monotonously about his family and their little iron refinery; how there had been a girl back home and how he might have married and had children to grow up with the planet. The Marsman didn't come back the third night, or ever.

He wasted one night. This was on a quiet, well-spoken, gray-haired man, himself a former gaff who had retired on his "earnings." He came for the first time on Smiley's fourth night in the bar, and for almost a week he came again every night. He was a mine of information on criminal ways and means, nicknames, jargon, Watch corruption, organized prostitution, disposal of gaffed goods. On the last night, the wasted night, after chatting and drinking for an hour, he confided without warning that he was in possession of a secret truth unknown to other men. Leaning across the table in excitement, he whispered clearly: "Things have not always been as they are now!"

Cade remembered the rites of the Mystery and leaned forward himself to listen. But the hope was illusory; the gentle old man was a lunatic.

He'd found a book, he said, while still gaffing years ago. It was called Sixth Grade Reader. He thought it was incredibly old, and whispered, almost in Cade's ear: "More than ten thousand years!"

Cade leaned back in disgust while the madman rattled on. The book was full of stories, verses, anecdotes, many of them supposed to be based on fact and not fiction. But one thing they had in common: not one of them mentioned the Emperor, Klin, the Order, or the Realm of Man. "Don't you see what that means? Can't you see it for yourself? There was a time once when there was no Emperor."

In the face of Smiley's bored disinterest he lost his caution and spoke loudly enough for Mistress

Cannon, at the bar, to catch a few words. She stormed to the table in a loyal rage and threw him out. She later regretted it. Word got around, and the incident brought on the only Watch raid during Smiley's stay at Cannon's.

The whole district was minutely sifted, and Cade too had to submit to questioning. But the watchers were looking for just one man, and Smiley's origins did not concern them. Later, word got to Cannon's that they had found the madman in the very act of airing his mania to jeering children on the street. He did not survive his first night in the Watch House. Those rubber truncheons, Cade remembered, and wondered whether it had been necessary to cope with the poor fool so drastically.

There were others who came to the table and talked. There was a pastel-clad young man who misunderstood Cade's lack of interest in the girls and immediately had the matter made crystal-clear to him. Mistress Cannon pitched him limply out with the usual hoarse injunction: "And don't you ever come back in here again!" But he probably didn't hear her.

One night there was a fat-faced, sententious fellow, a con man who had hit the skids because of liquor. Smiley bought many drinks for him because he had been in the Cairo Mystery--and several others. He explained that the Mysteries were a good place to meet your johns, and was otherwise defensive. Cade dared to question him closely after the con man had poured down enough liquor to blur his brain and probably leave the incident a blank next morning. But he knew little enough. He'd never heard of hypnosis in connection with a Mystery. A featureless, egg-shaped room had nothing to do with the Cairo rites. Mysteries were strictly for the johns; the revenue from them was strictly for the blades, like him and Smiley. He proposed vaguely that they start a new Mystery with a new twist and take over all the other blades' johns. With his experience and Smiley's looks it'd be easy. Then he fell asleep across the table.

There were many others; but she never came, and he never heard a word about her or anyone like her.

When the two weeks he allowed himself were past, he knew vastly more than he had known before, but none of it led to the girl. It was time for the other plan.

Mistress Cannon protested hoarsely when he told her he was leaving. "I never saw a man go through a load like that so fast," she complained. "You didn't have to buy for everybody that said he was a rog. Listen--I made enough on that liquor to cover another week easy. You don't tell anybody about it, and I'll let you stay. Two weeks won't do it in this town, but three weeks might. What about it?"

"It's not the money," he tried to explain. She was right about his blues and greens being gone, but she didn't know about the box of loot he still had in his room. "There's a job I've got to do. Something I promised before I came here."

"A promise doesn't count when you're hot!" she shouted. "What good will it do to try and keep your promise if you get picked up by the watchers as soon as you step out of the door?"

He wasn't worried about that one. The Cannon grapevine was efficient, and he knew the search for the "impostor" Cade had bogged down, at least locally. Two pedestrians had been incinerated by a young armiger ten days ago. Though a strong order had been put out that identification of the two as the Cade impostor and ex-teacher Zisz was not confirmed as yet, the local Watch had naturally slacked off its effort almost to zero. If Arle was making any search, it was undercover.

All Cade wanted was a place to leave everything he had except his gaudies and the better suit of commoners' garb. Reluctantly Mistress Cannon provided him with one of a pile of metal boxes in her kitchen: private vaults with self-set radionic locks, hidden under layers of foodstuffs.

Cade dressed in his room for the last time in the sober, dignified suit he had specified. Old Carlin had grumbled at the requirements: "Think you're going to Audience?" and Cade had smiled...but that, as a matter of fact, was exactly it: the alternative. The only one.

He could have tried to plunge into the Cairo Mystery and been hypnotized again for his troubles. He could have gone to a Chapter House and been burned down. But there was still, and always, the Emperor. This was the morning of the monthly Audience Day; he had timed it so.

Even here at Cannon's this much remained sure: the rogs and blades, the whores and hostesses were unfit people, but they were loyal to the Emperor, every one. There had been no trace of the conspiracy he sought. The insane burglar with his imaginary book had been an object of horror to them all.

The Realm is wide, thought Cade, but not so wide that the Emperor will turn a deaf ear to any plea.

His only fear was that he would not be believed when he told his complex and terrible story. The Emperor's benevolence would be sorely tried to comprehend a plot against him in an innocent Mystery; and to add to that the defection from fitness of the Gunner Supreme. Cade wondered what he himself would have thought of such a tale a few weeks ago.

But it would get to persons less full of loving kindness than the Emperor. He had seen the iron-faced Power Master at ceremonies--a grim tower of a man; the gentle Emperor's mailed fist. Which was as it always had been, which was as it should be. It wasn't hard to visualize the Power Master believing enough of the story to investigate, and that was all that would be needed.

Cade had in his pockets as he left only half the remaining smaller gaudies and a handful of clink: three blues and a few greens. The gold box and the Gun of the Order were in the kitchen behind hardened bronze under a layer of meal. There was something like a tear in Mistress Cannon's bloodshot eye when she said: "Don't forget you're coming back. There's always a place for you here."

He promised to remember, and the promise was true. He hoped he would never have to see the place again, but he knew he wouldn't forget it to his dying day. Such...irregularity! No order in their lives or thoughts, no proportion, no object, no fitness. And yet there was a curious warmth, an unexpected sense of comradeship strangely like that he had felt for his Brothers in the Order, but somehow stronger. He wondered if all commoners had it or if it was the property of only the criminals and near-criminals.

When he closed the door behind him and started down the street, he felt strangely alone. It was the same street down which he had walked in the lamplight with the elusive girl following behind. He rounded the corner, where another watchman now stood, and trudged to the palace in bitter solitude. What would happen would happen, he gloomily thought, and cursed himself for his gloom. He should have been full of honorable pride and exultation over the service he was about to render to the Emperor, but he was not. Instead he was worried about the commoner girl.

The girl, the girl, the girl! He had lied to the Gunner Supreme by not mentioning her--but only after he already had suspected that the Supreme was an unfit voluptuary, false to the Order. Hopefully he tried to persuade himself that she would come to no harm; realistically he knew that, harm or not, he could not lie to the Emperor and that she might well be caught and crushed in the wheels of justice he was about to set in motion.

## CHAPTER 14

As a respectable-looking commoner of the middle class, Cade was admitted without questioning through the Audience Gate, a towering arch in the great wall that enclosed the nerve-center of the Realm. The palace proper, a graciously proportioned rose-marble building, lay a hundred meters inside. A Klin Serviceman--the gold braid on his gray meant Palace Detail--led the newcomer to a crowd already waiting in the plaza.

"Wait here," he said brusquely and strode off.

Cade waited as further commoners arrived and the crowd began to fill the open square. He noticed, however, that from time to time one of the throng--usually well dressed--would approach a loitering guard for a few words. Something would seem to change hands, and the man or woman would be led off toward the palace itself.

The Gunner managed to be nearby next time it happened; he smiled bitterly as his suspicions were confirmed. Even here in the palace, under the very eyes of the Emperor, there was corruption almost in the open.

The next Serviceman to approach the crowd with a new-comer took him inside for the modest price of one green. And he gave Cade what the Gunner took to be complete instructions: "When you enter the Audience Hall, wait for the appearance of the Emperor. After he appears, face him at all times, standing. Keep silent until you're announced. Then, with your eyes lowered, not stepping over the white line, state your case in ten words or so."

"Ten words!"

"Have you no brief, commoner?" The guard was amazed.

A brief would be a written version of his case. Cade shook his head. "It doesn't matter," he said. "Ten words will be ample."

He turned down the Serviceman's friendly offer to locate a briefsman who would, of course, require something extra for a rush job. Ten words would be ample; the ones he had in mind would create enough furore to give him all the time he'd need to state his case.

The guard left him finally outside the ornate door of the hall with a last stern order: "Stand right here until they let you in."

"And when is that supposed to be?" a fussily dressed man at Cade's elbow asked as the Serviceman walked away. "How long a wait this time?"

Before Cade could say he didn't know, a white-haired granny scolded: "It doesn't make any difference. It's a real treat, every minute of it. I've been promising myself this trip--I live in Northumberland, that's in England--for many a year, and it's a fine thing I finally got the greens for it saved, because I surely won't be here next year!"

"Perhaps not," said the man distantly. And then curiously: "What's your complaint for the Emperor?"

"Complaint? Complaint? Dear me, I have no complaint! I just want to see his kind face close up and say 'Greetings and love from a loyal old lady of Northumberland, England.' Don't you think he'll be pleased?"

Cade melted at her innocence. "I'm sure he will," he said warmly, and she beamed with pleasure.

"I dare say," said the fussily dressed man. "What I have to lay before the Emperor's justice and wisdom is a sound grievance..." He whipped out and began to unfold a manuscript of many pages. "...a sound grievance against my cursed neighbor Flyte, his slatternly wife, and their four destructive brats. I've asked them politely, I've demanded firmly, I've..."

"Pardon." Cade shouldered past the man and seized the old lady from Northumberland by the arm. He had been watching again the ones who got beyond the gate, and how they did it. To an expectant Serviceman he said: "Sir, my old mother here is worn from travel. We've been waiting since sun-up. When can we get into the hall?"

"Why, it might be arranged very soon," the Serviceman said noncommittally.

Cade abandoned the effort; apparently there was nothing to do but pay. Bitterly he pulled another green from his pocket. He had just one more after that, and a few blues.

"It's only your old mother you want admitted?" the guard asked kindly. "You yourself wish to wait outside for her?"

Cade understood, wavered a moment, and then handed him the last green he owned. It didn't matter. Once in the hall, in the Emperor's own presence, there could be no more of this.

And he was in the hall, with the puzzled, grateful old lady from Northumberland beside him, her arm tucked under his.

"Over there." The guard pointed. "And keep your voices low if you must speak."

There were two groups waiting, clearly distinguished from each other. One was composed of commoners, about fifty of them, nervously congregated behind a white-marble line in the oval hall's mosaic flooring. There were perhaps as many persons of rank chatting and strolling relaxedly at a little distance from the commoners. At the end of the hall was a raised dais where, he supposed, the Emperor would sit in state. By the dais was a thick pedestal a meter high. Klin guards stood stiffly here and there, with gas guns at their belts. The nearest of them gestured abruptly at Cade, and he hastily moved into the commoners' enclosure.

Granny was clutching his arm and pouring out twittery thanks. But Cade, already regretting the impulse, turned his back on her and worked his way through to the other side of the group. He was joined a minute later by the over-dressed fellow who had talked to him outside the hall.

"I saw you couldn't persuade the guard," the man said, "so I paid without quibbling. I wonder how many more times the grays will expect us to pay?"

"That had better be the last," Cade said grimly.

"Such a pity!" someone said from his other side.

"Eh?" Cade turned to see a sour-looking middle-aged woman, staring with pursed lips across the hall at a space near the dais that had been empty only a few minutes ago. It was filling now with Star-borns--Ladies, high dignitaries in the Klin Service, and a few Brothers of the Order, their cloaks banded with the Silver of Superiors below colored stripes that designated their Stars. Cade silently studied the stripes: Congo, Pacific Isles, California, and of course East Coast. He had served under none of them; they would not be able to identify him on the spot. But at the same time, they would not half-recognize him, assume he was the Cade impostor, and blast him where he stood.

"Such a trial to the Court!" the woman insisted, again pursing her lips and shaking her head with enjoyment.

"What?" asked Cade. She pointed, and he realized he had asked the wrong question. "Who?" he amended it, and then he saw...

"Who's that?" he demanded, clutching the sleeve of the man next to him.

"What'd you say? Would you mind--this cloth crushes." He picked Cade's hand from his sleeve indignantly, but the Gunner never noticed. It was she: he was certain of it. Her back was turned to him, and her hair was a brilliant, foolish shade of orange-red to match her gown, but somehow he was certain.

He turned to the woman beside him: "What about her? Who is she?"

"Don't you know?" She eyed him significantly. "The Lady Jocelyn," she whispered. "The peculiar one. You'd never think to look at her that she's a niece of the Emperor himself..."

The fussily dressed man interrupted with a snickering question to show that he was up on the latest palace gossip: "The one that writes poems?"

"Yes. And I have a friend who works in the kitchens, not a cook but a dietitian, of course, and she says the Lady Jocelyn reads them to everybody--whether they want to listen or not. Once she even began reciting to some commoners waiting just like us..."

But Cade was not listening. The Lady Jocelyn had turned to face them, and her resemblance to the girl of the Mystery collapsed. The bright red hair, of course, was dyed. But even Cade, as little competent to judge women's clothes as any man alive, could see that it was a bad match to a wretchedly cut gown. She was round-shouldered and evidently near-sighted, for she stood with her head thrust forward like a crane. When she walked off a moment later after surveying the commoners indifferently, her gait was a foolish sham. The only resemblance between this awkward misfit of the Court and the vivid, commanding creature who had saved his life was in the nature of a caricature.

All around him there was a sighing and a straightening. The Emperor had entered and was seating himself on the dais. Two Klin guards moved to the commoners' area, and there was a subdued jockeying for position. Before Cade understood what was going on, one of the guards had relieved him of his last few blues, examined the small sum with disgust, and stationed him well to the end of the line. Curse it, how much more was he supposed to know that he didn't? He realized that the guard's instructions had not been instructions at all but a last-minute warning which hit only the things he wasn't supposed to do: not talk, not turn his back, not overstep the line, not be long-winded--a mere recapitulation of things he was supposed to know. What else was involved? The commoners he had known at Cannon's were loyal, but shied from the idea of an Audience. He saw plainly from the people he was with that it was a middle-class affair. What else was involved? He was glad he wasn't at the head of the line--and hastily fell into step as the line moved off to stop at the enigmatic pedestal before the dais. Cade saw the fussily dressed man at the head of the line; he dropped currency--greens!--on it and murmured to one of the guards.

Thank offering, love offering, something like that, he vaguely remembered now, much too late to do anything about it. He glowered at the white-haired granny halfway down the line and berated himself for the impulse that had made him pay her way in. She, canny, middle-class, had saved her money for the offering.

"Commoner Bolwen," the guard was saying, and the fussily dressed man said to the Emperor, with his eyes lowered: "I present a complaint against a rude and unfit person to my Emperor." He handed his bulky brief to the guard and backed away from the dais.

Not a blue on him, Cade thought, and the line was shortening with amazing efficiency. "Offering," they



called it. Did that mean it was voluntary? Nobody was omitting it.

"I ask my Emperor to consider my brilliant son for the Klin Service."

"Loyal greetings to our Emperor from the city of Buena Vista."

"I ask my Emperor's intercession in the bankruptcy case of my husband."

Cade looked up fleetingly at the Emperor's face for possible inspiration, and lost more time. The face was arrestingly different from what he had expected. It was not rapt and unworldly but thoughtful, keen, penetrating--the face of a senior teacher, a scholar.

There was a guard at Cade's side, muttering: "Offering in your left hand,"

Cade opened his mouth to speak, and the guard said: "Silence."

"But..." said Cade. Instantly the guard's gas gun was out, ready to fire. The guard jerked his head at the door. He was no moon-faced, sluggish, run-of-the-mill watchman, Cade saw, but a picked member of the Service: no fighting man, but a most efficient guard who could drop him at the hint of a false move. And there were other guards looking their way...Cade silently stepped out of the line and backed to the great door, with the guard's eyes never leaving him.

Outside the hall the guard delivered a short, withering lecture on commoners who didn't know their duties and would consume the Emperor's invaluable time as though it were the time of a shop attendant. Cade gathered that the offering was another of the commoners' inviolable laws--even stronger than the one that made you use a smoker pellet when it was offered to you. Something as trivial as that, and it had barred him for a month from bringing his case to the Emperor!

The ridiculous injustice of it was suddenly more than he could take. Like an untested Brother suddenly thrust into battle, Cade choked on panic and despair. But for him, now, there was no faith in the Gunner Supreme to carry him through the moment of ordeal. There was no one, no reason for him to carry this burden at all. He who had dedicated his life and every deed in it to the Emperor was turned away because he didn't have greens to drop into a platter!

The guard was snarling that he had showed disgusting disrespect for the Emperor...

"Respect for the Emperor?" he burst out wildly. "What do you know about it, gray-suited fool? I'm risking my life to be here. There's a conspiracy against the Emperor! I was trying to warn..." His self-pity was cooled by a dash of cold fear. Next he'd be telling his name. Next the gas gun would go off in his face. And then there would be no awakening.

But the gray-clad guard had backed away, his weapon firmly trained on Cade's face and his finger white on the trigger. "Conspiracy, is it?" said the guard. "You're mad. Or...whatever you are, this is a matter for Armsmen. Walk."

Cade trudged emptily down the corridor. He had said it, and he would pay for it. There was an Auxiliary Chapter House in the palace, and every Gunner worthy of his Gun would have a description of the Cade impostor firmly planted in his memory.

"In there." It was an elevator that soared to the top of the palace and let them out at an anteroom where an armiger stood guard.

"Sir," said the Serviceman, "please call the Gunner of the Day." The armiger stared at Cade, and there was no recognition in the stare; he spoke into a wall panel, and the door opened. They marched through the Ready Room into the Charge Room, where the Gunner of the Day waited. Cade stared downward at the familiar plastic flooring of a Chapter House as he approached the desk. He could brace himself against the inevitable tearing blast of flame; he could not bring himself to look his executioner in the eye.

There was no blast. Instead there came a voice--dry, precise, familiar, and astonished: "Why, we thought you were...!"

"Silence!" said Cade swiftly. The Gunner was Kendall of Denver, a companion for years before his assignment to France. After the first show of surprise, Kendall's long face was impassive. Cade knew his former Brother's mind: form a theory and act on it. By now he would have decided that Cade had been on one of the Order's infrequent secret assignments. And he would never mistake Cade for the hunted Cade impostor.

"Guard, is there a charge?" Gunner Kendall asked.

"Sir, this cursed fellow failed to make the voluntary offering in Audience, he talked in the Emperor's

presence, and when I pulled him out of line he yelled about a conspiracy. I suppose he's mad, but if there's anything to it, I..."

"Quite right. I'll take charge. Return to your post."

When they were alone, Kendall grinned hugely. "We all thought you were dead, Brother. There's even an order out to kill someone impersonating you. You took a fine chance coming here. We have Brothers Rosso and Banker in the palace detail besides me; they'll be glad to hear the news. How may I help you?"

Escort to the Emperor? No; now the Emperor need not be troubled with it. The Emperor's right arm would set this crazy muddle right. "Take me to the Power Master, Brother. At once."

Kendall led the way without question. Through corridors, down ramps, through antechambers, Cade saw doors open and salutes snap to the trim uniform of the Gunner.

They passed through a great apartment at last that was far from ornate. There was an antechamber where men and women sat and waited. There was a brightly lit, vast communications room in the back, where hundreds of youngsters tended solid banks of sending and receiving signal units. There was a great room behind that, where men at long tables elaborated outgoing messages and brief incoming ones. There were many, many smaller rooms farther behind, where older men could be seen talking into dictating machines or writing, and consulting lists and folders as they worked. Endlessly, messengers went to and fro. It was Cade's first glimpse of the complex machinery of administration.

In a final anteroom, alone, they sat and waited. Cade felt the eerie sensation of being spy-rayed, but the orifice was too cunningly concealed for him to spot it.

"Gunner Kendall, come in and bring the commoner," said a voice at length--and Cade stiffened. It was the vibrant, commanding voice he could never forget; the voice that had broadcast the "kill-on-sight" command.

He followed Kendall from the anteroom into a place whose like he had never seen before. It had every comfort of the Lady Moia's bedchamber, but was sternly masculine in its simplicity. The whole room pointed to a table where the iron-visaged Power Master sat, and Cade rejoiced. This was the man who would crush the conspiracy and root out the decadent Gunner Supreme...

"Sir," said Kendall in his precise way, "this is Gunner Cade, mistakenly supposed dead. He asked me to bring him to you."

"My spy ray showed me that he is unarmed," said the Power Master. "See to it that he does not seize your weapon." He got up from the table as Kendall backed away from Cade, with confusion on his face. Cade saw that the Power Master wore a gun of the Order--a gun he deliberately unbuckled and flung on the table with a crash. Slowly he approached Cade.

The man was fully as tall as Cade, and heavier. His muscles were rock-hard knots where Cade's were sliding steel bands. Cade was a boxer, the Power Master--a strangler. With his face half a meter from Cade's, he said, in the voice that once had ordered his death: "Are you going to kill me, Gunner? This is your chance."

Cade told him steadily: "I am not here to kill you, sir. I'm here to give you information vital to the Realm."

The Power Master stared into his eyes for a long, silent minute, and then suddenly grinned. He returned to the table to buckle on his gun. "You're sure he's Cade?" he asked, with his back turned.

"No possible doubt, sir," said Kendall. "We were novices together."

"Cade, who else knows about this?"

"Nobody, sir. Only Brother Kendall."

"Good." The Power Master swung around with the gun in his hand. A stab of flame from it blasted the life out of Gunner Kendall. Cade saw the muzzle of the gun turn to train steadily on him as Kendall toppled to the floor.

## CHAPTER 15

"Sit down," said the Power Master. He laid his gun on the polished table as Cade collapsed into a

capacious chair. Numbly he thought: it wasn't murder like Fledwick; Kendall is--was--a Gunner under arms. He could have drawn...but why?

"I can use you," said the Power Master. "I can always use a first-rate Armsman who's had a look below the surface and kept his head. You could be especially useful to me, because, as far as the world knows, you are dead--now that Kendall has been silenced. Also, you seem to have an unusual, useful immunity to hypnosis."

"You know about it," said Cade stupidly.

The Power Master grinned and said, rolling the words: "The Great Conspiracy. Yes; I have my representatives in the Great Conspiracy. I was alarmed when they advised me that a most able Gunner had been turned loose with a compulsion to take my life, and even more alarmed when I found you had slipped through the fingers of the fools of the City Watch."

The girl--was she his spy in the Mystery?

"Now," said the Power Master briskly, "tell me about your recovery from their hypnosis."

"I was left in a drinking room to come to my senses," Cade said slowly, uncertain of what to tell. If she was his spy--but he risked it. He might be shot down like Kendall, but he would know. "I felt the compulsion mounting," he said evenly, "and then it went away for no apparent reason. It has not returned. I left the place looking for a Chapter House. One of the women followed me, and we were both arrested by the Watch."

The Power Master looked up sharply, and Cade was certain that there was surprise in the glance. "You don't know who the woman was?"

"No," said Cade. That much, at least, was true.

"You're sure?"

"I've been trying to find out," he admitted shamelessly, and the Power Master did not bother to repress a cynical smile. Cade didn't care: the girl was no spy of the Power Master's. His claim that the hypnotic compulsion had vanished by itself stood unchallenged. In spite of his bullying show of omniscience, the man did not really know everything.

"Tell me the rest," said the Power Master. "What happened to your partner in criminal insanity--the unbooked teacher?"

Cade told him of their cross-country journey, the shattering discoveries at the Building of Fives that climaxed in the treacherous murder of Fledwick. The Power Master smiled again at the involuntary pain in Cade's voice as he mentioned the presence of the Lady Moia. And he nodded approvingly as Cade told him of his two weeks at Cannon's--"waiting for the hue and cry to die down"--and of his failure to reach the Emperor.

"You've done well," he pronounced judiciously at last. "Now I want to know whether you've profited by it all."

"Since your novitiate, Cade, you've been filled full of brotherhood and misinformation. You've been doing all the right things, but for the wrong reasons. If you can learn the right reasons...Tell me first: why did you Gunners of France fight the Gunners of Muscovy?"

"Because they tried to seize an iron deposit belonging to our Star," Cade said simply. Where was the man leading?

"There was no iron deposit. One of my people faked a geological survey report for the Star of France and seeded a little Mars iron at the site. I held it in reserve as a bone of contention. When the French Star was making overtures to the Muscovite Star concerning a combination of forces, I let the news of the 'iron deposit' leak to Muscovy, with the results that you know. There will be no combination between France and Muscovy now, or for many years to come."

It was an elaborate joke, Cade decided, and in very bad taste.

"All your wars are like that," said the Power Master grimly. "They are useful things to keep the Stars diverted and divided. That is the purpose of the Great Conspiracy as well--though the Stars who think they are behind it do not know this. It requires immense funds to keep a vast underground organization going; the half-dozen or so Stars now supporting the Cairo Mystery conspiracy will soon be bled white and drop off, while others will take their place. My agents will keep anything serious from ever coming of

the Cairo affair, of course. I confess it almost got out of hand, but that is a risk one must run."

This was no joke, Cade numbly realized. It was the end of this world. "What do the Stars who...think...they are behind the conspiracy want?" he asked, fighting for calm.

"They want to kill me, of course, and go their own wild way. They want more, and more, and more Armsmen. They want to fight bigger and bigger wars, and destroy more and more villages.... You've been taught that the Stars are loyal to the Realm, the way commoners are loyal to the Stars. The truth is that the Stars are the worst enemy the Realm has. Without a Power Master to keep them out of harm, they'd have the Realm a wreck in one man's lifetime.

"And your precious Gunner Supreme. Cade, I suppose you think he's the first one like that in ten thousand years and will be the last one like that until the end of time?"

"That was my hope," Cade said wearily.

"Disabuse yourself. Most of them have been like that; most of them will be...must be, if you can understand. Arle is plotting, if you please, to supplant me, merging the two offices. It is only to be expected. A Gunner such as yourself may survive years of combat because he has brains. He becomes a Gunner Superior, in intimate contact with a Star. He figures in the Star's plottings. The women of the Court, fascinated by the novelty of a man they can't have, bend every effort to seducing him, and usually succeed. His vows are broken, he misses the active life of battle, he intrigues for election to the office of the Supreme. By the time he wins it, he is a very ordinary voluptuary with a taste for power, like our friend Arle.

"But, Cade, this is the key; don't forget it: There must be a Gunner Supreme. As a fighting man you know that. Many a time the fact that the Supreme lived somewhere and embodied your notion of the Order has saved your life or saved the day for your command. The fact that the Supreme in the flesh is not what you think doesn't matter at all."

Cade leaned forward. The abominable thing he was about to say was a ball in his throat, choking him, so he had to get rid of it: "The Emperor?" he asked. "The Emperor? Why does he allow it? Why?"

"The Emperor is another lie," the Power Master said calmly. "The Emperor can't stop it. He's just a man--an ordinary one. If he attempted to make suggestions about my task of running the Realm, I would very properly ignore them. Emperors who have offered too many such suggestions in the past, Cade, have died young. Their Power Masters killed them. It will happen again.

"And that's as it should be. As you know, the line of the Power Master descends by adoption, and the line of the Emperor by male primogeniture. The Power Master chooses a tried man to succeed himself. The Emperor gets what chance sends him. Of course, the line of the Power Master is stronger, so of course it must rule."

His voice rose almost to a roar. "But there must be an Emperor. The Power Master is unloved: he sends people to death; he collects taxes; he sets speed limits. The Emperor does none of this; he simply exists and is loved because everybody is told to love him. People do it--again, the right thing for the wrong reason. If they didn't love him, what would happen to the Realm? Think of such a thing as all the commoners becoming criminals. What would we do when the Watch Houses were all filled? What would we do if they kept attacking the Watch Houses until all the gasgun charges were used up? But they don't all become criminals. They love the Emperor and don't want to sadden him with unfit deeds."

The Power Master rose, holstering his gun, and began to pace the room restlessly. "I am asking you to think, Cade," he said with blazing intensity. "I don't want to throw away a fine tool like you. I am asking you to think. Things are not what they seem, not what you thought they were.

"For many years you did your best work because you didn't know the right reasons. Now it's different. There are other jobs for you, and you won't be able to do them if you're blinded by the lies you used to believe. Remember always that the Realm as it is works. It's been kept working for ten thousand years by things being as they are and not as they seem. It can be kept working to the end of time as long as there are resolute men to shove the structure back into balance when it shows signs of toppling."

Stopping for a moment at the feet of the slain Gunner Kendall, he said simply: "That was for the happiness of millions. They are happy, almost all of them. Gunners are contented, the Klin Service is contented, the Courts are contented, the commoners are contented. Let things change, let the structure

crash, and where would they be? Give each commoner the power I hold, and what would he make of it? Would he be contented, or would he run amuck?"

"Cade, I don't want to...lose you. Think straight. Is there anything really unfit about the work I do, the work I, want you to do for me? You made a trade of killing because the trade was called the Order of Armsmen. My trade is conserving the stability and contentment of every subject of the Realm of Man."

The passionately sincere voice pounded on, battering at Cade's will. The Power Master spoke of the vows Cade had taken, and he destroyed their logic completely. Cade had dedicated himself to the service of the Emperor--who was no more than the powerless, ceremonial excuse for the Power Master. With ruthless obscenity of detail he told Cade what he had given up in life in exchange for a sterile athleticism.

He spoke of food and drunkenness and drugs; of dancing and music and love: the whole sensual world Cade had thought well lost. He wooed the Gunner with two intermingling siren songs--the fitness of his new service under the Power Master and the indulgence of himself that was possible in it.

It would have been easy to tumble into the trap. Cade had been drained empty of the certainties of a lifetime. The Power Master said there was only one other set of certainties, and that if Cade would only let himself be filled with them, there would be the most wonderful consequences any powerful man of normal appetites would want.

It was easy to listen, it would have been easy to accept, but...Cade knew there was even more than he'd been told. There was one thing that did not fit in the new world, and that was the girl. The girl who had not wanted the Power Master killed, or the Gunner either. The girl who had warned Cade--rightly--that he would be going to his death if he tried to reaffiliate with the Order.

There was no all-powerful, all-loving Emperor anymore; there were no loyal Stars; there was only the Power Master--and the girl. So, thought Cade, treachery is the order of the day and has been for ten thousand years. He knew what answer he would give the Power Master, the answer he had to give to stay alive, but he was not ready to give it yet. A lifetime of training in strategy made him sharply aware that a quick surrender would be wrong.

"I must ask for time, sir," he said painfully. "You realize this is...very new to me. My vows have been part of me for many years, and it's less than a month since I...died...in battle. May I have leave to spend a day in meditation?"

The Power Master's lips quirked with inner amusement. "One day? You may have it, and welcome. And you may spend it in my own apartment. I have a room you should find comfortable."

## CHAPTER 16

The room was comfortable by any standards Cade had known; it was second in luxury only to the smothering softness of the Lady Moia's apartment. Compared to Mistress Cannon's mean quarters or the sleeping lofts of a Chapter House, it offered every comfort a dog-tired man could ask. And it was also, unmistakably, a prison.

There were no bars to guard the windows, and presumably the "shoot-on-sight" order had lost its force. Yet Cade was certain he could not leave the place alive without the express permission of its master. If there had been any doubt about the answer he must give tomorrow, this room would have resolved it.

And it went deeper. If he'd had any tendency to give that answer in good faith, or any hesitation at the thought of falsely declaring his allegiance, the room dispelled it. Given freedom, he might have found it hard to return and commit himself to treachery and deceit with a lying promise to the Power Master. As a prisoner he owed no honesty to anyone but himself. And perhaps to the girl--if he could find her.

The Gunner slept well that night. After breakfast had been brought him, his host appeared.

Cade did not wait to be asked. Saluting, he said: "My decision is made; it was not a hard one. I am in your service. What is my first assignment?"

The Power Master smiled. "One that has been awaiting you. The Realm is threatened--has been threatened increasingly--by the unbounded egotism and short-sightedness of one Star against whom I

cannot operate in the usual way. Until now...until now I have been searching for a man who could do what was necessary. You are the man."

He paused, and the silence in the room was explosive.

"You will go to Mars," he said finally, "and arrange the death of the Star of Mars. You will return alive. The details are your own concern. I can supply you with a flier and with money--whether to buy men or machines, I do not care."

Cade's mind accepted the job as a tactical problem, putting off for the time being the vital decision as to whether the commission would be fulfilled. For now, it would be necessary to act...even to think...in terms of fulfillment.

"I will need an identity."

"Choose it. I said the details were your own concern. I can offer, merely as a suggestion, that you would do well to adopt the identity of a lapsed armiger--you have known such cases--who took to the district. You might as well put the time you spent in that brothel to some use. And I can assure you that under such an identity you'll find yourself welcome in the Court of Mars. Yes," he said in answer to Cade's look of shocked inquiry, "things are that bad. Did you suppose I'd send you to kill a Star for anything less serious? Now, when you've decided on your course of action and prepared a list of your needs, call me..." He indicated a red button on the wall communicator. "Either I or a trusted servant will be there."

As he pointed, the set chimed. The Power Master depressed the button.

"Here."

"Message, sir. Shall I bring it?"

"To the outer room." And to Cade: "Call when you're ready."

The Gunner lost no time. He seated himself at a desk at one end of the room and was already listing the funds, transport, and identification he would need, when the door opened again.

"You are going to have a visitor," the Power Master said coldly. "I am very interested in knowing just how she discovered..."

"She? Who?" Cade was on his feet, the list forgotten.

"Whom do you suppose? How many Ladies of the palace do you know?"

It was the Lady Moia, then. And the memory of her still hurt. It would take time to recover from the shocks of that night. "One, sir, as I told you," he said formally. "And I would prefer not to see her, if that is possible."

"It is not possible. She knows you are here, and I have no grounds for refusing her admission without revealing your identity. How did she know you were here?" the vibrant voice demanded.

"Sir; I don't know. I haven't seen her since the Building of Fives..."

"The Building of Fives? You spoke only of the Lady Moia there." He peered closely into Cade's puzzled face and suddenly burst into a wide, wolfish grin. "You don't know!" he exploded. "My virtuous Gunner, this is the girl for whom you waited two weeks at Cannon's--I had a report from there last night, an hour after you went to sleep--a mysterious girl, a girl whom you had met just once." He was dragging it out, enjoying himself hugely. "Oh, Cade, you were so upright yesterday, so true to your vows. How could you have...neglected...a little thing like telling your master about the girl?"

Cade felt the blood rush to his face, but it was not the reflex of shame. It was she; she had found him after his futile, stupid hunt for her. And she was no commoner or wearer of the garter, but a Lady of the Court!

"No." The Power Master laughed. "I won't spoil the joke. You'll learn who she is shortly from her own--shall I say, delicate?--lips." The facade of grimness relaxed; the Power Master sat comfortably on the couch, chuckling. "If it's any satisfaction to you, Cade, I will admit that my respect for you, my hopes for you, have risen. I can use a man who knows how to keep his mouth shut. So she Saw Life after all?" His intonation was heavily satirical, amused. "Proof again that the simplest answer may sometimes be right. The whole palace has been buzzing about it for three weeks, and I thought I knew better!"

Cade tried to concentrate on what he was hearing and make sense of it. "The whole palace?" he asked uncertainly. "You mean you knew about her? The whole palace knew?" Then why, he wondered, all the

secrecy now? Why was he a prisoner here? None of it fitted with the Power Master's attitude of yesterday.

"Yes, of course. But they all thought it was the daring impostor Cade she met...and only I knew it was the real Gunner, chaste and pure. Or so I thought. Now it seems I had the right information, but they have the right interpretation of it all. And to think of the horror on your face yesterday when I talked of these wicked matters! Cade, you impress me; you'll be a good man to have in my service." He broke out chuckling again. "I keep wondering...she must have made a peculiar-looking tart. What did she look like? She's so--you know."

"So beautiful?" asked Cade.

The Power Master stared at him wonderingly. "We'd better get you off to Mars," he said dryly, and glanced at a paper he held in his hand. "She says she recognized you yesterday in Court but didn't want to 'betray you.' Now that I've 'captured' you, she wants to see you before you die."

Abruptly he ceased to be a man enjoying himself. "Cade," he said grimly, "I can understand and excuse your lie by omission of yesterday if it was prompted by mistaken loyalty to your little friend. You are, after all, unsophisticated. But if I find there's anything more to it, your little friend's visit will be quite literally the last you will enjoy before you die."

The door closed behind him, and Cade sank into a chair, burying his face in his hands. Had he gone mad? Had everybody?

"Traitor, face me! They said you lied, and I did not believe them, but I know now. Look me in the eye if you dare!"

Cade jumped up. He hadn't heard the door open; the first thing to reach his ears was the unpleasant whine of her voice, contrasting ludicrously with the melodramatic words. He looked at her, heartsick as he realized the monstrous joke somebody was perpetrating. It was the Lady Jocelyn. He had noticed the resemblance himself yesterday--but who else could know about it?

"Traitor," she said, "look on my face and see how you erred when you thought to victimize a foolish and ignorant commoner girl. Look on my face."

He looked, and something impossible was happening. The Lady Jocelyn's squint-stooped head moved back to sit proudly on her slim throat. Her round-shouldered stance straightened for a moment and settled to a supple, erect figure. The nearsighted, peering eyes flashed with humor and arrogance. She still wore an ill-fitting robe of lurid orange, and her stringy hair still missed matching the color of her robe, but none of these things mattered. It was she.

"Have you nothing to say for yourself in your shame?" she demanded in a voice that was also a caricature.

"A thousand pardons, Lady," he said hoarsely, his heart thudding. "If I had known, if you had permitted some word of your rank to cross your lips, I could not have lied to you." If Fledwick could hear me now! The girl winked and nodded "go on."

"Surely your warm heart will understand and forgive when I say that only your beauty drove me to my crime." The story seemed to be that the Lady Jocelyn, the palace butt, had gone out on the town incognito and been arrested, to the hilarity of the palace wits. She was pretending to assume that he was under death sentence for daring to insult her by taking her at her face value.

"Forgive?" she declaimed. "Forgive? Justice will be done; there is nothing to forgive. A life for an insult to the blood imperial. I have come to console you, fellow. Bring a chair for me. You may sit at my feet."

Cade did as he was told, by now far beyond any effort to take control of the situation. He knelt as she sat down and pulled a sheaf of manuscript from a sagging pocket in her voluminous robe.

"I shall console you for an hour by reading from my works." She launched into what he supposed was a poem: There is no whisper uttered in the Realm

That goes unheard. By night, by day, no voice

Is raised involuntarily or by choice

Unheard by him who holds the palace helm.

She cleared her throat, and Cade nodded, jerking his head a little at the wall communicator. He understood.

The doors are many in the Realm of Man;  
This door unguarded, that door triply sealed;  
Each loyal subject wearing like a shield  
The key: to live as fitly as he can.

Her knee pressed sharply against Cade's shoulder during the three words "this door unguarded." He managed to concentrate on the message.

Star-born or common, we must take and use  
The lives that we are handed for our lot.  
Great Klin can tell us what to do or not;  
Not now or ever is it ours to choose.  
The words were take and use--now...

She rattled her sheaf of manuscript, and from its bulky folds a flat case slid; he caught it before it struck the floor. Take and use--now. It was the smallest size of caster. He had it open in an instant and saw a half-hour reel of recorded tape ready to roll. All dials were at zero.

My voice is small; I do not know the way  
To reach all of the willing hands that serve,  
Setting at ease the flesh and bone and nerve.  
But if I spoke like thunder, I would say:  
Good people, follow Klin by night and day.

My voice--I do not know--setting. Swiftly he mixed bass and treble volumes to match her voice--and hoped the spymike system was anything but high-fidelity. He started the tape on a quick nod from the girl and was relieved to find that he'd done well. In a very fair approximation of her adenoidal whine the 'caster immediately began to drone out:

What beauty lies in loyalty! What joy!  
Is there a heart that throbs with lesser thrill...

He placed the box carefully on her chair as she rose, and followed her silently from the room. The Power Master, on the other end of the mike, was welcome to his share of the Lady Jocelyn's verses.

## CHAPTER 17

She led Cade through endless twisting dark passageways and stairs. Doors opened at a touch from her hand where no doors seemed to be, and never once did they encounter another person in their flight. There was more to the palace than met the eye, Cade realized....

When they emerged at last, it was into a narrow alley like those of the district where Cade had spent two weeks. A ground car whisked them away from the alley door. Cade never saw who was driving. He followed the girl into the back seat and turned to her promptly with the thanks and questions uppermost in his mind, but she put one finger to her crookedly painted mouth and shook her head.

Cade sat back, forcing his body to relax, but his mind was busy, fascinated by the puzzle of her constantly shifting personality. She had been a commoner at their first meeting, but one with an air of command, an important person in the Cairo Mystery. Then she had been a wearer of the garter, openly seductive--and vulgar. And now a Lady of the Court, a niece of the Emperor himself!

He knew now that the first time she had been a spy; he did not know for whom.

The second time she was in masquerade. The palace thought it was on holiday--he knew it was not.

This time he could not doubt her true identity; but the awkward, graceless, shambling fool of the Audience Hall was not the same Lady Jocelyn who sat beside him now, erect and confident.

All he had learned so far was what she was not--except two things: that she was still, and always, even under the makeup of her palace role, exquisitely beautiful, and that she had rescued him again...for what?

The car came to a discreet stop at the edge of a field, and the girl gestured him to open the door. She led him briskly across the field to an ancient, unpainted structure; Cade had no chance to look at the vanishing car.

"Open it," she said at the door of the building, and her voice was the commanding voice of the



egg-shaped room. Cade heaved a wooden bar out of double sockets and pushed the double door open.

There was a space flier inside--twelve meters of polished alloy.

"You can fly this, Gunner," she said. It was a statement, not a question.

"I've taken fliers to the Moon and back," he told her.

She looked worried. "Not Mars?"

"I can take it to Mars," he said--and he or any Gunner could.

"I hope so. This flier is loaded and fueled, with food aboard." She pressed a folded paper into his hands. "These are the coordinates of your landing point on Mars. There will be friends waiting there, or they will arrive shortly after your landing. If you take off immediately, you will probably be out of radar range before they can pursue."

"They?" he demanded. "The Power Master's fliers?" As far as he knew, the Power Master disposed only of freighters and ferries, without a ram in his space fleet.

"Cade," she said steadily, "we have no time. I've helped you before, against your will. Now I ask you to take off immediately--without questions or argument. First you must strike me--knock me unconscious."

"What?"

"You've done it before," she said angrily. "I must have a cover story to delay them with while you get clear."

Cade looked down at her, at the brilliant eyes and lovely face beneath the grotesque makeup. It was strangely pleasant, this warmth he felt...strangely unlike the peril he had been taught to expect from such nearness to a woman. It felt much as the touch of the Gunner Supreme's seal to his lips had felt in another life. Even as the thought came, his lips tingled.

"Cade!" she said furiously. "I tell you, there's no time to waste. The tape gave us a half-hour at the most, even if they didn't get suspicious before then. Do as I say!"

A palace ground car roared down the highway across the field, braked screechingly, and began to back up.

"They're here," she said bitterly.

With only a momentary hesitation Cade struck her as she had said he must--but he did not leave her lying there to cover his escape. He picked her up and raced into the building and up the ramp to the control-compartment lock standing open and waiting. He buckled her limp body into an acceleration couch and clanged the lock shut as a shouted challenge to surrender echoed in the building.

He slipped into the pilot's seat, and reflex took over. Straps, buckles, neck brace, grid-one temperature and voltage, grid-two temperature and voltage, first-stage discharge buildup and fire.

His blackout lasted only a few seconds. He turned in his straps, craning his neck to see the couch. She was still unconscious. Indicators flashed on the panel, and his hands worked efficiently, as if with a life of their own, even though he had not flown out of atmosphere for three years. For ten minutes he was necessarily a part of the ship, his nerve system joined with its circuits by his swift-moving fingers on the controls. Last of all he cut in the flier's radars and unbuckled himself.

He kicked himself over to the couch, frightened, to feel the girl's neck. She shouldn't be out that long, he worried. But she was, and there was nothing he could do about it.

Distractedly he began to search the ship for medical equipment. He braced himself in toeholds, spun open the air port of the control compartment, and floated into a cargo room perhaps three meters deep. In there, except for the space filled by an oversized loading lock, the bulkheads were lined with locked cabinets. Floating free in the compartment were four sealed crates. It was cargo, not medicine, here.

Aft of the cargo compartment was a bunk-lined cabin with a tiny galley and a vapor cabinet--the living quarters. She would want water. He filled a valve bag from the tap and gummed it to his thigh with a scoop of paste from one of the ship's omnipresent pots. When he kicked his way back into the control compartment, he found that the girl had freed herself from the couch and was swaying against a bulkhead with an uncertain hold on a grabiron.

"You fool," she said in a deadly voice.

"You told me to take the ship to Mars," he said flatly. "That's what I'm doing."

"Give me that water," she said, and drank inexpertly from the valve. "Cade," she said at last, "I suppose you meant well, but this means death for us both. Did you suppose they'd let you chase off into space with a member of the Emperor's family on board? They'll destroy us, and I will be reported killed--'unfortunately'--in the action. If you'd listened to me, I could have given you time for a safe escape."

Cade pointed to the stern-chase radar. "Look," he said. "There's nothing in sight--one pip."

"Where?" She pushed off from the grabiron and landed, clutching, by the screen.

"See?" He showed her. "A meteorite, most likely. Or even another ship. But not after us. They couldn't get into the air in less than two hours. Not unless they have fliers fueled and ready to go. By then we'll..."

"Suppose they have?" she blazed. "Wasn't this ship ready to go? Have you learned nothing? Do you still think the Realm's what it seems to be? This ship has been waiting six years for a Gunner to fly it, and now it's to be destroyed because of your folly!"

Cade floated before the screen, watching the green point on the gray ground. It was just becoming recognizable as three bunched points. Each second that passed made them more distinct. "Fliers," he said. "What are they--cargoes, ferries, recons, rams?"

"I don't know," she said venomously. "I'm no Gunner. Rams, most likely."

"With you on board?" Rams were designed for annihilative action. They matched velocities with their quarry and crushed it with their armored prows. It meant death to all aboard the victim.

"I see you're still living in your ethical dream world," she said. "I'm just a good excuse for the attack, Cade. If only you'd listened to me. What are you going to do now?"

"Outrun them if I can." He floated into his seat again. "I can try an evasive course and accelerate all the ship will take." It wouldn't be enough, and he knew it. "If the other pilots are inferior..."

"They won't be!" she snapped. He wondered whether she knew that rams had relays of pilots, always fresh, always solving for the difference while the quarry took evasive action, always waiting for the moment when the victim's single pilot tired after hours of dodging and began to repeat his tactics.

He reset the stern radar for maximum magnification and got a silhouette of three ugly fliers, smaller than his own, with anvillike beaks. They were rams.

"Cade, listen to me." Her voice compelled attention. It was more than a tone of command, more than the urgency of the words. It carried a desperate seriousness that made him pause.

"I'm listening."

"You'll have to fight them, Cade. There's no other way."

He looked at her unbelievably.

"There are guns aboard," she said, not meeting his eye.

"What are you talking about?"

"You know what." She looked squarely at him, without shame. "Fire on them!" she said.

## CHAPTER 18

It had been a rotten thing to hear from the lips of the lax and dissolute Mars-born gunner who had died in France. To hear her speak the unspeakable tore his heart.

"It's for our lives," Cade!" she pleaded shamelessly.

"Our lives!" He was passionately scornful. "What kind of lives would they be with a memory like that?"

"For the Realm of Man, then! The mission we are on!"

"What mission?" He laughed bitterly. "For a lie, a farce, a bad joke on the lips of the Power Master? What is the Realm of Man to me? A weakling Emperor, a murderous Power Master, a lying lecher of a Gunner Supreme! I have nothing left, Lady, except determination not to soil myself."

"Jetters and bombles!" she exploded, pleading no longer. "That's the way you're thinking--precisely like a commoner's brat terrified on the Beetu-five and the Beefai-voh!"

"I have no fear of the Beefai-Voh, and I don't believe in bombles," he said coldly. "I believe there are things one knows are wrong, detestably wrong, and I refuse to do them. I wish...I wish you hadn't said it."

She was fighting for calm. "I see I'll have to tell you some things. I won't try to pledge you to secrecy; your promise would be meaningless. But I hope that if the time comes, you'll let them torture you to death without revealing what I say, or that it was I who said it."

He kept silence.

"You've never heard the word 'history,' Cade."

He looked up in surprise. He had--used by the mad little burglar who'd been beaten to death in the Watch House.

She went on, frowning with concentration: "History is the true story of changes in man's social organization over periods of time."

"But..." he began with an incredulous laugh.

"Never mind! You'll say it's meaningless. That 'changes' and 'social organization' are words that just can't be used together--that 'changed social organization' is a senseless noise. But you're wrong.

"I cannot tell you my sources, but I assure you that there have been many forms of social organization--and that the world was not created ten thousand years ago."

Her burning conviction amazed him. Was she mad too? As mad as the little burglar?

"Try to understand this: thousands of years ago there was a social organization without Emperor or Stars. It was destroyed by people firing from fliers. That was a terrible way to fight. It killed the innocent--mother and child, armed man and unarmed. It poisoned food so that people died in agony. It destroyed sewer and water systems so that homes became stinking places of corruption.

"The social organization was destroyed. Homes and cities were abandoned--yes, these people had cities; ours still bear their names. They lived like talking, suffering animals who only knew that things had once been better. Every year they forgot more of what that something better had been like, but they never forgot the supreme horror of death from the skies. Every year the details of it grew more cloudy and the thing itself grew more terrible."

Cade nodded involuntarily. Like a night attack, he thought; the less you saw, the worse it was.

"There were centers of recovery--but that's no part of my story. You said you didn't believe in jetters and bombles? Cade, the jetters and bombles were real. The Beefai-voh and the rest of them are the names of the fliers that brought the supreme horror to that social organization."

"The Caves!" said Cade. The place called Washington, the rumbled ruinous blocks of stone with staring black eyes in them, haunted by the bombles...

"Yes, the Caves! The Caves everybody is afraid of and nobody can explain." She paused, almost breathless, then went on tensely: "Cade, you must fight. If you don't, you're throwing our lives away on folly."

Cade didn't believe it. The vague appeal to sketchy evidence--it was as if a patrol leader came back and reported: "Sir, I didn't see it, but I think there's a two-company enemy group somewhere up there in some direction or other." He gripped a grabiron in his fist until his knuckles went white. Ten thousand years of Emperor, Klin, Power Master, the Order, and the Stars, and the commoners...that was the world.

"They're coming up fast," she said emotionlessly, staring at the screen.

"Where are the guns?" he said hoarsely, not meeting her eye. And he knew he was only pretending to believe her story, pretending it was true so he could save her and himself at any cost in self-loathing.

"In the chart locker. Ten, I believe."

Ten guns. He would be able to fire at unheard-of aperture, until coils fused, and toss one aside for another. Ten guns--like that. As though a gun were not an individual thing, one to an Armsman, touched by the Gunner Supreme...

"We must get spacesuits on," he said. He opened the locker and began to select his own units. Even after three years, he remembered his sizes. He dogged a pair of Number Seven legs against the bulkhead and tugged himself into them, donned Number Five arm pieces, and sealed a torso unit around his body and to the limb units. He selected units for the girl and helped her into them; she didn't know how.

"Helmets now?" she asked calmly.

"Better carry the...the guns to the cargo room first." They made two armloads. Cade wiped a palmful

of paste against a cargo-room bulkhead and stuck his load to it in a near row. The girl ranged hers beside them.

"Helmets now," he said. "Then you go back to the control room. I'll airtight this section and open the cargo lock. You watch the screens--do you know the alarms?" She shook her head. "The proximity alarm is a loud buzzer. I won't hear it in vacuum; you call me on the suit intercom when it goes off. Just talk into the helmet. If I succeed in driving them off, you'll have to bleed air out of the control room until pressure is low enough for me to open the door against it. You hold down the switch on the upper left of the control array that's labeled 'Spacecock.' Can you do that?"

She nodded; they clamped on the plastic domes and sealed them. "Testing intercom. Do you hear me?"

"I hear you," sounded tinnily inside his helmet. "Can you turn your volume down?"

He did. "Is that better?"

"Thank you." That was all. A casual thanks for lowering his volume, and not a word about his decision. Didn't she realize what he was doing for her? Was she fool enough to think he believed her wild "history"?

He sealed the fore and aft doors and plucked one of the guns from the bulkhead. Full-charged. No number. What did a gun without a number mean? A gun without an Armsman matching it was unthinkable--but here were ten of them. Cade set each gun for maximum aperture and tight band, bled the air out of the compartment by a manual valve, and spun open the big cargo lock.

After that there was nothing to do. He floated and waited and tried not to think. But in that he failed.

What did he know--and how did he know it?

He knew Armsmen were Armsmen: fighters, masters of the Guns' complexity, masters of fighting, the only masters of fighting there were. That was an essential datum. He knew they were in the service of the Emperor--but that datum had crumbled under the ruthless words of the Power Master. He had known the Gunner Supreme was the embodied perfections of the Order, and that datum was a lie. He had known that it was abomination to fire from a flier--and found himself about to commit the abomination. He had known that for Armsmen there was only one woman, and not a woman of flesh: She who came fleetingly to those who died in battle, and in her fleeting passage rewarded Armsmen for their lives of abstinence. But he knew that for him there was another woman now--sometime mystagogue, traitress, whore, weak-minded noblewoman, expounder of insane "history." What did he know, and how did he know it? He knew that, false to the Order and to She who came, he wanted this woman and did not know her secret.

"Proximity alarm," said the voice in his helmet.

"Message received," he said automatically in Armsman style and smiled bitterly at himself.

Cade kicked his way to the array of guns. Two he gummed to his thighs, and two he clasped in his gauntlets. It was a grotesque situation. One man, one gun, it was supposed to be. But why? he demanded. Why not one man, two guns; one man, four guns; one man, as many guns as he needs and can lay his hands on? He shoved off to a port and began a hand-over-hand, spiderlike crawl from one quartz disk to the next, peering into the star-powdered blackness. The sun was astern of the flier; it would throw the rams into glaring relief. They wouldn't be able to stalk the victim in its own shadow.

There was a triple wink of light that became a blaze ripping past the ports. The rams had overshot in their first try at becoming part of the same physical system as their prey. They would return....

Cade wondered whether there could be peace in the Mysteries from the confusions that plagued him, and recoiled from the thought. He knew them, at least, for what they were: traps for the johns and clink for the blades. Peace? Perhaps there was peace at Mistress Cannon's, where a man could wallow deep, until not one ray of sunlight found him. At Cannon's you could drink and drug and couple while you had the greens, and then it was a simple matter to haunt dark streets until you found your nervous, late-going commoner. And then you could drink and drug and couple again where no ray of sunlight could find you. If firing from a flier was right, could a life at Cannon's be wrong?

The rams appeared ahead again, and the flier seemed to gain and overtake them. Cade knew it was an illusory triumph; he was being bracketed. They were far astern now.

What did he know, and how did he know it? He knew the Order and the Klin Philosophy and the Realm of Man had been created ten thousand years ago. He knew it because he had been told it by everyone. How did they know it? Because they had been told it by everyone. Cade's mind floated, anchorless, like his body. He didn't believe in jetters and bombles. That was for children. But he did believe in not firing from fliers. That was for Armsmen. Children and Armsmen had been told all about it.

"I'll take you to the Caves.

"And the Beetu-nine will come to tear your fingers and toes off with white-hot knives of metal.

"And the Beetu-five will come to pepper you with white-hot balls of metal.

"And the Beefai-voh will come and grate your arms and legs with white-hot metal graters.

"And last, if you are not a good boy, the Beethrie-six will come in the dark and will hunt you out though you run from Cave to Cave, screaming in the darkness. The Beethrie-six, which lumbers and grumbles, will breathe on you with its poison breath, and that is the most horrible of all, for your bones will turn to water and you will burn forever."

The three rams blazed past the open port again and seemed to hang in space far ahead of the flier. Their next "short" might do it.

"Clennie's filthy. He told me he made a nail hole in the wall and peeks at his sister every morning when she gets dressed. Anybody who'd do that would fire from a flier."

"...embarrassing but necessary questions have to be put by the entrance board. Candidate Cade, with love of the Emperor in your heart, can you truthfully say that at night you have only normal and healthy dreams, free from such degrading fantasies as demonstrations of affection for other boys and firing a gun while flying?"

"...but, oh, my pupils, there is worse yet to tell. This unfortunate young man who began by neglecting his Klin lessons did not end merely as a coward and thief. On reconnaissance flight he lost altitude and came under the fire of ground troops. I need not name the Thing he did; you can guess. Smitten by remorse after his unspeakable deed, he properly took his life, but conceive if you can the shame of his Brothers..."

"...heartbroken, but it had to be done. I never knew he had a rotten spot in him, but I saw the paper myself. He 'solved' Tactics VII, if you please, with a smoke screen--sending a flier over the enemy left flank and having the Gunner set fire to the trees with a low-aperture blast of his gun, uh...from the, uh, from the air. It just shows you can't be too careful..."

"I receive this gun to use in such a way that my Emperor, my Gunner Supreme, and my Brothers in the Order will never have cause to sorrow..."

"They're bunched in the square; we'll have to blast them out with a frontal smash. Cade, take your flier over for an estimate of their strength. Leave your gun here; we know they're low on charges, and it wouldn't do to have yours fall into their hands if you're shot down."

The flier seemed to shoot past the rams again. The next time, velocities would match...

No; it would never do for him to take his gun. He remembered soaring over the plaza, tacking and veering as flame squirted from the densely massed troops below, busy with his counting. He dropped an imaginary grid over them, counted the number of men in one imaginary square and multiplied by the total number of imaginary squares as he shot back to the command post on the outskirts of the Rhineland village with his estimate and joined in the costly advance on foot.

He had been told, and he believed. How much else, he thought--as though a harsh light had suddenly been turned on--had he been told and believed against all common sense and reason?

Bring on your rams!

This time it was neither a short nor an over. Suddenly the three rams stood, less than a kilometer off, as though frozen in space.

They were smaller than Cade's freighter and boasted a wealth of propulsion units, as against the freighter's central main thrust tube and concentric ring of smaller steering tubes. He rejoiced as he saw conning bubbles rise simultaneously on the three craft just behind their ugly, solid anvil beaks.

A propulsion unit came into play on the outermost of the rams--the reserve. Red haze jetted from a midships tube precisely perpendicular to the main thrust, and the ram drifted outward to double its

distance from the flier. Its forward component remained unchanged; it neither fell behind nor drifted ahead.

Aboard the two rams in action there must be relief at the flier's failure to take evasive action; they would now be plotting the simplest of symmetrical double-collision courses. Presently one of the rams would jet "over" or "under" its quarry, to stand out on the other side the same distance as its mate; simultaneously the rams would add equal and opposite lateral thrust in amount proportional to their distance from the flier, and the victim would be crushed between the two ugly anvil beaks.

Cade didn't know what the standard doctrine was for ramming distance, but he was content to improvise.

Both rams showed red exhaust mist. One was standing in closer; the other was moving "up" to hem the quarry in. Cade anchored himself at the lip of the open cargo lock; the conning bubble of the oncoming ram was sun-bright in his sights.

The gun gushed energy for three seconds before it failed. Cade hurled it through the lock into space and snatched another from his right thigh. It was not needed. The conning blister was still there, but blackened and discolored. He couldn't tell whether it had been pierced, but the ram issued uncertain gushes of red mist from one tube and then another, tacking and veering, and then flashed off at full thrust in what seemed to be the start of a turn-around curve.

The other ram was still working itself painstakingly around the flier with conservative jets of exhaust. Cade, half through the lock, emptied the full charge of the second gun and a third at his hull, and saw sunlit diamond flashes spraying through space--debris from exploding ports! The ram didn't wait for more, and when Cade looked for the reserve craft, it was gone.

A good engagement, thought Cade. Presumably they wore spacesuits aboard the rams in action, so he could claim no kills. The conning blister hadn't shattered like the ports--perhaps because it had been extruded into space cold for only a few seconds and the gun hadn't tickled it hard enough to set up destructive strain. And the psychology of it was important too. The terrifying novelty of a ship-to-ship firefight, of a gun being used from a flier--Cade laughed thunderously inside the helmet at himself, at Clennie, at the embarrassed entrance-board examiner, at the Klin teacher with his moral lesson, at Novice Lorca's smoke screen, at the Oath of the Gun, at the Gunner Superior of France and his frontal smash.

A small, tinny voice in his ears yelled: "Turn your volume down! Turn it down!"

"I'm sorry, Lady," he said, chuckling. "Did you see how I routed them? Now, if you can find the spacecock, I'll be able to open the door."

She found it and bled control-compartment air into space until he could shove the door open, airtight it again, and start the control-compartment pressure building.

## CHAPTER 19

He helped her take her helmet off, and then she helped him. They stood looking at each other, waiting for adequate words. Her eyes dropped first, and Cade momentarily felt she was ashamed of the thing she had made him do, the faith she had shaken and then destroyed.

But it made no difference now: the faith was destroyed--and for what? Cade stared long and hard at the Lady Jocelyn, and a fresh torrent of laughter burst from him, the sound echoing and reechoing in the vaulted compartment.

It was so ludicrous. There she stood, feet hooked under a toehold, a squat and misshapen figure no more womanly than the radars or the hulking compression pump. On top of the bulky mass of padding and metal and fabric the flaming, orange-red hair of the Lady of the Court was tangled and matted. Her face paint, never designed for beauty, was smudged and rubbed until she seemed a mocking distortion of the woman to whose beauty he had awakened a month ago in an underground center of intrigue.

He did not answer the mute question in her eyes, and she did not choose to put it into words. Instead she said quietly: "Help me with my suit, please."

Cade, suddenly sobered, showed her how to unseal the members and stow them in the locker. And

then, though he had thought himself past being shocked by the woman, she took him by surprise again. As though she were a commoner domestic she said: "I'll fix us something to eat. Is pressure up in the cargo room?"

He checked the gauge and spun the door open for her. "Don't come in for a few minutes," she said. "I'll be changing my clothes and washing up."

How many was a few? Cade spent half an hour getting out of his own suit, minutely inspecting it, and stowing it away, and performed as many other jobs as he could find. There were not many. At last, cautiously, he hauled himself through the cargo room to the third compartment aft, the living quarters. Its door stood open, and he went in.

"Oh, there you are. I was going to call you." She was at the tiny cooker, and two valved bottles of mash were beginning to gush steam. "There's a table and benches," she said, and he clicked them out of the wall, staring.

She had washed up. The soiled Court mask was scrubbed away and the perfection of her face was a renewed surprise. Her hair was bound with a cloth as if it were still damp from washing--he hoped the hair dye had washed out. And instead of her sagging orange robe she wore a fresh set of mechanic's coveralls. The sleeves and legs were rolled, and the belt pulled tight to her waist. She looked trim...and tempting. How did a man--a man not in the Order--go about telling a woman that she was beautiful?

"You've time to wash," she said pointedly.

"Of course, thanks," he said, and kicked over to the vapor chamber and thrust his head and hands in to be scrubbed by the swirling, warm mist and dried by the air blast. Turning to the table, he realized with sudden alarm that he was expected to sit across it from her.

"Excuse me," he said, found a coverall for himself, and fled to the control room to change and pull himself together. To sit across the table from her and look at her while he ate! He told himself it was a first step. The sooner he unlearned his role of Gunner, the simpler life would be. The mash would help. There was no sundown in space, but his stomach knew the time--mid-afternoon--and he was sure it wouldn't accept meat food for two hours. The coveralls helped too. He was glad to rid himself at last of the commoner's best suit he had bought at Cannon's with stolen money. Coveralls were a far cry from boots and cloak, but he had worn them in his Novice years.

Eating was easier than he had expected. There were thigh straps on the benches, and the table had a gummy top. It was an illusion of gravity at a time when the digestive system could use such assistance. The girl didn't speak as they solemnly chewed their mash, sucked water from their bottles, and fished carefully through the trap of the jar for chunks of fruit that had carefully dehydrated crusts but were juicy inside.

At last Cade said: "Tell me more."

"More about what?" she asked coolly. He knew she understood what he meant.

"You know what. 'History,' for instance. Or, more to the point, what cargo are we carrying, and to whom?" He had not forgotten, even while fighting off the rams, the locked cabinets and sealed crates.

"There's nothing more to tell."

"You said before takeoff that the ship had been waiting six years."

"It was nothing. Forget about it."

"So you're a liar too?" he asked hotly. Anger is a peril. The thought came unsummoned, and he pushed it away; the direful warnings of Armsmen's training no longer bound him. "What other accomplishments does the Emperor's niece have?" he demanded. "I've seen you as traitor, whore, and spy. Thief too? Is the flier yours? Or is it just something you decided to make use of--like me?"

"Get out of here!" Her face was white and tense with rage. "Get...out...of here," she repeated through clenched teeth.

Cade unbuckled the thigh straps and rose slowly, holding the table. He had been used long enough, by Stars and the Order and by her, at the risk of his life. Things were going to go his way for a change. "Do you really think you can get out of answering like this?" he said coldly. Coldly he looked down at the girl's trembling shoulders and, thinking of Mistress Cannon, who had taught him how, he forced a smile.

She was silent, lips compressed to choke back the words she might regret, eyes flashing the fury she

was trying to control.

"It's not that easy," he said. "Even a Gunner can learn the facts of life eventually. "You've done everything you could to destroy the meaning of my vows. What makes you think you can still count on the behavior they imposed?" She was rigidly holding onto herself, but he knew she couldn't keep it up.

"Have you forgotten that I spent three weeks out in the world without you--learning things you never taught me? I saw another woman like you, too. You don't imagine you're the only one being used by an ambitious traitor? I don't know who your master is, but I know hers. The Lady Moia..."

"Get out of here!" she screamed. "Get out! Now!" Tears streamed down her face as she freed herself and stood, but she was not sobbing.

"No." He pulled himself one "step" toward her around the small table. "Not until you answer me. You may be content to serve your own master, but I tell you that I am tired of being used. For thirteen years the Order used me as it pleased, and I was willing. Then I 'died,' and the Cairo people tried to use me as their murderer. Their chosen victim, your friend the Power Master, tried to use me the same way against the Star of Mars. By the Realm! Even a drunken con man at Cannon's thought he could use me for his ends. I've had enough! Do you understand that?"

He stopped, realizing that his tirade had given her a chance to gather her own control. "You saved me twice," he added more quietly, "when others tried to use me. Why? Why, to use me yourself, of course. To fly this ship. What for? For whom? This time I'm going to know!"

He let the last words ring a moment in the air, and then he snapped at her: "Whose cargo are we carrying? What's in it? Whose woman are you?"

"My own!"

He hadn't been watching for it; he had looked for collapse.

Her hand stung as it whipped across his cheek. He seized her arms as she floundered from the floor; they drifted together against a bulkhead. "Answer me!" he said sharply. She was crying now, sobbing in an agony of frustration and defeat. He felt her tense body relax, helpless and beaten.

She would fight no more. He knew he could release her and she would tell him what he wanted to know. He meant to release her; he started to. But in some way he did not understand, his hands refused to obey him. Her body was close to his, and her face turned up, suddenly startled and questioning.

He had never done it before; he didn't know how to do it. But his face bent down, and for a long time, a timeless moment, his lips were on hers.

She pulled away at last, and he held fast to a grabiron, oblivious to everything except the surging new sensations in him. This was how a man, an ordinary man, felt about a woman. This was what had been denied him all his life. This was what the Power Master had ruthlessly described in words. This was what brought the Gunner Supreme scurrying from planetary and Realm affairs to the side of the Lady Moia. This was what Jana had offered him at Cannon's. And none of them had quite understood that it was a thing without meaning to him--until now.

He looked up at her, standing across the room from him now, and made another discovery. She was quite helpless against him; he could take her when he liked. And that wasn't what he wanted.

He had kissed her, but that was not all. She had kissed him, and a whole new world had been in it.

"Jocelyn," he said quietly. He could taste the word in his mouth. It was a plea and a caress.

She said coldly, "I thought that this at least I would be spared from you. I will tell you as much as I can and then ask you to leave me alone."

"Jocelyn," he said again. She ignored it.

"I served as spy in the Cairo Mystery, yes. You should be glad I did. And you may believe me or not as you like, but I am neither whore nor thief. I serve the Realm of Man. As for the cargo, it does not concern you, and I would be a traitor for the first time if I told you more than that. Now, will you go?"

"If you wish." There was nothing more to learn, and much that he had learned unsought needed thinking over.

He left the room without looking at her again, and did not try to speak to her again that day. She slept in the cabin aft, and he tried to sleep on the acceleration couch in the control room, while thoughts tormented him.



Thinking was no help. He was bound to her, whatever she was, whosever game she played. But no matter how he turned and twisted each new fact, he saw nothing but a reasonless and chaotic conflict. She served the Realm of Man? So claimed the Power Master, offhand killer and father of lies that he was. So doubtless claimed the weakling Emperor, the rebellious Stars, the treacherous Gunner Supreme.

He had no reason to suppose there was sense to it at all. Always before, things had had meaning: each ritual gesture, each emphasis of wording, each studied maneuver in battle had had a meaning and a place in the fitting world of Klin. But now it seemed instead that there was just a world of random forces, clashing because of this man's lust or that man's pride. How could he demand more of her than the world offered?

In the morning he was hungry, and it was not unreasonable to go to the galley for food. She was distant and polite, and for the better part of a week she remained so. Then he tried once more to question her.

He asked again about History. She bit her lip and told him she never should have spoken as she did and never would have told what she had except to save their lives. "You would do best to forget you ever heard the word."

"Can I forget that I have fired from a flier?" he asked gravely, and she looked away.

About the cargo she would not speak at all, and his bitterness grew daily at the galling thought that he was expected to be a pawn in some game and be content with the role--he who had led companies and would surely have risen to the rank of Superior.

There were four days left to the voyage when he decided to force the cargo. He could have done it openly; she was powerless to prevent him. But he ensured his privacy by noisily rattling the handle of the door to the cabin at midnight by the chronometer. She must have been sleeping lightly. In less time that it would have taken him to actually open the door, he heard the dogs on the other side thud to. He rattled again, noisily, and then went off, grumbling as loudly as was reasonable. He smiled grimly, wondering when she would find the courage to come out--and more grimly still when he recalled that all the flier's food was on the other side of the dogged-down door. Well, he has fasted three days before. And now he would find out who was playing with his life.

The metal sheathing on the free-floating crates yielded easily to the lowest aperture of a gun. The contents of the crate nearest the breakthrough point were also metallic, but were undamaged by the blast of the gun. It was guns that were in the crate--at least a thousand of them. Guns of the Order, or replicas, full-charged and without numbers. He was not really surprised.

Methodically Cade opened the three other crates--all the same. And the lockers? The locks were radionic and not simple, but he solved them, each quicker than the last, and sampled the contents.

At the end he went back to the control room, making no effort to cover up his work.

Ten thousand guns of the Order, bound for Mars. He knew now for whom the Lady Jocelyn worked.

He slept, and in the morning tried the cabin door: It was still dogged down, and he called on the ship's interphone.

"What do you want?" she asked coldly.

"First, to apologize for disturbing your sleep."

"Very well."

"And something to eat."

"I can't see how to get it to you," she said indifferently.

"You can't afford to starve me. I still have to land the ship, you know."

"I have no intention of starving you." There was a hint of humor in her voice. "I was thinking it might be a good idea to weaken you a little."

"I've weakened already," he said. "I did some hard work last night, and I need food."

"What kind of work?"

"I'll show you when you come out." He didn't have to wait long. There was a scant ten minutes of silence before she called back:

"If I bring you some food, will you give me your word not to make a fool of yourself?"

"Certainly," he said cheerfully, "if you feel there is any value in the word of a lapsed Armsman. By what

shall I swear?"

Silence.

Then, almost timidly: "By yourself."

And it was thoughtfully he answered: "By myself, I swear that I will do nothing to distress you."

"All right. Five minutes," she said, and cut off.

Cade waited. He heard the dogs thud back and the door open. Silence then, and he made himself sit still and wait. Ludicrously, a valved bottle of mash floated through the open door from the cargo room. It must have drifted from her hand when she saw the ripped-open cargo. Cade watched the bottle bump to a gentle stop, and rebound from the bulkhead, to drift within his reach. He was hungry; he wanted the food; but he let it go slowly past him. Jocelyn floated in a moment later, pale but self-possessed.

"All right," she said. "Now you know. Don't ask me to explain, because I won't. I can't. Not if you tried to get it out of me by torture. I have some loyalties I do not violate."

"I have not," he said briefly. "What was left of them, you violated for me. And I'm not going to ask you to explain. You keep forgetting that I've talked to others besides you these last few weeks. The Power Master, for instance. And a miserable little Marsman who came to Cannon's to forget his loneliness. And..." He thought of the Mars-born Gunner, Harrow, who had died for a terrible sin. "...and others," he finished shortly.

Cade picked the bottle of mash from the air and tasted it.

"All right," she said, and dropped all pretense of indifference. "Just what is it that you imagine you understand?" He let the bottle go; the mash was cold, and he was no longer hungry.

"To start with, I know what loyalty you hold."

He waited, but she said nothing. "I won't pretend to understand why an Imperial Lady should serve as spy for the Star of Mars, but..." He paused with satisfaction. Her face was impassive, but one sharp indrawn breath had given her away. "Do you deny it?"

"No. No, I don't deny it."

"Then perhaps you will want to explain it?"

She was thoughtful, and she spoke reluctantly: "No. I can't. What else do you know?"

"Why should I tell you?" He was bargaining forthrightly now. "Why should I answer your questions?"

"Because I know more than you do. Because there are some things it's dangerous to know. Besides," she added, "I can't possibly tell you more until I find out just how much you do know."

"All right." He had nothing to lose...and he wanted to talk about it. "I'll tell you what I know and what I think:

"First, I have known for some time that the Star of Mars is petitioning the Emperor for the assignment of Mars-born Armsmen to his Court. Till now, of course, they have always been dispersed among the Earth Stars. But a month or more ago, requests were being made for the return of seasoned Mars-born Gunners, and for the retention of native novices on Mars when they reached the rank of armiger.

"Second, I know the Power Master is determined that this petition shall not be granted. I think I know why..."

She leaned forward, just a little eager for what he might say next.

He went on, deliberately shifting his ground.

"...why Mars wants its Armsmen at home, and why the Power Master will not allow it. The reason is so obvious it would never occur to anyone outside the little clique of schemers and tricksters and...History students in which you live! It's Mars iron, nothing more."

She sat back again and seemed almost bored; this was nothing new to her. Then he was on the right track.

"All of Earth's machinery needs Mars iron. If the Star of Mars had an Order of his own, composed entirely of Marsmen, with their peculiar devotion to their homes and families--I've talked with them, and I know how they feel--then he would hold more real power than the Emper...than the Power Master himself."

He laughed out loud, remembering the waking formula that had prepared him for the day each morning for six thousand days of his life.

"It is fitting that Armsmen serve the Emperor through the Power Master and our particular Stars. While this is so, all will be well to the end of time," he quoted aloud. "I said that many times each day for many years," he told her.

"I think the Star of Mars knows his request will never be granted, and I think he is now preparing to train an outlaw Order of his own to serve the same purpose."

A fleeting smile crossed her lips; in spite of everything, Cade realized, she still thought of him as a Gunner, with a Gunner's attitudes. She could not possibly have realized how much she was revealing with that small smile of satisfaction.

He had half-guessed before, but he was certain now, that the training of outlaw Armsmen had already begun. It took three years of novitiate drill before a Brother was given a practice gun in the Order proper. How many of them were there? How many half-trained, wholehearted Marsmen waiting right now for the guns he was bringing on this ship?

For the first time in ten thousand years, guns would be fired that had never been touched by the Gunner Supreme.

Then he remembered: not in ten thousand years. In History...how long was that?

"What purpose?" she asked.

Cade snapped to attention.

"Oh, a private armed force of his own. A force powerful enough to make a stand against the Earth-born Armsmen. It wouldn't have to equal the combined strength of all Earth forces. Nothing near that. He must know the Power Master will never let Earth Stars combine to that extent. These guns, the guns you would have had me carry unawares if you could, will make him strong enough to become Power Master--or Emperor in your uncle's place."

He stopped talking and waited. She said nothing.

"Well," he asked impatiently. "Can you deny it? Any of it?"

"No," she said slowly. "None of it. Except one thing. I am--you must understand, Cade--I am no man's paid spy!" She said the words with such unmistakable contempt that for the moment Cade found them hard to disbelieve.

"Then, why?" he asked intently. "What are you working for?"

She smiled. "I told you once: for the Realm of Man." And her earnestness lost all meaning, because once more she had refused an answer. But she went on: "Cade, you found me first in the Cairo Mystery. You didn't trust me then, and you discovered later that you should have trusted. Do you know what I was doing there?"

"The Great Conspiracy!" he sneered. "Every Star a Power Master! Add chaos and confusion to cruelty and unreason! Yes, I know what you were doing there!"

"If you'd think with your brain instead of your anger," she snapped, "you'd realize how wrong that is. No, wait a minute," she said quickly as he opened his mouth to protest, and went on, talking fast: "I wasn't working for the conspiracy; you must know that by now. Why should I have tried to save you from the drug? I have no special fondness for the Power Master." She paused for breath, and Cade had to admit that that made sense. It was the single paradox that kept the rest of what he knew from forming a clear picture.

She resolved it. "Cade," she said steadily, "much of what you've said today is true--most of it. There are some facts you still don't know, facts I don't dare tell you. They're dangerous even for me to know; for you, they would be fatal. The lives of other people are involved, and of one more important than you or--that doesn't matter now. But you can surely see, with what you do know, why I was working in the conspiracy?"

"Why, yes, of course--because your master ordered it!"

Her hands balled into furious fists, shaking in impotent anger at his refusal to be swayed. "Because...I...needed...you!" She spaced the words evenly in a last effort at control. "You or any Armsman I could get, someone to fly this ship. I told you it's been waiting for six years. Waiting for a pilot, nothing more. And I got the pilot. Now do you see? I couldn't let you kill the Power Master. I couldn't let him kill you either. I needed you for this."

Well, he thought bitterly, now it fitted. It all hung together. She'd had a job to do, and she had done it, calmly betraying one group after another to accomplish it. And he himself...he was a pilot for the Star of Mars. And nothing more.

She took stunned silence for surrender. "You do understand?" she asked more quietly. "Cade, later perhaps, I can tell you more, but now..."

"Now you've said enough. Unless, of course, you want to tell me--being no man's paid spy--just why you chose to act against the Great Conspiracy in favor of another one just like it? What makes you favor Mars' conspiracy?"

"Not conspiracy! Healing!" The dam broke at last; words and dreams held back too long began to flow out now in passionate floods. "Healing the life of man," she said proudly. "Saving it from the dead grip of the Power Master and the Klin Philosophy! How can I make you understand?" Her face passed from earnest pleading to the rapines of a visionary. "I've told you about History, but it's still just a word to you. You haven't studied..."

"You don't know what 'science' means, do you? Of course not; the word is half-forbidden and half-forgotten, because science means change, and change means threat to the Klin stasis and to the Power Master.

"Mankind is dying, Cade, because men are chained to their machines and forbidden to make new ones. Don't you see that one by one the machines will wear out and..."

"No," he said warily. "I don't see. The Brothers of the Order build new machines. When old ones are gone, new ones are always ready. Klin teachers study and build machines."

"But no new ones," she said. "Science means new things, Cade; searching for the truth with no roads closed, no directions forbidden. Cade, there was a time--I know from History--when men powered their machines with the metal uranium. It's gone now. Thorium was used next, and now it's gone too. And now the iron. Earth's iron is gone. When the Mars iron is gone too, what next? There should be ten million men working day and night to find a new power source, but there are none.

"There are other ways to destroy civilization besides firing from fliers! They'll have to stop making fliers and ground cars. The cities will become great sewers when the pumps stop turning. Inlanders will get sick, with ugly lumps of wild tissue growing from their necks, because there won't be anybody to bring them fish and salt from the oceans. Babies will grow up crooked because there won't be power for the milking machines in the food factories or for the boats that catch the cod and shark. Animals will overrun the growing food because there won't be wire for fences or power to charge them. Diseases will rot mankind, because there won't be power for the bird-dog factories." She stopped, worn out with her own intensity, and watched him silently. "Does it mean anything to you?" she asked with a touch of bitterness.

"I don't know," he said, bemused. He was thinking of what the Power Master had said to him that day, with Kendall dead on the floor. It made this much sense at least: that here were two honestly opposing forces. The Power Master's view of the world made more sense, from what he had seen of it, than Jocelyn's, but...if he could believe her instead, a man could have something to fight for again.

"All that," she said quietly, "can be cured by science. And there are other things--'art' is one. Another word, Cade. It means exploring this universe and making new universes with language and sound and light. It makes you laugh and weep and wonder; no man alive today can understand the joy of making and giving art, or the joy of receiving it from the maker.

"You don't know what 'freedom' is. But perhaps you'll learn--soon. I hope..." She hesitated and looked up at him defiantly. "I hope when we reach Mars you will accept service under the Star of Mars. He is the man to follow at this time. But for now, I cannot tell you more."

"Then I won't ask," he said. There was too much to think about already. And he knew all he really needed: he had learned the meaning of at least one new word, and that was "love."

## CHAPTER 20

They had three days more of space: days in which Cade found it less and less difficult to remember that the Order was behind him. The old life was finished, the old certainties gone. There was just one

certainty now--a woman. The only possible woman for Cade in the new life, just as the Lady of the Order had been the only possible woman for Cade the Armsman. Until they landed he could share a growing friendship and...something more. What might come later he did not know, except for one thing: if they lived through the landing on Mars, he would find some way to stay at her side. The Star of Mars could be no worse a master than the Star of France. Surely he was a worthier one than the Power Master.

Knowing this much and no more, Cade used the time he had to win the liking and strengthen the confidence of the Lady Jocelyn. Never had he known himself capable of such fluent conversation or such avid listening.

Too quickly, Mars filled the heavens, and Jocelyn's gentle friendliness disappeared behind a barrage of preparations and crisp instructions.

The coordinates she designated took them to a craggy basin in the Southern Hemisphere, less than a hundred kilometers from the capital city of Mars.

The spot had obviously been chosen to afford a combination of convenience and secrecy. From the air it was one of those blank patches that showed neither red nor green, but only featureless gray. No red meant no iron: none of the characteristic family-operated strip-mine refinery complexes of Mars. No green meant no water: no farms and farm families raising vegetables and goat meat for the miners and city dwellers of the planet. Featureless gray meant unobserved isolation.

Cade braked the big flier to a stop on level ground as though it were a ground car. He unbuckled himself from the control seat and looked out of a port at a desolate valley surrounded by gnarled old hills as high as any on sandstorm-lashed Mars. Jocelyn, at his side, surveyed the emptiness impatiently. She was already swathed in bulky synthetic furs.

Cade found a suit for himself and donned it. He came back to find her pacing the small area of cabin floor.

"Can your lungs take Mars air?" she demanded.

He nodded. "I've fought in the Alps and the Taurus." With Brothers crumpling about him, he remembered--brave men, tireless men who happened to lack the body machinery for battle on half-rations of air. "How about you? There's a respirator in the locker."

"I've been here before." She stopped him with a nervous gesture at the airlock.

Cade set the mechanism in motion, and there was an equalizing outreach of air. Momentarily his sight dimmed, and he had to cling to an iron for support. The girl, lighter and with bigger lungs, recovered before he did and was through the lock before he could walk certainly. Her eyes swept the horizon anxiously. "Your butcherwork on the crates isn't going to make things easier," she said. "We'd better start unloading and have the...the cargo ready to go."

"To go to the Star of Mars?"

"Yes."

He followed her back into the ship and opened the cargo port amidships. While she emptied locker after locker, Cade moved the bulkier crates outside. Fifty meters from the flier the pile of guns grew tall. But at every trip the girl's impatient scanning of the horizon was repeated.

"I assume your friends are late?" he asked uneasily.

"The less you assume, the better," she said. And then she uttered a gasp of relief. There was a black dot topping a hill, and then another--dozens, hundreds at last.

"The Armsmen of Mars?" He was torn between surprise at their unexpected numbers and contempt for their ragged approach.

"Far from Armsmen, Cade. The word is 'patriots.' You've heard it before." There was an unreadable quality in her voice. Cade could not tell whether she despised these people or admired them. "It means that they love their homeland. They are devoted more to Mars and its ruler than to the Emperor."

He couldn't help it; a shudder went through him at the thought--and a moment later he was smiling at the shudder.

"They're just porters, then."

She started to shake her head and then said: "In effect, yes. Just porters."

The crowd was drawing nearer. Patriots or porters, whatever they were, Cade saw clearly that there were no Armsmen among them. They were farmers, miners, clerks from the city. They walked easily, as you'd expect Mars-born people to, and clearly had no difficulty with Mars air. Their clothes were lighter than the furs he and Jocelyn wore against the chill. And they all carried uncouth sacks over their shoulders. Cade thought of the guns jostled and scraping together in the sacks and set his teeth obstinately: a gun now was just a killing tool, the way a saw was just a cutting tool.

There were boys in their teens and not a few women among the mob; it numbered some nine hundred, to carry about fifty thousand guns.

How, he wondered, could this rabble keep a secret? And then he thought of Harrow, the dead Gunner: "...a man likes to be among his own people...it's newer on Mars...I don't suppose you know anything about your eight-times great-grandfather..." If all these people shared that feeling!

With the crowd came noise, the undisciplined chatter of nine hundred excited people. A tall, lean-faced fellow in his middle years turned to the rest and yelled sharply through the thin air: "Just shut up, all of you! Shut up and stand where you are!" A few lieutenants repeated the crude command. After a minute the shipward drift of the crowd halted, and there was silence.

The man said to Cade: "I'm Tucker. There wasn't anything said about a woman. Who's she?"

The Lady Jocelyn said dramatically: "A daughter of Mars." If there was the faintest tinge of mockery in her voice, only Cade thought he heard it.

The lean-faced man said feelingly: "Mars blesses you, sister."

"Mars blesses us all, from the highest to the lowest." It seemed to be password and countersign.

Tucker said: "We're glad to have a high-born Lady among us, sister. I was told the flier of the ship wouldn't be a brother?"

"Not yet. He will be. He is an Earth-born Gunner who will train Marsmen for the day of liberty."

"It's growing," said Tucker rapturously. "Nothing can stop it!" It was beginning to sound more like the mystic nonsense of the Cairo gang than businesslike military identification procedure.

The mob was getting noisy again, and military procedure took another body blow. Tucker turned and bawled at them: "You all shut up now! Get into some kind of a line and get your sacks open. And don't take all day!" Cade watched them milling and groaned at the thought of turning such a mob into Armsmen. But he swallowed his disgust; what she wanted of him, he would do.

They did get whipped into line eventually by roaring noncoms. Cade couldn't make out whether these were merely temporary, self-appointed leaders, or whether there was any organization in this gang. But somehow a dozen Marsmen got busy sorting out sixty-gun piles from the heap and dumping them into waiting sacks. The guns couldn't have been carried under Earth gravity, but their weight on Mars constituted no more than a good working load. Cade was very glad that the guns of the Order had two centimeters of six-kilogram trigger pull before you hit a five-gram pull and firing contact. There were no accidents.

Jocelyn told him busily: "We won't need the ship, and I don't want to leave it here for a monument. Shoot it off to somewhere on automatic takeoff."

It was sound doctrine. By the time the empty flier roared off, its ultimate destination an aimless orbit in space, the tail end of the line of porters was snaking past a melting pile of guns. Tucker, the lean-faced "patriot" leader, was yelling again, trying to make himself heard over the combined noise of rockets and rabble, to get them to form a new line of march heading out of the valley.

As the noise of the vanishing flier was lost in the distant sky, the man's shouts were drowned out again by the terrifying crescendo of jets. Not one ship this time, but a fleet. An instant later a hundred or more space-recon fliers roared low over the hill-rimmed basin.

They fanned out beautifully, to land beyond the crags in a perfectly executed envelopment on the largest scale Cade had ever seen. He wondered numbly whether the brilliant maneuver had been performed on individual piloting or slave-circuit control.

The Martian rabble broke its uneven ranks. Nine hundred of them milled pointlessly about, asking each other frightened, stupid questions; the total effect was a thought-shattering roar. The Lady Jocelyn's hand gripped Cade's arm through the wadded sleeve of his furs. Her face was deathly pale. He must

have radar stations on Deimos and Phobos, Cade thought, to pinpoint us like that...

Then there was a voice, the kind of voice nine-year-old Cade, Gunner-to-be, had thought the Emperor spoke with. It roared like thunder through the basin of rock, breaking against the rim and rebounding in echoes--the voice of the Power Master, the voice Cade would never fail to know, whether it spoke cynically across a room, commandingly over the radio, or majestically into the thin air of Mars.

"Marsmen, my Gunners are taking up positions surrounding you. You will drop your bags of weapons and walk to the foot of the hills to surrender. I want only the two persons who landed by flier. They must be held, but the rest of you will be released after a search. You have fifteen minutes to do this. If you do not, my Gunners will advance, firing."

Silence from the hills, and a growing mutter from the crowd.

"Who are they?"

"Who's the man from the flier?"

"They said he's no brother!"

"Get rid of the guns!"

"They'll burn us down where we stand."

"What will we do?"

"What will we do?"

Cade shook his head dazedly; Tucker was glaring at him.

"He's lying!" shrilled a clear voice--Jocelyn's. "He's lying! Do you think he'll let you go when you're helpless? He'll kill you all!"

Her warning was lost in the roar, except to Tucker and Cade. The lean-faced Marsman said to her slowly: "When we're helpless? We're helpless now. We've drilled some, but we don't know guns."

With the brutal mob noise for a background, Jocelyn spoke again, softly and almost to herself. "Two hundred years," she said emotionlessly. "Two hundred years of planning, two hundred years of waiting, two hundred years of terror: waiting for a traitor or a fool to talk, but nobody did. One gun, two guns, a dozen guns a year at last, waiting..."

She was swaying as she stood; Cade braced her with his arm.

"What a dream it was...and we came so close. Mars in rebellion, the Klin Philosophy shaken, Armsmen split, the Power Master defied! Men on Mars--men everywhere--thinking for themselves, challenging the traditions that tied them down. Thinking and challenging!" A blaze that had kindled briefly in her eyes seemed to die.

"We underestimated," she said flatly. Now she was talking to Cade. "We didn't allow for the dead weight of things as they are. Two hundred years...I hope my uncle will not suffer when he dies."

Her uncle. Cade hung on to that, and comprehension came at last. "The Emperor," he said slowly, "your uncle--the Emperor; he knows of this?"

"Yes, of course." There were tears behind her voice. Cade marveled at his blindness, not to have understood before. It was so obvious; this way it all made sense.

"The Emperor--the last five Emperors, powerless in everything except knowledge. They and a few others in the family, a handful of men and women. Three generations ago the reigning Emperor saw that Mars was the key, that the rulers of Mars would rebel, and the Mars populace would be with them. The Emperor-Mars pact was concluded fifty-five years ago. My uncle wrote the petition for Marsborn Armsmen. What a great dream it was! But what difference does it make now?"

I hope my uncle will not suffer when he dies. But he would; the Emperor would suffer, and so would she. The Power Master would not let them die until he had wrung from them every bit of information that they held.

Abruptly the voice of thunder said: "Eight minutes!" and the Mars rabble flowed around them, scared, angry, and confused, demanding to be told what to do and what it meant.

Tucker had been listening, dazed. "If we could fight," he said hoarsely, working his hands. "If we could only fight!"

"Thinking and challenging," echoed Cade. "Thinking and challenging." Five years to make a novice. Ten for an armiger. Fifteen for a Gunner. To face Gunners with anything less than Gunners was like

opposing guns of the Order with wooden Clubs. Tucker knew that, and still dared to think: If we could fight.

They were patriots, Cade thought; now he knew what it meant. They were frightened now, with reason, but still they held their sacks of guns. They weren't ready to give in.

Cade said the impossible: "We can fight them."

"Armsmen?" said the girl.

But there was wild hope on Tucker's lean face,

"They're trained," he said foolishly. "They've had three years."

"There's no other way," Cade said to Jocelyn, ignoring the Marsman. "It's a cleaner death, and--you taught me to challenge the rules."

He fired his own gun straight up in a three-second burst at full aperture, and a stunned silence fell on the crowd.

"I am Gunner Cade of the Order of Armsmen," he shouted into the thin air. "You have guns--more guns than the Armsmen in the hills. I will show you how to use them."

## CHAPTER 21

Thoughts blazed through his mind. The complex gun; the thing no commoner could master: First Study of the Primary Circuits of the Gun, Ceremonial of the Gun, Order of Recharging, After-charging Checklist, Malfunctions of the Booster Circuit, the Sighting Picture. The Gun's Inner Meaning in Klin, Aperture and Band Settings for Various Actions. In studied sequence they flashed across his mind, and one by one he threw them out.

"The way to use your gun," he shouted, "is to point it and pull the trigger. If it stops firing, throw it away and grab another." To Tucker he said swiftly: "Have you a dozen men the others will listen to?"

The lean-faced man nodded.

"Get them here," Cade said. While the names were being shouted, he turned to scan the encircling hills. Against the sky he could see the slender rods of radionic grids faintly discernible--ten or so, spaced around the rim of hills. What contempt they must hold him in to expose command posts like that!

Where to attack with his rabble? Straight ahead there was a nice little pass in the hills. Standard doctrine was for the defenders to command such a pass by plunging fire. Standard doctrine in the attack was to draw fire from the defenders, pin down the defenders exposed by their fire, and storm the pass. The Marsmen had no training to prepare themselves for such an encounter. But off to the right was an ugly little cliff--a cliff nobody in his right mind would bother to attack or defend. It would be covered by a Gunner or so, no matter how unlikely it was. But was it so unlikely to be scaled by Marsmen to whom the air and gravity were normal?

"Here are the men." Cade looked over the dozen lieutenants Tucker had called up and proceeded to instruct them. A long line of his teachers would have cringed at his instruction. He showed them only the triggers, the band and aperture sets, and the charge gauges. They didn't need to know how to recharge; there were guns to spare. They didn't need to know the care of guns, the circuits, the ritual, the inner meanings--all they needed was to know how to shoot. As he showed them, his wonder almost equaled theirs at the simplicity of it all.

"We will head for that cliff," he said, pointing. "Try to show your men what I showed you before we get there. Don't try to keep order on the march. The worse it looks, the better. That's all."

He gave them a minute and then stepped off for the rim of hills. He yelled a command which he dimly realized was more ancient than the Order itself, and exactly as old as History:

"Follow me!"

"For Mars! For the Star of Mars!" someone shrieked insanely, and others took up the howl. Cade didn't look behind him. If he had them all, good. If he didn't, there was nothing to be done about it. Perhaps some would start with him and others hesitate and then follow--so much the better. To the ring of steady-eyed Armsmen watching from the hills, this charge across the plain would seem a panic flight. Even if they had picked up the gist of his orders to the mob with a three-meter directional mike trained on



him, or seen the scattered efforts of lieutenants to instruct their groups it would seem inconceivable to them that the commoners would fight.

Not that they would; Cade knew it well enough. They'd balk at the first blast of well-aimed fire. They'd shriek and run like...commoners. Mars or Earth, a commoner's a commoner--sluggish, overstuffed, stupid, soft. Point your guns and pull the trigger. Fine words, he mocked himself, fine words! They were supposed to have had three years of "training"--form-fours on the village square, no doubt, an hour a week. Even that didn't show. None of them had seen a gun before.

Thinking and challenging, he mocked. Thinking indeed, that challenged the one bedrock truth he knew: that Armsmen were Armsmen, fighters, gun handlers, the only fighters there were.

It was insanity; that truth he knew, and the other truth that made insanity his only course. If the fight was lost, he was already dead, and so was she.

She was running alongside, keeping pace with his strides. "Do you think...?" she asked wildly. "Cade, it's the Power Master's Guard! They can defeat any force of Armsmen in the Realm."

"We're not Armsmen," he growled. "We're a rabble of crazy patriots. We don't know how to fight, but we seem to have something to fight for. Now fall back. Get into the middle of this gang and leave yourself room to run when they stampede."

"I won't!"

"You...will!"

Meekly she fell back, and Cade strode on. Admit it, fool! he raged. Admit it! You're playing a game, a child's farce--the way you used to play Superior and novice back in Denver. They've forged a ring of fire around you, and you're charging into death: solitary death, because that mob will break and run, and well you know it.

A farce? Very well; play it out as best you can, he told himself, Gunner Cade, trained Armsman, master of fighting that you are--fight!

He swung on grimly, and the worn, ancient cliffs loomed ahead, grotesque engravings of wind and sand and centuries on deathless stone. If the Armsmen opened fire now, he was lost with his half-trained rabble. They'd never know enough to spread; they'd bunch like sheep and die in a crushed mob. If they reached the dead area under the cliff, there might be a momentary postponement of the butchery.

The Armsmen would have fired before now if they expected trouble. They must be looking for a desperate attempt to push through the nice little pass and escape.

The attack of the Marsmen would have to be swift and deadly. They might take the hill! It was a thing that would rock the foundation of the Order.

"For the Star! For the Star of Mars!" he heard them howling behind him, and grinned coldly. Patriots! Perhaps patriots were what you needed for a murderous, suicidal assault.

His feet slipped once on rubble, and the shadow of a crag was on his face. "Give me two of your guns, brother," he said to a boy with bulging eyes and a fixed grin on his face. "Up the cliff!" he shouted over his shoulder at the rabble. "Follow me...charge!" He broke into a run and noted coldly that the thin air roughly canceled the advantage of the lesser Mars gravity. The youth at his side, still breathing easily, pushed ahead--and fell a moment later with the fixed grin still on his face and both legs charred away by a long-range blast.

Automatically Cade blasted the crag from which the fire had come. The fire fight had been joined.

Make it or break it now, he thought. Face your death, fire a counterblast or two to let them know you were there, to make them pause a bit and wonder a bit and perhaps fear a bit before your commoners broke and ran.

"Follow me! Up!"

The lean-faced Tucker raced past Cade screaming: "For the Star of Mars!" His sack of guns flapped and bobbed as he began to scramble up the cliff. There were others--wildeyed men, a panting youth, a leathery woman--who passed Cade.

Behind him there were yells and the blast of guns. He hoped he wouldn't be burned in the back by one of the Marsmen's ill-aimed guns after coming this far...

The fire fight grew severe as he pantingly climbed the cliff. From the hills it was rapid and deadly.

From the Marsmen it was a torrent whose effect he couldn't guess at. The noise the guns made was a senseless blend of small-aperture buzz and wide-aperture roar. Cade scrambled grimly up and hoisted himself over the jagged cliff edge into the racket of a first-class battle. A rudimentary squad of Marsmen was blasting Armsmen across a windrow of fallen comrades. They had learned about aperture by now, Cade saw with bleak satisfaction, and they were learning how to rush from crag to crag, to take isolated Armsmen in pockets of the eroded rock by flanking fire. Incredibly, in spite of the numbers of their dead, they were gaining ground. Armsmen were falling.

They didn't need his gun. Cade turned from the shooting and stationed himself at the cliff head, splitting the steady stream of Marsmen as they gained the peak, sending half to the right and half into the fighting to the left.

"Tucker!" he yelled.

The lean-faced Marsman who had led the assault up the cliff was still alive. "Tucker, take this gang on the right and work them through the hills. Keep them moving, keep them firing, keep them yelling. I'll work the rest around the left. If you see any sign of the Armsmen's withdrawing to regroup, keep your men moving, but come and check with me. That's all."

"Yes, brother." Like old times, thought Cade--except that he was fighting now to overthrow all he had once fought for...and for Jocelyn.

He dared not think of that. He had not seen her once since the beginning. Now he had a job to do and was doing well. It had occurred to him at last that they might win.

The cliff-top fighters' insanely extravagant fire had done its work. This immediate arc of the hills was cleared of Armsmen. He saw that the Marsmen were sorted out into elementary squads and platoons--a lesson of battle, or fruit of their crude training? Whichever it was, it gave him leaders.

"Follow me!"

And they followed eagerly as he led them left, well down on the reverse slope of the hills. They worked the ragged terrain with style, arranging themselves into units of three--the useful skirmisher's triangle, from which any fighter can rush to take ground under the covering fire of the other two. Was this, Cade wondered wearily, what he had given his life to? This bag of tricks that a crowd of fanatical farmers discovered for themselves at the cost of a few lives. He dropped beneath the blast of an Armsman from a shadowing crag, and did no more philosophizing. When the crag had been undercut and toppled on the Brother, there was a new blast to face, and another, and still another.

Then they were back on the ridge of the hills and found they had taken a command post and its equipment. Some of the Marsmen paused to marvel at the radionic mast and mappers and communicator.

"Keep moving, blast you!" Cade raved at them. "Keep moving and keep firing!"

He lashed them on over the mound of dead Armsmen and into a blazing linked fire from a dozen wind-carved pockets in the rock. They had learned well. The Marsmen rushed from one eroded spire to the next...at the cost of a dozen lives they secured flanking positions, and withering enfilade fire wiped out the defending Armsmen in seconds.

He cursed them forward, and the next fire they met was scattered, rear-guard stuff--three men trying to fire like thirty. It was the retreat he had, half-crazily, hoped for: not a flight, but a consolidation of forces. The Armsmen would be regrouped soon in one mass capable of putting out an interlaced ring of fire. In spite of his green troops' astonishing performance so far, Cade bitterly knew he could not pit them against any such formation.

The mast of another command post was in their newly won territory by the time they had mopped up the rear guard. He shouted a cease-fire and led his men straight over the rim of the hills instead of working along the reverse slope for cover. He wanted to waste no precious time while there were Armsmen to be killed. They shot down a communications man, still sending; otherwise the command post had been abandoned. Cade eagerly took his binoculars and studied the work of Tucker's men to the right. They were strung out more than they ought to be, but one post had fallen to them and another was under attack. Signs of retreat were clear on Tucker's front also.

A sudden ferocious flurry of blasts ten meters from him sent Cade sprawling to the ground.

"What kind of cursed scouts do you call your cursed selves?" he raved at his men. "When I said kill them, I meant kill them! Let's clean up this cursed ground!"

They grinned at him like wolves, and followed in a wild surge that broke through the thin rear-guard screen, and clawed with fire into a regrouped main guard. "Feint at us, will they?" he yelled, only half-hearing himself in the roar of blasters at full aperture. Before the butchery was over, his Marsmen had lost heavily, and still another command post was in their hands. The Armsmen's retreat this time was no feint....

He sent scouts forward to harry the Armsmen. From the captured post, he studied neatly ranked recon fliers, two hundred meters from the reverse slopes of the circling hills. And something incredible was happening. The antlike figures of Armsmen were making for the fliers. They weren't going to stand and fight. They were racing for their fliers, doubling and swerving, boiling out in panic from behind the rocks.

"Fire on them!" yelled Cade. "Pass the word to fire!" There would be no hits except an occasional accident, but it would let the Armsmen know he was there....

A few of the antlike figures knelt and returned blasts, fearing a rush.

Tucker was there. "You told me," the lean-faced man panted, "you told me to report, but I couldn't get away..."

Cade didn't rebuke him, and Tucker ventured a note of triumph: "Gunner, we got their headquarters! That stopped them, didn't it?"

"It shouldn't," Cade said--and then realized the full extent of what had happened. Laughter, burst from his lips. "Yes," he said, "that stopped them." Even with his words they heard the first of the fliers blast off at maximum. A moment later there was another.

Cade followed his second in command across the now secure inner plain to inspect the headquarters post for himself. The roar of his snipers' guns, mingled with jets on takeoff, was sweet to his ears.

Eagerly he examined the remains of the command post the Marsman had taken, and there was no mistake possible. It was a well-selected position, as good a headquarters as the terrain could offer. It commanded a good escape route down the reverse slope to the fliers and a good 360-degree field of fire and observation. But the fury of five hundred Marsmen had overwhelmed the strategic knowledge of ten thousand years. The place was a shambles of ruined radios and maps, telescopes, bullhorns, all the heavy equipment of command. And over the rubble were strewn the bodies of Armsmen.

Cade let out a long halloo: "Hold your fire. Pass the word!" The command rang victoriously along the hills.

He walked to the central control panel of the communicator set and looked down at the crooked corpse that lay over it, a corpse half-charred and without a cloak. He rolled the body over and stared into the granite countenance of the Power Master.

Dead! Dead because he would not give his power to a subordinate. Because he had to witness the victory himself. He hadn't expected battle; none of them had.

The cease-fire had been luckily timed. Earlier it might not have been obeyed. Later it might have occurred without an order. Even so, there were irreconcilables who could not bear the helpless retreat of Armsmen by the hundreds to their fliers. Several continued to fire for a minute, and one woman ran shrieking down the rocks until she was picked off.

Cade watched the cloaked and helmeted figures swarming into the slender spaceships, blasting off northward, lifting on slave control the empty crafts whose complements would never fly again. They would take news of this day with them and spread it through the Realm of Man.

It was incredible that they should have won, thought Cade--but no more incredible than that commoners should have fought at all.

Patriotism?

Wearily he studied the Marsmen sprawled on the ground nearby. One little knot was singing some song or other about Mars. Others were talking loudly, with exaggerated laughter. One man was sobbing hysterically; he seemed to be unwounded. Many sat in silence with furrowed brows, or in near-silence, exchanging halting words.

"Yes," Cade heard, "but what if more of them come back?"

"There will be more of us. I have five brothers..."

"Yes! My boys are big for their age...yes..."

"They killed Manley. I don't know what I'll say to his wife."

"They'll take care of us. Her too."

"They better take care of us..."

Cade walked restlessly along the ridge, looking for something he dared not think about, through the territory that had been held until minutes ago by Power Master and Order and all the other trappings of the past.

Patriotism! The Brothers would be more wary the next time they were sent to fight against it. It was easy to imagine the bored confidence with which the five hundred-odd Armsmen had left their fliers and climbed the hills. They had thought themselves out on an elaborate policing job; they had found themselves well-placed observation posts with good fields of fire out of sheer habit. Then they had found their line broken by an impossible frontal assault and one command post destroyed in a matter of minutes. The loss of two or more posts had made it necessary to regroup, to retreat from commoners. And when the headquarters post was lost...

Ordinarily it wouldn't matter. Next-in-command-takes over, quite automatically, in less time than it takes to say. But to these stunned Armsmen, it must have been a last straw in a nightmarish overload of their capacity to adjust.

It was the very impossibility of the attack the inability of trained men, tradition-steeped, to believe it could happen, that had done it. When the Marsmen had scaled that cliff, the Brothers of the Order had lost their initiative of fire and that was fatal.

They had all lost their initiative of fire now--Stars. Klin teachers, the Order, the next Power Master. They would never win it back as long as battle-worn Marsmen could sit on a hilltop saying: "I have five brothers...my boys are big for their age..."

What had the Power Master said? "If they kept attacking the Watch Houses until all the gas guns were used up...We must have an Emperor for the commoners to love..."

But there was no Power Master now, and the Emperor...The Emperor himself had made this battle possible. The Emperor and...

Until this moment he had not let himself think about her: not in the battle, for fear of doing less than his utmost; not afterward, for fear of what he might learn. But now it was all right.

She came stumbling across the scarred rock, her face sober, her body drooping with fatigue, but her head held regally high.

"Thank you, Gunner Cade, for my uncle and for me."

She spoke formally, but he understood. There were no words with which he could have voiced his own joy. She was alive, unharmed. His arms could have told her, and his lips, but not with words.

"You owe no thanks to me," he said, "but to yourself and to our brothers here."

Then their eyes met, and even ceremonious language was impossible.

"Ho, Gunner!" It was Tucker, coming from below. "I'm getting them together down below. Should we leave a guard here?"

"What for...?" With difficulty, Cade brought himself back to the moment and its realities. "Can your men carry more? Some of the equipment is worth salvaging."

Tucker turned over some of the headquarters rubble with his toe. "Any of this?"

"I'll look it over," he said, and turned to Jocelyn. "May I see you first? A few words..."

"Of course." She took his arm, and he helped her down eroded steps to a sheltered place.

"What now?" he asked simply.

"Now? To the Star of Mars, to the Court. Then--well, perhaps we could go back. The Power Master had no heir designated; it might be safe to return to Earth. There will be endless confusion there, and probably safety. But the Star of Mars would surely give you command of all fighting."

The words hung in the air.

"And you?" Cade asked.

"I don't know. There will be things to do. I'm not used to being idle."

"I wouldn't like to be his Gunner Superior," Cade said slowly. "I think I might like to marry someday."

"Oh, Cade!" There was laughter in her eyes. "This isn't Earth. It wouldn't be the Order again. Most of your Armsmen, if you call them that, would be married."

"That's true," he said. "I didn't think of that. The old habits--Jocelyn, I..." How could he say it? "You're the blood of the Emperor!" he cried out.

"The Emperor," she said softly, "is a man too. A wise man. And married."

Now he knew there was no way to say it; words were not enough. As once before in anger, but now with tenderness, he seized her in his arms pulled her to him. As once before in surprise, but now with full knowledge, she kissed him back.

For minutes they sat together, until a shadow began to lengthen across them. Cade stood and pulled her to her feet.

"There's work to do," he said.

"Work for both of us, my darling."

"My darling." He said the new word wonderingly and then smiled. He had so much to learn.

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## CHAPTER ONE

JIM KANDRO couldn't pace the corridors, because there weren't any. The Colony's hospital was simply an extra room built onto the doctor's rammed-earth house. They still called it "earth," though it was the rust-reddened soil of Mars.

The narrow space between bed and wall cramped his legs; the monotonous motion wearied his arm. But Jim stayed on, doggedly determined to see the thing through, rubbing his wife's back and whispering reassurances, as much to himself as to her.

"Why don't you let me take over for a while?" the doctor suggested. Jim's usefulness was over now; the man was only communicating his own panic to his wife. "Go in the other room and lie down. Nothing's going to happen for a while yet."

"Doc—" The man's voice was rough with anxiety, but he held back the frantic questions. "Please, Tony," he said simply, "I'd rather stick around." He fixed a smile to his face as he bent over Polly again.

Anna came in before Tony had quite decided to call her. It was a talent she seemed to have, one of the reasons why he had chosen her for his assistant.

"I think Jim needs a cup of coffee," he told her firmly.

Kandro straightened up awkwardly. "All right, Doc." He was trying hard to be matter-of-fact. "You'll call me if anything—when there's news?"

"Of course he will." Anna's quick assurance forestalled Tony's exasperated retort. She put her hand on Kandro's arm, and smiled down at the woman on the bed. "Not much longer now, Polly," she said with quiet certainty.

"Come on, Jim."

As the door closed behind them, Tony turned to his patient, and surprised a brief smile on her lips. "You mustn't mind," she explained, almost apologetically. "He's so worried."

She had no breath for more. She twisted suddenly on the narrow bed and clutched at the air till Tony gave her his hand to squeeze. Every other form of physical labor, he reflected unhappily, was made easier by the light grav-ity of Mars; but the labor of childbirth was eternally the same. And there was nothing he could do right now, ex-cept to offer her the reassurance of his presence. He stood and waited, loose flesh cascading from the nape of his neck down his spine as she ground her teeth against the pain.

When it was gone and she released his hand, he turned to the sterilizer for a fresh glove. One more examination, he decided. Something should be happening by now.

He heard her deep inhalation behind him.

"Anna's so nice," she sighed.

He heard the difference before he turned and saw it.

Polly was lying back, completely relaxed, making the most of the time before the pain returned.

"Yes, she is," Tony said. He dropped the glove on the table; another examination wasn't going to do any good, for her or for him. *Quit the damned fiddling*, he told him-self. *Sit and wait. You let that poor son-of-a-gun get you down. If she can wait, you can too. Be the doctor you would have been in Pittsburgh or Springfield—any Springfield on Earth. So you're on Mars. So what? Sit and wait.*

On the other side of the door, Jim raised his "coffee" cup for the fourth time to his lips, and for the fourth time put it down untasted.

"But what do you *think*, Anna?" he burst out. "How does it look to you? You'd know if there was anything—*wrong*."

"It looks all right to me," she said again, gently. "It looks like a normal delivery."

"But she's been—she started at six o'clock this morning! Why should it take so long?"

"Sometimes it does. That doesn't mean there's anything wrong. It's hard work, that's all. It takes time." It was useless to tell him not to worry. She went over to the work counter that ran the length of the rectangular room. "I don't think it'll be much longer now, Jim. Do you want to try and get some sleep while you wait? Or if you're going to stay up, could you give me a hand here?" She pulled out materials quickly and gave him an alky torch.

"Look," he said desperately, "you would tell me, wouldn't you, if it wasn't going right? He—Tony wouldn't want to keep me from knowing, would he? She never got this far before, you know."

Even Anna's patience could wear thin. Deftly she removed the torch from his hand before the down-turned flame could do any damage.

Kandro wanted to yell: *You don't know, none of you know. Twelve years we've been married and a man and a woman want kids, and none of you know how we want kids and all she does is get so sick you think she's dying and she never got this far before and you just don't know...*

He saw in Anna's eyes that he didn't have to say it, that she did understand. Her arms went out a little, and the big, rawboned man flopped on his knees before the plain little woman and sobbed with his head awkwardly pillowed against her... .

At 3:37 a.m., Dr. Tony Hellman adjusted a tiny oxygen mask over the red button nose of a newborn infant, wiped it and wrapped it, and returned his attention to the mother.

When he had finished, he overrode Polly's plan to stay awake and stare at her baby. He gave her a stiff shot of sedative to make certain, then decided to give her her OxEn pill for the next day as well, hoping she would sleep through till late morning.

Only since the development of the magic pink pellets, containing the so-called "oxygen enzyme," had

it been possible for most human beings to live a normal life on Mars. Before that, anyone who did not have the rare good luck to possess naturally Marsworthy lungs lived permanently in an oxygen mask. Now masks were needed only for babies too small to tolerate the pill.

The miracle enzyme made the air of Mars useful to human lungs as the native atmosphere of Earth—always provided the human in question took his pill religiously every day. Let thirty hours go by without renewing the treatment, and he would be dying, within minutes, of anoxemia.

Tony took a last look at the baby, made sure the tiny mask was properly adjusted, and checked the oxy tank for proper flow. Polly was already half asleep. He went quietly past her bed and opened the door to his livingroom.

"Sh!" Anna turned from her workbench, her face warm and cheerful. She pointed to the bunk where Jim, fully dressed in tunic and sandboots, lay fast asleep.

"Everything all right?"

Tony nodded. "Damn sight better than I expected."

After the glaring light of the hospital room, the quiet dark in here was good. More than that, Anna's untroubled presence served to dissolve all the nervous tension of the hours before. Suddenly too fatigued even to talk, he finished briefly: "Boy—five pounds, two ounces, Earth-weight—good color—strong too."

"Good. I'll finish this and then go sit with her. I'll call you if she needs anything."

"What about him?"

Anna glanced at Jim's sprawled figure. "He'll be all right." She smiled. "He can wait a few hours to meet his son."

For just a moment more the doctor stood there, watching her, fascinated as always by her delicate art. A pull on the tube, a twist as it reddened in the flame, a spin against an iron tool, another puff. All of it casual, seemingly random, and then, somehow, there was a finished piece of work—part of the intricate glass tubing always needed at the Lab, a fragile-looking piece of stemware for some new colonist's household, a precise hypodermic syringe for himself.

He watched till his weary eyes refused the bright spot of light where the pale flame washed over the glowing glass. Then he stumbled into the adjoining bedroom and slept.

## CHAPTER TWO

THE LAB was the cash crop of Sun Lake. Mars had a slight case of radioactivity, nothing you couldn't live with, but enough to enable Sun Lake City Colony to concentrate and isolate radioisotopes and radioactive organics for sale on Earth at better than competitive prices, even after the stiff tariff for transport.

The materials handled were only mildly dangerous, but it was the doctor's job to render them effectively not dangerous at all. Twice a day, before work started in the morning and again before quitting time, Tony geigered the whole place. On this precaution the whole community depended, not only for safeguarding their sole source of income, but for their very lives. Every adult member of the Colony did work at least indirectly connected with the Lab; all of them spent some time there.

Among other things, it was the only building with a large enough room to serve for social functions. And it offered the only possible change from mud-colored walls, from isomorphic rooms, all just 15 x 15, from cement floors and wall bunks. The Lab had everything the other buildings lacked—steel framework *and* alu-malloy wall sheathing; copper tubing and running hot water; built-in power outlets, Earthmade furniture; even the blessings of an Earth-import air filtering system.

The one kilometer walk out to the Lab in the early morning always infused the doctor with a glowing sense of confidence and well-being. In a year on Mars, he had lost little of his first pleasure in the buoyancy afforded by the low gravity. Walking was effortless; and, in the thin air, an hour's sunlight was enough to clear the night's chill from the open spaces. At noon, the sun would be too bright; in the evening, the cold would return as suddenly as it had departed. Now, in the first part of the morning, it was like a perfect autumn day on Earth.

Behind him, in the houses that lined both sides of the colony's single curved street, people were dressing hurriedly, eating, making plans, getting ready for the day's work. Ahead, the shining blue walls of the Lab were set off against the magnificent backdrop of Locus Solis itself. The ancient sea bed was alive again with color as the early sun's rays glinted off millions of tiny particles, the salts and minerals of Mars deposited by long-dried waters in millennia past. The clean lines of the new building against that sparkling expanse constituted at once a challenge and a reassurance—this is what man can do; here is everything he needs to do it with.

*If we can ... a second chance for man, if we can learn how to use it...*

Tony unlocked the storage cabinet built into the massive lead-lined door of the Lab. He took out his suit of protective armor—probably the only Earth-import wearing apparel ever bought and paid for by the Colony—but before he got into it, he turned to look back just once at the little huddle of houses where, a few hours ago, Polly Kandro had affirmed her faith in Sun Lake's future in the most emphatic personal manner.

The solidity of the Lab was a disagreeable symbol of the Colony's present status; it was still the only decent structure Sun Lake had to show. Halfway up the almost imperceptible three kilometer slope from "canal" bed at his left to "sea" level at his right sat the Colony, lumpy. Every building, like Tony's own home-and-hospital, was tamped native dirt. The arc of dull rust-brown huts squatting close to the ground and close to each other presented to Tony a monotonous row of identical plastic-windowed backsides.

Behind them, fields A, B, C, and D showed, even from the Lab, the work of Sun Lake's "mudkickers"—the agronomists who, using tools as ancient as the mutation-creating particles that stream from a cyclotron, were changing Mars plants into things that could nourish an Earth animal, and changing Earth plants into things that could draw nourishment from the grudging Martian soil.

Mutated bean plants whose ancestors had been a but-ton-bearing Mars cactus dotted field A. Mutated cauliflower—size of apples, dark brown and still manufacturing in themselves too much potassium cyanide to be edible—darkened field B; another few plant-generations and they would be food for the Colony table, though tasting somewhat of the neutralized cyanide bitter almonds.

Ten kilometers beyond the fields of bastard Earth-Mars vegetation, there had been beauty only recently—the fantastically eroded Rimrock Hills. Five months ago, however, the first pre-fab shack had gone up in the camp on the other side of the hills. Three months ago the first furnace had been fired at Pittco Three: Pittsburgh Coal, Coke, and Iron Company's Mars Metal Refining Plant Number Three. Now a dirty shroud of yellow-stained smoke draped the peaks from dawn to dark.

With a feeling of intense distaste, Tony started climbing into his suit of armor. *A second chance for man ...*

His own high-flown thoughts mocked him. Another chance to do exactly as they had done on Earth. Already the clean air of Mars was thickening with the eructations of Earth's commerce. Nor was the camp beyond the hill a lone offender. Even Sun Lake, to survive at all, had to maintain a cash crop economy—and the Lab was the potentially deadly crop.

Tony made sure that every flap on his suit was zipped and closed, and the last adjustments made on the helmet. He picked up the hand counter from the bottom of the compartment and worked the screw around to calibrate out Mars' naturally heavy background "noise." The needle eased to zero on the dial. Only then did he open the heavy door of the Lab itself and begin his slow trip of inspection through the building.

All areas were well under the threshold of danger, as usual, except for a hot patch in the isotope room. Tony chalked a yellow line around the spot and marked the door of the room with a bright yellow cross. Finished, he headed straight for the clean-up room and checked the condition of the exterior of his suit against the bigger stationary radiation counter that was kept there.

Not until he was sure he hadn't picked up anything on gloves or boots did he remove his suit and dump it down the chute for routine de-radiation. He hated to take time for the rest of the procedure today: he had to check with the men who were working in the hot spot; he had to get back to the hospital to see Polly; he had a patient, Joan Radcliff, who worried him badly.



He stripped and dumped his clothes down another chute, sand-scrubbed himself, and, holding his breath, walked through the stinking alcohol spray. Methyl alcohol, cheaper and easier to produce in the Lab than water, and sand for soap made bathing an ordeal instead of the pleasant ritual it had been on Earth.

Tony moved fast, but by the time he had put on a fresh tunic and boots and emerged into the central hall, the Lab was already full of people getting set for the day's work. He edged past a knot of busy conversationalists in the corridor.

"Hey, Doc—"

He paused, and that was his undoing.

"How's Polly? Tony, hold on—how's the baby? Are they all right?—Doc, wait a minute. Did everything go all right?—Where are they?—What is it ...?"

He answered the same questions a dozen times. It seemed that half the population of Sun Lake was in the corridor with him, and they all wanted to know the same thing. Finally, despairing of getting through until he had satisfied them all, Tony climbed up on a chair and addressed the crowd.

"Five pounds, two ounces, Earth-weight—a boy—wrigglingest baby I ever saw. Plenty lively, and he looks just like his old man. What else do you want to know?"

"How's Polly?"

"Fine. So's Jim." The hoary joke got its inevitable laugh.

Then one of the chemists said, "I make a motion for a birthday present. Let's build that other room onto the Kandro house right now."

It was an offer that had been made months before, and that Polly, hesitant and slightly superstitious, had refused. "There'll be time enough after the baby's born," she had told them, and stuck to it.

Tony knew why; knew about the first time, eleven years before, when she had carried a child for seven months, and then had to pack away all the things she had lovingly collected for its birth. They had stayed in their cartons for four more years, and two more miscarriages, before she gave them tearfully to a luckier woman.

"When is she going home, Doc?" one of the electronics men asked. "How much time have we got?"

"I don't know. Maybe tomorrow morning," Tony told them. "She's in pretty good shape. It's just a matter of where she'll be most comfortable. I don't imagine she'll want to stay in the hospital very long.... After all, it's not exactly designed for luxurious convalescence." They were all familiar with the crowded little room; he waited for a dutiful laugh to die down, and added, "I think tomorrow will be about right—not later than the day after."

"We better get started then," Mimi Jonathan, the pert black-haired Lab administrator, spoke up. "Suppose I make up some work parties, and we get things going?"

She produced a pencil and paper and began taking down the names and abilities of everyone whose Lab work was not too pressing. Two groups of volunteers left promptly, to collect soil from the old "canal" bottom, and to set up the frames for ramming. Others would have to stay in the Lab to set up the machinery for work on the synthetics that would paint the new room, build the new furniture, and clothe the new baby. While Mimi plunged into the complexities of reassigning work space and job time, the doctor managed to get away from the enthusiastic crowd.

He made his way to the isotopes room, and was happy to find Sam Flexner, the chemist in charge, waiting for him at the yellow-chalked door.

Tony opened the door and pointed out the ragged chalked circle on the floor. "Any idea what it is?"

"We were running some radiophosphorus," Sam said doubtfully. "But there was no trouble on the run. Must be spillage." The chemist had a young open face, and Tony liked him. He began to fill in the necessary report.

"What reason?" Spillage was unusual.

"It's a bigger order than we usually handle—must have been a hundred kilograms." Sam looked up sharply. "It was all right yesterday, wasn't it? The afternoon checkup?"

Tony nodded.

"Then it must have been at closing. I—well, I left a few minutes early yesterday. Figured the boys

could close up all right, but I guess one of them took a lazy man's load in his tote box—filled it up too high to save himself a trip. I'll check on it and tell them in a nice way, all right?"

"That should do it. But I better have a look at the checkout tubes."

Sam brought over a tray of tubes resting in numbered grooves. He was wearing one like them pinned to his own lapel. The contents of the tubes was its normal dirty white. Purple would have meant "too close to hot stuff too long."

"Okay," said Tony, checking his form. "That hot spot there, I think you'd better chisel it out and get one of the suppliers to take it way out and dump it."

"Old Learoyd was here with a load of vanadium dirt. He'll do it when he leaves for Pittco."

"Fine. Get it done. And tell Learoyd to put the stuff in the *back* of his rig. I don't think you could kill any of those old boys with anything subtler than a meat ax, but I wouldn't want him to sit next to it for a ten-hour trip." He dated and timed off the form. "That's that. Only you better stick around till close-up after this." He smiled and put a stop to the young chemist's attempt at explanation. "How's Verna, anyhow? Something better happen: soon, if it's going to make all this trouble."

Sam grinned back. "You may hear something soon," he admitted. "But please don't—uh—"

"Doctors don't gossip," Tony said. "One thing about this place," he added, "we can't help making history every time we turn around. Have a baby, and it's the first baby: have another baby, and it's the first girl born; slice out an appendix, and it's the first abdominal surgery. Let's see—you and Verna will be the first marriage between a drop-in chemical engineer and a share-holding agronomist—if she'll have you."

"Sounds like one of those weather records," complained Sam. "The coldest three p.m. reading at the corner of Spruce and Juice on a January 16th since 2107."

"It's your place in history," Tony assured him. "We'll all be footnotes. I'll see you this afternoon."

### CHAPTER THREE

TONY STEPPED OUT with springs in his knees, and, feeling the waxing heat of the morning, threw back the hood of his parka. The marvelous clear air of an hour earlier was fast disappearing, as the mineral trash that covered Mars' surface began to heat and roil the atmosphere. He looked off toward the Rimrock Hills, mourning their vanished beauty; then he stopped in surprise, squinting at the enig-matic black bugs crawling back and forth within the shadow of the hills.

He stood there, watching, as the seemingly random pattern of motion trended gradually in the direction of the Colony.

Who would be out on the desert afoot? He stopped and shielded his eyes. There were about twenty of them, and they were humped with—carbines and oxy masks.

The military!

But why? There'd never been a visit from Commissioner Bell's little intercolony police force before; never been any occasion for it. Each colony handled its own internal policing.

It was a year now since Bell's boys had been out for anything except routine administrative work, such as guard mount over the rocket; the last time was when an ace foundryman for Mars Machine Tool was rightly sus-pected of committing mayhem on a Marsport shopkeeper. Mars Machine Tool's colony administration insisted on being unimpressed by the evidence and refused to sur-render him to Marsport. Bell's boys had simply walked in and taken him away for his trial and conviction.

But Sun Lakers weren't given to mayhem.

Tony headed back for the Lab as the crooked trail of the soldiers straightened out into a beeline for the same place. He had his patients, but he was also a member of the Colony Council and this looked like Council business.

In the Lab he went straight to the from office and asked Mimi, "Did Harve ever get that recorder put together?"

"Last week," she said. It's been a blessing too. Why?"

"I think Bell's boys are paying us a call." He told her what he'd seen outside. "It might be useful to

have a record of it."

Mimi nodded thoughtfully, and flipped a lever at the side of her desk.

"That'll register anywhere in the office," she explained. "I'm a pacer—Harve set it up so I could walk all over the office while I talk, and still have it recorded."

Sam Flexner was also there. He put down a completed report form on the spillage in his department to ask, "What do they want?"

"I don't know," Tony told him. "But I think we'd better put in an intercom call for Joe Gracey to come on out here. He ought to be tending his seedling in C Area. Phone the South End to send a runner and get him out here on the double."

Gracey was the senior agronomist, and, like Mimi and Tony, a member of the Colony Council. The fourth member, and most recent addition, was Nick Cantrella; in only six months' time since his arrival at Sun Lake, Nick had risen from junior setup man to bossing all maintenance and procurement for the Lab. At the moment he was home with a nasty chemical burn on his arm. It wasn't really so bad that he couldn't be called in for an emergency, but Tony hesitated to do so, and he noticed that Mimi didn't suggest it either. Nick had a red-hot temper and practically no inhibitions.

"No," the doctor said to the questioners that began to press around him, "I don't think we ought to go out and meet them. Better just go ahead and work and get the new room for the Kandros put together. Flexner, will you stick around? It may be some damn thing or other about our atomics—some technical precaution we may have missed."

"No, sir," said another man emphatically. It was O'Donnell, who had ditched a law career to become a sweeper and then a maintenance man and then a good jury-rig physicist. It was his job to see that no daylight showed between the Colony's atomics practice and the law.

"Hmp," said the doctor. "You stick around too."

There was a thudding on the door and a self-conscious calling of an archaic formula: "Open in the name of the law!"

The delegation was a half-platoon of soldiers with their carbines and cumbersome oxygen masks and tanks—a choice bit of military conservatism, since a pocketful of OxEn pills weighed a hundredth as much and would keep them alive a hundred times longer. There were two civilians and an officer—Lieutenant Ed Nealey.

Tony was relieved to see him; they were fellow members of the subscription club that split the heavy postage on Earthside scientific periodicals, and Tony knew Nealey to be a conscientious and level-headed young career officer.

The doctor was extending his hand to Nealey when he remembered his protocol. One of the civilians was unknown to him, but the other was Hamilton Bell, Commissioner of Interplanetary Affairs.

"I'm Tony Hellman, Commissioner," he said. "I don't know if you remember me. I'm the doctor here and a member of our Colony's Council."

The commissioner was a small man, tending somewhat to pompous frailty. He looked like the kind of person rumor made him out to be: a never very important functionary who got the dreary Mars post when a very ordinary graft ring of which he was a prominent member was "exposed."

"Can you speak for the Colony?" he asked abruptly, ignoring Tony's hand.

The doctor cast a bewildered look at Lieutenant Nealey, whose eyes were front and whose face was set. Tony noticed he carried in a canvas scabbard the disassembled dipole and handle of an electronic "Bloodhound."

"I'm a council member," Tony said. "So is Miss Jonathan here. Another council member's ill and the third is on his way. The two of us can speak for the Colony. Now, what can we do for you?"

"It's a police matter. Do you care to make a statement before I have to drag the situation out into the open?"

"Let me take it," muttered O'Donnell. Tony nodded. The lawyer-turned-physicist firmly told the commissioner, "I want to remind you that we are a chartered colony, and, under the charter, are entitled to police ourselves. And I also want to say that we are not going to respond to any fishing expeditions until we hear what the complaint is."

"Suit yourself," grunted the commissioner. "But you're not self-policing when you steal from another colony. Mr. Brenner, tell your story."

Eyes swiveled to the other civilian, Brenner of Brenner Pharmaceuticals. *So that*, thought Tony, *is what a trillion-aire looks like*. Younger than anyone could reasonably expect, and looking comfortably conservative even in a parka of orange-red mutation mink.

Brenner shrugged and smiled a little uncomfortably. "I had no choice, Doctor," he said. "A hundred kilos of my marcaine—bulk micron dust, you understand—was stolen yesterday."

Somebody gasped. A hundred kilograms of marcaine, principal product of Brenner's works, was a small fortune on Mars—and a large fortune on Earth, if it could be diverted from medical use and channeled into one of the innumerable pipelines to addicts.

"Naturally I reported it," Brenner explained. "And of course Commissioner Bell had to order a Bloodhound search. It brought us here."

"Ed," Tony appealed to the grim-faced lieutenant, "did you operate the Bloodhound? Will you give me your personal word that it led to the Colony?"

"Answer him, Lieutenant," Bell ordered.

"I'm sorry to— Dr. Hellman," Nealey said stiffly. "I checked the machine three times, myself. Strong scent from Brenner's storeroom to the Rimrocks, then some confusion in the Rimrock caves, and a weakening scent from the Rimrocks to here. It doesn't actually stand up to all the way here, but it doesn't go anywhere else. That's definite."

"Please, Dr. Hellman," said Brenner kindly. "You needn't look so stricken. All it means is that there's a rotten apple in your barrel. That happens."

Gracey hurried a spindle-shanked ex-professor of low-temperature agronomy from Nome University. He addressed himself directly to Brenner: "What are *you* doing here?"

"Mr. Brenner has sworn out an intercolony complaint of grand theft," said the commissioner. "You're Gracey? You needn't waste your breath trying to blacken Mr. Brenner's character. He's already informed me that there was a disagreement between you which you've taken to heart." His meager smile showed that what he meant was "become a little cracked over."

"He hasn't got any character to blacken," growled the agronomist. "He tried to get me to breed marcaine weeds for higher production of his hell-dust and I wanted to know why. Wasn't that naive of me? I checked on Earth and I found out that maybe ten per cent of his marcaine goes into medical hands and the rest—"

The commissioner shut him up with a decisive: "That's enough. I will *not* listen to random accusations based on newspaper gossip. I don't doubt that after marcaine arrives on Earth some of it is diverted. The world has its weak-willed people. But Mr. Brenner is a responsible manufacturer and you people—I respect your ideals but I'm afraid I can't say much for your performance. The business of Mars is business. And a major theft from one of our leading industrial colonies is very serious indeed."

"Gentlemen," said Brenner, "I *can't* ignore it. I'd like to, simply to spare the unpleasantness, but the amount involved is too important financially. And there's always the danger that some quantity might get into illegal channels."

Gracey snarled, looked as though he wanted to spit on the immaculate floor of the Lab.

"What exactly do you intend to do?" Tony asked hastily, anxious to forestall an eruption from the irritable agronomist.

"It should be quite clear by now," Bell replied, "that it is my duty to conduct a search of these premises."

"You'll keep your grabbing little hands off our equipment!" Unexpectedly, it was Flexner who exploded. "It's all nonsense, and you know it. What would we steal from that *drug peddler*?"

Brenner's quiet laugh rasped into the appalled silence that followed. Flexner, enraged, took just one belligerent step toward the trillionaire and the commissioner.

"Sergeant!" barked Lieutenant Nealey, and a noncom, unslinging his carbine like an automaton, aimed from the hip at the chemist. Flexner stopped in his tracks, redfaced with anger, and said bitterly, "So he can make the damned stuff and welcome, but all hell breaks loose if somebody hooks it."

"For the last time—" began Bell, exasperatedly, and then interrupted himself. He drew a paper from his parka and handed it to Tony. "The warrant," he said shortly.

Tony passed it to O'Donnell and there was a long, foot-tapping minute while the ex-lawyer studied the document.

At last O'Donnell said, "According to this, you plan to open our shipping crates and break into our process ovens. Is that correct?" He was pale with anger and worry.

"Correct," said the commissioner, while Brenner shrugged helplessly. "Marcaine could, of course, he con-cealed from the Bloodhound in lead-insulated containers."

"Then you *are* aware," said Tony, "that we manufac-ture radioactive materials?"

"I am."

"And you realize that there are certain procedures re-quired by law for the handling of such materials?"

"*Doctor* Hellman! Has it slipped your mind that I represent the law you're speaking of?"

"Not at all." Tony was determined not to lose his temper. "But I could hardly expect you to carry in your mind all the time the innumerable petty details that must come under your administration. And it happens that I represent, here in the Colony, the observance of the laws under which our radioactives license was granted. I think that as chief radiological monitor for the Colony, I should be permitted to accompany your men in any search."

"That's out of the question." The commis-soner dis-missed the request impatiently. "The license you spoke of is, as we both know, a grade-B atomics license, permit-ting you to handle only materials well below the safety level, so I see no reason for any unnecessary fuss. Lieuten-ant—"

"Just a minute, please, Commissioner," Tony inter-rupted frantically. It was perfectly true that as the direct representative on Mars of the Panamerican World Fed-eration, Bell was judge, jury, and corner cop, all rolled into one. Redress was as far away as Earth, and the road to Earth was the rocket from which Bell had the power to bar them.

"Don't you realize," Tony pleaded, "that our materials stay below the safety level only because we have a well-established monitoring procedure? If you insist on break-ing into the process ovens and opening crates without my supervision, Sun Lake cannot assume responsibility for any dangerous radioactivity."

I understand that, Doctor," Bell answered crisply. "Any handling of radioactives in my presence is obviously done on *my* responsibility, not yours. The commission, oddly enough, is supplied with its own monitors. I do not believe we will require your assistance. Carry on, Lieutenant."

Nealey took a reluctant step forward. Choking back his anger, Tony said flatly, "In my opinion you are ex-ceeding your authority. Your men will interfere with our processing and break open our shipment crates. Our machinery is so delicately adjusted that any kind of han-dling by untrained people could easily destroy it. And we've spent the last month packing our outgoing ship-ments for the next rocket. You know what the law is for packing radioactives. If you broke open our shipments, the rocket would be here and gone before we had the stuff decontaminated and repacked. It would be ruinous for the Colony."

He saw out of the corner of his eye that O'Donnell was unwillingly shaking his head. Bell was the law on Mars. And Bell wasn't even bothering to answer.

"At least give us a chance to look into it," urged the doctor. "Maybe we have got a bad apple. We'll find him if we do. You can't wreck us just on suspicion!"

"More than suspicion is involved here," said Bell. "The findings of the Ground Tracing Device, M-27, known as the Bloodhound, when operated by a qualified commis-sioned officer, are accepted as completely legal evidence in all authorized world courts."

They watched bleakly as the lieutenant began to as-semble the dipole, handle, power pack, and meters of the Bloodhound.

I have a suggestion," said Brenner. "Under Title Fif-teen of the Interplanetary Affairs Act—"

"No," said O'Donnell. "We don't want it."

Brenner said persuasively, "If you're clean, there's noth-ing to worry about."

"Title Fifteen was never meant to be applicable to a case like this," O'Donnell crossfired. "It's one of those shotgun laws, like a conspiracy count—"

"That's enough," said the commissioner. "You can't have it both ways. Since Mr. Brenner's willing, this is your notice; I'll confirm it in writing. Under Title Fifteen of the Interplanetary Affairs Act, I advise the Sun Lake Colony that you have until the next Shipment Day to produce the marcaine thief and the stolen marcaine or evi-dence of its disposal. If you fail to do so, I will instruct the military to seal off Sun Lake Colony and a suitable sur-rounding area for a period of six months so that a thor-ough search can be conducted. Lieutenant, move your men out of here."

Nealey snapped the half-platoon to attention and marched them through the Lab door. The unmilitary fig-ures of the commissioner and the tall angular drug maker followed them.

O'Donnell's face was grim. "It was written in the old days of one ship a year and never revised," he said. " 'Sealed off' means just that—nothing and nobody in, nothing and nobody out."

"But we're geared for four ships a year," said Flexner complainingly. "Shipment Day's only three weeks off. Rocket's due in ten clays, two days unloading, one week overhaul, and off she goes. We'd miss the next two rockets!"

*"We'd miss the next two rockets!" Tony repeated, dazed.*

"Half a year without shipments coming in, half a year without goods going out!"

"He's trying to strangle us."

"It can't be legal," objected Flexner.

"It is. By the time it could be changed, the Colony'd be dead anyway."

"Even if we pulled through, we'd be poison to Earthside buyers—shipments arriving there half a year late."

"He's trying to strangle us," O'Donnell insisted dog-gedly.

*"How many OxEn pills have we got?"*

"What's Bell's angle? What's Brenner out for?"

"Bell's crooked. Everybody knows that."

"That's why they sent him to Mars."

"But what's his angle?"

Tony was still a doctor. To no one in particular he muttered, "I've got to check on the baby," and started out on the road from the Lab to the huts with the spring gone from his knees.

## CHAPTER FOUR

TONY WOULDN'T TALK to the women about the commis-sioner and his trap. He'd try not to think about it; he'd tell himself it would work out somehow in the three weeks of grace they had.

The door to the hospital was open, but no sounds came from the other side. Polly was asleep then, and Anna had gone out.

Tony drew a cup of water from the tap on the plastic keg and set it to boil on the stove with a pinch of "coffee" makings—the ground, dried husks of a cactuslike plant that grew in some abundance on the desert. At its best the stuff had approximately the flavor of a five-day-old brew of Earth-import brick coffee, made double strength to start with and many times reheated. It did contain a substance resembling caffein, but to Tony it often seemed the greatest single drawback to human life on Mars.

Before he put any food on to cook, he stepped into the hospital half of his hut for a look at Polly. "Well!"

"Hello, Tony." Anna had moved the baby's basket next to Polly's bed and was bending over, peering into it.

"We were watching the baby," she unnecessarily told him, and promptly returned to that fascinating occupa-tion.

"Just what is there to watch so hard?" the doctor de-manded.

"He's—" Anna finally transferred her attention; she made a helpless little gesture and smiled with an irritating air of mystery. "He's very interesting," she said finally.

"Women!" Tony exploded. "Sit for hours watching a baby sleep!"

"But he's not sleeping," Anna protested.

"He's hardly slept all morning," Polly added proudly. "I've never seen such a lively baby!"

"And how would *you* know what he's been doing 'all morning'? When I left here you were asleep yourself, and Anna was all ready to go home and do likewise. Where's Jim?"

"He wanted to go to work," Anna explained. "He was—embarrassed, I guess, about staying out. I told him I'd stay. I wasn't really sleepy anyhow."

"You weren't sleepy? After twenty-six hours awake?" He tried to be stern. "So you sent Jim off to work to give him a chance to brag about his baby. You weren't sleepy, and neither was Polly, and strangely enough, neither was the newcomer here! Well, as of now, all three of you are just too sleepy to stay awake, you understand?"

Purposefully he moved the basket to the far side of the room. What they said was true, he noticed; young Kandro was wide awake and kicking, apparently perfectly content. Not even crying. Strange behavior for a newborn.

"Come on, Anna, clear out." He put the baby down and turned to Polly. "I'll give you ten minutes to get to sleep before I stuff some more sedative into you," he informed her. "Didn't anybody ever tell you you're supposed to be tired now?"

"All right." Polly refused to be ruffled. "He's an aw-fully nice baby, Tony." She settled herself more comfortably under the thin cover and was asleep almost before they left the room.

"Now go on home," Tony told Anna. "I'm going to make myself some breakfast. Wait a minute. Did you eat anything?"

I did, thanks." Abruptly she turned toward him, and made a conscious effort at concentration. The abstracted look left her eyes and she was brisk and alert as usual. "What about Polly? Don't you have to go out again? Somebody should be here."

"I'll get hold of Gladys when I leave. Don't worry about it."

"All right." She smiled at his impatient tone. "You don't have to push me. I'll go. You're still coming over for dinner tomorrow night?"

"You couldn't keep me away," he assured her.

She came back into the room and took a ration slip from the drawer where Tony kept them. "You pay in advance, you see," she added, smiling.

"And well worth it." Tony held the door for her, a habit he never quite lost even in the atmosphere of de-termined sexual equality that pervaded the Colony. Not until she was gone did he remember the coffee he'd started.

It was ruined, of course, and now he'd have to do without it. Water was too scarce, still, to waste because of care-lessness. But coffee or no, he was hungry. He found a dish of barley gruel, left over from a lunch he'd cooked for himself two days ago, heated it, and spooned it down hastily. Then, with a final check to make sure Polly was really asleep, he set out for the Poroskys' house to find Gladys.

At fourteen, Gladys was the oldest child in the Colony—none of the adult members was over thirty-five years—and her status was halfway between that of a full working member and the errand-girl position her younger sister occupied. She was old enough to assist almost anybody at anything, still too young to take full responsibility for a job. Now, Tony found, she was over at the Radcliffs', sit-ting with Joan. It was his next stop anyhow. If they did have to leave Mars, it would have at least one good effect: the life of Joan Radcliff would be saved. But, the doctor reflected, she'd die of a broken heart as surely as she was dying on Mars of—whatever it was. His star patient, the thin, intense girl lived only for the suc-cess of the colony on Mars. And life on Mars was killing her.

When he knew what she had, maybe Tony would know how to cure it. Meanwhile, all he could do was make a faithful record of its symptoms and try out treatments till he found one that would work. Or until he was sure none of them worked.

It was like an allergy and it was like heart disease and it was like fungus infection where you couldn't put your finger on the parasite. Tony didn't even have a name to tag it by.

Joan came down with it two days after she and her husband, Hank, arrived on the shuttle rocket. If

the doc-tor didn't find some relief for her soon, it looked as though she would have to go back on the next one.

Tony bit hard on the stem of his empty pipe, slipped it into a pocket, and walked into the bedroom of the Rad-cliff house.

"How's it going?" He put his bag on the table and sat down on the edge of Joan's bunk.

"Not so good." She had to work for a smile; a good colonist is always cheerful. "I just can't seem to get set-tled. It's as if the bed were full of stale cracker crumbs and broken shells—"

She *began* to cough, short dry barks that rattled her thin body, feather-light on Mars, against the bed.

*Cracker crumbs and sea shells!*

Sometimes it seemed that the damned condition reached her mind too. It was hard to distinguish between the delirium of fever, the depression of fatigue and con-finement, the distortions of mental disease.

The spasm had passed. She battled the itch to cough again and counter-irritate her raw, constricted throat. Tony, watching, knew the guts it took. She was fighting: a good colonist guarded her health; it was a colony asset.

Everything for the Colony. And for Henry, her hus-band. Joan was one of those thin, intense young people who give their lunch money to Causes. It had taken a lot of skipped lunches to get her and Henry to Mars as shareholders, Tony realized. But she could never have been satisfied with less—the non-voting position of "drop-in," for instance. She had to identify herself with a heroic unpopular abstraction, or life wasn't worth living.

Tony had more than a touch of it himself. All of them in the Colony did. But the doctor doubted that he had enough of it to fight against the brief, delusive relief of a coughing fit in order to get well imperceptibly sooner and go back to work for the Colony. If she got well.

Joan whispered, "Got some magic in your bag for me?" A good colonist is always cheerful; the great days are ahead.

"Middling magic, anyhow." He put the thermometer in her dry mouth and peeled back the blanket. There were new red bumps on her arms and legs; that was one phase of it he could treat. He smoothed on ointment and changed the dressings on the old puffy sore spots.

"That's good," she whispered gratefully as he took the thermometer from her mouth. "So cool!" Her tempera-ture was up another two-tenths over yesterday's 101.3. And the thermometer was not even moist.

Another injection, then. He hated to use them, as long as he wasn't sure of the nature of the disease, but one of his precious store of anti-histamines seemed to give a little relief. It was temporary, of course, and he ardently hoped it was doing no permanent damage—but it did shrink the inflamed watery bladder that her throat lining had be-come under the action of killer-enzymes. She would be able to breathe more easily now, and to sleep. It might last as long as twenty-four hours.

One more day, and by that time Hank would be back with a little of the latest Earth-developed hormone frac-tion. Tony had heard that Benoway, over at Mars Ma-chine Tool, was using it with startlingly good results for serious burns and infections.

Joan's eyes closed and the doctor sat there staring at the parchment-like lids, her chapped and wrinkled lips.

Tony grimaced; she was obviously being a fool.

He rose noiselessly and crossed the room to the water jug. When he came back he spoke her name softly: "Joan?" Her eyes opened and he held out the glass.

"Here's some water."

"Oh, thank you!" She sighed dreamily, reaching out—but she snatched her hand back. "No, I don't need any." She was wide awake now and she looked frightened. "I don't really want it," she pleaded, but her eyes never left the glass.

"Take it, drink it, and don't be silly!" he snapped at her. Then, gently, he propped up her shoulders with his arm and held the glass to her lips. She sipped hesitantly at first, then drank with noisy gulps.



"What are you trying to do to yourself? Didn't I order extra water rations for you?"

She nodded, shamefaced.

"I'm going to have some words with Hank when he comes back, to make sure you drink enough."

"It's not his fault," she said quickly. "I didn't tell him. Water's so precious and the rest of you are working and I'm just lying here. I don't deserve any extra water."

He handed her the glass, refilled, and propped her up again.

"Shut up and drink this."

She did, with a combination of guilt and delight plain on her face.

"That's better. Hank ought to be back tomorrow with the medication from Mars Machine Tool. I'll tell him about the water myself this time, and I don't want any nonsense from you about not drinking it. You're a lot more valuable to the Colony than a few quarts of water."

"All right, Doctor." Her voice was very small. "Do you really think he'll be back tomorrow?"

Tony shrugged with calculated indecision. Mars Machine Tool was almost a thousand miles away, and allowing time for food and rest, Radcliff should be back before midday tomorrow. But Joan's question was so pa-thetically eager, he didn't dare sound too sure. It was even harder when she opened her eyes again, while he was closing his bag, to ask, "Doctor, will it do any good, do you think? You never told me the name of it."

"Oh," he answered vaguely, "it's just something new." Just as he knew about Hank, he knew perfectly well the sixteen-syllable name of the hormone fraction. But he was afraid that Joan would know it, too, from sensational press stories, and that she would expect a miracle. The doctor was expecting only another disappointment, another possibility ruled out, another step toward the day when he'd have to break the girl's heart by ordering her back to Earth.

"I won't be able to leave anyone with you for a while," he told her as he left. "I need Gladys to stay with Polly Kandro. But remember, if you need anything, or want anything, use the intercom. Call somebody to do it for you. Your heart isn't in any shape for exercise."

The sun was beating down more strongly when he stepped outside. It was past mid-morning already, and he had to get over to Nick Cantrella's, give him official clear-ance on the burned arm, and talk to him about Bell's threat. But there were other patients, and they needed treatment more urgently than Nick. Better to get through with them first. Then when he got to Cantrella, they'd be able to buckle down to the quarantine problem.

## CHAPTER FIVE

A YOUNG GIRL'S HEAD was splitting with the agony of an infected supraorbital sinus, but she was no whiner and even managed a smile.

"I've got a present for you, Dorothy," he said. "It's from a girl who was your age a couple of centuries ago. Her name was Tracy. I don't know whether it was her last or first name, but she gave it to this stuff." He held up a hypo filled with golden fluid. "It's called bacitracin. They found out that this Tracy's body fought off some infec-tions, so they discovered how it did the trick and wrapped it up in this stuff—a good, effective antibiotic."

She hardly noticed the needle. *Misdirection is as useful to a doctor as it is to a stage magician*, he thought wryly.

A middle-aged man who should have known better was recovering nicely from his hernia operation.

"I still say, Oscar, that you shouldn't have let me fix it up. You would have been a medical marvel—The Man Who Got Ruptured on Mars. I could have had you stuffed, got you a grand glass case right next to the door at some medical museum on Earth. Maybe a neon sign! You got a nice repair job, though I say it myself, but you're throw-ing away world-wide medical fame. The Man Who tried to Lift a Lead Shipping Crate Barehanded! I can see it now in all the textbooks. You sure you don't want me to undo you again?"

"All right, Doc," grinned Oscar, red-faced. "You made your point. If I see anybody even looking as though he's going to lift a gut-buster, I'll throw him down and sit on him until the crane arrives. Satisfy

you?"

A not-quite-young woman suffered from headaches, lower back pains, sleeplessness, and depression. Poker-faced, the doctor told her, "Mrs. Beyles, you're the most difficult medical problem—a maladjusted person. I wouldn't be that direct if we were on Earth, but this is Sun Lake. We can't have you drinking our water and eat-ing our food if you don't pay for it in work. What you want, whether or not you admit it to yourself, is to get off Mars, and I'm going to oblige you. If you knew what Joan Radcliff is going through to stay— Never mind. No. I will not give you any sleeping pills. If you want to sleep, go out and work until you're too tired to do anything else."

Was he right? he wondered. He knew the woman would never believe him and would hate him forever, but it was another kind of surgery that had to be done—fortunately, not often. The woman would either change her attitude, thereby losing her ills and becoming the asset to the Colony that her strapping frame and muscles should make her, or out she would go. It was brutal, it was profit-and--loss, it was utterly necessary.

And so to Nick Cantrella at last, thank heaven. Heaven had often been thanked in the Colony for Nick's arrival. He was the born leader, the inspired and unorthodox elec-tronics man who hadn't garnered the sheaf of degrees needed for a halfway decent job on an Earth cluttered with bargain-counter Ph.D.s.

In the Colony he had signed up as a maintenance and setup man, but spent so much of his time troubleshooting that he was finally relieved of the routine part of his work. Just recently he had been promoted to chief of mainte-nance, purchasing, and repairs of all Lab equipment. His new dignity hadn't kept him out of trouble. He was home with a nasty chemical burn in his arm acquired far outside the line of duty.

Tony didn't know whether he was glad or sorry Nick had missed the session with Bell and Brenner. Nick could think on his feet, but it was an even chance that Brenner's oily sympathy and Bell's open contempt of the Colony would have goaded him into thinking with his fists.

"Tony!" Nick yelled as he came in the door. "Gracey was here with the news. It's the biggest thing that ever hit Sun Lake! It'll be the making of us!"

"Let's see the arm, Combustible," said Tony dryly, "Medicine first, politics later."

Nick fumed as the doctor removed the dressing and examined the site of the burn—now just a good scar, painless, non-disabling, and uncomplicated, due to quick poulticing and a heavy coat of eschar.

Tony slapped Nick on the back. "Okay, Fearless," he said. "You can go back to work. Inhale chlorine. Drop pig of osmium on your toes. Sit on a crateful of radiophosphorous and get a buttful of geigers. Stir nitric acid with your forefinger. There's *lots* of things you haven't tried yet; maybe you'll like them—who knows?"

"So it splashed," Nick grinned, flexing his arm. "Damn good thing I wasn't there this morning. I would've thrown those bums out. Do you realize that this is the biggest break we've ever had? Why, man, we should have been praying for something just like this to happen. We *never* would have cut the Earth tie on our own and given up luxuries like Earthside medicine. I'm glad Bell's kicking us into it. All we have to do is retool for *OxEn*." His face glowed. "What a beautiful job that's going to be! Those boys in the Lab can do anything—with my machinery, of course," he added.

"You can't do it, Nick." Tony shook his head ruefully. "Ask any of the biochem boys. I went on the guided tour through the Kelsey plant in Louisville while I was think-ing of joining the Colony. It left me footsore and limping because that plant is ten stories high and covers four city blocks. They operate more than 500 stages of concentra-tion and refinement to roll those little pink pills out of the protoculture. And the first couple of hundred stages have to be remote-control sterile. There isn't as much glass on all of Mars as the Kelsey people had just in their protoculture tanks. It's out, boy. *Out*."

"Hell, we'll rig up something. With all the crooks on Mars, we can make something they want and swap it for OxEn across Bell's search cordon. Don't *worry* about it, Tony. This should have happened a long time ago. On our own!"

"You're missing something. What if we do catch a mar-caine thief and the hoard and turn them over to Bell?"

Nick was thunderstruck. "You mean you think it wasn't a frameup? One of our guys?"

"We can't rule it out until we've looked."

"Yeah, it *could* happen. Well, if you'll kindly write out my medical discharge, I'll get a majority together and put it in the form of a motion that we hold a shakedown in-spection of the Colony."

"There's an easier way, maybe," Tony said. "Anybody who toted that much marcaine got gowed up on the stuff, whether he knows it or not. It's micron dust—fused am-poules are about the only thing that hold it without leakage, and this was in bulk. Also, the thief might be a regular marcaine addict as well as wanting the stuff to sell."

"So," Nick grinned, "we line everybody up and just see which one does this." He went into a comedy routine of tics and twitches and strange yapping noises. "You know that won't work," he wound up soberly. "There isn't any way to smell out a markie."

"*Practically* no way," Tony corrected him. "That's why Brenner's a trillionaire and that's why marcaine gives stiff competition to Earthside narcotics in spite of the extra cost. The damned stuff doesn't affect you so people no-tice. You become an addict, you take your belt as often as you please, and you can live in your own private sweet-dream world without anybody the wiser until—blooie!—you drop dead from failure of the cardiac node to keep your heart pumping."

"You said *practically* no way," Nick reminded him. "What's the catch? Have you got an angle?"

"I get my electroencephalograph out and read up on the characteristic brainwave patterns of marcaine users. Then I run the e.e.g. over everybody who could possibly have carried the stuff from Brenner to here. You want to line that up for me?"

Nick nodded glumly. "Sure," he said, "but you won't find any markies here. It's a frameup, I tell you.... Hello, honey! What are you doing home at this hour of the day? What's all that junk for?"

Tony turned to see Marian Cantrella, Nick's blond and beautiful wife, pushing her way through the door, her arms full of soft white cloth, scissors, heat-sealer, and paper patterns.

"You'll be witness, won't you, Tony, when I testify that I only left home because he didn't want me here?" Marian turned large violet eyes from the doctor to her husband and back again. "On second thought," she concluded, "you're no better than he is. *Could* either one of you big, *strong* men stop gaping and give me a hand with this stuff?"

Nick jumped up and relieved her of some of her bun-dles. "What's it all about?" He fingered the fine cloth cu-riously.

"Baby shirts, nightgowns, and diapers," Mariam said composedly. "Are you all through pawing it?"

"Oh, for the Kandro kid." But he didn't relinquish the material. "Where'd the cloth come from?"

"I think they just ran it off." Marian took the heat-sealer from him and plugged it into the house battery to warm up. She cleared a space on the table and laid out the patterns to study. "What's the matter?" she asked. "Something wrong with it?"

"No, it's a nice job." He brought the bolt of cloth over to the table and spread it out, then carefully pulled a thread loose. "But they should have replaced the extru-sin nozzle. See that line there—there on the side—where it looks irregular?"

Tony went over to look at the thread Nick was holding up to the light. He couldn't see anything wrong with it, and Marian confessed she couldn't either.

"It's there," Nick told them. "It means a worn nozzle. But it's not a bad job. Who did the setup?"

"For heaven's sake!" Marian exploded. "I don't know who did it! They handed it to me and said go home and make tiny garments, so I went!"

"Okay, baby," Nick soothed her. "I just thought you might know." He turned to Tony as Marian began cut-ting off squares from the bolt for diapers. "I don't see how they had a machine free for it," he fretted. "Every piece of equipment in the shop was scheduled for full time until Shipment— Well," he stopped himself, "I guess it doesn't matter anyhow. From here on out we can pretty much stop worrying every time we need to use a piece of the Lab for Colony goods. The days of plenty have arrived—extra underwear and new dinner plates all around."

"Sure," the doctor agreed sourly. "All the pajamas you want—and no OxEn. Tell me, Marian, what are the women saying about this marcaine business?"

"Same as the men, I guess." She tested the heat-sealer on a corner of the first diaper, and turned the dial for more heat. "It'll blow over. Even if this shipment does get held up, it'll straighten out. Kind of a shame if we're cocooned while the rocket's in, though."

She tried the sealer again then began running it deftly along the cut edges, leaving a smooth perfect selvage behind.

"I was hoping we'd get a look at Douglas Graham," she added. "I think he's *wonderful!*"

"Hah?" demanded Nick, starting. "Oh, the *This Is* man: My rival. He should be honored to be my rival."

"What's going on?" asked Tony. "Is it a family joke?"

"Douglas Graham's a national joke," said Nick. "Now that he's going to do an Inside-Mars, that makes him an interplanetary joke."

"Oh, the writer," Tony remembered. The rocket doctor had told him last trip that Graham would be aboard the next.

"He's wonderful," said Marian. "I just loved *This Is Eurasia*. All those dictators, and the Cham of Tartary and the history, he made it sound so exciting—just like a story.

"*This Is Mars*," said Nick sonorously. "Chapter One; Page One, The Story of the Sun Lake Colony, or, A Milestone in the History of Mankind."

"Do you think he really will write us up?" asked Mariam, "I mean if that silly marcaine business doesn't keep him away?"

"No, pet. We'll be ignored or maybe he'll take a few digs at us. His books run first as serials in *World Welfare* and *World Welfare* isn't interested in co-op colonists. He is interested in Pittco No. 3 over the hill, I'll bet you, by the way Pittco advertises. He'll probably play up all the industrial colonies as big smash-hits for free enterprise and not mention things like the Pittco red-light house."

Marian's lips tightened. "I don't think it's decent," she said.

"Right," agreed Nick soberly. "I'll tell Madame Ross tonight. Haven't been over for days. I'll tell her my wife doesn't think her girls are decent. Want to come along and make a night of it, Tony?"

"Ump," said Tony. If he was any judge, Marian's sense of humor didn't go that far.

"That's not what I meant!" she cried indignantly. "I meant it wasn't decent for him to hide things like that and— Oh, you're joking! Well, I don't believe he would do it! I've read his books and they're good."

"Have you got any of Graham's stuff around?" Tony asked hastily. "I don't think I ever read any."

"I shouldn't take time out," said Marian, a little sulk-ily, "but—"

She put down the sealer and shooed Tony off the trunk he'd been sitting on. A considerable quantity of wool socks and underwear turned up before she hit the right level. She handed over a conventional onionskin export edi-tion. Tony read at random:

*These are the words of the man who rules over the twenty-five million souls that hold the lifeline between America's frontier on the Yang-Tse Kian River and her allies in the Middle East: "Please convey to the people of your country my highest esteem and warmest assurances that the long peace between our nations shall never be broken without cause by me." The significance of this*

Tony handed the book back. "I don't think I've been missing much," he said.

Marian was still digging through the trunk, fascinated at the forgotten things she was turning up. It was sur-prising how little used were most of the items they had found essential to include in their limited baggage when they left Earth.

"Here's something," she laughed. "I used to read it back on Earth, and I thought it would be so useful here."

She held out an onionskin pamphlet titled in red: *The Wonders of Mars*, by Red Sand Jim Granata, Interplan-etary Pioneer.

Nick took the book from her and riffled through the pages with a reminiscent smile. "It's terrible, Tony," he said. "Get these chapter headings: 'Mining for Emeralds,' 'Trapped in a Sandstorm'—Red

Sand Jim should wish the air on Earth was as clear as the heart of a Martian 'sand storm—'Besieged by Dwarfs in the Rimrock Hills: "

"What?" demanded the doctor, incredulously.

"'Besieged by Dwarfs in the Rimrock Hills.' If you don't believe me, look. The dwarfs, it says here, were a constant menace to intrepid interplanetary pioneers like Red Sand Jim because they killed people and stole their babies and things like that. They didn't often see one—"

"Naturally."

"Naturally, Doctor, naturally. But they were little peo-ple who didn't wear shoes or clothes it says here—which reminds me." He closed the book. "I was out at the caves yesterday—took a ride with one of the prospectors. We've never really looked into the caves, and I had nothing better to do while you were teaching me safety precautions, so I wandered around some, and found kids' footprints in the entrance to one of them."

"They take the goats out there to graze sometimes," Tony said.

"That's not it. Looks like they've been going barefoot, and I don't think they ought to be allowed—"

"They certainly shouldn't!" Marian was indignant. "Why, they could *hurt* themselves. And they shouldn't be allowed in those caves either."

"They're not," Tony said grimly. "They have strict orders to stay away from the caves. But I never thought they'd be screwy enough to try going barefoot. I'll have to tell them about it."

"Tell them good," Nick urged him. "There's a lot of rock out there, and a lot of dangerous surface salts."

"I wish I knew some way to make it stick," the doctor said, worriedly. "Once those kids get a notion in their heads—if they still hang around the caves after listening to old man Learoyd's horror stories—I don't know."

"Don't take it so hard." Nick couldn't stay serious long "Maybe it wasn't the kids. Could be it's dwarfs."

"Ve-ry funny. I'll pass the word to the mothers that there shouldn't be any barefoot-boy stuff on Mars. I've got enough trouble without frostbitten toes, lacerations, and mineral poisoning."

"You better hope they're dwarf prints, Tony. That'd be easier to handle than teaching our pack of kids."

"Look who's talking! I'll thank you to line up that vote on an e.e.g. test for marcaine now while I dig up my medi-cal references. Also"—he got up briskly—"if there's more trouble coming, I better take care of myself while I can. Lunch'll be all gone if I don't get there soon."

## CHAPTER SIX

FORTY YEARS in the life of a planet is nothing at all, es-pecially when the planet is ancient Mars. It had been that long since the first Earth rocket had crashed at the southern apex of *Syrtis Major*—and remained there, a shining, rustless memorial with only the broad fractures in its fuel tanks to tell its story to those who came after.

Forty years, almost, since the first too-hopeful colonists followed, three thousand doomed souls. Their Earth-bred bodies, less durable than the flimsiest of their constructions, were already rotted to the skeletons when a belated relief ship came with the supplies without which they had starved to death.

Forty years, now, of slow growth but rapid change, dur-ing which a barren world had played host to, successively, a handful of explorers; a few score prospectors and wan-derers-at-large; a thousand or so latter-day homesteaders, with their lean, silent women; and finally—after Ox Fit—the new industrial colonies, none of them more than live years old.

The explorers had disappeared: gone back to Earth to lecture and write, or blended completely into the Martian scene; the prospectors and frontiersmen, most of them, had died; but the colonists, determined to stay on, drew fresh blood continually from the lifeline at Marsport—the quarterly rockets from Earth.

Sun Lake City Colony, alone among those who had come to Mars, wanted nothing more than to cut,

once and forever, that vital tie with Earth. But it was too soon, still too soon; the Colony was not yet strong enough to live, if the umbilical cord was severed.

And the colonists knew it. After lunch they gathered in the Lab, every last man, woman, and child. Tony rose from the black box of the electroencephalograph to count heads.

"We're one over," he told Nick. "Polly's in the hospital, Joan's home, Hank's at Mars Machine Tool or on his way back. Tad's on radio shack. Who's the spare?"

"Learoyd," said Nick. "And I've got Tad messaging Machine Tool to confirm Hank's whereabouts for the last four days."

"Okay. I'll get Tad later."

A whiskery man who looked as though he was pushing 90 stormed up to the doctor.

"It ain't your business whether I take a sniff of marcaine now and again and it ain't for you to say I stole any hundred kilos if you do find I use it once in a while. Bunch of greeners!"

"Calm down, Learoyd," sighed the doctor.

"Greener!" taunted the old-timer. "Call yourself Marsmen!"

"You can call us anything you want, Learoyd," said the doctor. "Only we've got to straighten this thing out. When did you last take marcaine? It won't—"

"You don't even know where you are!" quavered the old man. "Lake-us Sole-us, my eye! You're right on the edge of Ryan's Plain and you don't even know it. He was here first and he had a right to name it! Old Jim Ryan—"

Patiently Tony tried to explain: "Brenner says somebody stole the hundred kilos of marcaine two days ago. It could have been any of us. You were around, so we've got to be able to tell Commissioner Bell—"

"Another greener—a politician greener. The Law on Mars!" Learoyd's voice was heavily satirical. "When there was twenty, thirty of us, we didn't need no law; we didn't go around thieving! We got here ahead of you all, you and the farmers, too. What for did you have to come crowding in?"

"When did you take that last belt of marcaine?"

The old pork-and-beaner sighed brokenly. "It was more'n two years ago. I ain't got money for marcaine. I ain't a panhandler and I do a good job hauling for you, don't I?"

"Sure, Learoyd."

"Then *why* do you have to come bothering me? We was here first!" He collapsed into the chair by the black box, grieving for the past of the red planet, before this damn OxEn, when Marsworthy lungs were a man's passport to adventure where no man had ever been before, where a mountain range was your mountain range and nobody else's, where Jim Ryan died in the middle of great, flat, spreading Ryan's Plain, starved to death out there when his halftrack broke down.

Learoyd chuckled, not feeling the electrodes they were putting to his head. He'd got off a good one—five years on Mars and these ten greeners landed. They wanted to be heroes, the little greeners, but he told them. He sure told them.

"Call yourselves Marsmen? In six months half of you'll be dead. And the other half'll wish they was."

Jim Granata was in that bunch—a sly one, pumping him, making notes, making sketches, but he wasn't a Marsman. He went back to Earth and made him a pot full of money with books and—what did they call it?—Granata's Com-bined Interplanetary Shows. Little Jim, he called himself Red Sand Jim Granata, but he was never a Marsman.

The Marsmen came first. Sam Welch surveyed Royal Range, the Palisades. Araby McCoy—he got killed by eat-ing Mars plants; they found him with his food run out, curled up with the agony of poisoning. A thousand dollars a day they got then, when a thousand dollars was a thousand.

It was in '07 he told off those greeners, twenty-eight years ago. Only one rocket every couple years then, and sometimes they didn't get through. Jim Granata, he never set foot on Mars after '18 with his money and all; he wasn't a Marsman. They were here first. Nobody could take that away from them.

Sam Welch, Amby McCoy, Jim Ryan. Why not die too?

Learoyd wondered bitterly. A thousand dollars a day they paid him when a thousand dollars was a thousand, and look at him now. Where had it gone? Why was he living by hauling dirt for the greeners

when he had been here first? His lip trembled and he wiped his mouth. Somebody was shaking his shoulder and saying, "That's all, Learoyd. You're in the clear. Nothing to worry about." The old man slouched through the crowd and out of the Lab, shaking his head and muttering what sounded like curses.

Tony hadn't been very far from hoping that Learoyd would turn out to be the thief. The law would have to go easy on him and it would clean up the Colony's problem.

Colonist after colonist seated himself in the chair and cleared himself by revealing marcaine-negative brain-waves to the e.e.g. Tony didn't dare to think of what it meant. The last of them, the boy from the radio shack, was relieved to take his turn.

"That's the lot," Tony reported to Nick when young Tad, too, was cleared by the machine, and had gone back to his job.

Cantrella refused to share the doctor's gloom. "It's just what we needed," he insisted, smacking his fist into his palm. "Face it, man. There isn't any marcaine thief. Bell thinks he can run us off Mars by cutting off our import-export. *Let* them cut us off! We'll barter for OxEn. We'll damn well do without the Earthside enzymes and immu-nizers. We'll get tough with Mars, lick it on its own ground! We'll have to eventually; why not right now?"

"I don't know, Nick. I think you're going too fast," Tony demurred. "Look at old Learoyd—he's us, only a little worse."

"The pork-and-beaners imported their food, clothes, fuel, and look at them!" Nick insisted. "They failed. They didn't strike roots. They didn't adapt!"

"I don't know, Nick," the doctor repeated unhappily. "I've got to go see Polly and the baby now."

Tony lugged the e.e.g. back to his hospital-shack and found Anna holding the hand of a white, trembling, terri-fied Polly. Polly's other arm was around the baby, clutching the red-faced little thing as if it were on the edge of a precipice.

Without a word he took the child, snapped on his steth-oscope and sounded its heart, which was normal. In spite of the red-faced creature's squirming, the minute oxygen mask was in place.

Baffled, he replaced the baby and demanded of the women, "What's wrong?"

"I have to work," said Anna abruptly. She patted Polly's hand and slipped out.

"I saw something," Polly whispered. Her eyes were crazy.

Tony sat on the side of the bed and picked up the hand Anna had been holding. It was cold.

"What did you see, Polly?" he asked kindly. "Spots on the baby? A rash?"

She disengaged her hand and pointed at the window in line with the bed and two meters from its foot.

"I saw a dwarf! It wanted to steal my baby." She clutched the child again, not taking her eyes off the window.

Normally Tony would have been amused and not shown it. Under the strain of the day, he fought down a violent anger. The little idiot! At a time when the whole Colony was in real and deadly peril, she was making no effort to distinguish between a dream and reality.

"You must have drowsed off," he said, not as harshly as he felt. "It was just a nightmare. With your history, of *course* you're afraid that somehow you'll lose this baby too. You've heard all this pork-and-beaner and homesteader nonsense about funny-looking dwarfs, so in your dream your fear took that form. That's all there is to it."

Polly shook her head. "Gladys was staying with him," she recited monotonously, "and she had to go to that test in the Lab and she said she'd send somebody who'd been tested as soon as she got there. Just when I heard the door close, this face came up outside the window. It was an elf-like face. It had big thin ears and big eyes, with thin eye-brows, and it was bald and leathery.

"It looked at me and then it looked at my baby. I screamed and screamed but it just looked at my baby. It wanted to steal my baby! And then it got down below the window sill just before Anna came in. Even after she put my baby here with me, I couldn't stop shaking."

Anger was getting the better of him. "Do you realize that your story is perfectly ridiculous if you insist, on claiming it really happened, but perfectly logical if you admit it was a dream?"

She began to cry and hug the baby. "I saw it! I saw it! I'm afraid!"

Tony relaxed; tears were the best medicine for her tension. To help them along, he rose and got her a sedative and a glass of water.

"Take this," he said, putting the capsule to her mouth.

"I don't want to go to sleep!" she sniffled. But she swallowed it and in a minute or two felt under her pillow for a handkerchief.

When she had wiped her eyes and blown her nose, the doctor said quietly, "I can *prove* it was a dream. The dwarfs or whatever are just the kind of thing the pork--and-beaners and the homesteaders would invent to scare, themselves with. And the myth got exploited on TV, of course. But there can't be any because there isn't any animal life on Mars.

"We've been exploring this planet up, down, and side-ways for forty years now. We found a weed you can make dope out of; we found you can make liquor out of Mars plants; we found a lot of ores and minerals. But not one trace of animal life. Think of it, Polly—forty years and *nobody has found any animal life on Mars.*"

She reasoned, a little fuzzy with the sedative, "Maybe these funny little *things* could stay out of people's way. If they're smart they could."

"That's right. But what did they evolve from in that case? You know that if you have a higher form of life, it evolved from a lower form. Where are all the lower forms of life that evolved into dwarfs? There aren't any. Not so much as one puny little amoeba. So if there's no place they could have come from, there are no dwarfs."

Her face relaxed a little, and Tony talked on doggedly. "You got a bad scare and no mistake. But you scared yourself, like the homesteaders that started this nonsense." A sudden notion struck him. He put it in the urgent file, and went on. "You were afraid your bad luck would catch up with you and take your baby away. The vividness doesn't mean anything—you probably saw a scary picture in the papers of a baby-stealing Martian and stored it in your memory, and out it popped at the right time."

Polly cracked a sleepy smile and said, "I'm sorry," and closed her eyes.

*She'll be all right*, thought Tony, *and it's a good thing it turned up to remind me of the homesteaders—Thaler? Toiler?*

Whoever they were, the old couple on the wretched "farm" to the south 'oller, that was right. He hadn't seen them for a year, but he was going to see them today.

Anna was in the other, residential, half of the shack. "I think I talked her out of it," he said. "You'll stay here?"

"Yes. Where are you off for?" He was lugging the e.e.g. out again.

"That old couple, the Toilers. I wouldn't put the mar-caine theft past them and they're close enough to our general area. Before the last dozen Sun Lakers arrived, I had enough time on my hands to run out and see how they were coming along. If I just tell them it's time for another checkup, I'm pretty sure I can persuade them to give me a brainwave reading. That may break the case."

He strapped the black box to his bicycle and set off...

The Toilers were a different type from old Learoyd, and driven to Mars by a different urge. Learoyd had fancied himself an explorer and adventurer who would make a sudden strike and, after a suitably romantic life of adventure, retire to his wealth.

The Toilers laid the longer, slow-maturing plans of peasants: *In two years, when I have saved up seven schil-lings three groschen, I will buy Bauer's bull calf, which will service the cows of the village; Fritz by then will be big enough to take care of the work. Zimmerman, the drunkard, will go into debt to me for service of his cows and pledge his south strip, so Fritz need not marry his Eva. Schumacher's Gretel has a hairlip but there's no escaping it—his west pasture adjoins mine*

...

It hadn't worked out for the Toilers—the steady, upward trend of land values, the slow improvement of the soil, the dozen sons and daughters to work it, the growing village, town, city.

All that happened was they had scratched out a living, had one son, and gone a little dotty from hardship. Both had Marsworthy lungs. If she had not, Mrs. Toiler would, like hundreds of other wives,



have lived as matter-of-factly in an oxygen mask as her many-times-removed great-grandmother had lived in a sunbonnet.

The husband, by now, was stone blind. Data from him and hundreds of others had helped to work out the protective shots against ultraviolet damage to the eyes, a tiny piece in the mosaic of research that had made real colonization at all possible.

Tony knocked on the door of the hut and went in, carrying the black box. Mrs. Toiler was sitting in the dark, crammed little room's only chair. Toiler was in bed.

"Why, it's Doctor Tony, Theron!" the old lady exclaimed to her husband. Not bad, thought Tony, since he hadn't been able to remember *their* names in a flash. "Say hello to Doctor Tony, Theron. He brought us the Mail?"

"No, Mrs. Toiler—" he began.

"The old man started out of a light doze and demanded, "Did the boy write? Read me what he wrote."

"I didn't bring any mail," said Tony. "The rocket isn't due for two weeks."

"Junior will write in two weeks, Theron," she told her husband. "These are our letters to *him*," she said, producing three spacemailers from her bodice.

Tony started to protest, thought better of it, and glanced at them. All three were identical.

*Our Dear Son,*

*How are you getting along? We are all well and hope you are well. We miss you here on the farm and hope that some day you will come back with a nice girl because one day it will all be yours when we are gone and it is a nice property in a growing section. Some day it will be all built up. Please write and tell us how you are getting along. We hope you are well.*

*Your Loving Parents*

On the other side, the envelope side of spacemail blanks, Tony saw canceled fifty-dollar stamps and the address to *Theron Pogue Toiler, Junior, R.F.D. Six, Texarkana, Texas, U.S.A., Earth*. The return address was *Mr. and Mrs. T. P. Toiler, c/o Sun Lake City Colony, Mars*. Stamped heavily on each was a large, red notice: DIRECTORY SEARCHED, ADDRESSEE UNKNOWN, RETURNED TO SENDER.

The old man croaked, "Did the boy write?"

"I've come to give you a physical checkup," said Tony loudly, oppressed by the squalid walls and the senile dementia they housed.

"Isn't that nice of Doctor Tony, Theron?" asked Mrs. Toiler, tucking the letters back into her dress. But the old man had fallen asleep again.

Tony clipped the electrodes on and joggled Toiler awake for a reading. Marcaine-negative.

"We came in such a beautiful rocket ship," rambled Mrs. Toiler as he put the e.e.g. on her. "It was quite an adventure, wasn't it, Theron? We were so young, only twenty-three and twenty-four, and we sold our place in Missouri. It was such a lovely rocket we came in, a little one, not like the ones today, but this was before Mars got built up. We had quite a fright when one of the steering jets went bad while Mars was ahead, just like a big moon, and the poor crewmen had to go outside in their suits. It was quite an adventure, wasn't it, Theron?"

"I often wonder, Doctor Tony, whether Junior has ever been back to the old place in Missouri. We had him our first year here, you know; he's fourteen. He wanted to see the Earth, didn't he, Theron? He wanted to stay with relatives on Earth. So when he was twelve we went all the way to Marsport to see him off. It was quite an adventure, wasn't it, Theron? And he sent us his address *right* away—"

Marcaine-negative brainwave.

He was too sickened to stay, and the birdlike chatter of Mrs. Toiler never stopped as he said good-by and wheeled off to Sun Lake.

Their horrible deterioration during the past year to senility in the mid-thirties answered Nick Cantrella's plan to establish the Colony immediately as self-sustaining.

Life on Mars without even the minimum of supplies, immunization, and adaptation shots was out of the ques-tion. If they asked his medical advice, his answer would have to be: "If we are forbidden Earth supplies we must go back to Earth."

Tony groped in his pocket for his pipe, and clenched i between his teeth. *All right then, he thought, go back to Earth—go back and get yourself a decent cup of coffee in the morning. Go back—*

Back to what? To a clinic in an industrial town where he could give slapdash timeclocked attention to the most obvious ills of men, women, and children whose fears an deprivations began in the womb and ended only in the grave?

Back to the office, maybe? An *office* like the one he had, briefly, in the penthouse of a New York apartment building. Take your patients one at a time, give them plenty of attention, they're easy to cure if you understand them—the ulcers and piles and false pregnancies, the thousand-and-one diseases of the body that grew out of the mind—fear.

Go back? He bit hard on his empty pipe. It would be consoling to stand again on Earth, and fill his pipe and light it, puff clouds of smoke—while he waited for the crowded, psychotic planet to blow itself up and put an end to man once and for all.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

HANK RADCLIFF shook Tony awake a little before dawn. "I got the stuff, Doc." He grinned. "Just came in on foot from Pittco. The half-track broke down twenty miles out of Mars Machine on the way back, and I bummed a ride on a Pittco plane headed this way. The half-track's still at Rolling Mills and—"

The doctor shook his head groggily and thought of giving Hank hell for the abrupt awakening. But it was hard to stay mad at him, and Tony would have been roused by his alarm clock for the Lab check in a quarter-hour any-way. Did the Lab check matter? Did the medication for Joan matter? No. They were all heading back for Earth before long.

"Make me some coffee," he growled. "One minute by the clock."

He stretched, rolled out, shucked his pajama tops, and gave himself a sponge bath with a cup of water that would mean one less cup of coffee for him today. Some morn-ings he just couldn't stand the feel or stink of methyl al-cohol.

Shivering, he gulped the coffee and pulled on pants, parka, and sand boots. "Let's see the stuff," he said. "Did Renoway give you a letter or note for me?"

"Oh, sure. I almost forgot." Hank handed over an ampoule and an onionskin. The note from the Mars Machine Tool physician said:

*Dear Hellman:*

*Here is the T7-43 Kelsey you requested by radio mes-sage. Re your note by messenger, sorry to tell you symptoms completely unfamiliar to me. Sounds like one of the cases any company doc would ship back to Earth as soon as possible. The T7-43 has worked wonders in heat burns here and have seen no side reactions. Please let me know how it comes out.*

*In haste,*

*A. Benoway, M.D.*

Tony grunted and beckoned Hank after him as he picked up his physician's bag and went into the bitter morning cold.

"Did you say you *walked* from Pittco?" he asked Hank, suddenly waking up.

"Sure," said the youngster genially. "It's good exercise. Look, Doc, I don't want to get out of line, but I couldn't help noticing that you're building up kind of a bay win-dow yourself. Now it's my experience that those things are easier *not* to put on than to take off—"

"Shh," said Tony as they stopped at the Radcliff shack. They slipped in and Tony filled a needle with the new Kelsey drug. "Stay in the background until I get this over with and motion you in, Hank."

He awakened the girl.

"Here's the new stuff, Joan," he said. "Ready?"

She smiled weakly and nodded. He shot the stuff into her arm and said, "Here's your reward for not yelling." Hank duly stepped forward, switching on a light in her eyes that did Tony's heart good...

Breakfast was fried green Mars beans and "coffee"—bearable, perhaps, under ideal conditions, but completely inedible in the gloomy atmosphere around the big table this morning. Tony gulped down the hot liquid and determinedly pushed away his beans, ignoring the pointed looks of more righteous colonists, who cleaned their plates stubbornly under any circumstances.

The Lab radiation checked out okay; no trouble there at least this morning. After a meticulous cleanup, he visited Nick Cantrella in the hole-in-the-wall office at the back of the Lab.

"How's it look, now you've had a night's sleep on it?" Nick demanded. "You still want to throw in the sponge? Or are you beginning to see that we can lick this damn planet if we only try?"

"I can't see it," Tony admitted. Soberly he told the other man about his visit to the Toilers. "And look at Old Man Learoyd," he added. "He can't be much past sixty and that's stretching it. I know he came here when he was twenty-one; at least, that's what he says—so how old can he be? But I gave that man a physical checkup a few months back, and, Nick, he not only *looks* like an ill-preserved octogenarian, but if I didn't know otherwise, I'd stake my medical reputation on his being close to ninety."

Nick whistled. "As bad as that?"

"What do you expect? Chronic vitamin deficiencies, mineral deficiencies, not enough water, never-ending fa-tigue from never-ending work—you pay high for trying to live off the country. More than it's worth."

Half to himself, Nick said, "Six months. We lose our commercial contacts, we pay forfeits that eat up our cash reserve—what if we just go to the buyers and tell them what happened?"

Tony started to answer, but Nick answered himself: "It won't work. They won't dare place another order with us because they'd be afraid it'd just happen all over again. And we haven't got the funds to sweat it out until they forget. Tony, *we're washed up!*"

"There's still a search."

"Hell, you know none of our people took the stuff."

"Let's have a council meeting. I want a search."

Nick, Tony, Gracey, and Mimi Jonathan held one of their irregular conclaves in the doctor's hut.

"I suppose," grunted Gracey, "that when you find there isn't any marcaine in our trunks, you'll tear the Lab apart looking for it."

"If we have to, we may," said Tony, poker-faced, but sickened at the memory of what isolation from the life-giving flow of materials from Earth had done to the Toilers. "I've had some nasty jobs before this." He thought of how he had lanced the swollen ego of Mrs. Bayles, the neurotic, and how she must hate him for it—an ugly thought.

By mid-morning, Mimi had the shakedown under way. Tony settled himself in the radio shack, firing message after message to Commission headquarters at Marsport, trying to get through to Lieutenant Nealey. The operator at Pittco who relayed from Marsport telefaxed the same reply to the first four messages: UNAVAILABLE WILL RELAY MESSAGE END CORPORAL MORRISON COMMISSION MESSAGE CENTER.

On the fifth try, Nealey still had not been reached—but Bell had.

This time the reply was: LIEUTENANT NEALEY UNAVAILABLE MY ORDERS. UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES GROUND TRACING DEVICE M-27 LENT FOR PRIVATE USE. REMINDER LIMITED MAR MESSAGE FACILITIES TAXED YOUR FRIVOLOUS REQUESTS. REQUIRE CEASE IMMEDIATELY END HAMILTON BELL, COMMISSIONER P.A.C.

Gladys Porosky, the operator on duty, piped indignantly, "He can't do that, can he, Doctor Tony? The relay league's a private arrangement between the colonies, isn't it?"

Tony shrugged helplessly, knowing that Gladys was right and that Bell's petulant arrogance was a

long stretch of his administrative powers—but due process was far away on Earth, for those who had the time and taste for litigation and the cash reserves to stick it out.

Gracey joined him in the hut long enough to say bitterly, "Come and see the loot we accumulated." Tony went out to stare unhappily at the petty contraband turned up by the humiliating search: some comic books smuggled in from Marsport, heaven knew how, by a couple of the youngsters; some dirty pictures in the trunk of a young, unmarried chemist; an unauthorized .32 pistol in the mattress of a notably nervous woman colo-nist; a few bottles and boxes of patent medicine on which the doctor frowned; a minute quantity of real Earthside coffee kept to be brewed and drunk in selfish solitude.

By mid-afternoon this much was certain—any marcaine hidden in the Colony was not in a private home.

The Lab would have to be searched next.

It was like going into a new world, to escape from the doomed, determined optimism of the search squad and council members, back to the cheerful radiance that in-habited the hospital. Tony stood in the doorway, studying the family group across the room—father and mother thoroughly absorbed in each other and in the tiny occupant of the hospital bassinet.

It was still hard to believe the delivery had gone so well. Tony wondered again, as he had so often in the preceding months, what could possibly have gone wrong with all the previous attempts, before they came to Mars.

"He's awake again!" Polly hadn't quite made up her mind whether to be proud or worried. "He slept for a little while after you left, but then he started crying and woke himself up. You should have seen how mad he was—his face was so red!"

"He's quiet enough now!" Tony went over and stared down thoughtfully at the small circle of face, half obscured by the oxygen mask. Certainly there was no sign of ill health. The baby was a glowing pink color, and his still-wrinkled limbs were flailing the air with astonishing energy. But a newborn baby should sleep; this one shouldn't be awake so much.

"It's possible he's hungry," the doctor decided. "Hasn't he cried at all since he woke up?"

"Oh, a little, every now and then, but if you turn him over, he stops."

Tony went over and scrubbed his hands in the alcohol basin, then came back and surveyed the baby again. "I think we'll try feeding," he decided. "I've been waiting for him to yell for it, but let's see. Maybe that's what he wants."

"But—" Jim flushed and stopped.

His wife broke into delighted laughter. "He means my milk isn't in yet," Polly said to the doctor; and then to Jim: "Silly! He has to learn how to nurse first. He doesn't need any *food* yet. And the other stuff is there—what do you call it?"

"Colostrum," Tony told her. He removed the baby from the crib, checked the mask to make sure it was firmly in place, then lowered the infant to his mother's waiting arms.

"Just be sure," he warned her, "that the mask doesn't slip off his nose. There's enough area around his mouth exposed so he can feed and breathe at the same time."

The baby nuzzled against her for a moment, then spluttered furiously, turned a rich crimson, and spewed back a mouthful of thin fluid. Hastily Dr. Tony removed the infant, patted and held him until the choking fit stopped, and restored him to his basket.

Polly and Jim were both talking at once.

"Hold on!" said the doctor. "It's not the end of the world. Lots of babies don't know how to feed properly at first. He'll probably learn by the time your milk comes. Anyhow, he'll learn when he needs it. Babies don't stay hungry. It's like the oxy mask—he breathes through his nose instead of his mouth because the air is better. We don't have to cover up his mouth to make him do it. When he needs some food he'll learn what his mouth is for fast."

"But, Doc, are you sure there's nothing wrong with him? Are you *sure*?"

"Jim, in my business, I'm never sure of anything," Tony said mildly. "Only I've never yet seen a baby that didn't find some way to eat when it wanted food. If your pride and joy won't take the breast, we'll get Anna to whip up some bottles for him. It's as simple as that."

Or not so simple

George and Harriet Bergen's eight-month-old Loretta, conceived on Earth but born at Sun Lake, was still feeding from the breast. Loretta would be weaned not to milk but to the standard Colony diet plus vitamin concentrates when the time came. It was what the older children ate; they had forgotten what milk tasted like.

There were milch-goats, of course, and some day there would be milk for everybody in the Colony to drink. But to make that possible it was necessary now to allocate all the milk produced by the herd to the nourishment of more goats, to build up the stock.

It was hard enough to keep the herd growing even with the best of care. Yaks, at first, had seemed like a better bet for acclimatization to the Martian atmosphere, but they were too big to ship full-grown, and so far no young animals had survived the trip. So the Colony had brought over three pairs of tough kids, and bred them as rapidly as possible. Half the newborn kids still died, but the surviving half needed every bit of milk there was. Still, if necessary, a kid would have to be sacrificed, and the milk diverted to the baby.

Tony pulled himself out of the useless speculation with a start of dismay. There was no sense planning too far ahead now; Bell might solve this problem for them, too.

"Anything else you want to know before you go home?" he asked. "Have any trouble with the mask?"

"Anna checked us out on that," Jim told him. "It seems to be simple enough."

"Where is she?"

"She went home," Polly put in. "She said she had a headache, and when Jim came in she showed us about the mask again, and then went—"

"Hi, Tony. Can I see you a minute?" Marian Cantrella stuck her head through the outside door to the hospital. Tony turned and went out with her.

"Is she ready to go?" Marian wanted to know.

"Since this morning, really. But the damn search—How's their place? Did anybody get it back in order?"

"I just came from there," Marian said. "We've got it all fixed up and the new room's all done. The walls are still a little damp. Does that matter?"

"It'll dry overnight," Tony reflected. "They can keep the baby in the room with them till then."

"Right." She started away, and Tony was about to open the door when she turned back. "Oh, I almost forgot. Is it all right for Hank to take Joan out to watch? I was talking to her before, and she felt so left out of everything."

"I guess so." He thought it over and added, "Only if she's carried, though. Maybe Hank can fix up a tote truck from the Lab for her to ride on. I don't want her to use up what strength she has."

"I'll fix it," Marian promised. "I think it would mean a lot to her." Her golden curls shook brightly around her head as she ran off down the street.

Tony went back into the hospital. "Guess it's time to get you folks out of here," he told the Kandros. "Place is too cluttered up. I might need this space for someone who's *sick*."

Polly smiled up at him from the chair where she had been sitting for the last hour. "I don't know what I can wear," she worried happily. "The things I came in would fall right off me, and I can't very well go out this way. Jim, you better—"

"Jim," Tony interrupted, "you better get some sense into that wife of yours. You'll go *just* the way you are," he told Polly, "and you'll get right into bed when you get there, too. You've been up long enough for one day."

While Jim helped her with her sandboots and parka, Polly wrapped the baby for his first trip outdoors. They were ready quickly, but Marian had been even quicker. When they opened the front door they were confronted by a crowd of familiar faces. It seemed as if all of Sun Lake City Colony's eleven dozen residents had crowded into the street in front of the doctor's house. They were determined, apparently, that whatever happened next week, Marion Kandros' homecoming would not be spoiled today.

"I suppose you all want to see the baby? All right," Tony told them, "but remember, he's still too

young for much social life. I don't want you to crowd around. If you'll all spread out down the street from here to the Kandros' place, everybody can get a look."

Together Tony and Jim eased Polly into the rubber-tired hand truck that did double duty as a hospital stretcher. They placed the baby in her arms and adjusted the small portable tank for the oxy mask at her feet. Then they started slowly down the long curved street, stopping every few yards along the way for someone who wanted to shake Jim's hand, pat Polly on the shoulder, and peer curiously at the few square inches of the baby's face that were exposed to the weather.

The doctor fretted at the continual delays; he didn't want Polly or the baby to stay out too long. But after the first few times, he found he could speed things up by say-ing meaningfully, "Let's let them get *home* now." As the small party progressed down the street, they collected a trailing crowd. Everyone was determined to be in on the big surprise.

Polly and Jim didn't let them down either. The moment of dazed surprise when they saw the still-wet walls of the new room jutting out from their house was all that could be asked. Equally satisfying were the expressions on their faces when they opened their door and looked in at the array of gifts.

Tony gave them time to take it all in, then insisted that the door be closed and Polly and the baby be allowed to settle down. While he was unwrapping the baby, he heard them in whispered consultation, and a moment later the door opened again. Jim left it very slightly ajar behind him as he stepped out, so they could hear what went on.

"Wait a minute, folks," Tony heard him call. A slight hesitation, and then Jim's voice again: "Polly and I—well, we want to thank you, and I don't know just how to go about it. I can't really say I'm surprised, because it's ex-actly the kind of thing a man might know you folks would do. Polly and I, when we came here—well, we'd never had much to do with politics or anything like that. We joined up because we wanted to get away mostly.

"We—I guess you all know how long we've been wait-ing for this kid. When he didn't come, back there on Earth, we felt like we had no roots anywhere, and we just—wanted to get away, that's all. When we signed up we figured it sounded good. A bunch of people all out to help each other and work together, and the way the Stat-ute says, extend the frontiers of man by mutual endeavor. It made us feel more like we belonged, more like a *family*, than just working for some Mars Company would have been.

"It wasn't until after we got here that we began to find out what it was all about, and I guess you know we liked it. Building up this place, everybody working together—it just couldn't ever get done that way back on Earth. "And then this other thing happened, and the doc said it looked like it was going to work out all right this time.

"We started thinking then, and this is what I've been working up to. Maybe it's silly, but we figure it's something about Mars that made it work, or something about the Colony. And now the baby's here, I hope none of you will mind, but we'd like to name him Sun Lake City Col-ony Kandro—"

Jim stopped abruptly, and for a too-long moment there was only the grim silence of the crowd, the same bitter thought in every mind.

Then he went on: "Maybe you folks think that's not a very good idea right now. I don't know. If you don't like it, we won't do it. But the way we feel, Polly and me—well, we know things look bad now, but they're going to have an awful hard time, the Planetary Affairs Commission or anybody else, getting us off Mars."

"You're damned well right, Jim!" shouted Nick Can-trella. He faced the crowd with his fists hanging alertly. "Anybody think the kid shouldn't be called Sun Lake City Colony Kandro?"

The harsh silence broke in a roar of confidence that lifted Tony's chin, even though he knew there was no justification for it.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

INSIDE, the baby was wailing lustily again. From her posi-tion on the couch, Polly raised a commanding arm. "Turn him over, Jim. He'll probably stop crying if you put him on his tummy."

Tony watched while the new father slid his hand under his son's back with exquisite caution that belied his proud air of assurance. Turning to hide his smile, the doctor began piling hospital equipment on the hand-truck, to take back with him when he went.

"Look! Tony, look! Look at Sunny!"

"Sunny, is it?" The doctor turned around slowly. "So he's lost all his dignity already. I was wondering how you were going to get around that tongue-twister of a name. Well, what do you know?"

He watched the baby struggle briefly, then rear back and lift his head upright. He had to admit there was a cause for the pride in Polly's voice when a baby not yet two days old could do that.

"Well," the doctor teased, "he's Sun Lake City Colony Kandro, after all. You ask anybody in town if that doesn't make a difference. I won't be surprised if he walks next week, and starts doing long division the first of the month. Who knows, he might learn how to eat pretty soon!"

He realized abruptly he'd made a mistake. Neither par-ent was ready to joke about that.

"Doc," Jim asked hesitantly, "you're pretty sure there's nothing *wrong*?"

"I told you before," Tony said shortly, "I'm not sure of a blessed thing. If you can see any single reason to believe there's anything wrong with that baby, I wish you'd tell me, because I can't, but—this is Mars. I can't make prom-ises, and I'll make damned few flat statements. You can go along with me and trust me, or—" There was no alternative, and his brief irritation was already worn-out. "You can *not* trust me and go along with me. We have to feel our way, that's all. Now," he said briskly, "you're all checked out on the mask? No trouble with it?"

"No, it's all right. I'm sorry, Doc—"

"Got enough tanks?" Tony interrupted.

"You gave us enough to go from here to Jupiter," Polly put in. "Listen, Tony, please don't think we—"

"What I think," Tony told her, "is that you're good parents, naturally concerned about your child, and that I had no business blowing off. Now let's forget it."

"No," Jim said firmly. "I think you ought to know how we—I mean there's no question in anyone's mind about trusting you. Hell, how do I go about saying this? What I want to tell you is—"

"He wants to say," said Polly from the bed, "that we're both very grateful for what you've done. It's a happiness we thought we'd never know."

"That's it," said Jim.

"He's your baby," said Dr. Tony. "Do a good job with him." He pushed the hand-truck to the door and waited for Jim to come and help him ease it through. "Oh, by the way," he added, smiling, "I'll fill out the birth certifi-cate tonight, now that I know the name, if you'll come over and—"

"Doc!"

It was Hank Radcliff, running down the street breathless and distraught.

"Doc, come quick—Joan's dying!"

Tony grabbed his black bag and raced down the street with Hank plowing along beside him.

"What happened?"

"When I took her out in the tote truck," Hank panted, "before she could walk to the street, she toppled right over—"

"Walk? You let her walk?"

"But she told me you said it was all right!" The youngster seemed close to tears.

"Joan told you that?" They slowed in front of the Rad-cliff hut. Tony wiped the anger off his face and went in.

Joan was on the bunk in a parka; the doctor stripped it off and applied his stethoscope. He had adrenalin into her heart in thirty seconds and then sat grim-faced, at the edge of the bunk, not taking the black disk from her chest.

"Get that coffee," he snapped at Hank without turning. "The stuff they found in the shakedown."

Hank raced out.

After long minutes, Tony exhaled heavily and put away the stethoscope. She'd pulled through once more.

The girl lifted her parchmentlike eyelids and looked at him dully. "I feel better now," she whispered. "I

guess I fainted."

"You don't have to talk." Tony sat again on the edge of the bed.

She was silent for a minute, lying back with her eyes closed. He picked up her bird's claw of a hand; the pulse was racing now.

"Doctor Tony?" she asked.

"I'm right here. Don't try to talk. Go to sleep." "Is Hank here?"

"He'll be back in a minute."

"I want to tell you something, Doctor Tony. It wasn't his fault. I didn't tell him the truth. I told him you said it was all right for me to walk."

"You knew better than that."

"Yes. Yes, I did. I know you'll have to send me back to Earth—"

"Never mind about that, Joan."

"I do, Doctor Tony. Not for me; for Hank. That's why I did it. I'd go back for the Colony because it isn't fair of me to take up all your time, but what about Hank? If I went back, he'd have to go back, too. He couldn't stay here in the Colony if I were on Earth—alive."

"What are you talking about?" demanded the doctor, though he knew with terrible certainty what she meant—what she had tried to do. "Of course he's going back with you. He loves you. Don't you love him?"

She smiled a little and said softly without urgency, "Yes, I love him." And then, again hysterically: "But this is what he's wanted all his life. He doesn't feel the way I do about the Colony, the wonderful way we're all working together for everybody. With him it's Mars, ever since he was a little boy. He's in the Colony and he works hard and everybody likes him, but it would be enough for him to be a prospector like old Learoyd. Ever since he was a little boy he used to dream about it. You know how he's always going out into the desert."

"Tell him he doesn't have to go back with me! Tell him I'll be all right. Talk to the shareholders. Make them let him stay. It would break his heart to send him back."

Tony didn't dare excite her by telling her that they might all be sent back, that the Colony was a failure. Even if they pulled through by a miracle, Hank couldn't stay.

They called it the "M or M" rule—"married or mar-riageable." Far from the lunacies of the jam-packed Earth, they had meant to build with children and allowed no place for new immigrant women past childbearing—or for Hank in love with a woman returned to Earth. It didn't matter now, he thought.

Wearily he lied: "They wouldn't make him go back if he didn't want to. But he'd want to go himself."

She sighed and closed her eyes. It seemed a long time before he was sure she was asleep.

Hank was waiting in the living-room with the coffee.

"She'll be all right for a while," Tony told him. "She's asleep now, I think." He looked at the open doorway and added, "Come outside a minute."

Sitting on the tote truck, he said, "Give her one cup of coffee each day as long as it lasts. After any meal. It'll make her feel better. God, I wish I knew what else we could do. That stuff from Benoway didn't have any effect. I'm sorry I sent you all the way out there."

"That's all right, Doc. There was a chance. And I like seeing the country."

"You certainly do. You should have been one of the pork-and-beaners."

"Hell, Doc, I like it fine here in the Colony!"

Liked it, yes. It was on Mars. *Tell him or not?* Wondered Tony. *Young man, your wife tried to commit suicide so you could be free to stay on this planet. And what do you think of that?*

The hell with it. What he didn't know wouldn't hurt him, upset him, make him feel guilty.

"Doc, do you think we *will* have to go back?" Hank's voice was more than strained, it was desperate.

Tony stared. "It looks that way right now, Hank. But we have three weeks. Something—anything—may happen. I'm not giving up hope."

But the young man's face was tortured as Tony left him...



Joan Radcliff had wanted death and been cheated of it by adrenalin. Sunny Kandro wanted life, which meant his mother's breast, but some savage irony was cheating him, too. Newly born, five pounds of reflexes depending on the key suckling reflex that somehow was scrambled.

Sunny lay awake without crying, didn't seem to need sleep, could lift his head—all right, put that down to lighter gravity, even though the Bergens' little Loretta hadn't done it. Sunny had a wonderful color, a powerful nursing instinct—but he choked and gagged at the breast. Without fuel the machine of reflexes would run down and stop . . .

It didn't make sense to Tony. He had guiltily half-lied to the Kandros when he told them many babies didn't know how to nurse at first. That was the truth; the lie was that *this baby knew how*, but choked all the same. A feeding problem, they would have blandly called it on Earth, where there still were millions of cows, sterile hos-pitals, relays of trained nurses for intravenous nourish-ment regimes. Here a feeding problem was a feeding *problem*.

Any one of the wealthier industrial colonies would automatically have taken Earth-import powdered milk from its stores, but Sun Lake couldn't afford it, didn't have any. And what was more, Sun Lake wouldn't get powdered milk if Commissioner Bell made good on his threat.

If Sunny died, it would be worse than the unnamed little boy the Connollys had lost, and he had left a scar on the doctor's mind that time would never heal. Tony could still see the agonized blue face and the butterfly gasping for air—a preemie, but he never should have cleared Mrs. Connolly, seven months gone, until they'd had oxygen cylinders and masks and a tent for emergencies.

The Connollys had shipped back to Earth on the next rocket after the tragedy.

The father had cursed him insanely, damned him for a killer because he hadn't foreseen the need of oxy gear for their baby two months before it was due. OxEn they had, but OxEn made no change in the lungs of the baby. He'd given it intravenously, orally, in every solvent he could lay his hands on during the desperate hours before the im-provised mask fed the last trickle of oxygen from their single tank into the lungs of the infant.

Tony forced his face into a smile as he passed a couple —Flexner and his girl Verna. Behind the smile he was thinking that it would be harder to bear a muter reproach from the patient Kandros than Connolly's raging curses.

Tony dragged the loaded hand-truck into the middle of his living-room and left it there. He could put the stuff away later; it was getting late now, and he had yet to make his afternoon radiation inspection at the Lab. There was a package on the table; he took time to pick it up and read: *For Doctor Tony from Jim and Polly Kandro—with much thanks*.

For a moment he held it, weighing it in his hand. No, he decided, he'd open it later, when there was time to relax and appreciate the sentiment that lay behind it. The gift itself would be—would *have* to be—meaningless.

There was no way for any colonist to purchase or procure anything at all from the outside. Except for the very few personal treasures that were somehow squeezed into the rigid weight limit on baggage when they came out, all plastic chairs and sinks, blankets, and windows were uniformly functional and durable. But they *were* uniform, and they were also scarce. Each household contained the same irreducible minimum; Lab space and work hours were too precious to be used for the production of local consumption items.

Tony closed his door behind him and set out for the Lab once more. *Dull, monotonous, primitive, uncom-fortable*, he raged inwardly. *Every home, inside and out, just the same!*

Why had they come to Mars? For a better, saner way of life, to retrieve some of the dignity of men, to escape from the complexities and inequities and fear pressures of Earth. And what were they doing? Building a new life, with hard work and suffering, on the precise pattern of the old. There wasn't a person in the Colony who wouldn't do better back on Earth.

He found the Lab in an uproar. All work had stopped, so the grim hunt for the marcaine could go on. Nick had already begun art inventory.

"Make this an extra-good check, Doc," Tony was told in the office before he started out. "We'll be handling a lot of stuff that hasn't been used in a long time. And get-ting into all the corners too."

"Are the checkout tubes racked yet?" Tony asked.

"Right. We issued new ones to the men on the inspection squad."

"I'll do them first," the doctor decided, and went into the cleanup room where the wall racks were already lined with the tubes for that day. Usually they were checked in the following morning's inspection; but today the plant had closed down early for all practical purposes.

The tubes checked clean all down the line.

Tony selected a fresh tube from the opposite wall and went on out through the shipping-room to the workrooms. He didn't need armor for the afternoon inspection. The technicians had been in there working, and if their tubes were all clean there couldn't be any deadly hot stuff. The purpose of the late-day check was to catch reactions that were just starting up, and that might make trouble overnight. In the morning it was different. Anything that had been chaining for twelve or more hours could be vicious.

Back in the office, when he was finished, Tony reported a clean check-through. "What," he asked, "are you going to do about the shipment crates?"

"Leave them till last," Mimi Jonathan told him. "If anything turns up in the workrooms or storage bins, we'll have to open up the shipment crates one at a time. Doc, do you think—?"

She stopped, looked down a moment and then back at Tony, with a wry smile. "That's silly, isn't it? I don't know why I expect you to know more about it than I do. Oh, listen—they want you to stick around and monitor if they do have to open the crates. I'll let you know when it gets that far."

"Okay." Tony smiled back at her. "Try to give me more than five minutes notice, will you? I wish we had either a full-time radiological man or another doctor."

"How about Harve?" she suggested. "Could he fill in for you? We didn't want to assign him without your okay—he hasn't done any monitoring on his own yet, has he?"

"No," Tony said thoughtfully. "Not yet. But this won't be anything more than standing by with a counter and keeping his eyes open. I don't see why not; he knows the routine as well as I do by now. I'd leave it up to him," the doctor decided. "If he feels ready to take it on, it'll be a big help to me."

"I'll ask him," Mimi promised...

This afternoon the familiar splendors of the Martian scene evoked no glowing certainties in Tony's mind. He walked back from the Lab in the early twilight, his eyes fixed on the far hills, his thoughts roaming bitterly beyond, to the other side of the range.

Tony had been to the new town, just once, to help out when a too hastily built furnace exploded. The injuries had been more than Pittco's green young doctor could handle all at once. The doctor's inexperience, like the faulty furnace, was typical. The whole place was temporary, until it showed a profit for Pittco. When it did, solid structures would replace the jerry-built shacks; an efficient company administration would put an end to the anar-chic social organization.

But for now the town was just a sprawling collection of ramshackle buildings, constructed of a dozen different inadequate materials, whatever was available in Marsport when a new house was needed. There was no thought of the future on the other side of the hill, no worry about permanence, no eye to consequence.

If the camp went bust, the population would move on to one of the newer locations—and move again when that collapsed. If, on the other hand, the town survived, the population would move on anyhow. A new crop of workers would be imported from Earth, a tamer, quieter crew to do routine work in an organized company town, at considerably lower pay. And the boom-town adventurers would go, to find higher wages and a freer life somewhere else.

They struck no roots there, and they wanted none. Of all the widely scattered human settlements on Mars, the Sun Lake Colony alone believed that man could and would some day flourish naturally on the alien soil.

Tony Hellman had a religion: it was the earnest hope that the day would come before he died, that he would live to see them cut the cord with Earth. Training and instinct both cried out against the new danger of abortion to the embryo civilization.

Tony was a good doctor; in Springfield or Jackson City or Hartford—anywhere on Earth—he could

have written his own ticket. Instead, he had chosen to throw in his lot with a batch of wide-eyed idealists; had, indeed, jumped at the chance.

It was largely Tony's eagerness to emigrate that was responsible for the Colony's "M-or-M" ruling. The Sun Lake Society couldn't afford to turn Dr. Hellman down; they knew just how slim the possibility was of getting another doctor as good. So, after much deliberation, the by-laws were carefully revised, and the words "or marriageable" inserted after the word "married" in the list of qualifications.

The modification had resulted in a flood of new avid highly desirable members. Skilled workers were inclined to be more footloose and adventurous before they were married, before they had settled into responsible, well-paid jobs on Earth. Bea Juarez, pilot of the Colony's ship, *Lazy Girl*, was one of the new acquisitions; so was Harvey Stillman, the chief radioman.

Anna Willendorf was another member who had come in after the revised "M-or-M" ruling, one whose skill was almost as much appreciated as Tony's for a different reason. Plastics, produced in the Lab, could be, and were used for almost every item of furniture or furnishings in the Colony; but for some chemical processes, glassware was still a must. And now that giant machines existed on Earth to turn out almost every conceivable glass utensil, glass-blowers were far between, good ones almost non-existent. Without Anna's specialized talent, the Colony would have had to pay fabulous prices for the transport of bulkily packaged glassware from Earth.

Anna was one of the very few unmarried members of the colony who refused to participate in the communal meals. Laziness, or embarrassment, or both, served to drag in the others, like Tony, who might have preferred to remain aloof. Anna simply ignored the questions and remarks.

On rare occasions, however, she relented to the extent of "inviting" the doctor to dine with her—combining their rations, and preparing a meal for him in her own one-room hut. Then, for an hour, she would play hostess to him, an hour that restored, for both of them, the longed-for feeling of gracious, civilized living.

"One for all and all for one." "Mutual endeavor." "Collective self-sufficiency." The whole thing, Tony thought angrily, was an anachronism; more than that, an impossibility. No sane man could believe in it—unless he came from Earth and had nothing to see to believe in.

For tonight, at least, he was free of it. Anna was at the door when he reached it, holding it open for him. She watched him set down his bag as though he were unloading the troubles of the Universe.

"You need a drink," she decided.

He grinned sourly at her. "Some nice, refreshing, vita-min-packed, Grade-A, synthesized orange juice, maybe?"

She disappeared behind the drape that hid her kitchen section. Not many of them bothered to separate the kitchen from the living-room; perhaps, Tony thought, that was what gave her room such a special look. A moment later, she was out again, with two long-stemmed fragile glasses in her hands.

She handed one to Tony, and awe and wonder crossed his face as he sipped. He looked his question at her over the rim of the glass.

"I shouldn't have spoiled your surprise, really." She smiled at him. "The Kandros. They wouldn't prepare anything for the baby, but they must have ordered these from Earth when Polly was just—let's see—three months along, to have had them here in time."

"Real wine," Tony marveled, and sipped again. "Aged wine. How did they get it? How could they afford—?"

"They couldn't, of course," she reminded him, "but they have relatives on Earth. You know they're not the only ones who left some cash behind, 'just in case'?"

The doctor looked up sharply, and found a faint smile flickering on her lips. "How do you know?" he demanded. "Where do you find out these things?"

"What do they call it—feminine intuition?" She shrugged and moved toward the kitchen again. "Which also tells me that supper will be a desiccated mess if I don't serve it right now."

She had set the table as usual in front of the big window. Tony took his place and looked out through the eerie twilight across the endless expanse of *Lacus Solis*. The ocean bed was like a vast black velvet now, studded with a million tiny, glinting jewels.

The doctor stared out until Anna returned with a steam-ing dish. Dinner performed its usual magic. Tony *had* been really hungry. Tilting his chair against the wall, with his empty pipe in his mouth, he found that things were getting back into proportion.

"Anyhow," he said, "we still have time." They had been talking about Bell's threat of quarantine.

Anna, very seriously, demanded, "Do you think Bell can run us out?"

He waved a little too expansively. "Prob'ly not. Any number of other possibilities. Somebody at Pittco might have taken the stuff; they're close enough. Nope—" He hauled up. "Ed Nealey wouldn't make a mistake like that. He was working the Bloodhound and there's a boy who'll do any job the right way. Don't worry about it, though. It's two weeks to rocket landing, another week to Ship-ment Day—something'll turn up. We'll send O'Donnell to Marsport. If there's a legal angle he'll find it. Maybe he can scare Bell into backing down. Bell's supposed to be a small-timer. He wouldn't want any real trouble."

Anna got up abruptly and filled his empty glass.

"Hey, you take some too!" Tony insisted.

She made a show of draining the last few drops into her own glass; the rims touched as they drank.

"You're a strange girl, Anna," said Tony. "I mean you're not like the other women here. Joan. Bea. Polly. Verna." "No," she said. "Not very much like Bea."

Tony didn't know whether she was angry or amused and decided he didn't care. "I don't know why I don't marry you."

"Two reasons." Anna smiled. "One, you're not sure you want to. Two, you're not at all sure I do."

The sudden banging on the door was like an explo-sion in the quiet room. Harve Stillman didn't wait for any answer; he burst in. He was white-faced and shaken.

"Doc!"

"Pony jumped up and reached for his bag. "What is it? Joan? The baby? An accident at the Lab?"

"Hash from Marsport. The rocket's coming in." The man stopped to catch his breath. "They're inside radio range now. Estimated time of arrival, four a.m."

"Tomorrow?" Anna gasped.

Harve nodded and Tony put down his bag with me-chanical precision in the center of the table.

Tomorrow! Three weeks had been little enough time to find the marcaine and the thief and get rid of Bell's strangling cordon. Now, with the rocket in ahead of schedule, two of those weeks were yanked out from under them!

## CHAPTER NINE

TONY GOT only four hours' sleep before Tad Campbell came banging on his door at 3:15 a.m. The boy's enthu-siasm was more than Tony could face; it would be easier to carry his own equipment than to answer questions while he was dressing. He sent Tad to wait at the plane and put some "coffee" on to brew, then did a last quick check on his portable health lab, making sure that there was noth-ing overlooked in the hasty preparations after the news about the Earth ship.

Gulping down the hot brew, he reviewed the instruc-tions he had given Anna: feedings for Sunny Kandro; baci-tracin for Dorothy; ointment and dressings for Joan, another injection if she needed it; and under no circum-stances sedative for Mrs. Beyles.

He couldn't think of anything predictable he had failed to provide for. He folded the lab to make a large carrying-case and lugged his burden up the gentle slope that led to the landing field where *Lazy Girl*, the Colony's transport plane, waited.

Bea Juarez was warming the icy motors with a blow-torch. *Lazy Girl's* motors were absurdly small; their shafts spun on zero-friction air-hearings. Air-bearings dated from the guided missiles of 1950, but their expensively precise machining ruled them out for Earth. Shipping space to Mars was high enough to override the high manufactur-ing cost. Air-bearing motors were small and light; therefore virtually everything on Mars that turned or slid turned and slid on molecules of gas instead of oily films.

The bearings improved the appearance not only of machinery but of mechanics. Bea looked tired,

cold, and unhappy; but she lacked the grease-smeared dinginess that would have marked her on Earth. The girl nodded to him, ran a hand over the moisture condensing on the metallic surface, and applied the torch to a new spot.

She shook her head doubtfully. "Don't blame me if she falls apart in mid-air after we take off. I put her to-gether with spit overnight, Tony. She was scattered all over the field for a hundred-hour check. You'd think they'd let you know—" she grumbled, then broke off and grinned. "What the hell, if we blow up halfway between here and there, we don't have to worry about marcaine any more! Climb aboard, Doc." She snapped off the torch. "Hey, Fad! The doc needs a hand with his contraption."

Tony felt a twinge of conscience as Tad hopped out of the plane and ran to take the big box. It must have been a blow to the boy, to be deprived of carrying the heavy equipment from the hospital.

"How's it going?" Tony asked genially. "You seem to be getting along fine without your tail bone."

"Okay," the boy grunted.

He eased the box into the cabin, pulled it out of the way, and reached down a condescending hand to help Tony. "It don't seem to matter," he added, when the doc-tor was inside. "You'd never know it wasn't there."

Tad was the recent victim of an unhappily humorous accident. Butted in the seat by an angry goat, he'd had his coccyx severely fractured, and the doctor had had to remove the caudal vertebra.

Pony padded a couple of spare parkas into a comfortable couch on the cabin floor and stretched out. The plane had no seats. Coming back, they'd sit on the bare floor, slid the parkas would have another use. The ship was un-heated and the newcomers weren't likely to have warm clothes unpacked.

*Lazy Girl* was short on comfort and speed, cannibalized on Mars from the scrapped remains of obsolete models discarded by wealthier colonies. Tony, who didn't fly himself, had been told that she handled easily and flew an immense payload without complaining.

Tad had built himself a luxurious nest of parkas. He pulled the last one up around his shivering shoulders, leaned back, and examined the interior of the plane with a good imitation of a practiced appraisal.

"Nice job," he pronounced finally. "You don't get them like this back on Earth."

"You sure don't," Bea agreed ironically from the pilot's seat. "Hold on to your hat. Here we go!"

Say what you liked about Mars, about the Colony, about the poor old relic of a plane, Tony thought, when you took a look at the kids you began to understand what it was all about. A year ago, Tad had been a thoroughly obnoxious brat. But how could he be anything else on Earth?

They were all that way. You got born into a hate-thy--neighbor, envy-thy-neighbor, murder-thy-neighbor cul-ture. In your infancy your overworked and underfed mother's breast was always withdrawn too soon and you were filled again and again, day after day, with blind and squalling rage. You were a toddler and you snatched at another one's bit of candy; you were hungry and you hated him; you fought him. You learned big boys' games —Killakraut, Wackawop, Nigger inna Graveyard, Chinks an' Good Guys, Stermation Camp, Loot the City. The odds were you were hungry, always hungry.

Naked dictatorship and leader-worship, oligarchy and dollar-worship; sometimes one was worse, sometimes the other. The forms didn't matter; the facts did. Too many mouths, not enough topsoil. Middle classes with their relatively stable, relatively sane families were growing smaller and being ground out of existence as still more black dirt washed into the ocean and still more hungry mouths were born and prices went higher and higher—how long, in God's name, could it go on? How long before it blew up, and not figuratively speaking either?

The Panamerican World Federation, first with the most, refused to tolerate the production of mass-destruction weapons anywhere else in the world. Long calloused to foreign mutterings, the Western colossus would at irregu-lar intervals fire off a guided missile on the advice of one of its swarm of intelligence agents. In Tartary or France or Zanzibar, then, an innocent-looking structure would go up in a smoke mushroom. But they never stopped try-ing, and some day Tartary, France, or Zanzibar would launch a missile of its own and it would mean nothing less than the end of the world in fire and plague as the rocket trails laced continents together and the bombers rained botulism, radiocobalt, and

flasks of tritium with bikinis in their cores.

The damned, poverty-ridden, swarming Earth! Short of food, short of soil, short of water, short of metals—short of everything except vicious, universal resentments and aggressions bred by the other shortages.

That's what they were running from, the new arrivals he was going to meet today. He hoped there wouldn't be any more communicable disease carriers to quarantine at Marsport and fire back on the return trip without even a look around. There were supposed to be six medical examinations between the first application filed at the Sun Lake Society office in New York, and embarkation. But things must have gotten appreciably worse on Earth since—he started a little at the thought—"since his time." It seemed that now anybody could be reached. They used to say everybody had his price. Maybe it was true. He'd never had a chance to turn down a really big bribe, so he couldn't say. But if six boards of doctors could all be fixed, everybody's price must have taken a drastic slump.

Tad, sound asleep, rolled onto his stomach and humped up his behind, scene of the history-making operation, in a brief reversion to infancy.

"How come the rocket's getting in early?" Bea called back. "I didn't even have time to ask Harve about it last night, with the *Girl* spread out all over the field."

"Something about the throat liner. They have a new remote-control servicing apparatus on Earth," Tony said. "Gets the liner out and cleaned and in faster. We save two weeks on each trip, and get an extra trip—what is it?—every two years?"

"Year and a half," Bea corrected. She was silent a moment, then snorted, "Rockets!"

"At least," Tony dead-panned, "rockets give you a smooth ride. Fat chance of getting any sleep in this pile—"

"The *Girl* never gave you a rough trip in her life!" she interrupted angrily. She pulled on the stick and swung the *Girl* into a down wind.

The doctor drowsily studied her, silhouetted against the stars through the windshield. She was attached to the old crate—ought to find herself a husband. It had looked like her and Flexner for a while, but then the chemist had paired off with Verna Blau. As the motor warmed up, Bea unzipped her parka and shrugged out of it. Definitely, Tony decided, the best shape in Sun Lake. Trim, fined-down, athletic, but no doubt at all, from this angle, that the figure was feminine—even under the bulky sweater she still wore.

He lay back on his improvised couch and reflected on how pleasant it would be to stand behind her and run his hands down over her shoulders—infinitely pleasant just to stand behind her while she flew the ship. Pleasant but impractical. Play hell with her Estimated Time of Arrival at Marsport, for one thing, and, to take a longer view, he probably would end up by marrying her—her and *Lazy Girl*: the two went together.

Tony stirred uncomfortably. While he was thinking idly goatish thoughts about Bea, Anna had turned up in his mind, with a half-smile on her face. It was typical, he thought, puzzled; Anna never intruded until the moment you wanted her—if you wanted her, he added unhappily, giving the verb a new meaning. Anna's smile was a tin-gling mystery; her dark eyes were wells of warmth in which a man could lose himself; but after all these months, he wasn't sure of their color. And even when she crept into his mind, it was only from the neck up that he visualized her.

That wasn't the way he saw Bea. Tony shook himself, stretched out, and let his eyes linger on the girl in the pilot's seat until he fell asleep...

The sun was up when Bea eased the freighter in among more planes than they had ever seen before on Arrival Day. They recognized the elegant staff-carrier from Sun Lake's neighbor, Pittco Three, but didn't know the other twelve that were parked.

"Swell ride, Bea," said the doctor. "Now what is *this* dress parade all about? . . . Oh, sure. Douglas Graham is going to do a Gunther on Mars. These should be the big-shots from the commercial colonies."

"Is he going to bother Sun Lake?"

"Nick thinks he might zip through at the end of his tour, if he has time." He hopped to the ground, Tad following with the boxed lab. "You've got the shopping list, Bea?" the doctor asked. "I have to go over

to the Ad Build-ing. Don't think I'll have time for anything else. Can you get all the stuff?"

"Sure," she said easily. "We're not buying much this time."

Tony ignored the bitter significance of the remark. "We'll see you later, then. I hope this red-carpet business for Graham doesn't slow things up too much. I'd like to get back before lunch."

Tad was fidgeting next to him, waiting for a chance to break in.

A year ago, the boy had spent two days in Marsport, when he arrived with his family and the other founding members of the Colony. Then he had nothing more than a pitying sneer for the village of 600 people; now it was a place of wonder.

"Dr. Tony," he asked eagerly, "can we go to the Ar-cade?"

"We can go *through* it," Tony decided.

The Arcade was Aladdin's cave to Tad. To the Planetary Affairs Commission, which rented out booth space in the ramshackle building, it was a source of revenue. To Tony it was the stronghold of the irrepressible small re-tailer, who found his way even to Mars with articles he could buy cheap and sell dear—a reminder of the extent to which Mars was already taking over the social and eco-nomic patterns of Earth.

Booths at the Arcade did not display radiation counters, hand tools, welders, rope, radio, aluminum I-beams, air-plane parts, or half-tracks. Those you bought at the P.A.C. Stores, which were reliable, conservative, and dull.

At the Arcade there was one booth which sold nothing but coffee in the cup: *Martian* \$2.00; *Earthside* \$15.00 (*with sugar* \$25.00). Tony knew the privateer who ran this concession might be ruined by another arrival aboard today's rocket, landing in paper-light clothes with his gar-ment and personal luggage allowance taken up by bricks of Earthside coffee and sugar, burning to undercut the highwayman who had beaten him to the happy hunting grounds of Mars.

At another booth Tad's jaw dropped with perplexity. "Dr. Tony, what are those?" he asked.

"Underwear, Tad, for women."

"But don't they get *cold* in those things?"

"Well, they would if they went out and worked like our women. But—well, for instance in Pittco, over the Rimrock Hills front us, there are some ladies who only work indoors, where it's heated."

"*All* heated? Not just beam heat on the beds and things?"

"I'm afraid I don't really know. Say! Look at those boots there—aren't they something?"

"Boy!" The boots were mirror-shiny zipper jobs. "What I wouldn't give for a pair of those! Put 'em on when new kids come in, and then watch them try to walk around in Earth sandals, and get a load of that sand."

Here on Mars, the price put the boots infinitely far out of reach for a boy like Tad, even if Sun Lake's policies did not prevent the purchase of such an item. Some supervisor in an industrial colony, Tony thought, would eventually acquire them as illusion of escape from the sands of Mars.

And that reminded him. He turned to Tad.

"By the way, what do you know about kids going barefoot around the colony? When did that start?"

"Barefoot?" Tad looked outraged. "What do you think we are—dopes?"

"I think," Tony answered dryly, "that anybody stroll-ing around the Rimrock caves without boots on is about as much of a jackass as he can be."

"In the *caves*?" This time Tony thought he detected a note of more honest horror. All the kids went barefoot sometimes in the experimental fields; everybody knew about it and pretended not to. The kids were pretty care-ful about not stepping on marked planted rows, and the fields had been processed to remove native poison-salts from the soil.

"Listen, Dr. Tony," Tad said earnestly, "if any of the kids are doing that, I'll put a stop to it! They ought to know better! *You* remember that time you had to fix my hand, before the-uh—other thing, when I just thought I'd pick up a piece of rock and it practically sliced my finger off! They shouldn't be walking barefoot around there."

"I remember." Tony smiled. "Sliced your finger off is a slight exaggeration, but I wouldn't like to have to handle a mess of feet like that. If you know who's doing it, you tell them I said to cut it out—or

they may not be walking at all after a while."

"I'll let them know." Tad walked along silently, ignoring the bright displays as they passed, and Tony seized the chance to direct their footsteps out of the Arcade. "Dr. Tony," the boy said finally, "you didn't mean for me to tell you *who* it was in case I knew, did you?"

"Lord, no!" The doctor *had* been hoping to find out. But he realized now what an error he'd almost made. A year ago, Tad had been as miserable a little snitch and tale-bearer as Earth could produce. "I just want it stopped, that's all."

"Okay, then." Tad's face relaxed into a friendly grin. "It will be."

*We've got to keep going*, the doctor thought. For himself, for the other adults, it didn't matter so much. But for the kids...

Tony had absolutely no respect for Nowton, the P.A.C. medical officer, because Nowton was stupid. Fortunately Nowton was so stupid that he didn't realize this and greeted the Sun Lake medic joyfully.

"Hear you been up to tricks, boy! Why didn't you come to me instead? I got ways to get marcaine!"

"Glad to hear it, and I'll bet you do. While we were stealing that marcaine, we also had a baby. Got a form?"

"Corporal!" yelled Nowton. "Birth form!" A noncom produced a piece of official paper and Tony filled it in, checking weight and other data with notes in his pocket.

"That hot pilot of yours still around?" asked Nowton.

"Bea Juarez? Sure. Interested? Just tell her that her plane's a disgusting old wreck and you'll get her a new one. She always falls for that line."

"No kidding?"

"Who'd kid you, Nowton? Say, is Ed Nealey anywhere?"

"In the signal room. Where's Juarez, did you say?"

"I'll see you, Nowton." Tony hurried off.

He found the lieutenant reading a medical journal which had passed through his own hands months earlier, on its way around the joint subscription club of which both men were members. The club made it possible for them, in common with twenty-odd fellow members on Mars, to keep up with technical and scientific publications without paying ruinous amounts in interplanetary postage.

"Hello, Ed."

Nealey put out his hand. "I didn't know whether you'd still be talking to me, Tony."

"Hell, you don't give the orders. You have to play it the way Bell calls it. Ed, off the record—you're pretty sure it was one of our people?"

"All I'm sure of, it wasn't a phony. To qualify with the Bloodhound on Earth, we had to follow made trails—where they dragged bags of aniseed over the spoor. You can tell the difference. This one faded and wobbled like the real thing. And we lost it not more than a couple of miles out of your place, headed straight your way. Tony, have you *searched*?"

"Some. We're not done yet." The doctor lowered his voice. "What's the matter with Commissioner Bell, Ed? Does he have anything special against us?"

The lieutenant jerked his chin a little at a Pfc sitting with earphones on his head, reading a comic book, and led the doctor into the corridor.

"God, what a post!" he said. "Tony, all I know is that Bell's a lost soul outside the Insurantist Party's inner circle. He had fifteen years of being looked up to as the Grand Old Man of the Mexicaliforniarizonian Insurantists, and now he's been booted to Mars. He'd do anything, I believe, to get back into the party. And don't forget that Brenner's been a heavy contributor to the Insurantist campaign funds during the last three elections. You know I'm professional military and I'm not supposed to and don't want to have anything to do with politics—"

Commissioner Bell came stumping down the corridor. "Lieutenant Nealey," he interrupted.

Nealey came to as casual an attitude of attention as his years of drilling would allow.

"Surely you have better things to do with your time than palavering with persons suspected of harboring criminals."



"Dr. Hellman is my friend, sir!"

"Very interesting. I suggest you go on about your duties and pick your friends more discriminatingly."

"Whatever you say, sir." With slow deliberation, the lieutenant turned and shook Tony's hand. "I'm on duty now," he said tightly. "I'll see you around. So long, kid." He put his hand on Tad's shoulder, wheeled about smartly, and turned back into the signal room.

"Come on, Tad," said the doctor. "We're all done here. We might as well get out to the rocket field."

## CHAPTER TEN

THEY WERE APPROACHING the rocket field and what was, for Mars, an immense crowd—some five hundred people behind a broad white deadline marked on the tamped dirt of the field. It was an odd-looking crowd because it was not jammed into the smallest possible space, body to body, Earth-fashion. The people stood separately, like forest trees, with a good square meter around each of them. It was a Mars crowd, made up of people with lots of room. Tony stopped well away from the fringe of the group.

"This looks like a good spot," he decided. "Put the box down there; we can start setting things up."

"Doctor Hellman—hello!" A tall man, fully dressed in Earthside business clothes, strolled over. Tony had seen him only once before, when he had appeared at the Lab with Bell to make his monstrous accusation of theft. But Hugo Brenner was not an easy man to forget.

"Hello," Tony said shortly, and turned back to his box.

"Thought you might be here today." Brenner ignored the doctor's movement away from him and went on smoothly: "I want to tell you how sorry I am about what happened. Frankly, if I'd known the trail would lead to your place, I might have thought twice before I called copper—but you understand, it's not the first time. I've let it go before. This time they took so much I couldn't very well overlook it."

"I understand perfectly," Tony assured him. "We dis-approve of theft at Sun Lake too."

"Well, I'm glad to hear you don't take it personally, Doctor. As a matter of fact, I'm almost glad it happened. I've heard a lot about you and the kind of job you've been doing over there. I wish we could have met under more pleasant circum—"

"It's very kind of you to say so," Tony interrupted, de-liberately misunderstanding. "I didn't think a man in your position would be much impressed by what we're doing at Sun Lake."

Brenner smiled. "I think Sun Lake is a very interesting experiment," he said in a monotone that clearly expressed his lack of interest. "What I had in mind—"

"Of course, Mr. Brenner." Whatever the drug man had to say to him personally, the doctor did not wish to hear it. "We realize your only interest is in the recovery of your stolen goods. We're doing our best to find the thief—if he really is a member of our Colony, that is."

"Please, Doctor, don't put words in my mouth. Natur-ally I'm interested in recovering my goods, but I'm not worried about it. I'm quite sure your people will turn up the guilty party." Again his voice carried a flat lack of conviction.

"Commissioner Bell has seen to it that we turn up a guilty party," Tony retorted.

"I think the Commissioner was unnecessarily harsh." Hugo Brenner shrugged it off. "If it had been up to me—that's Bell's job; I suppose he has to handle it his own way. Let's quit beating around the bush, Doctor. I came over here to offer you a job, not to talk—"

"No."

"Suppose you listen to my offer first."

"No!"

"All right, then. Name your own terms. I'll meet your price. I need a doctor. A good one."

"I don't want to work for you at any price."

Brenner's mouth turned up at the corners. Obviously he enjoyed the game, and equally obviously he thought he was going to win.

"Let me mention a figure." He moved closer. "One million dollars a year."

Well, thought the doctor, now he had a clearer idea of what his own price was; now he knew it

wasn't a million dollars. Ten times what he made in a peak year on Earth. He looked full into Brenner's smirking face, and knew something else: he hadn't been so clear-through boiling mad in a long time; and he was fed up with diplomacy. Deliberately, he raised his voice: "Didn't you hear me before, Brenner? Or didn't you understand?"

He found it was gratifying to notice people turning his way, eddying in to listen.

"Let me make myself absolutely clear," he went on loudly. "I don't want to work for you. I don't like the business you're in. I know what you need a doctor for, and so does everyone else on Mars. If your boys over at Flop Heaven can't keep their noses out of your marcaine, that's not my worry! I don't want to be resident physician in a narcotics factory. Stay away from me!"

The smirk had left Brenner's face; it was ugly, con-torted, and much too close. Tony realized, too late, that Brenner's fist was even closer. Abruptly he stopped feeling like a hero and began to feel like a fool.

Then, quite suddenly, Brenner's fist was no longer ap-proaching, and Brenner was flat on the ground. Tony tried to figure out what had happened. It didn't make sense. He became aware of a ring of grinning congratulatory faces surrounding him, and of Tad next to him, giggling gleefully. He called to the boy curtly, turned on his heel, and walked back the few steps to his portable lab.

Nobody helped Brenner to his feet. He must have got up by himself, because when Tony looked back, out of the corner of his eye, Brenner was gone.

A short man bustled up. "I heard that, Dr. Hellman. I didn't see you hit him, but I heard you tell him off." He pumped Tony's hand delightedly.

"Hello, Chabrier." *That makes two of us*, Tony thought —*I didn't see myself hit him either*. "Look, I know it's no use asking you not to talk about it, but go easy, will you? Don't blow it up too much when you tell it."

"It needs no amplification. You slap his face in chal-lenge. He reaches for a weapon. You knock him uncon-scious with a single blow! You tell him: 'Hugo Brenner, there is not gold enough—' "

"Knock off, will you?" begged the doctor. "He wanted me to work over at his place by Syrtis Major—Brenner Pharmaceuticals Corporation, whatever he calls it. You know all his people get a marcaine craving from the stuff that leaks out of his lousy machinery. He wanted me there to keep giving his boys cures. I said no and he offered me a lot of money and I got sore. I shot off my mouth. He started to sock me and—"

And what? Tony still hadn't figured that out. He turned back to the box, still only half set up.

Chabrier said thoughtfully, "So you know that much, eh? Then you know it's nothing new, this business of missing marcaine?"

Tony abruptly turned back to him, no longer uninter-ested. "Brenner said something about previous thefts. What's it all about?"

"Only what you said yourself." Chabrier shrugged. "What did he offer you? Three hundred thousand? Four?" He paused, and when Tony made no reply, went on: "You can get better than that. It would be cheaper than junk-ing his plant and building a new one."

I know I can get better than that," the doctor said impassively. "What do you know about the missing mar-caine, Chabrier?"

"Nothing all of Marsport doesn't know. Was it in the neighborhood of half a million? That would be much less than the freight rates for new machines. He's used to freight being only a small part of his overhead. He ships a concentrated product." Chabrier chuckled happily. "How it must hurt when he thinks of importing plate and tubes and even, God forbid, *castings*. I tell you, a man doesn't *know* what freight can mean until he's handled liquor. Bulk is bad. Even just running the bulk liquor into the glass-lined tanks of the rocket ships is bad. It means that Mars ships water to Earth! *Actually!* But the foolish laws say we cannot dehydrate, let the water be added on arrival, and still label it Mars liquor."

"Please," said Tony wryly. "Please, Chabrier!"

The ratan shrugged. "So we take a *little* of the water out—My pit(eta, say. Water is water, they pour it on Earth, nobody knows, nobody cares. Bulk shipment is still bad, very bad. But bottles! Dr. Hellman, there is no known way of dehydrating a glass bottle. We ship them in, we fill them, we ship them back.

They break, people steal them here and aboard ship, and at the Earth rocket port. All so the label can say *Bottled on Mars!*"

"Muffle your sobs, Chabrier. I happen to know that people pay for Mars liquor and pay a great deal for bottled--on-Mars. At least, you're legal, and I understand you make good stuff."

"I drink it myself," said Chabrier righteously.

"To save the freight on Earthside rye?" Tony grinned, then asked seriously, "Listen, Chabrier, if you know anything about this marcaine business that we don't, for God's sake, spill it! We—I don't have to tell you how hard this thing is hitting us out at Sun Lake. *What* does all of Marsport know?"

"Was it perhaps seven-fifty?" the other man asked blandly.

Fair exchange, Tony decided. "A million," he said.

"So? This I do not understand! Why so much for a doc-tor, if he is to have a new plant?" Chabrier shook his head, shrugged, and went on more briskly: "I have told you already, if you understand: Brenner needs a new plant. His machines are no good. They leak. His men inhale the mi-cron dust, they get the craving, and they start to steal the product. Soon they are no good for the work, and he sends them back to Earth. You see today how many new men he brings in? Then one day there is more marcaine miss-ing. He—"

"One minute, Chabrier." Tony turned and signaled Tad to take a break, then moved off a few steps, and motioned to the other man to follow him. "You think it's a frameup?" he demanded in a low, intense voice.

"You would have me speak against our Commissioner Bell?" Chabrier asked with only the faintest trace of sarcasm showing. "Such a thing I will not do, but I beg of you to consider, if Sun Lake Colony should be bankrupt, their Laboratory must be sold at auction by the Commissioner, and such a plant would suit Mr. Brenner very well indeed. They say here in Marsport the machinery in this Laboratory is adaptable to many kinds of production. They say it is good, tight, well-built equipment, it will not leak. Till now it seemed quite clear." The little man shook his head doubtfully. "Now I do not know. A plant? Yes. A doctor? Yes. But *both* . . . and he offered a million! This I do *not* understand, unless he plans to work both plants. There is a rumor which has some currency today—"

The deep bass booming of the warning horn cut him off. People began edging away from the center of the field, terminating conversations, rejoining their own groups.

"You will excuse me now? I must go," Chabrier said, when the horn died down enough to permit conversation again. "I have my place reserved, but they will not hold it."

"Place?" Tony, still trying to catch up with the implications of the other man's news, didn't follow the quick shift. "What for? Oh, are you after Douglas Graham, too?"

"Of course. I understand he is—let us say, a drinker. If I can reach him before any of those other vultures—who knows? Maybe a whole chapter on Mars liquor!" He seized Tony's hand in a quick grasp of friendship. "Good luck, Doctor Hellman," he said, and dashed off, running ludi-crously on his short legs to rejoin his own party before the landing.

Tony searched the sky; the rocket was not yet in sight. He got back to work, swiftly now, setting up his equipment. Chabrier had mentioned a rumor. Never mind, there was enough to think about.

The whole thing planned beforehand, to ruin Sun Lake. *Maybe*. Chabrier was notorious as a gossip and petty troublemaker. A frameup. *Maybe*. And how could they find out? Who was responsible? Who was innocent? Nealecy, Nowton; Bell and Brenner; Chabrier with his fluid chatter and his shrewd little eyes. Nealey at least was a decent, competent man . . . *Maybe*. But how could you tell? How could you single them out?

"Parasites!" he thought bitterly, the cheerful Chabrier as much as the arrogant Brenner. Mars liquor brought fantastic prices because it was distilled from mashes of Mar-tian plants containing carbohydrates, instead of being distilled from mashes of Earth plants containing carbo-hydrates. And the friendly, plump little man got plumper on the profits culled from Earth's neurotic needs. It wasn't really much of an improvement on Brenner's marcaine business. A minor difference in moral values, but all of them were parasites as long as they didn't devote their time to the terrible problem of freeing Mars from the shadow of Earth's dominance.

*And what about our Lab?* Unquestionably, it was better to concentrate radioactive methylene blue for the treatment of cancerous kidneys than it was to concentrate alkaloids for Earthside gow-heads, but that, too, was only a difference in moral values. Parasites, all ...

"The rocket!" yelled Tad.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

IT LOOKED LIKE a bit of the sun at first; that was its brak-ing blasts seen from under. The monster settled swiftly, roaring and flaring in a teasing mathematical progres-sion of successively shorter blasts more closely spaced. When you could see its silvery bulk in profile it was go-ing *pop-pop-pop-pop-pop*, like a machine gun. It settled with a dying splutter and stood on the field some two hun-dred meters from the crowd like a remembered skyscraper.

Trucks raced out to meet it. Inside, the doctor knew, crewmen were walking around capstans that fitted over and unscrewed ten kilogram hex-nuts. The trucks slowed and crawled between the fins on which the rocket stood, directly under its exhaust nozzle. Drivers cut and filled to precise positions; then platforms jacked up from the crane trucks to receive the rim of the rocket's throat. Men climbed the jacks to fasten them.

The captain must have radioed from inside the ship; the last of the first hex-nuts was off. Motor away! Slowly the platforms descended, taking the reaction engine with them. The crane trucks crawled oft, two ants sharing an enormous burden.

The crew inside was busy again, dismantling fuel tanks, while the trucks moved to the inspection and repair shed off the field. A boom lifted off the motor, and the drivers scuttled back to receive the first installment of the fuel tanks, the second, the third, and the last.

"Now do the people come out?" asked Tad.

"If the rocket hasn't got any more plumbing, they do," Tony told him. "Yes—here we go." Down between the fins descended a simple elevator, the cargo hoist letting down a swaying railed platform on a cable. It was jammed with people. The waiting port officer waved them toward the Administration Building. The crowd, which had overflowed gently past the broad white line on the field, drifted that way, too.

"Stanchions! Get stanchions out!" the port officer yelled. Two field workers broke out posts and a rope that railed the crowd from the successive hoist-loads of people herded into the Administration Building for processing. There was a big murmur at the third load—Graham! The doctor was too far back to get a good look at the great man.

The loudspeaker on top of the building began to talk in a brassy rasp:

"Brenner Pharmaceuticals. Baroda, Schwartz, Hopkins, W. Smith, Avery for Brenner Pharmaceuticals," it said. Brenner ducked under the rope to meet five men issuing from the building. He led them off the field, talking ear-nestly and with gestures.

"Pittco! Miss Kearns for Pittco Three!"

A pretty girl stepped through the door and looked about helplessly. A squat woman strode through the crowd, took the girl by the arm, and led her off.

Radiominerals Corporation got six replacements; Dis-tillery Mars got a chemist and two laborers; Metro Films got a cameraman who would stay and a pair of actors who would be filmed against authentic backgrounds and leave next week with the prints. A squad of soldiers headed by a corporal appeared and some of the field workers let out a cheer; they were next for rotation. Brenner got two more men; Kelly's Coffee Bar got Mrs. Kelly, bulging with bricks of coffee and sugar.

"Sun Lake Colony," said the loudspeaker. "W. Jenkins, A. Jenkins, R. Jenkins, L. Jenkins, for Sun Lake."

"Watch the box," Tony called to Tad as he strode off.

He picked up the identification and authorization slips waiting for him at the front desk inside, and examined them curiously. Good, he thought, a family with kids. The loudspeaker was now running continuously. Two more for Chabrier, three engineers for Pittco Headquarters in Marsport.

A uniformed stewardess came up to him.

"Dr. Hellman? From Sun Lake?" Her voice was professionally melodious. He nodded. "These are Mr. and Mrs. Jenkins." She turned to the family group behind her. "And Bobby and Louise Jenkins," she added, smiling.

The kids were about seven and four years old respectively. Tony smiled down at them, shook hands with their parents, and presented his authorizations to the stewardess.

"—Prentiss, Skelly, and Laretsky for Sun Lake," the loudspeaker called.

"Excuse me, I'll be right back," Tony said and headed back to the desk.

They gave him more authorization slips. He riffled through the papers quickly as he headed back to find the Jenkinsons and wait for the newcomers. All different names. Only one family, the rest singles. Too bad.

He hunted through his pockets and found two packets of peanuts, mutated beyond recognition into chewy objects with a flavor something like grape pop.

By the time Bobby and Lou had overcome their shyness enough to accept the gifts, another stewardess was bringing up the rest of the group destined for Sun Lake.

"Dr. Hellman?" Her voice was as much like the first stewardess's as her uniform, but according to ancient custom this one was a blonde and the other a brunette. "Miss Skelly, Miss Dantuono, Mr. Graham, Mr. Prentiss, Mr. Bond, Mr. Zaretsky," she said and vanished.

Tony nodded and shook hands all around.

"Let's get out of here," he said. "It's quieter outside and I have to give you all a physical checkup, so—"

"Again?" one of the men groaned. "We just had one on board."

"I think I've had a million different shots since I started all this," one of the girls put in. What was her name? Dantuono? "Do we get more needles?"

"I'm afraid so. We have to be careful, you know. Let's get out of here," Tony said again. He offered his hands to the children, and they started moving.

By the time they reached Tad and the box that held the portable health lab, the crowd was already thinning out.

"We'll get right to it," the doctor addressed his group. "I'm sorry I can't examine you indoors under more comfortable circumstances, but I have to make a quick check before we can even let you on board the ship. It won't take long if we start right away."

"Doesn't the port have facilities for this sort of thing?" someone asked.

"Sure. They've got a beautiful setup right inside the building. Anybody can use it. Sun Lake can't afford the price."

He called them up one at a time, starting with the Jenkinsons, parents and then the children, so the kids wouldn't have too much time to get apprehensive about the needles. His trained reflexes went through the business of blood and sputum tests, eye-ear-nose-and-throat, fluoroscopy, nervous-and-mental, while he concentrated on getting acquainted.

Names began to attach themselves to faces. He finished with the two single girls, and started on the men. The big, long laced one was Zaretsky; skinny little bookkeeper type, Prentiss. The talkative one was Graham.

"First name?" Tony was filling in the reports while the samples went through analysis.

"Douglas."

"Drop-in or shares?"

"Drop-in, I guess. On Earth we call it the working press."

"Press?" Tony looked up sharply. "*The Douglas Graham?*"

"The *This Is* man. Didn't you know I was coming out?" Tony hesitated, and Graham asked quickly, "Your place is open to the press, isn't it?"

"Oh, sure. We just—well, frankly, we didn't think you'd bother with us. Certainly didn't think you'd come to us first. We'd have rolled out the red carpet." He grinned and pointed to the array of planes at the other end of the field; for the first time, he became aware of the curious and envious stares their small

group was receiving from passers-by. "Everybody else did. I guess we were about the only outfit on Mars that didn't at least *hope* to bring you back home today." He turned his attention to the checkup form. "Age?"

From appearance and general condition, Tony would have given the journalist ten more years; it was a shock to find that they were both the same age. He finished with-out further comment and went on to the next and last, a lanky blond youth named Bond. By the time he was clone, the analyses and reaction tests were complete.

The doctor checked them over carefully. "You're all right," he announced to the group at large. "We can get started now."

It was a slow trip. None of the newcomers were accus-tomed to the low gravity; they were wearing heavy train-ing boots acquired on board the rocket. And all of them were determined to see everything that was to be seen in Marsport before they took off. Tony led them across the spaceport field, and down the main street of Marsport, a mighty boulevard whose total length was something un-der five hundred yards, the distance from the spaceport to the landing strip.

He answered eager questions about the ownership and management of the hotels and office buildings that lined the block adjacent to the spaceport. These were mostly privately owned and privately built, constructed of glass brick. The native product had a sparkling multicolored sheen that created a fine illusion of wealth and high fash-ion—even when you knew that no building made of the stuff could possibly stand more than ten years. The same slightly different chemical content of Martian potash that produced the lustrous coloration of the bricks made them particularly susceptible to the damaging effects of wind and sand. Glass brick construction was, by far, more costly than the rammed-earth buildings at Sun Lake, or the scrap-shanties that characterized the Pittco camp across the Rimrock Hills from the Colony; but it was still much less expensive than the Earth-import steel and alomalloy used wherever strength and durability were important.

The Administration Building of the Planetary Affairs Commission, which occupied one entire side of the center block, was sheathed in a muted green alomalloy; the P.A.G. Stores and official P.A.C. hotel, across the street, were respectively dull rose and dove gray. The doctor pointed out each building in turn to his wide-eyed group. The writer was as eager as any of the others, and asked as many ques-tions. Tony was surprised; he had anticipated a bored sophistication.

Graham responded equally unpredictably to the series of interruptions they met with en route. Chabrier was first, even before they had left the spaceport. He dashed up to pump Tony's hand and babble that he was delighted to see him again, and how well Tony looked despite his drab sojourn in the so-dull Sun Lake where *nothing* ever happened.

"But this is Mr. Graham, isn't it?" he exclaimed in delight.

"Yeah," said the writer dryly.

"How fortunate! Distillery Mars, my concern, small but interesting, happens to be preparing a new run of Mars liquor, 120 proof—we should be so honored if you could make a point of sampling our little effort, shall we say this afternoon? I have *comfortable*"—a sidelong glance at Tony—"transportation here."

"Maybe later."

"To a connoisseur of your eminence, of course, we should think it a privilege to offer you an honorarium—"

"Maybe later, maybe not," grunted the writer.

"You will perhaps be pleased to accept a small sample of the product of Mars Distillery?" The little man held up a gaudily wrapped package. He pressed the gift into Graham's indifferent grasp, wrung Tony's hand warmly, said heartily, "We will look forward to see you soon," and departed.

Halliday of Mars Machine Tool was next. His manner was more that of a man inviting a guest to his country club, but he *did* mention that MMT would, of course, expect to provide for a writer's necessary expenses. Graham cut off Halliday's bluff assurances as curtly as he had stopped Chabrier's outpourings. It was like that all the way.

Everybody who was anybody on Mars was in town that day, and each of them managed to happen

on the Sun Lake crowd somewhere along the road from the spaceport to the landing strip.

Those who had met Tony at any time in the past were all determined to stop him for a chat; then they noticed Graham, and extended a coincidental but warm invitation. Those who were unacquainted with Sun Lake's doctor were forced to be more direct, and the bribe was sometimes even more marked than Chabrier's or Halliday's offers.

Graham was cold and even nasty to them. But once he took Tony's arm and said, "Wait. I see an old friend." Commissioner Bell was up ahead, striding toward the Administration Building.

"Him?" asked Tony.

"Yeah. Hey, Commish!"

Bell stopped as if he had been shot. He turned slowly toward Graham and stood his ground as the writer approached. When he spoke, there was cold hatred in his voice. "Just the company I'd expect you to keep, Graham. Stay out of trouble. I'm the man in charge here, and don't think I'm afraid of you."

"You weren't the last time," said Graham. "That was your big mistake—Commish."

Bell walked away without another word.

"You shot his blood pressure up about 20 millimeters," said Tony. "What's it all about?"

"I claim a little credit for sending Bell to Mars, Doc. I caught him with his fingers in the till up to his shoulder, at a time when his political fences were down, if you don't mind a mixed metaphor. I couldn't get him jailed, but I'll bet up here he sometimes wishes I had."

A wild hope flared in Tony. The *This Is* man was, sporadically, known as a crusader. Perhaps Graham's annoyance at the crude plays for attention meant that an appeal could be made on the basis of decency and fair play...

By the time they reached the plane, Tad was already on the spot with the portable health lab stowed away, and Bea was warming up the motors.

"Hi!" She stuck her head out of the cockpit to grin at Tony. "Got everybody? Tad, hand out the parkas to these people. Tony, they tell me you're a hero—had it out with big, bad Brenner in real style!" She didn't quite say, "I never thought you had it in you."

"Things get around, don't they? Bea, this is Douglas Graham. He's coming out to have a look at Sun Lake for a book he's doing. This is Bea Juarez," he told the writer. "She's our pilot."

Graham surveyed Bea. "I hope everything in the Colony looks as good."

"We'll be extra careful to show you only the best," she retorted. "Hey, Tad, get that mink-lined parka, will you? We've got a guest to impress."

Tony was delighted. If everyone else in the Colony could take the Great Man in stride so easily, he would be pleased and very much surprised.

Tad came running up with a parka. "What kind did you say you wanted? This is the only one left, except Dr. Tony's."

The three adults burst into laughter, and Tad retreated, red-faced.

Graham called him back. "I'm going to need that thing if the temperature in the cockpit doesn't go up."

"You're going to need it anyhow," Tony assured him. "There's a lot to be said for *Lazy Girl* here, but she's not one hundred per cent airtight."

"I get the idea," the journalist assured him. "You people don't throw heat around, do you?"

"Not heat or anything else," replied Tony. "You'll see, if you can stick it out."

"What the hell, I was a war correspondent in Asia!"

"This isn't a war. There isn't anything exciting to make up for the discomfort—except, say, when a baby gets born—"

"No? I take it there was something going on just a little while ago. What were you saying about the doctor being a hero?" he called forward to Bea.

She shrugged. "All I know is what I hear on the grapevine."

Tony heaved a mental sigh of relief—too soon.

"I was there." Tad had stuck right by them. "This man Mr. Brenner came over and asked Dr. Tony to come work for him, and he wouldn't and he tried to get him with a whole lot of money, but he still

wouldn't and—"

"Hold on," Graham interrupted. "First thing you have to learn if you're going to be a reporter is to get your pronouns straight. This Brenner was doing the offering, and Doc was refusing; that right?"

"Sure. That was what I was saying—"

"Look, Tad, we were only kidding about impressing Mr. Graham," Tony said quickly. "You don't have to make a hero out of me. I just had a disagreement with someone," he said to Graham, "and they're trying to make a good story out of it."

"That's what I'm after," Graham came back, "a good story. Tell me everything that happened, Tad."

The boy looked doubtfully from the doctor to the guest and back again.

"All right," Tony gave in. "But let's not make a fifteen-round fight out of it, Tad. Tell it just the way it happened, if you've got to tell it."

"Just *exactly*?"

"Yes," the doctor said firmly, "just the way it happened."

"Okay." Tad was far from disappointed. If anything, he was gleeful. "So this Mr. Brenner wanted Dr. Tony to come work at his place, curing people from *drugs*, and he wouldn't, and Mr. Brenner kept pestering him till he got mad, and he said he didn't like him and wouldn't work for him no matter what—I mean, Dr. Tony said that to Mr. Brenner—and Mr. Brenner got *real* mad, and started to swing at him, and—"

"Well, don't stop *now*," Graham said. "Who won?"

"Well—then Mr. Brenner started swinging and—I stuck my foot out and tripped him, and Mr. Chabrier came over right away and said how wonderful it was the way Dr. Tony had socked Mr. Brenner, and I guess that's what everybody thought." He looked up at Tony's astonished face, and finished defensively: "Well, you *said to* tell it just the way it happened."

## CHAPTER TWELVE

TONY FASTENED THE HOOD of his parka more tightly around his head, as the chill air of flight crept into the cabin. Graham, beside him, was full of flip comment and curiosity to which ordinary decency, let alone special diplomacy, demanded reply. But Tony shifted position and let his eyelids drop.

There was no mental eye to close and so thrust out the revised memory of the ridiculous incident with Brenner, nor any mental ear that could turn off the resounding echo of Bea Juarez's hilarity.

*You knew all along you never hit Brenner, didn't you?* he asked himself angrily. *You could have figured it out for yourself—if you wanted to! All right, then, don't think about that.*

The new colonists—he ought to do something about them, something to dispel the tense, apprehensive silence in the cabin. A speech of welcome, something like that.

Thank them for coming? Welcome them to Sun Lake? With the threat that hung over them all, new members and old, any speech like that would be ridiculous. Later in the day, they would be asked to sign final papers, turn-ing over, once and for all, the funds they had already placed in the hands of the trustees on Earth, and receiving their full shares in the Colony. Before then they would learn the worst; they would be told about the accusation that might doom the Colony. But how could he tell them now, before they had even seen Sun Lake, before they had glimpsed the spellbinding stretches of *Lacus Solis*, or had a chance to understand the promise implicit in the Lab's shining walls, in Joe Gracey's neatly laid out experimen-tal fields?

And in front of the Gunther, too, how much could he say, how much did he dare to say? Graham could wreck their hopes with a word—or solve their problems as easily, if he chose. Graham had exposed the Commissioner's corruptness once; he wasn't always just a Gunther; he was a part-time crusader. Possibly he would understand Sun Lake's desperate necessity—possibly?

"Oh, by the way," the writer was saying. "I've been won-dering what kind of checkup you have on these people for security."

"Security?" For a minute the word didn't make sense; Tony realized suddenly that he hadn't even



heard the word for a year; not, at least, with that sinister, special meaning.

"Don't you investigate the newcomers' backgrounds?"

"The Sun Lake Society—the recruiting office—checks on their employment records and their schooling to see that we don't get any romantic phonies masquerading as engi-neers and agronomists. That and plenty of health checks are all we need. The office wouldn't have time for more, anyway. It handles all the Earthside paperwork on our imports and exports, advertises, interviews, writes letters to the papers when that damn free-love story pops up again—" He gave Graham a look.

"All right," laughed the writer. "I'll make a mental note: Sun Lake doesn't believe in sex."

Tony was ruefully aware that a comeback was expected of him, but he substituted a feebly appreciative smile and leaned back, tiredly letting his eyelids drop again, in an effort to simulate sleep.

Through slitted eyes he studied the new arrivals. They were crouched on the cabin floor, bundled into their parkas, talking only occasionally. Even Tad, at the far end of the cabin with the Jenkins children, was low-voiced and restrained. Tony could see him pulling miraculous Martian treasures from his pockets for display, then pounc-ing on the few Earth items the new children had to show in return, cautiously pulled forth from supposedly empty pockets, and held for view in a half-cupped hand.

Near them, Bessie Jenkins, the mother of the two young-sters, sat half watching them, halt talking to the mousier of the two single girls ... Dantuono? Rose Dantuono, that was it. Anita Skelly, her vivid red hair concealed under the hood of her parka, was carrying on a conversation in monosyllables with Bob Prentiss; they seemed to be com-municating a good deal more by hand pressure than by word of mouth.

He shifted his gaze to the other side of the cabin where the remaining three men sat: Arnold Jenkins, the lanky Bond, and young Zaretsky. They lined up in a silent row, leaning against the bulkhead, evidencing none of the interested enthusiasm one might have expected. His own depression, the doctor realized, was affecting everyone.

What could he say to them? Here they were, newly es-caped from Earth, from a madhouse with a time bomb in the basement. It had cost each one of them more than he could estimate, in courage, in money, in work, to make the escape—and what could he promise them now?

With luck, with the help from Graham, with all the breaks, the best they could look forward to was the everyday life of the Colony: working like dogs, living like ants, because it was the only way to pull free of the doomed world from which they had fled. At worst, and the worst was imminent—back on the same rocket, or the next, or the one after that, back with all the others, destitute. Back to Earth, with no money, no job, no place to live, and no hope at all.

"Doc!" Bea yelled back into the cabin. "Radio!"

Tony got up and leaned over into the cockpit to accept the earphones Bea passed him.

"I can only spark a message back," she told him. "We didn't load the voice transmitter this trip."

He nodded. Through the phones a self-consciously im-portant teen-age voice was saying, "Sun Lake to *Lazy Girl*, Dr. Hellman. Sun Lake to *Lazy Girl*, Dr. Hellman. Sun Lake—"

"*Lazy Girl* to Sun Lake, I read you, Hellman," he said and Bea's hand sputtered it out on the key.

"Sun Lake to *Lazy Girl*, I read you—uh—seventy-two at Pittco, can *Lazy Girl* sixteen Pittco, over."

"Dr. Tony to Jimmy Holloway," he dictated, "cut out the numbers game, Jimmy, and tell me what you want, over."

The teen-age voice was hurt. "Sun Lake to *Lazy Girl*, medical emergency at Pittco Camp, can *Lazy Girl* change course and land at Pittco, over."

"*Lazy Girl* to Sun Lake, wilco, Jimmy, but where's O'Reilly, over."

"Sun Lake to *Lazy Girl*, I don't know, Dr. Tony. They messaged us that O'Reilly wasn't due back from Marsport all day, over."

"*Lazy Girl* to Sun Lake, we'll take care of it, Jimmy, out." He passed the phone back to Bea.

"Someboy's sick or hurt at Pittco. Drop me off there and I'll get back on one of their half-tracks."

"Right." Bea pulled out her map table.

The doctor went to the rear of the cabin where Tad had stowed the portable lab. He came back with a box of OxEn pills, and stood in the doorway between the cabin and the cockpit, facing the assembled group.

"These are the same pills you took on board the rocket this morning," he told them. "I don't think I have to warn you always to keep a few with you. Wherever you go, whatever you do, as long as you're on Mars, don't forget that it's literally as much as your life is worth if you don't take one of these *every twenty-four hours*." They all knew that, of course; but there was no harm in impressing them with it again.

There was more he should say, but he didn't know what. He chose the next best alternative and sat down. "What's cooking?" demanded Graham.

"Somebody sick or something at the Pittco outfit across the hills from our place. Their doctor's still in Marsport."

"Mind if I stick with you? I'd like to have a look at the place anyhow—when they're not ready for me."

Tony considered a moment, and decided he liked the idea. "Sure. Come along."

"I'd kind of like to see that girl who was for Pittco."

"You met her on the rocket?"

"I met her, all right, but she gave me a faster freeze than your girl pilot here. What is she anyhow—a lady engi-neer? All brains and no bounce?"

"Not exactly," Tony said. "I guess she figured she was on vacation. She's a new recruit for the company brothel. Those are the only women they've got at Pittco."

"Well, I'll be damned!" Graham was silent a moment, then added thoughtfully, "No *wonder* she wasn't inter-ested!"

*Lazy Girl* touched down at Pittco near noon. The doctor and writer were met by Hackenberg, the mine boss, who drove out in a jeep as Bea zoomed her ship off over the hills to home.

"I think you're too late, Doc," he said.

"We'll see. Hack Hackenberg, Douglas Graham." They climbed in the jeep, rolled past the smokestacks of the re-finishing plant, toward the huts of the settlement.

"Hell of a thing," grumbled Hackenberg. "Nobody's here. Madame Rose, Doc O'Reilly, Mr. Reynolds, all off at Marsport. God knows when they're coming back. Douglas Graham, did you say? You the reporter Mr. Reynolds was going to bring back? How'd you happen to come in with the doc?"

"I'm the reporter," Graham said, "but it's the first I knew about coming here with Reynolds. Did he tell you that?"

"Maybe he said he hoped you would. I don't know. I got my hands full as it is. I got a contract to be mine boss; everybody takes off and Big Ginny gets her chest busted up, the girls go nuts, and I take the rap. What a life!"

"Was there a brawl?" asked the doctor.

"Nobody told me—they yanked me out of B plant. They found Big Ginny over by the hills. She was all messed up—you know what I mean, Doc. They thought she was raped. Rape Big Ginny, for God's sake! It ain't reasonable!"

"They *moved* her?"

"They took her back to Rose's. I tell them and tell them to leave 'em lay, just get 'em warm, give plasma, and wait for a doctor. It don't do any good. First thing they think of whenever anybody gets smashed up is he don't look neat enough, so they yank him around to lie nice and straight and they yank him up so they can get a pillow under his head and then they haul him like a sack of meal to a bed. I hope to hell I never have a cave-in here with these dummies. Back in Jo'burg it happened to me. A timber fell and broke my leg nice and clean. By the time all my friends were through taking care of me and getting me comfortable, it was a compound complicated fracture with bone splinters from my ankles on up."

The jeep stopped in front of a large house, solidly constructed of the expensive native glass brick. Unlike most of the jerry-built shacks that housed the temporary work-ers in the camp, it was one of the few buildings put up by the Company itself, and few expenses had been spared.

The door opened hesitantly, and a girl peered out, then opened it all the way. "Hello, Hack. Is this the doctor?"

She was dressed in neither the standard tunic of most Marswomen nor the gaudy clothes of her sisterhood on Earth; instead she wore tailored house-pajamas of Earth-side synvelvet. She might have been any business woman of middle-class housewife answering her door back on Earth.

"Hello, Mary." Hackenberg turned to Tony. "Doc Hellman, this is Mary Simms. She's in charge when Rose is out. Mary, this is Douglas Graham, the famous Gunther." He stressed the last word only slightly. "You've heard of him?"

"Oh, yes." She was distantly polite. "How do you do, Doctor? Won't you come in?"

"I'll have to take off now." Hackenberg shook Graham's hand vigorously. "Glad to have met you. I'll pick you up later, Doc." He waved and headed back for the jeep. Tony and Graham followed Mary Simms indoors and pulled off their parkas:

The whole house was heated, the doctor noticed.

The girl led them through a large and rather formal parlor and into a smaller sitting-room. She crossed the small room, and opened a door on the far side.

"In here, *Doctor*," she said. Tony stepped into the small bedroom and heard Graham right behind him.

"How about me?" demanded the writer.

The girl's voice was icy. "Professional courtesy, I suppose; we *are* in the same business, aren't we? By all means, come in."

The doctor turned his smile in the other direction. A huge blonde lay on the bed between fresh sheets. She was in coma, or—

"Out!" Tony said firmly, and closed the door on both of them.

He lifted the sheet and swore under his breath. Big Ginny had been washed and dressed in a rosebud-trimmed pink niron nightgown. Few people with internal injuries could survive such first-aid. He opened his bag and began the examination.

He stepped into the parlor. Mary rose from her chair to question him, but Tony forestalled her. "She's dead." He added in a puzzled voice, "Her chest was beaten in. Who found her?"

"Two of the men: Shall I get them?"

"Please And—was there anything they found near by?"

"Yes. I'll bring it." The girl went out.

"How about the rape?" Graham asked.

"She wasn't," Tony said.

He dropped into a chair and tried to think it out. The woman had been pregnant, and there were signs of a fresh try at abortion—the "rape." Was the father known? Had they tried to abort her? Had there been a scene and a fatal beating out there by the hills? How did you know who was the father of a child conceived in a place like this? And who else would have any reason for the violence?

Mary Sinuns came in and said, "I passed the word for the men." She moved coolly so that her body was between Graham and the doctor, and handed over something wrapped in a handkerchief. "They found this."

"Did you know she was six months pregnant?"

"Big Ginny?" she asked, amazed.

"Why not?"

"Why, I've seen her medical card, and she's been here two years. She was married a couple of times on Earth—" The girl was flustered.

"Well?"

"Well, it surprised me, that's all."

He went into the small bedroom and unwrapped the object she had given him. It was a stained scrap of stout copper wire, about twenty-five centimeters long. That confirmed his diagnosis: attempted self-abortion, clumsy and dangerous because of the woman's bulk and prob-ably hazy knowledge of anatomy. But the innumerable blows on her chest and back didn't make sense ...

Back in the parlor, two men in miners' leathers were waiting. The writer was questioning them idly about liv-ing conditions in the camp.

"I'm Dr. Hellman from Sun Lake," Tony said. "I want to ask you about finding Big Ginny."

"Hell, Doc," said one of the miners, "we just walked over that way and there she was. I said to Sam, 'It's Big Ginny! jeez!' and he said, 'Some cheapskate musta hit her on the head,' and we tried to bring her around but she wouldn't come to, so we made her comfortable and we went and told Mary and then we went back on shift."

"That's all there is to it," said the other miner. "But it wasn't one of our boys. You ask me, it was one of those Communist crackpots from over your place, all the time reading—it drives you nuts, did you know that? How is the old bag, Doc? Is she yelling for her money?"

"She's dead," the doctor said shortly. "Thanks for the information."

"You ask me," the miner repeated stoutly, "it's one of those Communists did it."

"Can you beat that?" the other one said softly. "What kind of guy would kill a dame like that?" They went out soberly.

"Those guys were a little too innocent," said Graham suddenly. "Didn't you think so?"

"I know what that's about," said Mary Simms. "*They* didn't mention why they happened to be out strolling on the desert. They're gow-heads. They were picking up some marcaine. They have a deal worked out with one of the people from Brenner's Flop Heaven. He steals the stuff from Brenner and leaves it under a rock for Sam and Oscar. They leave money."

"I knew something was sour about them," said Graham broodingly. "What do we do now, Tony?"

"I'm going to write a note to Dr. O'Reilly and see if I can get Hackenberg to drive us to Sun Lake." He sat down and took out his notebook and pen, found a blank page, and carefully recorded what he had seen, without adding *any* of his conclusions.

He signed his name, folded and handed the sheet to Mary Simms. "When you give the doctor this," he said, "please tell him I was sorry I couldn't stay to see him. We're having big times over at our place. Ten new colo-nists." He smiled. "Nine immigrants and a new baby."

"Boy or girl?" she asked, with sudden interest. "How is it—all right? Was it difficult?"

"A boy. Condition fair. Normal delivery."

"That's nice," she said, with a musing smile. Then she was all business again. "Thank you for coming, Doctor. I can make some coffee for you while you're waiting for Mr. Hackenberg. We have real coffee, you know."

"I didn't know," he told her. "I'll take two cups."

Dr. Tony filled Hackenberg in on the jeep ride to Sun Lake. The mine boss profanely said nothing like that had ever happened before and he'd get the no-good swamper that did it and swing him from the gantry if he had to beat up every leatherhead in camp. He told some grisly stories about how he had administered rough justice to native coal miners in Johannesburg.

"'Course," he admitted, "you can't do that to Panameri-cans."

It was a good thing, thought Dr. Tony, that there wasn't any Martian animal life. An intelligent race capable of being sweated would really have got the works from Hack-enberg, who could justify abominable cruelty to his broth-ers on the grounds that they'd been born in a different hemisphere of his own planet. God only knew what he would think justified by an extra eye or a set of tentacles.

Hackenberg took the wide swing through the gap in the hills and highballed the dozen miles to Sun Lake City. He came to a cowboy stop in front of the Lab and de-clined their hospitality.

"I have to get back before the big shots," he said. "Thanks, Doc. I'll see you around."

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE BIG MAIN HALL of the Lab was jammed with people, standing in earnest groups, strolling around, all talking at once. As the door slammed behind the doctor and the writer, the hubbub quieted, and seventy-odd pairs of eyes turned on the newcomers.

"Quite a delegation," Graham commented. "For me?"

"I don't know," Tony confessed. He searched the room, and saw Harve Stillman break away from a small group and head their way.

"Hi, Tony, did you bring a friend?"

He turned to find Mimi Jonathan at his elbow.

"Oh, Mimi, this is Douglas Graham. Did Bea tell you he was coming? Graham, Mimi Jonathan. Mi—Mrs. Jona-than is the Lab Administrator, in charge of making the wheels go round. And this is Harve Stillman. Harve used to be—"

"—a newspaperman himself," Graham finished.

"Nope." Harve grinned. "A radioteletype repairman with the I.P."

"What a switch!" Graham smiled back and shook the other man's hand.

Tony turned from them to ask Mimi urgently, "How's it going? Did you finish up with the Lab search yet?"

"Afraid so. It's the same as the huts. Nothing turned up," she said harshly. "We'll have to check the shipping crates."

"Lord!" breathed Tony.

"Maybe it won't be so bad," Stillman ventured. "I've just given this crowd a briefing on handling hot stuff. Mimi seems to think we can clear it, up in a day or two if we all pitch in."

"Provided," Mimi added, "we all work just a little harder than possible. I'm sorry you had to come to us at such a busy time, Mr. Graham. I hope you won't mind if we don't fuss over you too much. You're welcome to wander around and ask all the questions you want. Everyone will be glad to help you."

"It will be a welcome change," he assured her.

Tony waited very impatiently through a few more min-utes of polite talk. As soon as Harve engaged the writer's attention again, the doctor turned back to Mimi. "What's the plan?" he asked.

"Five crews to get out about a kilometer into the desert, a half-kilometer apart. Everybody else brings them crates one at a time, they open and search, repack before the next one comes in. No contamination from crates standing open. Through all this you and Harve run back and forth checking the handling crews and the tote crews to see that they don't get danger doses and remove and treat them if they do. We figure four days to finish the job."

"Harve, do you think you're good enough to monitor the unpacking sites?" Tony asked.

"Contamination from the native radioactives would be as bad as getting our own radiophosphorus into our radiomethyline blue."

"I didn't want to go out and try it on my own. Do you think I can swing it?"

"Sure. Go pick us five of the coolest spots on Mars." The technician headed for the racked counters.

"Doc, can you let me in on that cryptic business?" demanded Graham.

"In a minute," said Tony, his eyes wandering over the crowd. "Excuse me." He had spotted Anna and was start-ing her way when she turned, saw him, and approached.

"We tried another feeding with the Kandro baby," she began without a preamble, "but he didn't take to it—choked it up again like yesterday."

Tony took out his pipe and bit abstractedly on the scarred stem. "No difference? No change at all?"

"Not that I could see. Tony, what's *wrong* with that baby?"

The doctor shook his head unhappily. "I don't know," he admitted.

There was something damnably wrong with the Kan-dro baby, something he couldn't quite figure. There was a clue somewhere in the vividly remembered picture of the gasping, red-faced infant, choking and spluttering on a mouthful of milk. Should he have tried water instead of normal feeding to get those scrambled reflexes into order?

"Doc—" said Graham.

"I'll be with you in a minute."

Anna went on serenely: "No trouble with Joan. I gave her her regular shot and changed the bandages when Tad told me you'd be late. She seemed fairly comfortable."

"Good. Miscellaneous complaints?"

"Kroll in engineering had a headache. And there's Mrs. Beyles. Her husband came and asked if there was anything I could do—they had a quarrel and he thought she went into a fit. It was a temper tantrum; I know you said not to give her anything, but John was so upset I gave her se-dation to quiet her." She

turned to Graham. "Sorry to have to drag out our hospital horrors. I'm sure you understand."

"Oh," said Tony. "I'm sorry. Douglas Graham, Anna Willendorf. Excuse me a minute, will you?" Mimi was tapping her foot, waiting for an opening. He told her, "I better get the afternoon safety done right now, and I'm damned if I'm going to do it with the whole Colony lurch-ing around the Lab. Get 'em out of here so I can go to work, will you? Graham, I can answer questions while I go through the Lab looking for over-level radiation. If you want to come along, you're welcome."

He led the writer out of the office into the dressing-room, as Mimi began to break up the knots of non-Lab person-nel who had shown up to thrash out the search plan and learn their own parts in it.

Tony helped Graham into the suit of protective armor. He didn't usually bother with it himself on the afternoon inspection, when other people were all over the Lab, un-protected.

The doctor started his meandering course through the Lab, with Graham in tow.

"I'm making the second of our twice-a-day safety checks for excess radioactivity. It happens that we've got to un-pack all our material scheduled for export, examine it, and repack it in a hurry if we want to get credit to pay our bills."

"Just routine, I suppose?" asked Graham blandly.

"I think you gathered that it certainly isn't. The fact is, your friend, Commissioner Bell, has accused us of har-boring a thief and his loot—a hundred kilos of marcaine. We've searched everybody and everything so far except the export crates; now we've got to search them."

"Why not tell the old windbag to go blow?"

"If we don't turn up the marcaine, he can seal us up for six months to conduct an inch-by-inch search."

"What's so dreadful about that?" Graham asked.

"We're geared to two ships in six months now instead of one ship a year. If we missed two shipments, both incom-ing and outgoing, we'd be ruined."

Graham grunted thoughtfully, and Tony waited—and waited—the grunt was all. He'd been half hoping the writer would volunteer to help—perhaps by picking up his anti-Bell crusade or by promising to see his powerful friends, or by exposing the sorry mess to the public. But Graham, apparently forgetting the Bell business entirely, pitched the doctor a ferocious series of questions that threatened to stretch out the inspection endlessly:

"What's in this box? Why isn't this conveyor shielded? Where's the stock room? What do you do here? Is it tech-nical or trade-school stuff? Where did this soil come from? What did you pay for it? Tile on this floor, concrete on that—why? Who's in charge here? How many hours does he work? That many? Why? How many hours does *he* work?"

As Tony paraded solemnly back and forth with the counter, checking off items on his report, he pressed a lit-tle on the writer.

"This crate here," he said, "is a typical sale. Radio-phosphorus for cancer research. It goes to the Leukemia Foundation in San Francisco. It's a traceless pure—better than nine-nines. We're in business because we can supply that kind of thing. On Earth they'd have to first make the traceless-pure phosphorus and then expose it to a reactor or a particle accelerator, and the extra step there usually means it gets contaminated and has to be refined again. Here we just produce phosphorus by the standard meth-ods and it is radioactive because the whole planet's got it. Not enough to present a health problem any more than cosmic rays on Earth do, but damned convenient for Sun Lake."

"Some crate," commented the writer.

"Lead, air gaps, built-in counter with a loud alarm. It's the law. Normally, we have five per cent of our manpower working in the shipping department. Now we have to un-pack and recreate all this stuff in less than four days."

"You people should have a lobby," suggested Graham. "If something like that was handicapping Pittco, they'd get rid of it quick. Are we just about through?"

"Just about," said Tony flatly. So much for that, he thought; at least he'd given the writer an eyeful of the safety precautions they observed, and made him sweat a little under the heavy suit at the same time.

In the cleanup room they stripped and showered, with Graham chortling suddenly, "O'Mally was a

prophet! My first city editor—he said when I got rich I'd install hot and cold running Scotch in my bathroom!"

"Sorry we only have cold, and don't drink this stuff unless you want to go blind. It's methyl."

"Can't be worse than the stuff I used to guzzle in Philly," Graham said blandly, but he stepped out quickly enough and followed the doctor's advice about a lanolin rubdown afterward.

"Dinner time now," said Tony, buttoning on his tunic. "Mess hall's here in the Lab. Only building big enough."

"Synthetics?" asked Graham.

"No, that's not the Sun Lake idea. We want to get on an agricultural cycle as fast as we can. Sun Lake has to be able to live on vegetables that grow naturally, without any fertilization except our own waste products. Naturally we're strong on beans, kudzu, yams, goobers—any of the nitrogen-fixing plants that contain some natural protein. You'll see."

Graham saw, he tasted, he expectorated. Into the shocked silence of the half-dozen at the table, he muttered an embarrassed apology and manfully choked down almost half of his vegetable plate—Mars beans, barley, stewed greens, and another kind of stewed greens.

To Tony he muttered when conversation had sprung up again, "But why do they taste like a hospital smells? Do they have to disinfect them or something?"

Joe Gracey overheard it from the other side of the table. "That's my department," he said. "No, it isn't disinfectant. What you and most other people don't realize is that we with our Lab are pikers compared with the lowliest cabbage in synthesizing chemicals. We taste the chemicals in our Earth plants and we accept them as the way they ought to taste. These are unfamiliar because there are Mars plants modified so that their chemicals aren't poison to Earth animals, or Earth plants modified so that Mars soil isn't poison to them. We're still breeding on this barley, which is generating too much iodoform for me to be really happy. If I can knock one carbon out of the ring— But you don't care about that. Just be glad we didn't try out the latest generation of our cauliflower on you instead of our test mice. The cauliflower, I'm sorry to say, generates prussic acid."

"Stick with those mice!" said Graham with a greenish smile.

"Only guaranteed-Earth animals on Mars, including you," said Madge Cassidy, beside Graham. He watched her wonderingly as she finished her barley with apparent enjoyment.

"How was that again?"

"My mice. The only animals on Mars guaranteed non-mutated. We have them behind tons of concrete and lead with remote feeding. It'd be no joke if some of the natural Mars radioactivity or some of the stuff flying around the Lab mutated them so they'd gobble Mars food that was still poison to people.

"You mean I might go back to Earth and have a two-headed baby?"

"It's possible," said Madge, getting to work on variety number one of stewed greens. "Odds are somewhat higher than it happening from cosmic rays or industrial radioactivity on Earth. But mouse generations go by so fast that with them it's a risk we can't take. Some of the pork-and--beaners died very unpleasant deaths when they tried eat-ing Mars plants as a last resort. It was the last resort, all right."

"But isn't *anything* on Mars good to eat?"

"A couple of items," Gracey told him. "Stuff that would probably be poisonous to any native animal life, if there were any. You find the same kind of thing on Earth—plants that don't seem to be good for anything in their native environment. My theory is that the ancestors of poison ivy and other such things aren't really Earth plants at all, but came to Earth, maybe as spores aboard meteor-ites. We need a broader explanation of the development of life than the current theories offer. We've grown a giant barley here, for instance, out of transplanted Earth stock, but it wouldn't be viable there. The gene was lethal on Earth. Here—"

He rattled on, to the accompaniment of Graham's nods of agreement, until Harve Stillman broke in: "Hey, there was a rumor through the radio relay today. You know about it, Mr. Graham?"

"Doug," the writer corrected.

"Okay." Harve smiled. "About marcaine—no, not about us," he added hastily. "About marcaine being forbidden in Tartary. The Cham pronounced a rescript or whatever it is, and according to the guys in Marsport that means the price goes up, and Brenner's business is doubled. Do you know anything about it, Doug?"

The newsman looked surprised. "It was all over the ship," he told them. "Everybody was talking about it. How come you don't get it till now? The radio op on board told me he spilled it in his first message to P.A.C."

"It's true then?" Gracey asked sharply.

"I wouldn't know. I'm only a reporter myself." He looked across to Tony. "Don't tell me Marsport wasn't buzzing with it. Brenner knew, didn't he?"

"No," the doctor said slowly. "I didn't hear anything about it there." But he had heard of a rumor; who was it? Chabrier! Of course, that was Chabrier's rumor: mar-caine prices going up, production will double, Brenner needs a new plant, needs a doctor, too ...

Tony stood up abruptly. "Excuse me. Gracey, are you finished? Want to come along?"

The agronomist rose quickly, and the two left together. On the way to collect Nick and go over to the Jonathans', Tony explained the situation rapidly to Gracey.

"I wanted to get the Council together tonight anyhow," he finished up, "to tell you about my idiotic brawl with Brenner. I don't know what kind of jam *that's* going to land us in. But this business ties in with what Chabrier told me. Rocket to Bell and Bell to Brenner, and the rest of us can get the news whenever the Commissioner gets around to it!"

"It makes a nasty picture," the agronomist agreed soberly. "Now what? Where do we go from here?"

"Damned if I know. Maybe one of the others can figure it." He knocked sharply on Nick's door.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

"IT DOESN'T MATTER," Mimi said firmly. "We still have to go through with the search."

"That's how I see it, too," Tony admitted. "We can't bring any accusations until we know our own slate is clean."

"If we could only get hold of the Bloodhound—"

"Bell refused."

"And that means no matter how carefully we search, he can still come in afterward and claim it wasn't done properly."

"Could we rent one or buy it?" Gracey wanted to know.

"Government property only," Mimi told him. "O'Donnell checked on that the other day."

"Okay, so we have to do it without the Bloodhound." Nick jumped up and paced the length of the room restlessly. "I bet I could build one if we only had a little time."

Well, we have to go ahead, that's all. Where does Graham come in?"

Tony realized they were waiting for an answer from him. "I don't know. He has no use for Bell, but he doesn't exactly rise to the bait when I throw it at him either. I think we better go slow and feel him out. He didn't seem to go for the blunt approach when Chabrier and the others tried it."

"Slow?" Nick stormed. "Man, we've got six clays! Go *slow*?"

"As fast as we can," Gracey put in. "We still have to get the search finished. I think we have to do that before we ask Graham anything. He has to have some facts to work with."

"Right," Mimi agreed. "Now let's get our plans organized. If we start at dawn, maybe we can do the whole unpacking operation tomorrow . . . *then* we can hit Graham. Means we'll have to leave crates open and repack them later, but I don't see any alternative now. How long is Graham staying, Tony?"

"He said maybe three days."

"Okay, then that's how we've got to do it. Maybe by tomorrow night we'll know better how to get at the guy."

They spent a busy ten minutes outlining the plan of operations, and then the three men went out,



leaving the details for Mimi to settle.

Tony walked down the settlement street slowly, trying to get his thoughts in order. It had been a long day—three fifteen in the morning when Tad woke him, and now there was still work to do.

Stopping in at the hospital to collect his bag, he found Graham kibitzing idly with Harve in his livingroom.

"Just waiting for you, Doc." Stillman stood up. "I have to get over to the radio shack. Tad's on the p.m. shift this week, but he fell asleep before supper, so I've got to take over tonight."

Tony surveyed his guest uncomfortably. "Anything you'd like?" he asked. "I have to go out and see a couple of patients. Won't be too long."

"Could I go along?" Graham asked. "I'd like to, if it's all right with you."

"Sure. I want you to see the baby I was talking about anyhow. My other patient is pretty sick; you may have to wait while I look in on her."

They stopped at the Radcliffs' first, but Joan was asleep and she usually got so little rest that Tony decided not to disturb her. Anna had said she'd had a fairly good day. He'd see her tomorrow.

"Where is this infant?" Graham asked as they walked down the Colony street.

"Here. This is the Kandros' place. Hello, Polly," Tony said as the door opened, even before he knocked. "I brought Mr. Graham along to visit. I hope you don't mind."

"I—no, of course not. How do you do? Come in, won't you?" Her manner was absurdly formal, and her appearance was alarming. Tony wondered when she had last slept. Her eyes were over-alert, her lips too tight, her neck and shoulders stiff with tension.

"How's Sunny?" He walked into the new room where the crib stood, and the others followed. He wished now that he hadn't brought Graham along.

"The same," Polly told him. "I just tried. You see?"

The baby in its basket was sputtering feebly, its face flushed bright red. *We're going to lose that youngster*, thought the doctor grimly, *unless I start intravenous feeding, and soon.*

"Tell me something, please, Doctor," she burst out, ignoring the reporter's presence. "Could it be my fault? I'm anxious—I know that. Could that be why Sunny doesn't eat right?"

Tony considered. "Yes, to a degree, but it couldn't account for *all* the trouble. Are you really so tense? What's it all about?"

"You know how it was with us," she said evasively. "We tried so many times on Earth. And then here we thought at first it'd be like all the other times, but Tony, do you think—is Mars dangerous?"

He saw she'd changed her mind in mid-confession and substituted the inane question for whatever she had started to ask. He intended to get to the bottom of it.

Over the woman's shoulder, he looked meaningfully at Graham. The reporter obligingly drifted back to the livingroom.

Tony lowered his voice and told the woman, "Of course; Mars is dangerous. It's dangerous now; it was dangerous; before you had Sunny. I'm a little surprised at you, Polly. Some women think that having a baby ought to change the world into a pink spun-candy heaven. It doesn't. You've had Sunny; he's a small animal and you love him and he needs your care, but Mars is still what it always was. The terrain's rugged and some of the people aren't what they ought to be. But—"

"Tell me about the murder," she said flatly.

"Oh, is *that* what you're jumpy about? I saw worse every night I rode the ambulance at Massachusetts General. What's that got to do with Sunny?"

"I don't know. I'm afraid. Tell me about it, Doctor, please."

He wondered what vague notion of terror she had got stuck in her head.

"The girl who got killed was named Big Ginny, as you may have heard. If you'd been on the wagon with me in Boston, you'd know there's nothing unusual about it. Women like that often get beaten up, sometimes beaten to death by their customers. The customers are usually drunk, sometimes full of dope; they get the idea that they're being cheated and they slug the girl. Another call for the wagon."

"I heard," she said, "that she was beaten to death with a lot of light blows. No man would do that. And I heard that Nick Cantrella saw footprints by the caves—naked footprints. He thought they were

children's."

"Whose do you think they were?" he asked, though he had a sickly feeling that he knew what she'd say.

Polly moaned, "It was Martian dwarfs! I told you I saw one and you didn't believe me! Now they've killed this woman and they're leaving footprints around and you still don't believe me! You think I'm crazy! You all think I'm crazy! They want my baby and you won't listen to me!"

Tony thought he knew what was going on in her head and he didn't like it. She had seen the attention of the Colony shift from her baby to the marcaine search, and was determined to bring it back, even if it had to be by a ridiculous ruse. She'd heard all the foolish stories about the mythical Martians; she'd had a vivid anxiety dream—which, he reminded himself, she had finally admitted was only a dream—and now she was collecting "evidence" to build herself up as the interesting victim of a malignant persecution.

"We've been over all this before," he told her wearily. "You agreed that you didn't really see anything. And you agreed that there couldn't be any dwarfs because no ani-mal life has ever been found on Mars—"

"Doctor," she broke in, "I've got to show you something." She reached into the baby's basket and drew out something that glinted darkly in her hand.

"Good Lord, what are you doing with a gun?" the doc-tor demanded.

There was no more conflict on her face or hesitancy in her voice. "You can say I'm crazy, Tony, but I'm afraid. I think there could be such things as Martians. And I'm going to be ready for them if they come." She looked at the little weapon tensely and then put it back under the pad in the crib.

Tony promptly drew it out. "Now listen, Polly, if you want to believe in dwarfs or ghosts or Santa Claus, that's your business. But you certainly should know better than to leave the gun near him. I'm going to give you a sedative, Polly, and maybe after a good—"

"No," she said. "No sedative. I'll be all right. But can I keep the gun?"

"If you know how to use it and keep the safety on and put it some place besides under Sunny's mattress, I don't see why not. But all the Martians you'll ever shoot with it you could stick in your eyes and never notice."

"Like the old lady, maybe I don't believe in ghosts but I'm terribly afraid of them?" She tried to laugh and Tony managed a smile with her.

"Nothing wrong with blowing your top once in a while. Nothing at all. Women ought to bawl oftener."

She grinned weakly and said, "Maybe Sunny's going to eat better now."

"I hope so. I'll see you tomorrow, Polly."

As they walked down the street in a strained, embarrassed silence, Graham looked as if he wanted to ask some thing. He finally did: "By the way, Tony, do you know where I'm supposed to sleep? Or where I'd find my bag? It was on the plane."

"Might as well stay with me. And your baggage ought to be at the Campbells'. Tad Campbell was that young sprout who deflated my fight with Brenner."

The baggage, a sizable B-4 bag on which Graham must have paid a ruinous overweight charge, was at the Campbells'. After picking it up, the writer followed the doctor to his hospital-hut.

Tony snapped a heat beam on the two plastic chair and took off his sandboots with a grunt. Graham rooter through his baggage, picked up Chabrier's gaudy package, and hefted it thoughtfully, then shook his head and dove in again. He came up grinning, with another bottle.

"How about it, Doc?" he asked. This is Earthside."

"It's been a long time," Tony sighed. "I'll get a couple of glasses."

The stuff went down like silken fire. It had been a very long time.

"What's about dwarfs?" the writer asked suddenly. "I couldn't help hearing part of that when I went out of the room."

Tony shook his head. "*Dwarfs!* As if we didn't have enough troubles here, without inventing Martian mon-sters."

"Well, what *about* them? All I've ever heard is that deep purple scene in Granata's interplanetary show. It's silly stuff, but nobody's handled it yet at all except Granata. Maybe I could use something; it's

a beautiful story if there's anything at all to back it up. Does anybody claim a connection between fairy book dwarfs and the Martian variety?"

"Two ways. First of all, Mars dwarfs are just as much a fairy story as the Earthside kind. Second, somebody once suggested that the ones in the story books were the space-traveling ancestors of the present-day hallucinations."

"Could be," the Gunther reflected. "Could be."

"Could be a lot of rot," Tony said without heat. "Space travel requires at an absolute minimum the presence of animal life—or at least mobile, intelligent life. Show me so much as one perambulating vegetable on Mars, let alone a native animal life-form. Then it's likely I'll think about dwarfs some more."

"How about a declining race?" Graham speculated. "Suppose they *were* space travelers, on a high level of civilization—they might have killed off all lesser life-forms. You see it happening some on Earth, and back there it's just a matter of living-space. We don't have the problem the Martians had to face, of dwindling water and oxygen supplies. Probably got them in the end, and destroyed their civilization—except," he added, "for the ones who got to Earth. I understand from authoritative sources that the last expedition to Earth was led by a guy named Oberon." Graham chuckled and drank, then asked seriously, "Has anybody ever *seen* one, except Granata?"

"Hundreds of people," Tony said dryly. "Ask any one of the old prospectors who come into, town hauling dirt. They've all seen 'em, lived with 'ern; some even claim to have been at baby-feasts. You'll get all the stories you want out of any of the old geezers."

"What are they supposed to look like?" the writer insisted.

Tony sighed and surrendered, recognizing the same intense manner Graham had displayed in the Lab. The man was a reporter, after all. It was his business to ask questions. Tony gave him what he wanted, with additions, explanations, and embellishments.

Martian dwarfs: an intelligent life-form, either animal or mobile vegetable. About a meter and a half in height; big ears; skinny arms. Supposed to be the naked remnants of a once-proud Martian civilization. (Except that there were no other remnants to support the theory.) In the habit of kidnapping human children (except that there was no specific authenticated case of a baby's disappearance) and eating them (except that that seemed too pat and inevitable an idea-association with the kidnapping—the sort of additional embellishment that no good liar could resist).

"It's an old prospectors' yarn," Tony wound up. "The homesteaders picked it up to frighten kids into sticking close to home. There are hundreds of people on Mars today who'll tell you they've seen them. But not only is there no native animal life of any kind on Mars today—so far as we can tell, there *never* has been. No ruins, no old cities, no signs of civilization, and not so much as one single desiccated dried-out scrap of anything resembling an animal fossil."

"That's strictly negative evidence," Graham pointed out. He emptied his glass and poured another drink for both of them. "But on the other side you have footprints, for instance, and eyewitness stories."

"If you're talking about the cataract-covered eyes of old Marsmen," Tony retorted, "don't call it evidence."

"It wouldn't be," Graham agreed, "except that there are so many of them. I'm beginning to think there's a story in it after all."

"You mean you believe it?" the doctor demanded.

"Do I *look* crazy? I said it was a story."

"So you came 150 million kilometers on a rocket, and then four more hours across Mars in a beat-up old rattle-trap of a plane," the doctor said bitterly. "You eat food that tastes like hospital disinfectant, and live in a mud hut, all so you can go back home and write a nice piece of fiction about dwarfs—a piece you could have dashed off without ever leaving Earth!"

"Not exactly," the Gunther said mildly. "I was only thinking of using them for one chapter. Local color, tales and legends—that kind of thing."

"You could get plenty of stories back on Earth," Tony went on bitterly. "Stories worth writing. How about Paul Rosen's story? There's a *real* one for you."

"Rosen?" Graham leaned forward, interested again. "Seems to me I've heard the name before. Who

was he?"

"Not was. Is. He's still alive; a cripple nobody knows."

"Tell me about Rosen."

"I'll tell you about Mars; it's the same story. You came to write a book about Mars, didn't you? Well, Mars—this Mars, without oxygen masks—is Rosen's work. Rosen's lungs. And you never heard of him. . . . Rosen was the medical doctor aboard the relief ship, the one that found what was left of the first colony. He had a notion about the oxygen differential, was convinced that it wasn't responsible for the failure. He was wrong, of course, but he was right, too. To prove his point he took off his mask and found he didn't need it.

"His assistant tried it, and nearly died of anoxemia. That proved some people could take Mars straight and others couldn't. When the ship got back Rosen went to the biochem boys with his lungs. They told him a few c.c. wouldn't be enough to work with, so he volunteered for an operation. Most of his lung tissue was removed. He was crippled for life, but they tracked down the enzyme that made the difference and worked out a test."

"That I remember," said Graham, continuing to fill the glasses almost rhythmically. "Half the guys I met in Asia claimed they enlisted because they weren't Marsworthy and life wasn't worth living if they couldn't go to Mars."

"That was the beginning of it," Tony said. "The ones who passed the test began to come over. Thousand dollars a day prospecting, and always the chance of finding bo-nanzas. At first they were pork-and-beaners, but the Mars vegetation they brought back took us one step closer to fitting into the Martian ecology. The biochem boys came up with a one-shot hormone treatment to stimulate secretion of an enzyme from the lining of the pylorus. It's present in most people without the shot, but not enough to break down the Martian equivalent of carbohydrates into simple sugars which the human body can handle. You asked me before what all the shots you got on board the rocket ship were for. That's one of them. It means you can handle the Mars plants which don't contain compounds poisonous to Earth animals.

"The other shots you got were to protect you against all the rest of the things that killed off the first pork-and-beaners—fungi, ultra-violet damage to the eyes, dehydration, viruses. For every shot you got, half a dozen of the first explorers and prospectors were killed or crippled to find the cause and cure.

"Five years ago came the payoff. The biochem boys got what they'd been looking for ever since they first sliced up Rosens trick lungs. They synthesized the enzyme, your little pink OxEn pill, and that did it. That's when the Sun Lake Society was founded; and the new rocket fuel two years ago made Sun Lake a reality. With OxEn and four trips a year, we can make out until we find a way to get along without Earth.

"Sun Lake is Mars, Graham; Sun Lake's all's going to be left when you crazy bastards back on Earth blow yourselves up. The other colonists here aren't Mars; they're part of Earth. When Earth goes, they go. Sun Lake's all's gonna be left ..."

"Coupla catches," said Graham, trying to make a glass stay put so he could fill it. "Commish Bell and his eviction notice. And you still need OxEn. Can you make that in a Lab?"

"Not yet," Tony brooded. He had forgotten the lovely optimism that could be poured out of a bottle. "Guess I had enough to drink. I have a hell of a day ahead of me."

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

A HELL of A DAY it was. It started, for one thing, with a hangover. Tony heaved himself out of bed, glad to find Graham still asleep. He didn't want any cheerful conversation just yet. He prescribed, dispensed, and self-administered some aspirin, used an extra cup of water for a second cup of "coffee," finally decided he was strong enough to face the reek of methyl alcohol, and got washed.

Mimi Jonathan was in charge at the Lab when he got there. Law or no law, he raced through the a.m. Lab check to get ahead on the awful job of monitoring the un-packing operation. He rode out on a bike to the five spots Stillman had selected for the inspection crews and found them reasonably low in

radioactivity.

Sheets of plastic had been laid down for flooring and tent walls were going up, with little tunnels through which the crates could be passed without the handlers bringing in all the dust of Mars on their feet. Blowers were rigged to change the air between each inspection, and radiologically clean overalls would be passed in at the same time.

A little after dawn, the careful frenzy was in full swing. A crew in the shipping-room eased out crates and passed them to wrappers who covered them with plastic sheeting and heat-sealed them. Aboard skids, the crates were manhandled up the slight slope from the "canal" bed to the tents in the desert, unwrapped, passed in, opened, searched, checked for chemical and radiological contamination, sealed and passed out again. Back at the Lab, they would be wrapped in lead sheets pending re-crating and stored separately in every workroom that could be spared.

Mimi was everywhere, ordering a speedup on the heat-sealing, or a slowdown on the bucket-brigade manhandling, routing crates to the station that would soonest be free, demanding more plastic sheeting, drafting a woman to wash more coveralls when a stand of them toppled over. The few Lab processes that couldn't be left alone were tended under the direction of Sam Flexner, by people from agro and administration, and by specialized workers like Anna Willendorf.

Tony and Harve Stillman moved constantly up and down the line, back to the Lab and out to the desert, checking persons, places, and materials. Before noon Tony had the bitter job of telling Mimi, "We've got to abandon the Number Two tent. It's warming up. Radioactivity's low on the site, but it's from something that chains with the plastic flooring, I don't know what. Another hour and radiation from the flooring will contaminate the crates."

The woman set her jaw and picked another crew from the line to set up a tent on another monitored site.

Somebody slipped in the Number Three tent, and Harve Stillman found some of the Leukemia Foundation's shipment of radiophosphorus had got from the inside of the crate to the outside—enough to warrant refusal by the rocket supercargo in the interests of the safety of the ship.

But never a trace of marcaine did the search crews find.

Lunch was at noon, carried about by Colony children. Gulping cool "coffee," Tony told Harve Stillman, "You'll have to take it alone for a while. I haven't visited my patients yet. I missed Joan Radcliff altogether yesterday. Send for me if there's anything you really can't handle." Tony started back toward the street of huts before a new emergency could delay him.

He stopped at his own house to pick up his medical bag and found Graham awake, at work in front of an old-fashioned portable typewriter. Another surprise from the Gunther; Tony had assumed the man worked with a dictatyper. Even in the Colony they had those.

Graham looked up pleasantly and nodded. "Somebody waiting for you in the other room, Tony." He motioned with his head toward the door that led to the hospital. "You going out again?"

The doctor nodded. "I don't know when I'll get back. You can walk around and ask questions wherever you find anybody. You understand the situation here—we can't let up on this marcaine business even for the press. I'll get around in time to pick you up for supper anyhow," Tony promised.

Tony went into the hospital, where Edgar Kroll was waiting for him.

"Sorry to bother you today, Doc," Kroll apologized. "I came over on the chance you'd be around right about now. Another one of those damned headaches; I couldn't get any work done at all this morning. Guess I'm just getting old."

"Old!" Tony snorted. "Man, even in Sun Lake you're not old at thirty-five! Not just because you need bifocals. You've stalled around long enough now." And heaven only knew what boudoir taunting from young Jeanne Kroll lay behind that, Tony thought, as he reached into the dispensary cabinet. "Here's some aspirin for now. If you come around tomorrow, I think I'll have time to refract you; I just can't manage it today. Take the afternoon off if the headache doesn't go away."

He got his black bag and walked down the street with Edgar, as far as the Kandros' place. At the door he bumped into Jim, just leaving for the Lab after lunch.

"Glad I saw you, Doc." The new father stood hesitantly in the doorway, waiting till Kroll was out of

earshot, then burst out, "Listen, Tony, I didn't want to say anything in front of Polly, but—are you sure it's going to be all right? Sunny still isn't eating. Maybe it's cancer or something? I heard of something like that with one of our neighbor's kids back in Toledo—"

Just exactly the sort of thing that made Tony almost blind with rage. He liked the man; Jim Kandro was his comrade in the Colony, but—! With his pulse hammering, he made it clear to Jim in a few icy sentences that he had studied long, sacrificed much, and worked hard to learn what he could about medicine, and that when he wanted a snap diagnosis from a layman he would ask for one. Jim and Polly could yank him out of bed at three in the morn-ing, they could make him minister to their natural anxie-ties, but they could *not* make him take such an insult.

He stalked into the house, ignoring Jim's protests and apologies both, and professional habit took over as he greeted Polly and examined the baby.

"About time for a feeding, isn't it?" he asked. "Is it going any better? Since last night, I mean? Want to try him now while I observe?"

"It's a little better, I guess." Polly smiled doubtfully and picked up the baby. She moved the plastic cup of the oxygen mask up a little over the small nose and put Sunny to her breast.

To Tony, it was plain that the infant was frantic with hunger. *Then why didn't it nurse properly?* Instead of closing over the nipple, Sunny's mouth pushed at it one-sidedly, first to the right, then to the left, any way but the proper way. For seconds at a time the baby did suck, then released the nipple, choking.

"He's doing a little better," said Polly. "He's doing *much* better!"

"That's fine!" Tony agreed feebly. "I'll be on my way, then. Be sure to call me if there's anything."

He walked down the Colony street wishing a doctor could afford the luxury of shaking his head in bewilder-ment. Maybe it was all straightening out. But *what* could account for the infant's fantastic behavior? There's noth-ing so determined as a baby wanting to feed—but *something* was getting in the way of Sunny's instinct.

He hoped Polly realized that Sunny would feed sooner or later, that the choking reflex frustrating the sucking reflex would disappear before long. He hoped she would realize it; he hoped desperately that it would happen.

Joan Radcliff was next and this time he found her awake. She was no better and no worse; the enigmatic course of her nameless disease had leveled off. All he could do was talk a while, go through the pulse-taking and temperature-reading mumbo-jumbo, change the dressings on her sores, talk some more, and then go out.

Now Dorothy, the sinus case, and he was done with his more serious cases for today.

Tanya Beyles had a green sick card on her door, but he decided to ignore it. He was already past the house when she called his name, and he turned to find her beckoning from the opened door.

She had dressed up to beat the band—an absurdly tight tunic to show off her passable thirty-plus figure, carefully done hair, and the first lipstick he remembered seeing around in months.

"I don't have much time, today, Mrs. Beyles," he said carefully. "Could it wait till tomorrow?"

"Oh, please, Doctor," she begged, and launched into a typical hypochondriac resume of symptoms, complete with medical terms inaccurately used. What it boiled down to was that a thorough examination was in order though there was nothing *nasty* wrong with her.

"Very well," he said. "If you'll come over to the hospital —next week, perhaps—when I have more time." With a chaperon, he added silently.

"Wouldn't it be just as easy here, and more private?" she ventured shyly, indicating the bedroom, where a heat lamp was already focused on the made bed.

"Dear God," he muttered, and found the professional restraint that had taken over while he was with Polly Kandro had now quite abandoned him. "Mrs. Beyles," he said, plainly, "you may not realize it, but we do have a sense of humor here, even if we don't share your ideas of fun. We've been able to laugh off your malicious gossip-ing and the lousy job you do in Agronomy; you do get some work done in Agro, and you don't eat too much to keep your shape, and I've hoped you'd straighten out. But if you start being seductive around Sun Lake—even if you start with me—you'll get shipped out so fast you I

won't—"

"Is that so?" she screamed. "Well, maybe you'd like to know that I can get all the love and respect I want around here and where you got the idea that I'm at all interested in you I can't imagine. I've heard of doctors like you before and if you think you're going to get away with it you're very much mistaken. And don't think I don't know all about you and that Willendorf woman. I know things people would love to hear ..."

He walked off before she could say any more. God only knew what they'd do with her—deport her, he supposed, and her sad sack of a husband would have to go, too, and it would all be very messy and bad-tempered. Maybe Bell and Graham and all the others were right, regarding Sun Lakers as anywhere from mildly insane to fanatically ob-sessed.

Maybe anything at all, but he still had to go to see Dor-othy and her sinuses. The doctor's facial muscles fell into their accustomed neutrality as he walked into the girl's bedroom and his mind automatically picked up the threads of the bacitracin story where he had left off two days before...

Half an hour later, he was back at the unpacking and search operation where he took over alone while Stillman, groggy with the strain, the responsibility, and the plain hard work, took a short break. The two of them divided the job then, moving steadily up and down the lines, checking, rechecking endlessly until, as darkness closed down, they were suddenly aware that there were no more crates.

Mimi Jonathan bitterly enumerated the results of the search: "About 1,500 man-hours shot to hell, three crates contaminated beyond salvage, nine salvageable for umpty--hundred more man-hours—and no marcaine. Well, nobody can say now that we didn't try." She turned to Tony. "Your move," she said.

"Graham?" The doctor stood up. "All I can do is try to get him on our side. He's friendly anyhow; he asked me to have supper with him out of his private stock of genuine synthetic Earthside protein."

"You don't sound too hopeful," Gracey ventured.

"I'm not. Did I tell you what his favorite story is so far? Martian dwarfs!"

"You mean he's passing up a yarn like the killing at Pittco, and he wants to write about that stuff?" Nick asked incredulously.

"You think he's going to step on Pittco's toes?" Tony re-torted. "Not that smart boy! Okay, I might as well get back and make my try." He started across the darkening desert, and Nick fell into step beside him. "Why don't you come along?" the doctor suggested. "Maybe you could talk his language better than I do. You might get a decent meal out of it, too."

"It's a thought. A good one. Only Marian's probably got supper all ready by now. I better check in at home first. I don't know—would you say it was official Council busi-ness?"

"That's between you and your hunger," the doctor told him. "What do you want most—meat or Marian?"

"Damned if I know," Nick admitted, grinning.

"Doc!" It was Jim Kandro, running clown the street toward them. "Hey, Tony! I just came from the hospital—looking all over—"

"What's up?"

"The baby! He's having convulsions."

"I'll go right over. Pick up my bag at the hospital, will you?"

Jim set off in one direction, and Tony in the other. "See you later," Nick called out to the doctor's rapidly retreat-ing back.

At the Kandros', he found Polly, near-hysterical, with a struggling infant in her arms. Sunny was obviously in acute discomfort; the veins were standing out on his fuzzy scalp, he was struggling and straining feebly, his belly was distended and his cheeks puffed out uncomfortably.

"How's he been eating?" the doctor demanded scrub-bing his hands.

"The way you saw before," said Polly. "Better and better, but just the way you saw before, wiggling and pushing so half the time he was sucking on nothing at all. He was crying and crying, so I fed him three or four times and each time he got more—"

She fell silent as Tony picked up the baby and patted and stroked it. It burped loudly. The alarming red color faded and the tense limbs relaxed. With a whimper Sunny collapsed on the doctor's shoulder

and fell asleep before he was back in his crib.

"Here you are, Doc." Jim came in and looked from Polly's empty arms to the quiescent baby in the crib. "I guess you didn't need the bag. What was it?"

"Colic," Tony grinned. "Good, old-fashioned, Earthside colic."

"But you told me—" Jim turned accusingly on his wife.

"And I told Polly," Tony put in quickly. "It doesn't usually happen. Babies don't have to be burped on Mars—most of 'em, that is. The mask feeds richer air into a Mars baby's nose so he just naturally breathes through his nose *all* the time and doesn't swallow air and get colic when he feeds. But I guess Sunny had his heart set on a bellyache. Was he crying when he fed, Polly?"

"Why, yes, a little bit. Not really crying, a kind of whimper every now and then."

"That could explain it. Just be sure to bubble him after feeding. Thank the Lord he's nursing."

Sunny was going to be all right; for the first time, Tony really believed it. Somehow that changed the whole dismal picture.

Tony entered his own house and found Graham still sitting in front of his typewriter, not writing now, but reading through a pile of onionskin pages.

"Hi. I was waiting for you."

There was a knock on the door.

"Come in," Tony called out.

"Oh, am I busting in on something?" Nick asked inno-cently.

"No, of course not. Glad to see you. Doug, this is Nick Cantrella. I don't know if you met him before. He's in charge of maintenance and equipment at the Lab, and a member of our Council. Nick, you know who Doug Graham is."

"Uh-huh. My rival. My wife's only true love."

"And you should see his wife," Tony added.

"This gets more and more interesting. You're not mar-ried to that lady pilot by any chance?" Graham extended a greasy hand. "No? Too bad. Join us? We're eating some meat I brought along."

"Don't mind if I do. How's the baby, Tony? Anything really wrong?"

"Yes and no. Colic. Good old colic," the doctor gloated. "It shouldn't happen, but, by God, it's something I know how to cope with; I think the kid's going to be all right. Coffee's ready. Where's the food?"

They munched sandwiches, and had "coffee" which Graham pronounced a very slight improvement over his own efforts. The two Sun Lakers were more than happy with it; it was sweetened with gratings from a brick of sugar produced by the Gunther from his wonder-packed luggage. The same suitcase turned out to hold another bottle of Earthside liquor, and Graham poured drinks all around.

"It's a celebration," the writer insisted, when Tony, re-mem-bering his hangover, would have demurred. "I got a week's work done today. Whole first chapter—complete draft of the trip out and the impressions of Marsport!" He fanned out a sheaf of pages covered with single-spaced typing, and corked the bottle.

Nick took a long deep swallow, settled back blissfully on the bunk where he was sitting. "Marcaine," he said at last. "That could explain it."

"What?"

"I've been sitting here imagining I was eating meat and drinking whisky. Can you beat that?" He sipped more slowly this time, savoring the drink, and said determinedly to Graham, "You're just about up to Sun Lake in your notes then?"

"That's right," Graham said. In the silence that fol-lowed, he asked brightly, "Say, aren't you the guy who saw the dwarf tracks?"

"Who me? You're sure you weren't thinking of uni-corns?"

"Do unicorns leave little footprints?"

"Oh, that. Yeah, I saw something out around the caves in the Rimrock Hills. That's where the kids take the goats to graze."

"Are they allowed to go barefooted around there?" Graham asked.



"Allowed!" Nick exploded. "You haven't been ten years old for quite a long time, have you? How much attention do you think they pay?"

*Quite a bit*, Tony thought, remembering his talk with Tad, but he didn't bring it up. Out loud he said, "I've got a theory about that. I've been thinking about it since last night, Doug. Maybe you can use it in your book. I'll tell you what I think. I think some kids who weren't supposed to do it went exploring in a cave, and one of them got lost. Then the rest wouldn't admit what happened, and all the search party could find was kid-sized footprints. So we have `dwarfs'! And a couple of dozen retired pros-pectors back on Earth are coining money telling lies about them," he finished more sharply than he meant to.

"I guess that squelches me." Graham laughed boister-ously, picked up his papers, and stood up. "I better be getting along. Have to find out about getting this stuff radioed out." He started for the door and almost collided with Anna coming in.

"Oh, I'm sorry. I forgot you had company, Tony. They kept me busy all day out at the Lab, and I thought maybe I could get some work done here this evening, but—" She smiled apologetically at Tony and Nick, then turned to Graham. "Were you going out?"

"Shouldn't I?"

"Of course not," said Tony. "Not when Anna's just come in. Stick around, and you'll see something."

"What does she do?" Graham asked. "Song and dance routine? Prestidigitation?"

Nick said from his perch on the wall bunk, "Graham, if you had an ounce of Earthside chivalry in your bloodstream, you'd uncork that bottle and offer the lady a drink."

"You're right. I'll even offer you one." Tony got another glass and the writer poured. Then he turned to Anna, and asked again. "Well, what *do you do*?"

"I'm a glassblower, that's all. Tony likes to watch it."

The doctor said testily, "Anna is also my assistant, if you recall—neither one is a full-time job, so she keeps her equipment here, and combines the two."

For a few minutes the four of them sat talking incon-sequentially, the three Sun Lakers answering Graham's endless variety of questions. Finally, Anna got up.

"If I'm going to get any work done, I better get started." She opened the cupboards and began pulling out equip-ment.

Graham stood up, too. "Well—" He picked up his sheaf of papers.

"Tony!"

All three men focused their attention on Anna, who stood facing them, her arms full of assorted junk.

"Tony," she said bluntly, "have you told Mr. Graham about our problem here? Don't you think he might be able to help?"

"Well!" Graham sat down again, and suddenly grinned. "Tell me, what can I do for dear old Sun Lake?"

"You can save our necks," Nick told him soberly. "At least I think you can, if you want to. You're going back on the rocket," he explained, "and that rocket won't have our shipment on it because—actually because—we did *not* steal some marcaine we're accused of stealing. It's not here, so we couldn't find it, and that means Bell will throw a cordon around us on Shipment Day. You know Bell from way back. You could raise such a stink about what he's doing to us—if you wanted to—that there'd be orders recalling him to Earth on the next rocket that comes in. You're big enough to do it. And we don't know any other way."

"You're very flattering," the writer said, "and also too damn brief. I already know that much. Suppose you fill me in on some of the details."

"Bell tramped in three days ago," the doctor began carefully, and went through the story, step by step, not omitting the information he had picked up in Marsport, and reminding Graham at the same time about the Cham's new regulations against marcaine.

"Brenner wants to get his hands on the Sun Lake Lab," Tony wound up. "You got Bell kicked out of a good job once for crooked dealing. You could do it again. Unless Bell's got religion, and I see no sign of it, Brenner could easily hire him to kick us off Mars and then see that Brenner Pharmaceutical got the assets of the busted Sun Lake Colony—including the Lab—in a rigged auction."

The writer pondered, and then told them slowly, "I think I can do something about it. It's a good story, anyhow. The least I can do is try."

Nick let out a wild *Wa-hoo!* and Tony slumped with relief. He looked back to Anna's workbench, smiling—but she was gone.

"Now that that's settled," said Graham, "I want a favor myself."

"Up to but not including my beautiful blond wife," promised Nick fervently.

"If it was women, I'd want that lady airplane pilot. But it isn't women. I still want to get this stuff filed to Marsport by your radio. I'm going to have a crowded schedule before takeoff and every minute I clip off in advance, like getting this stuff typed and microfilmed, will help."

"Sure, pal! Sure!" Nick stood up and shook the writer's hand earnestly. "I'll take you to the radio shack myself and give you the blanchest carte you ever saw!"

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

*It's a li'l Mars baby, It's a li'l Mars baby, It's a li'l Mars baby, Li'l Mars baby  
All—our—own!*

IT WAS MIDNIGHT, and Polly sang her song very softly, so as not to awaken Jim. Her hand, on the baby's back, caressed the tiny, clearly defined muscles, rigid now with concentration of effort. Her eyes filled with wonder as she watched Sunny nuzzle awkwardly, but successfully, against her breast.

He was eating! He was swallowing the milk, and not choking on it or spitting it back!

With a touch of awe at the thought that she was the only mother on Mars who had the privilege, she laid the baby over her shoulder and gently patted. Sunny bubbled and subsided. She laid him in the basket and sat watching him raptly. Jim rolled over and muttered, so she decided not to sing her song again. She was hungry, anyway. She touched her lips to the baby's forehead, straightened his mathematically straight blanket and went to the little pantry cupboard in the living-room.

A dish of left over navy beans would settle her for two or three more hours of sleep. She found a spoon and began to eat, happily. She cleaned the dish and licked the spoon, put them away, and started back for bed.

She was halfway to the bedroom door when it happened.

Everything went slower and slower and came to a stop. She was frozen to the floor, giggling—and she was also somewhere else, watching herself giggle. The reddish walls turned the most beautiful apple-green, her favorite color, and put forth vines and branches. They were apple-tree branches, and they began to bear apples that were baby's heads—severed baby's heads, dripping rich, delicious juice. The babies sang her song in a cheeping chorus, and she saw and heard herself giggle and sing with them, and pluck the heads from the branches, open her mouth—

"*Jim!*" she shrieked, and it all collapsed.

Her husband stood in the doorway, looked at her and leaped to catch her.

"Get Dr. Tony," she gasped after she had vomited and he had carried her to a chair. "I think I'm going crazy. There were these— Get Dr. Tony, please, Jim!"

The thought of being left alone horrified her, but she clutched the chair arms; afraid to close her eyes while he was gone. She counted to more than a hundred, lost track, and was starting again when Jim and the doctor burst in.

"Polly, what is it? What happened?"

"I don't know, Doctor, *I don't know!* It's all over now, but I don't know if it's going to come back. I saw things. I think . . . Tony, I think I'm crazy."

"You threw up," he reminded her. "Did you eat anything?"

"I was hungry after I nursed Sunny. I ate some beans—cold beans. And then it was horrible. It was like a nightmare, only I was watching myself—"

"This happened right after you ate the beans?" he de-manded. "You didn't eat the beans earlier?"

"No, it was right after. I fed Sunny, and then I ate, and then it happened. I was frozen to the floor and

I watched I myself. I was going to do something horrible. I was going to—" She couldn't say it; she remembered it too clearly.

"That's too quick for food poisoning," the doctor said. "You froze, you say. And you watched yourself. And there were hallucinations."

"Yes, like the worst nightmare in the world, yet I was awake."

"Stay with her, Jim. I've got to get something. Can you clean up in here?"

Jim clenched his wife's hand in his big, red fist and then began to mop.

Tony came back with a black box they all knew—the electroencephalograph.

"Look here, Tony," growled Kandro. "If you're think-ing that Polly's a drug addict, you're crazy."

Tony ignored him and strapped the electrodes to the woman's head. Three times he took traces, and they were identical. Positive brainwaves.

"You were full of marcaine," he told her flatly. "Where did you get it?"

"Well, I *never*—" and "God damn it all, Doc—" the couple began simultaneously.

Tony relaxed. "I don't need a lie-detector," he said. "It must have been put on the beans. Lord knows how or why."

Polly asked incredulously, "You mean people go through that for *pleasure*?"

"You had the reaction of a well-balanced person. It's the neurotic who enjoys the stuff."

Polly shook her head dazedly.

"But what are we going to do?" demanded Jim.

"First thing is to get some bottles and nipples and goat's milk for you. Breast-feeding is out for at least the next week, Polly. There'd be marcaine in your milk. You don't want to wean Sunny now?"

"Oh, *no*!"

Tony smiled. "We'll have to get a breast pump made, too, to keep your supply going. But that can wait till morning."

"But—" protested Jim.

The doctor swung around to face him. "All right, what do *you* suggest we do?"

Jim thought and said hopelessly, "I don't know."

"Neither do I. I'm a doctor, not a detective. All I can do is write a formula for the baby, and get people moving right now turning out the stuff you need."

He stepped into the nursery for a moment to peer at Sunny, in the crib—a beautiful, healthy child. Tony won-dered for a moment whether Polly's earlier fantasy about a menacing Martian had also been caused by her food be-ing doped. There had been no nausea that time, but it might have been a smaller dose.

Time enough later to figure all that out; Sunny would be hungry again in a few hours.

"Jim," he directed, "you better beat it over to Anna Willendorf's and tell her we'll need bottles right away. And get some milk while you're out. If you move fast, we'll have time to boil it and make the first formula before Sunny wakes up again."

"Milk?" Jim said, dazed.

"Milk. From one of the goats. Don't you know how?"

"I've milked cows," Kandro said. "Couldn't be much different."

"One other thing," Tony called to Jim, who was already at the door. "Nipples. Get Bob Carmichael for that. I think he can figure out some way."

"Right." Jim closed the door behind him.

They had the milk boiling on the alky stove when Anna arrived with the first bottle. "The others are still cooling," she explained. "What can I do now, Polly?"

"I don't know. Nothing, I guess. The doctor's showing me how to make formula and I suppose that's all there is. It was awfully nice of you to get up to make the bottles. I feel terrible about making so much trouble, but I just—" She trailed off helplessly.

"It wasn't your fault," Anna told her, then asked the doctor, "Do you want me to take over with the formula?"

"There's no need to," Tony told her. "For that matter, you can go back to bed if you want to. There

shouldn't be any more trouble tonight."

"I have to go back and get the other bottles later anyhow," she protested. She took over at the stove, showing Polly the procedures of sterilization and measuring involved in the baby's formula.

Jim came from a second trip to the Lab in time to boil up one of the new nipples and fill a bottle before Sunny woke. Polly, still shaken, but determined to behave normally, picked the baby up and changed him, warmed the bottle herself under Anna's watchful eye, and settled herself on a chair with baby and bottle.

Sunny sucked hungrily, wriggled, pushed his mouth sidewise, and then to the other side, sucking all the time. Milk spilled out the side of his mouth as he sucked without swallowing, and turned his reddening face from side to side, squirming desperately.

Tony, suddenly frightened, took a step forward. He could see the trouble clearly enough, but from above, looking down at the baby's face, Polly couldn't possibly see what was happening.

Sunny was trying to make use of the peculiar sidewise suckling he had developed at his mother's breast, but he couldn't wedge his small mouth around the comparatively firm plastic of the new nipple. Tony opened his mouth to speak; in a minute the baby would—

*"Stop it! You're choking—!"*

Polly's hand, holding the bottle shot away from the baby's mouth. Tony whirled to see Anna crumble to the floor, her mouth still open in the drawn-out shriek.

"Jim!" he shouted. "Quick! Take care of her!" Then he turned back again without waiting to see what Kandro did. He lifted the choking, convulsive infant out of Polly's limp arms, turned him upside down, and stroked the small stiff back vigorously. Within seconds, a thick curd of milk dribbled out of the baby's mouth, and the terrible gasping sounds turned into a low, monotonous wailing.

Tony put the baby back in his mother's arms, and turned briefly to look at Anna. Jim had lifted her onto the wall bunk. Tony checked quickly to make sure she hadn't hurt herself.

"Just fainted," he said, puzzled, and gave Kandro instructions to restore consciousness.

Sunny's wailing was turning into a hunger cry. The doctor picked him up again and wrapped him in one of the warm new blankets.

"Where are you taking Sunny?" asked Polly with shrill nervousness.

"To the hospital." He turned to Jim, still standing over the unconscious Anna. "Don't let her leave when she comes to, Jim. I'll be back later."

He went out, carrying the screaming baby in one arm and his black bag in the other.

The walk back to his own house was haunted. The ghost of a newborn baby went with him along the curving street, in the dark, a ghost that gasped and choked as Sunny did, twisting in agony until it died again as it had already died a thousand thousand times for Tony; only the first time was the worst, the first baby born and the first one dead in Sun Lake, and he'd had to watch it all, the ghost of a baby that died for want of air.

He went in by the hospital door. He didn't want to see Graham.

Systematically he turned on the lights and assembled his instruments in the sterilizer, turned a heat lamp on the examination table, and stripped off the baby's clothes: This couldn't go on; there had to be an answer to Sunny's troubles, and he was going to find it now, tonight.

Tony examined the child with every instrument and technique in his repertory. He felt it, probed and thumped; it, listened to its interior plumbing. He could find nothing that resembled organic trouble. And he could think of no rational explanation for a masked baby breathing through its mouth.

"It's got to be nasal," he said out loud. Three times he had used the otoscope, and three times he had found no obstruction. But—

Carefully Tony slipped the mask off Sunny's nose. He slipped it over the mouth instead, stifling its scream in mid-voice. At least, he thought grimly, the baby would *have* to breathe through the mask now if it wanted to keep on crying. The doctor began to probe delicately into one nostril, and Sunny promptly reacted with the unexpected. Impossible or not, he tried to draw a breath through his exposed nostrils, found an impediment, and began to choke again.

Tony withdrew the slender probe and stared at the gasping, red-faced infant. For just a moment, a

clear and frightening picture of the other baby blotted out what was before his eyes—the ghost baby that had come up the street with them. Then he looked at Sunny again and everything began to fall into place.

Sunny was the wrong color.

He should have been blue and he wasn't. He was gasp-ing for air, he couldn't breathe; he should have been oxygen starved. *And he was flushed a bright crimson!*

It wasn't lack of oxygen, then. It was impossible! But it was the only logical answer. Tony removed the mask from the baby's face with trembling hands.

He waited.

It took Sunny less than thirty seconds to do what Tony knew he couldn't do—and most certainly would do. Sunny gasped sharply for a moment. Then his breathing became even, his color turned a normal healthy pink, and he re-sumed his monotonous hunger cry.

Sunny didn't need an oxygen mask at all to survive on Mars, nor did he need OxEn.

The fact was scientifically paralyzing—the child was adapted not to the rich air of Earth, but the deadly thin atmosphere of Mars.

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

"SUNNY!" Polly ran to the table where Sunny still lay cry-ing, wrapped in his blanket again, hungry, angry, and per-fectly safe. "Doctor, what did you—how can he—?"

"He's fine," Tony assured her. "Just leave him alone. He's hungry, that's all."

Polly stared, fascinated by the naked-looking baby. "How *can* he breathe without a *mask*?"

"I don't know," Tony said bluntly, "but I tried it and it worked. I guess he's got naturally Marsworthy lungs. Seems to have been the only trouble he had."

"You mean—I thought Marsworthy lungs just mean you *could* breathe Mars air; people like that can breath Earth air, too, can't they?"

Tony shrugged helplessly. He was licked and didn't care who knew it as long as Sunny was all right. For the time being, it was enough to know that the baby had been breathing through his mouth all along just because he did prefer Mars air. He got too much oxygen through the mask, so he didn't use his nose; a simple reversal of the theory on which the mask was based. When his source of Mars air was blocked—first by his mother's breast, and then, when he had learned to adapt to that, by the less flexible plastic nipple—he had to breathe the richer air through his nose, and he turned red, coughed, sputtered and choked.

"I want to take him back now," said the doctor, "and try another feeding. Bet he'll eat right away." He picked up the baby, firmly refusing to surrender him to his mother, and led the way out of the hospital room and back to the Kandros' house.

Just before they left, Tony heard the steady clicking of Graham's typewriter in the other part of the house. He realized it had been going almost continuously. Obviously the writer understood that an emergency was in progress or else he was so busy himself that he didn't want to be bothered, either.

Jim was thunderstruck by his maskless Sunny. Ann seemed to have recovered from her faint. She was a little pale, but otherwise normal, moving about briskly, picking up scattered blankets and baby equipment.

"I tried to make her rest," Jim explained, "but she said she felt fine."

"You take it easy, Anna," the doctor told her.

"I'm perfectly all right," she insisted. "I can't imagine what made me do anything so foolish. I'm awfully sorry."

"Polly, I want *you* to go to bed right away. You've had enough tonight—this morning, rather. Jim, you can handle the baby, can't you? You want to change him and get him ready for his feeding?"

Jim stooped over his son at the wall bunk, his big hands fumbling a little with closures on the small garments. Tony sat down and leaned back, closing his eyes. The baby screamed steadily, demanding nourishment.

"Doc, I still don't get it. How did you figure it out?" Patiently, without opening his eyes, Tony

repeated his explanation for Jim.

"I'll take your word for it," the man said finally, "but I'll be darned if I can understand it. Okay, Doc, I *guess* he's all fixed up."

Tony stood up. "Do you know how to fix a bottle? I'll show you."

"Here." Anna was at his elbow. "I thought you might want one."

The big man, looking absurdly cautious, put the bottle to Sunny's mouth. Then he looked up, a tremendous grin on his face and his eyes a little wet. "How do you like that?" he said softly. The little mouth and jaw were working away busily; Sunny was feeding as though he'd been doing it for months.

They watched while he took a whole three and a half ounces, and then fell asleep, breathing quietly and regu-larly.

"A Mars child," said Anna gently, looking down at Sunny. "Jim, you have a real Mars child."

"Looks that way," said Kandro, beaming.

"Jim," said the doctor, "somebody ought to stay up and keep an eye on Sunny tonight, but I'm beat. And Polly's got to get some sleep. Will you do it?"

"Sure, Doc," said the father, not taking his happy eyes off the child.

"You get your parka, Anna, and don't argue with the doctor," Tony said. "I'm going to take you home and see if I can find out what made you pull that swoon. Come on..."

"I do have a headache," she admitted when they reached her house. "Probably all I need is a little sleep. I haven't been living right." She tried a smile, but it didn't come off.

"None of us have," Tony reminded her. He studied her and decided against aspirin. He selected a strong sedative and shot it into her arm. Within a minute she relaxed in a chair and exhaled long and gratefully. "Better," she said.

"Feel like talking?"

"I—I think I ought to sleep."

"Then just give me the bare facts." He ran his fingers over her head. "No blows. Was it a hangover?"

"Yes," she said defiantly.

"Very depraved. From the one drink you had with us?"

"From—from— Oh, hell!" That came from the heart, for Anna never swore.

"I've had enough mysteries for one night, Anna. Talk."

"Maybe I ought to," she said unwillingly. "Only a fool tells a lie to his doctor or the truth to his lawyer, and so on." She hesitated. "I've got a trick mind. All those people who think they're psychic—they are. I am, but more. It doesn't matter, does it?"

"Go on."

"I didn't know about it myself for a long time. It's not like mindreading; it's not that clear. I was always—oh, sensitive, but I didn't understand it at first, and then later on it seemed to get more and more pronounced. I—haven't told anyone about it before. Not anyone at all."

She looked at him appealingly. Tony reassured her, "You know you can trust me."

"All right, I began to realize what it was when I was about twenty. That's why I became, of all things, a glass-blower. If you had to listen to the moods and emotions of people, you'd want a job far away from everything in a one-man department, too. That's why I came to Mars. It was too—too noisy on Earth."

"And that's why you're the best assistant I ever had, with or without an M.D. or R.N. on your name," said the doctor softly.

"You're easy to work with." She smiled. "Most of the time, that is. Sometimes, though, you get so *angry*—"

He thought back, remembering the times she'd been there before he had called, or had left quickly when she was in the way, handed him what he needed before he actually *thought* about it.

"Please don't get upset about it, Tony. I'd hate to have to stop working with you now. I don't know what you *think*, just what you—*feel*, I guess. There are a lot of peo-ple like that, really; you must have sensed it in me a long time back. It isn't really so very strange," she pleaded. "I'm just a little—a little more that way, that's all."

"I don't see why I should get upset about it." He tried to soothe her, and realized sickeningly that it was a useless effort. He literally could not conceal his feelings this time. He stopped trying. "You must realize how hard I try not to show I'm even angry. It is a little disconcerting to find out—I'll get used to it. Just give me time." He was thoughtful for a moment. "How does it work? Do you know?"

"Not really. I 'hear' people's feelings. And—people seem to be more aware of my moods than they are of other people's. I—well, the way I first became aware of it was when somebody tried to—assault me, back on Earth, in Chicago. I was very young then, not quite twenty. It was one of those awful deserted streets, and he ran faster than I could and caught up with me. Something sort of turned on—I don't know how to say it. I was sending instead of receiving, but sending my emotion—which, naturally, was a violent mixture of fear and disgust—each more strongly than—than people usually can. I'm afraid I'm not making myself clear."

"No wonder," he said heavily. "The language isn't built for experiences like that. Go on."

"He fell down and flopped on the sidewalk like a fish, and I ran on and got to a busy street without looking back. I read the papers, but there wasn't anything about it, so I suppose he was all right afterward."

She stopped talking and jumped up restlessly. For quite a while she stood staring out of her window, toward the dark reaches of *Locus Solis*.

Finally she said in a strained voice, "Please, Tony, it's not really as bad as that sounded. I can't send all the time; I can't do it mostly." She turned back to face him, and added more naturally, "Usually, people aren't as—open—as he was. And I guess I have to be pretty worked up, too. I tried to send tonight, and I couldn't do it. I tried awfully hard. That's why I had that headache."

"Tonight?"

"I'll tell you about that in a minute. Right now I want—well, I told you I never told anyone about this before. It's important to me, Tony, *terribly* important, to make you understand. You're the first person I ever wanted to have understand it, and if you keep on being frightened or un-happy about it, I just don't know—"

She paused. "Let me tell you about it my way. I'll try to ignore whatever you feel while I'm telling it, and maybe when I'm done it will all be all right."

"When that happened in Chicago—what I told you about—I had a job in an office. There was a girl I had to work with who didn't like me. It was very unpleasant. Every day for a month I tried to turn that 'send-receive' switch and transmit a calm, happy feeling to her, but I never could make it work. No matter how hard I tried, I couldn't get anything over to her. I knew what she felt, but her emotions were closed to mine. She didn't want to feel anything from me, so she didn't. Do you understand that? It's important, because it's true; you can protect yourself from that part of it. You believe me, don't you, Tony?"

He didn't answer right away. He had to be absolutely certain in his own mind, because she would know. It would be far worse to tell her anything that wasn't true than to say nothing. Finally he got up and walked over to her, but he didn't dare speak.

"Tony," she said. "you're—oh, please don't be embarrassed and difficult about it, but you're so *good*! That's what I meant, you're easy to work with. Most people are petty and a lot of them are mean. The things they feel aren't nice; they're mostly bitchy. But you—even when you're angry, it's a big, honest kind of anger. You don't want to hurt people, or get even, or take advantage of them. You're honest, and generous, and *good*. And now I've said too much!"

He shook his head. "No, you didn't. It's all right. It really is."

There were tears shining in her eyes. Standing over her, he reached mechanically for a tissue from his bag, tilted her head up, and wiped her eyes as if she were a child.

"Now tell me more," he said, "and don't worry about how I feel. What happened tonight? Tell me about the headache. And the fainting—was that part of it too? Of course! What an idiot I am! The baby was choking and scared, and you screamed. You screamed and said to stop it."

"Did I? I wasn't sure whether I thought it or said it. That was strange, the whole business. It was terrible, somebody who hurt awfully all over and couldn't breathe, and was going to—to burst if he

couldn't, and that didn't seem to make sense—and terribly hungry, and terribly frus-trated, and—I didn't know who it was, because it was so strong. Babies don't have such 'loud' feelings. I guess it was the reflex of fear of dying, except Sunny is very loud, anyhow. When he was being born—"

She shuddered involuntarily. "I was awfully glad you didn't think to ask me to stay in there with you. When you sent Jim out, I talked to him, and sort of—concen-trated on 'listening' to him, and then, with the door closed, it was all right. Anyhow, you want to know about tonight. The baby topped it off. I didn't think that would have made me faint, by itself, but I was working in there, in the same room with Douglas Graham for an hour or more, and—"

"Graham!" Tony broke in. "Do you mean to say he *dared* to—"

"Why, Tony, I didn't know you cared!"

For the first time that evening, she laughed easily. Then, without giving him time to think about how his outburst had given him away, she added, "He didn't do anything. It was—it was about what he was writing, I *think*. I know what he was feeling. He was angry and disgusted and *contemptuous*. He hurt inside himself, and he felt the way people do when they hurt somebody else. And it seemed to be all tied up with the story he was writing. It was a story about the Colony, Tony, and I got worried and frightened. If only I could be sure. See, that's the trouble. I didn't know whether to tell somebody or not, and I tried and tried to 'send' to him, but he wasn't open at all, and the only thing that happened was that I got that headache."

"Then when you came over to the Kandros'," Tony finished for her, "and the baby had all that trouble, of course you couldn't take it. Tell me more about Graham. I understand that you're not sure; tell me what you *think*, and why."

"When Jim woke me up, we went back to your place together, and Graham was working there," she said. "He asked me what the excitement was all about and I told him. He listened, kept asking questions, got every little detail out of me, and all the time he was feeling that hurt and anger. Then I started to work and he began banging away on his typewriter. And those thoughts got stronger and stronger till they made me dizzy, and then I started trying to fight back, to send—and I couldn't. That's all there was to it."

"And you can't be certain what it was that he was feel-ing that way about?"

"How could I?"

"Well, then," he said, with a laugh of relief, "there's nothing at all to worry about. You made a natural enough mistake. Those feelings of his weren't directed *against* the Colony at all, Anna. Earlier tonight, after you left, Graham promised to help us. He was writing a story about the spot we're in, that's all, and I know that he felt all the things you've described, but not about us, about Bell."

"It could be." She seemed a little dazed. "It didn't feel that way, but, of course, it could." She sighed and leaned back in her chair. "Oh, Tony, I'm so glad I told you. I didn't know *what* to do, and I was sure it was something vicious he was writing about the Colony."

"Well, you can relax now. Maybe I'll let you go to bed." He took her hands and pulled her to her feet. "We'll work it out, even if I have to take a few new experiences in stride. Believe me, we'll work it out."

She looked up at him, smiling gently. "I think so, too, Tony."

He could have let her hands go, but he didn't. Instead, he flushed as he realized that even now she was aware of all his feelings. There were tears shining in her eyes again, and this time he couldn't reach for a tissue. He leaned down and kissed her damp eyelids.

A thousand thoughts raced through his mind. Earth, and Bell, and the Colony, now or forever or never. That time in the plane, thinking of Bea. Anna—Anna always there at his side, helping, understanding.

"Anna," he said. He had never liked the name. "Ansie." There had been a little girl, a very long time ago, when he was a child, and her name had been Ansie.

He released her other hand and cupped her upturned face in both of his. His head bent to hers, slowly and ten-derly. There was no fierceness here, only the hint of grow-ing passion.

When he lifted his lips from hers, he laughed and said quietly, "It saves words, doesn't it?"

"Yes." Her voice was small and husky. "Yes, it does dear."



If his mind was "open," he might feel what she did. Cautiously and warily, he reached out to her, with his arms and with his mind. He needed no questions and no answers now.

"Ansie," he whispered again, and lifted her slender body.

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

TAD'S LEFT EAR ITCHED; he let it. "Operator on duty will not remove headphones under any circumstances until relieved—" There was a good hour before Gladys Porosky would show up to take over.

"Mars Machine Tool to Sun Lake," crackled the headset suddenly. He glanced at the clock and tapped out the message time on the log sheet in the typewriter before him.

"Sun Lake to Mars Machine Tool, I read you, G.A.," he said importantly.

"Mars Machine Tool to Sun Lake, message. Brenner Pharmaceutical to Marsport. Via Mars Machine Tool, Sun Lake, Pittco Three. Request reserve two cubic meters cushioned cargo space outgoing rocket. Signed Brenner. Repeat, two cubic meters. Ack, please, G.A."

Tad said, "Sun Lake to Mars Machine Tool," and read back painstakingly from the log: "Message. Brenner Pharmaceutical to Marsport. Via Mars Machine Tool, Sun Lake, Pittco Three. Signed Brenner. Repeat, two cubic meters. Received okay. T. Campbell, Operator, end."

Tad's fingers were flying over the typewriter keyboard. Mimi and Nick would want to know how the rocket was filling up. The trick was to delay your estimated requirements to the last possible minute and then reserve a little more than you thought you'd need. Reserve too early and you might be stuck with space you couldn't fill but had to pay for. Reserve too late and there might be no room for your stuff until the next rocket.

"Mars Machine Tool to Sun Lake, end," said the headset. Tad started to raise Pittco's operator, the intermediate point between Sun Lake and Marsport, to boot the message on the last stage of its journey.

"Sun Lake to Pittco Three," he said into the mike. No answer. He went into "the buzz," droning, "Pittco Three, Pittco Three, Pittco Three, Sun Lake—"

"Pittco Three to Sun Lake, I read you," came at last, mushily, through the earphones. Tad was full of twelve-year-old scorn. Half a minute to ack, and then probably with a mouthful of sandwich! "Sun Lake to Pittco Three," he said. "Message. Brenner Pharmaceutical to Marsport. Via Mars Machine Tool, Sun Lake, Pittco Three. Request reserve two cubic meters cushioned cargo space outgoing rocket. Signed Brenner. Repeat, two cubic meters. Ack, please, G.A."

"Pittco to Sun Lake, message received. Charlie Dyer, Operator, out."

Tad fumed at the Pittco man's sloppiness and make-it-up-as-you-go procedure. Be a fine thing if everybody did that—messages would be garbled, short stopped, rocket-loading fouled up, people and cargoes miss their planes.

He tapped out on the log sheet: *Pittco Operator C. Dyer failed to follow procedure, omitted confirming repeat. T. Campbell.* He omitted Dyer's irksome use of "out" instead of "end" and the other irregularities, citing only the legally important error. That was just self-protection; if there were any errors in the final message, the weak spot on the relay could be identified. But Tad was uncomfortably certain that Dyer, if the report ever got back to him, would consider him an interfering brat.

He bet Mr. Graham's last message had got respectful handling from Pittco, in spite of the pain-in-the-neck Phillips Newscodex it had been couched in. They all wanted Graham. Tad had received half a dozen messages for the writer extending the hospitality of this industrial colony or that. The man had good sense to stick with Sun Lake, the boy thought approvingly. There was this jam with the rocket and the commissioner, but the Sun Lakers were unquestionably the best bunch of people on Mars.

"Pittco to Sun Lake," said Dyer's voice in the earphones.

"Sun Lake to Pittco, I read you, G.A.," snapped Tad.

"Pittco Three to Pittco One, message. Via Sun Lake, Mars Machine Tool, Brenner Pharmaceutical, Distillery Mars, Rolling Mills. Your outgoing rocket cargo space requirements estimate needed here

thirty-six hours. Reminder down-hold cushioned space requests minimum account new tariff schedule. Signed, Hackenburg for Reynolds. Repeat, thirty-six hours. Ack, please, G.A."

Huh! Dyer repeated numbers on *his* stuff, all right! Tad acked and booted the message on. The machine ship in the "canal" confluence would get it, then the drug fac-tory in the highlands dotted with marcaine weed, then the distillery among its tended fields of wiregrass, then the open hearth furnaces and rolling mills in the red taconite range, and at last Pittco One, in the heart of the silver and copper country.

He hoped he wouldn't have to handle any of Graham's long code jobs. Orders were to co-operate fully with the writer, but even Harve Stillman, who'd taken Graham's story on his rocket trip and Marsport, had run into trouble with it. Tad loafed through the material to the coded piece by Graham and shuddered.

It was okay, the boy supposed, for Earth, where you didn't want somebody tapping a PTM transmission beam and getting your news story, but why did the guy have to show off on Mars where the only way out was by rocket and you couldn't get scooped?

"Marsport 18 to Pittco Three," he heard faintly in the earphones. Automatically he ran his finger down the posted list of planes. Marsport 18 was a four-engine freighter belonging to the Marsport Hauling Company.

"Pittco Three to Marsport 18, I read you, G.A."

"Marsport 18 to Pittco, our estimated time of arrival is thirteen-fifty. Thirteen-fifty. We're bringing in your mail. End."

"Pittco to Marsport 18, O.K., E.T.A. is thirteen-fifty and I'll tell Mr. Hackenburg. End."

Mail, thought Tad enviously. All Sun Lake ever got was microfilmed reports from the New York office and busi-ness letters from customers. Aunt Minnie and Cousin Adelbert wouldn't write to you unless you wrote to them; and Sun Lake couldn't lay out cash for space-mail stamps.

Tad's ear itched. One thing he missed, he admitted to himself in a burst of candor, and he'd probably have to go on missing it. The Sun Lake Society of New York couldn't spontaneously mail him the latest *Captain Crusher Comix*.

He had read to tatters Volume CCXVII, Number 27, smuggled under his sweater from Earth. And to this day he hadn't figured out how the captain had escaped from the horrible jam he'd been in on Page 64. There had been a Venusian Crawl-bush on his right, a Martian Dwarf on his left, a Rigelian Paramonster drifting down from above and a Plutonian Bloodmole burrowing up from below. Well, the writers of Captain Crusher knew their business, thought Tad, though they certainly didn't know much about Mars—the *real* Mars. Their hero never seemed to need OxEn or clothing any warmer than hose and cape when on a Martian adventure. And he was always stum-bling over dwarfs and dead cities and lost civilizations.

Bunk, of course. Dwarfs, dead cities, and lost civiliza-tions would make Mars a more interesting place for a kid. But when a person grows up, other things mattered more than excitement. Things like doing a good job and know-ing it. Things like learning. Getting along. Probably, Tad thought uncomfortably, getting married some day.

"Mars Machine Tool to Sun Lake. Sun Lake, Sun Lake, Sun Lake, Mars Machine Tool, Sun Lake—"

"Sun Lake to Mars Machine Tool, I read you, G.A.," Tad snapped, peeved.

The operator might have waited just a second before he went into the buzz.

"Mars Machine Tool to Sun Lake, message. Pittco One to Pittco Three. Via Rolling Mills, Distillery Mars, Bren-ner Pharmaceutical, Mars Machine Tool, Sun Lake. Outgoing rocket cargo space requirements are: ballast, thirty-two cubic meters; braced antishift, twelve point seventy-five cubic meters; glass-lined tank, fifteen cubic meters; cushioned, one point five cubic meters. Regret advise will require steerage space one passenger. F.Y.I., millwright's helper Chuck Kelly disabled by marcaine addiction."

The repeats followed and Tad briskly receipted. He raised Pittco Three and booted the message, grinning at a muffled "God damn it!" over the earphones as he droned out the bad news about Kelly. Steerage passenger space didn't come as high as cushioned cargo cubage; a steerage passenger was

expected to grab a stanchion, hang on, and take his lumps during a rough landing; but it was high enough.

Sun Lake couldn't afford cushioned cubage, ever, and settled for braced antishift. Sometimes crates gave and split under the smashing accelerations, but the cash you had to lay out for cargo-protecting springs, hydraulic systems, and meticulous stowage by the supercargo himself wasn't there. It meant a disgruntled customer every once in a while, but the tariffs made you play it that way.

The door behind him opened and closed. "Gladys?" he asked. "You're early."

"It's me, sonny," said a man's voice—Graham's. "You mind filing a little copy for me?"

The newsman handed him a couple of onionskin pages. "Phillips Newscode," he said. "Think you can handle it?"

"I guess so," said Tad unhappily. "We're supposed to co-operate with you." Blankly he looked at the sheets and asked, "Why bother to code it, though?"

"It saves space, for one thing. You get about five words for one. 'GREENBAY,' for instance, means 'An excited crowd gathered at the scene.' 'THREEPLY' means 'In spite of his, or their, opposition.' And, for another thing, what's the point of my knowing the code if I never use it?" He grinned to show he was kidding.

Tad ignored the grin and remarked, "I thought that was it."

He entered the time in the log and said into the mike: "Sun Lake to Pittco Three." Pittco asked.

"Sun Lake to Pittco Three, long Phillips Newscode message. Sun Lake to Marsport. Via Pittco Three. Mes-sage: Microfilm following text and hold for arrival Doug-las Graham Marsport and pickup at Administration Building. GREENBAY PROGRAHAM SUNLAKE STOP POSTTWO MARSEST BRIGHTEST ARGUABLEST MARSING DOPEBORT FELKIL UNME SUNLAKE HOCFOCUS ETERS STOP SAPQUISFACT ERQUICK . . ."

Graham heard the last of the story go out and saw the kid note down the acknowledgment in the log.

"Good job," the Gunther said. "Thanks, fella."

Outside, the chilly night air fanned his face. It had been a dirty little trick to play on the boy. They'd give him hell when they found out, but the message had to clear and that Stillman knew a little Phillips—enough to wonder and ask questions.

Graham took a swig from his pocket flask and started down the street. He'd needed the drink, and he needed a long walk. It was surgery, he told himself, but surgery wasn't always pleasant for the surgeon. That doctor might be able to understand if he could only step back and see the thing in perspective. As it was, Tony obviously be-lieved Mrs. Kandro's absurd story about somebody doping the beans.

The writer grinned sardonically. What a cesspool Mars must be if even these so-called idealists were so corrupted! Marcaine addiction by a brand-new mother, theft of a huge quantity of marcaine clearly traced to the Colony. The doctor would hate him and think him two-faced, which he was. It was part of the job. He was going to start an avalanche; a lot of people would hate him for it.

An impeccable, professional hatchet job on Sun Lake was the lever that would topple the boulder to start the avalanche. The public-relations boys of the industrials used to be newspapermen themselves, and they could pick their way through Phillips. The word would be passed like lightning. They'd learn, to their horror, that this wasn't going to be a cheerful travelog quickie like his last two or three; that Graham was out for blood. The coded dispatch would be talked over and worried over in most of Mars' administration buildings tonight. They would debate whether he was going to put the blast on all the colonies. But they'd note that he pinned all the guilt so far on Sun Lake, not mentioning specifically that the abortion and the prostitution had occurred at Pittco.

So, by tomorrow morning, he'd let one of the indus-trials send a plane for him. He'd been playing hard to get for two days—long enough. He'd put on his jovial mask and they'd fall all over themselves dishing out the dirt on each other. He'd make it a point to pass through Brenner Pharmaceutical. Quasi-legal operators like Brenner always knew who was cutting corners. And Bell—what tills did he have his hand in?

Graham knew there wasn't another newsman alive who could swing it—the first real story to come

out of Mars besides press handouts from the industrials. And the planet was rotten-ripe for it.

Once he'd been a green reporter, lucky enough to break the Bell scandal. He'd actually been sorry for the crook. There'd been a lot of changes since. It was funny what happened to you when you got into the upper brackets.

First you grabbed and grabbed. Women, a penthouse with a two-acre living-room, silk shirts "built" for you instead of the nylon all the paycheck stiffers wore, "beefsteaks" broiled over bootleg charcoal made of real wood from one of Earth's few thousand acres of remaining trees.

You grabbed and grabbed, and then you got sick of grabbing. You felt empty and blank and worked like hell to make yourself think you were happy. And then, if you were lucky, you found out who you were.

Graham had found out that he—the youngest one, un-derfed, the one the big boys ganged up on for snitching, the one the cop called a yellow little liar, the one nobody liked, the one who always got his head knuckled when they played nigger Inna Graveyard—yes, he had power. It was the monstrous energy of Earth's swarming billions. If you could reach them, you could have them. You could slash down what was rotten and corrupt: a thieving banker, a bribed commissioner, a Mars Colony.

Under the jovial mask it hurt when they called you a sensationalist, said you were unanalytical, had no philos-ophy.

Graham stumbled and took a swig from his flask.

Who had to have a philosophy? What was wrong with exposing crackpots and crooks? The first real news story to come out of Mars would break up the Sun Lake Colony. Some good would go with the bad; the surgeon had no choice. That Kandro woman and her baby! The child belonged on Earth. And it would go there.

"Hey!" he said. Where the hell was the doctor anyway? Wandering in the desert, high as a kite on his expected triumph. His feet had led him down the Colony street, along the path to the airfield, past it, and a few kilometers toward the Rimrock Hills. He blamed it on the Mars gravity. Your legs didn't tire here, for one thing. The radio shack light was plain behind him; dimmer and off to the left of it shone the windows of the Lab, merged in one beacon.

The radio shack light went out and then on again. A mo-ment later, so did the light from the Lab.

"Power interruption," he said. "Or I blinked."

It happened again, first the radio shack and then the Lab. And then it happened once more.

The writer took out his flask and gulped. "Who's out there?" he yelled. "I'm Graham!"

There wasn't any answer, but something came whistling out of the darkness at him, striking his parka and falling to the ground. He fumbled for it while still trying to peer through the night for whatever had passed between him and the lights of Sun Lake.

"What do you want?" he yelled into the darkness hys-terically. "I'm Graham! The writer! Who are you?"

Something whizzed at him and hit his shoulder.

"Cut that out!" he shrieked, and began to run for the lights of Sun Lake. He had taken only a few steps when something caught at his leg and he floundered onto the ground. The next and last thing he felt was a paralyzing blow on the back of his head.

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

TONY WOKE UP in time for breakfast, an achievement in itself. He'd had some hundred and fifty minutes of sleep after a long and hard day, and that interrupted by emer-gency, crisis, and triumph.

He washed without noticing the stench of the alcohol. He noted the time; good thing there was no Lab inspec-tion to do this morning. He noticed the closed bedroom door; good thing he'd so hospitably given up his own bed to Graham, considering the unexpected turn of events the night before. He threw his parka over his shoulders and stepped out into the wan sunlight, oblivious to the lingering chill; good thing he—

Good thing he could still laugh at himself, he decided. What was the old saw about all the world

loving a lover? Nothing to it—it was the lover who loved the whole world. *Love, lover, loving*, he rolled the words around in his mind, trying to tell himself that nothing had really changed. All the old problems were still there, and a new one, really, taken on.

But that wasn't so. Graham had spent half the night writing his promised story. Sunny Kandro was all right at last. And Anna—Ansie—a problem? He could remember thinking in the distant past, as long as two days ago, that such an involvement would present problems, but he couldn't for the life of him remember what they were supposed to have been.

He went in to breakfast, not trying to conceal his ex-uberance, and sat down between Harve Stillman and Joe Gracey.

"What's got into you?" Harve asked.

"Something *good* happen?" Gracey demanded.

Tony nodded. "The Kandro baby," he explained, using the first thing that popped into his head. "Jim woke me up last night. Polly was—was having trouble with the baby," he hastily amended the story.

He'd have to tell Gracey about the marcaine. There *was* a problem after all, but this wasn't the place for it; a Council meeting after breakfast maybe.

"You know we've been having feeding trouble all along," he explained. "I found the trouble last night. I don't understand it, but it works. I took Sunny's mask off."

"You *what*?"

"Took his mask off; he doesn't need it. Eats fine without it, too. Trouble was, he couldn't breathe through his mouth and eat at the same time."

"Well, I'll be— How do you figure it?"

"Hey, there's a story for the Gunther," Harve suggested. " 'Medical Miracle on Mars,' and all that stuff. Where is he anyhow?"

"Still sleeping, I guess. The bedroom door was closed."

"Did you talk to him last night?" Gracey asked.

Tony attacked his plate of fried beans, washed them down with a gulp of "coffee," and told the other man about Graham's promise. "He was up half the night writing, too. I heard him while I was examining the baby."

"Did he show it to you?"

"Not yet. He was asleep when I got back."

Harve pushed back his chair with a grunt of satisfac-tion. "I feel better already." He grinned. "First decent meal I've had in days. What's the program for today, Doc? You going to need me on radiological work?"

"I don't think so. I'll let you know if we do, after Joe and I get together with the others. Got time for a meeting after breakfast?" he asked the agronomist, and Gracey nodded.

"Okay, I'll be in the radio shack if you want me," Harve said. "The kids took over all day yesterday. Don't like to leave them too long on their own."

"Right. But I don't think we'll need you."

That marcaine business—how in all that was holy, the doctor wondered, did anybody get marcaine onto Polly's beans? After all the searching, in the middle of the hunt, who would do it? Why? And above all, *how*?

Maybe one of the others would have an angle on it... .

"One thing I'm glad about," Gracey said soberly. "We *did* make a thorough search. Whatever happens from here on out, at least we've proved to our own satisfaction that nobody in Sun Lake stole the stuff."

"That's nice to know," Mimi agreed with considerably less feeling. "But frankly, I'd almost feel better if we *had* found it. I'd gladly turn the bum who took it over to Bell's tender mercies, if it was one of us. This way, we have to depend on Graham. You're *sure* he's with us?" She looked questioningly from the doctor to the electronics man.

"How sure can you get?" Nick shrugged. "He said so. Now we wait to see his story, that's all."

"I don't think we have to worry about that," Tony said. He couldn't tell them any more. He was sure

himself, but how could he explain without giving away Anna's secret? "Look," he went on briskly, "there's something else we *do* have to think about. I told you about Sunny Kandro, Joe. There's more to it than what I said at breakfast."

Nick and Mimi both sat forward with new interest, as Tony repeated the news about the removal of Sunny's mask. He cut off their questions. "I didn't tell you how it started, though. Jim came to get me, not for the baby, but for Polly."

A sharp rap on the door stopped him. Harve Stillman walked in. his face was grim; he carried a familiar sheaf of onionskin pages in his hands.

"What's the matter, Harve?" Mimi demanded. "Aren't you supposed to be on the shift in the radio shack?"

"That's right. I walked out."

"No relief?" she snapped. "Are you sick?"

"I'm sick, all right. And it doesn't make any difference now whether the radio's manned or not." He slapped the onionskin onto the table, and threw down on top of it two sheets of closely written radio log paper. "There you are, folks, have a look. It's all down in black and white. That's the translation on the log sheets. The bastard filed it in Phillips, so Tad wouldn't know what he was sending. When I think what a sucker I was, letting him pump me about who knew newscode around here! Go on, read it."

Mimi picked up the sheets and glanced at the penciled text. Her face went white.

"Hey," Nick protested, "could you maybe let us in on it?"

"Certainly," she smiled bitterly. "This is the story written for us by D. Graham, your friend and mine: I was greeted by a frightened crowd on my arrival at Sun Lake, and no wonder. After two days in this community, I am able to reply to the heads-in-the-clouds idealists who claim that on Mars lies the hope of the human race. My reply is that on Mars I immediately came face-to-face with drunk-enness, prostitution, narcotics, criminal abortion, and murder. It is not for me to say whether this means that Sun Lake Colony, an apparent center of these activities, should be shut down by law and its inmates deported to Earth. But I do know—

"That's crazy!" Nick broke in. "I heard him say myself—" He stood up angrily.

Tony reached out a hand to restrain him. "He didn't promise a damn thing, Nick. We just heard it that way. He said he'd do a story, that's all."

"That's enough for me," Cantrella replied. "He prom-ised, and he's by God going to keep his promise."

"Sit *down*, Nick," Mimi interrupted. "Beating Graham up isn't going to solve anything. Harve, you get back on duty, and buzz one of the kids to go over to Tony's and collect Graham. If he's asleep, tell them to wake him up. We'll go through the rest of this while we're waiting."

Harve slammed the door behind him, and Mimi turned to the others. "I'm sorry. I should have checked with you first. Every time something goes wrong, I start giving orders as if I owned the place. Here." She handed the sheets to Joe Gracey. "You look calm. You read it."

Joe took the papers and went on where she had stopped before.

"He can't do that!" Nick protested furiously, when Joe finished. "That story is full of lies! The murder wasn't here. Neither was most of the other stuff. How can he—

"He *did*," Tony pointed out. "How much convincing do you need?"

"It's carefully worded," Gracey said. "Most of it isn't lies at all, just evasions and implications."

"We've got to assume he's smart enough to write a libel-proof story." Mimi had recovered her briskness. "There's one place I think he slipped, though. Can I see those sheets of Graham's again, foe?"

Her eyes were shining when she looked again. "We've got him!" she said. "I'm sure of it! Let's call in O'Donnell and get his opinion on it. This stuff about Polly." She read aloud: "... the young mother of a newborn baby, unable to feed her infant because of her hopeless addiction to marcamine. This reporter was present at a midnight emer-gency when the Colony's doctor was called to save the child from the ministrations of its hysterical mother ...' Tony, you can testify to that!"

"I don't know," said the doctor painfully. "Sure, I realize Polly's not an addict, but—that's what I was start-ing to tell you when Harve came in. That's what Jim got me up for last night. Polly was sick, and

there's no doubt that it was a dose of marcaine that was responsible."

"What?"

"Polly?"

"But she couldn't be the one. She was—"

"How did Graham find out about it?"

"We were both asleep when Kandro came in," he ex-plaind, "and the noise woke Graham too. I didn't see him again myself; hut I heard him typing when I was in the hospital with the baby. And Ans—Anna told me she talked to him while she was making the bottles. She had no rea-son to hold back any information. I told her myself that he was writing a friendly story."

"Well, that fixes us, but good. Where did Polly get the stuff?" Nick demanded.

"I've been trying to figure that myself," Tony said. "I don't think *she* got it. Her reactions were not those of a narcaine user, and I'd swear she was shocked when I diagnosed it. The stuff was put there—and don't ask me who, or why, because I can't even begin to guess."

"Well, we've got our hands full," Mimi said thoughtfully. "'Where do we start? It seems to me the same answer is going to settle two of our problems. Where did Polly's marcaine come from, and how are we ever going to get out of this impossible situation with Bell?"

"That's not all," Nick added grimly. "We can solve both of those, and still get booted off Mars when this story breaks."

"That's a separate matter. All I can do about it is try to talk to Graham—or prove to him that at least part of the story is libelous. Come in," Mimi called, in answer to a knock outside.

Gladys Porosky pushed the door open and announced breathlessly, "We can't find him. We looked all over and he's not any place."

"Graham?" Tony jumped to his feet. "He was asleep in my bedroom; I left him there. He has to be around."

Gladys shook her head. "We opened the door when he didn't answer, and he wasn't there. Then we scattered; all the kids have been looking. He's not at the Lab, or in the fields, and he's not in any of the houses. Nobody's seen him all morning."

"Thanks, Gladys," Mimi cut her short. "Will you try to find Jack O'Donnell for me? Ask him to come over here."

"Okay." She slammed out of the door, leaving a whirlwind of babble and excitement behind her.

"I suppose he's skipped," Tony said. "Probably mes-saged one of the industrial outfits in that damn code of his, and got picked up during the night. His bags are still at my place, though—I saw them this morning. That's funny."

"What's luggage to a guy who can write like that?" Gracey asked. "He can get all the luggage he wants by wiping out another plague spot like us."

O'Donnell came in, and they waited in tense silence while the ex-lawyer read through Harve's penciled translation. "Only possible libelous matter I see is about the marcaine-addict mother. What's all that?"

They told him, and he shook his head. "No more chance in a court of law than a snowball in hell," he said flatly.

"But I don't care *how* he worded it. The story's not true."

"How many stories are? If truth or justice made any difference in the Earth courts, I wouldn't be here. I loved the law. The way it looked in the books, that is. I guess I'll have to pass my bar examinations all over again. Mars is under the Pan State, but I suppose this constitutes inter-rupted residence anyway."

"Big fat chance you'll have of getting to take your bar exams after that smear," said Gracey. "I'm not kidding myself about getting to teach college again. If I can get some money together, I'm going to try commercial sea-weeds."

"God help Sargasso Limited," said Nick Cantrella. "And God help Consolidated Electronic when I start my shop again in Denver. It took them three months to run me into bankruptcy last trip around, but I'll get them up to four this time. They can't stand much of that kind of punishment."

"Let's not jump to conclusions," Mimi said, with the quiver back in her determinedly businesslike

voice. "Let's assume Graham's skipped and the story's going through. We might still be able to hang on if we can square ourselves with Bell."

"Bell and Graham have no use for each other," Tony said. "Maybe this will make Bell easier to deal with."

"That I doubt. Let's figure on the worst. Suppose we *can't* convince Bell. We'll have two possible courses of action. We can sell out fast. From what I understand of this situation, I'm sure that the Commissioner would find a legal loophole for us on the marcaine deal if we decided to sell to, for instance, Brenner. If we do that, we can pay off what money we owe on Earth, book passage for our members, and with luck, have a few dollars left over to divide between us." She smiled humorlessly. "You might even have a capital investment of five or ten dollars, Nick, to start working on Con-Electron."

"Good enough," he said. "It'll give me courage—if I can still find a bar with a five-buck beer, that is."

"That," Mimi went on, "would be the smart thing to do. But there's another way. We can hang on through the cordon, hoping to prove our point. It leaves us some hope, but it leaves us penniless, even if we manage to stick out the six months. Whatever cash or credit we have on hand we'll have to pay out for OxEn. Don't think Bell is going to let us have the stuff free. Meanwhile, our accounts payable keep coming due, and accumulating interest. There's a good chance that long before the six months are up we'll be forced into involuntary bankruptcy. That's how Pittco got Economy Metals last year. We'd then be shipped back to Earth as distress cases, with a prior lien on our future earnings, if any."

Mimi sat down and Tony studied her handsome face as if he were seeing it for the first time. She'd been way up in the auditing department of a vast insurance company once. It would be hard on her. But he wanted to yell and beat down doors when he thought of what it would mean to Anna, plunged into the screaming hell of Earth's emotional "noise" that she couldn't block out.

He tried to think like a schemer and, knowing that it wouldn't work, told himself: *You marry Anna, take Brenner's offer—it's still open: good doctors aren't that easy to come by on Mars—and you set her up in a decent home.* But the whole thing crumbled under its own weight. She wouldn't marry a doctor whose doctoring was to patch up marcaine factory hands when they sniffed too much of the stuff... .

"Eh?" he asked. Somebody was talking to him. "Sell now, or hang on?" Mimi patiently repeated. "I want to think about it," he told her.

The others felt the same way. It wasn't a thing you could make up your mind about in a few minutes, not after the years and years of always thinking one way: Colony survival. To have to decide now which way to kill the Colony ...

Tony headed out to the Lab, racking his brains for an answer. But halfway there, he found to his chagrin that he wasn't serious at all. He was striding along freely in the clean air and light gravity, to the rhythmic mental chant Ansie—Anna—Ann—Ansie

## CHAPTER TWENTY

JOAN RADCLIFF lay almost peacefully, drugging herself against the pain in her limbs and head by a familiar reverie of which she never tired. She saw Sun Lake Colony at some vague time in the future, a City of God, glowing against the transfigured Martian desert, spiring into the Martian air, with angelic beings vaguely recognizable in some way as the original colonists.

Her Hank, the bold explorer, with a bare-chested, archaic, swordgirt look; Doctor Tony, calm and wise and very old, soothing ills with miraculous lotions and calming troubled minds with dignified counsel; Mimi Jonathan, revered and able, disposing of this and that with sharp, just terseness; Anna Willendorf mothering hundreds serenely; brave Jim and Polly Kandro and their wonderful child, the hope of them all.

She wasn't there herself, but it was all right because she had done something wonderful for them. They all paused and lowered their voices when they thought of her. Shed the sick and despaired, had in the end surprised and awed them all by doing something wonderful for them, and they paid her memory



homage.

Nagging reality, never entirely silent, jeered at her that she was a useless husk draining the Colony's priceless food, and water, giving nothing in return. She shifted on the bed.

Pains shot through her joints and her heart labored. *You're as good as they are*, whispered the tempter; *you're better than they are. How many of them could stand the pain and not murmur, never think of anything but the good of the Colony? But I'm not*, she raged back. *I'm not. I shouldn't have got sick; I can't work now; they have to nurse me. But you didn't drink any water until Tony made you*, said the tempter. *Wasn't that more than any of them would do? Won't they be sorry when you're dead and they find out how you suffered?*

She tried to fix her tormented mind on her Hank, but he had a sullen, accusing stare. She was tying him down; if they sent her back to Earth, he'd have to go too. They wouldn't let him stay in the Colony.

She wished Anna hadn't left, and swallowed the thought painfully. Anna's time belonged to the Colony and not to her. It was nasty of her to want Anna to stay with her so much. She straightened one puffy leg and felt a lance of pain shoot from toes to groin; she bared her clenched teeth but didn't let a whimper escape her.

Anna had propped her up in bed before, so she could look out the window. Now she turned her head slowly and looked out.

*I see through the window, she told herself. I see across the Colony street to a corner of the Kandros' hut with a little of their streetside window showing. I see Polly Kan-dro cleaning the inside of the window, but she doesn't see me. Now she's coming out and cleaning the outside of the window. Now she turns and sees me and waves and I smile. Now she takes her cloth and goes around her hut to clean the back window and I can't see her any more.*

*And now something glides down the Colony street with Sunny Kandro in its thin brown arms.*

*And now Polly runs around her hut again, her face white as chalk, tries faintly to call me, wave to me, and falls down out of sight.*

Joan knew what she ought to do, and she tried. The intercom button had been put in so she had only to move her hand a few inches. She reached out for the button, and held her finger on it, but there was no answering click. It was a few seconds and maybe minutes, and the thing that had stolen Polly's baby was gone down the other end of the street.

The sick girl sat up agonizingly and thought: *I can do something now. They won't be able to say I was foolish, because if I wait any longer I won't be able to catch up, it will be too far away. There's nobody else to do it except Polly, and she fainted. It has to be done right away. I can't wait for them to answer and then come from the Lab.*

*Poor Polly*, she thought as her heart thudded and faltered. *We must help one another...*

She shaded her eyes against the late morning sun and looked up and past the Colony street through the clear Mars air. There was a moving dot passing the airfield now, and she started after it, one step, two steps, three steps, as the City of God reformed in her mind and her eyes never left the moving dot.

Earth would be gone, a dead thing swimming in the deeps of space, a grave example for children. See? You must not hate, you must not fear, you must always help or that will happen to us. You must be kind and like people; you mustn't make weapons because you never know where making weapons will end.

And the children would ask curiously what it was like and their elders would tell them it was crowded and dirty; that nobody ever had enough to eat, that people poured poison into the air and pretended it didn't matter. That it wasn't like Sun Lake, their spacious, clean, sweet-smell-ing home, that there wouldn't have been any Sun Lake if not for the great pioneers like Joan Radcliff who suffered and died for them.

She wept convulsively at the pain in her limbs as she stumped across the desert rocks. They sliced her bare feet but she dared not look down ahead of her for fear of losing that fleeing dot she followed.

*I have done what I could*, she thought. *Hank, you are; free.* She fell forward and dragged her sprawled right arm along the ground so that it pointed to the moving dot and the Rimrock Hills beyond it... .

Somebody grabbed Tony by the arm and motioned to his helmet. He stared a moment, uncomprehending, then switched on the helmet radio.

"What's up?"

"Joan—Joan Radcliff!" It was one of Mimi's young as-sistants in the Lab office. "She picked up the intercom and buzzed it. When I answered it, it went dead."

"I'll be right out." The doctor made it on the double, in spite of the hampering suit, out of the shipping room and into the shower. He would have given a year of his own life to be able to speed up the decontamination process this one time, but he'd been near the open crates. It wouldn't help Joan if he exposed himself, and her, too, to radiation disease.

He ran the distance from the Lab to the street of houses. It was still running when he approached the Kandros' hut, and almost missed seeing Polly's limp figure in the road. Thoroughly bewildered, he picked her up and looked around for help. There was no one in sight.

A moment's indecision, and then, quickly, he carried Polly toward the Radcliff hut and deposited her gently on the wall hunk in the living-room. Pulse and respira-tion okay; she would keep. He headed for Joan's bedroom.

The doctor wasted a scant second staring at the empty bed; to him it seemed an endless time that had gone by. He pressed the intercom button, and waited through another eternity till the Lab answered.

Whatever had happened, whatever mysterious force had removed Joan from her bed and left Polly unconscious in the street, this, he realized, must have been the ulti-mate agony for Joan—to lie in this bed, in dreadful haste, to press this button and wait and wait until it was too late .. .

"That's you, Doc? What's up?"

"Trouble. Get Jim Kandro out here. To the Radcliffs'! And get Anna. Send her to Kandros'. There's no one with the baby. Is Mimi there? Put her on."

"Tony?" The Lab administrator's crisp voice was reassuring; he could leave part of the problem, at least, in her competent hands.

"There's trouble here, Mim—don't know what, but Polly's fainted and Joan's disappeared."

"I'll be right there." She hung up. Tony retreated on step toward the living-room, had an afterthought, and went back to the intercom.

"Get Cantrella here, too," he told the Lab office. "Tell him to bring along the e.e.g. setup. Fast."

Polly didn't look too bad. Marcaine again? He'd know soon.

Jim Kandro burst in, panting and terrified. His wide eyes went from his wife to the doctor, and a single raise able word came from him. "*Again?*"

"I don't know. She fainted. Take her home, then look at Sunny. Anna's on her way over to help you."

Jim left with his burden in his arms, and Tony returned to the sick girl's bedroom. There was no trace, no clue, nothing he could find.

A heartbroken shout from across the street sent him running out of the house, over to the Kandros'. The living-room was empty.

In the bedroom, Polly lay alone, still unconscious. He found Kandro in the new nursery, squatting on the floor beside the baby's empty crib, rocking in misery.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

"THEY OUGHT to get the test finished in a few minutes, but if you're ready, you might as well start now. It's a hundred to one chance against its being anything but cave dirt. Joe Gracey crumbled between skinny, sensitive fingers bit of soil taken from the nursery floor.

"As soon as we get the transceiver," Mimi said. "Harve's bringing it over now."

Anna appeared in the doorway. "She's conscious now." Tony went back into the bedroom. "Polly?"

Her eyelids fluttered open and closed. Her pulse was stronger, but she wasn't really ready to talk. He had to try. Without a stimulant, if possible.

"What happened, Polly?" he asked.

"What's the use?" she said feebly. "What's the use? We tried and tried on Earth, and I just got sick,

and we had Sunny here, and now they've taken him. It isn't any good."

"Who's taken him, Polly?"

"I went out to clean the windows. I cleaned the front window and then I went around to clean the back win-dow. When I looked in Sunny was gone. That's all. They took him. They just took him."

"Who took him, Polly?"

"I don't know. Martians. Dwarfs. We tried and tried on Earth—"

"Shock," Tony muttered. "There will be a reaction. She shouldn't be left alone."

"I'll stay," Anna offered.

"No, not you. We'll need you along with us."

"I'd rather not," she said.

"Ansie," he pleaded, biting back his angry disappoint-ment.

"I shouldn't have told you," she said dully. "I should never have told anybody. All right, I'll go."

He smiled and gripped her arm. "Of course you will. You would have anyway."

"No," she said. "I wouldn't."

"Then maybe it's a good thing you told me." His voice was stern, but his hand pulled her closer to him.

Polly twisted on the bed and sobbed. Anna pulled away. "Maybe." She bit her lip, looked up at him. "Only *please* don't be angry at me. I can't stand it if you keep getting angry at me." She turned and fled.

Tony went back to the bed, erasing Anna and her prob-lems from his mind with practiced determination. Polly was trembling uncontrollably. There was no more infor-mation to be had from her. He gave her a sedative and went out to join the others.

Harve had arrived with the transceiver in his hand. At Anna's suggestion, a rush call was sent out for Hank Radcliff to stay with Polly. He didn't know about Joan; they decided not to tell him about it.

"We need a man here with her," the doctor explained briefly. "The baby's disappeared, and we're going out now and try to track it. Polly might want to get up and follow. *You keep her in bed.*"

"Sure, Doc."

"Nick Cantrella will be over with some equipment. Tell him to test Polly."

They left the house, Mimi and Anna and the doctor Jim Kandro, Harve Stillman, and Joe Gracey.

"Look at that." Gracey was bending over in the road pointing to the barely discernible mark of a bare toe. Here in the bottom of the old "canal" bed, where the settlement was built, the land retained a trace of moisture, enough to hold an impression for a while.

Only part of a toe, but it pointed a direction.

They headed up the street, past the huts toward the landing field.

"Hey, Joe!" Someone was pounding up the hill after them, shouting. It was one of the men from the Argo Lab.

"That test—it's from the hills, all right, most likely from inside a cave, but hill dirt. That all you wanted?"

"Right. Thanks."

"They told me you wanted the word fast," the man said curiously. "Glad I caught you."

"Glad you did," Gracey agreed mildly. "Thanks again." He turned his back on the man. "Let's go."

They topped the slight rise that marked the farthest extent of the old river bed's inundations, and faced a featureless expanse of level desert land, broken only by *Lazy Girl*, chocked on the landing field at their left, and the hills in the distance. No other human being was in sight. It was hopeless to look for footprints here, in the constantly shifting dust.

"The hills?" Mimi said.

Tony looked at Anna; she shrugged almost impercep-tibly.

"Might as well," he agreed.

They moved forward, Kandro striding ahead with his hands knotted into bony fists, his eyes set on the hills, un-aware of the ground under his feet or of the people with him. It was Harve who found the print they had known was impossible—not really a footprint, but a spot of mois-ture, fast evaporating, still retaining a semblance of the shape of a human foot.

A little farther on there was another; they were going the right way. Tony stopped for a minute at one of the damp spots, poked a finger curiously into the ground. Grit and salt, as he had expected.

She couldn't have lived through it. He didn't know how she got as far as she did, but even if her heart held out, she must have sweated her life away to have left those damp indicators in the thirsty soil.

Only a little farther and the ground began to be littered with the refuse of the Rimrock Hills—here and there a sliver of stone, a drift of mineral salts. Gradually the dust gave way to sharp rock and hard-packed salt pans. And the footprints of sweat gave way to footprints of blood.

Mimi drew in her breath between her teeth at the thought of the sick girl stumbling barefoot over the slicing, razor-edged stones.

"I see her," Kandro whispered, still striding ahead.

They raced a kilometer over the jagged rock and planed-off salt crust to the girl's body. She lay prone, with her right arm flung up and pointing to the Rimrock Hills.

Tony peeled back her eyelid and reached for the pulse. He turned to his bag, and Anna—blessed Anna—was already getting out the hypodermic syringe.

"Adrenalin?"

He nodded. Swiftly and efficiently she prepared the hypo and handed it to him. He bent over the girl busily, then sat back to wait.

He glanced at Anna and straightened up quickly. "What is it?"

Her face was withdrawn and intense, her head held back like an animal scenting the wind. She scanned the broke waste and pointed a hesitant finger. "Out there—it's that way—moving a little."

Kandro was on his way before she stopped speaking. Stillman shaded his eyes and peered. "A rock in the heat haze," he pronounced finally. "Nothing alive."

Tony saw Anna shake her head in a small involuntary disagreement.

They stood and waited in a tense small circle until Jim reached the spot. He looked down and they saw him hesitate, then move on with the same determined stride. Gracey lit out after him. Mimi murmured approval. There was no telling what Kandro might do in his present mood.

The barely audible noise from the ground, and Tony was on his knees beside Joan. Her eyes went wide open, shining with an inner glory that was unholy in the dirt streaked, bloodstained dead white of her face. She smiled as a child might smile, with perfect inner composure; she was pleased with herself.

"Joan," the doctor said, "can you talk?"

"Yes, of course." But she couldn't. She only mouthed the words.

"Does it hurt any place?"

She shook her head, or started to, but when she had turned it to one side she lacked the strength to bring it back. "No." This time she forced a little air through to sound the word.

She was dying and he knew it. If it were only the heat he might have been able to save her. But her body had been punished too much; it had given up. The water and the air that kept it alive were spent. Her body was a dead husk in which, for a moment, abetted by the little quantity of adrenalin, her heart and brain refused to die.

He had to decide. They needed what information she might have. She needed every bit of energy she had, to live out what minutes were left. The minutes didn't matter he told himself.

He knew, even as he made up his mind, that this, like the ghost baby, would haunt him all his life. If he was wrong, if she had any chance to live, he was committing murder. But another life hung in the balance too.

"Listen to me, Joan." He put his mouth close to her face. "Just say yes or no. Did you see somebody take the Kandros' baby?"

"Yes." She smiled up at him beatifically.

"Do you know who it was?"

"Yes—no—I saw—"

"Don't try to talk. You saw the kidnaper clearly?"

"Yes."

"Then it was someone you don't know?"

"No—yes—"

"I'll ask it differently. Was it a stranger?"

"Yes." She looked doubtful.

"Anyone from the Colony?"

"No."

"A man?"

"No—maybe."

"A woman?"

"No."

"Someone from Pittco?"

She didn't answer. Her eyes were staring at her arm. The doctor had rolled her over, and the arm was at her side, stretched out. She let out a weird cry of fury and frustration. Tony watched and listened, puzzled, till Anna bent over.

"It's all right, Joan," she said softly. "You showed us. We saw the way it pointed. Jim is going that way now."

The girl's eyes relaxed, and once again the dreadful light of joy shone from them.

"Love me," she said distinctly. "I helped finally. Tony—" He bent over. She was trailing off again, less breath with each word. She might have minutes left, or seconds.

"Nobody—believed—me—or—them—it was—"

She stopped, gasping, and the quiet smile of content gave way to a twisted grin of amusement.

"Dwarf," she said, and no more.

Tony closed her eyes and looked up to Anna's serene face. He saw that they were alone with the body of the dead girl.

"Where—?" He got to his feet, carefully dulling sensation, refusing to feel anything.

"Over there." She pointed to where two figures stooped over something on the ground. Farther off, Kandro's tall figure, still resolutely facing toward the hills, was being restrained by a smaller man—Joe Gracey? That meant it was Mimi and Harve close by.

"They found something?"

"Somebody," she corrected, and couldn't control a small shudder.

Tony started forward. "You better stay with Joan," he said with difficulty, hating to admit any weakness in her.

"I'll call you if—if we need you for anything."

"Thank you." She was more honest about it than he could be...

They saw him coming twenty meters off.

"It's Graham," Mimi called.

"The lying bastard steals babies too!" Harve spat out in disgust.

He looks bad," Mimi said quietly. "We didn't touch him. We were waiting for you."

"Good." The doctor bent down and felt along the torso for broken bones. Carefully he rolled the writer over.

Graham's puffed eyes opened. Through broken lip with dried blood crusted on them he rasped jeeringly "Come back to finish the job? God-damned cowards. Sneak up on a man. God-damned cowards!"

"None of our people did this to you," Tony said steadily. His hands ran over the writer's battered head and neck. The left clavicle was fractured, his nose was broken; his left eardrum had been ruptured by blows.

"Let's get him back to the hospital," he said. "Harve, tell the radio shack to raise Marsport. Get Bell. Tell him we need that Bloodhound. Tell him I will not take no for an answer."

## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

IN AWKWARD SILENCE the little procession walked along the Colony street, Kandro and

Stillman together, carrying the writer, and Tony bearing the dead girl in his arms. The news had gotten around. Lab work seemed once again to have stopped completely.

They escaped the heartsick stares of the colonists only when they entered Tony's hut-and-hospital. He deposited Joan there, on his own bed. It was still rumpled from Graham's brief occupancy the night before. They settled the writer on the hospital table. With Anna's help, he removed the torn and bloody clothing from Graham's body.

"If you don't need us for anything, Tony, I think we better get going," Mimi said. "We ought to stop in and see Polly."

"Sure. Go ahead—oh, wait a minute." Jim Kandro turned from his fixed spot in the doorway to listen.

Tony beckoned the black-haired Lab administrator to the other side of the room.

"Mimi," he said in an undertone, "you ought to know that Polly has a gun. I'm not sure whether Jim knows it or not. You might want it if you're going out again. Anyhow, somebody ought to get it out of there."

She nodded. "Where is it?"

"Used to be in the baby's crib, but I think I talked her out of that. Don't know now."

"Okay. I'll find it. I think we better take it along. Oh—I'll send Hank back here."

He was thoughtful. "Anna." She looked up. Her face was set and miserable. "Are you going out with the search party?" he asked, an innocent question to the others who listened, with a world of agonizing significance for Anna "I— isn't Nick picking the people to go?"

"I thought you might *want* to go. If you're sticking around, you can handle Hank, can't you?"

"Oh, yes," she said eagerly. "I'd be much more useful that way, wouldn't I?"

He shrugged and tried to figure it out: she was perfectly willing to stay here in the hospital, to expose herself to Graham's physical pain and Hank's inevitable agony. But she was afraid to go out after the baby. Why?

Later, he decided, he could talk to her. He went briskly back to the table and began his examination of Graham. The writer was a mass of bruises from his chest up; he cursed feebly when the doctor felt for fractures. Tony set the collar bone and shot him full of sedation. "Your left eardrum is ruptured," he said coldly. "An operation can correct that on Earth."

"You bust 'em, somebody else fixes 'em," Graham muttered.

"Think what you want." He pushed the wheeled table over to the high bed Polly occupied just a few days earlier.

Graham groaned involuntarily as Tony shifted his shoulder. The doctor eased up. *What for?* he stormed at himself. *Why should I be gentle with the dirty sneak?* He glanced hastily at Anna and caught the half-smile on her face as she pulled the covers over the writer.

"I'm going into the other room, Graham," Tony said "You can call me if you need me."

"Sure," Graham told him. "I'll call you soon as I feel ready for another beating. I love it."

Tony didn't answer. In the other room, he sat down and faced Anna intently. "Do you know whether any of our people could have done that to him?"

"They aren't haters," she said slowly. "If they were, they wouldn't be here. Somebody might fly into a rage and break his jaw, but methodical *punishment* like that—no."

"I'll tell you what it reminds me of. Big Ginny."

"She was killed."

"She was beaten up, though that wasn't what killed her."

"Does it have anything to do with Pittco?" Anna asked. "Why should they beat Graham? Why should they have beaten that woman?"

"I don't know." He managed a feeble grin. "You know that." He lowered his voice. "Can you 'hear' him?"

"He's in a lot of pain. Shock's worn off. And he hates us. God, he hates us. I'm glad he hasn't got a gun."

"He's got a by-line. That's just as good."

"Evidently that just occurred to him. Can he hear us in there? He's gloating now. It must be a fantasy

about what he's going to do to us."

"Hell, we're through anyway. What difference does it make? All I want now is to find Sunny and get off this damned planet and give up trying. I'm sick of it."

"You're not even kidding yourself," she said gently. "How do you think you can fool me?"

"All *right*," he said. "So you think my heart is breaking because Sun Lake's washed up. What good is it going to do me? Anna, will I be seeing you back on Earth? I want us to stay teamed up. When I go into practice—"

The woman winced and stood up. She closed the door to the hospital. "He was listening," she said. "He let out a blast of derision that rattled my skull when he heard you talk about going into practice on Earth."

Tony pulled her down beside him and held her quietly against his chest. "Ansie," he said once, softly, "my poor sweet Ansie." He kissed her hair and they sat very still until Hank knocked on the door.

Hank stared at his wife's body, refusing to believe what he saw.

"She didn't feel much," Tony tried to explain. "Just a bad moment maybe, when her heart gave out. She couldn't have felt anything, or she'd never have gotten so far."

"We were there at the end," Anna reminded the young man. "She was—she was very happy. She wanted to be useful more than anything else in the world. You know that, don't you? And in the end she was. She loved you very much, too. She didn't want you to be unhappy."

"What did she say?" Hank wouldn't tear his eyes from the bed. He stood and stared ceaselessly, as if another moment of looking would show him some fallacy, some error.

"She said—" Anna hesitated, then went on firmly: "She said, 'Tell Hank I want him to be happy all the time.' I heard her," she answered Tony's look of surprise. It wasn't much of a lie.

"Thank you. I—" He sat on the bed beside his wife, his hand caressing the face stained with blood and dust.

Tony turned and left the room. In the hospital, Graham was asleep or unconscious again. Tony went back to his own chair in the living-room.

There were so many hints, so many leads, so many parts of the picture. Somehow it all went together. He tried to concentrate, but his thoughts kept wandering, into the hospital where the writer lay beaten as Big Ginny had been beaten; into the bedroom, where Joan lay dead of—of Mars; where Anna was comforting the young man who would never realize, if he was lucky, that he had killed Joan himself as surely as if he had throttled her.

The last thing she said before she died! Tony snorted. The last thing she said, with that glorious light in her eyes, and a grin of delight on her face was "Dwarf!"

And there it was!

Within a few seconds' time everything raced through his mind, all the clues, the things that fitted together—Big Ginny, and Graham's story, Sunny and the mask and Joan's dying words. Everything!

He jumped up in furious excitement.

No, not everything, he realized. Not the marcaine. That didn't fit.

He paced the length of the room and turned to find Anna standing in the bedroom door.

"Did you call?" she asked. "What happened?"

He smiled. He went over and pushed the door closed behind her. "Ansie," he said, "you just don't know how lucky you are to have a big, strong, intelligent man like me. When are we going to get married?"

She shook her head.

"Not until you tell me what it's all about."

## CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

REFUSE ENTERTAIN REQUEST THIS DATE. POLICE POWERS THIS OFFICE EXTEND ONLY TO INTERCOLONY MATTERS. PAC. DOES NOT REPEAT NOT AUTHORIZE USE OF POLICE EQUIPMENT FOR INTRACOLONY AFFAIRS.

HAMILTON BELL  
PLANETARY AFFAIRS  
COMMISSIONER

TONY READ THROUGH the formal message sheet, then the note attached to it:

*That's the master's voice up there. The PAC radio up in Marsport told me, on the side, that the old man doesn't believe a word of your story. If the baby really is missing, he figures "that Markie Mamma did it in." Graham really fixed us. I hope you're taking good care of him. If you get him back in shape, I won't feel so bad about taking a crack at him myself. Harve.*

The doctor smiled briefly, then asked Tad Campbell, who was waiting to take his answer back to the radio shack, "Did Mimi Jonathan see this?"

"No. It just came in. Harve wants to know what answer to send."

Cantrella and Gracey were out with the search party too, Tony realized. That left the decision squarely up to him.

He scribbled a note: *Hartle, try this one on the commish: 'Request use PAC facilities to track vicious attacker of our guest, Douglas Graham.' That ought to get us every tin soldier on the planet, and old man Bell himself hearing the parade. Graham as victim gives him an out, too he can call it intercolony. Get hot. We need that Blood hound. Tony.*

When the boy was gone, Tony paced nervously around the living-room, started to heat water for "coffee," and decided he didn't want it.

There was an almost empty bottle of liquor on the floor near the table—Graham's. The doctor reached for it and drew back. It wasn't the right time or the right bottle.

He headed for the bedroom door, and remembered that Joan's body was still occupying the bed. He peered into the hospital; Graham was still sleeping. Nothing to do but sit and wait, and think it out all over again. It checked every time—but it couldn't be right.

He hadn't told Anna yet. When you came right down to it, the whole thing was too far-fetched; he wouldn't believe it himself if somebody else had proposed it. But it checked all the way every time.

He got up again and hunted through his meager stack of onionskin volumes and scientific journals. Nothing there, but Joe Gracey ought to know. When the search party came back— It was more than an hour since Tad had left. Why no reply from Harve?

Tony went to the front door, opened it, and peered up the street, out over the housetops to the landing field. Nothing in sight. He turned to go back in, and out of the corner of his eye saw them rounding the curve of the street

Gracey, Mimi, Juarez, and then Kandro, taking each step reluctantly, his heart back in the hills, while Nick Cantrella and Sam Flexner, one on each side, urged him forward. Tony's heart sank; there was no mistaking defeat...

"I'm sure," Mimi said steadily, "we heard him cry. Just for a minute. Then it was as if someone had clapped hand over his mouth. Tony, we can't wait. We've got to get him out right away."

"What about the other caves?"

"We tried them all around," Gracey said. "Five or six on each side and a couple up above. But every one of those fissures narrows down inside the hill the same way. We couldn't get through. I don't see how the kidnaper did, either."

"How about the other side?" Tony asked. "Someone could go around with a half-track and take a look."

"We thought of it," Mimi said sharply. "Nick got Pittco on the transreceiver. *Mister* Hackenburg was so sorry. *Mister* Reynolds was away, and he didn't have the author-ity himself to permit us to search on their ground. He was so sorry!"

She stood up abruptly and turned to the wall, not quite quickly enough. Tony saw her brush at her eyes before she turned back and said throatily, "Well, little men, what now? Where do we go from here?"

"We wait," Joe Gracey said helplessly. "We wait for Bell to answer us. We wait for Reynolds to get



back. What else can we do?"

"Nothing, I guess. We left half a dozen men out there," Mimi told the doctor. "They're watching, and they have the transceiver. I guess Joe's right. We wait."

Silence, and Tony tried to find a way to say what he had to say. They couldn't just wait, not while he knew something to try. The baby might be all right, but maybe they would get there just one minute too late.

He turned to Gracey.

"Joe, what do you know about lethal genes?"

"Huh?" The agronomist looked up, dazed, shook his head, and repeated without surprise at the irrelevant ques-tion, "Lethal genes?" He stopped and considered, mentally tabulating his information.

"Well, they're recessives that—"

"No, I know what they are," Tony stopped him. "I thought I heard you say something about them the other day. Didn't you say you thought you'd hit on some that were visible on Mars?"

Anna drifted in, with Hank at her heels, and they went straight through, into the room beyond where Joan still lay.

"Oh, yes," Gracey said. "Very interesting stuff. Come out to the Lab when you have the time and I'll show you. We—"

Mimi jumped up. "*What* are you gabbing about?" she demanded. "This is an emergency! We have to find some way to rescue that baby!"

"I'm sorry, Mimi." Gracey was bewildered. "What's wrong anyway? Tony asked a perfectly innocent question, and I answered him when we'd all agreed that we had nothing to do but sit around and wait. Why not use the time?"

Abruptly Tony made up his mind. It was up to him now. And to Anna. He got up and called her from the bedroom, led her outside, into the street in front of the house, where they were out of earshot of all the others.

"Well?" She smiled up at him. "Will you stop feeling sorry for me and tell me what you're sorry about?"

"In a minute. Anna, last night when we took the mask off Sunny—when you fainted—how did it feel?"

"I told you."

"Yes, you said it was very strong, stronger than you thought a baby could—feel. But was it just stronger or was there something *different*?"

"That's hard to say. I was—well, I was all worn out and upset. It might have been different, but I don't know how. I'm not even sure it was."

"It checks," he said to himself. "Listen, Ansie, there's a job to be done. A tough job. A job nobody can do but you. It may—hurt you. I don't know. I don't even know if it will work. It's a crazy theory I've got, so crazy I don't even want to explain it to you. But if I'm right, you're the only person who can do it." He stopped. "Anna, did you hear what Joan's last word really was? She said, 'Dwarf.'"

He looked down into frightened dark eyes.

"Tony, there aren't any, are there?"

"You mean do I believe there are? No, I don't. But I do think there's *something*."

"You want me to go out there and listen?"

"Yes. But that's only part of it. I wouldn't let you go alone; if you do go, I'll be with you—if that helps any. But I want to go into the cave where they heard the baby and see what we can find."

"No!" The cry was torn from her. "I didn't mean that," she caught herself. "It's just—oh, Tony, I'm *afraid*."

"We've got to find out. Ansie, we've *got to find out*."

"The Bloodhound?" she asked desperately. "Can't you track them with the Bloodhound?"

"Bell hasn't answered us. How long can we wait?"

She stood silent for a moment, then turned her face up to his, serenely quiet now and trusting.

"All right," she said at last. "All right, Tony, if you say it has to be done."

"I'll be there with you," he promised... .

Mimi and Joe didn't understand, and Tony didn't try to explain. He simply repeated that he had an "idea"; he wanted to go, with Anna, to the cave where the baby's cry had been heard.

He left careful instructions about the care of Graham if he should awake, and about Hank, Polly, and Jim, all three of whom were too upset to be left to themselves.

A ten minutes' ride on the half-track and they were within the shadow of the Rimrocks. The drifting stench of Pittco's refineries on the other side began to reach them; then the ground became too rocky to go on. Tony stopped the machine and they got out. Farther up the face of the nearest hill they could make out the figures of the five who had remained on guard.

One of them came running—Flexner, the chemist. "They said on the transceiver you were coming," he told Anna and Tony. "What's your idea? We're going nuts sitting around waiting. Tad thought he heard Sunny cry again but nobody else did."

"I just wanted to see if I could turn up anything," Tony told him. "We're going into the cave."

Together they walked out of the sunlight into the seven-foot opening in the hard rock. One of the guards would have preceded them, but Anna firmly refused. A chalk mark on the wall, drawn by the others when they had left the cave, was guide enough.

They followed the white line on and down some fifty meters, then fifty more along a narrowing left-handed branch, and then a hundred meters, left again and narrow-ing, to another fork. Both the branches were too small for an adult to squeeze through. The chalk line pointed into the right-hand cranny.

That was as far as they could go. They stood at the nar-row opening, listening.

There was nothing to hear, no sound at all in the rock-walled stillness except their own breathing and the tiny rustling of their hands along rough alien stone.

They waited, Tony's eyes fixed on Anna's face. He tried to silence his thoughts as he could his voice, but doubts tore at him. He turned, finally, to the one certainty he knew, and concentrated on Anna and her alone; on his love for her, her love for him.

"I hear something," she whispered at last. "Fear—mostly fear, but eagerness, too. They are not afraid of us. I think they like us. They're afraid of—it's not clear—of people?"

She fell silent again, listening.

"People." She nodded her head emphatically. "They want to talk to us, Tony, but—I don't know." Her brow furrowed in concentration and she sat down suddenly on the hard rock floor, as though the physical exertion of standing was more than she could bear.

"Tony, go and tell the guards to go away," she said at last.

"No," he said firmly.

"Go ahead. Please. Hurry. They are trying—" Abruptly she stopped concentrating on the distance. "You spoiled it," she said bitterly. "You frightened them."

"How?"

"You didn't trust them. You thought they'd hurt me."

"Ansie, how *can* we trust them? How can I leave you here alone and send the guards away? Don't you see I can't take that risk?"

"You made me come here," she said tiredly. "You said I was the one who could do the job. I'm trying to do it."

Please go now and tell the guards to leave. Tell them to get out of range—down at the bottom of the hill, maybe as far away as the half-track. Please, Tony, do as I say."

"All right." But he was still hesitant. "Anna, who are they?"

"I—" The bitterness left her face. "Martian dwarfs. Ani-mal life, thinking *things*," she said.

"But what does that mean?"

"They're *different*."

"Like Sunny?"

"Not exactly." She made a small useless gesture with her hands. "More—distinct. No, maybe you're right. I think they're like him, only older."

"How many are there?"

"Quite a few. Too many for me to count. One of them is doing all the—talking."

"Talking?" Yes, that was part of what had bothered him. "Ansie, how can you understand so clearly? You told me you can't do that. You didn't know what Graham was angry about. How do you know what they're afraid of?"

"Tony, I don't know how. I *can* understand, that's all, and I'm sure it's right, and I know they're not tricking us. Now please, please go and tell the guards."

He went.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

"KEEP HIM AWAY from me!" Graham screamed.

Mimi raced through Tony's living-room into the hos-pital half of the hut.

It was Hank, standing rigidly still, glaring at the writer. "You don't understand about Mars," Hank was saying in a hard monotone. "You never saw the Rimrocks when there was just enough light to tell them from the sky, or walked a hundred miles in the desert watching the colors change every minute."

"Mrs. Johnson, get him out of here. He's crazy."

Mimi took Hank by the arm. "I'm not crazy," he said. "Those boomers at Pittco, this winter here, Bell and his soldiers, Brenner and his factory, they're crazy. They're trying to cheapen Mars."

*Hysteria*, thought Mimi. She'd coped with enough cases of it when she'd bossed girls at desks, as far as the eye could see, on the 76th floor of the American Insurance Groups Building.

"Radcliff!" she said.

There was a savage whip-crack in her voice.

He turned to her, startled. "I wasn't going to hurt him," he said confusedly.

*Get him to cry. Break him. Until then, there's no know-ing what will happen.* "Your poor wife's lying in there," she said with measured nastiness, "and you find time to brawl with a sick man."

"I didn't mean anything like that," he protested.

Still unbroken. "Get into the bedroom," she said. "Sit there. That's the least you can do."

He walked heavily into the room where his wife's body lay and she heard him drop into a plastic chair.

"Thanks, Mrs. Johnson," said Graham painfully. "He was spoiling for a fight."

"Mrs. Jonathan," she corrected. "And I don't want your thanks."

She turned and rattled through drawers of medications, hoping she'd find something she could give Hank. She didn't know what to use or how much. She slapped the drawer shut and was angry with Tony and Anna for not being there when she needed them.

She stalked into the bedroom and stared at Hank without showing any pity. He was looking dully at the wall, a spot over the bed on which Joan's broken body lay. No shakes, no tears, unbroken still. But she couldn't bring herself to lash him further and precipitate the emotional crisis.

She went back into Tony's living-room and threw herself into a chair. She'd hear if anything happened. Mrs. J., the terror of auditing, Old Eagle-Eye, and a few less complimentary things when the girls were talking in the old Earth days, between the booths in one of the 76th-floor johns. Efficiency bonuses year after year, even bad years, and that meant you *were* an old witch. She must be out of practice, or getting soft, she decided harshly, if she couldn't handle an absurdly simple little thing like this.

*We ought to have Tony train somebody besides Anna*, she thought. *There's Harve, but he only knows radio-health.* And then she remembered that it didn't matter; Sun Lake wouldn't last that long...

She heard a plane coming in at the landing field and wondered whose. She got up and had a drink of water from the wall canteen, and then, defiantly, another, because it didn't matter now. She felt like taking on the world for Sun Lake. Joan must have felt like that. Their water supply was scanty, but it was water—not the polluted fluid of Earth, chlorinated to the last potable degree.

The intercom in the bedroom buzzed. She walked in and picked it up, glanced at Hank, still numbly staring.

"Hello, Mimi." It was Harve. "Answer from Bell. Quote: 'Re assault on Douglas Graham I and detail of guards will take action this matter. Request use PAC facilities denied. Hamilton Bell' et cetera. What do you figure he'll do—try and pin the Graham slugging on us too?"

"I don't know," she said. "It doesn't matter. What plane was that?"

"Brenner's. The bastards didn't even check in with us.

Just sat right down on the field." "He might as well. He'll own it soon enough." She heard Harve clear his throat embarrassedly. "Well, I guess that's all."

"Good-by," she agreed, hanging up. She shouldn't have said that; she was supposed to pretend that while there was life there was hope.

"Hank?" she asked gently and inquiringly.

He looked up. "I'm all right, thanks."

He wasn't, but there was nothing she could do. She looked through the door to the hospital. Graham seemed to be dozing. She sat down in the living-room again.

Brenner came in without knocking. "They told me you were here, Mrs. Jonathan. I wonder if we could go to your office in the Lab. I want to talk business."

"I'm staying here," she said shortly. "If you want to talk here, I'll listen."

Brenner shrugged and sat down. "Do we have privacy?"

"There's a boy in the next room going crazy with grief over his dead wife—and over the prospect of leaving Mars. And there's a badly beaten man sleeping in the hospital quarters."

The drug manufacturer lowered his voice. "Relative privacy," he said. "Mrs. Jonathan, you have the only business head in the Colony." He opened his briefcase on the table and edged the corner of a sheaf of bills from one of its pockets. The top one was a thousand dollars. He didn't look at it, but riffled the sheaf with his thumb. They were all thousands, and there were over one hundred of them.

"It's going to be very hard on some of the colonists, I'm afraid," he said conversationally.

"You have no idea."

"It needn't be that hard on all of them." His thumb flipped the big bills. "Your colony is facing an impossible situation, Mrs. Jonathan. Let's not mince words; it's a matter of bankruptcy and forced sale. I'm in a position to offer you a chance to retreat in good order, with some money in your pockets."

"That's very kind of you, Mr. Brenner. I'm not sure I understand."

"Please," he smiled, "let's not be coy. I'm being perfectly candid with you. If it comes to a forced sale, I intend to bid as high as necessary; I need this property. But I'm not a man who believes in leaving things to chance. Why shouldn't you sell out to me now? It would save yourselves the humiliation of bankruptcy, and I believe everyone concerned would benefit financially."

"You realize I'm not in a position to close any deals, Mr. Brenner?" she asked.

"Yes, of course. You have a council in charge here, don't you? And you're a member. You could plead my case with them."

"I suppose I could."

"All right." He smiled again, and his thumb continued to riffle the pile of bills. "Then I have to plead it first with you. Why should you stay on Mars? In the hope that 'something' will turn up? Believe me, it will not. Your commercial standing will be gone. Nobody would dream of extending credit to the people who were six months behind on their deliveries. *Nothing will turn up*, Mrs. Jonathan."

"What if the stolen marcaine turns up?"

"Then, of course—" He smiled and shrugged.

Mimi read a momentary alarm in his face. For the first time since the crisis she entertained the thought that it was not a frameup.

She pressed harder. "What if we're just waiting to hand Bell the hundred kilos and the thief?"

Brenner turned inscrutable again. "Then something else will happen. And if the Colony survives that, something else again." He quickly denied the implication of sabotage by adding, "You have a fundamentally untenable financial situation here. Insufficient reserves, foggy motives—what businessman can trust you when he knows that your Lab production workers might walk out one fine day and stay out? They aren't bound by salaries but by idealism."

"It's kept us going."

"Until now. Come, Mrs. Jonathan, I said I wanted an advocate in the Council. You have a business head. You know that if you *do* produce my marcaine and the thief, Mr. Graham's little story—which I read with great inter-est—will be another bad bump to get over. There will be more."

He meant two things: more humps, and more sheafs of thousand-dollar bills for her if she took the bribe.

"Are you offering to buy the Colony, Mr. Brenner? Would you care to name a price?"

"What are you asking?" he countered.

*Oh, no*, she thought, *you're not getting away with that*.

"All right, we'll play it your way," she said. "Name *two* prices. You want to buy my services, too, don't you?"

"Whatever gives you that notion? I'm not trying to bribe you, Mrs. Jonathan." He picked up the sheaf of bills and placed them in front of her. "There's a hundred thou-sand—for a *down payment*, whenever you say. My price for the Colony only," he added distinctly, "is exactly five million."

"Plus your down payment?" she asked, amused.

"That's right."

"That would just about pay all our fares back to Earth. We'll smash the Lab to bits before we let you get it for any such price."

"You'll rot in prison if you do," Brenner said easily. "There is an injunction on file at Marsport signed by Commissioner Bell restraining you from any such foolish-ness. An act of contempt would mean imprisonment for all of you. I mean *all*."

"No such paper has been served on us."

"The Commissioner assured me it had been served. I don't doubt his word. Not many people, including appeals judges, would doubt his word either."

"It'll have to be put into form by the Council and voted on by the entire Colony," she said painfully. "You wanted an advance. Take your money back; I'm not for sale. But I *will* plead your case if you'll make it ten million. God knows, it's a bargain. There's absolutely no depreciation on the Lab to be figured. It's better now than it ever was. Maintenance has always been top-level. Better than anything you'll ever be able to find in industry."

"Five million and five hundred thousand was my offer. I'm not the Croesus uninformed people take me for. I have my expenses on the marcaine distribution end, you know...."

In the meantime, Tony was sweating out the time. Eight minutes creeping along the chalk line in the dark—he'd left the light with Anna. Five minutes scrabbling over the boulders at the cave opening on the face of the hill. Twelve long minutes talking the guards into leaving, and a pain-ful tortured eternity—maybe another twelve minutes re-entering the cave and tracing the chalk line by the dim light borrowed from Tad.

Tony was sweating ice by the time the radiance from Anna's light came into view. He rounded the last curve in the winding passage, and something jumped up from the floor and stood, tense and watchful as the doctor.

Anna, seated on the cold floor, laughed softly, melodi-ously. She was all right. Tony relaxed a little and in-stantly felt—something, a gentle stroking, a tentative touch, not on his head but *in* it. No menace, no danger. Friendship.

The doctor stared across the cavern: leathery brown skin, barrel chest, big ears, skinny arms and legs; the height of a small man or a large boy; and—a telepath.

The friendly touch on his mind persisted through his quick distaste, his exultation, his eagerness.

"Anna," very softly, "is it all right to talk?"

"Not too loud. His ears are sensitive."

"Who is he? Are there more? *Does he have Sunny?* Ask him that, Anna—ask him!"

"A Martian 'human.' A dwarf." She laughed again, joy-ously. "There are four more down there, inside, with Sunny."

"Is he all right?"

"Yes. They took him to help him, not to do any harm. He needed something, but I can't find out what."

The strange little being squatted again on the floor beside Anna. Tony approached slowly and sat down next to them.

He felt goose flesh and memories of old nursery-book horrors, but nothing happened. He forced himself to ask Anna, "What kind of thing?"

"Something to eat, I think. Something like the first sip of water when you're thirsty, and as necessary as salt, and—*good*. Maybe like a vitamin, but it tastes wonderful."

Tony ran through a mental catalogue of biochemicals. But that was foolish; how could you tell what would taste good to anything as alien as a Martian?

"Have you tried sign language?" he asked Anna.

"Where do you start?" She shrugged. "You'd have to build up a whole set of symbols before you could get anything across.... Tony, I'm sure we can get the baby back if we just understand what it is he needs."

The doctor reached over, hesitated, and forced himself to tap the weird thing lightly on the shoulder. When he had the creature's attention, he whispered to Anna, "Tell him we're trying to find out what it is." He pointed to his own eyes. "Show us," he said to the creature, and tried to project the thought, the image of seeing, as hard as he could.

They kept repeating it with every possible combination of thought and act. Then, suddenly, the Martian dwarf, jumped and dashed off down the tunnel. "Did he get the idea?" demanded Tony. "Is he coming back?"

It's all right," smiled Anna. "He understood."

Silence in the eerie place was almost unbearable.

"Don't worry so, Tony," Anna said. "If you want to know, he almost scared the wits out of me, too. I was sit-ting, trying to look down the little opening, and still talking—to the ones down there, and he came up behind me. I was concentrating on them so I didn't hear him either way."

Tony sat back thoughtfully. It was all true then; his crazy theory was right—there were actually "men" on Mars, a form of life so highly developed that it was telepathic, and with no lower life-forms to have evolved from. He wondered if he had hit the right explanation, too, but there was no other explanation.

The little fellow was back, carrying something, a box. Large letters in black on the side read:

DANGER

SEALED MARCAINE CONTAINER

*Do Not Open Without Authorization*

BRENNER PHARMACEUTICAL CO.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

TONY HELPED ANNA dismount from the half-track, with her valuable burden in her arms. She jounced Sunny hap-pily, and cooed down at the pink face. The doctor didn't jounce his own burden; he lifted it down even more carefully than he had helped Anna. The marcaine box was tightly wrapped in his shirt and hers. They were counting on the several layers of cloth to trap escaping dust and pro-tect them from marcaine jags, but the doctor still wasn't taking any chances on stirring up the contents of the half-full box.

They cut across the bare land in back of the row of houses, heading toward the curved street near the Kan-dros'.

"Tony," Anna asked anxiously again, "how are we possibly going to explain it?"

"I told you I don't know." He was only a little irritable. They had the baby; they had the marcaine. "We'll have to talk to Mimi and Joe and Nick, and probably the others too. We'll see how it goes—"

"No, I don't *mean* that," she stopped him. "I mean to Polly. And Jim. Jim isn't going to like it unless he hears the whole story, and I don't know *if* we ought to—"

"Like it or not," Tony said briskly, "Kandro'll do what I tell him to. We'll have to tell them it's marcaine; I don't dare risk mislabeling the stuff. You'll have to blow some ampoules for it, I guess, and I'll figure out some way of wetting it down and getting it into the capsules. But you're right," he added, "if you mean we shouldn't say any more than we have to just now."

They stepped onto the packed dirt of the street and cut; across to the Kandros'.

Joe Gracey was sitting alone in the living-room.

"Praise God," he said quietly, and called, "*Polly! Jim!*" The couple appeared, red-eyed, at the nursery door, saws their baby, and flew to him.

Tony said, "You can feed him in a minute. Now listen carefully. This young man of yours, you know, is special in some ways. He can take the Mars air and like it. It turns out that there's something else he needs—something that's good for him and bad for other people, just like the Mars air. It's marcaine."

Polly's face went white. Jim began a guffaw of unbelief that turned into a frown. He asked carefully, "How can that be, Doc? What is this all about? And who took him? We have a right to know."

Anna came to Tony's rescue. "You're not going to know right now," she said tartly. "If you think that's hard on you, it's just too bad. You've got your baby back; now leave the doctor alone until he's ready to tell you more."

Jim opened his mouth and shut it again. Polly asked only, "Doctor, are you sure?"

I'm sure. And it *won't* have anything like the effect on Sunny that it had on you. But it's real marcaine, all right, and he's got to have it or die."

"Like OxEn?" asked Kandro. "It's only fair in a way."

Tony ignored him. "I guess you're going to have to wean the baby after all, Polly," he said. "You can't keep taking marcaine for Sunny's sake. But for now, I guess you might as well nurse him. Your milk still has marcaine in it."

Kandro was still adjusting himself to the idea. "Sunny, doesn't need OxEn, so he's got to take something else?"

"Yes," Tony said, "like OxEn—" He broke off, and Anna spun toward him, her eyes wide. The doctor forced his face into calm lines. "I want to have a talk with Joe now. And Nick Cantrella. Anna, will you see if you can get Nick on the intercom? Ask him to come over here right away. I've got an idea."

In the living-room, he told Gracey: "You won't have to keep an eye on them any more, Joe. But watch *me*—I feel like Alexander, Napoleon, Eisenhower, and the Great Cham all rolled into one."

"You're certainly grinning like a lunatic," the agrono-mist agreed critically. "What's on your mind?"

"Wait a minute.... Did you get him?" Tony asked as Anna came into the room.

"He's coming," she nodded. "Tony, what is it?"

"I'll tell you both, soon," he promised. "Let's wait for Nick, so I won't have to repeat it." He paced restlessly around the room, thinking it through again. It ought to work; it ought to!

When Cantrella arrived, he turned on the two men. "Listen, both of you!" He tried not to sound too eager. "If I handed you a piece of living tissue with a percentage of oxygen enzyme—and I don't mean traces, I mean a *percentage*—where would we stand in respect to—" He halted the cautious, complicated phraseology. "Hell, what I mean is, could we manufacture OxEn?"

"The living virus?" Gracey asked. "Not crystallized OxEn processed for absorption?"

"The living virus."

"We'd be a damn sight better than halfway along the processing that the Kelsey people do in Louisville. They grow the first culture from the Rosen batch, then they cull out all the competing enzymes, then they grow what's left and cull, for hundreds of stages, to get a percentage of the living virus to grow a pure culture they can crop and start crystallizing."

"How about it, Nick?" Tony demanded. "Could the Lab swing a job of crystallizing a crop from that and processing it for absorption?"

"Sure," said Nick. "That's the easy part. I've been reading up on it since we talked about it before."

"Look here," Gracey exploded, "where do you think you're going to get your living virus from? You have to keep getting it, you know. It always mutates under normal radiation sooner or later, and you

have to start over again."

"That's my end of the deal. I have a hunch I can get it. Thanks, both of you." He went into the nursery and told Polly calmly, "I'm taking your youngster away again—just for a few minutes, though. I want to check his lungs in the hospital. Anna?" She was already taking the baby from Polly's arms. Tony picked up the wrapped marcaine-box and started out.

"Hey, Doc, what goes on?" Gracey demanded.

He brushed past Nick and the puzzled agronomist. "Tell you later," he called back.

On the street, Anna turned a worried face up to his. "Tony, what are you *doing*? You can't operate on a five--day-old baby ... can you?" she finished, less certainly. "You seem so—so happy and *sure* of yourself."

"I am," he said shortly, and then relented enough to add, "The 'operation,' if you want to call it that, won't hurt him." But he wouldn't say any more.

Mimi and Brenner were in Tony's living-room. The woman said hopelessly, "Hello, Tony. Mr. Brenner's made an offer— Oh! It's Sunny!"

"Hello, Mimi," said Tony.

"The youngster, eh?" Brenner said genially. "I've heard about him."

With a brusque "Excuse me" to the drug manufacturer, Tony said to Anna in an undertone, "Rig the op table, sterilites on. Get out the portable biopsy constant-temper-ature bath and set the thermostat to Sunny's blood temp-erature. And call me."

She nodded and went into the hospital with the baby. Tony dropped his bundle into his trunk and began to scrub up.

"What's been going on, Mimi?" he asked.

"Mr. Brenner's offered five million, five hundred thousand dollars for Sun Lake's assets. I said the Council would put it in formal shape and call a vote."

The descent from his peak of inspiration was sickening. Nothing had changed, then, Tony thought.

"Ready," Anna said at his side. He followed her silently into the hospital, slipped into his gloves, and said, "Steri-lize the Byers curette, third extension, and lubricate. Sterilize a small oral speculum." He spoke quietly. Graham was asleep in the bed across the room.

Anna didn't move. "Anesthesia?" she asked.

"None. We don't know their body-chemistry well enough."

"No, Tony. Please, no!"

He felt only a chill determination that he was going to salvage some of the wreckage of Sun Lake, determination and more confidence than he knew he should feel. Anna turned, selected the instruments, and slipped them into the sterilizer. The doctor stepped on the pedal that turned on the op lights.

Anna put the speculum into his hand and he clamped open Sunny's mouth. The prompt wail of protest turned to a strangled cry as the sinuous shaft of the Byers cur-ette slid down the trachea into the left bronchus. One steady hand guided the instrument, while the other manipulated the controls from a bulb at its base.

"*Hold* him," Tony growled as Anna's hands weakened and the woman swayed. Bronchus, bronchia, bronchile, probing, and withdrawing at resistances—and there it was. A pressure on the central control that uncovered the razor-sharp little spoon at the tip of the flexible shaft and covered it again, and then all flexure controls off and out. It had taken less than five seconds, and one more to deposit the shred of lung tissue in the biopsy constant-tempera-ture nutrient bath.

Hank was at the door. Anna, leaning feebly against the table, straightened to tell him, "Go and lie down, Hank. It's all right."

"Keep him away from me," warned Graham from the bed. "He was going to jump me before."

"I just wanted to see the baby," Hank said apologetically.

Tony turned to the intercom, buzzing the Kandros'. "Come on over," he told them. "You can have your baby back for keeps now. Is Gracey still there? Joe? I think I've got that tissue specimen for you. How fast can you get a test?"

"For God's sake, Tony, where did you get it?" Gracey was demanding on the other end.



"From a Martian dwarf." He couldn't resist it. "That's what I said. Lung tissue of a native Martian."

He hung up. Minutes went by...

"It is true! There are 'beings' here, aren't there?"

Tony turned to find the Kandros standing by the examination table. Polly already had her baby in her arms. Jim patted her shoulder. "He doesn't really mean it, Polly. Do you, Doc?"

Graham was grinning openly.

Tony turned from one to the other, not answering.

There was a commotion in the living-room and Brenner burst in, carrying a familiar box. "He just dived for it, Tony," Mimi said. "He said it was—"

"Careful!" said the doctor. "You'll spray marcamine all over the place. Put it down, man!"

Brenner did, and unwrapped it with practiced precision. "My stuff, Doctor," he said. "Think I don't know my own crates? Mrs. Jonathan, my price for your assets has just dropped to two and one-half million. And I am now in a position to prosecute. I hope none of you will make difficulties."

Jim Kandros said, "I don't know what this is all about, but we need that stuff for Sunny."

"You don't *believe* that, do you?" the drug maker asked scornfully.

"I don't know what to believe," said Kandros. "But he's—different. And it makes sense. He doesn't have to take OxEn, but he has to take something else. You better leave it for us, Mr. Brenner."

The drug maker looked at Jim wisely. "It's okay, Mac," he decided. "If you've got the habit and you can't kick it, why don't you come to work for me? I can use you. And you don't have to take so much. The micron dust in the air takes your edge off—"

"That's not it," said Kandros. "Why don't you listen to me? We need that stuff for Sunny. The doctor says so and he ought to know. It's medicine, like vitamins. You wouldn't keep vitamins from a little baby, would you?"

Graham snickered.

Kandros turned and lectured angrily: "You stay out of this. There hasn't been anything but trouble since you got here. Now you could at least keep from braying while a man's trying to reason with somebody. You may be smart and a big writer, but you don't have any manners at all if you can't keep quiet at a time like this."

He turned to Brenner. "You know we don't have any money here, or I'd offer you what we had. I guess the box is yours, and nobody has a claim to it except you. But Polly and I can get permission from the Council to go and work out whatever the box would cost. Couldn't we, Tony? Mimi? The rest would let us, wouldn't they?"

"I'm sorry, Mac," the drug maker said. "I wish I could make you understand, but if I can't, that doesn't matter. This box is going with me. It's evidence in a crime."

"Mr. Brenner," Jim Kandros said thickly, "I can't let you out of here with that box. We need it for Sunny. I told you and told you. Now give it here." He put out one big hand.

"How about it, Mrs. Jonathan?" Brenner seemed to be ignoring the big man's menacing advance. "Two and a half million? It's a very reasonable price, all things considered. Your new father here would be glad to take it."

"I'll take it, all right," growled Jim. "Hand it over. Right now." He was a scant four feet from the drug maker; Brenner's eyes were still fixed mockingly on Mimi Jonathan.

Kandros took one more step forward and Anna cried faintly, "No!"

Brenner stepped back and there was a large pistol in his hand. "This," he told them, "is *fully* automatic. It keeps firing as long as I hold the trigger down. I can spray the room with it. Now for the last time listen, all of you. I'm going, and I'm taking my box with me. If you try to stop me, I have a perfect right to use this gun. You know better than I do what fingerprints the authorities will find on the box. You're caught red-handed and I won't have any trouble proving it to my man Bell."

Mimi Jonathan said clearly, "So you're going to throw us off Mars, Mr. Brenner?"

"If necessary," he said, not following.

"You mean you're going to kick us out and we'll never see Mars again? And all the sacrifices we've made here will be a joke?"

He didn't get what she was driving at. "Yes," he said irritably. "You're quite right—"

He was cut off by Hank, broken at last under the goad-ing. The youngster sprang, raving, at Brenner, bowling him over as the pistol roared in a gush of bullets that ripped Hank's body. But even in death Hank kept his fingers on Brenner's throat.

And then there was a silence into which Sunny Kandro shrieked his fear. Mimi leaned against the wall and shut her eyes. She wanted to vomit. She heard Tony's awed whisper: "... smashed his trachea . . . broke his neck ... belly shot clean out ..." She shuddered, and hoped and feared she'd carry this guilt alone to the grave.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

"COME ON, Polly. You come out here." Kandro led his wife, still carrying Sunny, out to the living-room.

Faces were peering through the hospital window and they heard Nick Cantrella shouting, "Let me through, dammit! Clear away from that door!" And he was in, latching the door from the street. He snapped the cur-tains shut with an angry yank. "What in God's name hap-pened? I was coming for that tissue culture and now this—"

"Don't worry about it," said Graham dryly and with effort from the bed. "Just a little useful murder. Hank Radcliff, hero of the Colony, gives his life to save the world from Brenner." He swore in awed delight. "*What a story!* 'The Killing of Hugo Brenner'—an eyewitness account by Douglas Graham! Didn't Brenner know who I was?"

Mimi started. "I guess not," she realized. "I never told him."

"You're plenty beat up," Tony pointed out. "He wouldn't have recognized you. Hey, Nick, let's get those bodies out of here."

"Beat up is right," Graham chortled, "and it was worth it! Thank *you*, my friends, whichever one of you—or how many was it?—did that job on me. I thank you from the bottom of my poor old Gunther's heart. Just to be able to lie here and listen to all that!"

"I don't know who did it last time." Nick took one menacing step toward the bed. "But, by God, if you're starting on another of your yarns, I know who's going to—"

"Nick, wait a minute. You don't know what he heard."

"Hey, Cantrella, I need a hand here."

"I *know* who did it." Anna had to shout to make herself heard above Mimi and Tony, both talking at once. In the sudden silence, she said, "Didn't I tell you, Tony? I guess it was while you were away that I found out. *They* did it. I think he was planning to hurt the baby. Or they thought he was."

"*They?*" the writer asked contemptuously. "Dwarf-things again? You're a good second-guesser, Miss Willen-dorf, but you missed out this time. The only designs I ever had on the Kandro kid were to get him back to Earth where he could be properly cared for—instead of getting marcaine dosed out to him to cover up for Mamma."

"Listen, you lying crimp." Nick continued his arrested advance on Graham. "If you think you're safe to turn out more of that kind of stuff just because you're laid up in bed, you better start thinking all over again. I've got no compunctions about kicking a rat when he's down."

"Nick! Stop it!" Swift and sure and deadly sharp, Mimi's voice came across the room like a harpoon. "Give him a chance! You didn't hear what *he* heard—what Brenner said. I don't see how anybody could get a story against Sun Lake out of it."

"Thank you kindly, ma'm." Graham grinned painfully. "Good to know somebody around here is still sane. Don't tell me you go for this dwarf nonsense too!"

"I—don't know," she said. "If I'd heard it from anybody but Tony and Anna, I wouldn't believe a word of it. But they *did* get the baby back."

"Back from where?"

Tony realized for the first time that Graham didn't even know about Sunny's kidnaping. And the others for that matter, still didn't know what had happened in the cave.

"Listen," he said. "If you'll all take it easy for a few minutes, Anna and I have a lot to tell you. But first ... Nick, help me move them to the living-room floor. Anna, get blankets to cover them."

"Wait a minute." She went into the living-room. "All right," she called back a moment later, and Tony and Nick together carried what was left of Hank through the door. "I wanted to get the Kandros out first," Anna explained, locking the front door again.

They laid out Brenner's body next to Hank's, and covered them both with blankets. The two men started back to the hospital, but Anna laid her hand on Tony's arm to stop him.

"Could I see you a minute?"

"Of course." He let Nick go ahead, then asked, worried, "Ansie, darling, what's the matter?"

She closed the door. "Tony, we can't tell them," she said. "Not now."

"Why not? They've got to know."

"Don't you *see*? We shouldn't have talked as much as we did. We shouldn't have said or done anything in front of Graham, but he doesn't believe it yet. If we convince him—Tony, the dwarfs are terrified of people. They've kept away from people all along. For a reason. Don't you *see*?" she asked urgently. "Think what would happen to them. Think! I got just a flash of Graham's mind when I said *they* did it, before he decided to be skeptical. It was brutal. They'd be exterminated."

He did see it. She was right. He thought of Hackenburg over at Pittco, and the little Martian 'men' being worked in the mines—"native labor." He thought of what an Earth power would give to have telepaths in its military intelligence. He thought of the horror and hatred people would feel for the "mind-reading monsters." He thought of them in zoos, on dissecting-tables ...

He thought of Sun Lake, still facing a charge of theft; of the difference it would make in Graham's story if he knew it *wasn't* Sun Lakers who attacked him. He thought of what the existence of the strange new race of 'men' would mean to medical and biochemical research. And he made up his mind.

Anna looked away with anger in her eyes, hopelessness in the set of her shoulders.

"Why?" she begged. "They're— Oh, Tony, they're *decent*! Not like most people."

"Because *we* know about them, that's why. Because you can't—you just *can't* keep a secret like that. Because it means too much to men, to all men, to mankind, or whatever part of it survives the end of Earth. Anna, Sun Lake may not be the answer to our future—the dwarfs may be. Have you thought of that? They need us, they need to learn some of the things our civilization has to offer—and we need them. That piece of tissue I took from Sunny's lungs may mean the end of dependence on Earth for OxEn, and that's just one first thing. There's no knowing how much we can learn, how they can help us to adapt, what new knowledge will come out of the contact. We *can't* keep it to ourselves. That's all there is to it."

"There's no use arguing, is there?"

"I'm afraid not," he said as gently as he could. He opened the door. "Are you coming back?"

She hesitated, then followed...

"That's it," Tony wound up the narrative of their visit to the cave, and then repeated, this time to Graham: "That's it. But I think you ought to know that Anna was trying to persuade me not to tell this story in front of you, to let you go on not believing in these dwarfs. She was afraid of what people would do to them once it became known. I'm afraid too. What you write will have a lot to do with it." He paused. "What *are* you going to write?"

"I'm damned if I know!" Graham tried to lift his head, and decided against it. "It's either the most ingenious yarn I've ever heard—it covers every single accusation against you people, from marcaine theft to mayhem on my person—or it's the biggest story in the world. And I'm damned if I know which!"

He relapsed into a thoughtful silence, broken suddenly by the roar of a large plane. An instant later there was the noise of a second, and then a third. One at a time they came closer, and died out.

"That would be Bell." Mimi stood up wearily. "I don't mind saying I'm confused. What do we do now?"

"He's coming," Tony reminded her, "to help Mr. Graham. Perhaps we should leave it up to our guest to tell the Commissioner whatever he sees fit."

The writer was silent, stony-faced.

"There's a slight matter of a couple of stiff's in the living-room," Nick reminded them. "The Commish might want to know about them. Strictly intercolony stuff."

"You know," Graham broke in suddenly, "if I were dumb enough to believe your story about Martian dwarf-men—and if your little experiment with the kid's lungs works—Sun Lake could get to be quite a place."

"How do you mean?" Gracey asked.

"The way Mr. Brenner had it figured, your Lab is practically made to order for marcaine manufacture. And I gather you think you can turn out OxEn too, if that lung tissue is good. If there's anything behind all this dwarf talk—well, you've got a deal that looks worth a trillion. You can supply OxEn to all of Mars at what price? It wouldn't cost you anything compared to Earth-import."

He looked around the circle of astonished faces.

"Don't tell me none of you even *thought* of that? Not even you?" he appealed to Mimi.

She shook her head. "That's not the Sun Lake idea," she said stiffly. "We wouldn't be interested."

Anna smiled, very slightly, and there was a violent bang-ing at the front door.

Tony went slowly through the living-room. The door was beginning to shake under the blows.

"Cut that out and I'll open it!" he yelled. There was silence as he swung the door open. A sergeant of the guards, three others, and Bell, who was well in the rear. He must have heard there'd been shooting.

"What's been going on?" the Commissioner began. He sniffed the air and his eyes traveled to the covered bodies. "Graham? If it is, we might have a murder arrest. His dispatch gave you people plenty of motive."

"No. Brenner," Tony said shortly. "And a young man named Hank Radcliff."

Bell, starting for the figures, recoiled. "Sergeant," he said, and gestured. The non-com gingerly drew back the blankets, exposing the drug maker's face. The Commissioner stared for a long moment and said hoarsely, "Cover it, Sergeant." He turned to Tony. "What happened?"

"We have a disinterested witness," said the doctor. "Douglas Graham. He saw the whole thing."

Tony led the way into the hospital. The sergeant followed, then the Commissioner. Graham said from his bed, "Visiting a dead friend?"

Bell snapped, "It's an intercolony crime. Murder. Obviously I can't take the word of anybody who's a member of this community. Did you witness the killing?"

"I was a witness, all right," said Graham. "Best damn witness you ever saw. Billions of readers hang on my every word." He made an effort and raised himself on one elbow. "Remember the chummy sessions we used to have in Washington, Bell?"

On the Commissioner's forehead sweat formed.

"Here's the story of the killing," said Graham. "Brenner pulled his gun on the man named Kandro during a little dispute. He threatened to kill Kandro, went into some detail about how fully automatic that gun was and—let me think—his exact words were 'spray the room.' With a babe in arms present. Think of it, Bell! Not even you would have done a thing like that; not even in the old days. The Radcliff kid jumped Brenner and took all the slugs in his belly. I guess they were dumdums, because the gun looked to me like a .38 and none of them went through. Only the Radcliff boy squashed Brenner's neck before he knew he was dead. Reminded me of a time once in Asia—"

Bell cut him off. "Did Brenner die right away? Did he—say anything before he died?"

"Deathbed confession? Delirious rambling? No." The Commissioner relaxed perceptibly.

"*But*," said the newsman, "he talked quite a bit *before* he pulled the gun. He didn't recognize me with my bat-tered face and I didn't introduce myself. He thought it was a bunch of Sun Lakers in here and that nobody would believe a word they said about him. Brenner talked quite a bit."

"Sergeant!" Bell broke in. "I won't be needing you for a while. Wait for me in the other room. And see to it that nobody touches those bodies!"

The door closed behind the non-com, and Graham laughed. "Maybe you do know, eh, Commish? Maybe you know Brenner liked to refer to you as 'my man Bell'?"

The Commissioner's eyes ran unhappily around the room. "You people," he said. "Get out. All of you. Leave us alone—so I can take a statement."

"No," said Graham, "they stay here. I'm not a strong man these days, but Brenner talked quite a bit. I wouldn't want anything to stop me from getting the story to an eagerly waiting world."

Bell looked around hopelessly. Tony saw Nick's face twist into a knowing, malevolent grin; like the others, he made an effort to imitate it.

"What do you want, Graham?" asked the Commissioner. "What are you trying to get at?"

"Not a thing," the writer said blandly. "By the way, in my statement on the killing, should I include what Bren-ner had to say about you? He mentioned some financial matters, too. Would they be relevant?"

Tony tried to remember what financial matters Bren-ner had discussed, aside from the price he offered for the Colony. None—but Graham was a shrewd bluffer.

The Commissioner made a last effort to pull himself together. "You can't intimidate me, Graham," he rasped. "And don't think I can't be tough if you force my hand. I'm in the clear. I don't care what Brenner said; I haven't done a thing."

"Yet," said the writer succinctly. "Your part was to come later, wasn't it?"

Bell's face seemed to collapse.

"Still think you can get tough?" Graham jeered. "Try it, and I guarantee that you'll be hauled back to Earth on the next rocket, to be tried for malfeasance, exceeding your authority, accepting bribes, and violating the nar-cotics code. I can also guarantee that you will be convicted and imprisoned for the rest of your life. Don't try to bluff me, you tin-horn sport. I've been bluffed by experts."

The Commissioner began shrilly, "I won't stand for—" and cracked. "For God's sake, Graham; be reasonable! What have I ever done to you? What do you want? Tell me what you want!"

The writer fell back on the bed. "Nothing right now, thanks. If I think of anything, I'll let you know."

The Commissioner started to speak, and couldn't. Tony saw the veins of tension stand out. He saw, too, how Anna's lip was curling in disgust.

Graham seemed amused. "There is one thing, Commish. An intercolony matter under your jurisdiction, I believe. Will you remove those carcasses on your way out? You'd be surprised how sensitive I am about such things."

He closed his eyes and waited till the door was shut behind the departing guest. When he opened them again, all the self-assurance was gone out of them.

"Doc," he moaned, "give me a shot. When I got up on my elbow something tore. God, it hurts!"

While Tony took care of him Joe Gracey said, "It was a grand performance, Mr. Graham. Thank you for what you did."

"I can undo it," the reporter said flatly, "or I can use it any way I want to. If you people have been lying to me—" He sighed with relief. "Thanks, Doc. That's a help. Now if you want anything out of my man Bell—show me one of your Martian dwarf-men!"

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

GRAHAM'S CHALLENGE fell into a silent room. Everyone waited for Tony to speak; Tony waited for Anna.

"I don't see why not," she said at last. "I guess they'd do it." She looked despairingly at Tony. "Is this the *only* way?" she pleaded.

"It's the only way you're going to beat that marcaine- theft rap," Graham answered for him.

"All right. I'll go out there in the morning. I think I can talk them into it."

"If you don't mind, Miss Willendorf. I'd rather it was right now. In twelve hours, your hot-shot engineer here could probably *build* a robot dwarf."

"I can try," she said. "But I can't promise. Not even for tomorrow. I only think I can talk one of them into coming here. I don't know how they'll feel about it."

Graham grinned. "That's about how I figured it," he said. "Thanks, folks. It was a good show while it lasted."

"We're going," Tony said grimly. "And we'll bring you back a native Martian."

"Still not good enough," the writer said. "If you go, I go with you. You mind if I'm just a little suspicious?"

"It's ten kilometers to the Rimrocks," Tony told him. "Most of it by half-tracks, the rest by stretcher for you."

"All right," the writer said. "When do we start?"

Tony looked questioningly at Anna, who nodded. "Right now," the doctor said, "or any time you're ready." He opened a cabinet and fished out a patent-syringe am-poule. "This should make it easier." He started to open the package.

"No, thanks," Graham said. "I want to see what I see—if anything." His eyes went swiftly from one face to another, studying them for reactions.

"If you can take it, I can," the doctor told him. But he dropped the package in his pocket before they left.

In the rattling half-track, with Anna driving and Tony in the truck body beside Graham, the writer said through clenched teeth, "God help you if you tell me these crea-tures aren't biting tonight. It's a damn-fool notion anyway. You've been telling me they are born of Earth people. Why aren't there any born on Earth?"

"It's because of what the geneticists call a lethal gene. Polly and Jim, for instance. Each one of them had a cer-tain lethal gene in his heredity. Either of them could have married somebody without the lethal gene and had ordi-nary babies, on Earth or on Mars, because the gene is a recessive. On Earth, when Polly's lethal gene and Jim's lethal gene matched, it was fatal to their offspring. They never came to term; the gene produced a fetus which couldn't survive the womb on Earth. I don't know what factors are involved in that failure—cosmic rays, the gravity, or what. But on Mars the fetus comes to term and is—a mutant.

"A Martian. They don't just *accept* Mars air like an Earthman with Marsworthy lungs. They can't *stand* Earth air. And they need a daily ration of marcaine to grow and live. That's who stole Brenner's marcaine. That's why they slipped marcaine into Polly Kandro's food. They wanted her to pass it to Sunny in her milk. When we put Sunny on the bottle, they stole him so they could give him marcaine. They surrendered him on our promise to see that he got it."

"And that's a perfect cover-story for a dope-addict mamma," scoffed the writer. "How many of these mutants are there supposed to be?"

"A couple of hundred. I suppose about half of them are first generation. There must have been a very few in the beginning, children of homesteaders abandoned on a desert ranch when their parents died, who crawled out and lived off the country, chewing marcaine out of the weed. And they must have 'stolen' other Martian babies from other homesteaders when they grew."

Graham swore against the pain. "The Kandro kid looks as normal as any other baby. How are the mutants supposed to know he isn't? Does he give them a password?"

Tony explained wearily: "They are telepathic. It explains a lot of things—why they're only seen by people they want to see them, why they could steal Brenner's mar-caine and not get caught. They can hear people coming—their thoughts, that is. That's why they beat up Big Ginny; she was aborting a Martian baby. Why they beat the hell out of you. Why they sensibly keep away from most Earth people."

"Except Red Sand Jim Granata, eh?"

"Granata was a liar. He probably never saw one in his life. He heard all the dwarf yarns and used them to put on good commercial shows."

Anna maneuvered the half-track around a spur of rock picked out by the headlights and ground the vehicle to a stop. "It's too rugged from here on," she said. "We'll have to carry him the rest of the way."

"You warm enough? Another blanket?" asked Tony.

"You're really going through with this, aren't you?" said the writer. "I'm crazy to play along, but if—if this is a story and I get beaten on it— Oh, hell, yes, I'm warm enough. Stretcher ought to be easier going than this tin can."

Anna led, with Graham swaying between them on a shoulder-suspended litter that left the bearers'

hands free.

The writer's weight was not much of a burden in this grav-ity. Both she and Tony used torches to pick their way among the scree that had dribbled for millennia, one stone at a time, down the weathering Rimrocks. They smelled the acrid fumes of Pittco across the hills, fouling the night air, and Graham began to cough.

"Anna?" asked the doctor.

She knew what he meant, and said shortly, "Not yet."

Another hundred meters and Tony felt her begin to pull off to the right. Her "homing" led them to the foot of the mesa-like hills a few meters from a cave mouth. They headed in.

"Quite soon," said Anna, and then: "We can put him down."

"Be very quiet," Tony told the writer. He himself felt the faint, eerie "touch" of a mutant in his mind.

"They're very sensitive to—"

"*Gargh!*" shrieked Graham as a weird little fellow stepped into the beam from Anna's light. It clapped its hands over its ears and fled.

"Now see what you did!" raged Anna in an angry whis-per. "Their ears—you almost deafened him."

"Get him back!" The writer's voice was tremulous.

"I don't know if I can," Anna said coldly. "He doesn't have to take orders from you *or* me. All I can do is try."

"You'd better. It scared the hell out of me, I admit, but so did the fakes in Granata's Interplanetary Show."

"Man, didn't you *feel* it?" asked Tony incredulously.

"What?" asked Graham.

"Please be quiet, both of you!"

They waited a long time in the cold corridor before the thing reappeared, stepping warily into the circle of light.

Suddenly Anna laughed. "He wants to know why you want to pull his ears off. He sees you thinking of pulling his ears and the ears coming off and he's as puzzled as he can be."

"Shrewd guess," said Graham. "Do I get to pull them?"

"No. If you have any questions, tell me, and I'll try to ask him."

"I think it's a fake. Come out from behind those whis-kers, whoever you are. Stillman? Gracey? No, you're too short. I'll bet you're that little punk Tad Campbell from the radio shack."

"This isn't getting us anywhere," said Tony. "Graham, if you think of a person or a scene or something, the little fellow will get it telepathically, give it to Anna, and she'll say what it is."

"Fair enough," said the writer. "I don't know what it's supposed to prove, but it's some kind of test. I'm thinking."

A moment later Anna said evenly, "If you weren't beaten up already, I'd slap your face off."

"I'm sorry," said Graham hastily. "I was only kidding. I didn't really think it would—but it did, didn't it?" With mounting excitement he said, "Ask him who he is, who his people were, whether he's married, how old he is—"

Anna held up her hand. "That's enough to start. I can't think of any way to ask him his name. His parents—home-steaders—a shack and a goat—a kitchen garden—tall peo-ple, the man wears thick glasses— Tony! It's the Tollers!"

"That's impossible," he said. "Their son's on Earth. He never answers their letters," the doctor remembered. "They keep writing, and—how old was he when he left?"

"I don't know," she answered a moment later. "He doesn't understand the question."

"I felt it," said the writer, suddenly, in a frightened voice. "Like a thing touching you inside your head. Is that him?"

"That's him. Just don't fight it."

After a long silence Graham said quietly, "Hell, he's all right. They're all-right people, aren't they?"

"Do you want to ask him any more questions?" asked Anna.

"A million of them. But not right now. Can I come back again?" asked the writer slowly and heavily.

"When I'm in better shape?" He waited for Anna's nod, then said, "Will you say thanks to him and get me to the 'track?"

"Pain worse?" asked Tony.

"No, I don't think so. Hell, I don't know. As a matter of fact, I'm just worn out."

The small mutant glided from the circle of light. "By, fella," said Graham, and then grinned weakly. "He said good-by back at me!"

Gracey and Nick and half a dozen of the biochem lab boys were waiting for them at the hospital when they got back. Joe must have been watching out of the window, because he ran out to meet them.

It was late, and the lights were already out in most of the double row of rust-brown huts. But Joe Gracey, the quiet one, the gentle ex-professor, possessor of eternal calm and detachment, came flying down the dim street, shouting, "Doc! Tony! *We've got it!*"

"Sh-h ..." Tony nodded toward the dozing man on the shoulder litter, but Graham was already opening his eyes.

"What's up?" he asked mushily. "What's all excite-ment?"

"Nothing at all," the doctor tried to tell him. "We're back in the Colony. And you're going to bed. Hold on just a minute, will you, Joe?" He knew how Gracey felt; it was hard enough to restrain his own jubilation and keep his voice in neutral register. But Graham had had enough for one night, and Tony had to get his patient back to the hospital bed before he could take time to listen even to such news as Gracey bore.

Joe helped them get the writer comfortably settled, and waited impatiently while the doctor made a quick check for any possible damage done by the trip. Finally Anna pulled up the covers, and the three of them started out.

"Oh, Doctor—" Tony turned to find Graham up again on one elbow, wide-eyed and not a bit sleepy. "I was just wondering if I could have my typewriter." Before Tony could answer, the elbow collapsed and Graham smiled ruefully. "I guess not. I couldn't work it. You don't have anything as luxurious as an Earthside dictatyper in the place, do you?"

"Sure," Tony told him. "We've got one in the Lab of-fice. You get some rest now, and we'll set it up for you here in the morning."

"I'm okay," Graham insisted. "There's something I'd like to get on paper right away. I won't be able to sleep anyhow if I don't get it done."

"You'll sleep," the doctor said. "I can give you a shot."

"No." Graham was determined. "If you can't get the dictatyper out here now, how about some pencil and paper? I *think* I still know how to use them."

"I'll see what we can do. Anna, will you come with me?"

Tony led her, not to the living-room where the others were waiting, but into the bedroom. "How about it?" he asked in a whisper. "How's he feeling?"

"It's a funny mixture, Tony," she said, "but I think it's all right. He's not nearly as excited as he was before. He's eager, but calm and—well, it's hard to express, but *honest*, too."

"Right." He tightened his hand swiftly on her shoulder and smiled down at her small, earnest face. "A man could get too used to this," he said. "How do you suppose I got along before I knew about you?"

He strode into the living-room and consulted briefly with Nick, after which two of the men from the biochem section tramped out to the Lab and brought back the machine for Graham to use.

Through the living-room door, Tony heard the writer's voice droning on, dictating, and the soft tapping of the machine. But what was going on in the hospital didn't seem important.

The thing that mattered was the tiny pinch of pink powder Nick and Joe had been waiting to show him.

"Tony," said Nick, exultantly, "look at this stuff! It's damn near oral-administration OxEn. Took it through twelve stages of concentration and we'll take it through exactly three more to completion when Anna blows some hyvac cells for us. I tried and all I got was blistered fingers."

"It works?" asked Tony.

"It's beautiful," said Gracey. "The Kelsey people must have fifty contaminants they don't even suspect



are there. Now I want to know where that sample tissue came from and where you're going to get more. And what did you mean about dwarfs?"

"Didn't Nick tell you?" Tony looked from the puzzled face to the startled one, and chortled appreciatively. "You mean you've been working together on this thing all eve-ning and you never—?"

"He didn't ask," Cantrella said defensively. "Anyhow, we weren't working together. We weren't even in the same Lab."

"Okay," Tony grinned, "here goes again. You gave me the idea originally, Joe. As much as any one person or thing did. You were talking the other day about lethal genes. Remember, I tried to ask you about it this afternoon?"

"When Mimi blew up? Sure."

"That's when it hit me. I got that lung tissue from Sunny Kandro, Joe. After we brought him home. He's a mutant—the result of a Mars-viable gene that's lethal on Earth."

"And there are more of them?" Gracey leaned forward excitedly. "Are they co-operative? Will they answer ques-tions? And submit to examination? When can I see one?"

"They're co-operative," Anna said, smiling. "The rea-son you haven't seen one yet is that they can't stand humans—too uncooperative to suit them. Examinations? I don't see why not, if your intentions are honorable. They're telepaths, so they'd know you didn't mean to harm them."

"Telepaths!" Gracey breathed the word as Nick exclaimed it. "What other changes—" the agronomist started to ask, then said instead, "No sense you telling *me*. I will see one? Soon?"

Anna nodded. "Why not?"

"How about new tissue then?" Joe asked her. "Can we get it when we need it? You know how this stuff works? The old culture keeps mutating, and you have to start it over again. We can't keep taking slices out of Sunny all the time."

"I don't know," she had to admit. "I don't know if they'd understand what for, or why you're doing it."

"I don't think we'll have any trouble," Tony put in. "Nick, our Lab is equipped to turn out marcaine, isn't it?"

"Well, hell—yes, of course, but what for?"

"Marcaine and OxEn both? Do we have the facilities for it?"

"Sure. Processing the OxEn won't take up much."

"Then I'm sure we can get our lung-scrappings," the doctor said. "What do you say, Ansie? Will they do it? After all, you're the expert on these mutants."

"They like us," she said thoughtfully. "They trust us, too. They need marcaine. Yes, I think they'd do it."

"Doc!" It was Graham, calling from inside. Tony opened the door. "There anything left in that bottle of mine?"

"Hasn't been touched."

"Pour me a shot, will you? A good, long one. I'm not in such hot shape. And pass the bottle around."

Tony filled a glass generously. "Take it and go to sleep," he ordered. "You're going to feel worse tomorrow."

"Thanks. That's what I call a bedside manner." Graham grinned and tossed off the drink with a happy shudder. "I've got some copy here," he said. "Can Stillman get it out tonight?"

Tony took the typed paper from the dictating machine and paused a moment, irresolutely.

Graham laughed sleepily. "It's in the clear," he said. "No code. And you can read it if you like. Two messages and Take One of the biggest running story of the century."

"Thanks," said Tony. "Good night." He closed the door firmly behind him.

"Story from Graham," he said to the group. He buzzed Harve.

"Read it!" said Nick. "And if that lying rat pulls another—"

Tony gathered courage at last to run his eyes over the copy, and gasped with relief.

" 'Message to Marsport communications,' " he read. " 'Kill all copy previously sent for upcoming substitutes. Douglas Graham.' And 'Message to Commissioner Ham-ilton Bell, Marsport, Administration. As interested lay observer strongly urge you withdraw intended applica-tion of Title

Fifteen search cordon to Sun Lake Colony. Personal investigation convinces me theft allegations un-founded, Title Fifteen application grave injustice which my duty expose fullest before public and official circles on return Earth. Appreciate you message me acknowledg-ment. Douglas Graham.' "

Nick's yell of triumph hit the roof. "What are we wait-ing for?" he demanded. "Where's Mimi? We have pack-ing to do!"

"What's the matter with him?" asked Harve Stillman, coming in.

Tony was reading the last of the messages to himself. Anna told him, "You like that one best of all. What's in it?"

He looked up with a grin across his face. "I'm sorry," he said. "This is how it starts: 'Marsport communications, sub following for previous copy, which kill. By Douglas Graham. With mutants, lead to come.' Harve, what does that mean?"

The ex-wire-serviceman snapped, "It's additional copy on a story about the dwarfs—the first part isn't ready to go yet. What's he say, Tony?"

The doctor read happily: "The administrative prob-blems raised by this staggering discovery are not great. It is fortunate that Dr. Hellman and Miss Willendorf, co-dis-coverers of the Martians, are persons of unquestioned integrity, profoundly interested in protecting the new race from exploitation. I intend to urge the appointment of one of them as special Commissioner for the P.A.C. to take charge of mutant welfare and safety. There must be no repetition of the tragedies that marked Earthly co-lonial expansion when greedy and shortsighted—' "

"Damn, that's great," muttered the radio man. "Let me file it."

The doctor, with the grin still on his face, handed over the copy and Harve raced out.

Joe Gracey said, "Well, I certainly hope whichever one of you turns out to be Commissioner is going to give us Lab men a decent chance at research on the mutants. I was thinking—I could probably work out a test for the lethel gene, or Martian gene, better call it. Spermatozoa from a male, a polar body or an ovum from a female and we'd be able to tell—"

"No!" said Anna hysterically.

The others were shocked into silence.

"I'll take you home, Ansie," said Tony.

He took her arm and they walked out into the icy night down the Colony street.

"Ansie, I've been sort of taking things for granted. I should ask you once, for the record." He stopped walking and faced her. "Will you marry me?"

"*Oh, Tony!* How *can* we? I thought—for just a little while after I told you about me, I thought perhaps we could, that life could be the way it is for other people. But now this. How *can* we?"

"What are you afraid of?"

"Afraid? I'm afraid of our children, afraid of this planet! I was never afraid before. I was hurt and bewildered when I knew too much about people, but—Tony, don't *you see*? To have a baby like Molly's, to have it grow up a stranger, an alien creature, to have it leave me and go to its—its *own* people—"

He took her hand and began walking again, searching for the words he needed.

"Ansie," he began, "I think we will be married. If you want it as much as I do, we surely will be. And we'll have children. And more than that, the hope of all the race will lie in our children, Anna. Ours and the children of the other people here. And the children of the mutants. Don't forget that.

"They look different. They even think differently, and nobody knows more about that than you. But they're as human as we are. Maybe more so.

"We've made a beginning here at Sun Lake tonight. We've cut the big knot, the knot that kept us tied to Earth. Our mutants helped us do that, and maybe they can help us lick this planet in all the ways that still remain. Maybe they can help us cure the next Joan Radcliff. Maybe they can keep us from going blind when the pro-TECTIVE shots from Earth stop coming through."

"But maybe they can't."

"Ansie, if our children should be mutants, we'd not only have to face it, accept it without fear—we'd have to be glad. Mutants are the children of Mars, natural human children of Mars. We don't know yet

whether *we* can live here; but we *know they can*.

"They're gentle. They're honest and decent and ra-tional. They trust each other, not because of blind loves and precedents, as we do, but because they know each other as Earth humans never can. If blind hates and prece-dents end life on Earth, Ansie, we can go on at Sun Lake. And we can go on that much better for knowing that even our failure, if we fail, won't be the end."

He stopped at the door and looked down at her, search-ing for the understanding that had to be there. If Anna failed, what other woman would comprehend?

"I'll ask you this time," she said soberly. "Tony, will you marry me?"

## THE TOMORROW PEOPLE

*by Judith Merril*

Scanned by BW-SciFi

This book is fiction. No resemblance is intended between any character herein and any person, living or dead; any such re-semblance is purely coincidental.

For Milt and the unturned back

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### PROLOGUE

*June, 1973—January, 1976*

They sent two men out through unknown space to a far cold place, a place whose very name was fear, the name of the cruel god, the god of war. They shot two men off the Moon— out from the sun and away from the earth—in a new great ship with a shiny hull and a miracle fuel.

The ship went out with a blast and a prayer. After three years it came back with a sigh, unpowered, fuel-less, floating in slow-spiraled orbit through empty sky around the Moon. It came back with its hull scratched and dented and darkened from the dust and debris of space, the wind and sands of Mars. It came back with one man in it instead of two.

Johnny Wendt was the one who came back.

### PART ONE

*January 1976—June 23, 1977*

*Rockland, N. Y.—Thursday, June 23, 1:30 AM. (E.D.S.T.)*

He woke up screaming again.

Or else he dreamed the scream?

But when his eyes started to open, they closed reactively against the light. So Lee was up. And so it was no dream.

Sweat tickled his neck, but he lay still, breathing evenly, eyes shut. He would talk to her in the morning. Not now. In the morning it would be better, but not now. . . .

He opened his eyes a slit to make sure. It was her light, all right. She was sitting up, watching him.

"Sorry, darling," she said. "I couldn't get to sleep, I didn't think the light would bother you. . . ."

"Huh?" He blinked his eyes open wider. She was sitting, but with a pillow propped behind her back,

book on her lap. "No, 'sarigh'," he mumbled. "Go 'head. Light don' bother..."

She'd been reading. . . . She had been up first! He shook his head, clearing it, got her in focus. The flicker of frown on her forehead was apology, not worry. . . .

So it had been a dream?

"Hey," he said, "Was I . . . ?" He twisted his neck cautiously, felt for the knot in back with an exploring hand. "I feel like . . . Was I keeping you up, babe? Thrashing around, or ... anything?"

"No. It was just this damn book. I got started reading it and I kept thinking and I couldn't sleep—I'm sorry, darling," she said again.

She closed the book with a snap and reached for the light switch.

No!

"Don't quit on account of me," he said quickly. "Light doesn't bother me." *Jesus*, what a dream! "Anyhow, I'm up now." He rubbed at his neck, groped under the pillow and found his handkerchief. "I guess I was dreaming." He wiped sweat from his forehead and neck and face. Then he swung his legs out of the bed and stood up. "Coffee?"

Lisa hesitated, shook her head: No.

Johnny found his shorts on the floor, pulled them on. There was sweat on his thighs, too. Sticky and drying. A shower, he thought ... too damn hot in here. He peered at the thermostat; it said 68, but the room was hot. He turned it down. Check it out in the morning, he thought. Couldn't be working right. A drink and a shower would do it, all right. Then he could get back to sleep. Just one drink . . .

"Maybe a brandy . . . ?"

It took a moment to register—she meant for her. He looked down at her, grinning. "Hey!" he said, "Don't you think one lush around here is enough?" She smiled and he leaned over, meaning to drop a quick kiss on her hair. Then it hit him again: the incredible fact of her presence, right there, in his house, in his bed . . . the look and shape of her, the curve of shoulder, the aliveness just below her skin, the way her cheek curved with her smile . . . smiling light in her eyes, and all for him ... for him .. even while the faint line of frowning ... for him, too. . . lingered above. The cloudy feel and fragrance of her hair, and the strange blend of scents on her skin; soap, grass, sex, something else, something sweet and delicious and way-back in memory.

"Oh, baby!" he said and sat down to do an all-out job of kissing her. "Maybe I don't want that coffee—Nope!" He stood up, abruptly aware of dried sweat on his face, in his hair. "The lady wants a drink, that's what she gets!"

In the kitchen, he got the bottle and two glasses and went straight back, not giving himself time for the quick one he would have had while he mixed his coffee. He gave Lisa the bottle.

"Pour me. I'll be right back."

And what the Hell do you think you're proving? he jeered at himself as he turned on the shower. All the answers he could think of sounded more like Phil Kutler's brand of idiocy than like any of his own. He stepped impatiently out of the air blast and wrapped a towel around his still-damp waist. *Well*, he thought, any way you look at it, it's your own damn fault!

He went out, took the glass Lee held out, and belted it [down] fast. He filled it again, leaving the jug carefully on her table, not his own. Then he walked around the bed and sat down, leaning against the headboard.

Sip it, he told himself. Lisa leaned back beside him. He watched her breasts move under the fullness of the thin night-gown: rising, as she settled into place, and again as she raised her glass to her lips; falling when she lowered it; shifting again when she turned to smile at him. Her hair was freshly brushed, he saw, and her lips newly, lightly, rouged. There was a trace of perfume, too, that had not been there before—and the other smell, the special one he couldn't quite place, was lost under it. That was when he remembered something she'd said before.

"What's with the morning bus?" he asked.

"I have to be at the studio at ten. They're taping the Bar-tok. Didn't I tell you Hal called . . . ?"

"Yeah." She had told him. So okay. One more thing he didn't remember. He looked at her again. What the Hell is that smell, anyway . . . ?

"Lee . . ." He could sense her tension, her shrinking from what he was going to say. "I could go down too . . . while we're there ... we could see about that license, you know?"

"Oh, Johnny . . ." She paused, and because he did love her, he didn't wait to make her say the rest.

"Okay, doll. Listen . . ." No good. "Oh, Hell! Just don't forget old Johnny did his best to make an honest woman out of you!" What the Hell should he care? If that's how she wanted it...

She'd do anything for him, he knew. Anything—except marry him.

Okay! "Better get some sleep," he said stiffly.

"Mmmmm?" She emptied her glass, squashed out her cigarette, and slid down on her pillow. Her hand hovered over the light switch while her eyes questioned his.

"Hand me the jug first," he said. Jesus! What a dream! He filled his glass again, setting the bottle down on his own table. The Hell with it. This time he needed it.

"Jesus!" he said. "What a dream!" He laughed but it didn't sound right. "You know how words can get all mixed up? Choke and artichoke. First somebody's pushing my head in, then they're pulling me apart. Just like an artichoke— Christ! You know, you take off one leaf at a time and dip it in butter and suck all the good part off and throw it away and pull off another one. Then you get down to the heart— just sitting there naked with all the leaves off, and you can't even yell for help, who the Hell'd ever hear an artichoke ... ?"

The goddam glass was empty. In the dark, the gurgling sound of pouring was too loud.

The Hell with it!

Lisa didn't say anything.

Well, what *could* she say?

What the Hell did he want her to say?

"There's a moon tonight." That's what she said.

"Is there?"

The Hell with that too!

She shouldn't have put on that perfume, he thought. Then, startled, he found that his hand had gone out to the switch, and the wall that had been milky glass before turned trans-parent. A near-full moon, heavy and low on the hilltops sil-houetted the silvery birches and tall pines: brought them so close he could feel the night breeze outside. He shivered, suddenly and uncontrollably, then remembered he'd turned the conditioner down before.

He reached for the panel light. Lee stirred in the bed, turned her back to him. *Fooled you!* he thought with child-ish malice as he found the light . . . but no more childish than her back when she thought he was going for the bottle again, he decided. She moved again, and he saw she was propped on an elbow, staring out. A current of air, from her back maybe, carried that scent again—what in Hell was it?— An old smell, a happy one, something from back when the Moon was a moon, and the man in the moon was a joke, and not Chris, and Mars was an orangey spot in the sky, with no man in it anywhere. . . .

His hand on the thermostat wavered. He stood up, dropped the towel, and shivered again.

"Mind if I light the fire?" His voice sounded harsh in his ears. Hell with that too. . . .

"Mmmmm . . ." That could have meant anything. He crossed the room, set a match to the kindling and crouched at the fireplace, hugging the warmth, while he watched flames leap up. Smell of pine burning, the crackle of pitch, and then he remembered . . .

Vanilla!

A year . . . more than a year now . . . fourteen, fifteen months, that flavor, the scent of it on Lisa's skin had been haunting him. The smell of vanilla! He laughed. She made an inquiring noise and he looked around.

The moon was gone. The milky wall was black. His panel light glowed for a moment, then she moved toward his side of the bed and stretched out her arm and the small glow died. Firelight leaped up, warming him through.

"Hey, babe!" he said. "Oh, baby, I love you. . . ."

Across the broad pock-marked face of the Moon, like blue-tinged boils on chin, cheek, and forehead, three air-filled pressure domes gleamed in the hard rays of the naked sun.

Largest and best-advertised of these was the joint military and astronomical observatory base of the United Nations World Peace Control and International Scientific Congress, nestled appropriately, or at least hopefully, inside a hilltop between the great dry "seas," *Tranquilitatis* and *Serenitatis*.

Flanking it, at distances of about 800 miles each, were the Low-atmosphere and Low-temperature Laboratory of the Soviet Union of Asian Republics, and the All America Laboratory for the Investigation of Extra-Terrestrial Phenomena.

In both cases, the official designations of the smaller domes stated something less than the whole truth. Certainly, valuable scientific researches into the properties and effects of near-zero and near-vacuum were being pursued, eagerly, in the Red Dome. Just as surely, extra-terrestrial phenomena were being studied with active interest inside Dollars Dome. But the primary purposes of the two national labs were somewhat less academic than the "pure" scientific research which, for the most part, motivated the mixed crews of physicists, chemists, and astronomers in the big World Dome.

There was just one objective that could have induced either the USAA or the SUAR to finance and maintain experimental scientific bases more than a quarter of a million miles out from under the quivering noses of, respectively, the Congressional Committees and the Politburo. In his stronghold far out of sight beyond the Lunar Apennines, some 1500 miles from the United States of All Americas Dome in Playfair Crater, Dr. Chen Lian-Tsu was occupied just as busily as was Dr. Peter Andrew Christensen in Dollars Dome with the application of known physical, chemical, and astronomical data to the specific political-economic-imperial requirements of practical space-flight (tomorrow ... for our side).

In the surface matters of dress and taste, preference in food, sport, and language, as well as national allegiance, the two men were worlds apart. In the basics of personality both of them were so well suited to the similar jobs they held that they were almost absurdly alike—even to the fact that neither (though both were in their mid-forties) had ever married. They were the kind of men who "marry their work"; but, unlike others almost of their own type, both had avoided entanglement in arid marriages to which they could bring no real emotions. Their passions were already committed, wholly and without reserve, to the great dream of Space: of man in Space.

For these two, the immediate physical world, the Earth, was already abandoned; and from the perspective of an inward life based in the universe-at-large, either one could see with tragic clarity the narrow limits and uses of the old, little, world. They understood well enough the need of other men for competitive glories. They understood profit-and-loss and its importance to other men. And they knew perfectly well that for the non-imperial realities of the UN or the ISC there was no economic, political, or social need for space flight.

So they had cause to be loyal nationals, each to his own. And each took care, as he had all his life, that no breath of suspicion sully his name or place in doubt (by a wary government) his suitability for the work he had to do. And if on rare and most private occasions, either one of them thought briefly, wistfully, of the advantages of a united approach to the Dream—he knew well enough that for other men, Space was no dream at all, but a prize enhanced—if not created—by competition. The isolation, security measures, and end-less duplication of research and planning were, realistically, necessary.

This attitude was of course easier to maintain on the Moon than on Earth. Fifteen hundred miles of rugged lunar terrain, and the exigencies of rocket fuel economy, kept physical contact between the domes down to a minimum. Two hundred-fifty thousand miles of empty space, and the economics of human existence on the Moon, kept political contact with the home governments down to a minimum too: on the Moon, a really rigid security could be sustained with almost no worry about infiltration, no possible worry about associations, and no pettyfogging annoyances from suspicious, ambitious policemen or politicians.

The prevailing state of by-mutual-consent *laissez-faire* isolation was such an inherent fabric that Dr. Chen and Dr. Christensen had never even met personally. There had simply been no occasion. For that matter, up till the day of Johnny Wendt's return, the men on either staff who had even seen the other

dome could be counted on two hands; none had ever been further inside the other than the landing lock—and that only on the occasions of the inevitable minor emergencies that called for humane sharing of survival (not scientific) equipment. With the exception of these instances, USAA ships made it a point not even to fly inside a line-of-sight of Plato Crater, and Red pilots stayed equally clear of Playfair.

The only modification of this "natural security" status that had occurred between the times that the two domes went up, in '69, and the orbiting of the Moon Messenger in '74, was when an outraged AA Congress learned that the Reds had succeeded in sending a ship to Mars without any previous knowledge at Dollars Dome.

But even then, no real attempt was made at an Intelligence network operating directly between the domes; it just wasn't worth the waste of oxygen on a Dome resident doing less than a full-time job of research or development. The money author-ized as a result of the indignant Congressional Investigation went into tightening and improving existing infiltrations on Relay Station, the 400-mile Earth satellite, and at World Dome.

Undoubtedly, counter-espionage was strengthened correspondingly—and with just as little effect on the Red Dome it-self as the USAA move had on life at Playfair. Not till the orbiting of the Messenger, the giant wheel of space that rode the great ellipse from a 12,000-mile orbit around Earth out to the convenient dropping-distance of the Moon, carrying shuttle-ships of all three domes, was there the kind of inter-grouping that breeds espionage. In eighteen months of operation, the Messenger had already started to acquire an aura of the sort of glamour that once permeated Istanbul, Paris, Lisbon, and Rome, complete with agents, counter-agents, and double agents.

Congressional apprehension had increased sharply when it was finally admitted, less than a year after the Messenger went up, that the whole spectrum of psychogenic and psychosomatic ailments plaguing the dwellers on the Moon could be relieved by nothing less than a month-long quarterly rest leave on Earth. For a time, there was even talk of "rest camps" and "recreation centers" where top-secret Moon Dome scientists could take their rehabilitation leaves on Earth. But public distaste for the idea prevailed—and the original Congressional fears dissolved almost out of shape when, 32 months after its unheralded departure, the Lenin failed to make its scheduled return. By that time—Christmas, 1973—the Colombo was six months out, en route to Mars. And when a strenuous Intelligence effort confirmed that the Soviet ship was really lost (and not just secretly arrived), Dr. Christensen did not hesitate to remind the genial Congressmen that he had Told Them So, three years earlier, when he explained his failure to alert anyone to the possibility of a Red Mars-trip in the spring of '71.

The fact was he had assumed his opposite number would wait, as he was doing, for the next A-orbit date, in June '73, so as to gain the advantages that might accrue from the results of the ISC Observatory's studies during the close Mars opposition of '71. After the fact, he remembered that Chen had been faced with an extra intangible that had not troubled him: the history of Soviet "firsts." From Sputnik I on up through the first Moon-landing, SUAR (or USSR) rocket men had been first. The Party Chairman desired to keep it that way—so the Lenin left first.

But the Colombo came back.

It came back with no news of the Red ship.

And it came back with one man instead of two.

*Dollars Dome—January 12, 1976*

Johnny Wendt was the one who came back.

They met him with cheers and rejoicing, welcomed him home with music and medals and speeches on worldwide video beamed from the bunting-draped central square of the United States Moon Dome.

They sent relays of shuttles up to the big ship, with fuel and ship-to-base radio and an ace pilot, encased in the newest and safest of protective gear, to guide her down. The first shuttle took Johnny off, while official cameras recorded for all time the opening of the historic lock and the return of man-kind's first space-traveler to Terra's Moon.

The cameras kept grinding inside the shuttle while Major Wendt was bathed under batteries of

ultraviolet, and a medic in Geiger-suit looked down his throat, checked his heartbeat and pulse and lungs, looked at his insides under a fluoroscope, took smears and samples and ran off fast lab checks—then smiled and handed him a brand-new uniform, one they could trust to harbor no alien virus or unknown seed.

The camera followed him out of the shuttle, into the dome lock. Another camera, and the live video scanners, picked him up inside the dome. But in the lock, for the sixty-nine seconds it took to bleed air, no record was made. And Chris was there, alone, to meet him first.

He pumped Johnny's hand, grinning with triumph. "Man!" he said. "We made it, man!"

Then his grin faded. "You did," he corrected. "Johnny— what happened to Doug?"

"I don't know," Wendt said.

The inner door opened. Cameras swung into action. Gen-eral Harbridge stepped forward and shook Johnny's hand.

"Congratulations—Colonel!" he said, and pinned the new eagles onto the new uniform. But when they were under way, out of range for a moment of audio pickups, he asked anx-iously, "Wendt—what happened to Laughlin?"

"I don't know," Johnny said, "sir." Then, wearily: "Everything I know is in the Log, sir. I brought it down with me. I figured you'd want it. The doctor's got it."

Harbridge nodded and said nothing more. But his smile when he led Johnny up to the platform on the Mall was a shade forced. And as soon as he decently could, he whispered a word to an aide and ducked out, leaving the assembled Dignitaries to welcome the space hero home.

Nobody missed him. The Ambassadors and Senators pinned a whole chestfull of medals on the new uniform, and found a few for Dr. Christensen and his staff too. Then the VIPs and the cameras followed the new colonel to his first meal. The staff conference room had been turned into a banquet hall. Johnny was toasted and feted and fed.

They asked him to speak.

He stood up and looked at them all and his face was grim. Chris, sitting next to him, knowing him almost too well from five years of training and planning before the trip, stood up quickly beside him and grabbed the mike.

"Boy's all choked up," he said.

While the room laughed he managed to cover the mike for a moment. "Just tell 'em thanks, Johnny."

When it was quiet again, Wendt looked around, indecisive, looked down at Chris and grinned painfully. "I'm not much of a speaker," he said. "I ... Hell, I'm glad to be home!"

"Thanks," Chris said.

When it all broke up, Chris took him up to his room.

"Thanks?"

"For keeping your mouth shut. Whatever's bugging you . . ."

"You seen Harbridge yet?"

"No. He took off during the speeches."

"I know." Johnny smiled the new one-sided smile again. "He went to read the Log."

Pete Christensen looked at the stranger who had been a friend. "All right," he said. "What the hell happened?"

"It's in the Log, Chris—all I know about it. Ask Harbridge." He paused. "Hey," he said, "You got something up here to drink?"

Everything on the Colombo was tested and touched (and in some cases tasted too) by teams of two: a scientist and an Intelligence officer. Johnny had done his job all right, and Doug apparently had completed his before he disappeared. The boxes and bottles, tubes and jars, notebooks and tape re-corders and camera films were all filled and filed, packed with the answers to centuries of human questioning.

Yes, there had once been intelligent life on Mars.

No, it was there no more.



There were pictures of crumbling ruins, a very few carefully packed fossil remains, atmosphere samples, terrain maps and photographs, wind charts, rock samples, analyses, assays, and boxes of "Mars-Earth," from seven different "canals," alive with one-celled life-forms that made planet-life possible in the dry air above ground. The record of Laughlin's work on the symbiosis between the moisture-retaining "Mars-bugs" and the sparse photo-sensitive lichen of the "canals" were there too, neat and in order, properly filed away and labeled in Doug Laughlin's hand. And Johnny had finished the job; he'd brought back all the pictures and records and readings, the answers they sent him to get. Nothing was missing, not a thing out of place—nothing but Laughlin himself, one specially designed sand-caterpillar-tractor, two oxygen cylinders, and the four pages torn out of the Log.

Daily, sometimes hourly, press releases were beamed down to Earth, telling it all to a waiting world—all but the last bit, about the Log.

The teams of two went through the ship of space.

The semanticists, psychers, and medics went to work on the Hero, and on the Log he brought back.

The last entry before the torn-out sheets was in Laughlin's hand, dated April 26, 1975, roughly a month before scheduled takeoff for the return trip to Earth: a routine report on routine existence, noting temperature, wind, and moisture readings; cataloguing the men's whereabouts and accomplishments during the twenty-four-and-a-half hours that made one Martian day; listing lab findings of the past several days. Nothing remarkable in any way—except that it broke off in mid-sentence at the end of the page.

No clues or hints, no intimations, no cryptic allusions to Doug's impending act—not in that entry or any previous one. Presumably, the missing pages did hold some such references; but they were gone—presumably wherever Laughlin himself had gone.

Handwriting experts, called in by the Psych staff, agreed that Laughlin's last entry showed signs of emotional upset. But both men's handwriting showed a slow increase of tension throughout the Log, mounting sharply after the landing on Mars, and more swiftly again during the month since the sampling and mapping were finished, until the day of Laughlin's departure.

The next entry, after the missing four pages, was Wendt's, on April 29, at 1816 hours: "Laughlin gone out alone without notice. No signals from sand cat. I do not believe he plans to return. Tire tracks visible from cargo lock point N39W. Going out in heli now, no flight plan, will follow tracks. Carrying four hours fuel, standard 24-hr oxy-water etc. Figure two hours total flight time, unless I find him in trouble. Tape 237, a-6."

The next notation, at 2129 hours, said briefly: "No luck. Lost tracks in hills. Saw what looked like sand cat dust trail at N32W on other side. Going out again now, with six hours fuel. Oxy-water, 12 hrs. Tape 237, a-9."

Then: "4/30/75, 0110—Dust storm, 50 mi. past previous flight limit. N32W dust cloud could have been storm approaching. Any tracks will be covered now. Will commence standard search pattern, 3-hr, flights, when storm passes."

Half an hour later, at 0048: "Thought I'd catch a nap till storm let up, but might as well get the story down, as much as I know, before I forget anything. Doug left the ship some-time between 2315 (approx) last night and 0650 this morning (Mars-time, eq: 1108 and 1754, 4/29/75). Most likely he left just before I woke up, say between—"

Here, the Mars time had been written in and scratched out, and Earth time (which was Standard Log procedure), written in instead.

"—1745, say, and 1754. This is hunch mostly, I think the sound of the airlock might have been what woke me, since I did not actually go to sleep till an hour or more after 1108, when I went to my bunk, and I was surprised to see the time when I woke. Usually sleep longer. Was not aware of what woke me (if anything) at first, and did not take special notice of Doug's absence. Assumed he was sleeping. Got dressed, started making breakfast, then noticed panel signal that a sand cat was out—but no beeps coming in. Checked Doug's bunk, which was empty. Checked Log, for his trip plan. Found missing

pages. Checked time; then 1812. Found dust cloud that could have been cat trail on scope at N37W. Pro-ceeded on first search, as noted, at 1816.

"Throughout first search, I kept helmet radio tuned for automatic signals from cat, except for a five minute wave-band search every half hour after trying helmet-radio calls. No signals received.

"Storm seems to be mostly past now. Will now commence search pattern." Fuel and oxy-water data and signal tape ref-erence numbers followed.

Laughlin had then been gone at least seven hours. Longer trips than that had been made before—but not by either man alone. Nor were any trips—prior to this one—made singly by either partner without advance arrangements. If one of them went out alone, the other was required, by operating pro-cedures established beforehand, to stand by and maintain continuous radio contact. When they left ship together, the same continuous radio contact was maintained, one-way, and automatically taped on board the ship. Both sand cats, the helicopter, and the small plane were equipped with radio trans-mitters that operated automatically, sending signal directions, as long as the vehicle was in operation. There was no switch-off on the devices, and there was a secondary system designed to cut in if the primary were damaged in any way.

No direction signals had been recorded from Laughlin's cat at any time. Wendt's immediate reaction, written before his first search, "I do not believe he plans to return," had appeared filled with sinister import when the log was first examined. On consideration, the quick conclusion seemed a natural one, in view of Doug's failure to inform Johnny of his trip plans, or to file a route plan, plus the absence of any direction signals from the cat (which pointed toward delib-erate dismantling of the automatic equipment), and, finally, Johnny's discovery of the missing pages in the log book.

The next entry, made several hours later, debated the ad-visability of further search. The first effort had turned up no trail of any kind. The rule against simultaneous departures from line-of-sight had to be considered. Everything pointed to one extreme likelihood that Laughlin's departure had been planned and purposeful, and that no amount of searching would be rewarded. Nevertheless, Johnny continued to search for five more days, two or three flights a day, until the search pattern was finished, the flight coordinates adding up to a circle whose radius represented a narrow margin of safety above the flight limits imposed for one-man trips.

The final entry on the search was brief:

"I do not believe there is a possibility that Laughlin is still alive. He did not take any extra oxygen cylinders with him. At minimum usage, the two standard tanks in the cat, if full when he started, would have been stretched to 95 hours. He has now been gone from the ship for at least 127 hours. I have seen no sign of him, or of any ship's equipment, or of any trail he might have left, on any flight since the sec-ond one."

There were no further entries except for routine daily tem-perature and atmosphere reading, until the one that gave the calculations for takeoff and homeward orbit. Doug Laughlin's name was not mentioned again, nor was any reference to him made. No opinion was volunteered as to why he should have left the ship.

They went back to Johnny again.

"I don't know," he kept saying.

"Why did you tear those pages out of the Log?"

"I didn't."

"Who did?"

"I don't know."

"You think Laughlin did it?"

"I know I didn't."

"Why would he do a thing like that?"

"I don't know."

"What made you think he wasn't coming back?"

"I don't know. I just thought so."

"How did it happen that you weren't aware of his going?"

"It's all in the Log."

"Now look, Colonel Wendt . . ." (or "Johnny" or "son," depending on who did the questioning) ". . . you must have had some idea why he went. . . ."

Silence, usually. If the interrogator was friendly, a quiet curse.

"What happened to Laughlin?"

"Search me," he said.

So they did. They searched him with "truth" drugs which only confirmed what he'd told them. He did not know what had happened to Doug Laughlin. He did not know what had happened to the missing pages of the book. And he had no knowledge of having had anything to do with the loss of the man or of the material from the Log.

Meantime, reporters and commentators, interviewers and feature-writers from every corner of Earth fraternized restlessly in a well-appointed suite at Mexcity's best hotel where a Public Relations man in Space Academy brass buttons smil-ingly poured drinks, dealt out freshly-inked mimeographed sheets from a cardboard box, and made sure the free-lunch was kept replenished.

Security would be lifted, and Colonel Wendt would be personally available, as soon as the ship was completely un-loaded, he told the reporters.

How long would that be?

Well, it was hard to say. . . .

Soon. . . .

*Mexcity, U.S.A.A.—February, 1976*

They brought him back to Earth, on the next downswing the Messenger made. Security would have preferred to keep him on the Moon till they had something—anything—on Laughlin, or on the missing Log pages at least. But the M. I. squad had to have expert consultants and some psych equip-ment which Dr. Christensen irritably, arbitrarily, would not grant shuttle space. And the Psych man attached to the team was insisting they'd never get anything out of John Wendt till they let him go home, back to Earth.

So, twenty days after the feasting and medals, Colonel Wendt and an escort of nine guards and questioners left Dollars Dome. Five days later, they landed on a snow-swept concrete prairie in the Andes. The landing and clearance routine seemed to take an absurdly long time; it was after dark when a plain helicopter finally left the spaceport, carry-ing Johnny and two "bodyguards" from Security. By the time the reporters got wind of the hero's arrival, he was already in-stalled in his prison-of-honor—a whole floor of luxury in the tower penthouse of the same hotel where, nineteen floors down, in the pressroom, free lunch and free drinks were still passing around.

They showed Johnny through the place and explained po-litely, very pleasantly, that it would be best if he stayed in his rooms for a while. Adjustment period. Psych tests. All that sort of thing. Then they posted a very polite, pleasant, guard at each door to keep unauthorized visitors out—and Johnny in. Just as politely, and very firmly, they told the clamoring press:

"Not yet . . ."

When the records of the trip had been fully examined, when all the films and test-tubes and tapes and sample-boxes had been classified and examined, Security could be lifted completely. . . .

How long would that be?

Well, it was hard to say. . . .

Soon. Very soon. . . .

One after another, different men of eminence in different schools of psychiatric practice came up to the hotel pent-house. Johnny met them politely and listened—at first with interest, and then with indifference—and agreed, passively, to the succession of exhumative techniques they proposed.

They explained to him how a man's memory worked, how the brain stores and holds memories, how

a memory block occurs, how the subconscious mind can dominate a person's consciousness. Johnny nodded patiently, and remembered nothing more than before.

"You can remember if you want to," one man, said.

"Yeah." Johnny grinned, and looked embarrassed. "But what about if I don't want to?"

They told him that the information he withheld—from them as well as from himself—would probably make a difference of years in sending out another ship.

"Okay," he said, with the same one-sided grin, "Do your-selves a favor. Don't find out."

He made it very clear that he himself fully intended to spend the remainder of his days on Earth; and that he was quite convinced any man in his right mind would do likewise.

Pete Christensen came down to see him. Chris was a friend, twice: not just Johnny's friend, but Doug's too. It had been his job to choose the men for that trip. The training and planning that had prepared them had been by his orders, and much of the time at his hands. And they had all shared the dream. . . .

He said, "Listen, Johnny, we've got to know!" He talked about Congress and the new appropriations bill, about the dream that was dying in a morass of reaction and funk; and added, "There's nothing in your Log about the Lenin either."

"We never saw it."

"All right, you never saw it. So now you come back, with-out Doug, and something happened, but you won't talk. . . ."

"Chris, if I knew anything . . ."

"Okay, but you know these Mexcity characters, four pages missing from that damn Log, Doug missing, the Lenin miss-ing. And now you not only won't talk, but what they're saying is, you can't. You see what I mean? Christ, you read enough science fiction and horror stuff to see the picture. And you can believe me, they've got lobbies working nights painting the pic. Not just in Mexcity, either. You should see the Sunday supplement trash on tri-di!"

"I've seen it. What do you mean—lobbies?"

"The Undersea Dome crowd, Arctic reclamation. Half a dozen of 'em. Mostly the Undersea bunch, though."

"Undersea? I thought that bunch was so rich they didn't bother with Congress?"

Chris laughed. "You think that means they don't want public money to work with?"

Wendt shook his head and grinned: a nice young boyish grin, rueful, amused.

"Okay, look," Chris said. "They've got a bill going in now to cut all Space money outside of routine Lab funds, only for maintenance, see?, and some work on the stuff you brought back. But no new ship. Not even a refit for the old bird. No Venus job. You know what that means?"

Johnny nodded. He still smiled; but now it had twisted to the new one-sided kind.

"Damn it, they're scared," Chris said. "And damn it, you scared 'em! Johnny, you know even pressure from a group like Undersea wouldn't work if those guys didn't know all the folks back home were scared right out of their pants too?"

"That's right."

Chris looked at him, shook his head. "What the hell is out there?" he asked. "What made you feel this way?"

Wendt stood up and paced the length of the big room and back again. "Okay!" he said. "You want to know what's out there? I'll tell you. All right, I'll tell you, and you can have a good laugh and forget all about it. Forget it until you manage to wheedle some more dough out of Congress, and send some other poor goof out there. Then if he gets back alive and tells you the same thing, you might even start to believe it.

"I'll tell you what's out there: God, that's what. Mars is heaven, see—just like it said in the story—only different—and God lives there. So if you know some guy holy enough to meet up with the Hot Shot in person, send him on out. Otherwise, you better forget the whole thing."

Chris stood up stiffly. "Okay," he said. "I know when I'm licked."

"What's the matter?" Johnny said bitterly. "You're not laughing. Don't you think it's funny?"

"No. Maybe I haven't got any sense of humor. You know how us dedicated souls are. Anyhow, the joke is on me."

It was only after Chris left that Johnny realized the older man hadn't believed that he meant it. Score one for the psychers, he thought; at least they could tell when he was not kidding. They'd believe that one all right: believe that he meant it; what would bug them was trying to figure out what he meant by it.

Which was a good question too, when you thought of it. ...

It was some hours later that he realized he couldn't answer that one for himself—because it wasn't really his idea to start with. It was something Doug had said, in that bad month, the last month, before he went. . . .

Okay, he thought grimly, let's see how long it takes for them to dig that out. . . .

By that time, it was a game with him, a bitter game, to see how much he could throw the psychers off without actually telling a lie they could spot.

### *Mexcity—March, 1976*

Phil Kutler would never have gotten a crack at the Wendt case, except that none of the big men in the field had gotten anywhere, and that Johnny and Phil happened to have gone to school together. And when they examined the tapes that carried a record of every word Johnny Wendt had spoken in his luxury-prison, they realized that the most revealing thing anybody had gotten out of him—if only they knew what it revealed—was his bitter little speech to Pete Christensen. So they asked Kutler to come from New York, and sent him up, not quite sure himself whether he was there as friend or doctor.

Johnny greeted him suspiciously. They ordered some beer, and yakked for a while about things they'd done and places they'd been since they saw each other five-six years before. Mostly Phil's places and people and things; Johnny found he could damn near enjoy himself when someone else did the talking.

Finally Phil said, "Look, I'm a doctor. You know why I'm here. I got a big pep talk downstairs about all the stuff I'm supposed to find out for the sake of Progress and the Human Race, and a pile of high-minded stuff like that....

"Don't get me wrong, man. I've got nothing against noble abstractions. I'm all for the human race, and I guess progress is real peachy too. But like I said, I'm a doctor. We all get our kicks different ways, and I get mine curing sick people. And man, you're sick. Maybe I'm not supposed to come out and tell you like that, but it's sticking out all over. . . ."

"Sure, sure," Johnny said quickly. "How do you want to do it? Sometimes they want me to lie down. Sometimes I'm supposed to shut my eyes. One guy brought up a little tank of CO<sub>2</sub>, and there was one with some vitamin guk, and they tried scop, or something like it, a couple of times and—"

"Okay, chum." Phil stood up and stuck out his hand. "I'll tell 'em it looks promising and maybe they'll let me come and see you again some time."

"Not on your life," Johnny said. "They've got every word of this down on their magic spy rays."

"Oh?" Kutler looked around the room curiously, then with visible irritation, and finally with explosive fury: "The stupid brassbound idiots! What in God's name are they try-ing to do to you? Take a guy with the most obvious case of exposure fears any half-assed medic ever diagnosed, and sit him in a great big glass house with the whole world look-ing in . . ." He broke off abruptly. "Well, they got me on record now, too," he said quietly.

"You mean they sent you up here without telling you that?" Johnny asked.

"How come they told you?"

Johnny shook his head. "They didn't. I just figured it. Things the wrong people know about. Stuff like that. Yeah, sure, I know, it could all be—what do you call it?—'projec-tion?' Eyes and ears in the wall? Stuff like that?"

Kutler looked at him thoughtfully. "Have you asked any-one about it?"

"Hell, no!"

"Why not?"

"What difference would it make? Like you said, I'm in a glass box anyhow. Maybe I felt good knowing something they didn't know I knew. . . . Well I shot that wad, now, didn't I?"

"Yeah." Kutler sat back in the soft chair, picked up his beer, stretched his legs, and watched Johnny pacing from piano to windows and back. "Yeah, you sure did. If you're right, then they already have it. . . ."

"What did you mean, 'exposure fears'?" Johnny broke in. He stood tensely, half way from the wall to the piano. "Don't you think I want to get out of here?"

"Huh? Oh, no. I meant—just what you said. 'Eyes and ears in the wall.' Only now I'm not sure which came first, the chicken or the egg—Listen, John, do you want to find out? Right now?" He got up and went to the phone, but he did not pick it up, waiting for Johnny's answer.

"I don't give a damn one way or the other!"

"Oh?" He took his hand off the phone, half-turned away. "Of course if you don't think you'd feel better knowing you're right, then maybe you'd just rather not take a risk of being wrong. Oh, hell! Who's kidding whom anyway?"

He turned angrily back and picked up the phone. "I want to know."

"Okay, okay. Go ahead. I told you I don't care. . . ."

*New York City—March-May, 1976*

That was the beginning. Kutler came up every day for a while, just to talk. He was the only personal visitor Johnny would admit; and he himself refused to consider the visits professional in the bugged apartment. By the end of the week, a compromise agreement had been reached all around. Kutler had him for a patient, and his patient would come, like any other, to the doctor's office for treatment. Johnny was moved to a new hotel penthouse in New York.

Three months of probing, plus Wendt's agreement, finally, to the use of hypnotic recall technique, told them what they didn't want to know: which was, essentially, that they already knew just as much as he did.

Oh, they gained a few details, but none of any importance. The fact remained simply that Doug Laughlin had walked out of the ship one day while Johnny was asleep. He hadn't come back. He had taken nothing with him except what he wore on his back, and the food and equipment normally kept in the sand cat, plus, presumably, four pages out of the Log. Nowhere in the detailed memories of the days before Laughlin's disappearance, or the months after, was there slightest evidence that Wendt had torn those sheets out, nor that he had even read them at any time. Nowhere was there anything to relate Laughlin's disappearance, or the mutilation of the Log, to the Soviet ship, *Lenin*. Nowhere was there any shred of cause to believe that either of the two who went out in *Colombo* had seen or heard anything at all of the other ship.

The objective facts of the case, as far as Johnny Wendt knew them, or ever had known them, were exactly as stated before. But, adding Kutler's findings to those of the men who had preceded him, and to the evidence of conversations on tape, they could at least form an opinion on which it was just barely possible to rest a theory.

As far as Johnny himself was concerned, the final official verdict was that he was guilty of nothing but guilt itself. The two ideas to which the guilt was most frequently attached were—

a) the obvious possibility that he had in some way been personally, directly, responsible for Laughlin's death: and

b) the completely suppressed (except under hypnotic re-call) fear of remembering that for a time, before Laughlin's disappearance, a strong homosexual attraction had apparently been developing between the two men.

In neither case was there any reason to believe that Johnny's self-accusations were based on anything other than fearful fantasies.

As to what had actually happened to Doug—it was still anyone's guess. The best guess seemed to be

that he was suffering from the same developing fear of inversion that had afflicted Wendt; that he had been even more horrified at the idea than Johnny was, and had chosen deliberate sui-cide in preference to involuntary surrender to "degeneracy"; and that, perhaps, he had written something into those four pages that he thought might be revealing, and so removed them before he left.

It hung together. As a theory, it made sense. The only trouble was, if the theory was correct, then the wrong man had come back. The same psychiatrists who formulated the theories swore up and down that psych-tests on both men before the trip made it absurd to think that Laughlin would have reacted in this way. If anyone did, it should have been Wendt; and that would not have made much more sense.

But the theory was all they had. The only way they would ever know more was to go back and find out—and the very fact that they didn't know more was enough to whittle down the chances of going back, any time soon, almost to the vanishing point.

The great All American public was scared.

*Earth—May, 1976-May, 1977*

When they were satisfied that Johnny had told all he knew, they let him go home—which was no place in particular. He didn't like having a lot of people around, so he skipped the big whirl he could have had in New York or Washington or Buenos Aires. He bummed around as quietly as possible for a while; found that liquor helped, and women, mostly, did not; set himself up as a kind of roving consultant in engineering and design, and found that work could help, too, for short spells. If it happened to catch his interest.

Getting jobs was easy; the name of Johnny Wendt was enough, even though his qualifications could be equaled by any number of other bright young cybernetics engineers. But wanting to get jobs was tougher. He had all the money he'd ever need; and if he needed more, after the life-time pension and bonus pay, there were always advertisers clam-oring for his endorsements, and manufacturers for the use of his name.

He could get money, jobs, liquor, women. But what he wanted, he couldn't get, and didn't even know a name for.

The therapy had helped. But not enough. He knew for a fact that he hadn't killed Doug; but between fact and belief there is a world of difference. He knew, too, that he hadn't —done any of the things he'd been afraid even to think about, before the therapy. Now he could think about them; and did. Now he knew what he'd wanted to do. Now he couldn't forget.

After a while he met Lisa, or rather, met her again. He didn't really remember her from before, but she remembered him. When he first went up to the Moon, one of the be-glamoured selectees from the Space Academy, to train for the Mars flight, she was one of a crowd of worshipful and willing girls—young actresses, models, dance students—the whole gang dated. In the intervening years, she had made a name for herself on world-wide tri-di—which would have disqualified her from Johnny's cynical viewpoint ("The higher they get, the easier they fall," he was fond of saying just then), except that he met her quite unsuspectingly dur-ing her twice-a-week stints as dance-therapist for a group therapy clinic of Kutler's.

Oddly, she had remained just as worshipful, and just as willing. And Johnny found, after a bit, that he was reassured by some special warmth in her willingness; later he was fas-cinated by the calm pleasure she took in knowing that a million people were watching her when she danced on tri-di. Later still, when fascination and reassurance progressed far enough, he found at least a partial answer, with her, to some of the questions he was still asking himself about Johnny Wendt.

*Rockland, N. Y.—Thursday, June 23, 1977, 2 A.M. (E.D. S.T.)*

She watched him straighten up and come back to the bed. There were two women in her. One woman was glad be-cause it would be all right now: he wouldn't drink any more tonight. The other woman, watching as he came to her, was just glad. . . .

He sat on the bed and pulled her against him with both hands. "Oh, baby," he said, and lowered his head to her breast. His hands moved up her back to her shoulders, pulled down the straps of her gown. "Oh, Lisa, Lisa," he murmured against her skin. His lips moved down and encountered the crumpled gown again. "What's that doing there?"

His head came up again, with the good smile, and he was still smiling as his lips met hers, while his hands pulled the gown down and off her hips.

When he was asleep again, she knew it really was going to be all right this time. He lay on his side, a faint smile on his face still, his breathing even, untroubled, one hand cupping her breast. He looked so young. . . .

Now, the lines smoothed from his face, he could almost have been the same man she had first met five years, and a world, ago.

She lay quiet under his hand. *Oh, Johnny! If you could just . . .*

But she stopped the thought. No pushing, she reminded herself. No pulling. He'll come through his own way.

But this time she didn't believe it. It was taking too long. And the truth was, it didn't get better. It only got worse.

Would it help if I left?

That was the hardest part, to know if she herself did more good or more harm. . . .

She tried to lie still and the effort defeated itself. One by one, the muscles in her leg, her arm, her back and neck, stiffened to unsustainable tensions. She moved warily and he mumbled, his fingers tightening. Then he came up a little out of sleep, muttered "Sorry," and rolled over, freeing her to move.

But now she was afraid that if she moved at all, the tears would spill out, so she lay still again. Not till his breathing was quiet once more did she start edging over, an inch at a time, to her side of the bed. Then, holding herself balanced, as one might handle a bowl of hot soup, she shifted her weight till her feet touched the floor and her body was erect. She crossed the room, one silent padding footstep at a time, nudged the door noiselessly closed behind her, went through the shadowed living room to the kitchen, and closed another door.

Coffee, she thought. She put the percolator on, remembering he'd offered her coffee to start with. But she'd thought that if she drank with him, he wouldn't drink more than she did. Not much more, anyhow. . . .

Well, it worked, she thought, and added: this time.

The pot bubbled on the stove; Lisa sat on a stool and cried. No one heard either sound.

After a while she got up and rinsed her face at the sink. She poured her coffee, took it into the living room, and sat restlessly. Got up and went to the bedroom, tiptoed in and got the book from her table.

It was a good thing he hadn't looked to see what she was reading. She had grabbed the first thing at hand when she woke up. She laughed softly, remembering his righteous engineer's horror the first time the subject of ESP came up. Now he could joke about it, mostly. . . . You better watch out—my girl can read minds. She studies up on it. . . .

But in the ugly aftermath of the dream, if he had noticed, he would have seized on it furiously.

Well, it had all worked out.

This time.

She opened the book and read, sipping at coffee, till she felt ready to sleep again. Then she went back to bed.

PART TWO

*Thursday, June 23, 1977*

*New York City—1 P.M. (E.D.S.T.)*

He was only ten minutes late. Pretty good—for me, he thought ruefully. The image of Doc Bronski came alive again behind his eyes, the pink-cheeked old man listening and nodding while a much younger Phil Kutler talked importantly about his future plans. Good! the old doctor said. Good! Then at the end,



straight-faced: Good! For you it's right. Only once a day you got to get someplace. The rest of the time, your patients worry about being on time. . . .

Usually, he made sure to keep it that way; he did not ordinarily go out for lunch. But on Thursdays, one to three was free and—for some reason he had not yet examined—he had been very reluctant to have Lisa come to the office.

Half-way down the block, he saw her in front of the res-taurant. She was wearing green, a startling sea-green with a soft full skirt that seemed to float around her legs. She stood alone, very straight, with the dancer's solidity under her slenderness that always took him by surprise. He noticed, too, that in her flat green sandals she somehow had the pos-ture of a woman in high heels; and that she stood without any impatience; and that something about her kept the other people who hurried heedless along the sidewalk, from bumping or brushing her.

She's a good waiter, he thought.

Whatever had held her attention across the street released it. She turned and saw him, took a step forward as he hur-ried up.

"I'm sorry," he started. "You know how—" He saw her smile start. "You didn't have to wait out here. I had a table reserved."

"I was enjoying it." She glanced across the street. "They're gone now. There were two girls waiting for someone over there—just kids, they looked like—and three boys came down from the loft building next door here and kept watch-ing them. Then one of them went across, and the girls wouldn't talk at first, and I guess they were mad at their dates or whoever they'd been waiting for. Anyhow, they got together, and—" She laughed, and took his arm. "—I'll tell you this, you almost lost me. The third boy looked so lone-some—"

They sat down and ordered drinks. "I ordered lunch be-fore," he told her, "They make a good *cacciatore* here, but you have to wait if you don't give them notice."

"Fine!" She talked on, still glowing, about the girls across the street and the ragged old man who had tipped his hat to her as he passed: the way the whole city tingled on this kind of June day.

She had always loved New York. And she didn't get down much these days. Like a kid, on a holiday, he thought—or more like a kid playing hookey. . . .

"Does Johnny know you're out?" It started light, but by the time the words were on his lips, he had to work at keeping it that way.

She laughed. She had a good laugh, but this time it had lost the spontaneity of the sidewalk. "I'm not ... an es-caped prisoner," she said. "Johnny thinks it's great I'm do-ing a little work for a change."

A few more minutes of holiday would have been nice, Phil thought irritably. Not escaped, no ...

She went on, "He just flew me down, and I had a record-ing date at the Center. That's what made me think of calling you—I knew I'd be in the neighborhood." The waiter set frosted martini glasses in front of them. Lisa lifted her glass and held it toward Phil in a smiling toast. She sipped slowly. "All right, mastermind, you're way ahead of me. No, he does not know I'm out—" she set the glass back on the table with care— "with you."

Abruptly, the cloak of detached relaxation that had en-veloped her, held her apart from the sidewalk crowd, fell from her shoulders. It was, perversely, like watching another woman take off a too-tight dress, sighing out of girdle, stock-ings, brassiere, into naked comfort. Lisa seemed almost to vent the same sigh of relief as she stripped the practiced, professional, surface of calm from the coiled tense energies inside her.

"In fact, I almost called you to call it off," she said. "After I called yesterday, I realized Johnny wouldn't— Well, I guess I was sort of peeved. He was being silly about this morning. Oh Hell! I don't have to explain it to you." The edge of brightness in her voice was sharp.

Phil leaned back in his chair, his hand twirling the stem of his glass on the cocktail napkin, making wet circles. Across the table, Lisa sat straight on her chair, her lips moving with taut animation, shoulders tensing a little with each new sentence. "You know, when we first started—seeing each other—he used to talk about you all the time: 'Phil said this,' and 'Phil told me that' and 'The way Phil explains it. . . .' It got to where I was actually jealous of you for a while there. . . ." She hesitated.

"Fair enough," he smiled. "I was kind of jealous my-self...."

"I bite," she said. "Of whom?"

" 'And to which, and with what?'"

This time her laugh was genuine. "Hey, Doc, remember me? I'm not a patient. I'm just your lunch date. The rule book says you have to answer my questions."

"Well, I did. Both of you, if you've got to know."

She was embarrassed; he knew why, and let himself enjoy her confusion a moment before he explained:

"First of all, I kicked myself six times around the block for letting anyone else walk away with you. And then I noticed this little cloud, see? Absolutely no bigger than a man's hand. You know what it was? Professional jealousy. My psy-chiatrist explained it all to me. I was sore because you could get things out of Johnny that I couldn't." He grinned. "And we won't go into anything about my choice of words, either—"

Or anything about why a girl who's as miserably "in love" as you are, should feel sorry for me for being single . . . "Did you say a recording date?" he went on aloud, "A new show?"

"Well, not exactly a show." She tasted her chicken and nodded approvingly. "They're doing a tape series—Bartok— tri-di. We did the first movement of that percussion and celeste thing this morning."

"A series?"

"Well, I haven't committed myself after this one. I didn't know— This chicken is marvelous, Phil."

"Was this the recording or just rehearsal?"

"Recording. I did most of my practice at home. Only had to come down a couple of times."

"Well," he said neutrally, "it'll be good to see a new Trovi tape. You haven't done much recently."

She looked at him with brittle amusement. "That's like saying, 'Johnny took a long trip.' You know damn well I haven't done anything for the last year, almost. Since we moved up there." She stopped, waited, hoping he'd pick it up, give her an opening.

Not yet, he thought with faint annoyance, and fed her a question instead about the morning's work. He ate slowly, watching from under half-lowered lids as she talked just a little too briskly about the session: musicians; dancers; cam-eramen and their idiocies. The dark shadows under her eyes and strained set of her mouth did not match the bright nar-rative. She caught his eye, and her talk trailed off.

"Okay," he said, "So you got over being jealous of me. And Johnny does not know you called me. And you're back at work. Maybe. And you haven't been sleeping. So?"

"So— Well— Actually, it was sort of silly, I guess, call-ing you. I was feeling kind of low, and I— well, Johnny was drinking a lot again and—in spite of what I said be-fore, I guess he didn't like my taking this job too well. He may have to face up to something he won't like, soon, though. . . ." she added, half to herself. "Actually, things are much better now. I almost called you up to call it off, and then I thought it would be good to see you again any-how. I'll probably tell Johnny when I get home" But her face tensed again when she said it. Then she broke into a smile: "Only, I think I might better say I just bumped into you? If your conscience will let you back me up ... ?"

He nodded. Inside him a slot opened up, and like let-ters, the thoughts that were not spoken slid safely into a waiting-room of his mind where he could pick them up, open them and spell them out at his leisure.

"Phil, the truth is, he— The way it is now, he hates you! He hates so many— Oh, I'm sorry, Phil! Does everyone treat you like this? Like a piece of furniture or something? As if you had no feelings?"

Not everyone, kid. Just my patients. "If I'm lucky they do," he said, laughing. "That's how you can tell your friends from a psychiatrist. Sure, Johnny hates me, Lee. He's got reasons. How would you feel about a doctor who told you what was wrong with you, and then wouldn't cure you?"

"Wouldn't? Oh. I guess he does feel that way."

"I'm not sure he's wrong, Lee. I've been over that file fifty times in the last year if I've looked at it once. And I still don't know why it fizzled. Which makes it pretty sure that the blind spot's in me."

"But nobody else got anywhere at all with it!"

"That's just what I mean. He had some good solid front-line defenses. I got through. Period. Then I

got lost some-how. I'm the guy who's peddling road maps, see? And I didn't have one for him. So he found his own way out. Period and exclamation point." He ate a forkful of high-priced sawdust, and added, "Also crazy-mixed-up metaphors. But you dig me, kid."

Only you don't, he realized with an unanticipated pang of dismay. You used to, but now you don't. Lee, honey, can't you think anything any more but Johnny Wendt? Or see, or hear, or feel.

Ah, cut the crap, Kutler! he told himself. Of course she couldn't. Wouldn't. Shouldn't. He knew that beforehand. He had it all planned for them. What the hell, Doc? You wrote the prescription yourself!

So open up. Take the nice medicine.

*Mexcity—12 M. (C.S.T.)*

It was not excessively hot, for late June in Mexcity. But four blocks, from the air-conditioned Government office to the cool stone walled interior of the club left Chris sweat-sodden and near exhaustion. He was a big man, with a powerful frame, who tended to run to flesh. He was conscientious about exercise; he had to be, more than most of them. They came up, mostly, for six months, a year—maybe six years. He had gone up with the first crew to work on the Dome; he had every intention of dying there—or farther out.

But meantime, he thought (as he thought every time he came down) he ought to come Earthside more often; his muscles were in good condition, and the regular centrifuge workout topside kept the giant gravity down here from over-coming him. But his heart pumped too hard; his blood rushed too much; and the unfiltered air out of doors clogged his nostrils; the sun bursting out from behind clouds seared his eyeballs; clouds hiding the sun obscured his vision. It was always too bright or too dim, too damp or too dry, too cold or too hot, when you were used to Dome-regulated atmosphere.

Today, it was—for him—steaming hot.

And, when he entered the cool lobby of the club, it was clammy cold.

He went up to his room, switched on the air conditioning and lay down. After a while his heart stopped thumping, and the sweat on his neck and back dried. He got up, peeled off the sticky clothes, called down for ice cubes. A tall drink and a quick shower, and it was twelve-thirty. He might still catch Harbridge for lunch.

The General was out, the Decagon switchboard said. He should be back by two.

Chris left his name. "Please have him call me as soon as he gets back," he said.

It was a relief, in a way. He ordered lunch sent up, and ate in comfort in the room, without having to venture out into the street again. As he ate, he pulled out his notebook and pencil, and started figuring. A small smile settled on his mouth, while his second cup of coffee cooled in the pot. His pie sat forgotten on the back of the tray. Names and figures and layouts and lists of equipment filled page after page, as Dr. Christensen practiced the day-to-day magic of modern science: fitting five pet projects into the money allotted for one. Twice, he stopped to make calls out: the first to New York, the second to St. Thomas.

He was smiling grimly over a column of figures when they buzzed back, and he reached for it unthinkingly. He had already flicked the switch when he thought of his rumpled shirtsleeves, and the messy lunch tray still in view. Too late ...

It wasn't Harbridge anyhow; it was Kutler, from New York.

"Phil, for krissake! How've you been?"

"Mostly good. I got a message here to call you back— what brings you down to Earth? I thought you took vows up there—?"

"Damn near." He laughed. "Only thing I come down for is begging trips. Say, what's the chances of getting together while I'm here? I've got a couple of ideas I'd like to toss around with you."

"What's on your mind?"

"Couple of things. I'll tell you, I'd just as lief not do it on the phone. Any chance of getting you down here?"

The other man hesitated, looked down at something on his desk. "Over the weekend, I guess," he said. "What's your schedule?"

Chris shook his head. "I have to be at the base tomorrow afternoon." But there was nothing really to keep him in Mexcity till then. He didn't mind traveling: flying was more comfortable a lot of ways than sitting still, and he had enough vanity left to relish his VIP's privilege of a seat on the Mexcity-New York mail rocket—thirty-two minutes, pad to cradle. "Suppose I make it up your way?" he suggested. "Could we get together for a couple of hours? Tonight, maybe? Or tomorrow?"

"Tonight would be better," Kutler said. "I don't see where I could squeeze anything in at all during the day. Look—can you give me any idea what's on your mind?"

"Well, this much at least: I need a psyker to do a job for us. It's a big job. And I think you might be the right guy. There's nothing secret about it, really, but it just happens to be tied up sideways with a Security problem, so— that's all I can say on the phone."

"I see." He was thoughtful. "Then it has nothing to do with—our mutual friend?"

"Friend? Oh—Johnny? No."

"Have you been in touch with him lately?"

"No. What's up?" He asked it casually enough, but in the time it took to say the three words, a whole new set of possibilities and probabilities opened up. The whole wild plan with Harbridge could be thrown out . . . maybe even the lab transfer bit wouldn't matter . . . though that was going to be necessary anyhow . . . unless, of course, Kutler—or somebody—could solve the leave problem . . .

Slice it any way you liked, if Wendt was about to come out of his funk, the whole picture changed—for the dam-sight better.

"I don't know exactly," the doctor said. "I was sort of hoping when I got your message that you'd heard some-thing. I just had lunch with Lisa—"

"Lisa?"

"Trove. The dancer. You know, she and Johnny are— engaged?"

"Oh. Yeah. I knew about it. Didn't know her name." He dug back in memory. "I thought they were married by now?"

"Sort of." Kutler smiled.

"Oh. Well, you're in touch then?"

"Not really. I had lunch with Lisa, but that's the first I've seen either of them in six months. You know Johnny quit on the therapy? He wouldn't consider analysis, and we'd about had it with anything else."

"Oh. Well how does it look now?"

"Offhand, bad. But I don't know, I know Lee pretty well. She used to work with me, you know? Dance and music stuff with a clinic group I had for a while? She— well, just say, she's not the panic type; but she was pretty shook to-day. I figured things were just getting worse. Then I got back and found your message, and thought maybe you'd heard from him, and that got me wondering if whatever's up with them could be just—call it crisis. You follow?"

"Yeah." All the way. In fact, I'm way out front. And better slow down, too. It could be nothing. But it *could* be—"

He did not let himself pursue it further.

"... any chance of your seeing them while you're down? I know you're busy as hell, Chris, but I can't go myself; I'm the last one he'd talk to right now. And I don't know who else would even know what the difference was, if any-thing's happened at all—one way or the other. Lee's a good kid, but I can't rely altogether on what she says. You're not in love with the guy." He paused, and added: "This is pure hunch, Chris. I haven't got fact one to go on, but I've got a feeling, that's all. I think maybe this is the time that you could get through to him."

"Through, how?" he asked cautiously. Prayers don't get answered like that, on the phone.

"I wish I knew. I don't. I couldn't tell you where or what or how or even who. I just think that something's about to bust there. Could be just her, and you'd be wasting your time. But—I think it's a good time for you to see Johnny. If you still want him back that is?"

"Yeah. We could use him." Want him? *Jeeeesus!* "Okay, I'll tell you what. I'll try calling him. See what happens." He thought quickly. "Suppose I get hold of him and call you back? See how his time stacks up—if he'll see me at all. Then you and I can work out some time to get together."

"Good. I'll juggle my time if I have to, for this."

"Right."

After he switched off, he sat and thought for a while. Then he moved the tray, combed his hair, got his jacket back on, and tried Jed again. He got through this time.

"Say, don't you get any phone messages there?" he demanded.

"Sure, but I never get to make any calls. There's always one coming in."

The general and the scientist grinned at each other.

"I take it you made out?" Harbridge said.

"I didn't. You did," Chris told him. "They were all ready to let me out the back door with a pat on the head and a promise of a box of old clothes for my little Mars-bugs as soon as they had some to spare. But lab facilities down here for Earth-normal environment studies? Sorry! So ... I told them, very sincerely, that I thought perhaps General Harbridge could be persuaded to handle the Earth-side part of the project—and we sat down and talked."

Jed looked very innocent. "You know," he said, "some-times I wonder what we ever did to make them so—touchy over there?"

"It's a long story," Chris said, and then, soberly: "Look, I still got troubles. It worked out about the way we figured—some personnel money, and maybe a bit for supplies.

Okay, we can run some good studies on the bugs down here, which we need to, but they won't even consider transferring the whole lab setup down till the September report. After elections, that means. It was a stone wall, Jed. We're already shut out."

"Not quite," Harbridge said. "But—" He didn't have to finish it; they'd been all over the ground the night before. "Well?" he said finally. "What do you think? You want to try it the hard way?"

"I don't know, Jed," Chris said slowly. "It looked good last night, but— Let's say, if it looks necessary, a month from now would be soon enough. Don't you think?"

"Better," the General said. "Silly season."

"Yeah. Okay. Hell, I hope we don't have to— I've got a new line to try, anyhow."

"Something good?"

"I don't know. Phil Kutler just called me. You know— the psycher? I was telling you about him last night?"

Jed nodded.

"He's been following up on Johnny Wendt. Thought I ought to see him, about now." He saw Harbridge's wary glint. "If there's anything to it . . ." he said prayerfully.

"Well, if you get Wendt, you won't need—" He broke off again.

"What I was thinking—I'm going to call Johnny now. If I get anywhere, I'll let you know." He smiled. "Or if I don't. Either way, I'll talk to you tomorrow before I take off."

"Right. Good luck, Chris."

"Thanks."

He made several rapid calls, checking on the routine of the trip. Then he built himself one more tall drink and switched on the phone.

"I want Rockland, New York," he told the operator. "The residence of Colonel John Wendt. I don't know the num-ber. It's person to person for Colonel Wendt. . . ."

*Rockland—4 P.M. (E.D.S.T.)*

The phone chime couldn't compete with Beethoven. He didn't even hear it till it rang once in an interval. Then he tried not to hear it. But when the music began again, he was listening for it, and at the next chime he got up and went inside, turned the volume down and switched the phone onto audio only.

"Yes?" Lisa! She was never this late. . . .

"Colonel Wendt? Hold the line for Mexcity, please."

Mexcity? Not Lisa, anyhow. Colonel Wendt? Who the hell—? What did Mexcity want with him anyhow, at this late date?

"Colonel Wendt?" The voice was familiar.

"Yes?"

"Johnny—hi! This is Chris."

"I'll be damned! I thought you were away up there."

"Was. Will be. Tomorrow. Don't you ever answer your phone? I've been trying to get you for the last half hour."

"What's on your mind?"

A moment's silence, after which Christensen's voice came through just a bit too loud and too jovial: "At the moment: dinner. What are you people doing tonight? I thought maybe I could talk you into coming down to New York for the evening. I'm planning to hop the mail rocket there right away."

"Anything in particular, Chris?" *You're not calling me just for love, ole bud!*

"Several things." The voice was more normal.

Okay. Backslapping gambit rejected. "How about tomor-row?" Johnny said. "I'm not sure I could, but—?" He let it dangle.

"I can't tomorrow. Got to be in Denver by three."

"Hate to miss seeing you," Johnny said evenly. "Next time around, maybe?" Yeah, next century. Perversely, he reached out and switched on the video. After all, it wasn't Chris' fault. He'd been pretty decent, all round.

"My God, you look comfortable!" Christensen said. "It's miserable here!"

So go back up where you belong. . . "Yeah," he said. "Hate to go into town myself." The perverse impulse swept him again. "Listen, why don't you come up here instead? Why don't you eat with us? You know Lee, don't you?" No, you don't.

"Only from watching her. Matter of fact, I'd like to. If you really mean it?"

"Right. You can pick up a heli in New York, fly right in here. Just north of Nyack. Our strip is number seven-teen. You can't miss it."

"Okay. If I have any trouble getting on the rocket, I'll call you back. Otherwise—let's see—I guess I should make it about seven?"

"We won't eat till eight, probably."

"I'll see you."

"Right."

He switched off, and snapped off the player angrily. Well, it was his home and his dinner, after all. He didn't have to listen to anything he didn't want to.

And where in Hell was Lisa?

After four, now.

He went outside and got the coffee cup from the grass. Took it in to the kitchen and poured it down the sink. Scrubbed the cup by hand, and filled it up again, with just coffee. Got out another tape, a new piano boogie revival, and started the player again—loud.

He went into the work room and sat down at the draft-ing board, with its half-finished sketch. Lisa would be in any minute now. He got up and opened the door from the kitchen. Make her feel good to find him working . . .

He stared at the sketch, trying to feel like a man who was working. Then something hit him—the ghost of an idea. Or the memory of one? There was a picture in back of his mind of what the sketch should be.

The memory was of a time when the pictures were al-ways there, waiting, ready to go onto paper, into wire and contacts and complex machines.

This picture was not shiny-new, the way they used to be. This was remembered, a legacy from himself. But it was sharp and clear. It was good design. It would work.

He ripped the old sheet off the drawing board, pinned on a fresh one, and started sketching.

The coffee got cold between sips. The boogie tape came to an end, and began playing over. After a while, the kit-chen door closed, or almost did. He looked up. Lee was home. Going to start supper, he thought, didn't want to disturb him.

Hah! That's a good one! He looked at the drawing. What the hell had he been trying to do? What for?

But he felt good.

He went out and watched her move, wifely, around the room. When she came within reach, he grabbed her and pulled her down on his lap. Laughing, she told him about the morning session, about the pickup she'd watched on Sixty-third Street, the weird redhead salesgirl at Best's that afternoon.

Something nagged at his mind; then he remembered. It wouldn't be one of their good nights at home after all.

"Oh, I should have told you before, I guess. Pete Christensen called. You know, Moon Lab guy? He's coming for dinner—?"

"Dinner?" she pushed away, and stood up. "What time?" "Seven-ish." He looked at the clock. It was almost a quarter of. He grinned. "Well," he said, "I forgot. I'm sorry, babe." Then he pulled her back on his lap, and kissed her.

*Rockland—9 P.M. (E.D.S.T.)*

"I heard about this place," the big blond man said slowly, "But I don't think I really believed it before."

I like him, she thought. And he really liked the house. Lisa piled the last of the dinner dishes into the conveyer, and followed Christensen's gaze out across the patio to the pink and purple glory of the fading sun reflected in the river far below. She hadn't seen any of it this way for a while. The house, the river, the sheer brown cliff on the other side that was the twin of the one on which their house stood. The food, the furniture, the porch on which they sat. All this, through the stranger's eyes, re-acquired meaning.

Christensen was saying something, a question, about the conveyer. Lisa opened her mouth, but Johnny was answering him. Well, that was something: at least he could still talk about his own bright ideas.

The flashing hostility of the thought shocked her. I'm over-anxious, she told herself. She was being foolish about the whole thing. He just didn't want company. He'd been working, and he didn't want to be interrupted, that's all.

Just the same, she was glad Chris was there. If they were alone, no matter how much his mind was on what he was doing, sooner or later Johnny would have looked at her sharply, questioning. Where'd you go, babe? What took you so long?

Sooner or later, she thought again. He still would ask: tonight or tomorrow, or next year. Sooner or later . . .

I won't think about it. I won't worry.

It had been easy enough not to mention Phil before. She had just talked all around it. The sense of shock returned as she realized that was why she'd gone shopping, why she had stayed so late. Luncheon was incidental to him by this time; it was the afternoon that bothered him.

I won't think about *it*! She sat back in the chair, half-listening to Johnny's explanation, and concentrated on visualizing what was happening behind the conveyer door. Soundless, sterile processing of dirty dishes: along the perforated belt where floods of hot water rinsed the food particles down the grain into the grinder; then into the washer, where detergent foamed around them; then out again along the belt, through the rinsing spouts and the drying jets, and at last through the side opening of the long shelf in the kitchen, still neatly racked, ready to use.

Lucky Lisa. Lucky, lucky Lisa. Nothing to do. The dinner cooks itself, cleans up after itself. Next week we put in the automatic digester. Then there'll be nothing left for Lisa to have to do except sit and stew about Johnny. And Lisa.

She stood up. "The view is really better from the living room this time of day," she said. The girl speaks her lines well, she thought idiotically, and watched the characters move to the new set, rearranging themselves with just the sort of almost-right staging that was inevitable without a really good director.

The Successful Scientist said something to the Ex-Rocket Jockey. Ex-Rocket Jockey replied, rather shortly.

Both look at Girl. S S smiles successfully. E-R J smiles X-ly. (Crookedly? I suppose)

Girl: (Smiling girl-ly) "Mmmmmm? I was daydreaming."

S S: "Just looking at your book here. I used to be fas-cinated with this stuff myself, but I haven't done any serious reading outside the job since—I don't know when."

E-R J: (Points to Book) "Serious? You too, Chris? Well, I'll be damned!"

S S: (Embarrassed, but genial) "Oh, I don't know. If you'd brought back a couple of telepaths, now, instead of just bugs, we might have got somewhere."

Oh, God! she thought. Oh my dear God! That did it. Okay, here goes nothing!

"It is fascinating," Lisa said slowly. "They've done a lot of work on it the last three or four years, you know."

Chris shook his head. "I didn't know. Anything really new?"

"This fellow—what's his name?—Potter," she went on, as Chris held the book jacket up to the light. "He has a theory that all the different kinds of psi powers that have been proved to exist so far—"

She offered the bait consciously, deliberately.

"—all boil down\* to some form of PK . . ."

"Proved to exist?" Johnny asked coldly, taking the bait.

"All right, demonstrated?"

"Not to me." He took the hook too.

"Well, they've run enough experiments to show at least— all right, to indicate—"

It wasn't hard to do. Easier than if he'd had a chance to sit there reacting to the mention of the trip. Why in *hell* hadn't she remembered beforehand that Dr. Christensen was the one who'd been in charge of the whole trip? "Moon Lab" just meant some vague kind of research to her. But of course—

If she had connected, what good would it have done? It was too late to stop him from coming.

"—to indicate that there are people who are—well, sen-sitive—"

What was the book doing out there anyhow? She'd left it in the bedroom.

"—and others who can control— All right, who seem to be able to control—"

She saw his smile loosen up a little bit, and found she could breathe again without thinking about it.

"—to control the motion of inanimate objects—"

Damn! She'd done it herself. She'd left it—No she hadn't. She'd left it in the kitchen. Johnny must have picked it up during the day. . . . Then he'd been reading it himself?

"—non-physical' isn't the right word," she said, still floundering half-deliberately. "That would put the whole thing right back on a mystical plane."

"Which is a fine place for it." Johnny stood up. "Your glass is empty, Chris. Lee? You ready?" She shook her head. He went out to the kitchen with the two empty glasses.

"You worked yourself into a hole," Chris said, laughing, not knowing what had happened, or what had almost hap-pened—maybe—either.

"Back up about ten sentences, will you?" he asked. "You started to say something about Potter's theory?"

"Well, I haven't finished the book," she said. "Actually, I just ..got started on it last night. I wouldn't want to try to explain it." Her smile looked less nervous than it felt, she hoped. "Do you get down often?" she asked, stalling until she could come up with something better. If they could get onto something safe before he came back . . .

"Not often enough, I'm beginning to think." She liked the way he smiled: he meant it. And he meant what he said. All the time. "You said something before about 'PK,' and I've been trying to remember—"

*Oh, no-o-o-o!*

"—I told you, it's been years since I followed the litera-ture on this. PK is teleportation, isn't it? Stuff like that?"

All right, she thought recklessly, the hell with it! Let Johnny have all the fits he wanted to. This man



was really interested: he meant it. And she liked him. And liked talking to him.

"Psychokinesis is what it actually stands for," she said. "That's control of physical objects—Well, actually, any psi activity that involves application of energy, rather than just perception." Damn if she was going to keep floundering, either. She wasn't setting up straw houses now. "And Potter's approach basically is that perception involves an energy transfer, too. Light rays have to strike the eye, or sound waves hit your ear, before you see or hear. Even internally, the message goes to the brain through a series of impulses that he claims work like a radio condenser. I mean, he says the nerves don't actually touch, but energy stores up in one end until it sort of sparks to the end of the next one. So— wait a minute, let me find it here."

She reached for the book. He had been studying the back jacket. "This man, Potter, is a neurologist," he said thoughtfully. "Got interested in this stuff from working on neural exchange process. You know, that's goddam in-teresting. Say, Johnny, this is right up your alley, you know? Thanks." He took the full glass. "I never thought of it that way before, but if anyone ever does crack this nut, I'll bet it's a cybe man who does it!"

"Wouldn't surprise me," Johnny said drily. "Some of the squirrel tracks they're following now are no nuttier."

The silence did not really last long. Christensen said mildly, "Which set of tracks did you have in mind, John? Cybernetics or parapsychology?"

"Take your pick. I was thinking of some of the com-mercialized, excuse the expression, robots. But if you want to drag para- or any other kind of psychology into it, that's okay with me."

The X-smile again, Lisa noted. I ought to do something. This could get out of hand with no trouble at all. Everything she could think of seemed too absurd. It was quite evident that neither of them wanted coffee. Or music, or cards, or a look at the Moon.

What the hell am I doing here? He knew the answer to that one, too well: there were dozens—or hundreds?—of men who could handle the job he wanted Wendt for. Handle it better than John could, from the looks of things. But none of them were named Johnny Wendt: Space Hero.

And he, Peter Christensen, didn't owe anything to them, either.

Oh, crap. You don't need a new conscience, chum. You just need headlines. Go fetch!

Then he saw that the glass in the other man's hand was empty again.

Already? Things were worse than he'd thought. . . .

"Hey, Johnny, wait up!" He drained the glass, and de-cided he'd been moralizing too damn much. If he didn't have to fly back tonight, he wouldn't mind tying one on himself. He followed his host to the kitchen.

"What are you working on, now?" He asked, then chuckled. "Or have you got an idea-conveyor-and-processor to do your designing jobs too?"

The answering grin was almost like a guy he used to know named Johnny Wendt. "Not yet. Matter of fact, I got into something today that's been half on my mind all evening. I keep forgetting to be sociable. We don't have much com-pany here, you know. . . ." He trailed off, and eyed his drink. Then abruptly: "Got nine-tenths of something on the draw-ing board," he said, "if you want a look?"

"Sure. I'd like to."

He turned to follow and saw Lisa, halfway through the door, stop herself fluidly in midstride, and melt back into the living room.

Smart girl, he thought. He stepped into the study.

It was a good room, well-designed, like the rest of the house, arranged for comfort and use as well as looks. And it was Johnny's room, beyond a doubt. If he'd been brought here blindfolded, Chris thought, he'd have known this room belonged to John Wendt. But there was also something that didn't fit: something you couldn't quite put your finger on. It bothered him.

He started for the drawing board, but Johnny waved him to the couch instead. "Nothing worth looking at," he said. "Not yet, anyhow."

Chris sat down obediently. Anything he said was going to be the wrong thing. Let Wendt keep the

ball.

After a while, Johnny said, "Okay, let's get it over with. What didn't you want to talk about on the phone?"

"I don't know if you'd be interested," Chris said slowly. "I just finagled some dough for an increase in personnel. There's a job I thought you might do for us, but . . ." He waved a hand to include not just the room, but the house and the river, and the life it stood for. "Why should you?" he finished.

"Yeah. Why should I?"

More silence. Chris looked around still trying to pin down the elusive wrongness of that room.

Then he got it.

There was a gilded football on a shelf from Johnny's college days. There were old books, and a couple of photographs on the wall that couldn't have any meaning except in one person's memories. There were new things, too. But there was nothing, nothing at all, in this room, or anywhere in the house, to remind Johnny Wendt or anyone else that the man who lived here had spent most of five years of his life off of Earth: on the Moon, on Mars, inside the Colombo.

Involuntarily, Chris shivered, as a child shivers in the ghost-filled dark. He stood up, feeling tired. He had to get up early tomorrow morning. He ought to be leaving.

"Okay, so you changed your mind," Johnny said. "What were you . . . ? A-ah, never mind. Skip it." He picked up his glass. It was empty again. He stared at it, then put it carefully down, still empty. "I'm sorry, Chris," he said suddenly. "I'm being damn rude. I get—jumpy. Sit down for krissake, and tell me what's on your mind. You came all the way up here to see me. I can at least listen to what you want."

"Okay," Chris said. "But do me a favor?"

"What?"

"Get the jug." He caught Wendt's eye and held it. "Then we can both settle down. All right?"

It was close. Johnny wavered, then grinned crookedly and went for the bottle. All right. There wouldn't have been much sense even in trying to talk if Wendt was lushing so bad he couldn't admit it. *All right*, Chris thought: *Here goes nothin'*. . . .

He talked steadily for half an hour. Wendt sat and listened, arms folded across his chest, legs crossed, lips pressed in, his whole face narrowed and closed. When he spoke at all, it was in monosyllables. More likely, he would just grunt a reply to a question. But he listened.

"Damn place has turned into a bio lab," Chris said.

Johnny shrugged, didn't smile. The man was a guest in his home; he'd been childish enough already.

"Those damn bugs you brought back . . ."

Johnny lifted his glass to his mouth, barely sipped, put it down. So I brought 'em back. All right. We've made that point now. Let's drop it, hey, boy? He folded his arms across his chest, sat listening.

"Look, before I get into this any more—this is so new, some of it, I mean, it hasn't even been classified yet. But they'll probably top-secret it out of habit. For that matter, it might be pretty big. If you'd rather not hear—?"

"It's okay with me," Johnny said. "Who the hell would I talk to?" And cursed himself for an idiot. There went the last chance to get out from under the whole damn fool thing gracefully, *Well*, he thought, *maybe I like to suffer*. . . or maybe it was time to find out how bad it was to sit through this kind of crap. Some day it had to get to where it just didn't make any difference. It wasn't his ball game now. He was off the team. He was too old for it. If the kids still wanted to play, why should it matter to him if they babbled about it?

About time, he decided, approvingly, biting his fingers into his biceps across his chest.

"Okay. Well, you remember those freak results on the first chromosome charts?"

He nodded. Doug had—Hell with that bit! Listen to the man. ...

"Well it got even freakier when we got some good clear micropics and tried it again. Turns out all seven varieties had the same damn charts—let alone the same crazy number of genes."

"Yeah?" This time he allowed himself a small smile. It was getting just too damn silly. He knew where the damn bugs came from, and what they did, and they were no more related than—

The Hell with it! Nobody's asking you anything. Just listen, that's all you have to do—listen!

After that he managed to sip and hear, hear and sip, and not think at all, mostly.

". . . maybe different parts of a cycle, or even mutated species of the same bug? And we had just about decided we were dead wrong, when this crazy new thing comes up—

"Understand, now, we had these things under twenty-four-hour-a-day observation, cameras on the microscopes around the clock, and not a damn one of 'em ever did anything except make more of the same. No meiosis, no conjugation, nothing to account for the diploid chart or make any use of it. No mutations—but, none, see? That's about the only thing that kept anybody interested.

"We figured at first maybe the lab is too clean. So we x-rayed a few batches, and still no mutations. Then some bright lad pops up with figures showing that the increase in cell deaths under radiation corresponded to what you'd expect statistically for total of deaths plus mutations in protozoa down here. So these damn things would rather die than change—they're just not capable of adaptation. It says here.

"We had a couple of bio men around who thought this was the most fascinating thing since the original rib job, and I was kind of tickled at the idea of getting whatever those cells were using to resist radiations with—or I was until those statistics popped up to show it wasn't resistance, it was just complete lack of flexibility.

"So one of the bio boys gets the bright notion of trying a culture in Earth-normal atmosphere. I think he was chasing some notion about mutations being a complex result of radiations and some elements in the atmosphere. And the first reaction looked like high score for him, because the damn bugs went wild. Not one friggin one of them stayed the way it was. Every single one changed at least slightly.

"So they started all over again, and when we ran off the first rolls of film, we found out we were not only getting meiosis and conjugation, but getting it between what were supposed to be different species—which was what we'd figured all along. The only thing we weren't getting was mutation!

"Johnny, every damn one of those changes could be charted on the maps! And every damn one of 'em came out the way they were supposed to. Some of 'em were wild but not wild, crazy—just wild, way-out. You'd get a bacterium conjugating with an alga—or what we had figured for bacteria and algae, and the one of the products mixing with one of the water-retentive fungi, maybe, while the other one went into symbiosis with an unchanged alga and wound up like a new lichen—oh, some of those things mixed and matched seven or eight times around before they were done. But it all settled down into a group of five different types perfectly adapted to the environment they were in, and just as viable in it as they'd been on Mars."

It seemed to be time to say something again. Chris looked like it was time for an answer. It was damn sure time to wrap the whole thing up.

"So?" he said. "What's the scoop?"

"I've just told you essentially all we know so far. What I came down for this trip was to dig up some extra dough for a big program on it. Frankly, I'd hoped I could get all or most of it transferred to Earthside Labs. I think I'll be able to get that come fall. Right now, it's all upstairs, and if you feel the same way you did, I guess there's no point in asking—but let's put it this way: I have a hunch our best approach to this will be with the math and, if we can do it, with analogs. I don't think straight bio experimentation will ever crack this—unless we can set up the labs on Mars."

All right, man, all right, get to it, will you? The answer is No!

"So the first thing I need is a hell of a good cybe man, and you—"

"Lots of good cybe men around," Johnny broke in evenly.

"Yeah. You realize, that part could just as easily be done down here? Christ, no reason you couldn't work at home—don't blame you not wanting to swap a setup like this for—"

"Ready for a refill?" Johnny asked. "Wish I could help you out, Chris, but I tell you, I've got my hands full right now. I—"

Chris was eyeing the bottle and glass in his hands. Why so eager, son? I thought I was the lush . . . ? Then he got it. His hand tightened on the bottle neck as he poured . . . I've got my hands full, he'd said.

"Yeah," he said out loud. He handed the glass back, and poured himself one. "Yeah. Well—luck."

"... really a pleasure. It's a lovely place . . ."

Too smooth, too polite. Whatever he come for, he didn't find, Lisa thought. She was sorry.

"Too lovely, maybe," she said suddenly. "I think some-times we forget we're still part of the human race."

Shock raced around the room, bouncing off each of them to boomerang on the others.

Johnny's grin was a social grimace. "Her trouble is just not having things tough enough," he said. "When we were still putting the place together, she didn't have a gripe in her. Now I think she'd be jealous of the dishwasher."

Laugh, she told herself. Go ahead. The man made a funny. Chris was laughing: a polite laugh, too. Surely she ought to do as much.

"Frankly, I think it would get me that way," Chris said. "You know, this is the only place I've ever been on Earth that has all the comforts of home. And right now, I'd give anything to have, say, a week, with nothing to do in a joint like this— Just lie around in the sun and listen to music and boss the servos around. But I'd bet I'd be half-nuts in three days—" He stopped short. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean..."

"Well, why don't you stick around . . . ?"

"We keep talking about taking a camping . . ."

They broke in at once, both broke off at once, and for some reason the tension was gone.

"Well, any time you think you can stand a day or two of it," Johnny said, "just give us a couple days' notice . . ."

It wasn't what you'd call wild enthusiasm; but for Johnny, it was an effusion.

"Thanks," Chris said, and meant it. He did understand. "I'll take you up on that one of these days. Right now— Look, how about turning that around? It wouldn't be as un-comfortable as camping out, I'm afraid, but at least it's dif-ferent. Changed a lot since your time, too, Johnny— You ever been up, Lee?"

She shook her head. She could feel the pinkness of her cheeks, and her own quickened breathing. She tried to see Johnny's face, but he moved back a step into the shadow. She couldn't even tell if her own feeling was more excitement or apprehension.

"We'll think it over," Johnny said. "Might be an idea." His tone was completely flat.

"You understand," Chris said, "This has nothing to do with what we discussed? I'm talking about just a visit."

"Carfare's pretty high, isn't it?"

"It's on the company. The boss has some privileges."

"Well, we'll think it over." And this time, she thought, he really meant it. He would think about it.

What did Chris say to him? What did it?

They stood outside together, and watched the heli lift. Johnny switched off the landing lights, and the Moon jumped Out of the background and hung like a lantern right over the patio wall.

Lisa stared up with a new fascination. After a while she became aware of Johnny's eyes watching her, with mixed amusement and tenderness.

She moved closer to him. And broke the spell. "Nice to see Chris," he said abstractedly. "Maybe we ought to take him up on that some time—if you want to, I mean. But I— well, Hell, I wish he'd picked some other time to come. I was only half here tonight. Look, babe, you mind if I sit up some? Got a little work I've been thinking about—design stuff. I was working on while you were in town today."

Mind? "Go ahead," she said, and made a face at him. "At least I'll be able to finish that book of mine without giving you bad dreams."

Mind? She watched him till he disappeared through the kitchen door, reading the angularity of his shoulders, the swinging of his hands, the forward thrust of his head, and delighting in what she read. We should see more people, she thought. But Chris was special.

She got ready for bed slowly, and lay there a long time, with the book open in front of her, but not really reading. What a day! The dance session—Kutler—Christensen—and maybe even a trip to the Moon! And on top of it all, Johnny working again.

After a while, a sentence caught her attention, and she began reading. It was after two when she

finished the book, and turned out the light. She fell asleep almost instantly, and dreamed of cute little fat viruses, teaching her telepathy, so that she didn't have to wait for her baby to talk before she could communicate with it.

Her baby . . .

*Dollars Dome—10:30 P.M. (C.S.T.)*

Her name was Rita. She stood immobile behind the high counter, head bent in a posture of reverie—almost of prayer—to the microscope eyepiece.

His name was Thad. He was holding two culture plates which he had just carried up from the Mars lab. He intended to set the plates down on a rack at the end of the room. But when he saw her, he stopped.

Her new lab coat was spotless white, and she had pinned a stiff white square of cloth around her head to cover her hair. The way she stood, only the shoulders and collar of her coat showed; the folds of the headcloth draped so that the coat and cloth framed her face with the suggestion of a robed and cowed young nun.

She was not pretty. But the serenity of her fresh-skinned cheek, emphasized by the furrows of concentration on her brow, gave her so much the look of the eternal virgin that he could not, at first do anything but stand and stare.

He had seen her before, of course: in the cafeteria, several times; on the Mall; at a party the week before; in the pro-jec-tion room, yesterday. It was a month, at least, since she came up. They had been introduced at the party, and again yesterday, watching some films. He could not have seen her less than fifteen-twenty times, altogether. And each time he had noted, without interest, only that she was new, quiet, plain-looking; and of course goggle-eyed and stumble-footed, like all newcomers.

Now he wondered how he could possibly have thought her plain; or why, when they met, he had registered only her name, Rita Donovan, and her background—a summa cum type from Johns Hopkins. He had not been concerned enough to learn if she were married or single, or otherwise unat-tached.

It might have been half a minute that he stood watching her. Then he walked on and set his culture plates down. Neither his stillness nor his action penetrated the distant focus of her concentration. He walked around back of her counter, and noticed she had damn good legs, too.

"Something good?" he asked.

She started, and looked up.

"Good?" She laughed. "Every time I see these things— They're just fantastic!"

"Right out of this world," he reminded her, smiling.

"Oh, of course." She flushed faintly and her laugh held a note of embarrassment. "I guess I'll get used to it too. Some day. But—"

"Not very damn likely you won't, if you're working up here," he said. "Not at the rate these babies are going. We get to where it all seems almost normal, downstairs—every once in a while, that is. Then somebody comes up with something like Hendrickson's idea on controlled evolution, and you know you haven't even scratched the surface yet!"

"Have you seen his films?" she asked eagerly.

"Not the whole thing. I caught part of the run this morn-ing. They're showing 'em again at sixteen hundred." He glanced at the big wall chrono, pleasurably aware that until his eyes moved, the pink lingering in her cheeks had been, in part at least, a (pleased?) response to the way he was looking at her. (Yes, pleased, he was sure, when he looked back.) There was an hour to kill before the showing. "Got anything cooking you have to stick with?" he asked. "We'd have just about time for some coffee before they start."

She looked around carefully, checking. "I guess nothing special. . ." Her hesitation was not about leaving the lab; he was sure of it.

"I'll help you check out the cameras," he said, and headed for the far end, brushing her arm as he passed. The intensity of joint awareness startled—almost stopped—him. He de-bated suggesting his

room for the coffee: but only an hour ...

"Why don't we go up to my place for coffee?" she said. The words broke the bubble of tension surrounding the touch.

He grinned. "I'm with you," he said fervently.

"What's Hendrickson getting at anyhow?" she asked. "I didn't hear him the other night, but the way it looked in the Abstracts, he's hypothesizing what amounts to intelligent choice when he says 'controlled.' Did you hear his talk?"

"I missed it too. There's so damn much all the time, you never know which one to go to. But I got hold of him last night, and he won't put it that way of course, but it seemed to me that's how it added up."

They left the building and went outside into the bright glow of "afternoon sunlight," diffused from the dometop lights during the lunar night.

"But that means you also have to accept the idea of—I mean, what does the deciding?"

"Well, I guess that's why he won't use the word, 'intel-ligence.' He keeps saying his theory is purely pragmatic—a description of behavior, he says, not an explanation. So you can't pin him down." The most fantastic thing of all, he thought contentedly, more [startlingly] even than the stuff you worked on up here were the people you worked with. She had taken off the white kerchief, and out in the "sunlight," her hair shone a rich reddish brown and her face glowed with something quite other than the austere intensity in the lab.

They entered the dorm building, and she started up the stairs. "Wait a minute!" he said. "Anyone showed you the right way to go upstairs here yet?"

She laughed. "You mean 'giant steps'?"

"Yup. Race?"

"You're on." They both knelt to remove their shoes. "Three flights," she said, and they set off together, bounding up four, five, six steps at a time under the light gravity of the Moon.

*Rockland—2 A.M. (E.D.S.T.)*

Across the patio, a glow of light from the opaqued bed-room wall showed him Lisa was still up. He thought about that, and decided against it. Too much of that. Too much liquor; too much Lisa. Too much mash, too much mush. Half the drink was still in the glass. He stepped outside, and slowly, carefully, quietly, let it trickle over the edge of the tilted glass, till it was all gone, back to the soil. Asses to ashes and alcohol to earth. He lit a cigarette, and looked up again at the looming deceitful lure of the Moon. He wasn't going there. He wasn't going. Anywhere. He'd done all his going. And all his coming. Yeah. Too much..

He looked at the drawing board. The design that had seemed so good, so right in the afternoon now looked dead and clumsy. Hell with it. Hell with—Damn him! Damn him! Coming in here with his talk and his problems and his five-year-old daydreams, throwing everything out of whack. Tilting the machine . . . Great big blond baby who didn't know it was too big to be out there. Nice safe little Moon base.

Hell, the Moon was part of Earth, didn't they know that? Took all the know-how they had to make out even there . . .

. . . And they wanted to go to Mars! All the big babies, like Chris, out of the yard for the first time . . . Stand on the curb screaming blue murder to get across the street.

Well he'd been across the street. And back. Back for good. If they wouldn't listen to him, that was their tough luck.

What he needed was a drink.

He went back and filled his glass. The bedroom light was out. Good. For once, there was nobody watching, waiting, listening, to see what he'd do. Nobody . . . ? He walked through the living room and pushed the door open, suddenly, silently. She was asleep, sound asleep, sprawled on the bed like a kid. She was smiling a little bit. She was beautiful. He closed the door just as softly, and padded back to his work room.

Work room! That was a laugh. He laughed. Haw, haw! The sound came out, too loud and not funny.

What does Johnny Wendt want with a work room? Used to work. Don't got to work now.

What for?

Money? Smile once for a whiskey ad. That's money. Sci-ence? That was a laugh, too, but he didn't try it this time. Science is a big blond bastard, fixing it for everybody to go the way Doug went.

Which way? Which way did you go, Doug?

Doug, for chrissake, where are you?

Come back, Doug.

Doug, migod! And you stand on the dry dust with your suit all around you to keep you safe in the thin air, and miles away, whichever way you look, is nothing, nothing at all.

Better have another drink. Put the bottle down, now. Careful. Might spill.

PART THREE

*Friday, June 24, 1977*

*Rockland—8:30 A.M. (E.D.S.T.)*

He woke with a twist in his neck and his shoulders and arms stiff and sore. Faint sounds somewhere took on shape and meaning. Lisa, in the kitchen. Breakfast. His stomach turned over, and settled down to hunger.

He'd decided to go to the Moon. Why?

Who knows? He shrugged. What's the difference?

He'd decided something; that was an accomplishment right there. Yeah, big deal: go see ole buddy Chris and get yapped at some more. Okay, he'd decided, hadn't he? Give Lee a kick anyhow.

Lisa Goes To The Moon. He started to laugh, but he coughed and half-choked instead. He was thinking of the magazines when he was a kid. Too bad Lisa couldn't wear one of those bubble-type outfits the girls on the magazine covers had. That would go over big, in the Dome! He could just see them, Chris's crew of tame scientists, goggle-eyed.

Spent two damn years up there and never saw a babe worth looking at. All goggle-eyed.

This time the laugh almost came out right.

If it was a magazine story, though, Chris's little Mars-bugs would turn out to be secret-super-intelligences with in-vincible powers, from Betelgeuse.

Or Arcturus.

That would be nice, he thought. Let it turn out poor old Doug was just a rabbit mesmerized by these snakey protozoan intelligences. Pretty soon they'd take the whole world over, too—except for The Hero, who'd dash in and save everyone just in time.

Singing: "I'll be glad when you're dead, you amoeba, you." Lee was making breakfast. He wasn't ready to see her yet. He found the coffee jar, and made himself some, boiling scalding hot, turned the outside wall to full light and trans-parency, and propped himself on the couch with the hot coffee and the hot sun shining on him.

When, he was ready to go out to the kitchen, he found her just finishing her breakfast, wearing yellow shorts, very short, and a bright purple halter top, looking about sixteen years old.

"Hi, doll." Grinning made his face feel cracked and a million years old. "How come you look like that when I feel like this? I worked late," he said. "Lay down to think some-thing out, and I fell asleep."

"Sure," she said.

He looked straight in her eyes for a moment, and remem-bered she wasn't really a kid. She was two months older than he was. He hated her for knowing what he wouldn't tell; and blessed her for not trying to make him say it. He sat down and patted her hand.

"Hey, babe?"

"Hmmm?"

"I seem to have made a decision."

"Yes?" But there was something scared in her eyes.

"I have some recollection of deciding last night that we would go to the Moon."

She surprised him. Last night, he was sure she was all hopped up about it. And even now, the scared look left her eyes. Scared? Why? What of? She looked pleased, all right. But she didn't say a word.

"That is, if you still want to go," he said stiffly.

"I—well, yes, but—Let me think about it a little. All right?"

"Sure." He stood up and went and looked in the warmer. Bacon and toast. You goddam lucky bastard, he thought, You're so used to her doing things your way, you think you have to get sore if she doesn't climb all over you and yell Hallelujah!

He made a sandwich out of the bacon and toast, and went back to the table.

"Whatever you want, baby," he said softly.

*New York City—6:15 P.M. (E.D.S.T.)*

"Well, I'm sorry," Kutler said. "I guess it was a bum hunch."

"I don't know. You weren't too far off—I don't think. But damn if I knew how to get through. You're sure there's no way you—?"

The doctor shook his head. "I wish I could. I've tried a couple of times. I'll keep on trying. But—" He shrugged, and finished his drink.

Pete Christensen cleared his throat. "What do you say to some dinner? This place serve any food?" Damn it, the guy actually gives a damn! You didn't find many like that any more . . . Any more . . . ? Damn fool thought. Never was more than one in a million who did—outside his own yard or his own pocketbook.

"Well, they serve it." Kutler said. "Nobody in his right mind would eat it. Tell you what—there's a place down the street here—You like Swedish cooking?"

"Grew up on it."

The doctor nodded, pleased. "Okay, let's get out of here." He caught a waiter, paid the check, and they walked down Lexington toward the Swedish place, talking trivia about the city and how it changed. It must have been seven-eight years, Chris thought, since he'd seen this part of town; yet some blocks, you could go back twenty years after, and noth-ing changed at all.

"I used to love this damn town," he said, surprised, be-cause it had been so long since he had even thought about New York, let alone looked at it. Kutler was good for him; the man cared. It was a little painful even to visualize all the things he seemed to care about. Like a wheel hub, with another spoke reaching out every part-turn. "I guess," he said slowly, "I've put it all into one." And then thought, That was dumb. Then: But he knows what *I meant*.

"Rockets only go one way at a time, don't they?" the doctor said.

Chris cleared his throat.

"Here we are," Phil said.

As soon as they'd ordered, Chris plunged in. "Here's what I wanted to see you about, Phil. You know, we've had a personnel problem up there all along that's a little unusual. I suppose you know the background—I'm sure you do, be-cause we fed you this stuff when you worked with Wendt. Our psychogenic troubles?"

"Yeah. Fascinating stuff, too. I figured if you wanted me, it would be something to do with that. But you want a good psychosomaticist, Chris, there are a hell of a lot of 'em better than me. I've always been interested, but it's not really my field."

"I don't need just a good psychosomatics man," Chris said. "We've got the problem under control from the point of view of our people's health. Nothing to it. Every damn contract calls for one month Earth rest leave after each working quarter. Three months up, one down. Keeps 'em healthy as hell. Any good psychosomatics man will tell you that's the only answer, short of an all-out training program that adds up to something like studying yoga, f'krissake!" He dipped into heaven-scented pea soup, and broke crisp bread. "Phil, what I'm after is someone who'll look at it from the point of view of a new environment that men damn well can live in. I do. Have, more than ten years now. Some of the others could, if the contracts let 'em. I don't know how you feel about this. Maybe you'll take the same stand the



others do: we're asking for something 'unnatural,' and we have to pay the price. I just had a hunch you might—feel differ-ently."

"Because of Johnny?" the doctor asked quietly.

"All right." Chris let himself look at the other man for the first time since he'd started his speech.

"Because of Johnny. But I mean it a couple of ways."

"Relax, will you?" Phil looked as if he could take some of his own advice, too. "Who's kiddin' whom? I know I feel guilty about Johnny. So what difference does it make if you know it too? But that doesn't mean I'm going to throw up a good practice here and go tromping off to Outer Space to offer myself up in his place."

Chris finished the pea soup, looked at the other man, and laughed. "Damn it, I've got to get down more often," he said, and laughed again. "I keep saying that. When I'm down. Now look: first of all, I said it was a couple of ways 'because of Johnny.' Sure, that was one of them. The other is, you did get somewhere with him. Or come to think of it, that's just one other part of it. You got through to him; no-body else could. That means, the way I see it, you maybe— speak our language some? You don't start with the idea that being off of Earth is 'unnatural.' Am I wrong?"

"I don't think so," Kutler said slowly. "Hadn't really looked at it that way. Maybe so— What's the other bit?"

"Obvious. Just that you've had some experience with our kind of nut."

"Oh *now*! Just because two guys have been to the same place, and both come back sick doesn't mean—" He stopped short. Chris grinned. "Yeah. I see what you mean," the doctor went on, slowly. "Nine times out of ten, it does mean just that. Only," he finished, "Johnny didn't get sick on the Moon."

"Well, frankly, I didn't mean it that strongly anyhow. You're way ahead of me, as usual. But—let's just say, if I've got a sick horse, and I can't get a vet—because nobody's in-vented veterinary medicine yet—I'm damn well going to try to find a doctor who's at least worked on a horse before."

"Even if it died?"

"He's not dead," Chris said drily. "Far from it. You seen that layout up there?"

"Not since it was finished."

"Well, you've seen the girl."

"Yeah." Kutler looked at him levelly. "I saw her yesterday. He's not dead. Yet."

"He's sick. Okay. You still know more about—horses— than a man who's never opened one up." Kutler started to speak, but Chris went on. "At least, I think so. So here's what I'd like to ask you to do—"

He opened his briefcase, and pulled out the folder of case histories and medic reports. "Here's the background stuff. If you can find time to look it over, and you think you're willing to consider the idea at all, what I'd like to do is start sending my leave people in to see you. Not for treatment," he said hastily, as the doctor tried to stop him again, "Just inter-views, sort of. Get your own histories on them. See what ideas you get. This thing is wide open, Phil. I don't know if what we need is a man on the job up there, or a consultant, or a whole staff and program, or what the hell. I figure you can at least give us a push the right way. Will you hire on as consultant for now on that basis? Then if you think you're not the right man, find us one. Or a dozen. Or tell us what we need. Or tell us you can't even do that. But give it a whirl, will you? I don't know where else to start with."

Kutler hesitated, still. "How much time do you figure I'll need for that 'month'?"

"You decide. Give it what you can. Take what time you need. Bill us at whatever your hourly rates for government jobs are. We're used to cost-plus," he added drily. "Don't stint yourself on the expense account. When you've got a yea or nay or maybe for me, let me hear it."

The doctor was silent a moment, and Chris held his breath, almost. He'd had the right hunch this time. If Kutler took it at all, he just might actually crack it—because if he took it, he'd kill himself trying.

"I can at least look over the literature," Phil said finally. He grinned. "Which in English means, all right, so you've got me curious. Or hooked?"

Chris passed over the envelope with the folder. He saw Phil's eyebrows go up.

"What's this bit?" He was indicating the red-stamped TOP SECRET.

"Christ, I get to where I don't even see it. Every damn thing we do up there—But on this job, they mean it. Only reason I got funds for anything as—way out?—as this was Security has fits about these people going up and down all the time. Anything to keep 'em up on the farm, the way they see it. Frankly," he added, "that was another reason for want-ing you. You're cleared already. God knows how long I'd wait before they found another man they'd put their gold star on."

*Acapulco—7:30 P.M. (C.S.T.)*

"What do you think?"

Brigadier General Jedro Arthur Harbridge, USA ASF, turned from the bar cabinet in the study of his country home with an air of some satisfaction. He carried two palest-gold martinis to the desk, handed one ceremoniously to his Press Secretary.

"Hard to say," Prentiss answered. "Thanks. Well—here's luck!" He sipped appreciatively. "Okay, you win. The Dutch gin is better." He picked up the memo he'd been looking at while the General mixed drinks. "I can't see anything in here that will make headlines—that's sure."

"Okay." Harbridge settled down in an anachronistically solid-comfortable leather chair. "What are you going to make 'em with, then?"

Al Prentiss shrugged one gray dacron shoulder. "What's the rush?"

You wouldn't understand, boy, if I spelled out every word! This particular rush had started a long time ago—for some people. For others, including all or damn-near-all PR men, the General thought, there was no rush: just the crush of the crowd.

"That's my problem," he said heavily. "Now your problem is getting the Dome in the papers, and getting it in good."

Prentiss studied his chief's face, and nodded. "Okay. So let's take it from One. How much of this stuff has been re-leased before?"

Harbridge frowned. "Just" the general background. Nothing on the genetic structure at any time. Seems to me, the only thing that went out was a film made up from their lab micros, with a very basic sound-track—you know, the little Mars whachahoosies in their natural habitat?—the symbiosis stuff, or fission or fusion, or whatever these dingusses do instead of screw—that kind of thing. That's about a year ago, I guess, little less. On the other hand, I think the only stuff mentioned here that's been officially classified is the chromosome chart stuff: or anything that was done before June 1, come to think of it, unless it's been released. That was the last full regular report, and they get stamped before they're read."

"So I'm stupid," said Prentiss, "but what's such hot news about chromosomes? We all got 'em." He stood up abruptly. "Damn it, sir, you just can't make good copy out of what a bunch of amoebas do for sex—even if they come from Mars." He held the papers fanned out, and looked at them with scorn.

Harbridge took the sheets, and held them in his lap. A slow smile spread on his face. "All right, Al. I'll give you a story to write. Two of 'em. First one is the bugs. Just what's in here, but no details. Leave out the chromosomes: they might not be copy to you, lad, but they're hot, believe me. Now let's see."

He put his drink down, picked up the papers again, and reached for a clipboard and pencil. Then he went through carefully checking and crossing-out.

"Use this, you can quote this bit direct," he said, as Prentiss came around the desk to look over his shoulder. "'... startling adaptation syndrome, which does not conform so much to the concept of mutation as of controlled evolution.' Hey, you know this stuff is pretty jazzy, Al. Come to think of it, we better leave out the last bit—What the hell does he mean, 'controlled' evolution? Who's doin' the damn con-trolling?—Never mind. Just make it, 'does not conform en-tirely to the usual concept of mutation.' Leave out all this part about the Earth-normal environment—that's really secret. Here, this bit won't hurt anything, '... genetic relation-ships between species ...' and if you just change this about capacity for cross-breeding to something about experiments at cross-breeding—make it sound like Luther Burbank or some-thing—you follow all this?"

"From a distance," Al Prentiss said dourly. "Or maybe through a glass, darkly."

"Okay. Now this chromosome chart bit I guess is pretty touchy too, but there's no reason we can't

say something like 'unusual' or 'unanticipated' chromosome count. What do you think?"

"I'd hate to say—sir. But if you mean, do I think I can write a story out of this that sounds like telling something without actually anything classified—sure. Just let me run home for my trusty old bio notebook, so I know what I'm talking about, and I'll whip right out—one, two, three."

The General put down the memo, stood up, and laughed.

"In your own unpleasant way, Al, you're a good boy. Drink up, you're too slow." He took the empty glasses back to the bar, and immersed himself once more in his elaborate martini ritual.

"I take it," Prentiss said thoughtfully, "that when I get this written, you'd like to see it in print somewhere?"

"Probably."

"I see. Following the same thought, I come up with the notion that you'd want to see it—if you did—in some paper whose publisher does not play golf with you?"

Harbridge nodded solemnly. "Not even the editor," he said.

"Right. I assume then ..."

The phone buzzer sounded. Harbridge lost all interest in the bar. He picked up the phone, leaving his inscreen dead. "Hello."

"Jed? Hi. Listen—"

"I've got company," Harbridge said. "I think he'd rather not know who called. What's the word?"

"No dice. I spent five hours and had a lovely time. Nice wife. Or whatever she is. But no dice. Stone cold dead, I'd say. You better take the ball."

"Okay. You know this can get rough?"

"I've got callouses."

"You're on, man." He hung up, wondering just how sure young Prentiss was as to Chris' identity: and whether it mat-tered.

"In short," said Prentiss smoothly, "I assume that once the thing's planted, we never heard of it. Do I dig you, sir?"

"Right where I live," said the General. "And, by the way— I do want to see it in print, for sure."

PART FOUR

*June 28—August 4, 1977*

*Rockland—Tuesday, June 28*

For four days, she'd been waiting for Johnny to leave the house: leave it long enough so she'd know she had ten minutes' time all alone.

It was hard to believe it could have gone that far; but when she thought back, it must have been going on quite a while now. Unless they went somewhere together, days—or weeks?—might go by till Johnny found any reason to go even down the road.

They had built the house in the exact center of their own thirty-five acres: no near neighbors to plague them—or to gossip with or play bridge, or borrow lawn-mowers, or any one of the things that might take a man ten minutes' walk to the next house.

The place was provisioned and stocked for every possible need. They marketed once a month—together.

On rare occasions, if the heli needed work Johnny did not want to do, he'd fly down to Nyack; usually, she went along, anyhow, and they'd have dinner out, take in a show, spend an evening pub-crawling, something like that.

But the house had everything that he wanted; most of all, it had her. Up till now, that knowledge by itself had been enough to allow her to overlook, not-notice, or never-mind all the rest.

But now, for four days, she had wanted to make one single phone call without him around: and there had never been a time she could be sure he wouldn't wake up, or pick up an extension from some other room, or—or something.

The whole thing was ridiculous. Most of all, her own feel-ing about it was all out of proportion. She

kept telling herself that.

*Just pick up the damn phone and call!* He was in the shower; how was he going to hear her from there?

But, again, she jittered around until, just as she reached for the switch, he came out.

Damn!

"Hi, babe." He came over and kissed her. And at the touch, the easy relaxation with which he had entered the room vanished. "What's the matter, babe?" He sat down and put his arms around her; tilted her face up with one hand under her chin.

"Nothing," she said unconvincingly, and tried to smile a response to him. That was not very convincing either. She saw the small muscles in his jaw tighten up, and start knotting. Oh, God damn! "Probably just—time of month, I guess," she said.

He bought it. He grinned and patted her on the head sympathetically; his face relaxed; he stood up with the confident nonchalance of masculinity, not prey to nervous\* cyclic emotions, and went into the kitchen. A moment later, he called back: "I'm going out and see what I can do about that door handle." The door slammed.

She saw him cross the back lawn toward the hangar. She watched till he went inside. With her eyes still on the window, she switched on the phone.

"May I speak to the doctor?" she asked the pert nurse who answered.

Dr. Aaronson looked harassed as usual, but his smile was beatific: "Everything's fine," he said. "All down the line. Don't give it a thought. You ought to come in, say, oh, two-three weeks?"

She tried to look as she thought she ought to feel. "That's wonderful," she said. "Look, I've got a problem."

"Hmmm?" His eyes were watching something else off the screen. His manner said clearly: I already told you, you don't have a problem.

"It's just—well, is there any reason—" It sounded so silly, when you came to ask it. "—reason I shouldn't take a trip to the Moon?"

"How far—" he'd started to ask before she finished. His eyes swiveled back sharply. "Well!" It was the first time she'd ever heard him laugh out loud. "Well!" he said again, satisfied, "I thought I knew all the questions by now! Offhand, let's see—I can't see any reason not to, in the shape you're in. When did you plan to go?"

"I'm not sure—two or three weeks? A month, maybe?"

He nodded thoughtfully. "Well, I'll check up, but I don't see why not. Stop in for a checkup before you go."

"Thanks. I will. I'm sorry if I interrupted you—"

"Nonsense. It was a pleasure, believe me. I think that's the first new question anyone's asked me in fifteen years."

She switched off and sat there a minute, her eyes at last off the window, her whole self composed for the first time in days.

He found her half-asleep in the sun at the edge of the pool, her orange swimsuit with the tigerish black stripes a splash of color on pale green tiles. She lifted her head and squinted at him from some faraway place inside herself.

"Hi, handsome," she said.

"Hello, babe." He dropped into a chair, looking down at her. She was okay now. She started lifting herself up from the tiles, backbone first, as if someone had tied a rope around her torso, and was pulling her up. He watched, fascinated; incredible, what she could do with herself!

"How's the water?" he asked lazily.

"Good." It looked good too. He went inside for his trunks, and she called after him to switch the player on.

"There's a tape on already," she said. "That new one you got."

The soft beat of African drums was beginning when he came back out. Lisa sprawled in the grass past the pool, and with each beat, she raised herself higher, till as the tempo grew furious and swelled into

crashing crescendos she was moving swiftly in a whirling ecstasy of liquid orange flame and streaked black shadow.

It was a long time since she had danced for him this way, he realized abruptly. She danced by herself, or unselfconsciously in front of him, all the time; but this was a performance—planned, staged, presented for his pleasure. He sat back and let the poetry of her pervade all his senses.

When the dance was done, she fell in a huddled heap at his feet, the fingers of one hand outstretched to almost-grasp his toes. She lay so still that he hardly dared breathe, while the memory of sound died.

Then she opened one eye, half-raised her head, grinned, and winked at him.

"Swim?" she said.

"You're on."

As they climbed out of the pool, she asked, casually, as if were something they'd just stopped talking about, "Still want to go to the Moon?"

"Sure," he said quickly. "Why don't we make it a honey-moon trip?"

He saw the tautness begin in her face, and he had to do something: "Christ!" he said, "What a tin-pan-alley bonanza. Song called 'Do You Want a Moon Honeymoon, Honey?' We'll make a million, babe!"

"Get a good old-fashioned Turkey In The Straw type tune for it." she came back, "and the callers can say, 'Every-body rise an' shine, for Moon Honeymoon, Honey—'"

But the troubled tension was still there. And he could feel it stretching the skin on his own face now. "—On the other hand," she said, too lightly, "I always did want to live in sin with a Man in the Moon."

Okay, let it go, the kid's trying. . . . "You mean you'd rather have the wedding after the honeymoon?" he persisted compulsively. "It's kind of—unconventional, Lee—" Stop! For Chrissake, stop!

"I never commit myself to more than one drastic action before four P.M.," she said primly.

Commit yourself? Well, that was that. Neatly done, babe, he thought. And then remembered that he was the one who had started the Moon bit.

Okay. Okay, they'd go. What the hell? The Moon was just part of the Earth's backyard, that's all. Right across the street, nothing else.

Okay, they'd go.

"Okay, babe," he said, stepping toward her. "But if you won't have me, I don't know what I can do about it, except for me to have you. . . ."

Rockland, N.Y.,

July 25, 1977

Dear Chris—

You guessed it, I suppose, as soon as you saw the envelope. (I suppose this is what they really mean by a 'dilatory correspondence?' I've gotten to feel as if I've known you for years, just through exchanging delaying letters—)

Turns out now we can't do it on the 31st. Johnny got some sort of (hush-hush) job onto the drawing board today, and they've got to have it Aug. 3, he says. Has to take his first plans in Saturday, and then he could leave, if they like what he's done, but he won't go until he sees the final blueprints, so—

Frankly, as you realized (from what you said in your note last week), I can't really say I'm sorry to see him so wrapped up in new work. But must confess I am getting kind of wistful about the trip up too—

Anyhow, I rearranged my own schedule as soon as he told me about this last night, and have now got things set so the recording series will be finished by Aug. 5—working all next week like mad—so that I won't have any dates I can't break, and I'll be free to pick up and go any week after this coming one, any time Johnny can tear himself away from the drawing board.

Did Phil finally make it? I know he's been champing at the bit the past week or so, since he made up his mind to the trip.

(Just phoned his office, found out he took off yesterday.)

Tell him hello from us, and I hope the whole thing works out. He never said whether it would mean

his staying up there or not, but I gather this trip is just a visit anyhow? Maybe we'll make it up before he leaves—?

Do give him regards, anyhow.

Very best, and from J.,

Lisa

P.S. Will assume any date after the 31st is okay, unless you let us know otherwise . . .

L

*Mexcity—July 27, 1977*

"I guess they're not going to pick up on it," the General admitted.

"You can't win every time," Prentiss said.

"I know. But how many battles lose a war? Any bright thoughts?"

"Only complicated ones."

"Okay. Even not-so-bright. Something is better than nothing."

"Well, it's not that complicated, I guess. Just tricky. Pick up on it ourselves."

"You mean plant it?" Harbridge was thoughtful. "No," he said. "Too risky. If we got caught out on the first plant, so we're devious bastards with something up our sleeves. If we didn't do the first one, and got caught on this, we're not so devious, and it's obvious we're out to get Christensen. If we got caught on both, it would smell real funny—and too many people have good noses in this town—hey!"

"Something?"

"I think so. This thing is a windfall to anyone who's after Chris' hide. Or it ought to look that way, if they were just looking. I think you did too good a job, Al. They just didn't realize there was anything there shouldn't have been in that article." Which shows just how much anyone is worried about what goes on up there, he thought. Chris used to keep an eye on his public relations, but he's been out of touch too much. Well, let's give a push—"I think—let's see, that Dartmouth boy we got shoved at us, what's his name?, Jen-nings? Yuh. He's Andy Jennings' son?" Prentiss nodded.

"Okay. That's it. I think this kid is just dumb enough so if you clucked at him about the kind of leaks that let important stuff like that get out, he'd be very likely to go home and tell his pop. And in view of the fact that Andy Jennings just bought himself a small interest worth a half million dollars in Undersea, I think we might just get our work done for us."

"You think Jennings' can remember a whole sentence that long? I mean, get home and tell it straight?"

"Well you better make it very clear." The General laughed.

Prentiss went out to find young Jennings, and Jed sat down to write to Chris.

*Dollars Dome—July 28, 1977*

NESNETSIRHC .RD said the lettering on the trans-lucent plastic door and then, underneath it, ROTCERID HCRAESER. Nature's own idiot, spelled backwards, the Director thought. Peter Andrew Christensen, Big Brain. If you're so smart, why aren't you a University President? Or Research Director for General Atomics? Or a respectable dues-paid master plumber, maybe?

Irritably, he flipped the reader switch and swung his chair ninety degrees to the glowing screen beside his desk, where Lisa Trovi's ragged typing explained, as adequately as possible, why the visit had to be postponed again. He flipped the frame, and got Jed Harbridge's carefully composed message on the screen. Might as well start writing answers—get them on the shuttle back. He sat, thought about what to tell Jed, and flipped back to Lisa's note. Switched on the dictaphone, and thought some more.

Knock on the door. "Come in!" The shadow behind the panel moved, and the door opened. "Oh, Phil." Good. He turned off both machines.

"Busy? I can come back . . ."

"You couldn't have picked a better time. I've just been sitting here stewing in my own juices—such as are left. Sit down. What's on your mind?"

"Questions, mostly."

"Like . . . ?"

"Like, to start with, what's in your mind?"

Chris grinned briefly. "You decided I'm a case too?"

"Sure. What of? If it's all the same with you, I haven't had an agoraphobiac in a long time . . ."

"You know, I might've been better off that way." He laughed. "What can I do for you outside of that? I don't suppose you've had time enough yet to have any idea . . ."

"Pretty damn good idea," Phil broke in cheerfully. "I'll do you up a proper report when I get back down, but I can tell you offhand now that I think any kind of half-decent psych staff up here could solve most of the problem, without half trying. In fact, the most interesting damn thing about it isn't the diseases, but the patients. They don't want to be sick. I've never seen a more co-operative group in my life. It's a headshrinker's heaven, man!"

"That right?" Chris thought it over. "Well. Of course, I guess it helps to start out with a high IQ level and—" He broke off at the doctor's amused headshake.

"Chris, if you asked me before I came up here I'd have said you couldn't take a batch of human beings, selected for ability rather than stability, and shut 'em up in an enclosed system where the environment violates every bit of early conditioning, and expect any thing but Trouble, with a capital T. You did it. Which proves only that my preconceptions are as useless as yours or anybody else's."

"You think we're in pretty good shape, then?"

"No. Astonishingly good shape. I have never seen a group of human beings working with such a high integration of aims and abilities; or expressing their own emotions so satisfactorily, with so little apparent hostility—or in such good physical shape, for the most part, considering the unfamiliar conditions."

"Well, of course, those rest-leaves have a lot to do with it," Chris conceded.

"I'll bet. If it wasn't for that, I couldn't honestly even consider taking the job. I've been counting noses, and I figure there are enough of 'em ready to try giving up their leaves so I can count on a few cases, anyhow . . ."

It finally penetrated. "Say! Do you mean you've decided?"

"I haven't decided anything. I just want to know: where and how do I apply for employment around here? And which is more to the point?"

"You mean it?" The depression that had weighed on him for the past week, and had hung so thickly in the air all morning that it immobilized him, began to lift. "Damn it, that's great! Never mind the employment office, you're hired! How much do you want and—?"

"Who-a-oa . . . Like I said, first I want to know what I'm hired for."

"How do you mean?" Chris asked slowly. "We went all through that to start with . . .?"

"That was the official request. Now suppose we lay it on the line for each other. I don't think you'd sacrifice any work-time up here just to solve the pro-tern personnel problem. And I frankly would not be interested in giving up a fairly well-established and moderately lucrative Earthside practice, just to solve your hiring problems. You've got your own reasons, and I've got mine, but I think what we're both interested in is finding out how to make human beings tolerate life off of Earth—here, or on Mars, or in a starship or any other place. Do I read you right, friend?"

"Well—I'll—be—damned!" He looked across the desk at the young doctor with a new respect. "Am I all that transparent?"

Phil smiled. "Let's just say I'm a trained observer."

"No, I mean it," Chris said earnestly. "Does it all show right out there on my face? I mean, I can see where you'd know what was going on—but I'd hate to think of some of these Decagon jerks or the buggers down in Accounting knowing everything I thought about—"

"Relax, man! No, it doesn't show that much, Chris. Like I said, I'm a trained observer, and—" He broke into laughter. "Don't worry, Chris. Unless you go around feeding the Decagon boys the same stories you gave me, I doubt they'd be fretting about your intentions. You gave it away when you dragged Johnny into it. Or rather, you got me hooked that way, so it wasn't too hard to figure maybe you meant what you said. I don't know if I'd have read it the same way at all, if I didn't have this jazzy old

Johnny-monkey on my back— so to speak."

Well, what in hell did you say to something like that? "Oh! By the way—I have another note from Lisa today. Begins to look like they won't make it at all, the rate he's stalling." He had a sudden worried thought. "I hope that wasn't what you were counting on—?"

"Nooooooo. Tell you the truth, I never figured that was better than an outside chance. Last I heard, he still was flip-ping his lid if anyone even talked about space. I don't know how he'd face up to the trip out here."

"Yeah, I know." He was thinking of Lisa's frantic efforts to control the conversation that one night at their home—to keep away from anything that bothered John. He scowled. "As a matter of fact you could've knocked me over with any handy feather when I got that first letter from him, but I guess—dammit!" He cut himself off, and switched on the reader speaker briefly.

"Note: If John Wendt comes up, he is to have sedation for full trip. Copies to all Earth launch sites. Request special handling. Full sedation, delivered as much as possible accord-ing to pre-Messenger routine, without comment, as if still normal procedure. That's all.

"Excuse me," he said to the doctor. "I've been meaning to get that notice out ever since he said he was coming. Didn't want to forget it again. I just don't want to take any chances."

"Good idea," Phil nodded, then, explosively: "Damn it to hell anyhow!"

"That boy really is under your skin, hey?" He watched the doctor's face with interest; it was the first time he had seen the professional mask completely gone.

"Well, hell, we were old buddies, and—That's not it, though, really. I used to be fond of Johnny, but I don't think that's even specially true any more. It's just—well, put it this way:

"Suppose a patient comes in and tells me he keeps imagin-ing that he's chained to the floor of a dungeon and that a gorgeous babe comes in every evening to give him a good time? Chances are, I'll nod my head like a wise old doctor and start explaining about erotic fantasies, masochism, and all that. But—

"Supposing, for instance, this guy really is getting chained up every night, and this gorgeous doll really is raping him each time? It's so damn unlikely, the guy might even think he was dreaming if it did happen. Right?

"Or—supposing this fellow was sure enough imagining things, only he wasn't having erotic or masochistic fantasies at all? Like, let's say he works in a bicycle chain factory, and hates his job, and maybe there's a supervisor who's a beautiful dish, and she's always giving him a hard time. So maybe his fantasies are fear and revenge instead?

"Okay, so this I'd find out a lot easier than I would any-thing about the guy who's really getting tied up. But that's because everybody talks about their jobs and bosses, on the couch or off it. So you take Johnny Wendt, and Doug Laugh-lin for that matter, too. Here are two guys who got psych-tested inside out and upside down before they left. They also got all kinds of training and preparation for the things they might encounter, and I've taken the trouble to find out—you probably already know—that homosexuality was an eventuality the training program prepared them to cope with. Plus, neither one of them showed any appreciable tendency to panic over anything like that, if it did happen."

"Okay. I know all that," Chris said. "It still happens to be what did happen. So, like with the guy who really gets the chains and the babe, maybe there was something in the psychological—I don't know—atmosphere?—that we couldn't prepare for and don't know about, and—Hell, whatever the reason was, at least you found out what happened. Why is something else."

"Sure as hell is," Kutler said wryly. "And maybe you're right that what Johnny—or rather, Johnny's unconscious— thinks happened did happen. Only I don't think so. I find it easier to think there was something in the physical environ-ment which was just so completely different and new and un-prepared for that maybe neither one of them could even perceive it fully; and to the half-assed extent that they were aware of it at all, they interpreted it by association of some kind and—I just wish to hell Laughlin hadn't torn those pages out! If we knew what he thought was the matter, it might— Well, hell, forget it. I just thought you might like to know what's pushin' me."

"Yeah. Thanks." There ought to be something better to say, he thought. "Tell you what: you get the money for the next trip, and I'll see to it you get to go in person."



Kutler shrugged and smiled. "It's a deal. Meanwhile, sup-pose I start on my elementary-school work up here? Your people have problems people on Earth don't have. Maybe they have nothing to do with Johnny's troubles. Or maybe they do. But the principle "is the same. When you already know five languages, the next three are easier to learn. If I find out what one-sixth gravity and Dome atmosphere, do to people, maybe I'm that much closer to what one-third and a Mars atmosphere can do?"

"I take it," Chris said slowly, "that what you mean is you want the job, and you'll do what you're hired for, but with the understanding that you expect to be free to do more than that, too?"

"Man, you dig me the most!"

"Okay. Let me lay it on the line now, and make sure we both know what goes on. When I first thought of you for the job, it was mainly because I knew you were bugged about Johnny. Well so am I. But a different way. Frankly, if we never find out what happened to Doug or to Johnny, it don't make no never mind for me—just so we can get the next guys back alive—and get 'em there, to start with."

He stood up and walked around the desk; turned and went back and stood at his own seat looking at the doctor across the desk top. "Listen, Phil, you talk about me being 'a case.' Well, I am one, all right, and I guess you know it as well as I do. Johnny was my friend. So was Doug. But I'd send 'em again, even if I knew it would happen the same way again—unless I knew some better men to send. And I figure I owe Johnny a whole lot now—but that comes second with me. If it came first, I'd leave him alone, I guess."

"I think you might do a lot more for Johnny by not leaving him alone," Kutler broke in.

"Good. Only it's still secondary. I've been busting a gut to get him back on the job with us, but you know as well as I do why I want him. It all comes down to Congress, the Care and Feeding Of."

"I know," the doctor said slowly, "Okay, so while we're showing our cards, let me add this: that's one of the reasons I want this job. Another one of the reasons. I know what you're trying to do—but I don't want to see Johnny fouled up any more either."

"Okay, so stick around and keep an eye on me. That's all right too. The way it is right now, Kutler, I can see a good chance of every damn thing we've done so far going right swoosh down the drain for God only knows how long—an-other ten, twenty, thirty, years, maybe. Unless the Reds make it, that is—"

"Yeah, that's something else. What's with them over there? You've had these bugs Johnny brought back and the other stuff to work on—I take it the bugs get the most attention now?" Chris nodded. "So what are they doing there? They run shuttles up and down, and from what I saw coming up, and the scuttlebutt hither and yon, there's enough espionage going on to support a half dozen space programs. So what are they doing?"

"I wish to hell I knew! About the only thing I'm pretty sure of is, they haven't got anything big going out soon. If they did—well, frankly, I'd be the last to know. But the Decagon boys would know all about it before the New Krem-lin did, I'll guarantee. Then maybe we'd see some changes here too. Maybe, hell! That's the only thing that would get us off the ground again, the way it is now."

"A la Sputnik?"

Chris nodded. "And Muttnik, and Lunik, and Mechta— and the Lenin, for that matter. Frankly, Phil—" He hesitated. It was tempting to talk to this man; it would be a damn big help to have someone to talk to. But— "I wonder if some of the big-scare reaction to the whole Lenin-Colombo bust wasn't—encouraged a little? After all, Johnny did bring the ship back. It went to Mars. It came back. He's alive, in one piece, sane—as much as anyone, I guess?"

Phil nodded, smiling.

"So why the big scare? The way it adds to me—bearing in mind that I'm a wild-eyed scientist, see? Not a politico—" He grinned. "I keep thinking, the Colombo puts us one-up. As long as they don't make another move, we stay one-up. As far as the politicians go, that means the Space Program has done its bit for God and country—for now, anyhow. And meantime, for this new Undersea Corporation . . . And the Arctic Circle crowd has some big money behind it too. So why throw away the taxpayers' hard-earned loot on space-ships? No profits, no porkbarrel, not even any damn propa-ganda value. See?"

"That figures," Kutler said thoughtfully. So?"

"So I don't know. I'm just trying everything I have. Or can get. Including—" He hovered on the brink of filling in the rest of the picture, and decided against it. Not till he knew Phil Kutler a little more. And not till Harbridge was fully committed. "Including you, and Wendt, and the psych program and the bug research, and anything else I can dream up that might either be some real help, or might work to push Congress the right way, or both."

"But right now if you have to make a choice, what counts is the propaganda end of it?"

"Frankly—yes."

"Okay." The doctor stood up. "I just like to know what I'm doing when I do it. Where do I sign up?"

Chris stood too and held out his hand. "You just did. I'll get the contracts and stuff taken care of. When do you think you can start?"

"Hard to say for sure. As soon as possible—could be two weeks, could be six. I can't make the move till I get my patients settled with other men. Call it three-four weeks, with moderate luck."

"From when you go down?" Chris frowned. Add a week and a half, and it was going to run right into September anyhow.

Kutler nodded. "Is it too late to catch the Messenger back this trip?"

He hadn't thought of that. "No. The passenger shuttles don't leave till evening anyhow. But don't you need more time—?"

"What for? I had my case histories before I came up, and I'd already seen twenty-five per cent of your people. I've seen enough up here now to know there's a job to do, and I want to do it. The rest can wait."

Chris nodded. Damn it, I like this guy! He thought. Then he remembered. He switched on the deskreader and flicked back to Lisa's letter. "Say, I almost forgot, Lee sent you all kinds of regards."

He was ridiculously conscious of Chris' eyes on his face as he read, and of his own determinedly neutral expression.

The note was typically Lisa: the wording, punctuation, even the typing, held that quality of—what?—mock-effront-ery?—that had drawn him so strongly that day in front of the restaurant.

Then he got to the bottom, and smiled. Great little in-triguer she'd make—like real subtle messages, hey?

"I take it she thinks I should haul out of here before Buster gets on board," he murmured.

"Well, you thought so too, didn't you?"

He nodded and glanced at the other man's face. Just what is it that girl's got? he wondered again. And what difference does it make? Never mind her . . . what about him?

"Looks like something's going on with our boy, anyhow," he said carefully. "Maybe my hunch wasn't all the way off after all. I'm glad you got up there, Chris. Maybe you scared him back to work at least." Unless she meant "sideboard" where she wrote "drawing board."

Chris switched off the screen. "That's quite a gal," he said—a shade too casually.

"First time you met her?" Phil asked.

"Yup." Very casual now. "What's with those two, Phil? I mean—" He let it trail off.

Phil shrugged and refrained from smiling. "I guess the girl knows what she wants," he said noncommittally.

"I mean—well, hell, what's the deal? How come he doesn't break down and propose?"

This time he let himself smile. "He does. Every day and twice on Tuesdays, the way I hear it. She's the one who won't play."

Chris looked up sharply. "What the hell—?"

"Look, I'm not telling any stories out of school; I would have thought you'd know that much anyhow. Don't your people keep any tabs on Wendt at all?"

"Not my people," the other man said bitterly. "Just Se-curity. And what they don't tell me would—would probably launch a thousand spaceships, come right down to it. Hell, I wouldn't even know as much as I've told you if I didn't take that trip Earthside last month."

"Oh?" Well, you've got some connection, then. . . . He caught himself up, astonished at his own hostility. Well, something new has been added! Only it wasn't new at all. The only thing was that Chris had joined the club. Phil Kutler grinned inside himself, not pleasantly. Strange bed-fellows, he thought—goddam strange!

Mexcity, Thursday, August 4

The General dictated the last letter of the morning, dis-missed his secretary with a tired pleasantry, and buzzed Al Prentiss.

"You seen the papers yet?"

Prentiss was in a good mood—and a good thing, Har-bridge thought. He himself was beginning to think again wistfully about the pleasures of retirement.

"Only the Times," he said warily. He hoped Al's good humor was not the fine edge of battle. This would be a good day not to get clobbered by anything.

"I'll be right in." Click. That's the trouble with civilians, Harbridge thought. No damn manners. Al came bursting in, three folded newspapers under his arm, all early afternoon editions.

"Like a charm," he said, spreading them to the marked articles.

## MOON DOME ADMINISTRATION SCOURGED BY CONGRESSMAN

McLafferty Will Investigate  
Dome Security Practices

Iquique, Aug. 4: Representative Ramon E. McLafferty (I., E. Ch.) announced today that he was in receipt of 'evidence of incredible sloppiness' in the handling of what ought to be Top-Secret space research projects at Moon Dome.

The Congressman, who is newly appointed Chairman of the Security Subcommittee of the Joint Space Affairs Committee, declined to reveal his sources, but prom-ised an 'immediate and vigorous investigation.' Asked if his statement was connected in any way with his in-terview earlier today with Andrew Jennings, a close neighbor and friend of Rep. McLafferty in the northern mountains, the Industrialist Congressman refused to comment. . . .

That was the gist of them all, except for one columnist's item: Ray McLafferty will gain a lot of momentum for the Senatorial elections this fall, if the Moon Dome hearings turn out half as popular as you'd think. Not to mention a well-known neighbor of Ray's who has what you might call a small interest in persuading Congress that some of the Space Research funds could be better applied under water. . . ."

Harbridge chuckled. The day was not going to be so bad after all. "I hope it doesn't get too rough," he said.

"It's what the man ordered," Prentiss reminded him.

"I know. I just hope it doesn't get too rough. I forgot about McLafferty."

PART FIVE

*August 24, 1977*

*Dollars Dome—6 P.M. (C.S.T.)*

They had buckled her into the comfortable safeness of the couch, and she had swallowed a pill, and then vaguely felt the faint prick in her arm.

There had been dreams and dreamy times and maybe-dreams which were hard to sort out, but as she came more awake, she decided the truly-half-awake times had been only the ones where she swallowed what someone told her to, and float-walked to the toilet and back again.

She was very hungry. Somebody came and unstrapped her arms, and left her to free herself after that from the rest of the fastenings. She sat up stiffly, stood up on prickling feet, and stepped into the corridor. A whitecoated young man looked horrified, came running at her.

"Sorry, Miss, I didn't think you'd be up so quick."

Vaguely, she recognized him—or his jacket?—as the one who'd unfastened her. Then, with a rush of clarity, she saw it was Johnny he'd been standing with down the corridor. She stepped forward and whitejacket caught her arm.

"Steady—"

"I'm all right." She took another step, and the prickling began to ease. Johnny didn't look any better than she felt.

"Home was never like this," she muttered.

"Huh? Feeling rocky, babe?" His face was gray but he was a lot steadier on his feet. "Takes getting used to," he said, but he didn't sound as if it made much difference. He wasn't even looking at her. He kept staring at the couch behind him.

She stood still. Getting my Moon legs, she thought nervously, and wished the damn whitejacket character would go away, or Johnny would kiss her, or preferably both.

"Hello?" she said, smallvoiced, and put her hand on his arm.

"Hi, babe." He turned and really looked at her this time, and closed his other hand over hers. "Better yet? I was just looking at this setup—didn't get a chance when we boarded. It's changed some since—They've improved it a lot, but it seems to me there should be something better than all this belt-and-buckle junk. There must be some kind of synthetic fabric that would do the job," he said thoughtfully. "See, if you had—"

If I had half a brain, she thought, turning the mounting irritation back on herself, I'd have stopped to think I'm not the one who needs coddling this time!

"—made up into a net—soft enough for comfort, but rigid—"

He was keeping his brain busy. Fine. But what happens next?

"—enough to hold shape on a frame, you could work the whole thing with a pushbutton—"

The whitejacket type looked as impatient as she felt.

"—Give it a kind of dead man's brake," Johnny rattled On, impervious, "so it won't work during blast—"

Whitejacket gave her a pleading look. She took a deep breath. "Hey," she said. "Mister! You know which way to the Dome? I'm a stranger here myself—"

He grinned, shook his head as if to wake himself up. "Sure. Right down this aisle, lady. Step right through the double doorway to your right . . . ea-ea-ea-zee does it. You are now breathing the fresh pure air of Kansas City, im-ported direct to the Moon for the benefit of Dr. Christen-sen's walking talking researching exiles. Siberia was never like this either. Well, how do you like it?"

I don't know, she thought. I'm too busy liking you. She made herself stand still, not look around. If she looked, if she seemed to notice anything different, it would go away. Oh, Johnny! she thought, remembering suddenly, sharply, the man who had gone to Mars.

But he's still that way, lots of times, she defended auto-matically, even to herself; and told herself right back, Sure he is—on Earth! But they weren't on Earth: they were on the Moon, and Johnny hadn't even been able to listen to talk about space for a year and a half now without flipping his lid. . . .

Never mind, she stopped herself. She didn't have to under-stand it; she could just be grateful for it.

"All right, snotty, be blasé," she said aloud. "Me, I'm a greenhorn. I'm impressed." And she was, too. Startling, how anything could be so much like what you expected, but so much—what—so much more real. Like seeing art-book re-productions of Degas' dancers, and suddenly finding your-self in front of a full-scale canvas, alive with the breath and brush of the artist. And even now, all she was seeing was through the protective refraction of the great air dome. She wondered if visitors could ever get outside. . . .

"Hey, babe, stop staring and come say hello to the nice man."

She turned and smiled at Chris, with what she meant to be only a sideways glance at Johnny. His

face was open and relaxed and easy ... a face she remembered from long long ago, and saw now only for fleeting moments in great privacy and dim light. But even while she watched, it disappeared under the familiar mask.

"You'll have to excuse the lady," he was saying to Chris. "It's her first experience as visiting firelady off the planet of her birth, and . . ."

"I'm just Moon-struck," she broke in. "Hello, Chris. I... it ... well, thanks for asking us."

"Believe me, it's a pleasure to see you." He reached out a big hand, and took hers in it, then released her to shake hands with Johnny. "Having any trouble walking? Good. Those shoe plates are supposed to make just enough difference, but gravity and magnetism aren't exactly the same. Some people have trouble at first. Come on. Got some chow waiting for you. Even the Moon has traditions. Banquet in the dining room every time a ship comes in."

They were walking across a curious concrete flooring, flecked with sparkling bits of silvery stuff, away from the dome and wall, the great air-lock "gate" through which they had entered, leaving the two tall ships and the Moon-vista behind them as they approached the center of the base.

The shiny bits in the floor must be the magnetizing element, she decided, and became pleasantly aware of the difference Chris had mentioned. She felt light, buoyant, fluidly effortless in all her movements—but still her feet behaved as they were accustomed to behaving under normal gravity.

"I guess the people who feel uncomfortable walking must be the ones with feet out of proportion to their bodies," she said thoughtfully, remembering how the plates had been carefully trimmed to size and attached to her shoes at the spaceport on Earth. "I mean, if your feet were a little small, the surface wouldn't give you quite as much attraction as you needed to make it feel the same . . . ?"

Chris nodded. "We have special plates made up with thicker soles for overweight people, if they're staying on. Although, once you get used to the idea, it's kind of fun not to use them at all." He smiled. "You see what kind of solitary pleasures a man is reduced to in a setup like this? But I can't very well go floating around the place where the hired hands can see me, so I only do it when I'm alone in the executive suite," he added, to Johnny, and went on: "Listen, if you folks would rather skip the love-feast today, we can have something sent up to my place. Whatever you'd rather—?"

"Makes no difference," Johnny said curtly. "Whatever you want. They'll be expecting you, won't they?"

She heard the tightness in his voice, shot a quick unnecessary look at his face, and did her duty: "Frankly, I would appreciate it if it's not too much trouble," she lied. "I'm . . . kind of dazed." That was no lie.

"Sure thing. Wait here a minute, will you?" Chris stepped off more briskly in the direction they had been going, caught up with a group a little way ahead, and spoke quickly to a tall gangling redhead in shorts and a violent patterned shirt. The redhead glanced back at them, nodded, and rejoined his group. Chris came back, smiling, and they turned off the wide main "street," down a side corridor, heading "out" again now, toward a different part of the dome wall. A little later they turned again, and lost sight of the outside, walking up a ramp that led to another corridor, this one lined with doors. Chris paused in front of the last door along the row, and pushed it open.

Lisa took one step inside and gasped. Her first impressions of the room itself were vague. That didn't matter. She was facing a full wall section of the dome. From floor to ceiling, and perhaps eighteen feet along the side, the clear plastic brought the incredible outside right in with them.

She heard Chris laugh, and Johnny said, "Hey, babe, you're obstructing traffic." She stepped forward to let them in, but never moved her eyes. The only thing she thought about at all in that brief time of pure perception was to wish that Chris would go away, so she could know if Johnny was sharing her delight. Then Chris went away.

"'Scuse me. Check messages 'noffice," he said. Or something like that. He vanished through a side door, and she took her eyes off the outside long enough to look to Johnny and reach out her hand. He stepped closer, took her hand in his own, and stood next to her, seeing it with her—but just for an instant; then he stepped away.

Awareness of his movements around the room intruded gradually on her preoccupation. She turned,

and found him studying the titles in a bookshelf; looked around herself, and took in a low couch, table, comfortable looking sling chair. Another table, writing height, in the far side of the room, with a straight chair in front of it. Everything else was built in: shelves, drawers, cupboards.

No pictures. She was beginning to approve of Pete Christensen. Anyone who'd hang a picture on a wall in the same room with what she'd just been looking at ...

Dinner was the biggest surprise yet, because it was so normal—normal for Earthside luxury, that is. It arrived, scant minutes after Chris had mixed and served cocktails, on a hotel-type wheeled table, which came up in a sort of oversized dumbwaiter. On a plastic cloth, plastic dishes and earthenware containers held what was literally the banquet Chris had promised: appetizer to mints, with all stops in between, and roast beef featured in the middle. Plus a wine she could not identify, but found delightful.

"Our own brand," Chris chuckled. "So was the 'gin.' For that matter, damn near everything on the table is. I'm not sure offhand whether the dishes were made here or not, but the ceramic stuff was. And the plastic cloth. And the roast beef."

She had known about the hydroponics farm, and there was really nothing startling, if you thought about it, at the idea that where man can grow starch, he can, and will, also distill spirits. "Which tank do you grow your beef in?" She asked skeptically.

"No tank," he said, beaming. "That pink slice represents one of our biggest scores to date, gal. Experiment in trans-posing animals in utero. First viable one we got was a pig —wouldn't you know it? But we have practically a complete livestock farm here now, and we've got the process down to where we—" He stopped, as if checking himself, and then finished smoothly. "—we think we can pack up any kind of stock a space traveler orders and ship it to him—anywhere, any time. Not bad, hey? We're fooling around with deep-freeze now—the embryos, I mean. No luck so far, but—?"

His shrug, Lee thought, was magnificently eloquent: all around her, in front of her, even being ingested inside her, was evidence of the stubborn, determined, bull-headed damn dumb optimism of that shrug. Pete Christensen had made this station—fought for it, worked at it, schemed on its be-half—made it almost as literally as though he'd built it with his hands, unaided.

"You still headin' for the wild blue yonder, man?"

Johnny. Lisa looked once at his tight sardonic withdrawal and thought with a shiver: He made that, too.

*Dollars Dome—7:30 P.M. (C.S.T.)*

Half an hour, Phil thought. He'd give it another half hour, then he'd have to go up.

"You get so it seems normal," he said in answer to the comment from one of the three new all-alike young bio-chemists. How do they turn 'em out so same-all-over? Once upon a time, scientists at least had been odd ducks, individ-ualists—Okay, escapists; but individuals. Now . . . ? "It's morning now, Moonwise. Just dawned yesterday. But at Moon-night, all the difference is the blinds are down—that's the effect. The dome lights actually give you the same color and quality of light. You just can't see out, very far. You have to make your own day-and-night for living purposes. That's one of the tests you'll be getting this week. Find out what kind of routine or schedule looks best for each one of you, and after a while 'night' is the time you go to your room to sleep." You'll get used to it before I will, I bet, he thought, amused at the knowledgeable confidence he man-aged to convey.

Half an hour, at the most. God only knows which bit of fur Chris was rubbing backwards now. Or which way Light-ning Boy will strike when ole Doc Kutler shows! Well, might as well live dangerously—if there was no safe way to do the job. . . .

He confirmed the opinion of another of the triplet fledg-lings that the day-night bit might be behind some of the psychogenic systemic malfunctions he'd been warned about.

"Damnedest industrial hazards popping up these days," the third one said. "Used to be in our line all you worried about was catching malaria or getting too much roentgen. Now you sign a release about asthma and psychosomatic hypertension before they'll hire you."

"Well, that's really my job here," Phil said. "I'm the chief headshrinker in charge of eustachian tubes.

The day-night thing makes trouble, but nothing like what that inner ear of yours will try to do. Not to mention all the things your involuntary reflex system has to learn all over, and—"

"You know, I never thought of just how many things low gravity and rhythm disruption could do to a man!" Bio-chem No. 1 broke in, "Man, that could be fascinating!"

Well, all right. Phil started to feel better. At least one out of three was not Cool Cat straight to the core. The lad had spoken out of turn, and out of character. Phil made a men-tal approving note and fixed the still-nameless face in his mind. Then he stood up.

"I'm going to have to ran out on you for a while," he apologized. "Boss-man has super-visitors upstairs." No. 1 grinned; the others looked politely baffled. Carrera—that was his name.

"Scuttlebutt around St. Thorn wasn't so far off, I guess," No. 2 said to No. 3.

"Everyone was saying *Johnny* Wendt would be on board," No. 3 explained. "Who is it anyhow? Or do we get Classi-fied Personnel up here?"

*Johnny* Wendt. In emphasis. Even from this jerk . . .

"Everyone was right," Phil said flatly. "He's up with Dr. Christensen now."

"Oh?"

"Dammit!" said No. 2. "I know I'd have recognized him. I'll swear he wasn't on the Messenger."

Phil shrugged. "Maybe they have private luxury compart-ments?" he said with a suggestion of a leer. "He brought Lisa Trovi with him." And turned and went, knowing he had penetrated the professional boredom of No.'s 1 and 2.

*Johnny* Wendt!

Maybe the boys back at the table were more jazzed up about Lee being there—but they didn't say her name in caps or italics. Well, he thought, it was nice to know you weren't the only sucker in town. And Christensen's bulldog-gish efforts for the first time to get Wendt's name back on the rolls made full *objective* sense to Phil.

He tossed a mental apology at Chris. Amendment, rather. He'd actually begun to think the director cared about Wendt.

Or maybe he did; it wouldn't matter, *if* he did. He didn't care enough about himself to make a centimeter's difference if the blueprint was the plan for space. Whether he cared or not, he needed Wendt.

Phil started up the stairs to see the immovable object visiting the irresistible force.

Plus, of course, Lisa.

*Dollars Dome—8 P.M. (C.S.T.)*

The big wheel drifted in a sunlit void. Cargo ships snuggled cozily into the vast hub hold. Tiny toy-robots and toy-men who looked, in outspace gear, more like the robots than the robots did, clung to the outer shell, making their way in spiraling circuits around the great rim and the hub, checking, repairing, resealing the scars of cosmic dust and ultra-high-velocity pinpoint pebbles.

Inside the ion tubes, geiger-suited crews cleaned and in-spected. Fuel shuttles took their turns at the maw of the tanks. In the rim living quarters, crew couches were stripped and sprayed, deodorized, sanitized, and u-vee'd, covered with fresh plastic sheets. A team of two went through inspecting straps and webbing, and buckles.

All the routine of the Messenger's two-day Moonside orbit went on as it always did. Shuttles came and went from and to the three domes. And as routinely as all the rest, mag-netic tweezers plucked a thin strip of microfilm from a minute wall hole; a piece of candy offered and accepted was sucked till the candycoat came off the hard center—a pellet precisely shaped and sized to tonguing into the cavity of a false tooth; two men conversed about supplies and sched-ules, talking fluently meanwhile with their hands.

The shuttles went in and out, and before most of the residents of Dollars Dome knew who their guests were—or that they had special guests—the top man in every national delegation at World Dome, plus Dr. Chen and his aides in Plato Crater, knew that John Wendt had come back.

They also knew that Wendt had refused to go back into space since his first return from Mars—or that that was what the American government said. Now he was brought up, with absolute secrecy—kept in his bunk the whole way—as a prisoner? or for Security reasons? by choice? why?—and that a "woman friend" had accompanied him: presumably the American tri-di dancer, Trovi.

Why?

In at least sixteen different rooms in the three man-made Moon oases, men sat silently asking themselves the same questions, or conferring worriedly with other men about it.

In Dollars Dome, the word gradually spread too. And in Dr. Peter Andrew Christensen's living room, Trovi and Wendt sat sipping wine and coffee, while the Director made small talk and speculated about those sixteen—or more—rooms, and what was going on inside them all.

"...still headin' into the wild blue yonder?" It didn't come out light, the way he'd meant it to. He avoided Lee's quick look.

"You seen any leopards change spots lately, John?" The bastard laughed as if the joke was on himself. Sure.

Yeah. This cat over here, man. Flyin' tiger turned to pussy-cat. Yeh-man!

The self-made leopard looked like licking cream, rambling on to Lisa about food again. "Food gets ridiculously im-portant to us here," he said. "But the psych boys had that taped ahead of time. Found it in the World War Two, with the sub service, and then they doubled it in spades on the nuclear jobs. I guess they figure all of us for—what do they call it?—oral regressives—anybody who'll get into this kind of spot at all. Anyhow, that's one thing I never had to fight for. Johnny can tell you, even at the beginning, before we really had the farm going, we used to get beef and turkey sent up, even when there was no shipping space for lab supplies! Lord, how that used to gripe me!" He stopped a minute, to empty his wine glass. "Coffee?"

"Let me do it," Lee said.

Busy little bee, ain't you just, baby?

"Of course that was before we had the Messenger," Chris was going again. "Every ounce counted, ten times over then."

"Yeah," Johnny heard himself saying, his voice coming from somewhere outside his volition, but inside himself: "We had pretty good chow on. The. Colombo. Too." That was how it came out. But how was unimportant. From where? Why?

He tried to remember when he had last so much as com-pleted a conscious thought about that travesty—let alone said a word about it—Except No or Go to Hell! Or like that. He tried to see Lee's face without her noticing. Tried to find something else to say, while they sat waiting. Tried to think of some way for them to be on the shuttle tomorrow when it took off again.

Eight days, he thought. Eight whole long twenty-four-hours-to-the-each old-fashioned Earth-type days. My God!

It had been a mistake to come. But he'd known that. Old Johnny-can't-turn-down-a-dare, he thought, with small amusement.

That wasn't quite right, either. It took three dares: Chris; then Lisa; then that damnfool McLafferty with his idiot com-mittees. Good ole Solidarity Wendt, all-out for ole buddy Chris. Yeah.

There was a little wine still in the bottle. He picked it up. "Lee?"

"No thanks," she said. "I'm on coffee now."

"Chris?"

"Just a drop—no, never mind," Chris said. "I've got some brandy someplace around—" But he made no move to get it. "I've got to get some work done tonight yet. Always busy as hell around here when the Messenger's -up," he added, to Lee.

"How long does she stay in orbit?" Johnny asked, hoping it sounded idle.

"Two days. Starts back Friday morning, but for our pur-poses, it's Thursday night. Anything out of here has to get off the ground by ten tomorrow at the latest, to make orbit. Then she's back by next Wednesday. One thing, at least, you don't have to worry about late trains when they run on orbit!"



And when did I hear that joke the first time? Johnny thought, while Lisa gave her nicest duty-laugh. This party's sure getting dead, he thought. And guess who killed it? Hell!

Eight days. Okay.

Eight days?

He finished the wine.

"By the way," Chris said, leaning back, "I've been catch-ing up on that ESP stuff since I saw you that time, Lee. You know, I used to fool around with it quite a bit back in school—the Rhine cards and all that. But I lost touch."

"Decided you couldn't push rockets with wishes?" Johnny bit in.

"That's about it," said Chris equably. "Now I think may-be I should have stood with it. I'm sure as hell not pushing 'em any other way."

"If spaceships were wishes," Johnny said, and stood up. "It's in there, isn't it?" He pointed to the bedroom door.

"Huh?" Chris double-took. "Oh, yeah, right through the bedroom."

"Excuse me." He went out and left the other two in brief uncomfortable silence.

"You know," Chris said after a moment. "Telepathy would be damn useful sometimes, when you think of it."

"It's okay, Chris." Lee smiled, with obvious effort, and stood up. No matter where she sat or what she did, her eyes kept turning back to the stark lithographic contrasts of the weird lunar landscape on the other side of the curved wall. "It's—"

... a lot better than I was afraid of ... Well, you didn't say a thing like that: not even to a beaming-father-type like Chris. He's not married, she realized suddenly. That was too bad; he was a man who ought to have children. Children!

The landscape blurred, and she blinked hard and fast.

". . . matter of fact," he was saying, "Your man Potter seems to be getting a lot of respect. Maybe we will push ships with PK someday, if he's right. Telepathy would be a lot more help just now, though—I'd give a pretty to know what they're up to at Red Dome, and Intelligence doesn't come up with much. His idea on telepathy is that it amounts to a semantic translation of a total set of somatic conditions, right?"

"That's how I get it." Outside, a shimmering blue-tailed beetle skimmed in a long parabola through the sky. Some-body's shuttle-ship. That's how we looked, coming in! "Doesn't sound too likely, though—I mean, how many people would get the right message ever, if it depended first on one of them being able to—well, project his own nerve and muscle sets to another, and then the other one having the right frame of reference, semantically, to 'read' the so-matic set? Like, it won't do us any good when we meet up with Jovians or the bug-eyed types from Arcturus Three, will it?" Keep it light, that's all. Just keep it light.

"Oh, I'm willing to let the Arcturians wait," he laughed. "I just want to know what the boys in Red Dome are dream-ing up. Now if you just fill me in on how to make your muscles feel like my muscles—come to think of it, that's up Kutler's alley, isn't it? Wonder if he's up on this at all?"

"Talking dirty again?" Johnny stood in the bedroom door-way looking from her to Chris to her. "Kindly keep y'all's muscles in different parts of the room," he said, with a grin that was not a grin at all. "Or," he went on, facing Chris, still with the smile that made the words an official joke, "you will start feeling my muscles."

Oh, Lord! Stop it, Johnny! please *stop!*

"How in hell did you two get around to the Phys Ed de-partment?" he went on. "I thought I left you up on thought-steam rocket ships?"

"Too rarefied," Chris said. "They forgot to think us up some atmosphere."

"Oh? Oh, yes, when did Young Doctor Kutler join the party?"

"Well, he hasn't yet. Matter of fact, I thought he'd be up here by now. He took over as official greeter for me with the new people who came up with you."

"You mean," Johnny said slowly, "Kutler is up here too?"

"Sure. Didn't you know? Lee, you knew . . . ?"

Yes. Yes, I did. "Hmmm?" She made a great thing out of tearing herself from the view. "Oh, is he here now? I knew he had been up, but—?"

Chris swallowed it. Not Johnny. Damn him, damn his eyes! He had no right to know so much about her and so stupid-silly little about him.

"Sure, he's on the payroll now. First time I ever did anything the Security boys loved me for. We've had this problem of sending people on leave one month out of every four. Plays hell with our schedules and personnel problem, which didn't bother them downstairs—but when they started tightening up on Security, they got damn bothered about all these classified project people being Earthside on their own so much. But if they stay up here, without that relief, they don't last a year, most of 'em. Every psychogenic trouble in the books—plus some Phil can write his own book about it when he's done. They—there he is. Come in. Hi—we were talking about you."

Phil came in, smiled quietly, nodded to Lisa, and crossed to where Johnny stood, hand held out.

"It's good to see you again," he said.

"Is it?"

Phil dropped the hand Johnny had ignored.

She knew exactly what would happen next, and could not even start to think how to avoid it. She was appalled, but in a way almost relieved, to find she was not even going to try.

The two men stood two feet apart, face to face, for a hovering moment. Then Phil turned, with a faint shrug. "How do you pick these guys you hire, Chris? I swear, when you talk to a bunch of them, you'd think they were all man-ufactured in the same—"

"I hire?" Christensen started. "Hell of a lot I have to do with .. ."

"I asked you something, Doc," Johnny said at the same time, and reached out and put his hand on Kutler's shoul-der, turning him back. "Are you so damn sure it's so good to see me?"

Kutler shook his shoulder sharply; Johnny's grip tightened.

Lisa stood watching.

"For krissake, Wendt!" Chris stepped forward. "What did he do?"

"Nothing," Johnny said through almost clenched teeth. "Not a goddam thing!" He didn't look at Chris; just at Phil. He dropped his hand. Neither one moved.

"So you're the bright boy who's been making plans?" Johnny laughed, a short ugly bark. "I should of known."

Okay, boy, here I am. Still in my head, more or less. You proved your point. Lightning didn't strike. I made the trip, and so what? What's next on your list of magic tricks?"

"Oh, Christ, Wendt, forget it, will you?" Kutler said. "I didn't ask to get you here. I only work here." He turned to Chris. "I'll see you later, I guess?" He turned to Lee. "I'm sorry."

That was the cue, of course. Johnny took two steps for-ward and his arm drew back. "Leave. Her. Out. Of. It," he said. "You. Son. Of. A. Bitch."

For one quick instant, the script almost went through to the end. Something exploded in Phil Kutler's eyes that Lisa had known must be in the man—because he was a man— but had never seen or heard in any way. Then the doctor reached out again and drew back the male response.

"Okay," he told Johnny mildly. "Have it your way." He turned and left.

The silence he left was like the death of sound after a thunderclap. Johnny stood tense, his arm still half-set for a blow, until the door closed. Then he dropped into the nearest chair, went loose all over, and looked down at the floor.

"I guess I figured things a little wrong, Chris," he said tiredly. "I shouldn't have come. I'm sorry as all hell." After a moment he looked up at Lisa, and then away. He said nothing to her. Dimly she knew that—for the first time?— maybe not?—she had had nothing to offer him.

Damn it, oh damn, damn, damn, oh damn it all!

"Maybe it would be better if we went back down this trip," Johnny said, still to the floor.

"I'll see if I can work it," Chris said. Something in his voice made her look closer. It was incredible, but it was true: Chris wasn't angry; not even disappointed, specially; he just knew it was no good. Maybe he also knew it hurt Johnny even more than it did him to know it; but he no longer cared. It wouldn't

work: that finished it. He went to the cabinet, set a full bottle of Earthside brandy on the table, and two glasses.

"Why don't you two take this along to your place?" he said, casually as though nothing had ended, nothing had even begun. "I'll see what I can do about shifting some schedules. We might have to try and get you onto a UN ship, okay?"

Johnny nodded. "Thanks." He stood up, started to pass the bottle up, and couldn't do it. Lee followed. Damn it, she thought, this time he wasn't even drunk!

He made up for it. He was drunk and asleep when Chris phoned to the room two hours later. "He's sleeping," Lee said softly.

"Oh? Well, listen, we've got a problem here. I can get one bunk. Only one. UN ship's full up, a bunch of VIP's who won't wait. And I can't squeeze out more than one here, this trip."

She was silent. She looked at the square solid face in the screen, and wished . . . well, what was there to wish?

"The only way I could do it, Lee, would be as Priority Emergency, and I think that might make some—well, some unpleasant publicity."

"It's all right, Chris," she said clearly. "Suppose Johnny takes this one, and I'll go next week, the way we planned."

"Do you think that's—a good idea?"

She smiled. Johnny was not going to think it was a good idea at all. "It looks like the only thing we can do, doesn't it?" Well, Johnny could think what he liked. "I—frankly, I'd just as lief stay the week, if it won't—Well, you're the boss. Just, if you think that's best, it's perfectly all right with me."

She waited breathlessly. "Sure," he said. "I just didn't think you'd want—I thought you might be uncomfortable staying by yourself."

"No. I'll tell Johnny when he wakes up," she said.

"You send him to me," Chris said. "I'll tell him." She did not contradict.

After she hung up, she went to the outside wall and pulled back the drapes that Johnny had drawn. Light flooded the room. She closed the drapes again, and stood outside them, nose to the window like a kid at a candy store.

Instead of being worried, or upset, or angry, or nervous, or anything she ought to be, she kept looking and wonder-ing if people ever got tired of a scene like that.

## PART SIX

*August 25—September 2, 1977*

*Dollars Dome—Thursday, August 25*

"Yeah. Sure. If it's all right with Lee, it's okay." Sure, what the Hell? Why shouldn't I leave my girl behind? Give the other boys a chance . . . That was idiocy. Or was it? You couldn't say Chris had failed to notice Lee. Well, who does? You want a babe nobody else wants, find yourself some old bag. Plenty of girls who'll be overjoyed to marry the great Wendt. Plenty of 'em. Sure. For all he knew, this time might have torn it with Lee anyhow. He stood up. "I'll go see if I can round her up and see what she thinks, okay?"

"Right. See you in half an hour? I've got to get the changes cleared through soon as possible."

"Right." He went out of Admin and across the mall to the guest residence. The place had changed since—well, sure it had, he was thinking four years back and more. He hadn't really seen it when he came through on the way back from—

All right, leave it lay. . . . Forget it!

She wasn't in the room. He found her finally in the dining room, drinking a glass of milk with a tablefull of awed young scientists. If he could laugh today, it would be funny—the way their eyes swiveled after her when she got up to come to him. Plus the double-take when the whispered word went round the table about who it was she'd gone to. The great Wendt!

Well, the great Wendt was getting sent home for being bad. And he couldn't have mama's hand to

hold, this trip.

"Chris says he can swing one berth, but that's all," he said. "The way I see it, I'm a heel no matter what I do. You rather stay alone till next trip, or what?"

"Well—what do you think?"

"I think—never mind, babe, you don't want to know that. I guess there's nothing to do but go along with it? Unless you think you'd be—"

"What?"

"I don't know. It's that ole sou'then gennulman training coming out. You know what I mean."

"Here? Don't be an idiot, darling. I'll keep my chastity."

Damnedest part of it was: she would, too.

"Okay, babe. I'll go let him know." But he stayed where he was. "Babe?"

"Hmmm?"

"Hell, I—I'm sorry, that's all. I don't know what the Hell. . . !"

"It's okay, Johnny. Let it ride, huh?"

"Sure."

But there was something missing. After he talked to Chris, he wandered out, thinking he'd find her and see if there was anything he could do, in the three hours he had, to help things. Then he knew what he really meant by "help things," and made sure he didn't find her.

She wouldn't stop him. But it wasn't what she wanted. Or what he had any right to ask.

Be a good thing if she did find someone else, he thought. He swallowed the fury in his throat, and found the bar.

## TRIP TO MOON FOR PROCESS SERVER? DOME DIRECTOR SUBPOENAED

McLafferty Demands Christensen  
Testify at Special Hearing For  
Space Security Next Week

Mexcity, Aug. 25: Dr. Peter A. Christensen, Director of the All-Americas Laboratory for The Investigation of Extra-Territorial Phenomena, has been summoned to testify at a Special Hearing of the Security Subcommittee of the Joint Congressional Space Affairs Committee (SAC).

The Subcommittee convened in special session yes-terday to study evidence previously announced by Chair-man Ramon E. McLafferty (I.,E.Ch.) as "seriously questioning the efficacy of Space Research Security." The nature of the evidence has not yet been revealed.

Special Hearings on the matter, which Rep. McLafferty describes as "most urgent," will commence next week, in advance of the convening of Congress. Dr. Christensen was called upon by the Committee today to appear voluntarily for questioning in regard to Se-curity measures in the Moon Dome.

Queried on the procedure of the Subcommittee if the Moon Research Director should fail to comply with the request for voluntary appearance, Rep. McLafferty said that a subpoena definitely would be issued.

"The Moon Dome is a territorial part of the Amer-icas," stated the East Chilean Industrialist, who is a candidate for Senator from Chile this fall. "If it is nec-essary to send a subpoena there," he told a press conference this morning, "we will do so." He added that he did not believe Dr. Christensen would fail to comply with the Subcommittee's request.

## *Dollars Dome—Sunday, August 28*

The Biochem labs occupied a complete "building"—a structural unit shaped like a pie-slice with the first forkful already gone—a pumpkin pie, possibly, or any fallen custard filling that would provide for greater height at the outside than in the center. Eight such buildings extended from the central Mall to the

crater walls, rising by stepped-back stories till the top two levels in each were single rows of rooms facing the transparent dome wall above the crater. These were, for the most part, living quarters, but in Bio even the top stories were taken over for lab space by now.

Still, there was not room enough in the one building. The "Mars-bugs," which had occupied perhaps one cubic meter in their sample boxes on the Colombo twenty months earlier had been so carefully, prudently, frequently, and multi-experimentally proliferated in the meantime that a department which had once shared the single building with two other sections had now—and recently, nearly half of the growth having occurred in the past three months—overflowed into corners and corridors all through the Dome.

There was a batch of cultures in Metallurgy being studied for "evolution-mutation" response to various mineral environments. With the assays and testing of (non-self-reproducing) Mars samples long finished in that department, and its original function in connection with rocket construction and propulsion become an economic dodo, the once-proudly inorganic chemists turned eagerly to working with bugs.

The hydroponics farm had suffered no such financial blight as had Metals and Fuels and other non-maintenance projects; but efficiency in the building known as the Farm had so minimized space requirements during eleven years of steadily increased personnel and improved living standards, that one whole tank room was available—and thus put to use—for "farming" experiments with bugs.

A section of Electronics was currently being cleared and remodeled for the cybernetic approach to a theoretical understanding of "controlled evolution" by construction of analog computers which might "act out" the mathematics that had to date eluded all other efforts at analytical understanding.

As a matter of fact, the bugs had already, in one sense, overflowed the Dome itself. One farm-tank full had been "planted" in an open pavilion outside the walls, roofed against meteors, but incompletely enclosed: "The Shack" was the simplest way to conduct Moon-environment tests.

Lisa followed Thad Bourgnese down ramp after ramp in the Bio building, listening with half an ear as she was trailed through the upper levels where the Earth-normal atmosphere work was done, down to the glassed-off pressurized chambers near the crater floor where experiments were conducted by space-suited scientists in Mars-normal, or at least a half-dozen variant approximations of Mars-normal, atmosphere.

This was the only building she had not previously toured at least superficially; and Thad was seeing to it that her tour here was not superficial at all. But by this time she was chronically half a day behind herself, still absorbing mentally what she had seen in the morning, while she tried, to retain what was shown her in the afternoon long enough to digest it that evening.

She hadn't realized; she hadn't even begun to realize before she came: she had known everything there was to know about Johnny Wendt—except what mattered.

She knew the public hero, the lover, and the tortured man. From very far and very near, especially from near—from inside-out almost—she knew him better than, perhaps, she knew herself: certainly better than he knew himself. But now, in his absence, she was learning for the first time in concrete specific terms just who Johnny was—what he had done—and why so many people gave a damn.

Nine-tenths of the research inside the Dome was directly connected with what Johnny had brought back from Mars. Half of the total stemmed directly from investigations initiated by either Wendt or Laughlin on Mars, or by Johnny on the trip home.

The popular tag, astronauts, was misleadingly limited, and Johnny had never done or said anything to correct the mis-conception for Lee. The fact was, he and Doug had not been sent just to pilot a ship, collect specimens, and carry them safely home. That job could have been accomplished with robots; the justification for risking human life was the requirement of trained human judgment. The two men had not just picked samples: they had decided what to pick; had run the first tests and experiments on the spot; initiated whole lines of research; and judged on the basis of their findings what was worth carrying home and what was not.

They had worked hard for a year and more on Mars; and harder, perhaps, training for ten long years before. Between them, they had contained a practicing knowledge of the whole spectrum of analytical and investigative sciences. Doug was the "biologist"—which, in that team, meant doctor, farmer, organic

chemist, cook, as well as the branches of the life sciences; Johnny was "physicist," which meant, in particular, the whole range of cybernetics, from its application to neurology and linguistics, to its most abstruse "big-brain" computing techniques. As such, he was pilot and navigator, engineering crew, construction and repair man, inorganic chemist, civil, mechanical, and electrical engineer, nuclear physicist, and mathematician.

It had taken ten years of Academy and post-grad work, and then special training on the Moon, to prepare these two, and a score of others for the complex job. In the end, Johnny and Doug had seemed the best team for the trip.

Lisa had known all this, but known it as one knows, for instance, that the diameter of Earth is 7928 miles; now she was learning it first-hand, as one knows the diameter of a plum is small enough to be held inside one's hand.

And it was awkward, always, because everyone—bar Chris and Phil—took it for granted that she knew already.

Naturally, Johnny would have told her everything; naturally, she'd have seen the slides and films, read the records, heard the stories, over and again.

But—naturally—she knew nothing, except what she had read in public print, heard from Phil Kutler, or pieced together from Johnny's infrequent, oblique, and most often uncompleted references. If he even owned any slides or pictures, Lisa did not know about it; she finally had to ask to see the stereos of the Martian "city"—the crumbling ruins of whatever civilization had once existed there. Then, when they found out that she really never had seen anything, they brought the whole works out for her: Marscapes and space shots and all the "Mars-bug" micro-shots that were not too classified to show.

And all the time, wherever she went, whatever she did, right outside and visible every time you crossed the mall, was the Beyond, the still-unborn world of the Moon, and Space itself, the stuff of dreams that ruled the whole life of a man like Peter Christensen—that had ruled, guided, channeled Johnny's life, until—

Till what? Till he went out too far? Till he woke up? Until the big dream turned to a steady nightmare for some reason no one, Phil or Chris, Johnny, or she herself, quite knew.

The strange thing was, the more she learned, the more she understood, about the John Wendt she had never met, the harder it was to think of going home to the sad travesty of the whole man who waited for her back on Earth.

Well, not yet quite on Earth: it was now Sunday after-noon, and he would be en route along the Belt from Perigee—or even spiraling downward in the Earth bird by now. Since Thursday night, he would have been in the same state of drugged calm in which they had both awakened just enough to take nourishment and eliminate wastes, still half-unaware, all the way up.

"Well, that's about it...."

Lisa pulled herself out of her private world of worry and wonderment, and followed Thad back up the ramps.

"About the only thing you haven't seen yet is the Shack," he was saying.

"Shack?"

"Outside," he explained. "We figured the easiest way to study these babies at Moon conditions was right out there on the Moon. You've probably seen the Shack from your window. You're in North Hall, aren't you?"

"Yesss ... oh, of course. I thought—" She giggled, realizing for the first time how absurd the immediate assumption had been. "I thought it was some kind of guard house."

Thad laughed and pushed the lounge room door open for her, leaned past to hold it as she went through. He nodded to two men deep in discussion near the door, waved to a group across the room. It was cheerful and late-afternoon-feeling inside. A handsome red-haired girl detached herself from a knot of white-coated technicians at the tea table and approached them.

"Hi, Ree." His voice held a special warmth that made Lisa look again, more closely, at the girl. It was astonishing, really, how many of these girl scientists were lovely women as well. . . .

Well! How quaint! Shades of great-granddad! . . . but it was true, all the same, she thought

stubbornly. You just didn't see this particular kind of—well, loved-loveliness—in most busy-brain career types on Earth. But here, even the plain ones seemed to have that sort of glow. . . .

So? There were at least as many men as women here, she reminded herself—and no fluffy chicks to grab off the men from the brainy types. So why shouldn't they look loved-and-lovely? They were, that's all. As to wit, Thad's voice just now. . . .

*Oh, Johnny! Johnny, come back! Wherever you are, all the rest of you, darling—come back!*

The three of them sat together, drinking hot tea and talking: the dance, and biology, McLafferty and psycho-somatic cures, the current topics of gossip and news in the Dome—all but one, Lisa thought. None of them mentioned John Wendt.

He's down by now, I guess. . . .

"What time does the rocket get down to Earth usually?" she asked.

"Oh, six, seven, eight, maybe nine—depends on the Belt and ionosphere conditions, mostly."

She nodded, sipped tea. It was nearly six now; he'd be on Relay, or on the way down. What was he thinking? What had he been thinking . . . ?

Nothing, of course. He'd been asleep all this time. Four days in her life that had simply not-been for him: it was a strange thought, and an unpleasant one.

She was up in her room, just done changing for dinner, when Chris phoned, to tell her he'd received clearance on the Earth landing. "I just wanted to let you know," he said a bit awkwardly. "Everything's fine. ..."

"Johnny—?" She took a firm grip on the words this time: "Johnny was all right? He wasn't upset, or—anything?"

"He's fine. Tell you the truth, Lee, I asked for a special call on it. He came out of it fine. Calm. Sent word he'd meet you at Baja next week."

"Oh thank God!"

She had not meant that to be said aloud; she was not even certain that she had. But the words stayed in her brain like a refrain for hours afterward: thank God, oh, thank God!

". . . told them I'd ask you, and see what you . . ."

"I'm sorry, Chris. I was wandering. I missed something."

"The World Dome call."

"Which World Dome call?"

"You were wandering, gal. I was telling you, I had a call from the UN Dome right after the one from Relay. They heard you were staying on this week, and wanted to know if there was any chance of getting you to give an evening performance before you go?"

"Performance? Here? On the Moon?"

"Well, I said I didn't know—Why not? I should think this place would be a dancer's dream?"

He was dead right, of course. And she was shocked that in five days here she'd never even thought of the things you could do dancing at one-sixth gravity!

"I'd love to, Chris, but—listen, I'll try some stuff tonight and see how it goes, okay? Can you let them know tomorrow morning?"

"Sure. It would be all rush-rush, anyhow. Not much difference tonight or tomorrow. You had dinner yet?"

"I was just going. I told Thad I'd eat with him and that lovely girl—Rita?"

"Rita Donovan?"

"That's right. But if I'm going to practice, I think I'll eat later. Are you going down now?"

"I suppose so. Why?"

"Well, would you explain to Thad? Or what's his room? I'll call—"

"I'll let him know. Now can I ask a favor?"

"Any time, Chris." He was such a nice man. . . .

"Frankly, I feel kind of foolish," he said, with his slow smile, "but Kutler's been up here sounding off about your dancing, and tell you the truth, I don't usually take much time for that kind of thing on tri-di.

I—"

She let out a peal of delighted laughter. "Doctor Christen-sen, are you asking for a stage-door pass to watch rehearsal?"

"I guess that's the size of it." He actually looked sheep-ish ...!

"Okay, but on one condition—"

"Yes?"

"Where's the stage?"

He started to answer, and she interrupted. "I didn't mean the stage. I meant a place for practice. All I need is floor and something to play tapes on. Oh—can I get some stuff from the library now?"

"All the time," he said. "Like the dining room. Library has to stay open, around here. Everyone's on such whacky schedules."

"Well, good, I'll change and go see what they've got. Suppose—how about meeting me there? Then you can show me where to set up shop?"

"Great. Twenty minutes. I'll see Thad on the way."

"You're a doll." She switched off, humming the tune that had started to run through her head as soon as she thought at all seriously about dancing here. But how could she not have thought of it once all this time?

She shook her head, smiling, still humming, and changed to dance leotards, added a full skirt, and slipped on soft dance shoes.

Before she left the room, she stood for a long moment looking through the dome wall at the brilliant mid-day moonscape outside.

If I ask to see the Shack, they'll let me go out, she thought; and thought, afterwards, it was silly to want to so much. But she would ask.

*Mexcit—Monday, August 29, 9:30 A.M. (C.S.T.)*

The General refolded his morning paper, and set it neatly in its accustomed upper left hand corner of his desk. He was pleased. By now the gossip columnists would be in full cry; the afternoon papers would be worth seeing.

From his briefcase, he took a flat envelope, and excerpted three microfilms. He threw the first one on the desk reader, and glanced through it again: Chris was too damn involved with Wendt, he thought worriedly. The message was some-how, almost intangibly, fuzzy; not Chris' usual clear-stated summary, anyhow. And somehow the man had completely missed seeing the obvious newspaper advantages.

Prentiss had just about bust a gut getting the press release ready when word came from Relay—and Chris hadn't, even thought to call him during the week on it, so they could get set ahead.

Nobody (but nobody, the General thought chuckling rem-iniscently) was going to believe that Johnny Wendt had gone up to the Moon, in the company of a beautiful dancer, both under strictest security to the point of full-trip sedation, and come back, the same way, the same Messenger orbit, leaving the gal behind, for purely personal, non-significant reasons.

He found it hard to believe himself. The more he thought about it, the more the overtones—or undertones?—of the courier-message from Christensen bothered him.

Hell, he decided: It's good copy. That's all.

And what could Chris be pulling?

It didn't make sense enough to worry over.

So he stopped worrying.

The next film he had also seen at home the night before, but he studied it carefully again. It was long: five single-spaced typed pages, compactly written; and it contained the life history of Ramon E. McLafferty, Congressman from East Chile, white hope of the Industrialist Party, Chairman of the Space Security Subcommittee of the Joint House-Senate Space Affairs Committee—former ranch hand, bookie, stock yard "insurance" protection boss, newspaper owner, fighting union smasher, contractor for nearly 20% of the work on construction of the Messenger, minority holder of Undersea Corp. stock, and



probable next junior Chilean Senator.

The General spent some time rereading, and reading again, the story of Ray McLafferty's rags-to-riches rise—plus an abstract of a psychoanalytic report, and some dirty-edges peripheral track-trailing. When he felt quite sure he had all the pertinent facts in his mind, he took the film and placed it immediately in the special miniature safe at the back of his bottom desk drawer.

The third film was a standard form from M.I., stamped across the top with block-lettered TOP SECRET's. This one Harbridge had gotten on his way to work. It was, as it turned out, the most interesting document of the three.

In one unsensationally worded paragraph, it stated conclusively that definite evidence had finally been obtained regarding the Palisades Query. There had been a physical transferal of subjects (ref. PQ 1579J-2z) on several occasions, first known being 9/12/76; most recent, 3/14/77; two known dates in between, and three suspected. Transferal in small quantity, but sufficient for purpose of investigation by instigators.

Which meant simply that on at least four occasions, small, but significant, samples of Mars-bugs had been successfully turned over to agents of Red Dome, where said samples might now be assumed to have flourished and multiplied, and to be under study at least as intensive as that at Playfair.

The General pursed his lips thoughtfully. He removed the film, and held a match to the edge, dropped it into a metal bowl set with precision at the right front edge of the desk top, watched it dissolve into smoke and a small residue of chemical matter.

He repeated the procedure with Chris's report, smiling as he thought about Ray McLafferty:

Lordy, what he'd give to see that damn paper!

The smile was because there was no possibility that any such information could get to the Congressman's hands.

*Dollars Dome—Tuesday, August 30, 1977*

"I hate to stop and eat, even," she said. Her cheeks were pink, and her smile was one of pure sensual pleasure. You could see in the way she walked that she was still feeling the wild pleasures of leaps and pirouettes to soaring music, free from the weight of a lifetime on Earth. "You know, I just can't figure out why I never even thought of it till they asked!"

Phil smiled, and manufactured a leer. "Come let me show you my couch," he said. "We'll find out why."

"Darling," she said, "But I'm hungry."

"Wellll—okay," he said. "After dinner."

They laughed at each other, and impulsively, she reached for his hand as they walked into the dining room. Damn if it wasn't catching, he thought with amusement, and yet with a sharpening edge of concern—because it just didn't fit. But when you looked at the tables in here, the groups of two, four, five, six, eating and talking and smiling . . .

It reminded him of something dim, in the background of memory. ...

He caught it: photographs, in his childhood, of Israeli and Russian co-ops. Propaganda shots, of happy smiling healthy "free workers."

But the scene here was not posed. It was for real. And it went on all the time, all the hell over the slaphappy Dome. And it was getting more pronounced. He noticed it more than he had at first, in spite of getting used to it. And he thought it had started to show up in the clinical picture too. Nothing conclusive yet, but—

"Hey?" She'd said something he missed.

"Just—I wish I was going to have time to do that show."

"Well, why not? Chris said something about them calling again today. If you gave the word now, I'll bet they'd get it set for tomorrow night?"

"Tomorrow? Don't be silly, dear. I'd need at least four more—well, maybe three days. But I'm just starting to get an idea what I can do. Phil, it's like—like starting all over, say to learn ballet, after you've

been an expert in, say, African dance. It's that different!"

"Yeah? Well you could fool me, kid. I'm just ignorant enough to think you looked damn good back there."

They took their dinners to a table where Thad Bourgnese and the Donovan girl and a couple of others were already seated. Thad jumped up to move a chair for Lee next to his own. Phil pulled up his own chair alongside Rita, watching her.

By every damn bit of experience he had with anyone he'd ever known, this particular girl ought to flip her lid this time. Instead, she turned and smiled and said, "She is just too beautiful to believe, isn't she?"

"Yeah." Phil ate his soup, and kept his thoughts to him-self. When Chris joined them a few minutes later, and took Lisa's other side, engaging her in intense quiet-voiced con-versation, he watched Thad from out of the edge of his vision.

Bourgnese turned to Rita again. That was all. You'd have sworn no one anywhere around the table had felt the least ruffle of irritation at any point.

Phil was beginning to believe they hadn't; for the first time, he started mentally reviewing, seriously, some of the startling improvements he'd seen in his hypertension cases. It figures, he thought, reluctantly. Damn if it don't figure . . .

"Phil!"

"Hmmm?" He looked past Rita and Thad to Lee's rosy face.

"Remember what we were saying before?"

"Yeah?" Which what? Which before?

"Well," she said, brimming with laughter, "Chris wants to know if I'd be willing to give up my berth this week, so he can take it!"

"I got the official bit just now," Chris told them all. "They want me to testify next Tuesday. But, Lee, we can switch someone else, if you think—"

"Oh, no. I mean, thanks, but—well, frankly, I was just telling Phil when we came in, I wished I could have some more time for practicing. Now I've got started, I'm just flabbergasted. . . ."

Later, he got her alone long enough to make sure she had not spoken spur-of-the-moment, before she thought about Johnny.

She hadn't.

"Chris said I could radiowire him this evening, and if he wants, he'll be able to call me, tonight or tomorrow. So we're not announcing anything about the performance yet. But he got a report that Johnny was fine when he landed, and—oh, dammit, Phil, one week won't kill him. One more week, I mean. And when do you think I'll ever get a chance to do this stuff again?"

"Honey—I'm not saying No."

"I know." She looked at him with such affection it almost hurt. "I'm not arguing with you, either, dear—just with me. But you know—I'm beginning to think maybe Johnny's a lot tougher than we give him credit for. I think he'll be okay." She stepped away, turned back for a moment. "Or maybe I want to find out if he is," she added, and vanished down the ramp to her practice room.

*St. Croix, U.S.A.A.—Friday, September 2, 1977*

The bar was cool and dim in the daytime, a good place to sit and look, without the added haze and heat and too-bright light, into the anyhow doubtful mirror of your mind. But as dusk dropped on the island, the bar conversely bright-ened. With the evening's coolness, it grew warmer inside. At midnight, it had become a gaudy splotch of brilliance aburst with noise, fragrance and stench, sweat and promises.

Light and color, odors and entreating bodies, these could be shut out, he had learned quickly, simply by keeping his eyes on his glass, and his glass full enough. But the noises— shrieking and murmuring, laughter and shouts, the sound of glasses, of cards and rolling dice and clicking wheels, of shuffling feet, pounding heels, of silver coins and golden rum in swift exchange,—the bloodbeating rhythm of the calypso band in back of the thousand sounds of passion and delight, despair, forgetfulness, lust and

seduction in the tropic night—these could not be shut out, nor would he do so if he could. They built a barrier over the darkness that shrouded the mirror of his soul.

Johnny sat where he had been since noon, in the carved wooden booth, and the girl's voice for some reason emerged by itself, separately, from the sound of the room, drawing him back from the dazed withdrawal with which he had countered the bar's evening dawn.

He looked at her apprehensively: lovely kid. He shook his head: "No thanks, doll. Thanks, but no thanks. Siddown. Have a drink."

She sat.

She was young, very young. Her shoulders were bare, and the white ruffles of her blouse on breast and arms gave her an oddly pure look in the cacophony of color in the midnight bar. When she sat, the cerise skirt and black lace ruffle of her petticoat were hidden; all he could see was the blouse and bare skin above. Light spilled on golden skin; the crimson of her lips was all the impact of color she made; all the rest was black (hair and eyes), and white (blouse, teeth, eyes), and glowing tan-gold. She might have been anything from a grown-up twelve to well-preserved twenty-two—well-preserved, that is, for an island girl of her trade. Johnny guessed seven-teen.

While she drank rum-and-coke, and he sipped a fresh bourbon, he gave the whole idea some serious thought. A lovely girl, certainly. Clean-looking, too. He could check with Jake. Jake would know; Jake was his buddy. Jake said, don't take any babes up without checkin' first. Half of 'em's sick, and most of the rest is thieves. Jest check with me first. That's what Jake said.

Jake was at the bar now. Johnny toyed with the thought of taking the girl to the bar, and then maybe upstairs. The room upstairs was big and dim, cool, quiet now at midnight as it had been in the bar when he came in at noon. At noon the room was hot, and even through the blinds the whiteness of high sun crept in.

The room was cool now: cool and quiet and all alone.

Lisa . . .

"What's your name, doll?"

She told him, and it was hilariously funny, because it was Dolly, and he'd called her doll so she'd thought he knew all along, and the band came and played Dolly Dawn. When they went to the bar, Jake nodded and said Dolly was fine, Dolly be good for him. So he gave Dolly five dollars, for being a good girl, and shook hands with Jake, and went up alone to the dim cool aloneness where nobody knew or cared anything anyhow he could sleep deep and no dreams.

But he remembered before he was all the way asleep that it was Friday—had been Friday—and tomorrow—today—he would have to leave . . . back to where the world was and people who knew all about it ... about everything.

When he woke up, the newspaper was under the door for him: he'd told them when he came: no papers, no tri-di, no nothin', till Saturday. Bring me a paper on Saturday. And here it was.

They were all right. Jake, all of them, they were okay.

The headline was right on page one.

## MOON LAB DIRECTOR WILL TESTIFY

*Christensen To Appear*

*At SAC Hearing Tuesday*

Mexcit, Sep. 2: Dr. Peter A. Christensen, Research Director of the U.S.A.A. Moon Laboratory, is en route to Earth today, to testify voluntarily for the McLafferty Committee, at a hearing next Tuesday, Aug. 23.'

The announcement of Dr. Christensen's compliance with the request of the S.A.C. Security Subcommittee Chairman, Rep. Ramon E. McLafferty (I., E. Ch.) was made today by Brigadier General "Jed" Harbridge, Decagon Science and Space chief. The Moon Lab program, although under Congressional control primarily, is sponsored in part by the U.S.A.A. Space Academy, and associated Decagon Space Research units.

There was no comment from Gen. Harbridge on the "evidence" McLafferty claims to have regarding Security leaks, and general laxity, at the Moon Dome. The official Decagon statement said only that Dr. Christensen boarded the Messenger satellite last night, and will appear, of his own volition, at the Tuesday hearing.

Dr. Christensen's decision followed an official request from the Subcommittee radioed to the Moon Tuesday. Acknowledgement of the message and compliance with the request was received Wednesday by Rep. McLafferty, it was learned at his office here today. Dr. Christensen will arrive on Earth Sunday, Aug. 21, at about 8 P.M., at St. Thom Spaceport. The rocket, previously announced to land at Baja Spaceport, was rescheduled for St. Thorn after receipt of Dr. Christensen's message to the Decagon.

Johnny smiled wryly. Poor Chris—everything had looked so rosy to him five years ago. They were really ganging up on the guy now. Yeah—poor Chris! Poor benighted bastard! Damn good thing . . . but you couldn't help feeling sorry for the man. He meant well; he was a Hell of a good guy.

Just stupid, that's all!

Johnny shrugged, dropped the paper, picked it up and riffled through for other news, feeling luxurious because he didn't have to leave today after all. The ship was coming to St. Thorn. Twenty minutes away, was all. Plenty of time, if he left on the six o'clock jitney tomorrow. "About 8 P.M." usually wound up to mean about midnight. ....

Well, well, we're getting around, aren't we?

It was a good picture of her, one of the batch they had taken out at the edge of the pool last September: Lee in Peter Pan costume, poised on one toe, it seemed, right on the edge of the pool—about to take off, you'd swear it.

A new art-form will be born this Saturday night [it said underneath] when Lisa Trovi, world-renowned tri-di dancer, gives a precedent-making performance at the Moon's World Dome. Miss Trovi has been on the Moon, at the U.S.A.A. Dome, since August 24, practicing for her appearance this Saturday.

"It's a completely new kind of dance," Miss Trovi says. "I'm just beginning to realize what can be done in light gravity. It's like changing from swimming in treacle to swimming in water."

The performance, scheduled for 8.30 P.M. (G.S.T.— 3.30 P.M. C.S.T.) will be broadcast live if conditions permit. Tri-di tapes will be aired from New York at a later date.

Saturday . . .

But this was Saturday. She wasn't on the wheel. She wasn't coming.

He realized only slowly that he was not surprised.

"Stands to reason," he thought. He showered and went down for breakfast of ham and eggs, pineapple juice, and good native rum at the bar.

PART SEVEN

*September 5-18, 1977*

*Acapulco—Monday evening, September 5.*

"Still no dice?"

"Nothing. God knows where the damnfool is." Chris came back from the telephone, sat down in the webbed chair, and stared without seeing at an expanse of mountain, sun, water, and forest that would have demanded the full attention of any man who did not live in daily view of heaven itself.

"How bad was it?" Harbridge asked.

"Not too. He had sense enough to suggest going back himself, before it got worse. I just wish to hell I hadn't been such a fool. I should have known—I'll tell you, the one I feel sorry for is the girl. Lisa. He doesn't know what he's— Hell, sure he does!" I keep forgetting, he thought, ashamed. Johnny's entitled to anything he can get!

"I don't know what's going to happen now," he said thoughtfully. "If he's not home, he might not have

gotten her wire either. Hell to pay if he finds out from the papers, or— Well, let's hope he took off on a bat after he did get the message. But I hope she's heard from him."

Harbridge was smiling with a sort of tolerant amusement. "Must be quite a girl," he said.

"Go to Hell," said Chris amiably. Both men laughed, and turned their attention to the less entertaining but more urgent business of the next day's testimony.

Chris was astonished, as always, at a glimpse into the workings of a Harbridge operation. Jed had a list of the questions that he would be asked. Jed also knew that McLafferty planned on parlaying the week's hearings into a trip to the Moon for himself. And he knew which reporters would cover the day with what biases.

"Reporters?" Chris was surprised. "Isn't it on the air?"

"Nope." Jed's mouth wrinkled briefly in half-smile. "The Honorable Congressman from East Chile says that he will not further endanger the Security of the Americas by utilizing a hearing chamber in which matters of utmost secrecy must be discussed as an open-air forum for personal publicity. I quote," he added, "from a rather extensive article in the current Time."

"Well, well. Whaddya know? This boy is not stupid."

"Not even a little. Bear it in mind. Now; suppose we run through the questions. Take the stand, Doctor."

They went down the list. Occasionally, Jed would stop listening to make a suggestion. Once he proposed a complete change of treatment. Mostly, he nodded with satisfaction. "You're really doing a job up there, Chris," he said when they finished. "Damn! It's a pleasure to see someone once in a while who knows what goes on in his own bailiwick." He went to the bar. "What'll you have? Scotch?" He poured, shaking his head. "Sometimes, lately, it gets to seem as if everyone has his eye on the ball so hard that you'd swear they don't know what team they're playing for. Or what game it is. I don't think I know more than a dozen men in Mexcity who actually do their jobs—that's not true, either," he stopped himself. "I know plenty of them—but they work for somebody. I meant men at the top. They're so busy staying there, somebody else has to 'handle the details.' Which means, do their work for them, while they keep a weather-eye out on the lookout post. Anyhow," he said briskly, "Ray McLafferty knows what he's doing. He's no pushover, Chris." He drank deeply, and walked over to where his comrade-in-arms of twenty years' battles sat.

"Listen, Chris, what I'm saying is: watch out for this guy. He's dangerous. Frankly, I think I might just have outsmarted myself this time."

"That's not how you sounded an hour ago." Chris twirled his glass in his hand. He did not look up. He knew Jed Harbridge pretty well. There was more coming. "I thought we had it made?"

"Here's how I see it—as of right now. Ray'll shoot the works on this thing. It's a sure ticket into the Senate for him, if he plays it right. And he wants that seat bad. He's aiming high. Frankly, I'm with him. He's smart and he works hard, and he's got enough imagination to see what that ass in Americas House couldn't see if you painted it out for him color by color. The day Ray gets in there—and I think he'll make it in twelve years, with any luck—we'll have a Space program and we won't ever have to go through this kind of friggin corruption to get what we need again."

"So? This is bad?" Chris put his glass down. He was beginning to understand, and he did not like the way it felt, somewhere around the middle of his belly.

"Maybe. For you. Play it tough tomorrow, Chris. But when he comes to the Dome—I'd play it soft if I were you. He wants a Space program—but he wants it under his thumb.

If you're too tough— Well, he'll probably be head of SAC next year."

"I think I follow you, but I don't know if I like the looks of the terrain. I take it you mean, we're going to win, but I just might lose?"

"I didn't figure it that way, Chris— Well, hell, you know that. This McLafferty is new; I underestimated him at first ... I still think we can handle him. I just don't want to see you go in there without knowing everything."

"Yeah. I know." Chris stood up. "Guess I'll try Johnny once more, before I quit. Say—wasn't there something about a subpoena for him? Maybe he's ducking—"

"Or maybe they're keeping him tanked up and happy until the right day. That's one thing that does worry me, Chris. I hope you find the guy."

"Yeah. Well, there's nothing that he can say, really. Christ, he didn't even see anything but the Dome. Had him kept under sedation the whole way." He stopped in the doorway and turned back. "Here's how I figure it, Jed. Like, I dragged Johnny up there because his name would help, and I guess after I met the girl, I knew she'd push too, right with us. She wants him back on his feet. She's a smart chick. She knows he can't make it from flat on his fanny; he needs a job to do. So: I get the guy up there. But I keep him knocked out all the way up. Why? Because I knew damn well he'd flip sooner or later, and I wanted to be on hand myself when he did. Hell, I don't mean I thought it out that way, in so many words—but I can see it easily enough from here.

"So Johnny's my old buddy. Like you and me. Blood and sweat. And tears. The whole routine. I didn't give much of a damn what it did to him. I got my newspaper story. If he'd cracked some other way from how he did, I might even have got to him and got him back to work. Snake pit. You know? But I wasn't thinking about him.

"So if Johnny's expendable, who gives a damn about me? Tell you the truth, I'm getting old enough so I should maybe get back to Earth anyhow." And get married . . . ?

The unbidden thought stopped him cold. "Don't rush any-thing," Jed said drily. "You're not quite fired yet." His mouth wrinkled again in the not-quite smile. "Why don't you give this dish a job up there, man, instead of trailing her back here?"

That sonofabitch knows too damn *much*!

"Okay," he said. "Why don't you talk the boys up on the hill into setting up an institute of the dance upstairs? Maybe a whole Art Academy? They might go that a lot quicker than a manned flight again."

When he got the operator again, he was surprised, and obscurely annoyed with himself, to find he had to clear an adolescent lump from his throat before he could give Johnny's number.

And there was no answer, still.

*Dollars Dome—Monday, September 5, 5 P.M. (C.S.T.)*

The job itself was proving unexpectedly satisfying. Dr. Kutler brought his last patient's card up to date and sat back, swiveled his chair around and pulled aside the shutters that closed off the Dome wall during consultations. For the victims of the variety of ailments that constituted what they had started to call "loony-sickness," even the sight of the alien land could interfere with the effort at therapy—no matter how eager the patient was to be there, or how idealistically or aesthetically pleased by the sight. When a man's body is in rebellion against the disruptive effects of just-too-much-difference in his environment, it helps to minimize those differences—as much as possible—while trying to cure the bodily disorder.

The basic cause of the internal "dyscommunication" which caused hearts to pump overtime and reaching fingers to tremble and muscles to twitch could not be shut out or turned off or even disguised. Low gravity was the devil man had to fight—and conquer—on the Moon; and if he could have turned it off for his patients, Phil would not have done so.

That was what quarterly leaves did. His job was to help them teach their bodies to live with the difference.

Some people could do it. To the doctor, that meant that most, if not all, could learn. Chris had stayed healthy for eleven years of almost-solid Moon residence. Johnny had no psychosomatic troubles through two and a half years of low-grav and no-grav on the Mars trip. There were at least a dozen others on the Dome staff who had always regarded the required leaves as a nuisance, and had volunteered eagerly for experimental work—more eagerly than usefully. The valuable patients were those who got sick.

The valuable doctor, however, stayed healthy. It was too soon to tell, of course, about himself. Kutler knew his own weaknesses better than most men do; but how predict strength or weakness against an unknown assailant?

That didn't hold all the way either—He knew he could predict Lisa's immunity. The woman was so incredibly in control of her own body. He remembered her at World Dome, soaring like a

new—better?—kind of human ... a free creature . . .

He tried to dispose entirely of the idea gnawing him. It was so absurd he should never, he thought, have allowed him-self to think the idea through verbally. But he had; and it sure as hell wasn't absurd from his own point of view. She was a teacher who could be trusted to put her words into practice, to teach by doing.

Okay, so it's a great notion. Get yourself somebody. . . . Plenty of dancers and physical therapists would love the chance.

He went to the intercom, dialed, and waited, No answer. He had almost switched off when the screen suddenly lit.

"Oh, Phil—Hi!" She was breathless. "I just got in, heard the thing buzzing. What's up? Have you heard . . . ?"

She stopped as he shook his head. "No. I called to see if you had. Got in from where?"

"Thad Bourgnese took me out to the Shack. Phil, it's so silly, but you know I'm halfway in love with this place? I feel like a stinker, I mean, I ought to be chewing my fingernails to get home, but I—well, damn it, I'm glad I couldn't take the last trip down!"

Defiant, she was rather more lovely than usual, he decided. "Well, fine," he smiled. "I was just thinking about a job for you here."

"Here? Dancer-in-residence?" But before she laughed, a look of surprised delight had fled across her face, and an ex-expression of chagrin had followed it so quickly it was unlikely any one but a trained observer would have noticed the change from the first flush of reaction to the laugh.

"Why not?" He did not follow it up; he was more than a little annoyed with himself for having said anything to be-gin with. "Okay, kid," he said. "I was just checking in on you."

"Right. I'll see you, Phil, thanks for the call ... hey!" She reached to the side of the screen, toward where the tube slot must be, "There's a message. I didn't notice." She tore opened the radioletter, glanced at the bottom, and nodded: "Johnny." Then her face went white, and her mouth started to open as if she'd been slapped in the face.

The screen went dead. "I'm sorry, Phil. 'Scuse me." The audio clicked off too.

The bastard! The lousy lushin' whining wailing nasty-minded bastard!

Phil went to the couch, knelt in front of it, and beat clenched fists against the padding till he felt his rage subside.

He got up, went to his desk, pulled out his own old-fashioned typewriter, without which he could not think, and started typing. When he got up, half an hour later, he was Dr. Kutler again—and even Phil, plain Phil, had recognized that whatever Johnny wrote, it was in response to the knowl-edge that his wife did not want to come home.

Because she was his wife—whatever she thought about it.

And she did not want to leave, whether she knew it or not.

And it was a hundred to one, at least, that Johnny had picked the nastiest, hurtingest, angriest way to respond; but that was just foolish—not vicious.

A man has a right to react when his girl—or his wife— stands him up.

## CHRISTY TOPS McLFTY

### Moon Man Takes Decision Over Congress Quizzer at SAC Subcommittee Hearing

Mexcity, Sep. 6: "Chris" Christensen, Research Director at U.S.A.A.'s Moon Dome, swapped questions and an-swers here today with Ray McLafferty, East Chile Con-gressman, whose chances of election to the Senate may hang on the outcome of the special hearings now being conducted by his SAC subcommittee on Space Security.

Reporters present at the closed hearing agreed gen-erally that the scientist won this round. In answer to Committee queries, he outlined a solid Security plan in operation now, and invited the whole

committee to come and see for themselves what conditions were.

Confronted with the till now mysterious "evidence" which "initiated Rep. McLafferty's interest in Moon Se-curity—a news item on new research with "Mars-bugs," which violated Top-Secret classification, according to Rep. McLafferty—Dr. Christensen said that the con-tents of the article had not been classified, due to laxity in the SAC offices.

The material, he explained—in spite of the obvious lack of interest of some Committee members—had been contained in a Special Report submitted by him to SAC for approval and financing on June 19 of this year: Dr. Christensen's proposal at that time concerned the newly enlarged Biological Section, in charge of research on the Martian micro-organisms ("Mars-bugs") brought back in the ill-starred Colombo by Col. Johnny Wendt. The Moon Research Director requested permission to move the Department, bugs and all, to an Earth laboratory where Security would be maintained more effectively, and the expansions then under consideration might be effected with a great deal less expense.

His report was "not accepted," said Dr. Christensen. Instead, he was granted additional sums for personnel on the Moon. Apparently the original report was never "processed" officially in the SAC office at all, but Dr. Christensen testified that copies were made there, and that he saw one himself which had been typed in that office.

The scientist added that some of the personnel funds had been applied to expansion of the psychiatric staff of the Dome, in an effort to solve the psychogenic problems that have made extended quarterly Earth leaves manda-tory for Dome personnel. The statement anticipated queries from the Subcommittee regarding Security pro-visions during such leaves. Dr. Christensen said there was no way to insure strict Security while the leave system was in operation.

*Rockland—Tuesday, September 6, 10 P.M. (E.D.S.T.)*

Johnny set the heli down on the lawn gently, feeling his way almost by touch, without the field lights. He switched off the ignition, and got his bag out of the trunk space behind the seat. Picked up the pile of newspapers, climbed to the ground.

Half way to the house, he heard the noise in the trees and stopped.

"Who's there?"

"Colonel Wendt?"

"Who are you?"

A man, middle-sized, middle-aged, middle-anything, as far as the moonlight revealed him, came from the trees.

"Colonel Wendt?" he said again.

"You're on private property, mister."

"You are Colonel John Wendt?"

"What's it to you? I said you're trespassing. Now— get out!"

"Colonel Wendt, I am a duly sworn deputy of . . ."

That was as much as he managed. Johnny dropped the bag and papers, and swung with the same motion. The mid-dling man went down like a ripped sack of flour.

Johnny grinned. He rubbed his fist, pleased. First damn time I've felt half-alive, he thought, since . . .

It was just as well not to think back that far.

He picked up the papers, grabbed the suitcase again, and let himself into the house. He turned lights on, prowled through the rooms, looking for—what? He wasn't sure. What-ever it was, it wasn't there. Everything normal, just as they left it. Lee's things still in the closet. Well, what did you think? That she'd teleport them out?

He switched on the field lights, went back outside. The man was gone. Johnny turned back sharply, went in and got the key, locked up behind him this time when he came out. Went five steps and turned back, unlocked the door, went into his den, and came out a few minutes later with a gun full of bird shot. He held it conspicuously in plain sight while he locked up again. Then he paced off the distance to the heli, watching the trees to the right and left of the path closely.



"Don't mind shooting anybody trespassing on my property," he remarked aloud.

He was out on the field when he heard the crackling twigs of the man's retreat. He smiled. Maybe instead of putting the ship up, he ought to take off and . . .

A brawl wouldn't solve anything.

But it sure as Hell would feel good.

He flexed his shoulders, felt muscles tighten, and decided regretfully that he'd better get back in the house and stay there.

He hanged the heli, locked the garage, and went back indoors. Then he took the stack of newspapers and spread them on the coffee table in the living room. They were full of it, all right.

CHRISTY TOPS McLIFTY.

WENDT TO BE CALLED.

McLAFFERTY WILL GO TO MOON DOME

SCIENTIST LAYS BLAME FOR 'LEAKS' TO SAC

He read with particular interest one headed, DR. C. SAYS WENDT SEDATION WAS S.O.P. SECURITY MEASURE, where he learned for the first time that sedation for the trip was ordinarily limited to the self-powered shuttle trips at each end: all other passengers on the shuttle that carried him and Lisa to the Moon had been awake in the Messenger, and all but himself, coming down. According to Chris, the precaution was taken in his case to avert possible efforts by "any agents of other powers" to get information they thought Col. Wendt might possess.

Chris also explained that his trip had been "only a visit," but it sounded so phony, no one would ever believe it. Again Johnny grinned; Chris was always a scrapper, when they got him mad.

Damn, but a good old fashioned street fight would make a new man out of him. . . .

And get him subpoenaed. He figured to stay in the house for a while.

One paper had pictures of Lisa's appearance at World Dome on Saturday, and a review, which mentioned the presence of Dr. Kutler among the U.S.A.A. party at the performance. "Miss Trovi was escorted by Dr. Thaddeus Borgnese, Chief Biochemist at U.S.A.A. Dome," it said right afterwards.

Well, whaddya know? We're makin' time, hey?

He was startled at how calm he felt about it all.

When he found the wire from her in the facts chute, with last Tuesday's date on it, he did not want to open it. He almost threw it out. Leave well enough alone. It's done, it's over. Forget it. He had already told her so. His own wire would be in her hands by now.

He wound up putting the envelope, unopened, in his desk drawer. Tomorrow, he could decide what to do with it.

He did not drink. He went to bed at midnight, cold sober. To his surprise, he fell asleep without trouble, and slept well all night.

*Dollars Dome—Monday, September 5, 9:30 P.M. (C.S.T.)*

Okay babe if that's how you want it. It was fun while it lasted, I guess. My least sincere congratulations to whoever— whoops, whomever—the lucky man may be.

Easy come, easy go, babe.

Better luck next round.

Johnny

She must have read it through fifty times, looking for some-thing, some clue? somewhere in it, that would explain what it meant. Because it couldn't mean what it said. That didn't make sense.

She knew there were thirty-nine words in it. There'd been a movie or book once called Thirty-nine Steps. A movie—she saw it at the Museum. Thirty-nine steps to where? Out. Right out, obviously. But .

..

Why? Because it was Johnny, that's why!

There just wasn't any other reason to find.

The phone buzzed. Phil. She'd promised to call him back, hadn't she?

"Hey, kid, you hungry yet?" he asked.

"N-nnoo. Thanks, Phil."

"Well, how about a drink? A walk in the Mall? The way I feel tonight, gal, I'll even go dancing with you. . . ."

She kept shaking her head, but she smiled.

"Phil, you're sweet, but I think I better . . ."

"I think you better listen to Doctor. Turn on your screen?"

"Phil, honestly, I—"

"Let's put it this way. I'll go have a drink. Then I'll come pick you up. We'll do whatever you want to do. Or just sit and talk. But be ready in fifteen minutes, or you'll find out—" He made that improbable leer of his. "—I ain't like no lily myself. Hate to go banging doors down, but"—he shrugged fatalistically "—sometimes, you know . . . ? See you. Fifteen minutes." And he switched off before the seed of laughter turned to tears or gave her voice enough to answer.

She tried to call back, but he wasn't in, or didn't answer. She washed her face, and got dressed. She was just putting lipstick on when he knocked.

She nodded casually at the envelope on the bed.

"May I?"

"Go ahead."

She watched in the mirror while he read, saw pain flush his face and retire, and the doctor face take over.

For a moment, she was certain that his pain was for her, and felt an answering surge of—gratitude? Then she told herself not to be foolish; Phil had plenty of reason for pain of his own when Johnny pulled one like this.

They wound up in his office. Two days before lunar sun-down, the view from this side of the Dome was a sharp contrast in near light and far dark; but even the still-lit portion of the Moon's surface was without glare, since the shadowless Dome itself filtered the rays of the low-lying sun to give the moonscape from this window almost the look of atmospherized land.

They sat in front of the window, with the inside lights off, and talked.

They talked all around it, brushing it lightly just once in a while. She knew he would not push; but she also knew that she had to talk to him, now. He wanted to give her re-assurance and friendship; but this time she really needed advice.

He was rambling on about a theory of heart disease he had seen in a journal of psychosomatic medicine, when the right moment came.

"Phil?" she broke in.

He stopped talking. That was all. No question, no look her way, even. He knew she was ready.

"Phil, listen, this mess is—well, I don't know if I mean it's worse than you think, or better? If I could just tell for sure what he really wants—I mean—Phil, does he mean it? Or is he going to change his mind next week, and come yell for mama?"

"You probably know the answer to that one better than I do."

"I guess I already answered it," she admitted.

Silence. Then:

"So I guess I have to decide what I'll do when he does?"

"Or you could just decide what to do now."

"How do you mean—? Well, yes, I hadn't thought of that." She heard her own short laugh, like that of a stranger. "I'll have to have someplace to go. And my things are all— well, that doesn't matter. There's plenty of money," she said angrily. "That helps, doesn't it?"

"Where were you thinking of going?"

"Well, I wasn't. I wasn't thinking. And I kind of resent you making me start now."

Nothing. She looked at him. He was looking at her, smiling. An old friend. He knew.

He didn't know everything, though.

"Phil?"

"Hmmm?"

"Remember that time I had lunch with you, right about when Chris was down?"

"Yes."

"Remember I said Johnny might have to—to face up to something he wouldn't like?"

"Yes?"

"Well—I—I'm pregnant, Phil. I thought so then, but I wasn't sure."

Well, she thought gleefully, I did it at last! Phil Kutler had jumped forward in his chair, just like any normal man.

"You thought so in June?" He was absolutely staring! "How far along are you then?"

"Well—four and a half months or so, around there, I guess."

"Stand up."

She did.

"Yeah. I guess so," he said, and sat back again. "It could be—at four-and-a-half—with you. I'll be damned!" He was watching her closely, and, she realized, with a warmth of affection that made all the rest of the mess much easier. "So?" he said. "For heaven's sake, sit down, Lee. I've had my look." She sat. "Now: I guess that means you—"

"It doesn't mean anything one way or the other, Phil. It just means that whatever the rest means is more so, that's all." Here she was on solid ground. This part she'd thought out beforehand, and carefully. "The thing is, Phil, that other time even, when I first thought I might be pregnant, I realized I couldn't go through with it the way things were."

She saw his slight start, and smiled. "I don't mean that. I meant marrying him. I—"

She had kept herself beautifully under control up to then, but suddenly everything inside was clogging up. "I—" She stood up. She walked around the room, sat down at last on the couch, behind his back. "I decided," she said carefully, "that unless things changed a lot at home, if it turned out I was, I would just leave, and not—I mean, not even tell him."

"But you didn't. Hold up! Does he know or not?"

She shook her head. "No." She looked up at him, feeling awfully foolish for some reason. But it made sense, it all made sense, this part of it. She'd thought it all through, and through again. "Look, Phil, I wasn't just being—well, emo-tional. I really meant it that way. But then, right at that time, -Chris came down, and Johnny agreed to the trip—and then he kept putting it off, all summer long, and every time I thought, 'He won't do it after all,' he'd set a date, and every time it got close—well, you know." She had to stop, and get the clogged-up stuff clear inside again.

Phil just stood there. He put a hand on her shoulder, and she groped for it with her band, held on to it hard, and found she could talk again.

"Don't you see, Phil?" Her voice was a wail, but she didn't care. Her face was streaked with tears; it didn't matter "Don't you see? I—I couldn't let Johnny's child grow up with—oh Hell!—with Johnny for a father. The way he's been. Could I?"

"Oh, you poor kid!"

Lisa was silent a moment. Then: "This won't stop me dancing, I think?"

"No ... no reason it should, for a while."

She took a deep breath. "All night. I want the job, Phil . . . and the sooner I get started the better. Lisa Trovi, Famed Tri-Di Star, will give an impromptu recital in just one hour...."

*Dollars Dome—Monday, September 5, 11 P.M. (C.S.T.)*

Mounting with the beat of the bongos, she climbed to the pinnacle in step with the quickening pulse of the piano; then poised, spread-winged, against the high-flying clarinet's sharp sweetness.

The big wings rustled, swayed, started to move slowly back and forth to the pounding measure of the

muffled bass. Back on the drum thump—forward on the twinkle of the cymbal— arms pumping faster, stronger, with each beat, while the bass jumped the tempo and the cymbals turned from tinkles to a crash.

The clarinet slid up and off the top of a final run; the piano faded slowly to a hush; the bongos fell in line behind the bass and cymbals. Then they stopped.

For one measure there was silence from them all. The single sound in the crowded room was the flapping beat of the great gauze wings.

Drums crashed—like the surf, like thunder, like an earth-quake, like a bursting dam. With a final sweep of wing-width, Lisa leaped forward, beating and fluttering, beating with the arm-wings, a-flutter in a mist of multi-hued chiffon—leaped out and downward, turning and twisting with the slowing slant of the widespread wings.

From the midstage high riser down to the floor, she floated like a dragonfly, drifted like a leaf.

She landed like a bright bird fallen to earth, in a deep crouch. Then with the final cymbal-clang she thrust upward, outstretched on toetips, arms back and open, head proud and lifted, her whole face brilliant with the afterglow of music, of dancing, of climbing, of flight down to earth.

They clustered around her, smiling and cheering. Somebody stayed at the bongos, tapping out a light-mood intricate rhythm. Someone else went to the piano, and began to mesh trills with the bongo jokes.

Two of the men lifted the dancer—veils, wings, and radiance—onto their shoulders and paraded her around the practice room.

In the deep armchairs shoved back to the wall, three couples sat in intertwined delight, watching, clapping, cheer-ing the impromptu, cakewalk-conga-line that followed the accolade around the room.

Two women went out quietly and returned with a wheeled cart of sandwiches, cool bottles, frosted glasses, coffee and cakes. The men put down the dancer and claimed their own girls from the cart. One pair took over an armchair vacated by a dreamy couple who left the party, holding each other's waists with secret smiles.

Other pairs settled down, or wandered off. A crowd around the cart sorted out into more couples, and at last left a mixed group, six or eight, perhaps, standing and laughing and eating, drinking, unpaired yet.

Lee gobbled shamelessly, suddenly famished. She sat alone in the midst of the small group, watching, delighted, as the joy of her climb and fall spread to all the rest.

The dark-haired doctor stood a pace apart, just outside the laughing group, watching her. The hunger in his eyes found no matching thirst in hers; it flickered, and died.

The group remaining settled down to shop talk. Lisa left; Phil went with her. At the door of her room she turned and smiled that marvelous marveling radiance. "They felt it, Phil," she said. "They felt it with me!"

He nodded and smiled back and watched her go in.

*Acapulco—Wednesday, September 7, 8 P.M. (C.S.T.)*

"Kutler? Sure ... Hi, Phil, what's up?"

"How private is this wire?"

"Hardly at all."

"Well— Did you call my friend?"

Kutler's friend—Johnny? Chris couldn't think who else it would be. "Tried to. Been trying. Jerk doesn't answer."

"Figures. He wired. Yesterday, very negative," Phil said. "Got his information mixed up, I'm afraid."

"Yeah. I can see how that would work. Well, he'll get the source material Sunday."

"I don't know. That's what I wanted to talk to you about. I'm not sure about sending it now?"

"Oh." Damn this open beam anyhow! "I don't see," he started thoughtfully, and Phil added:

"I'm not the only one. In fact, it wasn't my idea originally."

"Oh?" Oh! The fat was really in now, then? "Well, what-ever you think," he said reluctantly. "Damn, I wish I was up there!"

"Yeah. Look, there's one other thing. That therapist I asked you to get me ... I've got an application from—"

"Which therap—?"

"Good. I hoped you hadn't done anything yet. I've got a hell of a good applicant. She's worked with me before. I just wondered if I could hire on my own, or if it had to be done through Mexcity?"

"Wellll—I don't know—" Then it all fell into place. "Look, Phil, I'll have to check on that," he said. "I gather you want a fast answer?"

"I'm afraid we might lose this girl if it goes through chan-nels; I don't know how long she can wait."

"Will she wait till I get back up?"

"I'm sure she could do that much."

"Right. I'll check on it here, and we'll get it worked out when I get home."

Chris talked a few more minutes with Bourgnese, about routine lab affairs, and switched off. Across the room, Jed was waiting with raised eyebrows. "What was that bit?"

"Damn that open beam! I wish I could have had two min-utes with Kutler alone. Sounds like Wendt heard the news on his own—or didn't like her wire—or anything. I gather he flipped, anyhow, and either she doesn't want to go home, or Phil doesn't think she should, or Johnny's threatened some-thing, or—I don't know. But that bit about the girl who used to work for Phil—that's how Johnny met Lee. She was doing some kind of dance therapy with a group of Kutler's. So I assume he's thinking of using her now. Up there. I don't know . . . ?"

"You don't?" Jed was clearly amused.

"Okay, so you were kidding about a job for her up there, but how's it going to look—?"

"You're slippin', fella," the General said. "Think it through, man, think it through."

Inside-Outside: Like it's a meteor shower of secrets from space all over town this week . . . not to say out-of-town . . . Those stories you heard about ex-Astronaut (Col.) Johnny Wendt chasing the subpoena server off the family acres with a ray gun might be slightly exag-gerated . . . Seems all Johnny did was pop him one, but the SAC boys are takin' it hard anyhow ... Be a leetle charitable, fellas; they tell me Johnny's had a hard time lately. Not even one dancing girl left to his name . . . And speaking of dancing girls, yummy Lisa Trovi, whose name has been linked with Wendt's off and on, is still Mooning over us. Her name came off the downbound Messenger passenger list at the last moment on Thursday for the second week in a row . . . Kid just can't get her-self down to Earth, I guess, after the way she wowed 'em in World Dome ... Or it could be like "Chris" Christensen figures he needs a good hostess for Ray McLafferty's visit next week? . . . Ragin' Ray takes off Sunday week to make the Moon scene for a one-night stand, but he's taking a bunch of the boys along to stay a week and have a good look at the Security plumbing . . . Somebody complained about leaks . . . Christensen goes up tomorrow. We put our dough on this boy, after hearing him softsell the subcommittee on Tuesday, to get things set up for Ray's party in a week easy . . .

from the syndicated capitol

gossip column, "Phlip Asides From Inside,"

by Lenny Phlip, Mexcity, September 10, 1977

Moon Dome

September 15, 1977

Johnny dear—

("Dear John," I guess, in reverse?)

I've taken this much time to decide what to do, after getting your wire, partly because I had to wait for Chris to get back, to know if the suggestion Phil made would be all right—partly because I just couldn't think too clearly at first, after your wire came—and partly, I have to admit, because I kept

hoping I'd hear from you again.

There doesn't seem to be much point in hassling over anything. I know you're capable of sending a message like that in anger, and then withdrawing it. But that's the point —I know you're also capable of withdrawing it, which is saying quite a—

I said there was no point in hassling, didn't I? All that matters now is that I've finally decided you really meant it. You don't want me to come back. I could hardly argue with that anyhow, but it's also possible you're right—so I've de-cided, for the time being, anyhow, to stay on up here. Phil needs an assistant to do the kind of dance and music work I used to do with his therapy group in N.Y. And—well, I like it here. As long as Chris is willing, I'll stay put for the time being.

If you want to get my stuff out, let me know and I'll write Jeannie or Edna to come take care of it.

Damn, I'm sorry it had to be this way. It's not what I wanted, Johnny—

Love (still)

Lisa.

P.S. Only damn it, if you do change your mind, or have changed it, you idiot—don't wire—call!

TO: J.A. Harbridge

FROM: P. A. Christensen

DATE: September 15, 1977

BY SPECIAL COURIER

Attached regular news release will give you dope on Lee Trovi; also attaching copy her letter to J., and much good may it do you. Suggest you plant one of your own boys up here for this kind of job. I'm too old to learn bitch games.

No more word from J. on this' end. Any news? Please fastest whenever. K. wants to go downstairs, some notion in hand about personnel here makes him think maybe has new approach for J. I tend negative: only account probable subpoena if down. ?????

Checkthru for visitors satisfactory. Place clean as a whistle. One problem: Shack outside Dome where Moon-normal work done last two months. Wide open, actually. Alarms, etc., but—???

Better leave up, posted guard, etc.? Or take down, risk mention by someone? Damfino. Advise—

Earth news sounds like last week added up okay. Keep 'em crossed—

PAC

P.S. Kutler just buzzed me to ask could I get some con-fidential authoritative opinion on medical aspects of preg-nancy, childbirth, here. That's all he said. Draw own con-clusions. I don't want to. Couldn't allow anyhow, I guess. Add: if subj married, why shd K. clam up? Ouch! Please rush answer, pac

TO: I.K. Trozhikov

FROM: Chen L-T

RE: Bio Project

DATE: September 15, 1977

TOP SECRET INFORMATION—FOR THE PARTY

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ONLY

Tests Alpha and Beta, Schedule Nine, concluded Sep. 13 and 15, with results as predicted (4.5% average margin of error). Test Gamma in progress; indications point to pre-dicted results; expect terminate Sep. 18.

Schedule Ten follows immediately, unless countermanded.

Test results attached. Please rush computer results. Med. Off. G.N. Gregoriev suggests possible correlation with effects here noted in Para. 5-G, his report, Sep. 1. Computer data on tests to date may provide basis for broad theoretical approach.

Chen

(Attached)

Dear Ilya,

I trust the implications of this report will stagger you as they do me. Wish we had some better notion of how far they have gotten in this line. (If anywhere; pragmatism has its drawbacks.) Also, how controllable is the effect—if it does exist? Suspicion here (mine and Gregori's, especially) is, if correct, they must soon know what we do and v.v. Or perhaps retroactively? (Think that through!)

Also: will you handle the Maria Harounian matter your-self? I feel some obligation, as she will not name the father, and symptoms have progressed to where Maria can not be held responsible for her own care immediately. Keep the quiz boys off her if you can, for a bit? She comes down next trip, I hope.

Lian

. . . Johnny's been hittin' the bistros just like in the old days before he began goin' steady with his favorite dancing girl—who practically vanished from tri-di as well as the nite spots while they were makin' it together... Let that be a lesson, kids: don't hide your light o' love behind a bushel, or even a bushel of high-priced acres. If you don't take her out to shine every once in a while, she'll take off the first time some guy offers her the Moon....

from the syndicated capitol gossip column,  
"Phlip Asides From Inside," by Lenny Phlip,  
Mexcity, September 18, 1977.

PART EIGHT

*September 21, 1977*

*Dollars Dome—4 P.M. (C.S.T.)*

He watched her face through the clear plastic of the pressure suit helmet, and tried to identify the "waiting" look. She was too absorbed to see him staring, but she wasn't just thinking, or daydreaming. Listening? That was how it looked, but not quite . . .

He touched helmets. "What do you hear that I don't?" he asked.

Lee started slightly, like someone snapped out of day-dream. "Hear?" she asked. Well, it was worth a try, he thought. Maybe just plain fantasizing, after all?

"See is more like it," she said. "I was looking at the design they make. I guess I got half-hypnotized, following the lines."

He looked. When he first looked, before he began watching her instead, he had noticed only a small marble interweaving of ganglion-like ropes of cells. Now the ran-domness of the arrangement was less apparent; it could hypnotize if you tried to follow the branchings-off and con-nections between rope-colonies. There was a sense of al-most-order—

He shook his head and looked away.

"Damn! You know I never really looked at them be-fore. They do get you. . . ."

"Oh, they're not all like that," she said quickly. "Just the ones out here. Every time you change the soil or air, they change. One of the tanks in Earth-normal, you'd think it was full of just dirt—they're just scattered through like regular Earth soil microorganisms. But this Moon-type mutation links up this way, and Thad says—" That was at least the twelfth time on the trip he had heard Thad says. "—says the things that look kind of like nerves are actually linked up that way—I don't mean, they're really like nerves, but each rope is a separate colony, and he thinks they might have some kind of communication even, where two ropes connect. Either that or some kind of symbiosis or syzygy or—"

"Thad say all that?" Phil broke in, laughing at the earnest-student manner of her recitation.

"And more," she retorted. "But now you'll never know— We better get back, I guess. I'm supposed to make like re-spectable for tonight." She started laughing, and took a step away so helmet contact was broken. He saw the laughter continue, but the sound broke off in the middle. Inside the pressurized half-track, she opened the face-plate, still chuck-ling. "It gets tougher to get dressed every day," she said.

"I mean, work clothes are fine, but when I have to get dressed . . ."

"Well, take plenty of time," he said, soberly. "I don't know what the honorable investigators would make of it if they knew, but it's a sure bet they'd smell headlines in it."

"I'll try to worry about it," she said. "Phil, you know, it's the damndest thing—I suppose I'm in a jam. Or some-thing. I mean, when I think about it, it's practically classic—the unwed mother bit, and my man is sick-sick-sick—and probably half stoned besides—and here I am taken in by the men in the Moon—maybe that's what makes it seem like lovely nonsense instead of Something Awful?"

"You've been pretty happy the last couple of weeks, kid?"

"Yes," she said quietly. "Yes, I have, Phil. And I mean what I was saying—It seems like I ought to be worried and troubled, but—I'm not." She looked away, and back again.

"Phil, I'm not even worried about Johnny. I don't know what's gotten into me. I don't mean I don't care. I do. Just—it doesn't feel like anything's wrong. We're just apart for a while, that's all. I don't mean that's what I think, Phil, just what I—Oh, you understand! You know, Thad says . . ."

"Does he?" Phil said meaningfully.

"Phil! You don't think I—? Oh *no!*"

And he actually believed her. She seemed not too startled, but just enough—not too scornful, just the right amount. And her laughter was free.

"Okay," he said. "I retract. But quit saying it or I'm just as likely to start sulking." He managed what he thought was a creditable smile

### *Dollars Dome—7 P.M. (C.S.T.)*

The dining room on arrival days always wore a bloom of festivity. The only decorative extras available were the glow-ing white onion-lilies provided, one for each table, by the farm section each week (carefully cultivated in defiant eva-sion of the ubiquitous regulating in-quintuplicate official schedules of production and supplies). But the bright plastic table tops were somehow gayer, the lighting more luminous, even the clatter of dishes and cutlery in some way more cheerfully hungry, at Wednesday dinners.

The big difference of course was not in the place but the people: and not just that they tended to dress a bit more than usual, laugh a bit oftener, talk a bit freer, but that they were there, all together.

"Days" in the Dome were marked off by Mexcity's Cen-tral Time; but without external dark-and-light cycles to pat-tern the twenty-four hours, the Dome worked round the clock, each person fitting his own preferred schedule into the complex of work-to-be-done. Ordinarily, only one section of the dining room was in use; and it was in use at all hours, as groups came and went to and from their elected shifts. But on Wednesdays, any one not absolutely required at his job was fairly sure to attend seven P.M. dinner, after the shuttles came in.

This Wednesday night, in particular, the Dome was out in full force—in party mood, party dress, party manners—to welcome Congressman Ramon McLafferty and his picked crew of super-snoopers.

Dr. Kutler was seated with four of the congressional in-vestigators and three higher-echelon Dome scientists at a round table so close to the speakers' table that he was liter-ally back-to-back with Lisa Trovi. He confined his own part in the dinner talk to polite replies and concentrated on his uneasy appraisal of the behavior of the Dome people at large, and an amused, but equally uneasy, eavesdropping on the exchanges between Lee and the visiting congressman.

Lisa's attitude seemed to be in keeping with the peculiar response of the Dome as a whole to the invasion: a sort of high faith that warm welcome and willing liking were enough to absorb anything from outright ill will to malicious fancy to simple self-interest.

That McLafferty fell short of sharing this feeling was evi-dent. He knew the dinner, the gaiety, the enthusiasm that greeted him, were put-up jobs; he accepted them gracefully as his due. And he maintained this knowledge, based on experience, at least half the way through the meal. By that time he was so thoroughly conscious of the deep sincerity of Lee Trovi's empathetic interest, that the stanchions of isolation supporting his cynicism were sorely shaken. And when he rose to say the expected few



words after dinner, he was much too practiced an orator to misinterpret the swell of applause that surrounded him for either the patter of polite boredom, or the too-regular thumping of planned demonstration.

Chris used the moment to lean across and say a single word in Lisa's ear. From where Phil sat, turned around, right behind her, the word looked like, "Thanks."

She turned to Chris, eyebrows, raised, baffled.

He nodded toward McLafferty.

She cocked her head, shrugged bare shoulders: What?

He shook his head slightly. "Later," he murmured, and sat back, watching her and the speaker, his face carefully neutral. But Phil thought he saw an echo of the same unease he felt himself.

Later, in one of the larger conference rooms, twenty-odd of the banquet elite drank coffee and brandy and listened to newly-arrived music tapes. McLafferty's crew was staying a week, till the next orbit down; but the congressman him-self would leave tomorrow. Conscientiously using his time, he made a point of speaking with everyone in the room, taking notes occasionally with an air of apologetic industry. His manner was briskly efficient, but leisurely—yet somehow it took hardly half an hour's time to cover the group, and permit him to drift over casually to the circle of chairs where Lee and Phil sat together with Chris and Thad Bourgnese.

"You know, you fellows really have got something here," McLafferty's smile should have been engaging; somehow it was not. "One thing," he said, with a nod at Lee, and a sweep of the arm around the room, "You certainly have the best-looking lady scientists I've ever seen!"

Thad grinned. "I can see it now," he said. "Headline: Congressman Gives Lunar Ladies Blanket Clearance. Or: Selenite Scientistes—hmmm—need a verb with an S and something about Security. Well—" He rose, made a mock-bow to Lisa, who was laughing helplessly. "Beggin' yer par-don, mum, you bein' Medic in any case, and not Lab Staff, present comp'ny excepted an' all that."

It could have been nasty. It wasn't . . . perhaps because Lisa's laughter included McLafferty? Or just that comment and reaction were both so spontaneous? Phil couldn't tell for sure.

Bourgnese excused himself, and went off in the general direction of the redheaded Donovan girl, leaving the seat next to Lisa for the congressman, who had passed with as-tonishing speed through startlement, chagrin, mild amuse-ment, and suspicion to sudden hilarious delight.

"One thing," he said, regarding Lee with warm approval, "You folks don't scare easy."

She blinked. "What are we supposed to be scared of?"

"Nothing," he said. "Absolutely nothing."

And damn if it didn't sound just like he meant it!

*Rio de Janeiro—12 A.M. (S.W.A.T.)*

It was the fourth club that night, and he was positive he had said hello to all the same people at each one. He sat at a single table, watching red and black and orange and blue-green female rumps writhe to rhumba beat and won-dered how they contrived to stock each joint with The Crowd between the time he left one and arrived at the next.

No more pub stops, he told himself firmly. Next time he'd go direct, maybe to Los Gringos, yes, that was a good bet—tourist trap kind of place The Crowd wouldn't be caught dead in. Go straight there, find out. If they were there anyhow, he'd know...

He could swear those jazzy bottoms out on the dance floor were exactly the same ones he'd watched all night.

He finished his drink, thought about another. Hell with it, make the move now, catch 'em off balance. He got up and started to weave his way through the full tables. The band had stopped. People were coming off the floor.

Behind him, a voice he knew said high and clear, snide and cruel, "Well, she always had a yen for Phil Kutler—"

Gentlemen don't slug lady bitches, he told himself, care-fully unbunching the muscles in shoulder and

upper arm. Leave it lay, lad. Don't even look. He knew he knew the voice, but he did not know whose it was: best to leave it that way.

He dodged past a couple of strangers, got blocked at the next table by a crowd of six sitting down. The high vicious clearness followed him:

"But I'm not so sure that's it. I can't say who told me, but it's someone I usually listen to, and the way he heard it, the reason Ray let that Moon scientist off so easily—"

It died away. Another voice, lower and less clear, urgent in undertone, blocked it off. Johnny's way was still stopped. He turned, not meaning to; walked back past the table between without wanting to, went up to the red-gown bitch who owned that voice.

The deeper, lower, one, the man at her side had been saying his name.

He smiled, and he knew just how damned unpleasant that smile was.

"Pardon me," he said. "I believe you were saying something about a friend of mine?"

"Excuse me," she said coldly. "I don't believe—" She turned to the white-jacketed man. "Darling, do you—?"

"Yes," he said wearily. "Johnny Wendt, Linda Har—"

"Forget it," Johnny said, suddenly sick of the whole thing. Why pick a fight with a perfectly nice guy over a bitch, or a pair of them? "Skip it. I'm sorry. I don't want to know your friend. Should've cut out like I started to. Teach her some manners, hey?"

He turned and started to edge his way past the table again.

"Bob!" The high clear vicious voice. Yeah?

He grinned. Nobody could say he started this one. He tensed himself for the hand that would touch his shoulder.

Okay! He wheeled back, driving from the shoulder as he turned, with great satisfaction.

*Dollars Dome—11:30 P.M. (C.S.T.)*

"Oh, I'm sure you could!" Lisa turned to Chris. "Where did Thad take off to before? He usually works this shift, doesn't he?"

"Usually," Chris said—a little reluctantly? Phil wondered if the same thought that had crossed his was in the Director's mind? Thad had left with Rita Donovan; hadn't Lee noticed? It wasn't like her to be so tactless, if she had. And, he thought a bit grimly, it was unlikely she had not noticed. Checking up? He felt almost ashamed of thinking it.

"I was just telling Ray I didn't see why he couldn't tour some of the labs now, if he really wanted to. Thad would probably be in Bio anyhow, and—"

"I imagine Dr. Christensen has a more formal tour ready for tomorrow," McLafferty broke in smoothly.

"Sort of," Chris said easily. "But it wouldn't make any difference that I can see. I'm not sure Bourgnese is working tonight, but I'd be glad to take you around myself any time. We don't go much by the clock around here."

"That's what I was telling him," Lee said. "Ray was so startled when we came up to daylight again, he asked how we were able to stay on a regular schedule, and I was explaining how it worked." She stopped and laughed, a rippling silver sound that Phil recognized quickly as the trained professional one. "He said a place like this would suit him fine, because as soon as he saw the sun, he thought it was morning, and he was all ready to start a day's work. So I said, 'Why not?' and—there you are."

Chris shook his admiringly. "You Mexcity types always flabbergast me. If it was really dawn, and he'd been at an all-night brawl, I'll bet he'd feel just the same way."

"Company helps," said the congressman. "Depends whom you've been with all night."

McLafferty didn't see it. Probably even Chris didn't. But Lee winced under the import of the heavy compliment, and threw the briefest pleading sort of glance at Phil.

Well, he thought. Here we go on the white charger again. He turned to Chris.

"Why don't you take Mr. McLafferty to see the farm?" he suggested. "You know that's got to be

working now—" All the Maintenance sections would be. "He could see that stuff now, and the labs tomorrow." To the congressman he explained: "Wednesday night's the one time the labs run on skeleton staff. The big dinner throws everything out of whack when the ship's in." With considerable satisfaction, and at pontifical length, he made clear to the impatient visitor that the obviously special-festive character of the earlier banquet was not quite as special as he'd undoubtedly thought, but a weekly, normal, occurrence.

"This is Saturday night in the Dome," he wound up. "About the only thing you'd see in the labs now would be tapes and cameras and people tending them. But Maintenance runs all the time, of course. And I'd think from your viewpoint, that part of the routine—that part of the staff, for that matter—would be most—" He hesitated. "What would you call it? fruitful? Suggestive? Whatever it is, I'll bet they've got the most of it." He turned to Lee, glanced up at the chrono above the Mall fountain. "About time for us to get back to work—hey, kid?"

She took it smoothly. And gratefully. "I guess so." The gratitude showed only in her look at him, not in her voice, which held just the right reluctance. "I don't suppose—?" she said.

"I think the way they're coming along, by next week they'll be able to handle the one session on their own," he said. "Or with me. I blow a mean tape, myself; I just don't look as good as you tapping my foot to the beat."

McLafferty, without actually moving a foot, had somehow edged forward, silently questioning.

"Jam session thing we've been trying for a group that's had trouble with schedule adjustment," Phil explained, marveling at the inventive capacity of the knight-errant. "Idea is to create a regular emotional rhythm each day. Seems to be working out pretty well. . . . Oh, look, Lee, if you want to cut out this once, I don't suppose it would—"

"Don't be silly," she said firmly. Her smile was snakey-demure. "We wouldn't want the Investigating Committee to think I don't earn my pay, would we?"

"She thinks of everything, don't she?" McLafferty said, smooth as ever. "Tell you what, Chris—why don't we have a look at your farm while they get organized, and maybe stop in at this session afterwards—If you don't mind, Doc?"

Phil thought it over. "Don't see why not. Sure. There's no actual therapy at this. I don't think the group would mind. Come on, gal. We've got about two minutes now. See you folks later—"

The two of them hurried off, not-hearing Chris calling after them: "Hey, where is this thing?"

"Let you know soon as we do," Phil muttered.

It was really no problem. They rounded up ten eager listeners in the dining room, and got set up in Lee's practice room a good ten minutes before the touring party found them.

And Lisa had no trouble getting two theoretical dormitory-mates to go off with her afterwards. "You know," she said sleepily, "I think this works more for me than for you folks."

"Night, kids," Phil said. "Well, Mr. Mc..."

"Call me Mac," he said grudgingly. It sounded just like, Your round, man! But don't walk down any dark alleys. . . .

## PART NINE

*September 25—October 3, 1977*

Acapulco, Sunday, Sep. 25

Dear Lee:

The General says he can get this to you with comparative privacy, which seems like a good idea. Apparently I don't mind broadcasting my nastier moods; it's just if an unaccustomed brief spell of humility comes over me, I can't stand to have anyone know I occasionally behave like a civilized human.

If I do, or am, which is probably open to doubt. Particularly after my last radiowire to you.

Your reply caught up with me the first time the facs company had an address for me, which was during a couple of refreshingly sober days in the Rio jail—great place, by the way, clean, spartan, healthy as all hell. Might have done better to have done worse (I took a poke at a foul-mouthed ass in a night club) and been kept longer.

Anyhow, it seemed a bit late, and hardly the place, from which to answer your PS. Hoppen Harbridge also located me there; he'd been concerned because of the subpoena for me being withdrawn. Thought maybe it had been served instead and I was being maybe too royally entertained somewhere in private until T (for testimony) Day came. Man seems as uneager for me to take the stand as I am, which gets me a bit concerned. (It will be no news to him when he reads this; I've already told him so. I suppose I'd rather have him read it than him and every other damn snoop or spy from how many? countries, which is what I gather al-ready happened to our previous by-radiowire exchanges.)

I seem to be rambling on, just possibly in an effort to avoid coming to the point. Which is as follows:

I'd very much like to take you up on your implied invita-tion. I have only recently learned how much I need you. I learned it, babe, from Toronto down to Rio, with many stops in between. Or amend that: I started in St. Croix, worked my way up to Toronto via home, and etc. But in the process I learned a couple of other things, most impor-tant of which is that there seems to be remarkably little of Johnny at home these days—barring some mixed crap and fury, a bit of which I got rid of in that Rio ginmill. Some more of which probably is creeping into this letter, no mat-ter which words I reach for.

So I need you; so what the hell do you need me for?

And is it just what a guy wants most, to need a dame? You don't need me. You've made it damn clear, and I, be-latedly, bless you and thank you for doing just that, doll. God help me, I do think you Jove me. Or loved, as the case may be. It occurs to me that with effort and application I might learn to do likewise in return. If I can't I can at least stop needing.

So tell ole Chris thanks from me—or Kutler, whoever did mastermind getting us up there. I might have gone on leech-ing on you the rest of my life, or yours (which might have been shorter; how long could you stand it anyhow?) if some-thing hadn't happened to blast us apart long enough for me to back off and get a good look at J. Wendt. The veritas in vino is stronger proof in night clubs, maybe? Or were you watering the stuff at home, babe?

The Gen. says 10 minutes, if I want to get this into the package. (10 minutes with or without time for him to read?) So—

I understand there is about to be a new subpoena for me. I'd enjoy slugging the next guy, too, but am temporarily convinced it is better not to do so off home property, and also better to stay off home property myself for a bit, for many reasons, not all of them tactical.

(Speaking of tactics, it's only fair to warn Harbridge, which I haven't directly, as yet, but will, that I am still on the other side of the fence. My distaste for McL. happens to be stronger than my preference for throwing spokes in space wheels. But Gen., if you think you are harboring any-thing less than a viper in your bosom, be disillusioned.)

Anyhow, this is to let you know that my immediate future plans consist of a knapsack, a couple of books which, if I bother to read them, might bring me up to date in my sup-posed profession, and probably a jug of honest tequila under a bough. The last is not part of the Grand Reformation Plan, but should be mentioned as still the great likelihood.

In any case, I will have no address for a bit, so tell Kutler not to try looking. Even Harbridge won't know where I am. (The Gen's mysterious sources show that Kutler's subpoena is already signed—like my own—and will be going up same orbit as this.) As for you, babe, stay put a while if you can. You'll hear from me, soon as I know what to say. Thanks for the chance to say anything. Apologies for what's been said—for a lot of things, for me, I guess. Convey same to Chris, will you?

Listen, babe, I am one crazy-mixed-up bastard, as you have better cause even than most to know—but for what it's worth, I do—Hell, I can't even say that. Let me say, I do want to love you. If I make the grade, I'll let you know. Meantime—

Hell.

Johnny

FROM: Christensen

TO: Harbridge

DATE: Sep. 29, 1977

## VIA SPECIAL COURIER

Seems I missed a few bits, while McL was here. Phil says I have gone soft in the head like the rest of the Dome people. That's not what he says, but how I read it. He'll undoubtedly explain his notions to you, and to you they might even make sense. You two boys should have a ball, come to think of it. But I don't know what I'll do here on my own, so don't keep him away; I seem to need a headshrinker for chief aide up here. At least, it's been working that way.

With that off my chest: McL's boys have behaved them-selves here. In fact, they've been too damn nice (which is part of Phil's theory), probably. To hear them talk today, butter wouldn't melt and all that, but we'll find out, I guess, when they hit dirt again. Can't give you anything to build specific suspicions on, because what investigating they did seemed pretty damn routine and unenthusiastic to me. Mostly, they goofed off seeing how far they could get with the female personnel. Hope they got sent home happy, and appearances would indicate as much. (But it worries Phil; I'm getting an education, man. Always thought psychers were supposed to be less puritanical than us plain folks.)

Thanks for getting that letter to L. Big help. Phil will fill you in on her too; he finally let me in on it. Hope you didn't—sorry. Was about to hope you didn't really let Wendt out of sight, but I ought to know better by now.

As you can see, I am confused by a lot of what's going on. Will try to get clearer by next week. Or am I missing some data?

PAC

LUNA LAB LOVE NEST  
SAYS McLAFFERTY

Mexcity, Oct. 2: Scientific research is losing out to research in the art of love among the elite inhabitants of the U.S. Moon Dome, according to Rep. Ramon E. McLafferty, Chairman of the SAC Security Subcom-mittee.

The Subcommittee, which has been conducting Spe-cial Hearings probing Security leaks in the Space pro-gram, will turn its attention next week to a "serious impairment of efficiency and morale prevalent in the Research Center" at the U.S.A.A. Moon Dome, ac-cording to a statement issued after Chairman McLafferty conferred with members of an investigating team which returned from Moon Dome on today's shuttles. The Representative went to Baja California Spaceport earlier this afternoon to meet with the investigators immediately on their arrival.

In a press release issued after the conference, the nature of the alleged "impairment of efficiency and morale" was not specified, but another paragraph stated that "the findings of the investigators are such as to suggest a thoroughgoing congressional probe into the personnel of the Moon Dome and the moral attitudes and practices prevailing there."

Questioned by reporters, Mr. McLafferty added that the testimony he hoped to produce at the new hearings would be of such an "intimate and personal" nature in "many cases" that not only will the hearings not be live-televised (as was true for the Security hearings a few weeks back), but may be closed to the press as well. If this should be true, the Representative assured re-porters that the entire proceedings would be filmed, for subsequent release to the public, after editing to "protect any innocent persons whose names may be brought in either unintentionally or with malicious intent."

Usually authoritative sources close to the congressman said, off the record, that there was definite evidence in McLafferty's hands of "certain instances of loose living and certain unconventional sexual arrangements" at the Moon Dome. Rep. McLafferty's comment on this was: "We certainly do not plan to level any spe-cific charges at this time." He referred to "unbelievable" conditions reported by his investigators, and added: "We certainly will probe the matter thoroughly, and put an end to this sort of corruption, if it does exist, before it can become a national disgrace."

Queried as to whether hearings on the alleged immorality would be conducted by his Security Sub-committee, or by the SAC itself, Rep. McLafferty in-dicated that he felt the security leaks originally

under investigation by his team, and the new findings, were definitely related to each other, and that the hearings would continue under the aegis of the Subcommittee.

One witness scheduled to testify during the coming week should be able to shed considerable light on "im-moral practices" such as those alleged. That is Dr. Philip Kutler, Staff Psychiatrist for the Moon Dome, who was subpoenaed by the Subcommittee last week, and arrived today on the same shuttle with the investi-gating team.

Reporters present at the shuttle landing at Baja Cali-fornia Spaceport saw no signs of unfriendliness between Subcommittee investigators and Dr. Kutler, but were unable to obtain any statement from the doctor.

Subpoenas for a number of other members of the Dome staff were issued today, and shipped via Moon shuttle in the hands of a Dome staffer returning from Earth leave who was sworn in as process server just before takeoff time. An official list of those named in the subpoenas will not be issued "until after service on Wednesday evening (when the shuttle arrives at Moon Dome), but among those named in authoritative circles as probable witnesses were Research Director P. A. Christensen, who testified two weeks ago on Secur-ity control; Dr. T. L. Bourgnese, Biochem Chief at the Dome; Leonard Lakeland, Hydroponics Technician; Dr. David Chernik, Medical Staff; a number of female staff-ers, whose names were withheld, and quite possibly the newest female staff member, tri-di dancer Lisa Trovi, whose appointment as Psychiatric Assistant made head-lines a short time ago. It was not known whether Miss Trovi would be questioned about her own experiences at the Moon Dome or in connection with Col. John Wendt, whom she accompanied to the Dome on the mysterious visit six weeks ago about which the Subcommittee has been eager to question him.

A new subpoena for Col. Wendt has also been issued, but since his release last Saturday from Rio Detention House, where he served two days of a twenty-day drunk-and-disorderly charge, Col. Wendt has disappeared.

*Acapulco—Sunday, October 2, 11:30 P.M. (C.S.T.)*

Under grizzled hair, the General's face was still strikingly young: the tight-skinned smooth-jawed face of a man whose energies are never at the ebb. A man capable of restraint and of control, conscious of power, continually on the ad-vance. A dangerous man, thought Kutler—a man almost without weaknesses himself, and entirely without empathy for weakness in others.

"Frankly, I think it's damned important," Phil said crisply. "You know better than I do what shape he's in right now. But I wouldn't want to be responsible for what he'll do when he sees this bloody foolishness." He rattled the folded newspaper in his hand.

"I'll be just as frank," Harbridge answered after a mo-ment's thoughtful silence. "Of course Chris was right. I know where Wendt is, and I could reach him for you. But it's a risk I don't think is warranted. We're in a position to—let me say, prevent any wild behavior on his part. Mean-time, I'd as lief not—draw enemy fire?—by contacting him."

That would be final. Phil had hoped for the admission of knowledge, worked for it. Now he had it, and realized he had gained nothing.

"All right," he said tiredly. "You're the tactician." He was suddenly not so much angry as disgusted.

"Jed," he said, and didn't even realize till he was halfway through his speech that the General's first name had come naturally. "I understand your hesitation about contacting Johnny." You don't dare talk to him. It would mess up all your thinking, wouldn't it? "But in the event that you should be in touch with him in the next few days—or have some means of sending him a message—I think you might do him a favor to let him know Lisa is pregnant."

Harbridge had to repress a faint grin. So he had known all along. Phil had counted on shock value in that one.

"I had the impression the lady did not want him to know?"

"The lady is of several minds in the matter. But I think it would be easier if Johnny felt that she sent him the mes-sage before he reads or hears it from some public source."

The General thought that one over. He shook his head.

"I can't see it, Phil. It don't fit. What you said about Ray McLafferty and this whole new pitch fits fine. But not throwing the girl to the wolves. What would he get out of it?"

"Revenge?" Phil said, testing.

"Revenge?" Harbridge smiled indulgently. "This is poli-tics, Kutler, not couch games." He thought a moment more. "And let's say Ray isn't the man I think he is—Why take it out on her? You or Chris, I could maybe see. Why her?"

The man was good. Damn good. But from the outside only. Damn fine analysis; no understanding ... no, that was wrong too ... no compassion? ... no insight, no intuition.

We'd make a great team—if we could stand each other.

Phil shrugged. "He's not the only one to think about."

"He's the important one. He puts out the releases." Har-bridge looked up sharply. "One thing maybe you left out? Ray's not the guy to take no for an answer. Not very easily. He'll damn well see to it Trovi's protected. For now."

"It may not be up to him."

"What the hell are you driving at, Kutler?"

"He's got a mess of subpoenas out. Including for her. People talk. She's not much of a liar either. Or take me." And take special note of the fine set of rattles while you're at it. "It may sound quaint, but I have an aversion to perjury. So do some other people—non-political types. Scientists. Like that."

"You don't think he's overlooked that? Why in hell do you suppose he sacrificed coverage? He gives the press con-ferences."

I'm damned if I'll spell it out for you. I warned you. That's enough.

Phil shrugged again and let it drop.

*Acapulo—Monday, October 3, 7:30 A.M. (C.S.T.)*

The General had been awake for fifteen minutes when the call came. He was still in his pajamas, sipping his second coffee and reading through Chris' message again, reviewing the talk with Dr. Kutler in his mind; he had just realized that he had never gotten around to hearing Kutler's pet theories, when the call came. He took it where he was, in the bedroom.

Wendt's face was taut as his voice, but he was in control.

He looked surprisingly young, tanned, and healthy. Could be quite a guy, Jed decided, if he stayed sober long enough.

"Saw this thing in the paper," Wendt said, without pre-liminaries. "What's the scoop?"

"I can't say for sure," Jed told him. "And if I could, I wouldn't on the phone."

"Anything to it?"

Harbridge shrugged. "You know more than I do. Last time I was up was to pin eagles on you."

"That's right—sir. I damn near forgot, didn't I—sir?"

"Come off it, Wendt. It was stupid enough, calling me. Don't let's play games now."

"No, sir. Sorry to have bothered you."

Jed saw his arm tense; he'd be reaching for the switch. "Hold on, John," he said sharply. The damn fool call was made. Might as well get some use out of it.

"Yes, sir?"

Harbridge sighed. All right, two could play that, if nec-essary. "I take it you have decided to accept the subpoena?" he asked acidly.

"I have my heli right here—sir—to go get it with."

Jed grinned. "At ease, will you, Wendt?" He saw the other man relax imperceptibly, unwillingly. "Okay, as long as I know you're a law-abiding citizen, and not calling to ask for assistance in this absurd evasive maneuver—" He allowed just the corners of his mouth to twitch slightly. "—I can tell you this much. My own opinion is it's a personal spite feud. I think he's got it in for Chris or Kutler or both of them. I had a talk with Kutler last night and—"

"Excuse me, sir. Are these Dr. Kutler's opinions you're giving me, or your own?"

"Both. Why?"

"I'm not sure I'd put my faith in his explanations."

"They're the only explanations I've had so far," Jed said crisply. "Maybe next week I'll know more."

"That's what I actually called about," Wendt said, drop-ping the mocking-game altogether. "Do you, or will you, know which witnesses will be subpoenaed for next week?"

"I don't know now. You'll probably see it in the papers same time I do."

"I see." His eyes made sure he didn't believe a word of it. "I was hoping there might be some way to have a word with—one of the people whose names I saw mentioned."

"Sure. Any time you get tired of hiding out, just drop by and I'll arrange a call for you. Glad to do anything I can. Stop by this evening." He glanced at the wall clock, visible in Wendt's screen, trying to remind him that by now they knew where he was. He thought he got an answer-ing flicker.

"Well, I'm taking up too much of your time, General. Suppose I give you a buzz tonight, anyhow?"

"If there's anything important on your mind, sure. But, John—"

"Yes?"

"I—wouldn't pay too much attention to the news stories. You understand?"

"I think so. I'll buzz you. So long."

*Balsas, Mexico—7:45 A.M. (C.S.T.)*

He left the phone booth, stepped into the hovering ground car, and took off on a cushion of air, silently. Inside fifteen minutes, he entered the outskirts of Teloloapan, without incident. He parked the rented car neatly on a residential sidestreet, and grabbed an airbus downtown. His clothing would be least conspicuous in a working-class place. He found a ginmill open for the go-to-work quickie trade, and settled down.

After a week of water and coke, the Mexican beer was biting and strong. He drank slowly; he had a lot of thinking to do first, and over that bridge there had to be room for some action still.

Meanwhile, there was plenty of time to think; and to drink—slowly. It was too early to do anything else.

At nine o'clock, he began on the phone, trying to locate Phil Kutler. Anyone else would have been better. But like the man said, his was the only game in town.

By eleven, the operator had him convinced that the doctor was not registered at any hotel in Mexcity; the only for-warding address at his New York apartment was Moon Dome.

"Have you tried Decagon Information?" And why in Hell hadn't he thought of that first?

"Just one mommmmmment . . ." And she was back—with Jed Harbridge's Acapulco phone. Great!

He went back to his booth, drank one more bottle of beer, and decided to be logical this time. He walked down the length of the bar, toward the sleepy-looking middle-aged Mexican who had perched on the bar stool all morning.

"Listen, chum," he said, without preamble, "I have to talk to the boss, and it irritates him when I make public calls."

The sleepy man looked at him sleepily. "Senor?"

"Oh come off it. Look, how about we take a walk? Get acquainted a little?"

The sleepy man thought it over. A faint glint showed in his eyes. He shrugged fatalistically, climbed down off the stool, threw a coin on the bar, and followed Johnny into the street.

"I owe you congratulations anyhow," Johnny said. "I sure as hell thought I'd throw you this morning."

The man, no longer sleepy, smiled. "It was nothing," he said proudly. "I have long experience."

"Damn glad you do," Johnny said, and meant it. "Look, I wasn't kiddin'. I want to call your boss. I tried this morning, and he didn't like me using a public phone, so we couldn't say much. If you'll just—"

"But Senor—" The man was clearly pained. "If I could, I would help you gladly, but I have no means . . ."

"I'm not asking you to give me your junior G-man kit or wrist radiophone or anything," Johnny said



patiently, "Hell, I don't want to know what kind of setup you've got. Put it this way. I'll go back in the bar. You get in touch. See what the man says. Tell him I want some private talk, that's all. Okay?"

The man opened his mouth. "But Senor—"

Johnny said, "Fine!" and slapped him briskly on the back. Walked back into the bar, sat down, got one more bottle, and nursed it, like the first three. He would make it last as long as he could. It was the last one, either way. There was too much to do.

Just what was to do, he wasn't sure yet. The first step was Kutler. After that he'd know. But for Kutler, he needed his wits.

If the sleepy man didn't show by the time the bottle was gone, he'd have to find some other way to get hold of Phil. Or make up his own mind, without Phil.

But he was goddam tired of sitting around waiting—for nothing. It was just about time to go get—What? What you goin' to get, boy? What's to get?

Good question. But it didn't matter much. Just so long you could sit on your ass, that's all.

Rather get knocked onto it, hey, boy?

Not very damn likely!

Tough guy! ????

Maybe.

Yeh. I remember. Did some fancy gettin' and goin' before, hey man?

He stood up. Carried his bottle to the bar. Stood a mo-moment indecisive. Put the bottle down, waved to the barman and walked out. Find the sleepy man . . . find Harbridge . . . find Kutler . . . find Lee.

And there you were. Simple, when you came right down to it.

Let 'em have their spaceships and cootie-bugs and truth drugs and politics and screw 'em all. Including the pall-bear-ers. Let 'em play their games. Johnny Wendt didn't care. Let 'em have anything they wanted, except one thing. . . .

The one thing is you, Lee. Lisa, Love, Lee, I want you. ..

He strode out of the dim bar into the sunlight, arms swing-ing, teeth white in laughter against the tan of his face. A sad-faced woman in black gown and mantle scurried out of his way, crossing herself fervently.

Drunk or devil or what? he wondered. What does she think I'll do? Damn fool dames don't even know a crazy man from—

From what?—

His laughter shouted in the street.

—from a crazy-in-love man. That's what!

The woman peeked back around the edge of her veil, and her face looked a little less sad.

If I had a damn rose I'd throw it at her!

He felt clean all over. Only where in Hell was Sleepy keep-ing himself?

*Mexciti—Monday, October 3, 1:45 P.M. (C.S.T.)*

"For you—"

The congressman handed the desk phone to the doctor with as much flourish as if it were a saber or pistol. Phil took it as cautiously.

"Yes?"

"Kutler? This is Jed Harbridge."

"Oh?"

Then he realized there was no point in playing mum; Mc-Lafferty would be recording it all, anyhow.

"Just wanted to let you know: I've got an urgent call for you here."

There was still nothing to say but "Oh?" The more so, knowing Mac must be recording. Let Harbridge decide how much to say; he knew his way around this rat race.

"If you're not tied up for lunch, maybe you could get over now?"

Phil wished he knew his own way around better; which of these two had sharper teeth? And which

was more likely to stick in a fight? And how do you decipher what a man tells you in the presence of the enemy? And was it the enemy, anyhow? It was hard to see any real difference of attitude between the general and the congressman, when you sat in between them, as he literally was doing now.

"You say 'urgent,'" he formulated carefully. "Does that mean immediate? Or very important?"

"Some of both. It can wait a little. Frankly, I think the immediacy is more on your end. Oh, look, I hate to sound cloak-and-dagger; it's nothing like that. A personal matter— what you were asking me last night. I'll be more specific if you like, but I assumed—"

"That's all right, Jed," he broke in. At this point, there was just one thing he had to know. And he saw no reason not to ask. "I take it it's not from the Dome? You said 'personal'."

"That's right." Jed sounded relieved: presumably he, Phil, now knew what it was all about. He saw no good reason to let Harbridge know that he knew less than ever now. All the personal matters he could think of, right now, were 250,000 miles away . . .

Except one. But he knew Harbridge wasn't about to let him talk to John. And if he was, why call him here to let him know? That wasn't it; and it wasn't from Lisa. So it could wait.

"What time do you go out?" he asked.

"Twelve, twelve-thirty . . ."

"I'll try to make it," Phil said. "I think I can wind things up here pretty soon?" He looked across the desk at Mc-Lafferty, who nodded, shrugged, mouthed, Any time . . .

"Right. As soon as you can?"

"Right."

He handed the phone back. "Seems something's come up," he said briskly. "I want to catch Harbridge if I can before he goes out for lunch. So let me jump in with both feet." He smiled. "I'm not much good at the ringaroundrosy you boys play, anyhow."

"You do all right," the congressman said ruefully.

"Thanks. I think. Look, is there still anything you want to ask me? Before we do it in public, I mean?"

"Nothing awfully important. We've about covered the ground."

"Okay. Then there's something I want to tell you." He saw the other man brace himself almost imperceptibly, and smiled again. "Relax, man. I didn't say tell you off. I said tell. Like, information. What you're after. Pay dirt, man."

McLafferty was mentally balancing on the balls of his feet, with both arms up, guarding. Change of pace, Phil thought approvingly. Always works. Reluctantly, he admitted he could probably get pretty good at this kind of bull if he had to.

"Okay," Mac said, on balance again. "This is the sure-enough assay office. Let's see what color your dirt is."

"I assume anything I tell you here is confidential—I mean as far as the press is concerned?"

"Well, I can't give you a blanket yes on that. Anything you tell me that bears on the investigation, I can't keep concealed. . . ."

"I'm not asking that. Put it this way: I have a piece of information I think will be of use to you, and certainly of interest at least. It has nothing to do with anything that's happened at the Dome—or in connection with the Dome— except that the person it concerns happens to be there." He stood up, walked to the window. He wasn't sure enough of his ability to use his face. His voice he could play with skill; but usually people weren't watching him when he talked. "Frankly," he said to the window, "I'm telling you this because I believe you'll feel, as I do, that making it public would do no particular good to anyone, and might do great damage to the person involved. It's something that could come out easily in the official inquiry, but—"

He had to turn back because this way he couldn't see the other man.

"—Look, I assume you record conversations here?"

Mac looked pleasantly neutral; made no reply.

"So I know I'm putting myself on a limb when I say this. But I'm hoping that what I tell you will help you decide what questions to ask me tomorrow—or which ones not to ask." He laughed, a bit nervously and it took no effort to sound that way either. "I guess I better put it on record, after that, that I'm not

asking for preferential treatment for myself or anyone else, but merely attempting to provide you with certain background extraneous information which I believe will help you to frame your questions in such a way as to protect innocent persons from unnecessary publicity. Does that cover me?" He tried the laugh again.

"Beautifully. Ever think of going into the law?" McLafferty's manner was warm, inviting.

"Often. I'll return the compliment. You ever think about headshrinking?"

There was no perceptible difference in the warmth or sincerity of the laugh. "As a matter of fact—often. From the other end of the couch."

This man was much more his own type, as a matter of fact, than Jed Harbridge was. But Jed's type, too—Phil became aware of an unfamiliar sensation of grave respect. The bland-looking man across the desk had both kinds of awareness. Talk about dangerous men . . .

"All right," Phil said. "I've wasted enough time."

"Just one thing," Mac broke in.

"Yes?"

"You understand I have made no pledges of silence or secrecy?"

"I do."

"Okay. Shoot."

"What I wanted to tell you is simply that Lisa Trovi is pregnant."

It was heart warming to see it register. Bland, hey? About as bland, behind the meringue face, as baked hot peppers . . .

"Man, you don't think I can—?"

"About six months pregnant," Phil said. He waited for the meaning to sink in, and added, "Well, five and a half."

McLafferty smiled, but it was weak. "Wendt, I suppose?"

Phil shrugged. "The lady won't say," He managed to make it quite lewd. Mac's eyebrows shot up briefly.

"Well," said the congressman, "I see what you mean. I'm not sure—"

Busy brain whirring away, thought Phil admiringly.

"—You understand, I'll have to give this some careful thought. Offhand, I don't see how it really concerns this investigation, but—"

But you see all that lovely black ink, don't you, man?

"—I'll tell you one thing. I wish to Christ I could talk to Wendt. This damnfool hiding-out doesn't accomplish anything."

Oh, no, Mac! Really! How much do you think you can do me for? And then, startled, he thought: Well, whaddya know? Ole doc's ego acting up! At this stage yet . . . And finally, amused: Got to see my psychiatrist about that!

"Wish I could help you," he said smoothly. "Frankly, I'd like to get my hands on that boy myself." He reached out his hand. "Well, I hope you'll see this thing the way I do, when you've thought it out. I better haul out of here now. Can't hold up the whole Decagon."

The only thing that bothered him when he left was that he might have underestimated Lisa's effect—again. McLafferty ought to be arrow-proof; but so should a lot of others. Who weren't.

*Mexcity—Monday, October 3, 1:45 P.M. (C.S.T.)*

He parked right inside the Decagon lot, and to hell with them all. If they tapped him now, they would, and that was that.

But he knew it was damned unlikely they'd have a paper waiting for him here.

He had no trouble getting to Harbridge either. He showed the guards and the secretaries the same thing: his face and a five-dollar bill. He was upstairs in ten minutes flat, with the private secretary.

She was new. He said patiently, "Please just buzz and say, 'Johnny's here.' That's all."

"I'm sorry, sir. I'll have to have your full name."

"Let's say I'm his long-lost son. Johnny Harbridge, okay?" Why not just tell her? He didn't know.

"Oh, Mr. Prentiss— I wonder if you could—"

Johnny looked at the smooth-young-man who had just entered. The smooth-young-man looked at him, got notice-ably ruffled around the edges, and said, "Just a minute, Glory. You—er— What can I do for you, Colonel? I'm Al Prentiss, the General's Press Secretary."

"Pleased to meet you, Al. I was trying to persuade the young lady that the General would want to see me—since I'm here, I mean."

"I imagine he would," Prentiss said, deadpan. "If you'll wait just a moment, I'll let him know . . ."

He went through a door across the room.

Johnny waited.

He got tired of waiting, and followed through the door.

Prentiss. Harbridge. Kutler.

"Well," he said. "Old Home Day. All we need now is Chris."

"All right, John," Harbridge said wearily. "What are you trying to do?"

"Brace yourself," Johnny said. "Especially you, Doc. Sit down. It'll be a shock." He strode to the desk and looked straight at Harbridge. "I'm trying to find out how I can get to the Moon."

The General shook his head. "You do need Chris then. I can't authorize it."

You're full of bull. "Oh?" He turned to Phil. "All right. Who authorizes trips down? You or Chris? I—don't think the environment up there is quite right for Lee."

Phil shrugged. He was good at it. "Tell her," he said.

Johnny looked from the doctor to the general and back again. No point in crawling. Both men were set. He felt the inviting ache in his shoulder, and set it aside. If he was sure Prentiss would stay out of it... He could clean up the other two without getting winded. . . .

Good thing Prentiss was there. Just as well.

"Okay," he said. "I'll do that."

He started out.

"Colonel Wendt?"

He turned, half-way. Bully-boy Prentiss. "Yeah?"

"I just thought I'd mention—the backroom boys think it's pretty sure she's subpoenaed. That would mean she'd be down next trip anyhow."

Pacifier? He didn't think so, somehow. The guy almost seemed human.

"Thanks," he said. "I didn't think of that."

*New York—Monday, October 3, 7 P.M. (E.D.S.T.)*

The city hadn't changed; it was he who had.

Such a short time—and actually, very little had happened. Very little. Sure. You just went right out of this world.

So: two years later—damn near—the doctor gets around to knowing what the man meant. Phil marveled, not for the first time, at the ease with which we assume communication; fool ourselves into the oddly arrogant delusion that we have heard, that we know, understand, even share, the consciousness of our fellowman.

Phil Kutler walked the streets of the city he loved, and felt bruised. Everywhere were barriers. Walls: not only of brick and stone and wood, but walls of tougher, harder, more hurtful, flesh and blood and emotion.

He wished, wished with all his heart, fervently, that some-one in all the millions of his city, could hear him now— as he, finally, heard Johnny Wendt. . . .

"Mars is heaven, that's what . . ."

As he had heard Lisa—what was it? Four weeks—One month ago? It seemed hardly possible—and understood that her need was not his own desire. Understood it, and still de-sired—hell, still *loved*!

It was, looking back on it, highly improbable. I am not that big a man, he told himself soberly. And it

was true. But he had been. Then. There.

Maybe Johnny was right. Maybe men ought to stay where they acted like men. . . .

No!

No, damn it, Johnny was wrong! As wrong as a man CAN be. "Something up there makes us love," he paraphrased nervously, and admitted it frightened him, and stopped fear-ing it.

If anyone was right, Doug was!

He laughed. It was that simple. Just that simple. No one would ever believe it, but he was deeply sure. He knew, be-cause he was certain it was exactly what he would have done.

A stiff-backed, powder-caked claw-fingered female, rushing on tight-toed stilt heels, miscalculated; a bony shoulder knifed his bicep; a sharp elbow rose reflexively, caught him in the chest.

"Whyncha look wareyagone?" she shrieked.

"I beg your pardon," he said. And wondered what Moon-change would happen to her, if she could go too?

Wondered, more practically, if that odd feeling of kinship with McLafferty meant the other man had felt it too? Smiled, thinking: All that work and sweat. And suppose the big oaf has turned into a gentleman?

It wouldn't matter much. Actually, all the sweat had not been needed. Johnny was already on his way.

Damned rude of him not to wait for me to push, Phil thought, delighted.

PART TEN

*October 5-9, 1977*

*The Shack—Wednesday, October 5, 4 P.M. (C.S.T.)*

She switched off the half-track engine, and as the spotlight faded, the world directly ahead of her blinked out.

She opened the cab door and stepped out into heaven. Above her, the gorgeous enormous full Earth, gleaming blue-greenly against the black velvet stardiamonded backdrop of everywhere—always out there.

And right ahead, now, the muted twin glows of the Shack itself and the Shack guardhouse.

She flashed on her helmet lamp, picked her way over Moon crust to the guardhouse. Looked in, exchanged smiles, and went on to the Shack.

She sat down in front of the tank, where the greyish-white ganglions had long since ceased to show discrete patterns. Now they crowded together, piled on each other, multiplied, multiplying. The daily "watering" of a month ago would have been hopelessly inadequate now; a steady trickle of nutrient fed the tank from a storage drum—and even the daily ten gallons hardly seemed to account for the burgeon-ing of the white cells.

Lisa looked. Watched. Stared. And listened.

A nagging thought stopped her. She switched on her radio.

"Jim?"

"That you, Miss Trovi?" From the guardhouse.

"Yes. I meant to ask—will you call me at six? I want to get back for dinner tonight."

"Sure thing."

"Thanks."

She switched off, and let herself drift into—what? where?—

Far out. Or far in? That used to be a joke, so far out you're in, so far in you're out, but it's no joke, it's not funny, it's fun.

Swing on a star . . . climb up a moonbeam . . . feather-light, fearfree, far sands of home . . . Hello! . . . Hello, I know you, don't I? ... Don't know your name, but . . . funny-fun! . . . the soul is familiar . . .

Foolish to want a name. Baby has no name. What name for baby? Doug, we'll call him Doug . . . Hello, Doug . . .

. . . and the well opened up again, great valentine lake of lovelygood, lace-edged, beating heart, two hearts in three-quarter phase . . .

Where are you? Hello? Hello?

Oh!

"Oh. Oh, hi. Six already?"

"No," Jim, the guard, was leaning over her, helmet to helmet. "They been trying to call you from Dome, Miss Trovi. We kept gettin' the call on our sets, but you didn't answer, so I figure your radio's off, and come in to tell you."

"Oh. Thanks, Jim."

She switched on the helmet set.

"Hello?"

"Lee! Thank God! You had us worried. Been trying to get you the last twenty minutes!"

"Who's that? Thad?"

"Yuh. Listen, we've a call for you. Earthside. Better hurry. We can't hold the frequency much longer." Earthside?

"Johnny!" She jumped up. "Hold it, Thad," she said. "I'm on my way."

*Mexcity—Wednesday, October 5, 5:35 P.M. (C.S.T.)*

"I'm sorry, Johnny. We've been doing our damndest. She's on her way, back now, but Relay will cut out in two minutes."

The distant voice was Chris', but yet not Chris. He couldn't get through, somehow.

"Okay," he said. "Look, I don't have to talk to her. Will you send her down?"

"I'll tell her you called. I'll tell her you asked her to come. I can't send her, Johnny."

"Okay." Bastard! You'll tell her—yeah! But what? What can you tell her to be so sure she won't want to come? "Okay. If that's it, that's it."

"I'll tell her," the voice named Chris said again.

"Hey! Chris! Listen!" He felt his throat tighten up, but the words squeezed past. "Chris! If she—never mind if— Chris, can you make room for me to come up Sunday? Maybe she ought to stay—"

"I don't know—"

"We-are-sorry-to-interrupt-this-call-but-Relay-Station-has-passed-out-of-range-This-is-a-recorded-message-We-are-sorry-to-interrupt—"

The sound cut out. Johnny turned from the mike, and saw Jed's hand on the switch.

"Well," he said. "Thanks. I—appreciate everything."

Harbridge took a single step forward. "All right, Johnny. I'm glad we could get you through. Wish you'd connected better. But I imagine she'll be down Sunday. She is on the subpoena list, you know, so—"

"She is?" He hadn't even read that. He'd forgotten about it. The headline was all he saw, really.

"You—wouldn't care to tell me where Phil Kutler is?" he asked, feeling the ice in his gut again, just like he felt it when he saw the paper, her name, and Phil's picture.

DANCER PREGNANT, SAYS MOON DOC

"No. No, I don't think I'd care to tell you that, John. In fact— Al, I think I hear your phone." He looked meaning-fully at the young man, who undraped himself from the corner of the desk, mock-saluted, and left. "Now let's get something straight, John," Harbridge said. "I got your call through. That's as far as I go. You had no damn business coming in here again. If you had half a brain, you'd realize what it means if they get you into that hearing room now. If you care about Lisa at all— Well, that's your affair. But you busting in here is my business. This is the last time you do it. Try it again, and you'll find yourself in the jug before you're halfway in the main door. You follow me?"

"All the way," Johnny said. "Sir."

"All right. I'm going to do one more thing for you, and then I'm through. I wouldn't do it for you; but it happens to be more convenient for me this way. I'm going to get you the hell out of here without any of the process servers who are outside by now getting hold of you. After that, will you please, kindly, get lost?"

"I hear you talking," Johnny said tightly. "I'm not sure I follow you though."

"You follow me all right. Come on."

Johnny followed. There was nothing else he could do. What counted now was Lisa, Lisa and nothing else. No one else. If he had to eat Jed Harbridge's crud, he could do that too. And remember fit too—but for now, he followed. He followed the General up to the private parking roof, and accepted the loan of a heli, and took off.

For where?

Home seemed less unlikely than most other places.

*Dollars Dome—Thursday, October 6, 2 P.M.*

The woman was positively glowing at him.

"You do understand, Lee? I can't take a chance on letting him come up. Not now. Maybe in a month or so, if things quiet down. But one more mess now—I'm sorry to put it that way, Lisa—"

"I do understand, Chris." She smiled impishly. "Anyhow, you wanted publicity, didn't you?"

"God help me, I did." He looked at her suspiciously. "You know, I keep feeling as if you're just sitting there waiting for me to do a reverse switch and tell you I've changed my mind and sure he can come."

"Well, it would be nice. Do you think it would help if I concentrated?"

"Concentrate any harder, and—I don't know. I know I won't change my mind. If I could, I would have, by now."

"All right, then." But she still sat, smiling.

"You sure you don't want to go, after all?"

She shook her head. "I don't want to. And even if I did, it wouldn't be a good idea." Her laughter poured out. "I can just see myself on that witness stand!"

He winced. She stood up.

"It's all right, dear. I'm not going down. Tell them to come get me, if they want me that much."

He tried visualizing that one, and liked it. "I might just do that," he said, and then reluctantly: "About Johnny, Lee. What do you want me to do?"

"Let him come up."

Damn you, woman! You know what I mean. "Short of that," he said gruffly.

"Give him my love. Tell him I want him to come."

"You don't want to—well, send a letter or anything? I could deliver it myself. Privacy—"

She hesitated. "No. No, I don't think that's the way. Oh, Chris, don't worry so! If I'm not worried, why should you be? It's going to be all right. I know it."

The worst part was: he believed her. You couldn't not believe, when she was there with you. But—

"Have a good trip," she said.

"Thanks. Take care of yourself, Lee." She moved to the door with that fantastic grace she seemed to have developed lately. "Oh, Lee—"

She turned back, smiling.

"If you don't mind—I'd just as lief you stayed in Dome while I'm gone. I'd hate to think of you out at the Shack— Well, like yesterday. It bothers—"

"Oh, stop worrying, dear." She turned, and was gone.

*Baja California Spaceport—Sunday, October 9, 5 P.M. (P.S.T.)*

"No, she didn't come this trip."

"Well, what do you suggest, Dr. Christensen? Will you accept delivery, or should we return to

sender?"

"Can you tell me the name of the sender?"

"I suppose—I don't see why not. Colonel Wendt."

"I'll take it," he said decisively.

The Port Manager handed it over with relief. "All right. Will you see the reporters now? They've been waiting. . . ."

*Rockland—Sunday, October 9, 10 P.M. (E.D.S.T.)*

He couldn't see why he'd never thought of it before.

All the times he'd sat in this room and stared at that damn impregnable glass wall, and never realized he had something so simple that could—if not damage it, then at least—make an impression on it.

He got up from the couch and picked up the five darts from the floor. Two others stuck to the curved surface of the giant window, both from previous tries. He had been leaving them there, timing himself to see how long it took to get them all up. But that didn't work, because he didn't stick with the game. Now he got an absurd satisfaction out of wrenching the two suction cups loose. He'd keep score the other way instead—see how many turns it took to get them all up.

At least it wouldn't be too quick.

Not that it mattered; it was ten now; if she didn't call soon, she wasn't going to. Unless the landings were really late this time?

He dialed for the news, and sat back, not listening to all the headline part. Landing times would come at the end.

The first shuttle had been scheduled for five-thirty, Cen-tral time. That was two and a half hours now he'd sat waiting for the phone chime; dialing for no-news; pacing the room up and down; opening the liquor cabinet and closing it again; getting—and forgetting—five cups of hot coffee from the bleak kitchen.

Somewhere along the way, he'd thought of the darts.

Given a near-impossible combination of luck and skill, you could make a suction dart stick on curved glass one time in—how many? That's what was wrong with the first scor-ing system; this way he'd find out.

He threw all seven, one after another, as fast as he could. One caught, clung, dropped. The others just bounced. The phone chimed.

The phone!

He reached for the switch, and the screen lit up, and— damn it to Hell, you fat bastard, where's Lee?—it was Chris!

"She didn't come," Johnny said.

Chris shook his head. "She asked me to give you a mes-sage."

"Yeah? Okay, give it."

"She couldn't come."

"No?"

"The doctor says . . ."

"Which doctor? Ole buddy Phil?"

"No, the Medic. She's not supposed to take the trip till—"

"You always were a bum liar, Chris. So she didn't come. So?"

"All right, I'm a bum liar. If you want to know, I wouldn't let her. And you ought to have your head examined, for wanting her to. She's been subpoenaed."

"Me too. If they get around to serving it."

"Yeah, but her left isn't as good as yours. Do you want to hear the message or not?"

"Sure. Why not? What is it? Love and kisses?"

"As a matter of fact, that's exactly it."

"Okay." But he had seen Chris hesitate. There was more. He waited.



Chris waited.

"All right, spill it, will you? What's the rest?"

"You turning mindreader too?" Chris said nastily.

"Leave it lay, man," Johnny growled. "What else did she say?"

"She said for you to come up."

"Okay. Got room next trip?"

Chris shook his head.

"The one after?"

Same bit.

"No room, huh? She stays up, I stay down, right?"

Chris never said a word.

Johnny switched off and got out the bottle and picked up the darts, and started keeping score by how many belts it took to get a dart up.

Damn things wouldn't stick at all.

PART ELEVEN

*October 13-18, 1977*

*Dollars Dome—Thursday, October 13, 3:30 P.M.*

"It bothered Chris too," she said.

"I'll bet. And you can't see why?" He watched her face with every bit of intelligence and knowledge at his command. He found nothing there but serenity—and some tenderness and amusement.

"Phil, what on Earth—well, all right, what in Space— could happen? Am I supposed to be afraid of the dark?"

"Everything spooky spooks worse in the dark," he said. "And kid, this bit with you and the Shack has got spooky."

"Well, I don't know what I can say to that." She stood up, smiling, but a little impatient now.

"Lee—suppose I say you can't go?"

She did not seem to understand.

"Suppose I forbid you to?"

"Phil!"

It was complete in itself. The one word said it all. By whose authority? With what right? For what reason? Darling—you're fooling, aren't you?

"Suppose I said Chris forbade it?"

"You mean you want to know what I'd do if I were actually made to believe I couldn't go?"

He nodded. She thought a moment.

"I'd try anyhow. Then if I couldn't—I mean, really couldn't—" She grinned. "—I wouldn't."

What does she want me to do? Throw my arms around her and hold her here? Maybe she did: it was a nice thought, anyhow.

Her smile changed, and he remembered, sharply, too vividly, that one kiss the day she told him about—

The baby. Johnny's baby.

"Phil, I suppose this is the time to say it. You are the kindest, most decent, most loving human being I've ever known. Sometimes I wish it was you who needed me."

That was all. And it was enough. Of course that was the difference, and he had, really, always understood, just as well as he did now.

But it mattered that she had told him. It mattered a great deal.

"Thank you, Lisa. I do love you very much." The words tasted good. Fresh. Pure. He was glad he had said them. "I—almost wish I needed you too." But I'd rather love you.

When she was gone, he sat and studied that one out. He didn't get very far. It was easy to analyze—simple masochistic crap. And/or false superiority: Better to love and not have than to be

needful and get? Feed that to the pigs—or the bugs. It wasn't for Kutler. Except it was. So?

So nothing. So live with it. Someday you go back to Earth and get analyzed, lad. Till then, don't try to understand. *Relax and enjoy it.*

Which was the damnedest part. He did enjoy it.

He got that settled in his mind; then he tried conscientiously to worry about Lee. She had gone to the Shack again, of course. She was out there now, dreaming whatever she dreamed when she stared at the wild growth there. It was dangerous—

He laughed. What in hell could be dangerous about it?

Spooky things . . . scared of the dark . . . And of course: scared of bugs. Just that simple.

He stopped trying to worry.

But what made her think he and Doug Laughlin were so much alike?

He was curious; he dug Laughlin's pre-trip psych profile out of the files.

She wasn't so wrong.

*Rockland—Friday, October 14, 5 A.M. (E.D.S.T.)*

He wouldn't be able to do it until all the darts stuck. He knew he wouldn't. But he knew when the darts stuck, he could. Easy. No sweat. He knew just how, but...

Won' work till they stick, gotta all stick . . .

He kept throwing. Took a lot of drinks to make one stick. Got to do it soon, run out of drinks otherwise.

Damn bottle was empty. More in cellar, but cellar Hell of a ways, besides he didn't want. Lousy stuff. Gets, you nowhere.

He laughed.

Man, I wen' nowhe' . . . This boy did that job . . . Yessir, Johnny Wendt went, went nowheah atall . .

Stupid business, two darts won't stick. All the other ones stick, what's matter with two?

Maybe no-good darts?

He picked them up again and took them to the wall. Stuck one on, then the other. See? Stick fine. See?

He almost cheated, but it was no good, it wouldn't work unless he threw them all and made 'em stick.

He took the two off again and went back to the couch. Threw and picked up and threw and picked up and threw and picked up and had to get another bottle after all and threw and picked up and threw, and there you are.

You wouldn't believe it, both 'fern stick 'tonce!

He got up and went out the back door, feeling in his pocket for keys. Somebody came up and asked him if he was Wendt, but he fooled 'm, just said, "Man, I ain't even come yet," and kept going, to the garage.

He got in the car and it Wendt. Jus' fine.

Wendt, went, when it went, Wendt went straight into the damn glass wall.

Tricky going for Wendt, but this man used to be crack pilot. Nerves of steel—all that. Slambang into window-wall, crrr-aaa-ck, and slam on brake, and there you are ...

He climbed out and walked into the living room, feeling fine.

Not many guys could do that. Not damn few very many.

Crack-smash that damn wall and not touch a thing inside. Car right outside where it ought to be. Johnny inside. Good. But no damn curved glass wall. Seven damn darts and a couple of jugs, or a few maybe, and the ole car, and there you are: no damn glass wall!

He was tired. He lay down to sleep.

*Red Dome—Friday, October 14, 4:30 A.M. (S.S.T.)*

They sat in a group around the woman, Maria. Nobody talked.

They sat for a long time in silence. Perhaps an hour, perhaps more. Then Maria began to murmur. Nobody moved. The tape recorder ran, as it had run, since they started. Only two of them in the group knew English well, but all of them listened with the same deep attention.

From time to time, someone came in and took over a seat from one of the circled sitters. Maria stayed where she was, quite content.

*Rockland—Saturday, October 15*

Someone was screaming. It wasn't Doug, because Doug wasn't Doug now, just a million little Dougs and his leg itched where the Dougs kept biting, damn! damn Lisa, Lisa wouldn't scream, ice cream, whipped cream, Lisa whip cream, lovely Lee, Lee, Lee . . .

"Leeeee!"

He opened his eyes for one moment, saw the ceiling of the living room, felt floor rug underneath, and heard his own voice screaming, "Leeeeee!"

He closed his eyes, shut his mouth tight, moved convulsively, rolled over, and lay on the floor a long time, sobbing without sound, dry angry sobs that shook his frame and jarred his guts—but brought no release, so after whatever time, long time, it was, he stood up, got his balance, and walked steadily through the house into the kitchen.

Turned, went back through the living room and bedroom to the shower. Shower first. He had a sour smell that sickened him.

He came out of the shower and blower and stood in the bedroom and thought it would be nice to sleep. One drink and go to sleep . . . ?

He put his shorts on, and a shirt, socks, shoes. Cup of coffee, maybe . . . might wake up. He didn't want to sleep again. Okay—coffee. He started back through the living room to the kitchen. The house was a wreck, and the floor was full of broken glass, but that . . .

He saw the car outside, and remembered . . .

There it was. The damn window was busted!

How in Hell had he managed that?

He could figure that out later. And clean things up later. Right now, no time—first things first.

First thing was Lee. Quick! before he was too late. Too late already, anyhow: too late for Doug, for ever, too late.

Too late for lots of things, too late for Johnny? Maybe, but if not too late for Lee, then maybe . . . ?

He remembered some more. He couldn't go.

Couldn't go.

Couldn't?

He took the word out, out of his aching head, and looked at it. Studied it, turned it over, tried to turn it inside out, but there it was, all the time, like a neon light:

c-o-u-l-d-n-apostrophe-t

Couldn't.

He shook his head tiredly, but the letters danced behind his eyelids even when he closed his eyes. He was very very tired. He took off his jacket and went into the bedroom and took off his trousers and lay down.

When he awoke again, it was dusk. He knew exactly what he had to do. He was cold sober, not hung over, fiercely hungry too. But he was afraid it might already be too late to get things done today.

Which day? Friday? Saturday? Sunday? Eating could wait.

He went to the phone, and flicked the switch, the operator thought he was kidding, but she finally told him: Saturday. And almost eight o'clock.

He went to the kitchen and made himself a sandwich with two thick slabs of rye bread and a stack of old dried-looking boiled ham slices from the refrigerator. He was too hungry to care if it was dry or

tasteless.

He took one large bite, wrapped the rest in a napkin, and shoved it in his jacket pocket. He started out, then re-remembered seeing a quart of milk when he got the ham. He went back, and drank all but an inch or so of the milk, right from the wax container. Then he went out, a little worried, wondering if he'd done something to the heli too, that he didn't recall.

The funny thing was, he was so set on getting to someone from the Committee, to tell them he'd take the subpoena now, that when the little man in the brown suit stepped out from behind the hangar, and served it on him he didn't even think to be surprised. The only thing that startled him was the big bass voice asking his name; it came from such a medium guy.

Afterwards, a hundred feet up and building speed, he was astonished at the man still being there. He shook his head and grinned. "Guts!" he said out loud to nobody, admiringly.

Later yet, over Philadelphia, he had to decide which way to go, and realized he didn't know where they were firing from this trip. It occurred to him, hovering there, that he was not quite as clear-headed as he felt he was. The sandwich was still in his pocket, for instance, and he didn't know where to go. Also, belatedly, he wondered if he'd have any trouble with this bunch about going up.

He kept on south. It would be either Andes or St. Thom, that much he was sure of. Just beyond Wilmington he saw a field with service stations and no traffic to speak of. He dropped, left the machine for servicing whatever slipshod way the station did it, and went inside to the phones.

Senor McLafferty was not at home. He was in Mexcity, at a verrree imporrrtant conferrence.

"Can you tell me where to reach him?" Johnny asked urgently.

She was most sorrreee, but the number was one she was not allowed to give.

"Can you reach him?" There was no time for arguing.

Reluctantly: Yes, she could.

"All right, now listen. Call him right away. I'm at a pay phone, and I haven't got much time, and believe me, he wants to hear from me. My name is John Wendt, you un-derstand? The number here is Wilmington Five-seven nine oh-eight jay six. Please ask him to call me as quickly as pos-sible. You got the name, now, John—"

"Yes, Senor. I know the name." He relaxed. He could see the difference. She did know the name, and she would call McLafferty. He flicked off, bought a soda, and sat down in the old metal chair out front to wait for the call back.

It was midnight here. Ten, Central time. The rocket would blast at eight ack emma Central, latest—seven, more likely—from wherever they were shooting from. If the idiot congressman called back but fast, and if it was St. Thom, he could make it. Andes was probably impossible even now.

*Dollars Dome—Sunday, October 16, 4:35 P.M. (C.S.T.)*

Thad Bourgnese pursed his lips in a silent whistle, and passed the news wire across the desk to Kutler. "Here we go again," he said.

Phil glanced down the sheet rapidly. "Could be," he said. "But I wouldn't put any money on where we go. Or he goes. Or—"

"She goes? Obviously, friend: whither he goes. I mean, you're the doctor; you've noticed, I'm sure?"

"Only thing I'm not sure of," Phil laughed, "is what you mean. Was it the belly or the heart I was supposed to diagnose? On second thought, that's not the only thing I'm not sure of. It's practically lost in the multitude."

"All right. Here's another one for you. How in the name of all that's holy did he get on that ship? Last time I heard Chris on the subject, J. Wendt wasn't going to hit Moondirt again till death did them."

"One of the many uncertainties I mentioned," Phil said noncommittally. "You never know. A lot can happen in a week Earthside. Or maybe Chris was willing to take the risk if he was on the same trip . . ."

"The trip wasn't the problem. They could keep him under, like last time. I dunno—the old man's gettin' soft, maybe—" He broke off.

"Hi, gorgeous," he said, as Lisa pushed the door open. "What brings you back from the Great

Unknown so early and all of a glow?"

She gave him a smile-in-passing, but her question was for Phil. "Is he coining with Chris?"

"Dunno, honey. They're both coming. Hard to say whose idea it was or who's talking to whom."

Thad was right about that all-of-a-glow bit. Pregnant women get that way, he told himself, and now with Johnny coming ...

"Hold on, beautiful. Didn't anybody ever tell you it's bad manners to listen through keyholes? If we had a keyhole, I mean."

"But I wasn't—"

"They're still running radiowire service, chum," Phil stepped in. "Or were, last I heard." Odd, now it came time to accept the idea, admit it, quit nibbling around the edges, how easy it was. Damn sight easier than querying and wonder-ing about things that just didn't fit, any other way. "Glad you stopped by, kid," he said to Lee. "We've got to get moving with the new program. Never catch you any more when you're not working or sleeping or out visiting your buggy buddies."

"All right. But did you get the news report yet?" He nod-ded. "May I—?" He passed it over.

She looked it through quickly and handed it back.

"Nothing you didn't already know, hey?" Phil stood up, trying to look brisk and efficient. "The more I think of it, the more I think we better get that new program set up now. I have a feeling," he said in Thad's direction, "I may be losing my chief assistant headshrinker a little sooner than I expected."

He hustled Lee out of the room ahead of him, and set a fast pace for his office. He needed a little time to think, before he verbalized into his conscious intellectual Gestalt the reality that so far existed for him only in awareness.

And before the verbalizing, he had to determine—if he could—how much she knew.

He closed his office door, and switched on the Busy-light. No approach like the obvious, he decided.

"Lee, how did you know about Johnny?" he asked as soon as she was settled in a chair.

"How—? Oh. I thought you really thought I got a wire." She looked at him almost warily. "I told you before, Phil, I knew he'd come. When it was time."

"Just feminine intuition?"

He had intended the remark to be neutral and light. It came out harshly sardonic.

Lisa sat forward, startled. "What do—" she started. She searched Phil's face for—what? He didn't know. Then she withdrew: her eyes turned inward; she sat back, not relaxed as before, but erect, spring-coiled for some as-yet-unde-termined action.

"No," she said finally. "Not feminine intuition, Phil. How about just intuition? The kind anyone can have?"

Damn *you!* the outraged seeker within shrieked. Bitch!

She knew, and wouldn't tell.

But does she know she knows? The doctor was back. "All right, I'll buy that," he said. "For now, anyhow." He stood up and went to the window. Looking out, because he couldn't hurt her and see her hurt, he said, "Let me ask you another one."

"Yes?" She was all self-possessed again. That tender-amusement bit. *Okay, kid, brace yourself; you'll need it!*

"What makes you think Doug Laughlin was so much like me?" And he held his breath. If he was wrong—or if she lied—he would never know which it had been. The words flew from him, even as he tried to call them back: once spoken, they wiped out all slower safer ways to know for sure.

"Well, darling, there are so many— Did I tell you that? I didn't mean to. It was such a wild thought— Come to think of it, maybe it is 'feminine' intuition, Phil. Maybe something to do with being pregnant, or—something like that? Because I sure do a lot of it these days. I never used to. Not as much, anyhow . . . Maybe I'm just more relaxed, so that I know when I think something, or when I just—feel it. I mean, feel it's true, so if I wasn't watching, or rather, if I were less aware of what goes on inside me, I might think I was thinking, or think I had heard it or read it somewhere or actually seen it. You know."

"I know," he said. "I know very well. Because I thought I heard you say that about Doug. And now

you think you did. But you didn't."

"I didn't?" It was honest bewilderment. ... He was almost sure it was.

"No, damn it, you didn't! I know you didn't—because it just happened, by pure stupid dumb good luck, that the recorder was on for the whole conversation.

"Which conversation?"

"The one that left me wondering why you should think that. I got out the files on Doug, and decided you were pretty right. Then I remembered something I'd thought about down in New York, and I wanted to make a note of it while I remembered—an insight I thought I maybe had into Doug's walkout. Seemed more likely to be valid, after I checked some of his reactions against my own. So I went to turn the tape on, and found out it was on, and just for kicks, played back everything we'd said, meaning to wipe it off afterwards, and—you'd never said a word about Doug and me. Not one damn word!"

He had turned as he spoke, flinging the words at her in passion. Now he turned from her white face and looked out again.

"Phil—"

"Yes?"

He heard the faint female-rustling sound of her moving, but wouldn't look around. She came up beside him. She too looked out, standing at his side.

"You know," she said slowly, "It could be that I'd men-tioned it some other time? And you remembered it just then for some reason, and thought that's when you heard it?"

He nodded. "Could be. When did you first think of it?"

Slowly: "I'm—not—sure."

"But you think it was that day? Don't you?"

"Not in your office. The first time I thought of it, it was out—there." With a tilt of her head she pointed to the Shack.

"You were out there just now, weren't you?"

No answer.

"When you knew about Johnny?"

Nothing.

He wanted to grab her shoulders and shake her and make her face the truth. He walked carefully away from her and sat down at his desk.

"I want to tell you about something, Lee. You may have come across some accounts of this kind of thing yourself. It's not too unusual. And you've done some reading in this type of thing—"

"Never mind, Phil." She came back from the window and sat facing him again. "I know where you're going. Clairvoyant and—telepathic phenomena under hypnotism. Right?"

He nodded.

"You know any clear-cut case?"

He nodded again. "A couple. Clairvoyance. Not the other." He picked up a pencil, studied it curiously. Just a pencil. He put it down. "Let me add this, Lee: every case I ever heard of that seemed reliably reported and scientifically set up involved a performance under hypnotic command. That is, with the help of suggestion. There are at least two or three that seem clear of any suspicion of suggestion as to what to see. Completely clear, I mean. But the subjects were told to do it."

*Relay Station—Sunday, October 16, 5 P.M. (C.S.T.)*

Once upon a time, the great harbors of Earth used rocket beacons to signal to ships entering and leaving port: ships that rounded the globe, sometimes, under no other power than that of wind and water waves. At the ports of Space, rocket fire moves the ships in and out; waves of sound carried silently on waves of electrons convey the signals now. Other-wise, harbors have always been much alike. Even four hun-dred miles above ground, men sweat in their pressure suits; swear at the intractable bulk of large masses (with or without "weight"); mill in apparent confusion, behind which in-credible achievements of order and planned distribution move endlessly; roughhouse and rag and joke with the blood-and-gut

humor (and good humor) of haulers and movers and handlers and drovers and drivers and sailors and truckers and spacers and all men who gain their daily bread conquering space-mass-time with their hands and backs.

Relay Station is many things. Most ports are. It's Earth's eye on the sky and it's the reflex nerve center of radio communication around the Earth. It is also a tunneled labyrinth of intrigue and espionage. But first and foremost, it is Man's greatest port to date. Every ship of all nations that lifts off of Earth stops here for inspection and servicing and then for safe-passage through the vicious rays of the Vanallens, infinitely multitudinous scyllas and charybdises of the Space odyssey.

From Relay, the Belt Balloons, air filled and skin-charged, each with its central pit of a single shuttle ship, are flung up through the twin belts of darting electrons, to meet the great wheel of the Messenger in orbit at its 12,000-mile perihelion.

All passengers on U.S.A.A. ships have the option of sleeping through the two first legs of the trip, till the shuttle is safely inside the Messenger; but the more knowing ones come out of sedation at Relay, in hopes of traveling close enough to other Balloons to see for themselves the coruscating display of blue fire, as the wild electrons of the Belts are dashed off the charged thin skins of the bulleting spheres.

John Wendt had never seen the Belt Balloons. When he lived and trained on the Moon, and took rare leaves on Earth, the Messenger, with its ion drive and thermal exchange power plant, was still a drawing-board dream. The thrice he had traveled by shuttle, via Balloon and the Messenger, he had made the whole voyage under sedation.

His choice of minimum sleep this time out was not motivated by a desire to see the Balloons. He had avoided exposure to Space talk, Space news, Space views, so thoroughly in his twenty months on Earth that he did not even know there was anything worth seeing.

He simply meant to let Pete Christensen, and anybody else who noticed, know that he could make the trip. Wide awake.

He was a little sorry when he learned that Chris was on the first shuttle, the one that left ten minutes before Mac got him to the St. Thorn Port and through the snarl of red tape that wound him up on Shuttle Two. But he assumed there would be communication between the two boats, once on board the Messenger. Certainly, the Dome Director would be free to go between shuttles, and certainly, he would be apprised of the change in the passenger list at the first opportunity.

Johnny looked forward to seeing Chris when the time came. The shoe had changed feet, and it fit one hell of a sight better.

He never did get to see Shuttle One crackling spectacularly through the outer edge of the Big Belt, as Two's balloon entered Little Belt; he was much too sophisticated a Space traveler to crowd to the viewports when the others did.

*Dollars Dome—Monday, October 17, 2 P.M. (C.S.T.)*

"That ought to fix you up now, Miss Trovi." He fastened the buckle that held the miniature set strapped to her suit, and said, "Now if you want to just show me how you'd work it, make sure you got it right . . . ?"

Lisa unstrapped the kit, took out the tape, put it back in, switched the set to record, and turned it off again. "I'd better try it with the helmet, don't you think?" she said doubtfully.

"Sure. Good idea." The big mechanic beamed down at her as if he had personally built the whole combination, and not just the small machine. But when he reached to help her adjust the wire trailing from the mike in the headpiece, she shook her head and waved him off:

"I've got to be able to do it myself."

It worked fine. She put three extra rolls of tape in her pocket, thanked him, and left. The big man watched her go, shaking his head.

"Guts!" he said. "Damn but that babe has guts!" He went back into the workshop and told his helper, "That bastard Wendt don't come through, I bet there ain't a single man here wouldn't marry her, the day before the kid's born, or the day after. And mop up the sonofabitch before dinner besides."

"One mistake, chum." The helper was married. "You don't know how easy it is to get a divorce. Don't just say single men."

*Red Dome—Tuesday, October 18, 9:25 A.M. (C.S.T.)*

The Guards Lieutenant saluted with military precision, which was worse than wasted on Dr. Chen. The Director was not even annoyed; the irritation of acknowledging the salute never materialized, because the necessity to do so failed to impress him. Dr. Chen could be exceedingly single-minded on some occasions. He had a superior capacity for crisis action.

He also had a crisis.

And he noted, with some detached part of his mind, that he was enjoying it enormously.

It was a long time since there had been any real emergency or crisis in the Dome.

This one was not in it either.

"Very well," he said crisply. "You will please explain to me how she contrived to leave?"

"She is a good pilot, Comrade Your Excellency. She holds all necessary permits and licenses."

"There are no permits or licenses to leave the Dome," Chen said coldly, "except express assignment from me."

The young officer said nothing.

The Director considered the words that might best express his scorn and contempt for the so-called Guard who had permitted Maria Harounian to leave the Dome. Having considered them and relished them, he filed them in his mind, and said to the dutiful Lieutenant, whose fault it was not:

"I want Harounian found and returned to Dome immediately."

He did not stress the words. He spoke almost softly. But his meaning was deadly clear. "Organize a search," he said. "A full search. I will review your search plan in fifteen minutes. Excused."

The lieutenant saluted again. Dr. Chen acknowledged with the faintest possible nod.

PART TWELVE

*Wednesday, October 19, 1977*

*Messenger—7:45 A.M. (C.S.T.)*

He came awake to vicious clarity. The long dreamless pill-induced sleep had left him over-rested, too fresh, too thinking, conscious, and aware.

But this was Wednesday: the last day. He'd be in the Dome that night. He was not absolutely sure he could make it. For the first goddam time in his life, he was not certain he would be able to come through.

Something strangely like exultation surged through him.

And what in hell was that for? What was so special about not being good enough?

He knew, but damned if he'd tell himself.

One thing he told himself, all right, at the beginning, and that was still good. He got through Sunday and Monday and Tuesday; he could make it through ten more hours and stick with it. Maybe he'd crack up and go tell Chris off or open an air lock or any damn thing. But he wasn't drinking this trip. Not this trip.

Whatever happened after he got there, he'd get there cold sober. Then it was up to her. . . .

Monday night was the worst. Monday night and Tuesday. He got through that all right, he could make ten lousy hours. But he hadn't had a goddam drink yet, and he wasn't going to. Not this trip . . .

Ten hours?

The bastard was jeering at him. So okay, laugh. Ten hours is pretty damn long. Yeah.

He got up, and planned his time. Breakfast. That was as far as he could get. Lunch, later. And all the time in between.

Sunday, and Monday morning he had seen the control rooms and comm rooms and cargo shuttles and climbed around the massive ion engine. The heat exchangers were old stuff; so was most of the rest. But he had looked at every-thing, examined, inspected. He could handle this job himself if he had to now.



He didn't have to. Basil would. Basil . . . he'd trained with Laughlin and Wendt, but wasn't tapped for the Colombo trip. So now he was a Space ferry jockey. . . .

Good boy, Basil, he made the grade. Didn't go too far out like we did . . .

Basil would brake into Zeroville orbit. Should have started by now, he thought, shouldn't they? Then he felt the difference, and knew he'd been feeling it all along. Deceleration. Not much yet, but you started easy with ions and let it build. No blast, no sweat.

Monday, after lunch, nothing to do except sit in the damn lounge and watch them all lushin' it up. Hell with that. Hell of a trip not to drink on; nothing else to do. Half the victims got stoned first night out and stayed that way.

He spent Monday afternoon in the dining room, drinking coffee, watching out the pretty picture window while the Moon came around and around, bigger each time—if you happened to have micro-calipers to measure with. He stared out long enough so he found out one thing: empty Space didn't bug him at all. He already knew that the birds were okay. He had almost enjoyed it, going through the business end of the wheel with the guys. It wasn't going that bugged him; it was where the Hell you went.

Which was just what he'd said all along. But now he knew. Chris had kept him knocked out the whole trip up and back before; so they hadn't been so damn sure either . . . ? Well, now he was.

He sat there until Chris came in and saw him. Then he sat there long enough to make sure Chris knew he was looking out. Then he swung down to the crew lounge and found a poker game getting under way.

He was okay till the game broke up. After that, it was bad. That was the only time he almost broke down. A couple of shots would've put him to sleep at least. He spent the time from two in the morning till six, when they started to serve breakfast, sitting in the damn dark dining room, watching the Moon grow so slowly you didn't know it, except that you knew it.

After people started to show up, it was better; he had to keep up some front, when they were watching him.

Chris stayed out of his way; he stayed out of Chris'. He was disappointed, some, but glad; Chris probably knew he came on as Mac's man. So that was that. No battles. Everybody knew what side they were on. At least Mac and Chris knew. Johnny knew what side he was on, too, but it wasn't what they thought.

*Turnabout, that's all*, he thought with silent grim pleasure. *They used me; now I use them. Let 'em all bleed.* . . .

Tuesday was bad anyhow—bad all day long. If he'd had to stay awake Tuesday night, he didn't know—

The Medic asked him, did he want a sleeping pill. Well, Hell, plenty of people took sleeping pills. Only now he was wide-awake, rested, and much too clear in the head. Maybe I should of stood out of bed . . . ?

Ten hours ... He didn't know what was going to happen, but he was sure of this much: he was not going to drink; and he was not—voluntarily, anyhow—damn it, not without a fight—going to sleep out anything the rest of the passengers could take.

*Dollars Dome—11 A.M. (C.S.T.)*

They stopped at the office to see if Thad had any news yet. He did; but nothing special. If there had been any trouble, or anything out of the way at all, on board the Messenger, it was not being broadcast.

"They probably kept him sedated anyhow," Phil pointed out, as they crossed the Mall to the Med Building where his office was.

She shook her head. "No. Not this time."

"Oh?" He looked at her curiously. Under his eyes, she lost some of the quiet certainty with which she had heard both Thad's report and Phil's comment.

"I mean, I don't think so. I—" She flashed a quick smile. "—have a hunch, let's say."

"Tell me more."

"I will," she said soberly. "That's what I wanted to talk to you about, Phil."

But she said nothing more till they were in his office. Then she took out two small roles of sound tape, and handed them to him.

"I'd like you to hear these for yourself before I say any-thing," she told him. "I made them out at the Shack. One was Monday. The other's yesterday."

He turned spools over in his hand dubiously.

"You care to give me any notion of what I'm listening to? Or for?"

"I thought perhaps you should just hear them first, but— I guess it'll make more sense if I tell you this much first. After we talked about that—telepathy bit, I got to thinking, and I realized I'd just been scared by the idea. Kind of foolish, I guess ... All this time I've been going around telling people I believe in—or, well, that I think there's a lot of sense in some of the work they've done in E.S.P.— Then as soon as something happens to show me, I back off and say, 'Oh, no, not for me, friend!'" She smiled wryly. Phil grinned.

"Honey, I told you to start with, this Shack stuff was spooky. Something makes sense, that doesn't necessarily make it feel sensible. I still get shivers when I try to think what they mean by an 'infinite universe.' Stuff like that."

"Maybe so. Anyhow, I think I'm over—" She stopped herself. "That's not true. I'm still scared as hell. But I'm scared of having a baby too, and scared of what might hap-pen tonight, when Johnny comes, and—I'm scared of lots of things I know are real, and even know I'll get through all right."

He cleared his throat. "Okay, kid. I hope you love me too. Now:—what's the bit with the tapes?"

"Well, I tried to think how I might be able to find out scientifi—I guess, experimentally is a better word? Anyhow, I thought if I got a recorder fixed up so that I could talk what I was thinking out there—at least I'd find out what I do think there—I told you, I'm never positive afterwards just when I got some idea, or just where it came from—?"

He nodded.

"And then, if it turned out to have anything on it that we could check . . . Well, then I'd know. Or at least, we'd know there was something worth working on. Well, you know what I mean."

"I think so. Just one thing, Lee. 'You want me to play these, so I gather you do think there's something—" He smiled. "—something 'worth working on?' "

"I'd rather not say what I think before—"

"I didn't ask you to. I told you what *I* think, right now. It's just that it's the way you talk about the whole business that makes me think so. So I play these tapes, see? And let's say I think there's something there—let's say, at a minimum, something that needs to be looked into more?" He paused. "Lee, you're not forgetting that Johnny's coming? He'll be here tonight. I don't know what happens after that. Neither do you. I just don't see the news story on why he's coming. Why in hell would he come up here for McLafferty if he wouldn't for you or Chris?"

"Phil—" She put a hand on his arm, stopping him. "Listen first, will you? I've heard them. I know there's some-thing that—well, just listen, will you? We'll talk later. "But I haven't forgotten about Johnny, believe me. That's partly why I wanted to give you the tapes now—before he gets here. And partly why I guess I don't want to talk about it right now. I can't decide anything much till he comes anyhow. And—well, whatever happens, I'd like to think that—I mean, let's say I back out of the whole thing and go home and never say bad words like ESP again—If there's anything in this thing, I have a hunch it's not me especially. I just happen to be the one it—happened to? That's as good a way as any to put it. So—so shut up and listen first, will you?"

"Right." He put a hand on her shoulder. "One other thing, Lee—while the saying's still good. Don't forget I made an offer?"

"I won't," she said. She stepped forward quickly inside his arm, kissed him, and turned and left. "I've got a class for the next hour," she said at the door. "Then I'll be in my room till about two or three. After that, I'll be out at the Shack, if you want to talk to me about any of the stuff there."

The morning had been all right.

He'd never had more than theoretical training on ion drive; there was no working ship with one when the Colombo took off. Now, roaming on invitation between the rocket rooms and control centers, he began to realize just what a monumental accomplishment the Messenger was. It was one thing to have the figures in your head: thrust and cost, tonnage, performance, all that. But for John Wendt, at least, nothing convinced but performance. The math told you what to expect—what your chances were. After that, metal and plastic and power, and flesh and blood and brains made it work.

If it worked, it was time to believe in it; not until then.

He spent the morning acquiring belief in the ion drive. He made a point of not thinking ahead. But as the drive shut out, and the great wheel, shorn of all velocity, slid onto the Zeroville coasting track, he had no alternative. Eleven-fifteen. TOA Moon Dome announced for seven-thirty. Eight hours, fifteen minutes.

Lunch, of course. Then what? There'd be nothing doing in crew quarters, once the shuttles left—Sonofabitch!

He wouldn't be on the wheel; he'd be in the shuttle. In Shuttle Two: out like a light. With all the other squares.

All passengers made the shuttle-leg under sedation. All passengers . . .

The speaker overhead came to life: "All passengers please board your shuttles. Prepare for sedation."

Johnny found Basil, and thanked him. "Nice of you to let me hang around so much," he said. "I'd have flipped my top sitting it out with the damn riders the whole way."

"Pleasure, Johnny. I mean it. Hell, it was good to see you again. I don't want to stick my nose where it ain't wanted, but—like man, if you're gonna be around again—oh, crap, you know what I mean."

"Thanks, Bass. Tell you the truth, I don't know yet my-self. But you got no one to blame but yourself if they kick you out and give me your job. Hell—I felt so much like crew this trip, I forgot all about the shuttle-leg, till they hollered just now." The announcer barked again, and started "Last call."

Johnny took off down the shaft.

He had it made!

*Red Dome—3:50 A.M. (S.S.T.) (2:30 P.M. C.S.T.)*

". . . helicopter sighted at base of hill 29.3 kilometres N. 17° E. from Playfair Crater. Flight reconnaissance fully establishes identity of vehicle. No indication of presence of pilot, M. Harounian. No superficial evidence of forced landing. Ground search to be conducted pending permission from U.S.A.A. authorities to conduct same within 50-kilometre zone."

Dr. Chen tapped the stiff paper of the official report thoughtfully on his desk. Then he switched on the phone, and asked for the S.U.A.R. hostel at World Dome.

That seemed probably the best way to go about it. Besides which, Dr. Christensen was not at Dollars Dome, and no second-in-command would want to take responsibility for such a decision.

*Dollars Dome—4:30 P.M. (C.S.T.)*

Phil Kutler sat at his desk, with a dozen sheets of rapidly typed pages spread out in front of him. He picked up one, glanced at it, put it down, picked up another. He shook his head, marveling or disbelieving, or just dazed: he wasn't sure which.

On each page, he had collected what seemed to be associated bits from the two tapes. Now he began stacking sheets, sorting them into two piles. In one were the "weirdies": what they seemed to mean was not even worth thinking about yet, he told himself firmly. The other stack held more coherent and familiar bits which, however, seemed probable "normal" thought ramblings. He picked up the next page:

"I will come, yes, I come ... I hear you call. I know it is time now I will leave this place . . . come to where love sends the call out ... I too love, have warmth, I bring my breath with . . . come now to know,

learn, tell, teach, ex-change . . . come with love to love . . ."

That was from Monday. From the Tuesday tape: "... came to us ... to me ... to us, me-all, came seeking, not knowing, almost, not-sure . . . came with openness, with warm-breathing . . . came to find and to speak and know . . ."

He put it with the others, then took it off. This one was worth at least asking about. He knew in advance what the answer would be. No one had come to the Dome or the Shack; if they had, the whole Dome would know it. But—it hung together too well. He set it aside, separately. The next two went onto the stack. He pulled the remaining page toward him, and sat staring at it.

" . . . each time around it's closer, bigger . . . need a damn microcaliper to know it but true, it is ... Lisa, Lee, love . . ."

It wasn't till that bit came out near the end of the Monday tape that Phil understood why she had waited till today to tell him, or why she would not stay while he played them. Damn few things that would really embarrass Lee—but her own voice talking love-talk to her would be one too much!

". . . To you, just to you . . . screw 'em all ... but I dammit I damn I love you, you're too damn good for me but if I still can I'll get you back . . . round again, bigger, I can't see the difference, but know . . . too damn many things don't see, don't have to not-know account of that. Don't see you either . . . baby, babe, doll, wait . . . damn it hurts, scared, Lee, you know?, damn, I'm scared . . . but I'm coming, babe, here I come, wait!"

Also on Monday's tape: "... bastard, but not so bad. Smart bastard anyhow . . . just for now, though ... up there, he's the boss . . . good man, Goddammit, you like the guy or not, good man in his job, and he knows not here, not know . . . Mac-go-to-hell, who cares which one? Just you kid, the rest of 'em drop dead all I care . . ."

The page was a full one. Tuesday's sections included mentions of someone named Bass, and a man called Kenny, and something about a poker game, scraps on a smashed window, subpoena server, a bit about "Mac"—McLafferty?

Well, this page at least could be checked. He folded it, tucked it in his jacket pocket, and left the office.

Downstairs, he turned, without quite planning to, in the direction of the Ad Building. In the back of his mind was the question of whether to speak to Thad about the tapes. He knew he wouldn't; and with Chris on his way back, it didn't make sense, anyhow. But he was not quite ready to see Lisa yet, and he very much wanted to talk to someone.

He'd kill some time with Thad, anyhow.

Better that way. His thoughts could work themselves out better on their own, in their hidden places, than he could do by conscious effort.

*Dollars Dome—4:45 P.M. (C.S.T.)*

The suave exterior of the U.S. Envoy to World Dome, the Honorable Andrew Kenneth Gahagan—a diplomat of the old school—appeared sadly shaken on the phone screen: whether by emotion, bad radio transmission, or creeping senil-ity, Thad could not tell.

When he heard what the Honorable Gahagan had to say, he ruled out the likelihood of poor transmission. The other two choices remained equally possible, since the biochemist had no way of knowing just how serious, realistically speak-ing, a Red "invasion" of territorial boundaries might be.

"It can't wait two-three hours?" he asked. "Dr. Chris-tensen will be here at seven, and I think it should be au-thorized by him personally."

"My own feeling in the matter," said the Honorable Gahagan "is that it should be authorized by Mexcity or not at all. I felt obliged, however, to determine your attitudes be-fore communicating with State on the matter."

Thad felt an almost irrepressible urge to say, Oh, hell, tell 'em come on over, if they'll send their bio chief in the parry ... or perhaps, You know, some of the babes there aren't bad. Tell 'em to shoot us a photo and we'll look for ourselves ... or even just, *Oh, foof!* He exercised his will power to its fullest

extent and said instead:

"Look, let me buzz you back in five minutes. I've got something here I have to get out of the way, and then I'll see what we can do about it."

He switched off and said to Kutler, who had come in some-time during the conversation, "You get that bit?"

"Just the tailend."

"The Honorable is all worked up because the Reds have asked permission to conduct a search for the pilot—girl pilot, I might add—of a helicopter of theirs that seems to have landed in some kind of trouble inside our zone. I wouldn't've thought twice myself, but Old Horsefeathers has me worried. And maybe with this whole Security investigation bit—"

"Man, you don't read the news. It's sex they're discovering now, not Security," Phil interjected.

"Oh. Well, maybe being as it's a girl pilot— Got it!" he said suddenly. "What do you think of doing it this way? Tell 'em sure, and we'll help. Set it up so any search team is mixed? Then there can't be any snooping or anything. What do you think?"

"Sounds good to me," Phil said. "It can't wait till Chris comes, hey?"

"This babe has been missing about twelve hours, and they don't know if she's hurt or in shock or anything."

"Well, we can't very well refuse permission then. I guess the mixed search is about the best bet."

"Yeah." He reached for the phone switch, hesitated, picked up a scrap of paper from the desk. "Do me a favor, will you? Get a few guys to run on out to this location right away and look over the plane. That's where it's supposed to be. Meantime, I'll tell Ole Mustachios what the score is, and let— Nope. I'll call Plato first, and then tell Gahagan. That way he can't stall."

Phil nodded approvingly, took the paper, and started out. "Hey, Thad," he said first. "Lee's out at the Shack. Sup-pose I get the squad to drop me off there on the way, and bring her back in? You don't need me for anything around here?"

"No. Good idea. Glad you thought of it."

*Dollars Dome—7:30 P.M. (C.S.T.)*

When he came out of it, Chris was standing next to the couch, watching him. He got himself unbuckled, stood up, stretched. Chris watched, and said nothing. Johnny straightened out, felt his feet steady under him, and took a stance facing the other man, not more a foot away.

"All right, Johnny, you got here," Chris said. "Now what?"

"What I said to start with," he replied evenly. "I want to see Lisa. I hear by the newspapers—" The hell with that crap! He didn't ask why . . .

"I see by the newscasts," Chris picked up on it, "That you are here as a 'special investigator' for Mr. McLafferty—what-ever that is."

Johnny said nothing.

"Are the newscasts right?"

"Ask McLafferty."

"You're closer."

"Listen, Chris. I came for Lee. You can make it easy or make it tough. We used to be friends, so I tell you this once: I came for my girl. You and Mac can both go to what-ever kind of Hell they keep for guys like you. And I'll foul you up as cheerfully as him if you get in my way. I came for my girl. The rest of your politicking fornicating foolishness doesn't concern me at all."

Chris thought it over. "Okay," he said. "I'll cooperate with you in anything Lee wants. Outside of that, I warn you, step out of line just once, just by one toe, and—I'm the boss here. That's all."

"Okay. Now where's my girl?"

"You know the room. If she's not there, try Kutler."

*Dollars Dome—7:50 P.M. (C.S.T.)*

"He's pretty damn busy," Bourgnese said. "If it's some-thing I can take care of ... ?"

"You Number Two boy here?" Johnny demanded.

"You could put it that way," the other man said coldly.

"Okay. I'll put it that way. Can you authorize me a half-track?"

"You're kiddin'!"

Well, what in Hell is so special about wanting a car? "What are they, made out of solid gold or something? No-body but the Big Cheese can sign 'era out?"

"Look, before you flip completely, friend, leave me advise you that there probably isn't even a car in the Dome. If they're not all out already, they ought to be. And what makes you so damn eager to get in on it?"

"In on what? I'm looking for Lisa."

"Well, try Kutler if she's not in her room. He brought her back in—"

"He's not here and neither is she."

"You sure of that? He went out for her—Hell, it must've been five-thirty or so—"

"I'm sure. She's at the Shack."

Bourgnese stared at him a moment.

"You tried the dining room and dance room and all that jazz? I know he was bringing her right back."

"Listen," Johnny said, straining all his nerves for patience. "They're not here. They're at the Shack. Hell, I don't know where he is, and I don't give a damn. But she's there."

"How do you know?"

"How the Hell do you think I—?" He stopped cold. How did he know? "They're both there," he said, and knew it was true. "I don't know who the hell else is with them, but they're both there."

"Wait a minute," Bourgnese went to the phone and called the Shack Guardhouse. "Charlie! Is Miss Trovi still there?"

"Yeah. Her and the other babe and the Doc. Some half-track dropped him off couple hours ago. They're all in there."

"Right. Thanks, Charlie." He switched off and got Lock Supply.

"Give me the call number on Kutler's suit."

"Hold on. Here it is. Five-nine-cue-six-emmm."

"Thanks." He switched off and on again, dialed the helmet radio number. Nothing. "Damn!"

He turned back to Johnny. "Okay," he said, "Let's go."

They strode rapidly across the Mall to Lock Supply. Bourgnese signed out suits for both of them.

Johnny turned to Thad as the other man started away. "Thanks," he said. "I don't know why in Hell you're doing it. But thanks."

"No," Bourgnese said. "I guess you wouldn't know why."

### *The Shack—8 P.M.—Phil Kutler*

The two women sat, one at each side of the tank, gazing into it. Lisa's voice droned as the tape wound from spool to spool:

". . . but I-all did not know . . . idea of unit-body discrete-person too far back with memory haze . . . and not-alike, even when . . . but when? how far back? ... so long I had been one-and-all . . . recalled haze-memory, but too much lost with no-need-to-know . . . had to begin, to learn, fresh, new . . . too slow, too slow . . ."

"He's coming!"

The words cracked like a whiplash in his helmet; he jumped back, out of touch, put a hand to his face-plate in reflexive feeling for damage, that snap had been so sharply physical.

The plate was intact. Of course. He smiled foolishly, leaned toward her again; found he had to force himself to retouch helmets. That crack had hurt.

"Johnny?" he asked.

No answer. Then out of the side of his eye he saw she was nodding her head inside the helmet.

"Can you tell if anyone's with him?"

Pause. "Somebody, yes ... not Chris . . . Thad?"

That seemed likely.

"How is he— What kind of a mood—? I mean Johnny."

She giggled. "Fierce!"

Great! But she didn't sound worried. "That's good?" he asked sourly.

"Depends . . ."

He backed off to look at her. The half-smile on her face was—in Moonsuit and helmet, in a half-enclosed shack on the Moon's friendless face—absurd, ludicrous . . . nothing short of outrageously funny with its eternal-mysterious-fe-male. So laugh already! He didn't. Sure, he thought, funny, like . . . crazy, man . . . but how would it look if she smiled it for you? Then he realized she could probably hear this as well—or more clearly than?—anything he said aloud through the helmets. And then, with relief, but with bitter-ness too: If she were listening, that is ...

She wasn't. She was listening only to one man, the man at the wheel of the half-track, now visibly nearing at full speed across the Moon dustcakes—coming for her.

And the half-smile was gone. A full, lovely smile now, and moist eyes too. What the hell is he saying?

None of your damn business!

He started again. It was going to take getting used to: getting to know when you had thought a thing for yourself, or had it thought to you. That one was himself—he thought.

He leaned forward again. "Does Maria know?"

"Of course. We were just thinking . . ." Then it happened again: a sort of stereo-thought in his mind, coming from both, complete, in-agreement, and did-he-agree? Was this the best way?

He nodded, straightened up, and walked through the door to wait outside.

### *The Shack—8 P.M.—Thad Bourgnese*

"It ought to be Phil," he said tensely. "I'll try him again." This time the reply was immediate; nothing wrong with Doc's suit then; he'd just been switched off before.

Switched off? The guy goes out to get Lisa, stays out him-self instead, and turns off his set. Nice going ..

"Hi," Phil said. "Johnny with you?"

"Yeah. What in hell are you doing out here? And where's Lee?"

"Right inside. Waiting. Also, we have a guest."

"Guest?" If that meant what he thought it did, this was one too much. "Who's the guest?"

"I hate to shout," Phil said. "You dig me, man!"

Yeah? I do, do I? Then what in the name of all-holy have you been sitting out here for? The whole damn Dome goes out hunting, and . . .

The half-track ground to a screeching halt. Wendt was out almost before it stopped. Thad turned off the ignition and followed. He saw Johnny's taller figure march like incarnate doom on the man at the door.

"For krissakes, Phil," he started, and would have said, Let him in! but it was unnecessary. Kutler had moved before Wendt got there. Johnny went through, and Phil stepped back in front of the door.

Thad walked up slowly. He was trying hard to hold onto the irritation he knew he should still feel.

"What gives?" he asked, and managed a frown.

"Lee said, just Johnny, first, please. That's all."

"Just? What's with your company?"

"She'll be out." Kutler's calm ought to be infuriating. But all he felt was: *Well, Phil's got some sense; he must know what he's doing. ...*

"You wouldn't mind filling me in some?" he asked.

"Glad to. Turn off your radio. I don't want to tell the whole world."

The two men touched helmets, and Phil started talking. A moment later, a bulky figure in an ill-fitting, clearly-marked, S.U.A.R. suit came out of the Shack. The three of them headed for the pressurized Guardhouse.

*The Shack—8 P.M.—Johnny Wendt*

He stepped through the doorway into dimness and a kind of—warmth? In the center of the pavilion—that's all it really was—a tank set on the ground bubbled evilly around an enormous hump of moldy grey-white, kneaded-looking, knobbed, and ridged.

Two suited figures sat, one on each side of the tank. As he entered, the one at the far end arose, walked around the tank, came toward him.

Lee?

It wasn't, of course. He would have known by her walk, and when she came close enough, by her face . . . But before he saw these things at all, he knew it wasn't. Lee sat with her back to him. The other woman—Maria?—smiled as she passed, and went out.

Lee sat where she was, back to him. But—

Johnny, oh Johnny, my darling, my love!

It was not in words. The thought of the words, the idea of speaking, was there; and it seemed that he heard: but what was most real about it came through without symbols, and surely without any sounds. It was just—

Warmth. Lisa-to-Johnny-warmth. Love.

Nothing to question or worry or doubt or solicit or yearn for or want or need or define. Just love-as-is . . . love-actuality . . . love-known, love-before, love-after . . . a place to rest and be warm through inside himself.

He had felt it before.

He had felt it and it had been false.

He had felt it, not Lisa-to-johnny, but—

No!

If he screamed aloud, nobody knew it. He didn't know. His head ached, either from the resounding scream inside the helmet, or else from the need to scream, kept in his head.

Doug, get out! Get out, damn it! Get out of here! Damn it, you're dead! Don't you know you're dead?

The figure at the tank rose, and began to turn.

Johnny stood helpless, rooted. He would have fled if he could. But the warm flood embraced him, caressed him, held him bound. Frightening, enticing, beckoning, threatening, stiflingly suffocating, vibrantly life-giving. And—

He had run from it before. He could run no more.

The figure turned toward him entirely, and stepped for-ward.

It was not Doug. Doug was dead.

It was Lee. Lee, Lisa, Lisa-love, Lisa-loves-John . . .

Her walk . . . Her love . . . Her face, smiling up at him, close and closer still, through the plastic helmet plate, tear-fully?, lovingly, hers.

*Lee!*

He reached out his arms.

She came into them—almost. His gauntleted hands gripped the backs of her shoulders, and she looked up, laugh-ing. The rigid fabric of his suit was pressed against hers, and there they stood, each one behind his own life-saving column of air inside the pressured suits, in a mad caricature of em-brace. Laughter broke loose inside him and bubbled up. He bent his head; helmets touched; and their laughing mingled and merged and grew whole. It raced into the current of love-warmth, and pulled him with it, turning and twisting and sporting in cascading torrents of lovely-Lisa-laughs-with-love . . .

How long they stood there in the wondrous half-embrace he did not know: two enclosed islands



inside their Moon suits, making love through glass walls by the side of a strange pool of—

He shuddered.

—of bubbling putrescence, of—

A friend! she said sharply.

Friend!? He looked at the tank and he shuddered again. Looked back at his Lisa. "Hey, babe," he said gently, his helmet against hers, "I think we better get you—"

Not yet! She smiled. But she hadn't waited to hear what he said. And she hadn't opened her mouth when she spoke.

Nor had he—the first time.

You know it's true, darling . . .

Her voice, yes, but voiceless . . . Their helmets now were clear inches apart. Listen! she insisted.

Monday afternoon, she told him, reciting, you sat in the Messenger dining room and watched the Moon, and you thought you could see it get bigger and bigger each time it went around, if you could have microcalipers to measure with . . .

This morning, you watched every step of the ion blast...

Yesterday . . .

It went on and on. It battered, without hurt; pushed, without tearing; forced itself into his consciousness tenderly, gently, inexorably. It was true. It worked.

Like the ion engine—like anything—it worked! He saw it work, felt it work, knew it worked. So it was true.

Why?

How?

I'll show you, darling ... He let her draw him back to the tank, and sat down beside her.

#### *The Shack—8 P.M.—In the Guardhouse*

"You are Maria Harounian?" Bourgnese asked sternly.

"Yes."

"You speak English?"

"Only few words."

"You are from Red Dome—from the S.U.A.R. Dome?"

She nodded.

He turned to Kutler.

"How long has she been with you in there?"

"She was there when I got there; two hours, maybe? I don't know if you noticed, Thad. She's—quite pregnant. You might ask her to sit."

"All right. Would you like to sit down, Maria?"

She shook her head. "No-thank." She smiled. When she smiled, her wide blonde face looked remarkably like Lisa Trovi's long dark-skinned face.

"You saw her enter the Shack?"

Some shuffling of feet. "Yes, sir."

"And you permitted her to enter?"

"Well, yessir. Miss Trovi said—"

"You did not see fit to inform us in Dome?"

"Sir, Miss Trovi said this lady was with her. She took all responsibility."

"But you knew a search was being conducted for Miss Harounian?"

"Well, yes, but we didn't know it was her. Miss Trovi come to the door, and said, her and her friend going in to the Shack, let 'em know if anyone tries to call . . ."

"You didn't ask who her 'friend' was?" Thad shook his head, incredulous. These men were good guards. They knew their job.

"Well, no sir."

"Sir—"

It was the Russian girl. "Yes?"

"Sir—she want us. Calling now."

There was an odd sort of urgency in her voice, in her face, her whole stance.

"Right!" The three of them started back to the Shack, with just one small part of Thad's mind still wondering why neither he nor the guards had called Chris yet.

Inside the Shack, Lisa waited, with Johnny beside her. She smiled a welcome to the Soviet girl; included the two men afterwards. She beckoned Phil. "Start the tape? I'll try to keep talking it."

### *Mars—April, 1975—Doug Laughlin*

The Earthman stood beneath a violet sky, on rusty sands, and turned, inch by inch, slowly, feeling with all his ... something he had no word for ... exactly as at home he might have felt with a moist finger for the source of wind.

He made three complete turns before he stopped. He nod-ded, satisfied. That was the way. It didn't change. The tenth time in four days now, and always the same.

He went into the ship, and entered the direction in the Log.

The brother-Earthman slept. The first one sat at the big book and wrote. He covered two pages, and went back and read them through, nodding. Then went back to what he had written before, and read that. He nodded again.

He closed the book, and sat thinking. Then he stood up and went to the bunk where the brother-Earthman slept. He reached out a hand and drew it back again. Reached out and drew back. As if a wall stood between them. It seemed like a wall: from the brother-Earthman there was a sort of cloud of No—Don't touch!

He backed off from the bunk, somewhat sadly. Got into his heat suit and mask. Went down to the cargo hatch. Checked out a sand-cat. Started it up. Stood out on the sands while the motor wanned in the dawn chill. Made his inching turns again: nodded, deeply satisfied, certain now.

In his mind, he went back inside to the brother-Earthman, walled in his bunk with sleep and No. Stood there, thinking, and went back inside and to the Log. Looked through the pages, four of them on which he had written what at last he believed, what he was going to find out for sure.

Wanted to leave what he said, but not leave information to follow with. If he was mad, let one death be enough. Four pages, two sheets, and each sheet somewhere on it had the destination. He thought:—

If he was right, explanations would follow. If he were wrong—what difference why?

He tore out the sheets. Left the ship. Started out, to find the Mars-people whose love-thoughts, greetings, warm yearn-ings and welcomes came like a wind, like a breeze, like a flood of light, beam of caresses, from a direction he now knew he knew . . .

### *Mars—April, 1975—Martian*

*I-all waited, eager, sending out callings: joyous, rejoicing, preparing reception; calling in airmakers, calling in water-cells, calling in; calling for the Earthman coming . . .*

*. . . I-all, a planet-wide oneness of readying: for new ex-change, learning, contact, emotion, give-and-take, take-and-give; from/to/with/alongside/between/together with this unit-body of Earthman approaching . . .*

*. . . I-all, ready now, knowing from last time, from Earth-other-brothers who came in first great ship, knowing ahead this time: air, water vapor—without these the Earth-bodies cannot survive; old memories stirring, from before me-all, once on a time when the I-we who lived before me-all were discrete bodies alive in a fluid of water-air; back, distant-far back before the drying and thinning of atmosphere . . .*

*. . . I-all, descended, evolved, changed, mutated, attenu-ated, substance of sentience: broken to one-cells; joined in [one-thingness]; stretched out to use all the sparse vapors spread round a*

*planet; combined, united, one-minded but many-celled—starch-makers, water-bags, air-holders, carriers, sun-suckers, thought-senders, soil-savers, moss-tenders, all of the others, all of the kinds of me-us, one-cell and one-cell; and here in the dim place of safehold, the grouped onecells, planners and thoughtmakers fed, watered, warmed, by my-our other-I's, sending out callings for feeders, airers, for heaters, waterers, all to send extras with carriers to the vault, to tend the Earth-brother . . .*

Doug would have been all right, except that he misjudged the distance. If he had realized he'd have to go all the way to the old city to reach It-Them, he would have done the whole thing differently. He'd have told Wendt where he meant to go—if not why—and taken a heli. If he real-ized, he would have lived.

If *They-It* had realized—if the two Russians had come to It-Them sooner after the crash, had lived a bit longer to tell more and learn more, if *They-It* had been able to learn from the first two that for Earth-bodies the life of the brain alone is not sufficient— If It-They had understood the whole human mechanism, perhaps he'd have lived.

Whether the Martian (call it that; call it "it", there is no proper pronoun) could have summoned resources sufficient to keep Doug alive—for years, as it would have been— until help came, the Moon-Martian did not know. But the Martian had too little information to plan ahead, and it took planning.

It could have stopped him; would have, had it known his supplies would run out before he reached the vault, or that its own preparations were foolishly inadequate. But the centuries—aeons? millennia? How long, Moon-Martian also did not know—of one-ness, alone in togetherness with all just oneself, the long-long loneliness had only been out-lined, sharp-edged, and identified, when the two Russians came for so short a time.

Laughlin came closer, and it sent its call stronger and clearer, more endearing. Laughlin's cat sputtered and failed, and without thinking, he strapped the spare oxy tank on his back and set out afoot.

He lived ten days inside the vault beneath what he and Johnny had decided must have been a Martian bank, but had been built especially to guard, preserve, tend, grow, the brain-center of the planet-wide "body" of the last Martian —the brain into which was poured the memory and knowl-edge, skill and affections and hopes and dreams and lost be-liefs and yearnings and ideals of a race which could not in its own first form survive the stripping of the atmosphere from the old planet.

He lived, intact, ten days; his brain, for which there was enough starch, air, and water, stayed alive and able to com-municate—how long?—Moon-Martian did not know—a long time, too-long, till he was sure the Martian knew enough now for the next Earthmen; then he chose not-to-live.

It was his choice to make. The Martian did not like it. but complied; it had no choice.

*Wednesday, October 19, 1977 10:15 P.M. (C.S.T.)*

The two bulky figures entered the half-track, and the taller one sealed the door behind them.

When he turned back to her, the woman had already opened the car's oxy valve, and removed her helmet.

Without taking his eyes from her face, he reached up and undid the clasps on his, broke the gasket seal, and lifted the bowl off his head. He stepped forward, and she took one step at the same time, meeting him. For the first time in two months, they met each other's lips.

He stripped off his gauntlets, and held her head in his hands, drinking in the touch and look and scent and feel of her. From the neck down, the limp pressure suits swathed them both in formless fabric armor; but hands and heads were free to caress; a smile could be finger-traced as well as seen; a murmured word was clear to a close ear.

For minutes, they stood close as the cloth barriers would let them be, not thinking anything, not saying anything in words that mattered. Then, still without words, he started the car, and they sat together, his arm around her, her head on his chest, for all the world like two wistful teenagers, while the 'track chugged torpidly back over the black face of the old Moon, under the gleaming greenfaced glow

of Earth.

Perhaps half way back, the words began. And then they tumbled out, questions on both sides coming so eagerly that nothing could really start to be answered.

It was a curious double-level conversation, too: because while their spoken words explored the wide new world opened up by the events at the Shack, the unspoken dialogue between them continued to re-enforce itself, and re-create their private world of love and close communication. The con-tact, once made, seemed quite able to function on its own, independent of the—

—whatever-it-was? Lisa, in snatches, told Johnny as much as she had been able to figure out, with Thad's help and Phil's, about the growth and differentiation of the Mars-bugs. The bubbling vat was a sort of brain-center. It extended nerve-like networks to all other colonies of bugs. Here on the Moon, where zealous "jailors" fed and tended the "brain," the network was just a sort of habit; on Mars, it served the vital function of connecting the water-holders, the oxygen-makers, the perceptors and proprioceptors and nutriment-synthesizers. The adaptation-or-mutation puzzler which had first caught the attention of the Dome scientists was not too different in nature from the sort of "instinctive" decision that sets the sex and functions of each new-made egg in an ant colony. All genes for each caste are present at birth; the en-vironment of the particular cell determines the final role of the member. And the choice of environment for that cell? With a functioning conscious brain, it was much easier to understand in the—Martian? Moon-Martian? The friend, was the way Lee thought of it—than it was in an ant colony.

She was telling him how Phil had forced her to recognize and experiment with the psi effects, when the call came. It came on the radio—but that was one minute after they had reversed direction, and started back toward the other half-track. It came first in Lee's awareness.

In the middle of a sentence, she broke off, and at the same instant, in the wordless sentence of love she was "speaking" she stopped to say, They're out of gas.

Later, John realized that if she'd said it aloud, he still would have doubted. But in the inner dialogue there was no space for doubt or disbelief. He heard it, knew it, and acted on it, long seconds before they had switched on and warmed up their radio set, to call for help.

And by that time, he'd had the next thought.

He told Bourgnese, on the radio, that they were on their way, and asked them to stay tuned in. Then he switched off and started to ask Lee if she would try something—then knew she already knew, and before he could tell her exactly what it was he wanted, felt the opening channel between his own mind and the—friend—and switched on the set again.

"Bourgnese?"

"Right here."

"Listen, this might be just for laughs, but give your buggy a try again, will you?"

"Tonight I'll try anything, man," Thad said, and then, "She won't catch, John. We're bone dry."

"Forget the starter. Listen—just get in gear and drive. I mean—damn it, this sounds nuts. Pretend you've got gas. Like, try it once, okay?"

"What can I lose?"

A moment's wait, and an exclamation—hardly more than a whoosh of air, but it contained all the bafflement, delight, suspicion, excitement, and fascination that gave them the an-swer. Then, very calmly:

"Nice going, John. We'll make it back, I guess."

The new world of collaboration had started.

#### EPILOGUE

*Dollars Dome, Thursday,*

*October 20, 1977—2:30 A.M. (C.S.T.)*

In the conference room, Dr. Christensen sat at one end of the table; Dr. Chen sat at the other. Down one side of the table were ranged the U.S.A.A. staff, including Trovi, Kutler, Wendt, Bourgnese. Down the other side were S.U.A.R. men in equal numbers—and Harounian.

The last of the tapes slid to an end, and turned itself off. There was silence. Then Kutler rose and started to speak.

He explained in detail what he knew of the development of Lisa Trovi's ability.

He sat down, and the Soviet's Gregoriev rose, and told a rather more methodical and experimental tale of the dis-discovery of Maria Harounian's talent. "We came to the conclusion, tentative, that the pregnancy might be a factor," he finished. "It now seems this is justified."

Lisa whispered to Phil. He rose again. "Miss Trovi suggests that the particular pregnancy that was operative was hers—only because the child carried genes familiar to the—the Martian. She understands that it might be possible for a mind which has not yet developed semantic centers to—receive?—more readily. Thus, she believes her unborn child and Miss Harounian's might have been in contact more easily than two adults."

The first stir of reaction across the table subsided; there were nods of slow agreement.

Bourgnese rose: "Begging the pardon of the two ladies," he said, "I'd like to call attention to another matter. It happens these two infants were conceived prior to a certain —ah, noticeable change in—well, I'm sure you gentlemen have all been aware of the furor in our press about our—ah, morals, here? Of course, we don't know how things are at your Dome, but—?" He stood a moment, grinned, found two, then three and four answering grins across the table. "My suggestion was that perhaps the—emanations? callings? —from the—Martian—might have been in part responsible for—shall we say?—an extraordinary goodwill in the two Domes blessed with—Martian extensions?"

As he sat down, one of the Chinese delegates leaned forward. "I was just thinking," he said, without bothering to rise, "I wonder how good this Martian is at PK?"

The words raced round the table, with the thought right behind. In a moment, a babble of voices was following. After a short time, John Wendt stood up.

The room quieted slowly. Slowly, and with precision, he told the story of the fuelless half-track.

"Gentlemen," he said. "It appears that we may have at hand a fuel—if you call it that—which will make any kind of space travel more practical. Excuse me; I am doing my best to understate. Assuming this—fuel—does not exist, we now know—" He swallowed, opened his mouth, cleared his throat. "Oh Hell. What I'm trying to say is: I'd like to volunteer three of the crew for the next trip out—any-where."

—THE END—

## THE YEAR'S SF A Summary

If you do manage to lift yourself by your own bootstraps, do the boots come along? It seems to me they would! it's a "closed system," isn't it?

In which case, perhaps the analogy of a multiple-stage rocket would be more suitable to describe the present paradoxically successful plight of science fiction. . . .

"The trouble is, the whole world seems to have gone '*science-fictional*'" Isaac Asimov wrote me, while preparing his article on "The Thunder-Thieves." "All sorts of mad ideas (or so they would have seemed a few years ago) are under serious investigation by scientists and—wonder of wonders—are reported in the press without either jokes or sneers."

What's more, the press (still somewhat ill-at-ease with the far-out notions "sober scientists" turn out to have) frequently refers to s-f to bridge the gap between the commonsense facts of a few years ago and the startling new scientific achievements—achievements "that only yesterday were science fiction."

It's not just the newspapers, either. The general magazines are printing more (and *better*) s-f all the time. Public libraries have special displays of new s-f. Several new s-f programs were announced for television at the start of the '58-'59 season.

And while all this was going on, the number of specialty s-f magazines on the newsstands plummeted from twenty-one, at the start of 1958, to ten at year's end.

These trends are not so contradictory as they may at first appear. Science fantasy is simply hoisting itself out of its own bootstraps—or leaving its booster tanks behind, as it levels into a new trajectory.

In a review of last year's *SF*, Anthony Boucher commented on the new non-fiction section, saying, "Much of the disciplined imagination we used to associate with science fiction now appears without fictional coating." And Asimov, in the same letter quoted before, said, "No matter how fast science progresses, it does not and cannot encroach upon science fiction—though between you and me it can encroach on s-f readers, by saturating them with science-advance, and depriving them *of* the need for s-f magazines."

I think Dr. Asimov is very right. It is worth noting in this connection that two of the magazines that suspended publication last year were replaced by "space" titles; and that John W. Campbell, Jr., who has edited the field's leading magazine, *Astounding*, for more than twenty years, called upon his readers last summer to subscribe to membership in a new "Society of Gentleman Amateurs"; the Society is to have its own journal, devoted exclusively to speculative science and engineering. (The rules would bar any working scientist from writing in his own field.)

Or consider these bits from a piece published last year on the possible future uses of parapsychology.

"The real idea . . . is to employ the waves or impulses for long-range transmission of messages, and even for the near-fantastic purpose of moving or influencing inanimate objects at great distances. . . . One group . . . has advanced the idea that the brain wave amplification concept offers a possible means of communication between space ships..." And the theory is proposed "that the measurable electrical impulses given off by the human brain are products of a body chemical reaction much in the same way that noise is a product of a combustion engine, and that the true brain waves making possible extra-sensory perception are something else again and not yet understood. . . ."

The article also claims that many "scientists of the highest repute" have come to believe "that there definitely is a special group of humans having the power or gift of transferring thought from mind to mind, and influencing consistently the dice in a game of chance." Now there would be nothing of special note in all this, except that the scientists referred to are not the hand-picked group of known "crackpots" who would have been quoted in an article of the same sort in a science-fantasy magazine ten, five, or just two years ago. They are working engineers and research men at Westinghouse's laboratory in Friendship, Md., at the famous Rand Development Corporation in Cleveland, and at the Army's Redstone, Alabama, missile development center.

The article, which appeared in the Sunday *N. Y. Herald Tribune* on July 13, 1958, was written by that paper's military and aviation editor, Ansel E. Talbert. It starts out: "An amazing series of projects . . . are receiving serious study in the research branches of the United States armed forces." It closes with a paragraph quoting Col. William Bowers, director of biological sciences in the Air Force Office of Scientific Research, as being "tremendously interested" in finding out "whether messages and even energy emanating from the human brain can be transmitted over thousands of miles. . . ."

"Science-advance" and "disciplined imagination" are no longer the esoteric intellectual entertainment of a specialized cult; it is to be expected that the literature of logical speculation will not for long retain its discrete identity. And if any further evidence were needed, it could be found in the ranks of s-f authors: both in the fast-growing roster of new names attracted to science fantasy, and in the attitudes expressed by older writers in the field.

For the past three years, an annual Science-Fiction Writers' Conference has been held at Milford, Pa. Discussions at these meetings cover every facet of the writer's craft, with special reference to science fantasy: markets, agents, editors, critics, research sources, and the basic subjective problems of writing itself. During the 1958 sessions, one point of view emerged repeatedly: the writers who had been in s-f for any length of time, almost to a man wanted to get out—but to take it with them as they went. Some wanted the greater literary freedom of the book form; some wanted to get away from "gimmicks"; others wanted editors without established s-f conventions.

"I want to say the same kind of thing, but I'm tired of saying it to the same people," some of them summed it up.

But one way or another, almost all wanted to write "a sort of s-f" or "something in between s-f and mainline fiction," for a wider market.

S-f (the category) is, if not dead, moribund; then long live s-f (the literature, and way of thinking).

In a year of disquieting news all round in the s-f marketplace, the saddest single item—after the untimely deaths of Henry Kuttner and C. M. Kornbluth—was the retirement of Anthony Boucher from the editorial chair of *Fantasy and Science Fiction*. From its first issue in 1949, through five years of co-editorship by Boucher and J. Francis McComas, and five more of Mr. Boucher's solo guidance, *F&SF* reflected his distinctive editorial personality, and exercised a potent influence on science fantasy as a whole, by supplying a sorely needed critical standard to a field which had grown up with pulp traditions and which was often marked by careless prose and stock characterizations.

Wide erudition and keen intelligence are professional requirements for the science-fiction editor, but Tony Boucher was the first to add a discerning sensitivity to good writing.

Consoling notes: One of the reasons Boucher gave for leaving the magazine was the hope of finding more time for his own writing. And the selection of Robert P. Mills, who edited *F&SF's* (more brother, by its personality, than) sister magazine, *Venture*, to fill the slot on the older magazine, gives hope that the new *F&SF* will take on some of the invigorating freshness he injected into the short-lived *Venture*.

Also worthy of special mention is the changeover in *Satellite*, formerly a digest-size bimonthly, now a large-size, smooth-paper monthly magazine. The experiment with a "slick" format was last tried some years ago by Hugo Gernsback; from what I've seen so far of the new *Satellite*, I think its chances are a good bit better than *Science Fiction Plus* ever had. In any case, it's an effort everyone in the field will be watching with interest, and one I personally hope will succeed.

Special mention for merit, outside the realm of the Honorable Mention listings that follow, go this year to:

Karen Anderson for "In Memoriam: Henry Kuttner," as heartfelt and apropos a eulogy as ever I have read or heard.

Vladimir Nabokov's *Nabokov's Dozen* (Doubleday), which contains some wonderful fantasy, reprints of previously printed stories.

Ron Smith, Dave Foley, and Bob Leman for their sidesplitting parody of *F&SF* in *Inside Science Fiction*.

Peter Ustinov, whose publishers wouldn't permit us to include his charming *Atlantic* story, "The Man in the Moon" in this volume.

--J.M.

## HONORABLE MENTIONS

The following books and magazines are represented in the Honorable Mentions list for 1958; abbreviations used in the list are indicated to the left of titles.

### Science-Fantasy Magazines:

Amz *Amazing Science Fiction Stories*

Ast *Astounding Science Fiction*

F&SF *Fantasy and Science Fiction*

Fant *Fantastic*

FU *Fantastic Universe*

Fut *Future Science Fiction*

Gal *Galaxy Science Fiction*

If *If Magazine*

Inf *Infinity Science Fiction*

Neb *Nebula Science Fiction* (British)

NW *New Worlds* (British)

OSFS *Original Science Fiction Stories*

Satl *Satellite Science Fiction*

SciF *Science Fantasy* (British)

*Star Star Science Fiction*  
*Sup Super-Science Fiction*  
*Vent Venture Science Fiction*

General Magazines:

*Adam Adam*  
*Arg Argosy*  
*Atl Atlantic Monthly (Anniversary Issue)*  
*Cos Cosmopolitan*  
*Dec December*  
*Esq Esquire*  
*Harp Harper's*  
*Plby Playboy*  
*Rogue Rogue*  
*SEP Saturday Evening Post*  
*Swank Swank*

Books:

"MBM" *A Mile Beyond the Moon*; C. M. Kornbluth (Doubleday, 1958)  
"SIS" *Station in Space*; James Gunn (Bantam, 1958)  
"Star#4" *Star Science Fiction Stories, #4*; ed.: Frederik Pohl (Ballantine, 1958)  
"TOR" *The Graveyard Reader*; ed.: Groff Conklin (Ballantine, 1958)  
"TofS" *A Touch of Strange*; Theodore Sturgeon (Doubleday, 1958)  
"TSS" *The Other Side of the Sky*; Arthur C. Clarke (Doubleday, 1958)  
"F&SF:8" *The Best of Fantasy and Science Fiction: Series 8*, Doubleday, 1959

POUL ANDERSON

"Backwardness," *F&SF:8*  
"The Apprentice Wobbler," *Star*, Jan.  
"The Last of the Deliverers," *F&SF*, Feb.

ALAN ARKIN

"People Soup," *Gal*, Nov

ROBERT ARTHUR

"Notes on the Great Change," *Dec*, May.

PAUL ASH

"Big Sword," *Ast*, Oct.

PAULINE ASHWELL

"Unwillingly to School," *Ast*, Jan.

ISAAC ASIMOV

"S as in Zebatinsky," *Star*, Jan.  
"Lastborn," *Gal*, Sept.

DON BERRY

"Man Alone," *If*, Oct.



ROBERT BLOCH

"That Hell-Bound Train," *F&SF*, Sept.

JOHN BRUNNER

"Substitute God," *FU*, Aug.

ALGIS BUDRYS

"A World Named Mary" (pseud.: Robert Marner), *Vent*, May.

"The End of Winter" (pseud.: William Scarff), *Vent*, Jan.

ARTHUR C. CLARKE

"The Songs of Distant Earth," TSS.

HELEN CLARKSON

"The Last Day," *Satl*, Apr.

MARK CLIFTON

"Remembrance and Reflection," *F&SF*, Jan.

MILDRED CLINGERMAN

"The Day of the Green Velvet Cloak," *F&SF*, July.

THEODORE R. COGSWELL

"Things," *F&SF*, May.

JOHN BERNARD DALEY

"Wings of the Phoenix," *Inf*, Apr.

AVRAM DAVIDSON

"Up the Close and Down the Stair," *F&SF*, May.

"The Grantha Sighting," "*F&SF*:8"

CHAN DAVIS

"It Walks in Beauty," *Star*, Jan.

GORDON R. DICKSON

"The Christmas Present," *F&SF*, Jan.

"The Question," *Ast*, May.

"Gifts," *Ast*, Nov.

CHARLES EINSTEIN

"Short Snorter," *If*, Aug.

GEORGE P. ELLIOT

"Among the Dangs," *Esq*, June.

HARLAN ELLISON

"The Last Day," *Rogue*, Nov.

"My Brother Paulie," *Satl*, Dec.

ROLLER ERNST

"The Red Singing Sands," *Sup*, Feb.

CHARLES G. FINNEY

"The Iowan's Curse," *Harp*, July.

CHARLES L. FONTENAY

"A Summer Afternoon," *F&SF*, Feb.

DONALD FRANSON

"The New Science of Astronomy," *Fut*, Dec.

CHARLES E. FRITCH

"Big Wide Wonderful World," *F&SF*, *Mar*.

RANDALL GARRET

"Respectfully Mine," *Inf*, Aug.,

RON GOULART

"Dream Girl," *F&SF*, Dec.

"The Katy Dialogues," *F&SF*, July.

JAMES E. GUNN

"The Immortals," "*Star#4*"

"Powder Keg," "*SIS*"

"Deadly Silence," *FU*, Apt.

HARRY HARRISON

"Trainee for Mars," *FU*, June.

FRANK HARVEY

"100 Miles Up," *Arg*, Feb.

ZENNA HENDERSON

"Captivity," "*F&SF:8*."

FRANK HERBERT

"Cease Fire," *Ast*, *Jan*.

PHILIP E. HIGH

"Risk Economy," *Neb*, Feb.

SHIRLEY JACKSON

"The Omen," "*F&SF:8*."

DANIEL KEYES

"The Trouble With Elmo," *Gal*, Aug.

JOHN KIPPAX

"Me Myself and I," *SciF*, #27.

DAMON KNIGHT

"The Enemy," *Vent*, Jan.

"Idiot Stick," *Star#4*."

C.M. KORNBLUTH

"Theory of Rocketry," *F&SF*:8."

"Reap the Dark Tide," *MBM*."

FRITZ LEIBER

"A Deskful of Girls," *F&SF*:8."

"Rump-Titty-Titty-Tum-TAH-Tee," *F&SF*, May.

JACK LEWIS

"Glossary of *Terms*," *FU*, Sept.

VICTORIA LINCOLN

"No Evidence," *F&SF*, Apr.

KATHERINE MACLEAN

"Unhuman Sacrifice," *Ast*, Nov.

RICHARD MATHESON

"The Edge," *F&SF*, Aug.

T.H. MATHIEU

"Cargo: Death," *Fut*, June.

DEAN MCLAUGHLIN

"The Man on the Bottom," *Ast*, Mar.

SAM MERWIN, JR.

"Lady in the Lab," *Adam*, II, 3.

ALAN E. NOURSE

"Hard Bargain," *Plby*, May.

"The Gift of Numbers," *Sup*, Aug.

FINN O'DONNEVAN

"The Gun Without a Bang," *Gal*, June.

CHAD OLIVER

"The Space Horde," *Amz*, Feb.

AVIS PABEL

"Basic Agreement," *Ast*, Sept.

FREDERIK POHL

"The Wizards of Pung's Corners," *Gal*, Oct.

ROBERT PRESSLIE

"Another Word for Man," *NW*, Dec.

"Dial '0' For Operator," *SciF*, #27

JOHN RACKHAM

"One-Eye," *Ast*, May.

KIT REED

"Devotion," *F&SF*, June.

MACK REYNOLDS

"Pieces of the Game," *Ast*, Dec.

JOEL TOWNSLEY ROGERS

"Night of Horror," *SEP*, June 7.

CHARLES W. RUNYON

"First Man in a Satellite," *Sup*, Dec.

MARGARET ST. CLAIR

"Squee," *Fut*, Feb.

THOMAS N. SCORTIA

"The Avengers," *OSFS*, Sept.

JOHN SHEPLEY

"Gorilla Suit," *"F&SF:8."*

ROBERT SILVERBERG

"The Man Who Never Forgot," *F&SF*, Feb.

"Slice of Life" (pseud.: Calvin M. Knox), *Inf*, Apr.

CLIFFORD SIMAK

"Leg. Forst.," *Inf*, Apr.

"The Big Front Yard," *Ast*, Oct.

CORDWAINER SMITH

"The Burning of the Brain," *If*, Oct

"Western Science Is so Wonderful," *If*, Dec.

WILL STANTON

"Over the River to What's-Her-Name's- House," *F&SF*, May.

JON STOPA

"A Pair of Glasses," *Ast*, Apr.

THEODORE STURGEON

"The Graveyard Reader," *"TGR."*

"A Touch of Strange," *"T of S."*

WILLIAM TENN

"Eastward Ho!" *F&SF*, Oct.

WALTER TEVIS

"Far From Home," *F&SF*, Dec.

PETER USTINOV

"The Man in the Moon," *Atl* '58

JACK VANCE

"World's of Origin," *Sup*, Feb.

JOAN VATSEK

"The Duel," *F&SF*, May.

KURT VONNEGUT, JR.

"The Manned Missiles," *Cos*, July.

PAUL WALLACH

"Piggy," *Swank*, Dec.

JAMES WHITE

"Tableau," *NW*, May.

JEANNE WILLIAMS

"The Hunter and The Cross," *Fant* Aug.

RICHARD WILSON

"Man Working," *"Star#1."*

JOHN WYNDHAM

"Idiot's Delight," *NW*, June.

ROBERT F. YOUNG

"Magic Window," *FU*, Aug.

INTRODUCTION to The Year's Greatest Science-Fiction and Fantasy – 4th  
Annual Volume  
by Judith Merril

You've heard the one about the old egghead (slightly cracked, but not quite addled yet) who's got this gorgeous girl assistant, and this formula (or Frankenstein, or maybe a giant ant). Anyhow, the old boy means well, but he just can't stop himself. (*One more experiment!* he says each time, *and then I'll quit.*) And he would have sure enough destroyed the world if the young reporter (or engineer, or Marine lieutenant) didn't bust in the door and marry the poor girl *just* in time.

Well, maybe I got it a little mixed up, but you know the one I mean. What I wanted to say was . . . you won't find it here.

The name of this book is *SF*.

*SF* is an abbreviation for Science Fiction (or Science Fantasy). Science Fantasy (or Science Fiction) is really an abbreviation too. Here are *some* of the things it stands for. . . .

*S* is for Science, Space, Satellites, Starships, and Solar exploring; also for Semantics and Sociology, Satire, Spoofing, Suspense, *and* good old Serendipity. (But *not* Spelling, without which I could have

added Psychology, Civilizations, and *Psi* without parentheses.)

*F* is for Fantasy, Fiction and Fable, Folklore, Fairy-tale and Farce; also for Fission and Fusion; for Firmament, Fireball, Future and Forecast; for Fate and Free-will; Figuring, Fact-seeking, and Fancy-free.

Mix well. The result is *SF*, or *Speculative Fun*. . . . Happy reading.

—J. M.

## ROCKETS TO WHERE?

by Judith Merrill

"In a free world, if it is to remain free, we must maintain, with our lives if need be, but surely by our lives, the opportunity for a man to learn anything. . . . We need to cherish man's curiosity, his understanding, his love, so that he may indeed learn what is new and hard and deep. . . ."

"Nobody and nothing under the natural laws of this universe impose any limitations on man except man himself."

The first quotation is from an interview with J. Robert Oppenheimer in *Look* magazine last year. The second is from the "Three Fundamental Laws of Astronautics," as set forth in a publication of the American Rocket Society by Krafft A. Ehricke (theorist-designer for the General Dynamics Corporation, and the man responsible for much of the planning that has gone into our ICBM's, as well as the solving of the re-entry problem and the new plans for a manned orbital vehicle).

Taken together with the words of the late Albert Einstein at the close of the preceding article, these excerpts comprise a potent statement of the essential philosophy of the scientist, a philosophy which has perhaps become essential to *all* thinking citizens in the "Age of Space."

The sense of wonder, the desire to know; the will to work at finding out; freedom to learn—but even more vitally the inward freedom implicit in the conviction that man's capacity for curiosity and for endeavor is the only measure of his potential growth: these are the tenets of world sanity and human survival now. (As ever—but now more than ever.)

To the extent that we can cherish curiosity (learn to question the obvious, rather than accept unthinkingly), cherish understanding (the *why?* and *wherefore?* . . . not just the *who-what-where-when-how*) and cherish love (learn that we need each other more than we need fear each other)—to the extent, in short, that "scientific man" can become *thoughtful* man—to this extent only can we hope to outlast our own powers of destruction.

I understand that a new model Detroit automobile takes eighteen months or more from the drawing board to the dealer's display room. It is eighteen months, as I write this, since the launching of *Sputnik I*. In that brief time, we have witnessed so many further "breakthroughs" on so many scientific fronts (not necessarily connected with space flight at all) that to attempt even to summarize them here would be absurd. (The headline in my morning paper said today: *PIONEER IV NEARS MOON ON WAY TO DATE WITH SUN!*) The record of physical accomplishment, here and abroad, has been so steadily spectacular that I think most of us *have* lost the faculty for amazement—at engineering feats. But there is still cause for wonder (and lots of it) in another sphere—and that is in the unmeasured, and as yet barely recognizable capacity of the human being for intellectual, spiritual, and emotional attainment.

"The readjustment of attitudes toward the universe" made necessary by the immediate prospect of space flight was compared to "the beginning of the readjustment of man to a round instead of a flat earth," by *The New York Times'* science writer, Richard Witkin, just last year.

I do not think he overstated. And what he asked for was not far short of a miracle—considering that the four hundred years since Copernicus has been inadequate to sell mankind in general on the existence of the solar system.

Not even that comparatively small segment of humanity that we call "Western Culture" was entirely convinced. At least, one generation back, in Arkansas, a teacher could—and did—lose his position for instructing his pupils in contradiction of Solomon's clearly stated biblical precept that "the earth is fiat, has four corners, and is the center of the universe." (I quote from the decision of the presiding Justice of the Peace. Whether the Copernican heresy is countenanced today in the same small community just south of Little Rock, I do not know.)

We needed a miracle, and it seemed we were little likely to be given one. (Modern miracles have been moved from the Handout Department to Do-It-Yourself.) The truly amazing and heartening thing is that we *are* showing sign of producing it—eventually.

The prevailing *pre-Sputnik* attitude toward space ran a gamut from tolerance to hilarity.

"Before *Sputnik*, it was considered bad taste for the military to mention space," Wernher von Braun said in a *Life* interview.

"The long-time dream of little children has come true," one Boston paper started its feature piece on the first satellite. Most of the press preferred to say "science-fiction dream."

A rather self-consciously courageous editorial in *Newsweek* (for Oct. 21, 1957) proclaimed our entry into the Age of Space . . . "whether we like it or not." And plenty of people did not—especially if, as seemed inevitable, there would be Russians up in heaven too.

But even in those first few weeks, the job of psychological retooling had begun. The same issue of *Newsweek*, for instance, carried a full-page advertisement headed, "Instrumentation—stepping stone to the stars"; and under a science-fictiony illustration, in dignified text, came a pitch for the long-range investment policies of the First National City Bank of New York! *The New Yorker* (dated two days earlier) had an ad with a starmap, a spacesuit, and a map of Florida, saying, "The earth has now launched its first man-made satellite . . . when the rockets take off for outer space . . . [it will be] . . . only natural to stop at your nearest 'moon' and ask the man for a free Rand-McNally space chart."

It took the nation's publishers practically no time at all to get onto the same good thing (whether they liked it or not). The newspapers poured out a deluge of I.G.Y. and Vanguard promotional pieces—some rewritten, some pulled fresh from the files of the past two years. Hot on their heels, the weekly news magazines beat the bushes of industry, government, and universities for fugitive eggheads to "expertize" for the "news analysts." (I wonder if anyone has calculated whether the total energy expended by physicists in interviews during October–November, 1957, would have been sufficient to lift a lunar probe?)

By now, of course, there is hardly a publication in the country that has not featured some sort of something about space. And a whole new category of publishing has been born, ranging from comic books and *True Space Secrets* (one issue of which contains a revealing article entitled "Sex in Space") to the *Washington Space Letter* (subscription, \$25 quarterly, \$75 the year, as advertised in the *Times* financial section, for manufacturers who want "space contracts") and the *Space Journal* published in Huntsville, Ala., by the Rocket City Astronomical Association (and featuring such sensational articles as "The Purpose of Man in the Universe").

From a standing (if not sitting-down, or sound-asleep) start eighteen months ago, we have covered a truly fantastic stretch of psychological ground. The staggering fact is that today the American public as a whole has come to accept the imminence of space flight as a reality no less tangible than, say, the likelihood of another World Series next year—and hardly less exciting, either, if probably not quite so enjoyable. (I wonder, though, what might happen if someone were to start some office pools on the next series of Florida vs. California rocket launchings?)

I wonder, too, whether *sound asleep* was not after all the best way to speak of the national state of mind two years ago? Asleep, and *dreaming*? Whether you thought of it as childish or inspired, science-fictional, scientific, ennobling or illusory, the "dream" was there—as far back as man's memory goes. Our language, folklore, and religion are all full of it. Ambitious, we "hitch our wagon to a star." Demanding, we "want the moon on a platter." Happy, we sit "on top of the world." Prayerful, we seek eternal paradise—in heaven.

Perhaps this new reality is easier to accept than some others because it *has* the quality of awakening

from a dream? Let us hope so: once fully awakened, we cannot but perceive, and accept, the equal reality of global brotherhood—and thus end forever the nightmare of global war.

## THE YEAR'S S-F A Summary

I should not like to have it thought, from my earlier comments, that I take exception to everything Kingsley Amis says. On one point at least I am very much in agreement with him, and that is the urgent need for a new name for this field.

Not to carry the sweetness and light too far—his feeling that " 'Science fiction' is every day losing some of its appropriateness as a name for science fiction," seems to me typical of his failure to understand what science fiction is—but for quite different reasons, I do share his conclusions.

The Sunday Herald Tribune, a few weeks ago, published a longish and most favorable review which began:

"This is a curious and original and very serious book, and it will be so satisfactory to the right reader that I think a warning is in order: though the action takes place in the future, and though a space ship takes off on the final page, this should not be confused with what is usually called science fiction. What he has really written is a highly imaginative, and basically joyous, celebration of humankind's instinct to keep going."

The book under discussion was Walter M. Miller, Jr.'s *A Canticle for Liebowitz* (Lippincott, 1959), the work of a skilled, experienced, popular s-f author, first published as a series of long novelettes in *Fantasy and Science Fiction*.

Now "science-fiction" books *by science-fiction authors* are simply not reviewed seriously in the major critical outlets. (These days, they are rarely reviewed at all.) But the canny jacketeers at Lippincott have gotten around this taboo several times now by the simple expedient of not *labeling* their books as s-f. In this case they went a step further: the jacket flap biography explains that Mr. Miller "compromised between art and engineering by writing science-fiction, until this, his first novel." (My italics—J.M.)

Then they took care to plaster the jacket with quotes from "respectable literary" names—all clearly "non-science-fiction" people, except the acceptable exception, Bradbury—saying, "It falls into no genre, certainly not science fiction," and "It is not, really, a 'futuristic' novel." (Plus one from old friend Amis, who says, "... a serious and imaginative novel. . . .")

Thus freed of the Curse of the Tag, an excellent novel became eligible for consideration on the level on which it was written—instead of the usual fast paragraph at the space-opera stand.

Well, if this is what it takes to persuade "literary" folk to read a good book and enjoy it—down with "science fiction," sez I. Let's have a new label. Or none at all. Who knows? That way, Sturgeon might outsell Pat Frank.

I should confess here, also, that I owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. Amis. The wildly improbable circulation figures he quotes in his book led me to get down to a long-postponed job of research on the cross-the-counter condition of health of what we still do call science fiction—and I emerged unexpectedly reassured.

Last year I reported here that the number of magazine titles in the combined fantasy and s-f fields had dropped from twenty-one to ten. As of the start of 1960, we are down two more, to eight titles—less than at any time since before the big boom of the early fifties—since 1946, to be exact. *But—*

Of these eight titles, six are monthlies, and two bimonthly. In 1945-46, with eight titles, there was an average of four magazines a month issued; now there are seven. In 1949, when there were also seven magazines a month on the stands, they comprised 17 titles. In the peak year for s-f magazine publishing, 1953, there were four times as many titles as now—but only *twice* as many magazines.



It would be easy—and gratifying—to adduce from this that the publications surviving today are the solid, sound, worthy ones: to some degree it must even be true. But to generalize from that to the notion that "science fiction is maturing" (which I keep hearing, hopefully) would be inaccurate. The reason for all these healthy-looking regular monthly magazines has virtually nothing to do with either publishers or buyers; it is the work of the distributors, who last year began putting pressure on the publishers to go monthly or quit. Two who tried to make twelve books a year pay off, failed; two others "suspended" indefinitely without trying.

There is then less cause for alarm than one might think, but small cause for joy either, in the condition of the specialty magazines. In two other fields, however, s-f is thriving: paperback books, and general fiction magazines.

For the past five years the number of paperback books in the combined fantasy and science-fiction fields has held to a remarkably steady all-time high of 70 to 80 per year. From the looks of things, it will rise sharply this year. In short, we may expect more individual paperback books than issues of magazines this year—but the fact is that for the past two or three years, p-bs have been outselling magazines in total quantity. 60,000 copies is an exceptionally good circulation for an s-f magazine these days, I understand; but very few book publishers will issue a p-b without being able to sell at least that many. The average paperback sale is probably somewhere between 90 and 100 thousand.

In the first volume of S-F, reporting on 1955, I pointed out with some pride that as many as 50 or 60 s-f stories had appeared in "slick," quality, and other non-s-f magazines. Last year more than that number was accounted for in the "*Playboy*-type" magazines alone. With what appeared in the slick and quality magazines, there were, I should estimate, upward of 200 stories (fantasy and s-f) published in non-s-f periodicals in 1959—equal to the contents of at least three more full digest-size magazines, but with circulations (in many cases) in the hundreds, instead of tens, of thousands.

Granted that most of this non-specialty material is of low quality—so far. So was most of the stuff in *Amazing* and *Wonder* in the early 'thirties. It's being bought by editors who don't know the field, and often as not from writers not much better informed. (As witness: Jack Kerouac's pretentious "City," in *Nugget*.)

But it is being bought and printed. S-f—or whatever we don't call it—is being read and enjoyed more widely than ever before.

The new popular interest in what is still best described as "science-fiction thinking" is evidenced, again, in the really enormous quantity of speculative non-fiction appearing on all sides. As with the fiction in the unfamiliar media, much of this wordage is only by courtesy of subject matter "speculative," and when a generally thoughtful or imaginative piece does appear, it is immediately rehashed in a dozen other publications till the last drop of new-think has been squeezed out of it. But the titles alone indicate the latent interest on the part of the mass readership:

"This Is Living in 2000," appeared in *Newsweek* a few months ago. The title approximates Gernsback's old series in the *Air Wonder* of the 'twenties, and the subject matter (subheadings—"Ersatz Coffee," "Climate Control," and "Mining the Ocean Floor") was not much fresher to hardened old readers of s-f. To *Newsweek* readers it was ahead of the news. About the same time (the turn of the decade) *The New York Times Magazine* published "Brave World of the Year 2000," and *This Week* produced a pushbutton-happy two pages called "Get Set for the Happy New Decade." And *Esquire*, in its fat gold Christmas issue for 1959, included an article by David Schoenbrun called "1960: Birth of a Century," which was as thoughtful and comprehensive a piece of extrapolative writing as one would wish to see these days.

Then there were the "Adventures of the Mind" series in *The Saturday Evening Post*; the series of articles on ESP, space travel, and chemical warfare, in *Harper's*; and the increasingly fruitful "SR/Research—Science and Humanity" monthly section in the *Saturday Review*.

People—the general public—are getting used to the idea that hurt so hard when the first Sputnik blew the roof off: that there is precious little we know, and precious much to be learned; and that science is a method—not an authority.

Because the academicians, politicians, and spokesmen in general always learn more slowly (being

already so stuffed with knowledge), it may seem that this kind of "s-f thinking" is making slow headway; but watch the cartoons in your newspaper or weekly magazine—listen to the new gags—check the number of fantasy or s-f themes in TV shows—in pop songs.

That mass readership is going to be ready for *good* (but don't call it) science fiction sooner than most of us have believed.

The changes in this year's S-F are obvious—or some of them are. The title, date of publication, size, and price, you'll have noticed by now; also the dropping of the controversial special non-fiction section. There will be more changes next year, I hope; this year, the change in publishing arrangements came too late to do much about adding some of the material I hope to use hereafter.

Special mentions for 1959, besides those regularly included in the short-story honor roll, should be given:

For verse and poetry: to F&SF, especially the contributions by Hilbert Schenck, Jr., and Gordon Dickson; and to Prof. Theodore R. Cogswell and his *confreres* in the *Publications of the Institute of Twenty-First Century Studies*.

For novels in the magazines: to Gordon Dickson's explosive "Dorsai!" (*Ast*, May-July), Everett E. Cole's "The Best Made Plans," (*Ast*, Nov.-Dec.); and the magazine version of Pat Frank's "Alas, Babylon" (*Good Housekeeping*, March).

For novels in book form: to Kurt Vonnegut's *The Sirens of Titan* (Dell); John Brunner's *Echo In the Skull* (Ace); and Theodore Sturgeon's *Cosmic Rape* (Dell).

For the short story reprints in the Kornbluth *Marching Morons* (Ballantine); Sturgeon's *Aliens 4* (Avon); and Anthony Boucher's giant two-volume anthology, *A Treasury of Great Science Fiction* (Doubleday).

And above all, for well-worded clear thinking about the troubles, needs, and satisfactions of the (science fiction?) field, the volume, *The Science Fiction Novel* (Advent), edited by Basil Davenport, and with papers by Robert A. Heinlein, C. M. Kornbluth, Alfred Bester, and Robert Bloch.

—J. M.

## HONORABLE MENTIONS

### Abbreviations

Amz Amazing Science ,Fiction Stories

Ast Astounding Science Fiction

Cos Cosmopolitan

F&SF Fantasy and Science Fiction

"F&SF:9" "The Best from Fantasy and Science Fiction: Series 9," ed. Robert P. Mills (Doubleday, 1959)

Fant Fantastic Science Fiction Stories

FU Fantastic Universe

Gal Galaxy Science Fiction

Gent Gent

If If Science Fiction

LHJ Ladies' Home Journal

Mr Mister

Neb Nebula Science Fiction (British)

NW New Worlds (British)

Nug Nugget

OSFS Original Science Fiction Stories

Plby Playboy

Rog Rogue

Satl Satellite Science Fiction

SEP Saturday Evening Post

SFR San Francisco Review

"Star" (#5&#6) "Star Science Fiction Stories," #5 and #6, ed. Frederik Pohl (Ballantine, 1959)

BRIAN W. ALDISS

"The Lieutenant," Neb, Feb.

POUL ANDERSON

"Brave to Be a King," F&SF, Aug.

CHRISTOPHER ANVIL

"The Lawbreakers," Ast, Oct.

ISAAC ASIMOV

"Obituary," F&SF, Aug.

ALAN BARCLAY

"Nearly Extinct," NW, Dec.

CHARLES BEAUMONT

"Sorcerer's Moon," Plby, July.

MYRLE BENEDICT

"The Dancing That We Did," FU, Sept.

"The Comanleigh," FU, Nov.

ALFRED BESTER

"The Pi Man," "F&SF:9."

MARION Z. BRADLEY

"The Wind. People," If, Feb.

RAYMOND BROSSARD

"The Merman," FU, July.

FREDRIC BROWN

"Three," Gent, Oct.

ROSEL G. BROWN

"Lost in Translation," F&SF, May.

ALGIS BUDRYS

"The Man Who Tasted Ashes," If, Feb.

"The Stoker and the Stars" (Pseud.: John A. Sentry), Ast, Feb.

WILLIAM CHAMBERLAIN

"The Flying Jeep," SEP, Dec. 5.

A. BERTRAM CHANDLER

"The Man Who Could not Stop," F&SF, May.

"Familiar Pattern" (Pseud. George Whitley), Ast, Aug.

LES COLLINS

"Question of Comfort," Amz, Mar.

LUCY CORES

"Deborah and the Djinn," FU, Sept.

LEE CORREY

"Letter from Tomorrow," FU, May.

C. L. COTTRELL

"Danger! Child at Large," "Star" #6.

AVRAM DAVIDSON

"The Woman Who Thought She Could Read," F&SF, Jan.

CHAN DAVIS "Adrift on the Policy Level," "Star" #5.

CHARLES V. DE VET

"Seedling," Ast, Jan.

PHILIP K. DICK

"Recall Mechanism," If, July.

GORDON DICKSON

"The Amulet," F&SF, April.

G. C. EDMONDSON

"From Caribou to Carrie Nation," F&SF, Nov.

GEORGE P. ELLIOTT

"Invasion of the Planet of Love," "F&SF: 9."

HARLAN ELLISON

"The Abnormals," Fant, April.

PHILIP JOSE FARMER

"The Alley Man," F&SF, June.

HOWARD FAST

"The Cold, Cold Box," F&SF, July.

CHARLES G. FINNEY

"The Gilashrikes," F&SF, Oct.

CHARLES L. FONTENAY

"Wind," Amz, April.

DANIEL F. GALOUYE

"The City of Force," Gal, April.

TOM GODWIN

"Empathy," Fant, Oct.

DAVID GORDON

"Despoilers of the Golden Empire," Ast, Mar.

"... or Your Money Back," Ast, Sept.

RON GOULART

"Parlor Game," FU, May.

WILLIAM GRESHAM

"Forsaken Earthman," Satl, Feb.

W. T. HAGGERT

"Lex," Gal, Aug.

JIM HARMON

"Measure for a Loner," Amz, Mar.

LARRY M. HARRIS

"Hex," Ast, May.

HARRY HARRISON

"I See You," NW, May.

FRANK HARVEY

"The Death Dust," SEP, Aug.

ROBERT HEINLEIN

"All You Zombies—" F&SF, Mar.

ZENNA HENDERSON

"And a Little Child . . ." F&SF, Oct

PHILIP E. HIGH

"Pseudopath," NW, Aug.-Sept.

SHIRLEY JACKSON

"Strangers in Town," SEP, May 30.

COLIN KAPP

"Breaking Point," NW, Dec.

GERALD KERSH

"The Oracle of the Fish," Nug, June.

DAMON KNIGHT

"What Rough Beast?" "F&SF:9."

PHILIP LATHAM

"Disturbing Sun," Ast, May.

JOY LEACHE

"Miss Millie's Rose," FU, May.

FRITZ LEIBER

"The Silver Eggheads," F&SF, Jan.

"Fantastic Science Fiction Stories, Nov. (Complete Issue).

C. S. LEWIS

"Screwtape Proposes a Toast," SEP, Dec. 19.

ANNE MCCAFFREY

"The Lady in the Tower," F&SF, April.

HAROLD MEAD

"The Hunter and the Huntress," SEP, Oct. 10.

ROBERT NATHAN

"The Snowflake and the Starfish," SEP, Aug. 29.

FINN O'DONNEVAN

"The Sweeper of Loray," Gal, April.

CHAD OLIVER

"Transfusion," Ast, June.

STUART PALMER

"Three-Dimensional Valentine," F&SF, Mar.

TOM PEASE

"Mount Bettsville," Mr, Oct.

ROG PHILLIPS

"Camouflage," Amx, June.

"Keepers in Space," Fant, April.

FREDERICK PILLSBURY

"The Marvelous Black Magic Washing Machine," LHJ, Aug.

H. BEAM PIPER & JOHN MCGUIRE

"Hunter Patrol," Amz, May.

FREDERIK POHL

"To See Another Mountain," F&SF, April.

ROBERT PRESSLIE

"Suicide Squad," Neb, Feb.

ROGER PRICE

"The Tree," Plby, Sept.

BEN PURDY

"The Noise," Plby, March.

KIT REED

"Empty Nest," F&SF, Aug.

JANE RICE

"The Rainbow Gold," F&SF, Dec.

E. F. RUSSELL

"Now Inhale," Ast, April.

WILLIAM SAMBROT

"Football Majors at Pacific U.," Cos, Oct.

IDRIS SEABRIGHT

"Graveyard Shift," F&SF, Feb.

ARTHUR SELLINGS

"The Scene Shifter," "Star" #5.

MICHAEL SHAARA

"Citizen Jell," Gal, Aug.

ROBERT SHECKLEY

"The World of Heart's Desire," Plby, Sept.

JOHN SHEPLEY

"The Abyss," SFR

ROBERT SILVERBERG

"Heap Big Medicine," OSFS, July.

CLIFFORD SIMAK

"Installment Plan," Gal, Feb.

HENRY SLESAR

"The Trigger," Amz, June.

CORDWAINER SMITH

"Angerhelm," "Star" #6.

EVELYN E. SMITH

"The People Upstairs," FU, March.

GEORGE O. SMITH

"The Big Fix," Ast, Dec.

"Instinct," Ast, March.

JERRY SOHL

"Counterweight," If, Nov.

WILL STANTON

"Who Is Going to Cut the Barber's Hair?" F&SF, Sept.

LEE SUTTON

"Soul Mate," F&SF, June.

WILLIAM TENN

"The Malted Milk Monster," Gal, Aug.

THEODORE L. THOMAS

"Broken Tool," Ast, July.

ROGER THORNE

"The Cage," Rog, Nov.

E. C. TUBB

"Orange," If, Nov.

ANNE WALKER

"A Matter of Proportion," Ast, Aug.

EDWARD WELLEN

"Hear a Pin Drop," Fant, April.

KATE WILHELM

"One for the Road," FU, July.

JAY WILLIAMS

"Operation Ladybird," F&SF, Aug.

RALPH WILLIAMS

"Cat and Mouse," Ast, June.

ROBERT F. YOUNG

"To Fell a Tree," F&SF, July.

## SUMMATION The Year in S-F

by Judith Merrill

When I determined to include in this collection the excerpts from Harry Stine's as yet (at this writing) unpublished article, I was motivated by several things.

First, and most evident, was the paucity of *good science fiction*. There was an abundance of high-quality speculative and imaginative fiction of various kinds, published in ever conceivable medium, during 1960; there was very little "real science fiction" anywhere—in or out of the specialty publications—and of that little, most was mediocre to poor.

At the same time, I did not, and do not, believe that the genre is disappearing. It is, certainly, diffusing—spreading out from a limited-circulation group of fiction magazines and a select grouping of hardcover book titles to the mass markets: paperback novels, radio and TV, comic books, newspapers, and large-circulation general magazines.



In another sense, too, it is diffusing. Until a few years ago, "pure science fiction" confined itself, with rare exceptions, to speculation about space, the atom, and possible inventions or discoveries in the physical sciences.

The very technological advances that have swallowed up the old subjects almost entirely have, meantime, opened up whole new frontiers. And in the same way, the new media of communication now open to science fiction provide it with a new function as well.

Science fiction did not invent speculative thinking; it was quite the other way round. For whatever reasons of historical happenstance, the special kind of thinking that lies between outright fantasy and scientific hypothesis was focussed for a while largely in the s-f magazines. Now, some of the best story plots are going into reports by research and development men for the government, the armed services, the big corporations, and such novelties in our scheme of things as the Rand Corporation. What part of this thinking is not channeled into governmental or industrial secrecy is as likely to appear in essay form in a serious journal as in adventure trappings in the magazines.

Mr. Stine has pointed out several areas not currently being examined in this way by industry or government, and has provided a tool for the job. Meantime, there is another job for s-f to-do—and one it is doing effectively.

The switch to initials just above was intentional. I am talking now about the whole field of science-fantasy, of speculative literature. And the job I refer to is roughly equivalent to that performed by the Encyclopedists before the French revolution: PR, essentially, public relations.

I have stressed throughout the book the underlying theme of communication. Perhaps writers in the field are so concerned with the one subject just now because the motivation of the writers themselves has shifted somewhat from extrapolation to explanation?

The modern scientist cannot possibly even attempt to keep up with progress in specialties outside his own; publications come too fast and frequently. But the modern citizen *must* keep up with at least the broadest outlines of new developments—and must be prepared, continually, for the most radical of new departures. The best of academic educations have not prepared even the most willing laymen to think in terms of tomorrow's strange new world; and few citizens have either the studiousness or the background to keep up with the accelerating rate of change.

TV has proved, or re-proved (the advertising agencies did it first) the relative impact of pictures and words; there is the same distinction to be made between word-pictures and word-studies. To the specialist, the study is more informative; to almost all others, the word-picture is more so—not only because it informs more quickly, but because it does it more graphically.

Newspaper columnists, among others, have seized on this "pictorial" use of s-f recently. Of the future-story columns I've noticed, two in particular struck me as most effective: William A. Codwell's "Locked Alone in the World," (under the by-line: "Simeon Stylites") and William V. Shannon's "1961."

For non-fictional, straight-article presentations of speculative material throughout the year, both *The Saturday Evening Post* and the *Saturday Review* made impressive publishing records—addressing similar information to different readers in very different styles.

A surprising amount of material was also published during 1960, in general and literary magazines, about science fiction, science fantasy, and the "s-f way of thinking." Some of the special attention was, of course, stimulated by the Amis book (*Nation's* "Lucky Jim and the Martians," for instance). More of it was the product of the dilemma of education and communication in general: Norbert Wiener's "The Grand Privilege"; John Lear's "When Space Travel Was Witchcraft"; N. R. Hanson's "Science Is a Way of Seeing" (all in SR); Thomas N. Scortia's "The Captive Eggheads" and Robert Bloch's "The Clown at Midnight" (in *Rogue*); and the extraordinary article, "Unbelievable but True," in *The Saturday Evening Post*.

Within the specialty field, also, fact articles—and critical 1 essays—have been more numerous and more interesting. The previously established series by Willy Ley (*Galaxy*), Isaac Asimov (*Fantasy and Science Fiction*), and Kenneth Johns (combined pseudonym for Kenneth Bulmer and John Newman in *New Worlds*), continue as brisk and intriguing as before. John Rackham contributed a thoughtful piece on "The Science Fiction Ethic" to the 100th issue of *NW*. Sam Moskowitz's scholarly series of

researches on fantasy authors (*Fantastic*) is coming up to contemporary writers. Ted Sturgeon's initial column in *If* promises a bright future—though Fred Pohl's reviews will be missed. In the same way, while mourning Damon Knight's absence from s-f reviewing, I have found Alfred Bester's fresh approach to s-f criticism (*F&SF*) provocative and stimulating. A whole new publication devoted to "science-fiction-non-fiction" has emerged: *The Journal of the Interplanetary Exploration Society*. But the most dramatic of the excursions into speculative essay took place in *Analog*.

It was John Campbell's magazine to which the title of the *SEP*'s "Unbelievable but True" piece applied, and the article seemed to have been stimulated primarily by Campbell's crusading articles and editorials for investigation of the Dean Drive.

The "Dean Drive" is an invention of a Washington, D. C., mortgage expert named Norman Dean: a device to convert rotary motion into unidirectional motion, extremely suitable-for space drive (among thousands of other applications) because it somehow appears to get around Newton's law about action and reaction. All the energy goes into the push—none into push-back.

Mr. Dean had patented his device privately, after failing for several years to interest the U. S. Government in an engine which obviously *could not* work—because Newton said so. Mr. Campbell publicized the invention to the point where his last editorial on the matter ironically stated, "... Dean's device is now being thoroughly and adequately investigated by competent scientists and engineers.... We cannot continue to follow the work; much of it is going to duck rapidly behind closed doors; some of it definitely has already...." He goes on to point out once more, emphatically, that his crusade was not for attention to the particular device, but for a new kind of approach to invention and research—for, essentially, the application of the open speculative mind to all of science and engineering.

The "Dean Drive crusade" will, I believe, redound even more to Campbell's honor as time goes on. But if the drive itself should fail to prove out, his basic fight for attention to new and *different* ideas on the part of established science will have been more than worthwhile by itself.

One other item not mentioned in either of the Honorable Mention lists to follow is the continuing emergence of verse in s-f. In addition to the irrepressible Hilbert Schenck, there were notable contributions last year by Randall Garrett, Joseph Hansen, Alan Lindsey, and Rosser Reeves.

With more and more science fantasy appearing in full-length novels rather than magazine short stories, I have felt for the last two years that this book should offer a more complete and authoritative report on the new books than I could hope to do myself. Starting with this volume, that report will be handled by Anthony Boucher. But outside the realm of s-f itself there are a few new books I think may be of special interest to readers in this field. These include—

Doubleday's new series of Tutor Books: a completely new approach to self-teaching textbooks. "The Arithmetic of Computers" taught me the fundamentals of the octal and binary systems in about four fascinated hours. (Others are on algebra, trigonometry, electronics, and bridge.)

"The World Is My Country" (Putnam, 1961), is World Citizen Garry Davis's autobiographical account of ten years of living out his own private political science-fiction farce-satire-adventure.

Finally, I should like to express my considerable gratitude to those who assisted in compiling this volume—most notably James Blish and Merrill Zissman, who revised and copied the music for the songs; Ann Pohl, who did most of the cataloging; and Barbara Norville, Oriole Kingston, Mae Sugrue, and Bob Bone, for a marvellous assortment of miscellany.

## Honorable Mentions

## Abbreviations

*Amz* Amazing Science Fiction Stories

*ASF* Analog (Astounding) Science Fact and Fiction

*Cos* Cosmopolitan

*Dude* The Dude

*Esq* Esquire

*Fant* Fantastic Science Fiction

*FU* Fantastic Universe

*F&SF* Fantasy and Science Fiction

"*F&SF:10*" "The Best from Fantasy and Science Fiction: Tenth Series," ed. Robert P. Mills  
(Doubleday, 1960)

*Fut* Future Science Fiction *Gal* Galaxy Science Fiction *Gent* Gent

*If* If Science Fiction

*Ken* Kenyon Review

*LHJ* Ladies' Home Journal McC McCall's

*Mlle* Mademoiselle

*NW* New Worlds (British)

"*NWW #16*" "New World Writing #16" (J. B. Lippincott Co., 1960)

*OSFS* Original Science Fiction Stories

*Plby* Playboy

*Rog* Rogue

*SEP* Saturday Evening Post

*SciF* Science Fantasy

*17* Seventeen

VANCE AANDAH

"It's a Great Big Wonderful Universe," *F&SF*, Nov.

MRS. AGATE

"Slammy and the Bonneygott," *F&SF*, June.

POUL ANDERSON

"The Burning Bridge," *ASF*, Jan.;

"The Martyr," *F&SF*, Mar.

ANDERSON, ASIMOV, BLOCH, LEINSTER, SHECILLEY

"The Covenant" (round-robin story), *Fant*, July.

CHRISTOPHER ANVIL

"The Troublemaker," *ASF*, July.

J. G. BALLARD

"The Last World of Mr. Goddard," *SciF* #43, Oct.;

"The Voices of Time," *NW*, Oct.

JOHN BERRY

"The Listener," "NWW#16."

JAMES BLISH

"The Oath," *F&SF*, Oct.

ROBERT BLOCH

"The Funnel of God," *Fant*, Jan.

WILLIAM BRANDON

"The Hermit," *SEP*, Mar.

JOHN BRUNNER

"Badman," *NW*, Mar.

"Imprint of Chaos," *SciF* #42, Aug.

ALGIS BUDRYS

"The Price," *F&SF*, Feb.;

"Rogue Moon," *F&SF*, Dec.

WALTER HUPP

"Vigorish," *ASF*, June.

ARNOLD CASTLE

"When Day Is Done," *If*, May;

"The Perfectionists," *Amz*, Jan.

ARTHUR C. CLARKE

"Inside the Comet," *F&SF*, Oct.

TOM AND GLADYS CLUFF

"The Lutine Bell," *FU*, Feb.

THEODORE R. COGSWELL

"The Burning," *F&SF*, July.

CHARLES COTTRELL

"Jack of No Trades," *Amz*, Aug.

GORDON R. DICKSON

"An Honorable Death," *Gal*, Feb.

WILLIAM EASTLAKE

"What Nice Hands Held," *Ken*.

CAROL EMSHWILLER

"Puritan Planet," *OSFS*, Jan.

PATRICK FAHY

"Bad Memory," *Gal*, Dec.

JACK FINNEY

"I Love Galesburg in the Springtime," *MX*, Apr.

DAVID E. FISHER

"East in the Morning," *Gal*, Feb.

JEAN FRITZ

"Haunted Christmas," *17*, Dec.

RANDALL GARRETT

"... And Peace Attend Thee," *Fant*, Sept.;

"Drug on the Market," *FU*, Feb.

PHYLLIS GOTTLEIB

"A Bone to Pick," *Fant*, Oct.

WILLIAM LINDSAY GRESHAM

"Room for One More," *Dude*, Nov.

JIM HARMON

"Blueblood," *Gal*, Dec.

LARRY M. HARRIS

"Charley de Milo," *ASF*, June.

RAYMOND HARTLEY

"Monkey on My Magazine Rack," *Gent*, May.

ZENNA HENDERSON

"Things," *F&SF*, July.

CHARLES HENNEBERG

(trans: Damon Knight) "The Blind Pilot," *FirSF*, Jan.

FRANK HERBERT

"Egg and Ashes," *If*, Nov.;

"The Priests of Psi," *Fant*, Feb.

PHILIP E. HIGH

"Mumbo-Jumbo Man," *NW*, Jan.

HUGH HOOD

"After the Sirens," *Esq*, Aug.

LANCE HORNE

"Nuclear Justice," *NW*, July.

HAYDEN HOWARD

"Murder Beneath the Polar Ice," *If*, July.

EVAN HUNTER

"It Was Lovely That Summer," *Dude*, Mar.

EUGENE IONESCO

"Rhinceros," *Mlle*, Mar.

RONA JAFFE

"Trompe l'Oeil," *Cos*, July.

STEPHEN A. KALLIS, JR.

"The Untouchable," *ASF*, Dec.

COLIN KAPP

"Enigma," *NW*, Feb.

DANIEL KEYES

"Crazy Maro," "F&SF:10."

DAMON KNIGHT

"Time Enough," *Amz*, July.

R. A. LAFFERTY

"McGonigal's Worm," *If*, Nov.

REX LARDNER

"American Plan," *F&SF*, May.

KEITH LAUMER

"Combat Unit," *F&SF*, Nov.

STANLEY R. LEE

"The Eye of Aesculapius," *Fant*, Dec.

FRITZ LEIBER

"The Night of the Long Knives," *Amz*, Jan.

MURRAY LEINSTER

"The Ambulance Made Two Trips," *ASF*, Apr.

DAN LINDSAY

"The Beatnik Werewolf," *F&SF*, Dec.

C. B. LOVEHILL

"Gentlemen Be Seated," *Rog*, Apr.

KATHERINE MACLEAN

"Interbalance," "F&SF:10."

LARRY MADDOCK

"Creatures, Incorporated," *NW*, June.

RICHARD MATHESON

"First Anniversary," *Plby*, July.

KATE MCNAIR

"Her Dearest Wish," *LHJ*, Nov.

E. MITTLEMAN

"The Non-Electronic Bug," *If*, July.

HOWARD NEMEROV

"An Executive," *Esq*, Dec.

ALAN E. NOURSE

"The Mirror," *Fant*, June.

HAROLD PARSONS

"The Funnel," *NW*, Aug.

FREDERIK POHL

"The Day the Icicle Works Closed," *Gal*, Feb.

ARTHUR PORGES

"Words and Music," *If*, Sept.

JOHN RACKHAM

"The Bright Ones," *NW*, May.

FRANCIS G. RAYER

"Static Trouble," *NW*, Feb.

BRIAN RENCELAW

"Ounce of Prevention," *Plby*, Sept.

MACK REYNOLDS

"Combat," *ASF*, Oct.; "Revolution," *ASF*, May.

CHARLES W. RUNYON

"Remember Me, Peter Shepley," *Fant*, Dec.

WILLIAM SAMBROT

"The Story of an Atomic Age Ordeal," *SEP*, July 9.

WINSTON P. SANDERS

"The Word to Space," *F&SF*, Sept.

THOMAS N. SCORTIA AND JIM HARMON

"Caliban," *Fut*, Apr.

JACK SHARKEY

"The Dope on Mars," *Gal*, June;

"Equity," *Dude*, Sept.

ROBERT SITECKLEY

"The Girls and Nugent Miller," *F&SF*, Mar.

ROBERT SILVERBERG

"The Still Small Voice," *Amz*, May.

CLIFFORD D. SIMAK

"Final Gentleman," *F&SF*, Jan.;

"Gleaners," *If*, Mar.

CORDWAINER SMITH

"The Lady Who Sailed the Soul," *Gal*, Apr.

THEODORE STURGEON

"Like Young," *F&SF*, Mar.

WILLIAM F. TEMPLE

"Sitting Duck," *NW*, Nov.

THEODORE L. THOMAS

"The Crackpot," *ASF*, Nov.

DON TRACY

"The Owl That Asked Why," *SEP*, Dec. 24-31.

E. C. TUBB

"Too Bad," *SciF* #40, Apr.

LELAND WEBB

"A Man for the Moon," *Plby*, Aug.

W. T. WEBB

"Not a Sparrow Falls," *SciF* #39, Feb.

DONALD E. WESTLAKE

"Travelers Far and Wee," *OSFS*, May.

ROBERT WICKS

"The Impersonator," *If*, Nov.

KATE WILHELM

"When the Moon Was Red," *Amz*, Sept.

RICHARD WILSON

"The Best Possible World," *NW*, Sept.

JOHN WISDOM

"The Lonely Crowd," *Dude*, Sept.

WILL WORTHINGTON

"Abide With Me," *Fant*, Jan.

MURRAY F. YACO

"No Moving Parts," *Amz*, May.

## Introduction

In the beginning there was Wonder. Early Man lived in a world of alternating light and dark, where wind faded to calm and sun succeeded storm, all without cause—where summer heat and winter's ice were equally marvelous—where the fruit of the soil or the prize of the hunt might, unpredictably, either fill or kill a man.

Ancient Man learned about cause and effect. He sowed, and reaped; trapped the lightning for winter



warmth; caught rain in pools against summer's drought. He flew an arrow with the feathers of a bird; smelted ore for a sharper stone to tip the arrow; modeled a wheel from a rolling stone. The natural miracles he could control ceased to astonish him; those outside his grasp were, perhaps, supernatural? He wondered—about giants, gods, and demons.

Historic Man, guided by the recorded increment of wonders noted (resolved or unsolved), harnessed the energies of wind and water, grouped with his kin to raise up walls of stone, to stop the enemy before the battle; lived longer and more leisurely; learned to think in abstractions; devised mental tools—logic, morality, philosophy; made new tools with which to peer through at the macro-and micro-cosmic realms of the gods and devils. He saw the magnificent orderliness of the universe; banished wonder and base superstition together; rejoiced, and proclaimed the Age of Reason.

Rational Man inhabited a law-abiding world controlled absolutely by Cold Facts and Logic, Physical Laws and Mechanical Principles. He himself was the inevitable sum of Mendelian Laws, Chemistry, Conditioning, and Reflexes. A minimum of marveling was contained in a Rational Deity—a Great Architect who had (with compass, protractor, and Euclid's Axioms) laid out the universe. The new verities were classified, catalogued, and cross-indexed for eternity. The new technique of observing, testing, and labeling, was called the scientific method.

Modern Man used the new tool of experimentation, and learned: to unleash the lightning; make water from air, cloth from coal, food from metals; to create whirlwinds and earthquakes, brew storms and dispel them; defy distance and gravity; outstrip his own noise; cause a sunburst on Earth; and (now, newly) to animate matter.

Wonder—informed, thoughtful, purposeful wonder—is loose on the Earth again. And this is what "SF" means, what "science fiction" is: not gimmicks and gadgets, monsters and supermen, but trained wonderment—educated and disciplined imagination—a marvelous mirror for Modern Man and the world he is only beginning to make.

J.M., Milford, May, 1960

## Theodore Sturgeon by JUDITH MERRIL

The man has style.

The same quality of "voice" or "presence" that makes the most unevenly composed Sturgeon story compellingly readable, marks his personality with equally unmistakable (if no more definable) fascination.

He is a man of varied interests and strong opinions, many skills and endless paradox. Snob-and-vulgarian, athlete-and-aesthete, mystic-and-mechanic, he is detached and merry, humble and arrogant, over-mannered and deeply courteous—a manicured nudist, a man of elegant naturalness, thoughtful simplicity, schooled ease, and studied spontaneity.

Strangers always notice him; children respond with immediate and lasting confidence; those who know him, like or dislike him. No one is indifferent—and no two see quite the same man.

No two are presented with quite the same man. Yet there is rarely intent to deceive (I would have said never, but one must allow for the natural effects of, for instance, bill collectors, Internal Revenue officers, and certain publishers); nor is deception ordinarily the result. The change of face or stance or style, from one audience to another may be anywhere from subtle to sensational; but each attitude is as genuine as the last—simply a new permutation of the internal contradictions.

Beauty is a state of mind compounded of harmony and/or contrast with the environment of the beautiful thing, he wrote me once. The environment does not have to be concrete, but it does have a hell of a lot to do with the reflexes of the beholder . . .

This is one of the basic ingredients of Sturgeon's style. In his work, the choice of language, the prose (or poetic) meter, sometimes even the syntax, is generated by the situation or character: a constant variation of prose pattern is one of the elements that marks his writing style. In his person, a similar

variable surface stems in the same way from the instinct for "harmony and/or contrast."

"Sturgeon is living his own biography," one close mutual friend used to say in moments of maximum frustration with the eternally sincere poseur. And though I doubt Ted has given much thought—or would care, if he did—to the figure he may someday cut in a scholar's summary, it is certainly true that he insists on revising the script constantly. He simply cannot stand idly by and see the dramatic unities destroyed by the gross, absurd hand of real happenstance: there is never a doubt which road to follow, when logic or self-interest depart from the moment's artistic necessities.

There are certain things about Ted that are (comparatively) unvarying: attributes that change, as in all of us, only with time and growth. His appearance is one.

A bit above average height (perhaps five-ten?), he is slender in build, but determinedly fit. (His first ambition was to be a circus acrobat.) He is just short of being conventionally handsome, but the trim beard he adopted years back (before they were fashionable) is the touch that turns what was almost a faun-like countenance into a faintly satanic mask.

He is a warm person, and the only formalities he practices are his own—such rituals of behavior he has devised to suit his own purposes (or, rather, pleasures. At work —any kind of work—he is impatiently, starkly, functional). He is (almost) obsessively clean, with a passion for neatness and pleasing design. (Note the "almost," nothing is ever all-one-way with Ted. He is fond of saying: "The definition of perversion is anything done to the exclusion of everything else—including the normal position.")

He loves good food, good drink, good talk, good music, good decor, good looks, good manners. He hates dirt, sweat, too-loud voices, ill-fitting clothes, clumsy behavior. (I feel that the nearest to a basic you can get is in living graciously. I can only know my own definition of graciousness, and it is one that precludes hating a man for his black skin, pissing on other people's rugs, going naked when it will distress others, sleeping with other men's wives, violating privacy, and any number of other delightful or uncomfortable or fun-making things .. .)

He acquires skills with the dedication of a collector: offhand, I know him to be anywhere from competent to expert as a chauffeur, guitarist, radio (and general electronics) repairman, cook, bulldozer operator, automobile mechanic, and maker-of-what-have-yous-from-wire-hangers-toothbrushes-and-old-bottles. He also sings well, and speaks with an unusually, noticeably, clear diction—and with a wit that is, mostly, warm and friendly.

In my first list of paradoxes, I stressed the "manicured nudist." (Yes, if you've been wondering; those rumors are at least partly true. Ted was, for some years, an enthusiastic (nay, evangelical) nudist.)

I mentioned later that his near-obsession with cleanliness and tidiness had an exception. The exception is work. The most obvious thing about the Sturgeon style, is the easiness of it, but that ease is earned the hard way.

An editor, fretting about an overdue novel of Ted's, once told me: "He says he has three days' work left to do. I believe him. I know he can write a novel in three days. But which three days is it going to be?"

The editor was almost right, but also wrong. I have known Sturgeon to sit at the typewriter (in an attic or cellar or closed-off bedroom, before the garage, uncombed, paper-strewn, coffee-nerved, and sweating) for hours on end, sleepless and almost foodless, producing a steady stream of (one-draft, final-copy) words, hour after hour. (I think the record for three days, though—with catnaps and sandwiches—was not quite two-thirds of a novel.) But typing is only one part of the job.

"Nobody can do two things at the same time," Ted says lightly. "I never think while I'm writing." He doesn't. The thinking comes first, between the false starts and in the glare of the virgin white sheet on the typer roller.

(He said it a little differently in "The Perfect Host") You want to write a story, see, and you sit down in front of the mill, wait until that certain feeling comes to you, hold off a second longer just to be quite sure that you know exactly what you want to do, take a deep breath, and get up and make a pot of coffee.

This sort of thing is likely to go on for days, until you are out of coffee and can't get more until you pay for same, which you can do by writing a story and selling it; or until you get tired of messing around

and sit down and write a yarn purely by means of knowing how to do it and applying the knowledge.

Neither way of saying it explains why he loses weight in the process. He sweats—just like people; he does it in private. When he's done enough of it, out of the mill comes the fluent graceful prose anyone would know as Sturgeon's.

The operative phrase in that quote is "knowing how to do it and applying the knowledge." In an enormously gratifying introduction to a short story collection of mine, Ted publicly disclaimed any responsibility for me as a writer. When he learned I was writing this article, he reminded me, sternly, of his version of the matter. Having been forbidden to extend public gratitude, and with full intention of doing so, perhaps, I can take the curse off it, by taking some credit to myself first:

It was I who taught Sturgeon how much he knew about writing; I did it by listening, and asking an occasional question, while he was teaching me everything he knew about writing. (The differences that are still evident are, I am afraid, a matter of art rather than craft.)

I am not just joking. At the time that Ted decided I should, and by-damn would, write science fiction, he was still recovering from the double shock of his first prolonged experience with "writer's block," and the breakup of his first marriage. He could not think ill enough of himself. (His best stories then were tragedies—or self-mockeries: "Maturity," "Thunder and Roses," "It Wasn't Syzygy," "The Sky Was Full of Ships." There was even one, less memorable, called "That Low.") And his sad theme, reiterated, was: "I want to be liked or admired for something I do—not just for what I am." Or, alternatively:

"I'm not a writer. You are, Phil (Phil Klass—William Tenn: at that time he was also a new writer—two stories ahead of me (he had two published). For most of a semi-starved year, just before the Big S-F Boom started, the three of us lived—or so it now seems—on one ten dollar bill loaned around in continuous rotation.) is. I'm not. A writer is someone who has to write. The only reason I want to write is because it's the only way I can justify all the other things I didn't do."

At the same time, he was scouring his mind for what helpful odds and ends it might contain for a novice writer. (I did not mean to imply that Sturgeon formed his intent against my will; I could hardly talk or think of anything else in those days—but to me it was a hopeless hope. I knew I was, literate; I could do research; I could write a tolerable article, or even a "hack" pulp story, to formula rules. But to be A Writer, which was something else again, one needed Talent and Imagination . . .)

The first thing he did was to give me a book.

He had seen some (sincere, young, and of course free verse) poetry of mine in a fan magazine. He liked one poem, said so, and showed up a few days later with Clement Wood's "Complete Rhyming Dictionary and Poet's Craft Book," inscribed:

I give it so that Judy can

Become a goddam artisan.

He suggested, gently, that I try my hand first at some of the French light verse forms. I did try one, and decided to go on to greater things. I wrote a sonnet; or so I thought. It had the right number of lines and rhymes in the right places, and it was in iambics. I sent it to Ted, and got back a five page critique, line by line. Some lines he even praised; but he began with a sort of first-grade explanation that a sonnet is never, not ever, in tetrameter; each line, always, has ten syllables, not eight. He wrote, in part:

Keep pure and faithful your respect for the form. Violate it nowhere, ever, not in the slightest shift of syllabic value. Our language, with all its faults, is one of the most completely expressive in history. (Joseph Conrad thought so well of it that he adopted it completely. When using it, never forget that godlike compliment.) We have a highly flexible grammar. Verbs can be placed anywhere in a sentence. Parenthetical thoughts are in the idiom. The rich sources of English have brought to it shades of meaning and choices between sounds which are unparalleled in other tongues . . .

. . . I find little fault with your punctuation, but it might help you to assume my view of it; namely, that punctuation is inflection in print. To me, "She loves me—" is heard differently from "She loves me . . ." and from "She loves me." There is a speaking difference between a colon and a semicolon and a coma . . .

. . . If you master this form, you will have such a feel for the music of words that in your odes and your vers libre your work will be completely compelling, and in your prose your songful characters will speak, when their thoughts sing, with singing . . .

He said, apologetically, that there were only two things he could really tell me about story writing, and that one of those was not his own thought, but had been told to him by Will Jenkins. It was the basic device for generating a plot —

Start with a character, some one with certain strong, even compulsive personality traits. Put him in a situation which in some way negates a vital trait. Watch the character solve the problem.

I don't think I have ever written a successful story that emerged any other way.

The second piece of advice was his own, and this was: see everything you write about. Don't put a word down until you can see the whole scene for yourself—the room, or outdoors area, all the people, including the ones who do nothing; the colors and shapes; the weather; clothes, furnishings, everything. Then describe only those parts concerned in the action; or describe nothing, except what your characters do; they will be behaving in context, and the reader will be able to rebuild a complete scene from the pieces of the pattern you've given. It doesn't matter if this scene is different from yours; it will have the same meaning in his frame of reference that yours did for you.

This is one of the most astonishing pieces of instruction on record—simply because I have never heard it anywhere else. It seems so obvious—once you know it.

He wrote me the letter with the first quote I used here, about the nature of beauty; it was, in context, concerned with the ability to create beauty. And another letter picks up a theme he spent hours on:

. . . imagination is a thing like language skill or how to drink brandy something which can be done well or badly, too much or not enough . . .

It would be impossible to detail, one by one, the things he taught me, or the boosts he gave. I doubt that I remember all of them now. Most of it was so well absorbed that I no longer distinguish it as something learned from Ted. I have relayed what I recall most vividly, and will yet add an incident or two, primarily for two reasons.

The first is that, in all seriousness, he learned something vital to him in the process, and I think it constituted a sort of turning point, starting up from the extreme of his depression. It was, I believe, the day I read "Bianca's Hands," in carbon (the ms. was then in England, submitted for the British Argosy short story contest). I did not —do not—like the story. Even more, I disliked his effort to compare it with Ray Bradbury's work. I had at that time read exactly one Bradbury story I liked. (I have since read several that were published before then, and many written afterwards, that I greatly admire. But this was 1947; most of Bradbury up till then was in the Weir Tales vein, and this is rarely to my taste.) In any case, I was somewhat brusque in my criticism. Ted, perhaps defensively, explained it had been written many years earlier, and that he had showed it to me for one section, just redone: several paragraphs of deliberately constructed poetry, highlighting an emotional crisis, but spelled out like prose, so that it did not appear to break into the narrative.

And it was in pointing this out (I had missed it, as he expected) that he stopped, astonished, and said he had just realized how much he did know about how to write—that it was a skill, with him, not just a talent.

Whatever reinforcement the recognition needed came very soon afterwards, when the story won the first prize of \$1000.

I never again heard the line about "something I do, not just something I am."

My other reason for leading you through my primer class as a writer is that I feel it reveals some vital aspects of Sturgeon's personality that I have not seen expounded in any of the several eulogies, prefaces, blurbs, and biographies I have read myself. Nor could I (I tried!) describe these facets myself, except by playback.

I might mention, here, that this article has been the most difficult piece of nonfiction I have ever done. How many false starts I made, or how many pages of unused copy will wind up in the circular file, I don't want to count. I started out to do a straightforward biographical article, with some, like, personal touches. (You know: "I was there, when . . .") And the more I tried, the more I realized I was, probably, uniquely unqualified to write anything balanced, objective, or factually informative about Ted Sturgeon. ("Probably," because there are others who know him, as person and writer, at least as well as I do; some of these have also been the beneficiaries of his astonishing capacity for advice, support, instruction, and

encouragement of younger writers. But—) I believe my position is unique, because I am not only a friend, fan, colleague, and sometime protege; I am also, in one sense, Ted's own invention.

The first Judith Merrill story published was called, "That Only A Mother . . ." (I had done these pulp jobs under various by-lines.) It was on the strength of that one story, before it was published, that I got the editorial job at Bantam Books which led directly to my first anthology. Less directly, the same story had much to do with Doubleday's acceptance of my first novel, on the basis of a short and unfinished sample. It was Sturgeon who supplied the confidence, and ultimately, the challenge, to try to write the story; in between, he also supplied—by accident—the ideas for the central problem and the central character. All I did was write it; after that, it was Ted, again, who took it to his own agent; and it was in the agent's office that it was read by those people who later influenced jobs and contracts. All this was, to some extent, happenstance. But the author of the story was created by design—Sturgeon's design.

Sometime before I gathered up my courage to try the "serious story," I had already determined to be a freelance writer (of articles and "hack pulp stories"). For several reasons, irrelevant here, I wanted a pen-name. Among others, I asked Ted for ideas. He suggested my daughter, Merrill's, first name. I balked; none of my reasons included the wish to change my Jewish name to anything so flamboyantly anglo-saxon-sounding .

Ted reacted with unwonted anger, and we parted in mutual irritation. Three days later, I had a letter, explaining things, with an enclosure—a sonnet called, "On The Birth of Judith Merrill!"

Two lines of the poem had come to his mind, you see, while we were talking (in an ice-cream parlor!). From that point on, all my arguments were unreasonable and obstreperous. He went home to finish the story he was working on: an assigned job with a sure check at the end, which he needed badly. But the poem kept growing. Finally —

. . . remembering something you had said about your Hebrew name, I went to the encyclopedia . . . It was right in there, reproduced also in Greek script and in Hebrew, and it means Jewess. It doesn't mean anything else but Jewess. . . .

With this reassurance that I was bound to change my mind, he spent the next day on the sonnet. The letter goes on—

. . . it is a Petrarchan sonnet, which means that its form is extremely rigid and complex. The rhyme scheme is 12 2 1 , 1 2 2 1 , 3 4 5 , 3 4 5 . Notice that there is no rhymed couplet at the end, as is found in Shakespearean and Wordsworthian sonnets. The idea is presented in the octet (the first eight lines) and resolved in the sestet. I'd rather build something like this than eat, which is demonstrable . . .

(Well, what would you have done? Let a reasonable prejudice stand in the way of a compulsive christening?) I had a name.

The man is full of self-contradictions: he is blind and perceptive; rational and illogical; pedantic and lyrical; self-centered and warmly outgiving. But he does each side of all the coins with style.

One more anecdote, about the final challenge that sent me home to write my story:—

I was leaving the apartment he then shared with L. Jerome Stanton. It was just after the big news about "Bianca's Hands," and Ted was effusing in all directions, including mine. He went to the door with me, told me to go home and write a better one. I took it as mocking. He stopped himself in mid-explanation (of his sincerity) and said, suddenly, pointing to the hall wall:

"Look!"

I did, and looked back questioningly.

"Look! Don't you see it?"

"See what?"

"The little green man, running up the wall ...?"

I shook my head, smiled faintly. "Nope."

"Keep looking. Look. See! Right there? He has a long green cap sticking straight out, and he's taking tiny little steps . . ."

I didn't see any green man, and I said as much. "What's more, if there was one, he'd be taking long draggy steps and his cap would hang down, going up that wall . . ."

"There," he said triumphantly. "See? I write fantasy. You write science fiction."

So I did—and came, eventually, to be asked to write about Sturgeon. Well, as I said, I am prejudiced; and the things that seemed important to say left no room for statistics. These have, in any case, been more than adequately compiled elsewhere. I have tried to portray what I could of an unusual and admirable human being. But it's tough, when you're writing about a man whose style you can't possibly match.

## INTRODUCTION

Science, they keep telling us, is "catching up" with science fiction. This is happily (at long last) true—precisely as it *must* be true that on any new frontier (space, surface, political, or academic) surveyors will replace the early scouts, and settlers may tread heavily on the surveyors' heels.

This succession is, indeed, the only sure way to determine the validity of the new frontier. And the more swift and certain the waves of succession, the better it speaks for the work of the scouts—and for the alertness and adventurous spirit of man's society. The rhythm of progress has a fixed pattern, but its tempo is variable in the extreme. Not all frontiers are still new when they are explored.

It was almost 2,000 years from the speculations of Aristarchus of Samos to the mathematically verifiable hypotheses of Johannes Kepler; three hundred more before Goddard and Tsiolkovsky (half the world round from each other) began to apply the principles of physical reaction (first observed in China in Aristarchus's time, and mathematically formulated by Newton in the century after Kepler) so that men could and would, a scant half century later, build vessels to carry them into space to test, with physical exploration, the "proven" theories of Kepler.

In any field of new knowledge, on all frontiers, concrete or physical, the fools must first rush out to see what the accepted angels of the day do not credit even enough to fear. The quixotic ass may be a "Somnium" or a glider at Kitty Hawk, a "Rights of Man," a burning bush, a dream of passage to India, a Unified Field of Theory, or a story of space. Whatever its form, it must take shape first in the imagination of some, somehow, less fettered mind, and pass, through the speculations of philosophers, onto the lathe of logic; if it turns true (however slowly or swiftly), it has become Accepted Theory.

With Theory, the *cycle* begins anew: someone must "dream up" (literally, just about) a completely new way to test a new theory. Better disciplined, less dreaming, men must refine the techniques; mathematical symbols must be found to describe in precise language the verified experiment. And

With a new technique in hand, a new idea in the mind's storehouse, some new dreamer will first *imagine* the next step, and (barring final warfare) so on, and on, and—

--J. M. Milford, March, 1961

## SUMMATION: S-F, 1961

by Judith Merrill

For some years now, those of us working in what even we still quaintly call "the science-fiction field" have been increasingly aware of the floating-island nature of that "field." And if it seemed at times that we were simply drifting out to sea, it is now becoming sharply evident that the direction of drift, all along, was into the "mainstream." The specialized cult of science fiction (for which many of us still, and I expect will, feel a lingering nostalgia) is rapidly disappearing, as the essential quality is absorbed into the main body of literature.

More properly, I should say, reabsorbed. S-f had its beginnings in mainstream writing. The literary-sociological analysis of the compartmentalizing of this kind of fiction during the first half of the twentieth century will undoubtedly provide scholastic adventure for innumerable future thesis-writers. For those of us actively interested in the (flooded) field at the present time, it is enough to understand that the reabsorption has not been one-sided. For any prodigal to effect his return, it is necessary not only that the

parent body be prepared to offer welcome, but that the wanderer has found cause to come home.

These causes have been varied and complex, ridiculous and sublime: they have included such things as the influence of "the syndicate" on magazine distribution, the International Geophysical Year, Kingsley Amis' book of lectures and Willy Ley's lectures on books. (The rest of the list I leave to those scholars of tomorrow.) But whatever the causes, the results are obvious.

At the beginning of 1956, when the First Annual of this series was being readied for the press, I counted thirteen science-fiction magazines in this country, and four more in England. (Most of them were quarterlies or bimonthlies; it averaged out to about ten altogether each month.) That first annual contained, proudly, three (out of eighteen) stories from sources outside the specialty magazines; the Honorable Mentions listed seven more. And the Summation pointed with a sort of ghetto pride to the fact that thirty or forty of Our Kind of Stories had crossed the line in '55, and found respectable lodging in literary and "slick" magazines.

This year, sixteen of the thirty fiction and verse selections are from general fiction magazines, or books. There are five s-f magazines published here, and two in England—five and a half a month average, with the three bimonthlies.

In '56, I was able to include three "name" writers from outside the specialty field. This year, there are only thirteen stories by writers known *in* the field. Most striking is the number of writers from non-fiction fields who have made their first story efforts in s-f; most gratifying is the growing number of serious young writers who are devoting themselves equally to s-f and "quality" media.

This is the internal evidence. From outside come such items as the previously mentioned seminar of the Modern Language Association (or the word from my scout in Sausalito that s-f is the top seller in the beatniks' favorite bookstore). There is *The Twilight Zone* on TV, which no one (except us Old School Ties) thinks of as s-f. There is *The Saturday Evening Post*, printing without special comment an average of one fantasy or s-f story per issue....

Which brings up a point. The welcome offered to s-f is warm, as only a homecoming can be. But by the same token, the critics, editors, reviewers, publishers, who are uncle and aunt, elder brother, sister, and cousins, who all stayed correctly at home while we went wandering in lurid pulp-paper lands, are not prepared to meet us on the grounds of our own choosing—and certainly not to recognize us by the, identity we assumed "outside."

Thus, much of the best science fiction published today is under wrappers and headings that either angrily disclaim the "science-fiction" label, or ignore it completely. As for the broader field defined in this book as "S-F," the most special labeling it's likely to get is "unusual" or "offbeat." The cult is dead, or at the least, moribund. But one may hope it has infused new life into the culture.

I should like to take this opportunity to extend my thanks to a few of the people whose assistance becomes more and more necessary, as the source material spreads itself thin. For suggestions or submissions of material, my thanks to Madeline Tracy Brigden, of *Mademoiselle*; to Anthony Boucher; to Laura Cohen; and to Willard Marsh. For help in obtaining permission for stories, and in assembling the final manuscript, to Robert Mills, Frederik Pohl, Joseph Ferman, Mrs. Brigden, my family, and—far beyond the call of duty—S & S editrix, Barbara Norville. And for opinions on the selections, my especial gratitude to Virginia Bush.

Judith Merrill  
Milford, 1962

## HONORABLE MENTIONS

Abbreviations:

*Amz* Amazing Stories  
*ASF* Analog Science Fact & Fiction *Aud* Audit  
*Dude* The Dude  
*Fant* Fantastic Stories

*F&SF* Fantasy and Science Fiction *Gal* Galaxy Science Fiction

*Gent* Gent

*If* If Science Fiction

*LHJ* The Ladies' Home Journal

*McC* McCall's

*Metr* Metronome

*Mlle* Mademoiselle

*NW* New Worlds (British)

*Plby* Playboy

*Rog* Rogue

*SEP* The Saturday Evening Post

*SciF* Science Fantasy (British)

*Vog* Vogue

"*ACOS*" *A Cupful of Space*, Mildred Clingerman (Ballantine, 1961)

"*COTM*" *Call Out the Malicia*, John Anthony West (Dutton, 1961)

"*F&SF:11*" *The Best from Fantasy and Science Fiction: Eleventh Series*, ed. Robert P. Mills  
(Doubleday, 1961)

"*Sard*" *Sardonicus and Other Stories*, Ray Russell (Ballantine, 1961)

"*SCTH*" *So Close to Home*, James Blish (Ballantine, 1961)

"*TIM*" *The Infinite Moment*, John Wyndham (Ballantine, 1961)

VANCE AANDAHL

"Cogi Drove His Car Through Hell," *F&SF*, Aug.

GEORGE SUMNER ALBEE

"Baby Was One," *McC*, Apr.

BRIAN W. ALDISS

"Hothouse," *F&SF*, Feb.;

"Moon of Delight," *NW*, Mar.

POUL ANDERSON

"Hiding Place," *ASF*, Mar.;

"Night Piece," *F&SF*, Jul.

CHRISTOPHER ANVIL

"Identification," *ASF*, May;

"No Small Enemy," *ASF*, Nov.

RUSSELL A. APPLE

"Astronaut Aweigh," *LHJ*, Jan.

ISAAC ASIMOV

"Playboy and the Slime God," *Amz*, Mar.

J. G. BALLARD

"Deep End," *NW*, May.

ALAN BARCLAY

"Haircrack," *NW*, May;

"The Scapegoat," *NW*, Apr.



CHARLES BEAUMONT

"Blood Brother," *Plby*, Apr.

THOMAS BERGER

"Professor Hyde," *Plby*, Dec.

JOHN BERRY

"The One Who Returns," *F&SF*, Mar.

LLOYD BIGGLE, JR.

"Monument," *ASF*, Jun.

CHARLES MINOR BLACKFORD

"The Valley of the Masters," *If*, Sep.

JAMES BLISH

"A Dusk of Idols," *Amz*, Mar.;

"The Abattoir Effect," "SCTH."

ROBERT BLOCH

"Crime Machine," *Gal*, Oct.;

"Philtre-Tip," *Rog*, Mar.

NEAL BROOKS

"The Peacemaker," *Rog*, Oct.

ROSEL GEORGE BROWN

"The Ultimate Sin," *F&SF*, Oct.

JOHN BRUNNER

"The Analysts," *SciF*, Aug.

ALGIS BUDRYS

"Wall of Crystal, Eye of Night," *Gal*, Dec.

WALTER BUPP

"Card Trick," *ASF*, Jan.

OTIS KIDWELL BURGER

"The Zookeeper," *F&SF*, Jul.

HAROLD CALIN

"A Time to Die," *Amz*, Jun.

ARTHUR C. CLARKE

"At the End of the Orbit," *If*, Nov.;

"Before Eden," *Amz*, Jun.;

"Death and the Senator," *ASF*, May.

MILDRED CLINGERMAN

"A Red Heart and Blue Roses," and "The Gay Deceiver," "ACOS."

AVRAM DAVIDSON

"The Sources of the Nile," *F&SF*, Jan.

KATHLEEN DAVE

"Come on in, Mrs. Farrick!," *Mlle*, Aug.

MIRIAM ALLEN DEFORD

"The Cage," *F&SF*, Jun.

GORDON DICKSON

"An Honorable Death," *Gal*, Feb.;

"Rehabilitated," *F&SF*, Jan.;

"The Haunted Village," *F&SF*, Aug.

JEREMY DOLE

"The Year the Yankees Won the Pennant," *Play*, Oct.

WILLIAM EASTLAKE

"What Nice Hands Held," *F&SF*, Jan.

HARLAN ELLISON & JOE L. HENSLEY

"Do-It-Yourself," *Rog*, Feb.

DAVID ELY

"The Last Friday in August," *Fant*, Dec.

CAROL EMSHWILLER

"Adapted," *F&SF*, May.

JACK FINNEY

"Where the Cluetts Are," *MCC*, Jan.

DANIEL F. GALOUYE

"Spawn of Doom," *Fant*, Dec.

JAMES GARRETT

"Gentlemen Be Sated," *Dude*, Jan.

RANDALL GARRETT

"The Highest Treason," *ASF*, Jan.

HERBERT GOLD

"The Day They Got Boston," *Met*, Jan.

DAVID GORDON

"The Foreign Hand-Tie," *ASF*, Dec.

HENRY HASSE

"The Beginning," *Amz*, May.

ZENNA HENDERSON

"Return," *F&SF*, Mar.

FRANK HERBERT

"Try to Rememberl," *Amz*, Oct.

PHILIP E. HIGH

"Fallen Angel," *ASF*, Jun.;

"Survival Course," *NW*, Dec.

GARY JENNINGS

"Buy Now, Die Later," *Gent*, Aug.

TEDDY KELLER

"The Plague," *ASF*, Feb.

JOHN KIPPAX

"Blood Offering," *SciF*, Jun.

HERBERT KUBLY

"'They Think I'm Mad,' Said the Marquise," *Vog*, Sep. 15.

R.A. LAFFERTY

"Rainbird," *Gal*, Dec.

GEORGE LANGELAAN

"Cold Blood," *NW*, Oct.

KEITH LAUMER

"The King of the City," *Gal*, Aug.

FRITZ LEIBER

"Scylla's Daughter," *Fant*, May.

MURRAY LEINSTER

"Doctor," *Gal*, Feb.

ART LEWIS

"Vassi," *If*, Jan.

WILLARD MARSH

"My Cosmic Valentine," *Aud*, Jan.

ARTHUR MAYSE

"The Haunted Dancers," *SEP*, Jul. 8.

WINONA MC CLINTOC

"Four Days in the Corner," *F&SF*, Sep.

FRED MC MORROW

"The Big Wheel," *SEP*, Jul. 29.

ROBERT MURPHY

"The Phantom Setter," *SEP*, Jun. 17.

NILS T. PETERSON

"Pecking Order," *F&SF*, Sep.

FREDERIK POHL & C. M. KORNBLUTH

"The World of Myrion Flowers," *F&SF*, Oct.

ARTHUR PORGES

"One Bad Habit," *Fant*, Jun.

TOM PURDOM

"The Green Beret," *ASF*, Jan.

KIT REED

"Piggy," *F&SF*, Aug.

JOHN REESE

"The Cat That Vanished," *SEP*, Mar. 4.

MACK REYNOLDS

"Black Man's Burden," *ASF*, Dec.;

"Farmer," *Gal*, Jun.

LEIGH RICHMOND

"Prologue to an Analogue," *ASF*, Jun.

DAVID ROME

"Time of Arrival," *NW*, Apr.

RAY RUSSELL

"Sardonicus," "Sard."

FRED SABERHAGEN

"Seven Doors to Education," *If*, May.

MARGARET ST. CLAIR

"Lochinvar," *Gal*, Aug.

WILLIAM SAMBROT

"The Cathedral of Mars," *SEP*, Jun. 24.

JACK SHARKEY

"No Harm Done," *Fant*, Jul.

ROBERT SILVERBERG

"Company Store," *NW*, Aug.

CLIFFORD D. SIMAK

"Horrible Example," *ASF*, *Mar*.

CORDWAINER SMITH

"Alpha Ralpa Boulevard," *F&SF*, *Jun*.

D. D. STEWART

"Junior Partner," *NW*, *Jul*.

THEODORE STURGEON

"Tandy's Story," *Gal*, *Apr*.

JOSEPH TINKER

"Tinker's Dam," *ASF*, *Jul*.

JACK VANCE

"I-C-a-BeM," *Amz*, *Oct*.

KURT VONNEGUT, JR.

"Harrison Bergeron," *F&SF*, *Oct*.

EDWARD WELLEN

"IOU," *If*, *Mar*.

JOHN ANTHONY WEST

"George," and "The Fiesta at Managuay," "COTM."

GEORGE WHITLEY

"Change of Heart," *NW*, *Sep*.

WILL WORTHINGTON

"The Food Goes in the Top," *SciF*, *Aug*.

JOHN WYNDHAM

"How Do I Do?," "TIM."

("William Sambrot's story, "Nine Days to Die," from the *SEP*, July 9, 1960, was incorrectly listed here *last* year by its subtitle, "An Atomic Age Ordeal." )

## SUMMATION: SF, 1963

by Judith Merril

Never before have so many been threatened with so much.

If the fallout doesn't get you, the fault slip will. The next ice age, we are shiveringly reminded, is practically upon us. It may be a matter of only thousands, or hundreds, of generations before our sun goes nova. And if neither natural nor man-made Doomsday befall us, it will be not hundreds, but ten or less generations before we must cope with the prospects of starvation—or suffocation—in the foul-aired plankton-fed single supermegapolis of Earth's sardine-can-packed population.

It is not that the dangers are new: just that we are newly aware of them.

Never has so much been promised to so many.

The wealth of our technological civilization, today, is beyond the wildest fantasies of earlier times:

wealth measured not in such abstractions as "capital goods" or "national incomes," but in the actualities of physical comfort, health, leisure, longevity, and even that most vital (and most alienable) of "natural rights," the freedom-and-capacity to pursue individual happiness.

That wealth, like technology, is unevenly distributed, we know. But even the most horrifying (to us) conditions of life on Earth today were only the norm for the human condition until a few scant centuries ago. (Neither Plato nor Lao-tse would have paused long in their dialogues on politics or morality, to be shocked at the deaths of four children in a rebellion-quelling like Birmingham's bombing. Apartheid standards of living would have seemed slave-coddling to Cheops or Genghis Khan. The civil rights available to a Red Chinese peasant today would have dazzled a serf in the kitchens of Louis XIV of France.) And the increment in knowledge and productivity continues to accelerate while it spreads. The real-wealth potential is constantly greater both in total quantity and in wide availability.

The resources of our world are not new; we have just started to make use of them.

Never has so much uncertainty been felt by so many.

In our relations with the physical environment, we first learned simple skills to use it, then acquired some understanding of it; only then could we start to remake it to our advantage. The accumulation of observations by countless naturalists and discoverers provided a basis for analytical science; the scientist's hypothesis-and-experiment is the base on which the inventor and engineer stand.

As far back as any history goes, human beings have observed each other; primitive techniques for controlling and utilizing human intelligence and personality were discovered in the age of myths. But the first systematic, analytic, scientific studies of mankind by man began barely a century ago—five hundred years behind physical science. If the rate of progress has been swifter, it is because we had already learned something of the techniques of scientific investigation, and because we now have the products of earlier sciences to use as tools and mirrors for self-study. (Electroencephalography probes and measures the functions of the brain; a cybernetic machine mirrors it.)

We are now rapidly approaching the kind of understanding of our own thoughts, emotions, capacities, and behavior which will, abruptly (next year? next decade?), break through to the level of application and invention. The true science of humanics, when it emerges, will of necessity convey the power to remake our intellects and personalities to our advantage ... or to our final doom.

The concept of self-determination is not new; but we are now about to acquire the capacity for it.

Science fantasy is not so new now either; it has apparently just, reached the level of self-consciousness. That is: never before has so much been published by or about writers and writing of speculative fiction.

There was the usual scattering of individual items:

Fredric Brown had a page of poetic definition in *Fantasy and Science Fiction*. Isaac Asimov had two pages in *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, urging the use of an early taste for good science fiction as a selection test for creative scientific potential more effective than any combination of intelligence, aptitude, and personality tests now in use in our schools.

Walt Kelly had four pages in the *Atlantic*: "Ka-Platz! The Delight in the Unexpected." Robert Bloch devoted his column in one issue of *Rogue* to the annual World Science Fiction Convention. At least two pieces by Soviet authors appeared here: one by Arkadi Strugatsky, in *USSR*, about Soviet science fiction; and "A Soviet View of American Science Fiction," by Alexander Karantsev, in *Amazing*.

The first series of Sam Moskowitz's bibliographic biographies of leading writers in the genre appeared in book form as *Explorers of the Infinite* (World Publishing Company, 1963). Michael Moorcock began a series which has since completed a scholarly analysis of fantasy fiction, in *Science Fantasy*. Life had a lengthy photo-biographic essay on Hugo Gernsback and "scientifiction."

In addition to these individual statements, some fifty-two writers of s-f, and nine assorted editors, agents, reviewers, producers, publishers, etc., (A list of the participants will be found at the end of the *Summation*.) were involved in three separate publishing ventures: the *Playboy* symposium, the Double Bill survey, and a series of guest editorials in *New Worlds*.

The opinions expressed in the editorials would take too much space to summarize individually; as a group, they fall largely within the range of attitudes more concisely formulated in the Double Bill survey.

The questionnaire, compiled by Lloyd Biggle, Jr., asked eleven questions, most of which concentrated on advice to new writers. The three that evoked the most widely interesting responses were the *raison d'être* question quoted earlier, and these two: "For what reason or reasons do you write (or edit) science fiction in preference to other forms of literature?" and "What is your appraisal of the relationship of science fiction to the 'mainstream' of literature?"

Among forty-three participants, there were at least six or seven distinct notions of what "mainstream" meant—and even more differences about the relationship between mainstream and s-f. Some felt the first was a subdivision of the second; some that the second was a subdivision of the first; and some said there was no real distinction between the two, except that imposed by artificial labels. A large and vigorous minority felt the two forms are radically different and probably will not—certainly should not—merge and lose their separate identities. And cutting across all other differences (except among those who saw none) was a roughly half-and-half split on which is "better" literature.

In view of all these permutations of disagreement, the clear-cut response on the other two questions is startling. Discounting the several authors who gave as reason for personal preference, "easier to write and sell" or "entertainment" as the major significance (since these are applicable to any field in which a writer happens to work), the overwhelming majority gave as their main answer to both these questions the freedom offered in s-f, as compared with other contemporary forms: freedom to express any and all opinions, to explore unconventional and unpopular ideas, to examine human problems and relationships, and to experiment with style and technique. ("It stretches the imagination." "I am a surrealist at heart." "The most iconoclastic form of literature." Or John Campbell's, "There's room to think and move.")

Next most important, and mentioned by at least half the authors, was the use of s-f (in this case primarily science fiction) as a learning medium. For some, this meant simply a vehicle for teaching (or preaching); others—and rather more—were interested in what they themselves learned, both as readers and writers; the largest number referred to the sheer intellectual exercise involved. ("Mind-stretching." "Exhilaration." "Kicks." "Creative challenge.")

The Playboy discussion was a showcase for this kind of thought-kick. The twelve participants were invited, not to discuss their work, but to demonstrate it. Although the published version did not appear until, the summer of 1963, the project was initiated almost a year earlier, at a taped midnight discussion during the World Science Fiction Convention in Chicago in 1962.

Seven of the final panel members were present at that first session, and it was the only actual "session." Many tapes and mailings later, much-revised and re-exchanged, the symposium emerged as a wide-ranging, colorful résumé of science-fiction thinking over the past twenty-five years. If there was a certain lack of freshness of idea, at least for the case-hardened s-f reader, in most of the subjects covered (space race, aliens, nuclear war, population explosion, genetic control, ocean farming, automation, robots, transportation and communication), it was a different matter when the discussion turned to the prospects for what I have called here humanics.

This is, of course, the true frontier of science in our day. When we have crossed it, we may come to new perceptions which will require a genuine re-evaluation of our understanding of the physical world. But for now, outside the most esoteric work in cosmology and, on the other end, subnucleonics, the largest part of our physical science is in the engineering stage. And by definition, it is where the breakthroughs are just about to come, that speculative fiction becomes exciting and fruitful.

Among the subjects covered were psychochemicals, as specifics for mental disease, as education conditioners, as sleep substitutes, and as pleasure enhancers; current work in mapping the brain with psycho-electronics, and the possibilities of its application in all the areas mentioned above; progress in medicine, surgery, and cybernetics, toward the total elimination of physical disease—and for a dramatic increase in the ordinary lifespan; the use of cryogenics to preserve bodies until new biochemical or surgical techniques are available; and of course the effects of these developments, and of other aspects of technology already in hand, on the sexual, domestic, intellectual, ethical, religious, and social behavior of human beings.

Lightly touched on, here and there, were the upheavals in economics, politics, religion, and education, which are already irrevocably under way, as a result of automation and communications advances—but

which are still due for much more radical changes as psychological and physiological innovations occur, and as the more adventurous engineering research projects begin to bear fruit: broadcast power (solar or atomic), domestic automation, exploration of the solar system; or, less immediate, antigravity and perhaps the matter duplicator.

Noticeably absent from the discussion were two major themes of the last generation of science fiction: time travel and ESP. In the case of time travel, one might feel the vein has been thoroughly worked; pending new information, there is nothing much more to be said. But ESP, or "psionics," has been one of the most active areas of inquiry in the past decade, and still is. Presumably, Playboy is happy to be unconventional and iconoclastic, and willing to give space to eccentric or even possibly subversive ideas, but not quite prepared to be called "crackpot."

This distinction—and I mean "honor"—belongs to the specialty science-fiction magazines. (Remember—it was crackpot, not long ago, to believe in the future of rocketry or space travel; and that "crackpots" was security-guard slang for Manhattan District scientists.) It was precisely this extra dimension of freedom of thought that the writers were talking about in the Double Bill survey. It was in terms of this much latitude that Campbell said, "There's room to think and move."

The increasing pressures for conformity and homogeneity in today's culture are unfortunately not limited to suburban housing developments, clothing styles, or automobile shapes; nor even to the more rigid areas of religion, politics, and education. They work on science, art, and philosophy as well.

These pressures are not new. In the past they have operated against rationalism and scientific inquiry, even as today they inveigh against what institutionalized science finds irrational. At the height of the Inquisition, Johannes Kepler could publish his theories only as science fiction in *Journeys to the Moon*. In our present-day commonsensical philosophic atmosphere, imaginative literature still gives scope to inquiry in those areas of human experience not recognized by any currently sanctified systems of classification. When the vast body of phenomena now stigmatized by association with "magic" and "mysticism" are finally incorporated into a more inclusive view of nature and cosmology, some of the credit, one hopes, will go to the free-wheeling thinkers who are now busily prying the lid off Pandora's psi box, and to the magazines and editors who are providing the outlet for "crackpot" ideas.

This is perhaps the place to record my deep sense of loss—both personal and literary—at the death of Mark Clifton, in the fall of 1963. The first Clifton story, "What Have I Done?" appeared in *Astounding* (forerunner of *Analog*) in May, 1952, and shortly afterward in my anthology, *Beyond Human Ken*. Our first exchange of business letters turned quickly to a voluminous and stimulating correspondence which continued, with only occasional breaks, until his final illness. His active career in science fiction was short; there were five or six years during which his work appeared regularly; after that, only occasional short stories and one recent novel.

When he started writing, Mark had already retired as a semi-invalid from a long and successful career in personnel work and industrial relations. He was fascinated by people; he knew people; he cared about people. He wrote about them, when he had to stop working directly with them. He was passionately concerned with the necessity for integrating the humanist and scientific viewpoints in our time; tirelessly curious about everything people do, and why and how; often frighteningly clear-eyed in his insights.

I do not know whether it was Mark, or John Campbell, who coined the word psionics, but it had its first currency during "the Clifton period" in *Astounding*. He broke ground for a dozen new roads of thought that are still being traveled, explored, exploited, by writers today—roads leading to greater comprehension of human behavior, and in particular to those "crackpot" areas of the psi functions.

His work was sometimes too crude in style for my taste, although he could, and occasionally did (as with that first story), write with elegance; he was usually concerned only with speaking clearly and loudly. He knew from the first that even in science fiction there would be a large and unmovable block of readers, editors, and other writers who would shudder fastidiously at his "crackpot" thinking.

I tried to convince him that he could woo many of them with more attention to style. He did not care. He had a lot to say, and he always knew he did not have time enough. He was tired when he started. But he wanted to get everything he had learned, and everything he had learned to wonder about, down on



paper for the young minds, the fresh minds, the readers whose thinking had not yet set into molds.

I know he died dissatisfied; it was not in Mark to be satisfied; there was always something more. But as I read the work of the new young writers, I know how much more he accomplished than he would ever have believed.

Two other writers of special interest to this field died last year, but both were essentially "mainstream" writers, and have received their literary funeral orations elsewhere.

William Lindsay Gresham will be best remembered for his vivid novel of carnival life, *Nightmare Alley*, but he was also the author of some first-rate science fantasy.

C. S. Lewis was eulogized—among other places—in Edmund Fuller's regular column in the *Sunday Times Book Review*, and Mr. Fuller took the occasion to discuss imaginative literature in general: "Good fantasy is not escapist in the pejorative sense of the word. It may offer temporary refuge and relief from the pressure of the immediate world, but at the same time we are given new perceptions of our actual lives. ... Fantasy is an art of equivalents," and, he concluded, "opens to writers the added dimensions needed to grapple with immense, awesome realities in our potentially apocalyptic age."

Few mainstream critics approach a work of fantasy or science fiction with this much sympathy. Among the more memorable of last year's s-f books was *A Sense of Reality*, a collection of four of Graham Greene's novelettes, each of which attempted to explore, through the unreal, the nature of "reality." Two of these I feel were excellent (I should have liked to have included "A Discovery in the Woods" in this volume). Granville Hicks, reviewing the book for the *Saturday Review*, seemed to like all the stories, but found the main significance in Greene's love for paradox, which "is the point of the title." And Kingsley Amis (also in SR) seemed to believe that Andre Maurois, in "The Earth Dwellers," was writing a fable designed to convert followers of Fabre away from belief in ant-insect.

Meantime, the critics and the editors of quality fiction magazines have joyously discovered Slawomir Mrozek, the Polish satirist, whose short sharp fables (and these are fables) generally fall just short of fantasy, but well within the range of speculative or imaginative literature. Perhaps that elusive line between the genres of s-f and mainstream is related to the critics' enjoyment of the Mrozek fables as specific criticisms of Communism. The fables are barbed and excellent. They are true satires on mankind, with special reference to his political-social organizations. Most of them, with no more than some change in nomenclature and occasionally in minor procedures, could be aimed as pointedly at American customs. But in that case, would *Mademoiselle* and *Playboy* enjoy them as much?

I mentioned a story of Graham Greene's which would have been included here, had it been possible. There are always a few such disappointments in compiling an anthology. It may be due to the growing respectability of the field, or to the increasing number of mainstream entries, or both—but there seem to be more such problems each year. Some of these are due to previous exclusive reprint commitments. Others are budget problems: many anthologies proportion their funds to allow for larger payments to "name" authors; I prefer not to.

These dropouts are, of course, listed in the Honorable Mentions, together with stories that were too long, or for other reasons not quite right for the book. But there are two stories I should like to mention here, if only because both are the work of comparatively new writers of unusual ability. These were Roger Zelazny's extraordinarily thoughtful and tender "A Rose for Ecclesiastes," and Rick Raphael's very funny, very human "Sonny."

There were two other dropouts not listed at all because I do not feel that my coverage of poetry is wide enough for me to name individual items as "The Best." I use—or try to use—what I happen to see that I like. This time I was unable to secure rights to some poems from John Updike's new collection, *Telephone Poles*, and to excerpts from Harry Martinson's *Aniara* (both published by Knopf, 1963).

Fifteen or twenty of the poems in the Updike volume qualify readily as s-f; I liked, in particular, "Cosmic Gall," "In Praise of (C<sub>10</sub>H<sub>9</sub>O<sub>5</sub>)" "White Dwarf," "Comp. Religion," "Fever," and the title poem, "Telephone Poles."

*Aniara* is the book of poems on which the Swedish space opera (no joke; opera, about space) of the same name is based. The opera was published here in 1962; the poems in 1963.

In addition to these, several individual poems came to my (delighted) attention during the year: John

Ciardi's "A New Fable of the Grasshopper and the Ant," in McCall's; May Swenson's "Models of the Universe," written on commission for the Steuben Glass Company; Doris Pitkin Buck's "No Trading Voyage," in Fantasy and Science Fiction; Robert Cullen's "Dolphin," in Commonweal; "Helpmeet," by "Sec," in the Reporter; J. S. Bigelow's "The Bat and the Scientist," in the Atlantic Monthly.

I come now to the paragraph where I must thank those people who assisted in the preparation of the anthology. This (like the securing of stories) is increasingly difficult: the number of people who offer suggestions, read stories, or lend clerical help, seems to grow with each book. With apologies, then, to the many who are not mentioned here my especial gratitude to Carol Emshwiller and Anthony Boucher for their recommendations; to Virginia BHA, Gerard Dorion, and James Walker for reader reactions; to Mary Lou Collard, Marcia Pley, George Roeder, and Ann Pohl, for clerical and other assistance; and above all to Barbara Norville, at Simon and Schuster, for every conceivable kind of help and cooperation.

The following authors participated in the Playboy symposium, the Double Bill survey, and/or the New Worlds guest-editorial series:

Brian W. Aldiss DB  
James E. Gunn DB  
Poul Anderson DB,  
P Lee Harding NW  
John Ashcroft NW  
Robert A. Heinlein P  
John Ashton NW  
Zenna Henderson DB  
Isaac Asimov DB, P  
Damon Knight DB  
Alfred Bester DB  
Allen Kim Lang DB  
James Blish P  
Fritz Leiber DB  
Ray Bradbury DB, P  
Katherine MacLean DB  
John Brunner DB  
Donald Malcolm NW  
A. J. Budrys P  
Dean McLaughlin DB  
John Christopher DB  
Michael Moorcock NW  
Arthur C. Clarke P  
Andre Norton DB  
Mark Clifton DB  
Alan E. Nourse DB  
Charles De Vet DB  
H. Beam Piper DB  
Philip K. Dick DB  
Frederik Pohl DB, P  
Gordon R. Dickson DB  
Arthur Porges DB  
G. H. Doherty NW  
Robert Presslie NW  
Harlan Ellison DB  
David Rome NW

Daniel F. Galouye DB  
Fred Saberhagen DB  
Rod Serling P  
Wilson Tucker DB  
Clifford D. Simak DB  
A. E. van Vogt P  
Jerry Sohl DB  
Pierre Versins DB  
Theodore Sturgeon DB, P  
Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. DB  
Jeff Sutton DB  
James White NW  
William Tenn P  
Richard Wilson DB  
E. C. Tubb NW  
Roger Zelazny DB

The following editors, anthologists, publishers, producers, etc., also participated: John W. Campbell, Jr., E. Cornell, Groff Conklin, Basil Davenport, Martin Greenberg, J. F. McComas, P. Schuyler Miller, all in Double Bill; Dr. I. F. Clarke and Roberta Rambelli, in New Worlds.

#### HONORABLE MENTIONS

Abbreviations:

Amz Amazing Stories  
Anal Analog Science Fact & Fiction  
All Atlantic Monthly  
BW Book Week  
CY Catholic Youth  
Csmc Cosmopolitan  
DC The Diner's Club Magazine  
Dude The Dude  
Fant Fantastic  
F&SF Fantasy and Science Fiction  
Gal Galaxy  
Gam Gamma  
Gent Gent  
GH Good Housekeeping  
If If  
LHJ Ladies' Home Journal  
McC McCall's  
Mlle Mademoiselle  
NL The New Leader  
NW New Worlds (British)  
Plby Playboy  
Rep The Reporter  
R&T Road and Track  
Rog Rogue  
SEP The Saturday Evening Post  
SciF Science Fantasy (British)  
SS! Short Story International  
WoT Worlds of Tomorrow

WRD The Worm Runner's Digest

VANCE AANDAHL

"The Weremartini," F&SF, Jun.

BRIAN W. ALDISS

"Skeleton Crew," SciF, Dec.

POUL ANDERSON

"Turning Point," If, May.

PIERS ANTHONY

"Quinquepedalian," Amz, Nov.

CHRISTOPHER ANVIL

"Not in the Literature," Anal, Mar.

JOHN ASHCROFT

"The Shtarman," NW, Aug.

ISAAC ASIMOV

"My Son, the Physicist," F&SF, Apr.

J.G. BALLARD

"The Sherrington Theory," Amz, Mar.

STEPHEN BARR

"The Mirror of Gigantic Shadows," Plby, Sep.

JOHN BAXTER

"Eviction," NW, Mar.

PETER S. BEAGLE

"Come, Lady Death," Atl, Sep.

K.W. BENNETT

"The Seventeenth Summer," SciF, Apr.

FRANK BEQUAERT

"Alice Grebel and the Doomsday Machine," Csmg

JEROME BIXBY

"The God-Plllnk," WoT, Dec.

ROBERT BLOCH

"Beelzebub," Plby, Dec.

JUAN BOSCH

"The Indelible Spot," SEP, Nov. 16.

LYLE G. BOYD "The Provenance of Swift," WoT, Feb.

RAY BRADBURY

"Bright Phoenix," F&SF, May;

"To the Chicago Abyss," in the *Machineries of Joy* (Simon and Schuster, 1964).

CHRISTIANNA BRAND

"Akin to Love," Rog, Apr.

FREDRIC BROWN

"It Didn't Happen," Plby, Oct.

JOHN BRUNNER

"Singleminded," If, May;

"The Totally Rich," WoT, Jun.

WALTER BUFF

"The Right Time," Anal, Dec.

OTIS KIDWELL BURGER

"The Pleiades," F&SF, Feb.

JONATHAN BURKE

"When I Come Back," NW, Dec.

ALFRED CHESTER

"The Word," BW, Dec. 29.

PRICE DAY

"Four O'clock," DC, Apr.

HARRISON DENMARK

"The Stainless Steel Leech," Amz, Apr.

PHILIP K. DICK

"If There Were No Benny Cemoli," Gal, Dec.

JACK EGAN

"Cully," Amz, Jan.

LARRY EISENBERG

"The Fastest Draw," Amz, Oct.

DAVID ELY

"The Human Factor," SEP, Nov. 16.

FREDERICK ELY

"Chance the Prairie Prey," Rog, Jul.

MICHAEL FESSIER

"The H. K. Brock," Rog, Feb.

DAVID E. FISHER

"Mr. Mateosian and the Chinaman," Gent, Dec.

GERTRUDE FRIEDBERG

"The Short and Happy Death of George Frumkin," F&SF, Apr.

DANIEL F. GALOUYE

"Recovery Area," Amz, Feb.;

"Reign of the Telepuppets," Amz, Aug.

DAVID GORDON

"With No Strings Attached," Anal, Feb.

GRAHAM GREENE

Stories in *A Sense of Reality* (Viking, 1963)

WILLIAM LINDSAY GRESHAM

"Punch Line," Rog, Apr.

DAVIS GRUBB

"The Enchanted Room," GH, Mar.

LARRY HARRIS & DONALD WESTLAKE

"The Question," F&SF, Mar.

ZENNA HENDERSON

"Deluge," F&SF, Oct.

JAMES LEO HERLIHY

"The Astral Body of a U. S. Mail Truck," Mlle, Feb.

P. M. HUBBARD

"The Golden Brick," F&SF, Jan.

EILEEN JENSEN

"Androcles and the Librarian," LHJ, Sep.

WARD S. JUST

"The Day the News Managers Quit," Rep, May.

HERBERT D. KASTLE

"The God on the 36th Floor," Amz, Dec.

DANIEL KEYES

"A Jury of Its Peers," WoT, Aug.

DAMON KNIGHT

"The Second-Class Citizen," If, Nov.

AARON L. KOLOM

"Heavenly Gifts," WoT, Apr.

KEITH LAUMER

"It Could Be Anything," Amz, Jan.

FRITZ LEIBER

"Game for Motel Room," F&SF, Mar.

MURRAY LEINSTER

"The Hate Disease," Anal, Aug.

MAGNUS LUDENS

"My Lady Selene," Gal, Apr.

DONALD MALCOLM

"Twice. Bitten," NW, Feb.

DAVID MASON

"Road Stop," If, Jan.

JOHN J. MCGUIRE

"Take the Reason Prisoner," Anal, Nov.

RICHARD MCKENNA

"Hunter, Come Home," F&SF, Mar.

SEATON McKETTRIG

"A World by the Tale," Anal, Oct.

SLAWOMIR MROZEK

"The Elephant," Mlle, May.

WILLIAM F. NOLAN

"The Last Three Months," R&T, Sep.

GERALD W. PAGE

"The Happy Man," Anal, Mar.

ALEXEI PANSHIN

"Down to the Worlds of Men," If, Jul.

MERVYN PEAKE

"Same Time, Same Place," SciF, Aug.

TERRY PRACHETT

"The Hades Business," SciF, Aug.

THEODORE PRATT

"Robert Robot," CY, May

ROBERT PRESSLIE

"No Brother of Mine," NW, Dec.

KEN W. PURDY

"The Golden Frog," Plby, Jan.

JOHN RACKHAM

"Dossier," NW, Apr.

RICK RAPHAEL

"Sonny," Anal, Apr.;

"The Thirst Quenchers," Anal, Sep.

MACK REYNOLDS

"Expediter," Anal, May.

DAVID ROME

"Inside," SciF, Feb.

JAMES H. SCHMITZ

"Ham Sandwich," Anal, Jun.;

"Oneness," Anal, May.

EUGENE S. SCHWARTZ

"The Shelter in the Jungle," NL; SSI, Dec.

JACK SHARKEY

"Transient," Rog, Oct.

CLIFFORD D. SIMAK

"New Folks' Home," Anal, Jul.

HERBERT A. SIMMONS

"One Night Stand," Gam #1.

B. F. SKINNER

"A Christmas Caramel" (a play), WRD, Aug.

HENRY SLESAR

"The Valley of Good News," Dude, Mar.

CORDWAINER SMITH

"Think Blue, Count Two," Gal, Feb.

ALBERT TEICHNER

"Cerebrum," Amz, Jan.;

"The Forelife Myth," Fant, Jan.

WILLIAM TENN

"The Men in the Walls," Gal, Oct.

THEODORE L. THOMAS

"The Lonely Man," Gal, Apr.



DOBBIN THORPE

"Minnesota Gothic," *Fant*, Jun.

JACK VANCE

"Green Magic," *F&SF*, Jun.

JOHN J. WELLS & MARION ZIMMER BRADLEY

"Another Rib," *F&SF*, Jun.

JAMES WHITE

"Counter Security," *F&SF*, Feb.

TED WHITE & TERRY CARR

"I, Executioner," *If*, Mar.

JACK WILLIAMSON

"The Masked World," *WoT*, Oct.

ROBERT F. YOUNG

"Sweet Tooth," *Gal*, Oct.

ROGER ZELAZNY

"A Rose for Ecclesiastes," *F&SF*, Nov.

## INTRODUCTION

I don't read introductions myself: not ahead of time. Anything the author, or his friend or admirer has to say about it *may* interest me after I have read the book. Occasionally, I go back to a preface part way through the book, hoping for some sort of background to place unfamiliar or difficult material in context; but, that's rare, and there really ought to be a different label for that kind of introduction.

The stories in this anthology are not difficult; some of them were surely unfamiliar in tone or subject when they were first published, in the remote Sputnik and pre-Sputnik days, but there is nothing in here that needs footnoting for the ordinary space-age citizen of the sixties. Nevertheless, custom (and my contract with the publishers) requires that a collection of this sort have a preface.

I understand that the basic function of the introduction is advertising. I am supposed to tell you how good the book is and make you want to read (buy) it. Quickly, then—this is a very good book. If you are just deciding whether or not to read (buy) it, I suggest you turn immediately to the first page of the first story (or any other story); any one of them will be more convincing, and much more entertaining, than I am likely to be.

Presumably, I could stop here: perhaps wisely so. But it occurs to me that some of you may, after reading the stories, be interested in the background from which they came. Perspective and context I can talk about—at length. The problem becomes one of where to start and how to stop. Suddenly I still don't want to write an introduction: I want to write a book.

"Science fiction isn't a livelihood for you, it's a way of life," a typist told me once. True.

Science fiction—by which I mean for the moment the science-fiction field—has been my life, in large degree, for the last twenty years or so. I have made my living from it, and derived most of my entertainment and education through the reading and writing of it. My closest friends and most uncomfortable enemies were made among the writers and editors and publishers of SF. My children

were raised on its ideas. Books and correspondence files overrun my living quarters. What traveling I have done has been inspired by science-fiction happenings or people, and often made possible by professional connections.

In short, I am prepared to talk at length about what it (*SF*, s-f, science fiction, science fantasy, speculative fiction—it) is and where it fits and who does it and why, and whether it's worth it. I will try to limit myself only to what applies to this particular book.

*Science fiction* as a descriptive label has long since lost whatever validity it might once have had. By now it means so many things to so many people that—even though there are more and more people to whom it means *something*—I prefer not to use it at all, when I am talking about stories. *SF* (or generically, s-f) allows you to think *science fiction* if you like, while I think *science fable* or *scientific fantasy* or *speculative fiction*, or (once in a rare while, because there's little enough of it being written, by any rigorous definition) *science fiction*.

(I am not going to trap myself into attempting a definition of what I mean by *science fiction*; enough to say that of the stories in this book, those by Thomas, Reynolds, Byrom, Budrys, and Asimov, and Carol Emshwiller's "Day at the Beach" are all valid examples.)

So I say *SF*—but I still think *science fiction*: like it or not, the label sticks. It has a ring to it that suits our times: an implicit dialectical synthesis equally expressive of our acclimatization to the evermore-fantastic facts of daily life, and the growing popularity of fact-filled fantasy and fiction. ("True stories" have taken over the pop-magazine field; sex becomes so graphic it ceases to be suggestive; the Timeless West is vanishing before a flood of dates and names; the Private Eye has become a form-filling-out police detective, and the psychiatric crime-suspense novel has given way to the gadget-and-gimmickful spy story.)

In fact, one of the main difficulties with *science fiction* as a label for a particular kind of story, or category of publishing, is a popular reversal of meaning most often applied by editorial writers for *Time-Life*, political speechmakers, and a certain breed of science writer teacher: phrases like "a science-fictional adventure" or "an accomplishment positively science-fictional" or "beyond science-fiction" mean, as we all immediately understand, not a fantasy based on science or scientific reasoning, but a truly astonishing fact.

Aside from the inversion-process, there is a sideways slippage. To the moviegoer, "science fiction" has come to mean "horror." A "science-fiction movie" means *The Blob from Time*, not *Dr. Strangelove*. To the comic-book addict, it means Superman and his many friends. To the TV viewer, it is beginning to mean "space story" instead of "chiller," as *Star Trek* takes over from the *Twilight Zone*.

And of course, in book publishing, "science fiction" means either a book written by an author whose name is familiar to s-f book-buyers, or any poor-to-mediocre book with fantastic or futuristic elements written by an unknown. (So Vonnegut's *Player Piano* was "science fiction" in 1952, and "caustic social comment" when it was reissued in 1966; anything by Sturgeon is science fiction; anything by John Barth or John Hersey is not.)

People read for two reasons: to get away from reality, and to get closer to it; the ideal story form, I suppose, is the fable, which does both. In his introduction to the first *SF Annual*, Orson Welles suggested that s-f stories are "our modern fables." More recently there has been much talk (from me among others) about *SF* as modern myth. It may seem pretentious to speak of a field which degenerates so readily into mere adventure story as the replacement for classical philosophy in our time—and yet this is to some extent the role s-f has been playing. Science-fiction is not fiction about science, but fiction which endeavors to find the meaning in science and in the scientific-technological society we are constructing.

This book, then, contains 29 s-f stories, by which I mean a special sort of contemporary writing which makes use of fantastic or inventive elements to comment on, or speculate about, society, humanity, life, the cosmos, reality, and any other topic under the general heading of philosophy. They are, generally speaking, the stories that looked best to me on rereading, out of all those included in the first five *SF Annuals*. That means, among other things, that they were all published between 1955-1960, a significant half-decade with special import for speculative fiction.

I started work on the 1st *Annual* in the fall of 1955. Two of the stories in this book were first

published in January, 1955, and three more in March—which means one or more was probably written at least as early as 1953.

1953 was the year Dwight Eisenhower became President of the United States, and the Korean war ended, and McCarthy became Chairman of the Senate Committee on Government Operations. Stalin died. The peptide molecule was synthesized for the first time. Dr. Oppenheimer, the "father of the H-bomb," was dismissed from government employ as a bad security risk. John F. Kennedy, the junior Senator from Massachusetts married society girl, Jacqueline Bouvier. Dylan Thomas died; James Baldwin published his first novel; William Burroughs wrote *Junkie*. *The Old Man and the Sea* won a Pulitzer for Hemingway.

1954 was the Supreme Court ruling on integration, and Dien Bien Phu, and the formation of SEATO. Winston Churchill retired as Prime Minister; McCarthy was censured by the Senate. The USSR exploded an H-bomb; the first peace-use atomic power plant was opened in Shippingport, Pa. Aldous Huxley published a book of his experiences with mescaline, *The Doors of Perception*.

In '55, the Salk vaccine for polio was put into use; the CIO and AFL merged; there were Freedom Riders in the South; the DNA and RNA molecules were synthesized; *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* won the Pulitzer drama prize; nobody paid much attention to the early publicity releases coming from Washington about the satellites to be orbited during the International Geophysical Year. The anti-proton was produced in a laboratory.

'56: Sen. Kennedy (D., Mass.) failed to gain the vice-presidential nomination. Fidel Castro landed in Oriente Province and started fighting his way to Havana. The U.S. conducted an aerial H-bomb test over Bikini atoll. Premier Diem refused to allow a Vietnam election. *A Walk on the Wild Side* and *Giovanni's Room* came out, and *Around the World in 80 Days* brought wide-screen vision to the world. The Rebel won a Nobel Prize for Camus.

'57 was Kerouac's *On the Road* and Kennedy's *Profiles in Courage*; the first Little Rock ruckus; the Principle of Conservation of Parity, and the Sabin sugarcubes; O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*. Ghana achieved independence. And in October—Sputnik 1.

In '58, the first atomic submarine was launched; Alaska was admitted to the Union; the Diner's Club began; the Space Race got underway. '59 was the Castro victory in Cuba, college students in phone booths, *Lolita* banned and *Lady Chatterley* sold, the first Soviet moon rockets, and the Able-Baker rockets in the U.S.

When the last of the Annuals represented here was published, in 1960, more than 20 satellites had gone up, the lunch-counter sit-ins were starting, *The Catcher in the Rye* had become a Big Thing on Campus, Hawaii was the 50th State. Elizabeth Taylor had found happiness at last with Eddie Fisher, and John F. Kennedy was campaigning against Richard Nixon for the Presidency.

No one—well, hardly anyone—had yet heard of the Beatles or Bob Dylan or pick Gregory. Malcolm X was barely known outside Harlem. McCarthy was dead, but not McCarthyism, which seemed to have taken root in the American soul. There was much concern about science education, and classics were being dropped from school curricula. Khrushchev had not been to Disneyland, and people were starting to worry about China instead of Russia.

This was the time, so close and somehow so remote, during which these stories were written and published. It was a time of adjustments, culmination, transitions, announcements, rather than new achievements. (The basic satellite designs were on the drawing boards in 1952; the polio research was completed in 1953; Castro was already gathering his forces in 1954; and so forth.) This was even more true inside science fiction.

The best s-f of the forties had been (often brilliantly) predictive; the overall tone up through the early fifties was instructive, indeed evangelist; science fictionists were triumphant prophets of atomic power and space flight, direful forewarners of atomic war and brainwashing and overpopulation.

In the early fifties, the bright new ideas and urgent messages were fewer. Between 1948 and 1952, new writers had poured into the field, and new ideas as well as new techniques emerged in every issue of the proliferating magazines. Between 1955 and 1960, I think more writers left the field than came into it; the number of magazine titles fell off sharply; the new-concepts writing began to be found in RAND

reports and NASA releases, more than in s-f. The beginning of the industrial, political, and technological space age meant the beginning of a new period of exploration in "the human factor," as opposed to the "hardware," for both science and science fiction. The interesting new work tended to emphasize literary qualities rather than philosophic ones. And by 1955, the field had achieved just enough literary respectability to be able to serve a vital function: during the entire period covered by this anthology, it was the science-fiction magazines that provided the only widely read medium for protest and dissent in a witch-haunted country.

It was a curious combination of pressures and circumstances which resulted in the best American short fiction of that period being published in magazines most "literary" people (still) were not willing to have seen on their coffee tables. And it is interesting to note that the sophistication of science fiction through those years was, to some extent at least, a conscious process.

In 1956, the first Milford Science Fiction Writer's Conference took place under the joint direction of Damon Knight, James Blish, and myself. Thirty-odd writers attended, and discussed things like symbolism in fiction and techniques of criticism, as well as problems of marketing and plotting. The impact of the week of talks on those who attended was enormous, and the Conference has continued to function as an arena for serious professional discourse.

An indirect result of the Conference was a publication edited for several years by Theodore Cogswell, called *Proceedings of the Institute for Twenty-first Century Studies*. PITFCS published articles, limericks, nonsense stuff, poetry, and letters—most of all, letters. It provided a running round-robin for everyone professionally involved with s-f—and its full role in the development of the field, and of some individual writers, is hard to overestimate.

This anthology, as I said earlier, is made up of the stories in the first five Annuals that seemed best to me in retrospect—in a general way.

For instance, Daniel Keyes' "Flowers for Algernon" is not here, because it has since been published as a novel even better than the original novelette version. Eugene Ionesco's "Flying High" is missing because I could not secure permission to reprint. And half a dozen more I'd have liked to include, there was simply not enough space for.

Beyond that, there are stories missing here that should by all means be in any volume called *The Best of the Best*—but they were not in the Annuals to begin with. Some of these were permission problems, some were editorial restrictions imposed by the publishers, some again, lack of space. The considerations that go into the makeup of each year's Annual, are complex: Charles Beaumont's "The Vanishing American," for instance, was published in *Fantasy and Science Fiction* in 1955; there were too many stories from that magazine, and too many conformity/alienation stories that year, so it dropped out; in another volume, it would have been a sure selection.

Some other authors whose work was significant and popular during the period involved are not here and were not in the original Annuals because they were not writing short fiction at the time, or because a great deal of good fiction from one author does not always add up to individually excellent stories.

But while there are, to my knowledge, at least as many other stories published between 1955-60 that are just as good as these —these still (and I know I said it before) are very good indeed.

I have read each of them many times now, and I *know*.

Fritz Leiber  
by JUDITH MERRIL

For more than thirty years, Fritz Leiber has been entertaining, inspiring, irritating, enlightening and delighting a growing audience for fantasy and speculative fiction. He has received every honor and award the field has to offer, as well as some distinctive personal tokens of esteem, from a following which includes the entire spectrum of the curious multigenre known as "science fiction": the weird-and-macabre, whimsical and "heroic" fantasy, hardware-sci-fi, sociological speculation and political satire, psychological symbolism and *avant-garde* surrealism. He is as highly regarded by the Newrock Generation as by the

old Guard collectors of 1926 *Amazings* —and perhaps most of all by his colleagues inside the field ("a writer's writer"). Yet his name is hardly known outside the genre.

This paradoxical state of affairs is in part due to his very range and variety. Leiber is equally the Romantic and the Realist: a Shakespearean, scholar, and surrealist; poet, prophet, pamphleteer, pacifist and profligate; occasional painter, sculptor, collagist, and pianist; sometime fencer, serious chess-player, novice canyon-climber. He has been a (Phi Beta Kappa) philosophy student, stage and screen actor, preacher, college teacher, factory worker, editor; has written (aside from s-f) encyclopaedia articles, Lovecraftian horror, popular science, political tracts, comic-strip continuity, plays, poetry, and critical and scholarly works; he is a frequent contributor to fan magazines and amateur publications, an inveterate letter writer and omniverous reader.

There are authors one admires, authors one agrees with, and authors one loves. The first two sorts are taught in schools, displayed on coffee tables and book shelves, discussed at cocktail parties, bought as gifts, and generously lent out. Leiber gets borrowed, tattered and read.

Fritz is my good friend, and has been for twenty years, but the fact is I fell in love with him half a decade before we met. This is not to say my passion is a purely literary one: simply that the man and his work are not separable.

Anyone in the author-meeting business (critic, editor, anthologist) quickly comes to know that the writer of the grisliest murders will turn out to be a tidy, milky little man; the author of a Noble Doctor story probably suffers from chronic acne complicated by gout; and the authoress of those innocent ladies' romances will undoubtedly be not just a tart, but a *tweedy* one. Not so Leiber. (Indeed if one were to invert his literary multiple-personality, he would be left with no character at all.) In appearance as well as manner, he could step into any one of dozens of characters he has written (and on one occasion at least did so with notable success): in fact the "noble barbarian" of the Fafhrd and Mouser stories is so nearly a self-caricature that he is known as "Faf" to his family. The rhythms of his prose are those of his speech; his letters and conversations seem to pick up where the last story stopped and run into the start of the next, if not in topic, then in theme and style. Writing about him, I find it difficult to remember whether this phrase or that image was from the public or private communications.

As critic and editor, I have had to learn to guard against underrating his work on just this account: the best of his stories are often the "transparent" ones that leave me feeling it was after all just a lovely letter from Fritz.

That this kind of *personal* response—although less accountable and much less self-conscious—is shared by thousands of other readers, has been made clear on several occasions. The November 1959 issue of *Fantastic*, for instance: Leiber had just come out of one of his recurrent dry spells, and editor Cele Lalli bought up all his new material until there was enough to fill an issue; the magazine came out with a big black headline across its cover—LEIBER IS BACK!

On that "memorable occasion" mentioned above, when I saw —and heard—an ovation from hundreds of fans and fellow-writers when Leiber took an award at a convention hotel fancy-dress ball. The costume? A cardboard military collar slipped over turned-up jacket lapels, plus cardboard shoulder insignia, an armband, and a large spider black-pencilled on his forehead, to turn him into an officer of the "Spiders" in the Change-war of *The Big Time* and "No Great Magic." The only other component was the Leiber instinct for theatre.

Leiber was born on the day before Christmas in Chicago in 1910, and plunged immediately into the study of Shakespeare: until he was six, he toured the country with the repertory company in which his parents were actors " . . . memories redolent of grease paint, spirit gum, curling colored gelatins of flood- and spot-lights . . . I learned most of Hamlet at age 4 when my father was first learning it . . ." During his school years, he spent long winters in Chicago with two prim Germanic maiden aunts; summers, he was at home with his parents on the Jersey shore, learning more Shakespeare, stagecraft, and theatrical mores.

In 1932 he took a B.A. with honors in Philosophy from the University of Chicago, and went into the ministry: "Ran two Episcopalian 'missionary' churches in New Jersey as lay reader and minister while attending the General Theological Seminary in N.Y. (here a missionary church means one without a

resident priest) . . . I had to get christened and confirmed quick for this odd junket which I tackled most sincerely with the feeling, which 'Beezie' Mandeville [the Rev. Ernest W., of Middletown, N.J.] approved, that I could view the job as one of rational social service rather than religious conviction and vocation. In about five months I found out this wasn't so and I worked out the 'season' and quit."

The next year he was back at Chicago doing graduate work in philosophy. Then a year touring with his father's Shakespearean company, and two years of (mostly male ingenue) bit parts in Hollywood, followed by a brief unsuccessful attempt at freelance writing—and back to Chicago again as a staff writer for the Standard American Encyclopedia (an extraordinary reference work, some of whose oddities are revealed in last year's *New Worlds* story, "The Square Root of Brain").

In the summer of 1937, the time of that first abortive try at "being a writer," two significant events occurred in the literary world: Howard Phillips Lovecraft died, and John W. Campbell, Jr., became editor of *Astounding*, and very shortly afterwards began gathering material for a new publication called *Unknown*, where Leiber's first story was published in 1939.

His interest in fiction had started at college, where most of the time left over from his education in Utopian Socialism, pacifism, fencing, and chess (the only subject in which he now has an official "expert" rating), was devoted to long literary correspondences. The most significant of these were with H. P. Lovecraft (and other members of the Lovecraft Circle) and with his friend Harry Fischer, of Louisville. It was in letters with Fischer that the characters and some of the background of Fathrd and the Gray Mouser were first developed, and it was one of these that sold to *Unknown* and brought the author an immediate following among "heroic fantasy" fans. (Curiously, it was the second in the series, "Two Sought Adventure," that Campbell bought. The first, "Adept's Gambit," a far better story, did not see print until the publication of Leiber's first collection, *Night's Black Agents* by Arkham House in 1947.)

Between 1939-1943, there was a scattering of stories in *Unknown*, *Weird*, and *Future*. Meantime the Leibers (there was now a wife and infant son) left Chicago for Los Angeles again. A year teaching drama and speech at Occidental College was followed by another (very) brief try at free-lancing in 1942: just long enough to write the two novels that would place him firmly in the top rank of science-fantasy, and keep him there through his first long dry spell of five years. *Conjure Wife* (later filmed as *Burn, Witch, Burn!*) combined traditional witchcraft and a realistic contemporary setting derived largely from the year at Occidental; *Gather, Darkness!* went further in two directions, at least, using the apparatus and literature of witchcraft in juxtaposition with technological extrapolation and political prophecy to create one of the first truly modern science fiction novels.

If he had written nothing more, Leiber would still be a leading genre author. Few 30-year-old fond memories can stand intimate revisiting. These do. If I were coming across them for the first time today, I think I would respond with the same sense of discovery and astonishment I had in 1943.

The two novels were published almost simultaneously: *Conjure Wife*, complete, in the April *Unknown*; *Gather, Darkness!* as a serial starting in the May *Astounding*. By the time they appeared, however, Leiber had given up full-time writing again, and taken a war job as an inspector at Douglas Aircraft. (After a long struggle with his pacifist beliefs: "I very slowly came around to the view that the anti-fascist forces had been justified and 'right' in WW II.") In 1945, he joined the editorial staff of *Science Digest*—back in Chicago—where he stayed for twelve years. His literary productivity throughout this period was uneven both in quantity and quality. Only in the past fifteen years has Leiber finally settled down to full-time writing; and only now is he really coming into his own.

There are good reasons why this should be a time of recognition for him. In the television age, an audience of viewer-readers responds warmly to the specifically (and increasingly) theatric quality of his work: everything he writes has as much of the stage as the page in it. The best theatre, of course, is that in which the illusion is most complete, where the audience need not "suspend disbelief" but can just *believe*.

The current s-f audience is vastly more sophisticated literarily, as well as scientifically, than that of the forties. And of course television has accustomed the reader/ viewer to the idea of the familiarly convincing character and sustained theme displayed in a constantly changing, and frequently fantastic, series of situations.

And then of course science fiction and short stories are both "in": and Leiber's short fiction, more than that of any other writer, reflects the development of the several sub-species presently subsumed under the (absurdly inappropriate) label, "science fiction," from the origins of the specialty field to its present acceptance as a contemporary literary form.

Indeed, there is an intriguing parallel between the role Leiber has played inside the field, and the situation of science fiction in the literary world generally. The rigid compartmentalizing of American literature in the first half of the twentieth century which produced, among other things, the specialized category of fantasy called science fiction, continued to function within the field as it grew; and it is those writers whose names attach directly to one or another phase of that growth who have become identified with it in the great outside literary world: Heinlein, Asimov, Sturgeon, Bradbury, Simak, Clarke, Wyndham, Bloch; each carved out for himself a distinct and separate niche clearly visible to publishers, critics, and scholars. Leiber has been ubiquitous, seminal, influential, widely read—and, critically, virtually ignored.

I first met Fritz at a science-fiction convention in 1949. It would have been a memorable night anyhow: I met a lot of people either already legendary in that tight little world, or—like myself—novice myth-makers who would be friends and colleagues later: Poul Anderson, Randall Garrett, Joe Winter. We all wound up at a uniquely bemuraled restaurant called The Purple Cow (such as could only happen, I think, in Paris or the American Midwest). But that was later. At the beginning it was just a very crowded hotel room, and I was the almost-unknown author of two published stories, and I could not seem to find a single face I remembered meeting earlier in the day.

I was quite certain I had not met the man sitting on the window ledge, darkly handsome, remote . . . brooding? a bit amused? Our eyes met, and he began to stand up. (It took a while. Fritz is 6'4".) We both smiled tentatively.

"I'm Fritz Leiber," he said.

I said nothing. (Remember: this was a man I had been in love with for six years.) When I got my breath back I said, "I'm Judy Merrill." And he said, "Judith Merrill? You mean *you wrote* . . . ?"

The next thing I remember clearly is that I was deep in conversation with Leiber (FRITZ LEIBER!—who *remembered my story!*) and that the room was even more crowded.

Nineteen years later, I sat talking to a bright young writer who was barely born on the Night of the Purple Cow. It was the first day of the Milford Science-Fiction Writers' Conference, and I mentioned that Fritz had just arrived. "Fritz *Leiber*?" he said, and I realized that glazed look must once have been my own. "FRITZ LEIBER?" Later, he came and told me, "Okay. I could even go home now, I mean, I met LEIBER."

Only one other name from the Great Old Days seems to evoke the same kind of response from the Bright Young People—Theodore Sturgeon—for much the same reasons.

Both men have been singularly uneven writers. Much of what they published was too hastily written, or too much limited by the narrowness of the specialty field they wrote for. But it is true of both of them that the *best* of what they wrote, at any time, remains as valid now as when it was written.

Leiber's writing began, remember, under the sepulchral Lovecraft spell: his first efforts were all directed at the "weird" market—stories of necromancy, midnight, murder and madness. But he had trouble selling to *Weird Tales* from the beginning: the reasons are apparent in "Smoke Ghost" (which eventually went to *Unknown*), and in one of the few titles that did appear in *Weird* (in 1942, as it began to move inward from its black pole), "The Hound". Here one of the characters speaks, apparently very much for the author:

"Meanwhile what's happening inside each one of us? I'll tell you. All sorts of inhibited emotions are accumulating. Fear is accumulating. Horror is accumulating. A new kind of awe of the mysteries of the universe is accumulating. A psychological environment is forming, along with the physical one. Wait, let me finish. Our culture becomes ripe for infection. From somewhere. It's just like a bacteriologist's culture—I didn't intend the pun—when it gets to the right temperature and consistency for supporting a colony of germs. Similarly, our culture suddenly spawns a horde of demons. And, like germs, they have a peculiar affinity for our culture. They're unique. They fit in. You wouldn't find the same kind any other

time or place.

" . . . our fears would be their fodder. A parasite-host relationship. Supernatural symbiosis. Some of us—the sensitive ones—would notice them sooner than others. . . . Frighten and terrorize you, yes. But surprise, no. It would fit into the environment. Look as if it belonged in a city and smell the same. Because of the twisted emotions that would be its food, your emotions and mine. A matter of diet. "

His first active writing period came to a climax in 1943 with the publication of *Conjure Wife* and *Gather, Darkness!* Although he continued to make extensive use of the symbolism and melodrama of the supernatural afterwards, those two novels were the last major pieces in which conventional horror images dominated; *Conjure Wife* was the last in which they were used in what could be called a conventional way. His first "dry spell" began shortly afterwards, while he was working at Douglas in 1944.

In the next five years he wrote only a handful of stories, and sold only three. During this time, he was profoundly affected by events in the outside world: World War II and its holocaustic climax at Hiroshima; the ensuing atmosphere of anti-libertarian conformism, witchhunts, and brainwashing in the heyday of Joe McCarthy; the not-yet-popular struggles of Negro-Americans for civil rights and full citizenship; the Mad Ave and PR explosion in the Wonderful Postwar World of television and "media"; the (sic) preverberations of the twin explosions of Western civilization into outer, and inner, space. Out of all these, in his own phoenix-like crucible he was "brewing his cultures," cultivating a knowledge of the new demons and modern horrors, learning new imageries, patterns, symbols.

Two of the three stories of this time of silence pointed to where he was going. "Mr. Bauer and the Atoms" was in *Weird* in 1946:

"Frank Bauer lived in a world where everything had been exploded. He scented confidence games, hoaxes, faddish self-deception, and especially (for it was his province) advertising-copy-exaggerations behind every faintly unusual event and every intimation of the unknown. He had the American's nose for leg-pulling, the German's contempt for the non-factual. Mention of such topics as telepathy, hypnotism or the occult—and his wife managed to mention them fairly often—sent him into a scoffing rage."

[Then he learned about atoms:]

'See, we always thought everything was so solid. Money, automobiles, mines, dirt. We thought they were so solid that we could handle them, hold on to them, do things with them. And now we find they're just a lot of little bits of deadly electricity, whirling around at God knows what speed, by some miracle frozen for a moment.'

The next story to see print was three years later. This is in part how Marshall McLuhan described it in *The Mechanical Bride*:

"In a story called 'The Girl with the Hungry Eyes', by Fritz Leiber, an ad photographer gives a job to a not too promising model. Soon, however, she is 'plastered all over the country' because she has the hungriest eyes in the world. 'Nothing vulgar, but just the same they're looking at you with a hunger that's all sex and something more than sex.' Something similar may be said of the legs on a pedestal. Abstracted from the body that gives them their ordinary meaning, they become 'something more than sex', a metaphysical enticement, a cerebral itch, an abstract torment. Mr. Leiber's girl hypnotizes the country with her hungry eyes . . ."

I resist, with difficulty, the desire to quote in full here the final statement of the story (as written by Leiber, not McLuhan). When you have found it and read (or re-read) it, think back if you can—before Twiggy, Jane Fonda, Barbarella, before *Playboy*, Bardot, Monroe. "The Girl" was published in 1949, and McLuhan's book in 1951. They both had to wait for the audience to catch up.

When "The Girl" appeared, Leiber was in the middle of a new spurt of activity which began with the publication of a mimeographed magazine called *New Purposes*, and grew into such bittersweet prophetic "Love Generation" stories as "The Moon is Green," "A Pail of Air," and "The Nice Girl with Five Husbands"; and (on the other side of a suddenly familiar coin) a strain of satire which emerged at its sharpest in the Spillane pastiche, "The Night He Cried," and at its most terrifyingly prophetic in "Coming Attraction," "Poor Superman," and finally the 1953 novel, *The Green Millennium*. These last three titles are part of a "future-history" satire system set in a world (circa 1990's) of "off-the-bosom" dresses and



jewelled face masks, barbed auto-fenders and motorized sex/sadism, television brainwashing, automation redundancy, mystical cultism, violence-for-kicks, ocean-wide credibility gaps, and the sad dignity-in-defeat of the gentle "Dr. Opperly."

When they appeared, it was Joe McCarthy time. The science-fiction magazines were proud of being the last popular public arena for dissent and nonconformism—but one was not supposed to spell it out *too* clearly. It is not really surprising that editors began returning rueful notes about their readers' objections to certain stories—or that *The Green Millennium* had no magazine publication (at that time the main source of income from a genre novel)—or that "The Silence Game," a bitter story of the agonized-cool ultimate-dropout revolt, published at the time of the nationally televised Oppenheimer hearings (1954), was the prophetic last word from Leiber for another three years.

Once again there were stories left over. By 1957, the field seemed to be ready for them. "The Big Trek" and "Friends and Enemies," both first-drafted in *New Purposes* (eight years earlier) were published and, again, demand seemed to stimulate supply for a while—a short while, this time. The new stories of 1957-58 had two new themes, sometimes combined: time-travel and the hip (not-yet hippy) beat scene. *The Big Time*, the first of the Change-war "Snakes" vs. "Spiders" stories, won the annual Hugo Award for 1958—but stories like "Rump-Titty-Titty-Tum-TAH-Tee" and "A Deskful of Girls" once again upset and irritated more readers than they delighted. And "Little Old Miss MacBeth," by far the most advanced piece of symbolic writing Leiber had done, as well as his first really effective use of Shakespearean background, went almost unnoticed.

To what extent the financial and critical discouragement that accompanied each of his most fertile periods of literary growth were factors in the cyclical work stoppages is hard to determine: certainly, he never seemed to stop producing when his work was actively in demand; just as certainly, each time he would eventually outstrip the demand. And each time, there were other factors as well. Surveying the titles of 1957-1958, one thinks again of Poe, Fitzgerald, and the rest: "Damnation Morning," "Pipe Dream," "Tranquillity or Else," "Try and Change the Past." Leiber at this point was literally fighting for his life. His job at *Science Digest* had ended in 1956, when alcoholism and blood-poisoning incapacitated him in the hospital. For the next three years, his production was erratic: it was something of a victory headline when *Fantastic's* cover shouted LEIBER IS BACK! in November, 1959, at the end of the last really silent spell he was to have. It marked the time of Leiber's highly specialized kind of "settling down."

The cycles of surge and discouragement did not stop there. But when the really new 1960 stories like "The Inner Circles" and "The Secret Songs!" took too long to sell, he stopped writing—that kind of story—and did some continuity for the Buck Rogers comic strip. Or, when his 1964 novel, *The Wanderer*, took another Hugo but failed to pay for the time it took (again, no magazine sale), he accepted the novelization assignment for *Tarzan and the Valley of Gold* (the only *Tarzan* book ever authorized by the Burroughs family for publication under another byline). When *A Specter Is Haunting Texas* had trouble for some time finding book publication, Leiber went back to Fafhrd and the Mouser, finishing off a third volume for paperback publication. And when "Gonna Roll The Bones," a gamble-with-the-Devil modern horror story (a Dangerous Vision straight out of the *Unknown* period), won SFWA's Nebula Award for the best novelette of 1967, he was spending most of his time on critical writing.

One way and another, Leiber keeps sorting out the elements of his many "lives," using Shakespeare, sex, chess, science and the supernatural, politics and pacifism, alcohol, Hollywood, Academe, Church, Stage, and the publishing world, to cultivate his cunningly fashioned demons and daemons of the world of today, using them in new modes when he can, in old ones when he must. And in both veins, the young as well as the old continue to listen, with pleasure.

## PROLOGUE

My first science fiction story was published twenty-five years ago in *Astounding* (now *Analog*) — a rather unpleasant story called *That Only a Mother . . .*, concerned with the effects, on one small

ordinary family, of life during a comparatively "clean" atomic war in (what was then) the near future.

In 1948, a lot of us were very worried about the imminence of that hypothetical war: not just about death and injury, injustice and destruction; and hardly at all about "winning" or "losing"; but mostly about the insidious aftereffects — cancers and leukemias that might follow years later for apparently untouched survivors — and the effects of sterility and mutations on plants, animals, and human beings for generations to come.

In 1946, 1947, 1948, a great deal was being published about these things. One read the *Smythe Report* and *No Place to Hide* and the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* and the publications of the World Federalists and the daily newspapers. If one also read the science fiction magazines, the information total was staggering, unarguable, and terrifying.

There has been very little change in that total in this quarter-century. We have, of course, learned a great deal meanwhile about bacteriological and chemical warfare, both in theory and in practice. But so far as strictly atomic doom is concerned, the most significant differences are that the more powerful bombs and swifter delivery systems which were then predicted have been realized; and that the global holocaust which was then widely anticipated has not occurred.

I think it has not occurred because it took such a short time — perhaps five or six years — for the information that was fully available in 1948 to be disseminated, absorbed, and understood by many people, including small ordinary families, and even heads of governments. I like to think this rapid understanding came at least in part from the fervent dramatizing efforts of science fiction writers.

"Where do you get those crazy ideas?" This is the question S-F writers hear most often. Well, for instance:

*That Only a Mother . . .* dealt with radiation-caused mutation, not in broad statistical terms, or among bomb-victims, but as a side-effect due to casual exposure in one family on the "winning" side. Its specific sources were two: one, a tiny back-page newspaper article saying that the U.S. Army of Occupation in Japan had definitely established that the "rumors" of wide-spread infanticides in the areas of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were unfounded (even in those days some of us automatically read certain kinds of official U.S. releases backwards); the other, a domestic incident which brought sharply home to me how easily a mother (this one, for instance) can fail/refuse to notice a child's imperfections. The result was a story whose horror was rooted in a familiar domestic truism applied to readily-available public information which most people had simply not yet assimilated.

"Where do you get those crazy ideas?" From the same daily experiences and communications, books, newspapers, broadcasts, we all share. It's not the ingredients that are so strange, but the unexpected juxtapositions: the trick of looking at something familiar against an alien background, or examining the new and different against a familiar setting.

Science fiction is not so much prophecy as "probability." If you put this and this and that together in a certain way, here's what *might* happen. Sometimes the writer hits frighteningly close to what *will* happen, though not always for the right reasons: when I wrote that story about the armless-legless baby in 1947, I was thinking about radioactivity, not thalidomide.

"Realistic" fiction is about things that *have* happened. "Fantasy" is about things (we are fairly sure) *don't* happen. "Science fiction" is about things that *could* happen.

## Memoir

by Judith Merrill

Actually, this story should never be reprinted without the illustration that invented it.

In the Bad Old Days of happy memory, before science fiction turned respectable (and almost all other popular fiction died or went into comic strips), the phrase "pulp magazines" was applied to certain publications. These usually had cheap ("pulp") paper, modest pretensions, action illustrations, gaudy covers, and low prices—to reader and writer both. One way of keeping them cheap was to print the four-color covers in large batches at a single pressrun: This sometimes meant that covers were bought

before the stories they "illustrated."

I was fortunate enough on three occasions to be asked to write stories to fit covers. "Fortunate"? Right, because I found the process invariably produced completely "different" stories, of a sort I would never have generated out of my usual "creative" processes.

This one was written to a cover supplied by Fred Pohl, and is, I believe, my one-and-only action-adventure-chase story.

I have used this device with writing classes, by the way, and warmly recommend it to teachers and to apprenticing writers. It is revealing and exciting to see how many completely different stories are suggested to different individuals by a single painting!

## THE CONTRIBUTORS

**Jane Brierley** is a member of the *Societe des traducteurs du Quebec* and the Literary Translators' Association, for which she edits the newsletter, *Transmission*. She has recently completed a translation of Philippe Aubert du Gaspé's *Memoires* (1866), which is scheduled for publication in 1986 by Vehicule Press, Montreal.

**Lesley Choyce** lives in Porters Lake, Nova Scotia, where he owns and operates the Pottersfield Press, which is dedicated to Atlantic Canadian poetry and fiction. He has also published several books of fiction and poetry himself; most recent are *Downwind* (Creative Publishers), *Billy Botzweiler's Last Dance* (blewointmentpress) and *Visions from the Edge* (Pottersfield Press), a collection of Atlantic Canadian SF edited with John Bell.

**John Robert Colombo** is the author, compiler or translator of more than sixty books. In 1979 he compiled *Other Canadas*, the country's first anthology of science fiction and fantasy (see the Afterword). His other book-length contributions to the genre include *Friendly Aliens*, *Blackwood's Books*, *Windigo* and *Years of Light* (the biography of the late Leslie A. Crouth of Parry Sound, Ontario, who for thirty years produced the fanzine called *Light*).

**Michael G. Coney** is the most international of the authors in this anthology. Born in England, he also lived in Antigua, West Indies, before settling in Sidney, British Columbia (which provides the setting for "The Byrds"). He has published fifteen novels and numerous short stories, several of which have been translated into Dutch, French, German, Italian, Spanish and other languages.

**A. K. Dewdney** teaches Computer Science at the University of Western Ontario in London. His major interests are Discrete Mathematics and Theoretical Computer Science, fields in which he has published numerous articles. He lives in London, Ontario.

**Christopher Dewdney** is a major Canadian poet whose most recent book is a collection of selected poems, entitled *Predators of the Adoration* (McClelland & Stewart, 1983). His hobbies include recombinant genetics, rock camping and carnivorous marsupials.

**Candas Jane Dorsey** is a freelance journalist living in Edmonton. She is currently writing for and editing the Edmonton *Bullet*, an arts and culture tabloid. She has published three books of poems and several short stories, SF and mainstream.

**Gary Eikenberry** is an adult educator specializing in microcomputer applications in Ottawa. He has published several poems and short stories in SF and literary magazines throughout North America since 1975.

**Marian Engel** (1933-1985) is one of Canada's most respected literary figures. She was awarded the 1976 Governor General's Award for literature for her novel, *Bear*. Her most recent book is *The Tattooed Woman* (Penguin, 1985), a collection of short stories.

**Benjamin Freedman** conducts research in bioethics at the Westminster Institute for Ethics & Human Values and teaches in the faculties of Philosophy, Medicine and Nursing at the University of Western Ontario. He has published numerous articles in professional journals on topics relating to bioethics. "On the Planet Grafool" is his first fiction publication.

**Dorothy Corbett Gentleman** has published three books of poetry, most recently *Candles for the Dawn* (Pierian Press). She has recently completed another collection entitled *Above the Tilted Earth* from which "Instinct" was taken. She lives in North Vancouver.

**William Gibson** is familiar to readers of *Omni*, where he has been publishing short stories on a regular basis since 1980. His first novel, *Neuromancer* (Ace) has received the genre's highest honours from authors, fans and critics: the Philip K. Dick Memorial Award (1984), the Nebula Award (1984), the Australian SF Award (1985) and the Hugo Award (1985). His hobbies include cycling, travel and mowing the lawn.

**Phyllis Gotlieb's** first novel, *Sunburst*, was published in 1964 along with her first book of poetry, *Within the Zodiac*. Since then she has published five more novels, three more collections of poetry and one collection of short stories. Her most recent book is *The Kingdom of the Cats* (Ace, 1985). She has established herself as a major figure in science fiction and fantasy as well as an important Canadian poet.

**Terence M. Green** is an English teacher in Toronto. He has published several short stories in SF magazines, as well as many articles on SF and other literature. He has recently completed a novel, *Barking Dogs*, based on his 1984 short story of the same name.

**Eileen Kernaghan** lives in Burnaby, B.C., where she is a founding member of the Burnaby Writers' Society. Along with many published poems and short stories, she has written two fantasy novels, *Journey to Aprilioth* (Ace, 1980) and *Songs from the Drowned Lands* (Ace, 1983), which won the Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy Award for 1983–84.

**David Kirkpatrick** is a student and sports enthusiast living in London, Ontario. He has a Masters degree from the University of Toronto. He is currently working on a holographic approach to a novel, which will include "Terminal Cancer". This is his first publication.

**Margaret McBride** lives in Victoria where she is raising two children and a garden. She claims to have raised tse-tse flies and sold waterbeds for a living, although not at the same time. "Totem" is her first publication.

**Judith Merril** has established her reputation as a leading authority on SF (science/speculative fiction) by editing nineteen anthologies and writing several novels and short stories in the genre. She is also a broadcaster, consultant and peace activist. *Tesseracts* is her twentieth anthology.

**Frances Morgan** is a professional translator in Ottawa. She has translated two books by the Quebec children's author, Bernadette Renaud: *Cat in the Cathedral* and *The Computer Revolts* (Press Porcépic, 1983 and 1984). She is currently working on a joint writing-translating effort with another Quebec author to produce a bilingual novel for young adults.

**D. M. Price** is a poet and artist living in Vancouver, where he owns and operates a book store. He

claims to be successfully raising quantum black holes in his basement.

**Robert Priest** is a poet and singer living in Toronto. His most recent book is a collection entitled *The Man Who Broke Out of the Letter X* (The Coach House Press, 1984), his most recent recording is entitled *Summerlong* (G-Tel Records, 1984).

**Spider Robinson** is well known and respected among science fiction readers and writers alike. He is the author of several novels and collections of short stories, the most recent of which are *Melancholy Elephants* (collection: Penguin Canada, 1984; TOR, 1985) and *Night of Power* (novel: Baen Books, 1985). He lives in Halifax.

**Rhea Rose** lives in Burnaby, B.C., where she is involved in local theatre and freelance writing. She has attended the Clarion West Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers' Workshop in Seattle; "Chronos' Christmas" was workshopped there. This is her first fiction publication.

**Daniel Sernine** is the author of numerous short stories and novels for adults and children, and has established himself as a major force in French Canadian literature. He was awarded the 1984 Canada Council Children's Literature prize for his juvenile novel, *Le cercle violet* (Editions Pierre Tisseyre, Montreal). He lives in Montreal.

**Marc Seigny** is a Montreal-based freelance journalist. He has published articles and reports in a variety of French-language periodicals. He has also published several short stories in periodicals such as *Solaris* and *Imagine*. His most recent book publications on *La crise du carbure*, a fairy tale on ecology (Editions Pantoute, 1982).

**Susan Swan** is a freelance writer living in Toronto. She writes for a variety of media, including theatre, poetry and fiction. She has published several plays, one collection of short fiction and one novel, *The Biggest Modern Woman of the World* (Lester & Orpen Denys, 1983). She is currently working on a second novel, entitled *The Last of the Golden Girls*.

**Robert Sward** is a poet, editor, publisher, freelance broadcaster and teacher who now lives in California. He is the author of fourteen books, the most recent of which are *Poems: New and Selected (1957-1983)* (Aya Press, 1983) and *The Toronto Islands* (Dreadnaught Co-operative, 1983).

**Gerry Truscott** is a graduate of the University of Victoria's Creative Writing Department and is now the managing editor at Press Porcepic. He also writes and edits data for educational courseware at Softwords, Press Porcepic's software division. "Cee" is his first fiction publication.

**Elisabeth Vonarburg** was born in Paris, France, and now lives with five cats in Chicoutimi, Quebec, where she publishes and edits *Solaris*, one of French Canada's most important SF' magazines. She has published many short stories, mostly science fiction and fantasy (several have been translated into English), and one novel, *Le silence de la Cite* (Editions Denoel, 1981), which is being made into a movie. She is currently working on the script for the movie.

**Robert Zend** (1929-1985) came to Canada from Budapest, Hungary in 1956. He soon established himself as a major Canadian poet. He also produced over 100 radio programmes for the acclaimed CBC series, *Ideas*. His two-volume multi media novel entitled *OAB* (Exile Editions) represents his magnum opus, thirteen years in creation. Volume 2 of *OAB* was published shortly after his death in 1985.

# WE HAVE MET THE ALIEN (AND IT IS US)

## Afterword

Now, how could I have told you up front that what this book is about is critical alienation? I mean, and still have you read it? Actually, I *couldn't* tell you, because I didn't know.

*Had I but known* —well, at the very least, I'd have tried to balance things out more.

And that would have been a mistake.

In any event, after all the readings and re-readings, separately and in sequence, I knew everything about this book except what its overall theme had turned out to be. I found out from someone who had never seen the book at all.

I was thinking about what I wanted to say back here, and I started asking people—everyone, anyone—to tell me why they thought SF (science fiction, speculative fabulation, sometimes surreal futures) is so popular now. What social value does the genre have, now, here?

I got a lot of familiar replies, about rehearsing future options, opening one's mind to alternative realities, using exotic sets and lights to focus on familiar problems, generally practising thinking the unthinkable.

True. It was science fiction, future fiction, SF, that taught us how to think about death and despoilation by radiation, chemical waste devastation, Big Brother, Star Wars and Nuclear Winter. So what's "unthinkable" now?

My daughter, appropriately, gave me the answer that curled my toes and shivered my neurons and made me see the *whole* book for the first time:

*It's the only place you can do any useful thinking about the idea that there might not be a future:* the terminal fear that proliferates abortions and suicides, mass murders, mad leaders, terrorists and technical errors; the ultimate anxiety that makes people sorry they had children, and children not want to grow up.

And of course that's what most of this book is about: the children finding ways to grow up, the parents trying to help them. I didn't plan it that way; it's just that those were the stories that seemed to *work*.

You must understand that I am really a most improbable anthologist. I'm a poor scholar, not much of a collector or compiler, not at all a historian. (Call me a generalist, maybe, disseminator—someone once said *neophiliac*.) Nevertheless, this volume is my twentieth SF anthology, and the first nineteen brought me just enough dribs and drabs of fame and fortune so that I can now say brazenly (like in the Modern Art Joke): *I don't know anything about literary criticism, but I know what I like*.

What I like is getting my head turned around. I get off on fresh perceptions, widening horizons, new thoughts, and I like them best when they occur as a process in my own mind, rather than an exposition at which I am a passive spectator/receiver. What I look for in SF is the story (or verse—occasionally film—sometimes even essay) conceived and written in such a way as to suggest alternatives that will cause me to exercise my own imagination to broaden my own vision. To "ask the next question."

A Martian with a mangled spear  
Is stuffing tarts in my left ear.  
If I turn off my hearing aid,  
Will I still taste the marmalade?

This synaesthetic gem was probably the beginning of this anthology. It was handed to me in December 1968 in an unhallowed hall of Rochdale College by an idealistic young academic already highly respected as poet, publisher, and editor, but not yet famous for Alligator Pies, Garbage Delights and other tasty (*not* non-) sense. It turned my head around. I put it aside for my next anthology, which

was some time coming.

Twenty is a nice round number.

The first SF anthology I edited, in 1951, was called *Shot in the Dark*, not so much for its interior surprises as to enable Bantam Books to pass it off on mystery readers if necessary. The saleability of SF was an unknown quantity at the time.

The time, as it turned out, was right. In the next eighteen years I did eighteen more collections. The last two, *SF 12* (Delacorte) and *England Swings SF* (Doubleday), were published almost back-to-back in 1968.

That was the same year I arrived in Toronto, a newly-landed immigrant with a U-Haul full of books, papers, plastic milk crates and foam pads. My new job as resource person at Rochdale would pay only room and board. I expected to have to do more anthologies for car-fares and cigarette money, and I figured Dennis Lee's verse to be my first Canadian inclusion for *SF 13*.

Thirteen was the lucky number: I never got around to doing it. (*SF 12* was the twelfth annual in the "Year's Best" series, and twelve years of claiming to present the *Best*—of anything—was more than enough. Better iconoclast than iconescent.) But by the time I realized I was not going to do another SF annual, I had learned a couple of things about Canadian SF.

In all the far reaches of Canada in 1968 there seemed to be only two people (well, make it 2 1/4) writing recognizable science fiction seriously: Phyllis Gotlieb and H. A. Hargreaves (and Chandler Davis *very* occasionally; adding my own output at the time, make it 2 1/2). But in odd corners and coach houses (especially *the* Coach House Press) Canadians of rare talent and sensibility were writing truly-fabulous funny-serious social-commentary SF: Dave Godfrey, Ray Smith, D. M. Price, J. Michael Yates, Gwendolyn MacEwen, P. K. Page, Robert Zend, Christopher Dewdney and more, were stuffed in with the marmalade.

The seventies: I was becoming a Canadian and a broadcaster, and not thinking about anthologies at all. But (yes, Dennis, you'd still taste it) every switchoff was another switch on. I gave my SF collection to the Toronto Public Library to start the Spaced Out Library, and so became an occasional consultant. I was putting a lot of energy into The Writers' Union of Canada, so became involved with a schools-curriculum project outlining available Canadian science fiction. I wrote radio documentaries and magazine articles, and kept getting asked to do pieces on science fiction. No way I could miss out on what was happening in Canadian SF.

A lot was happening. Here, as elsewhere through the seventies, the most visible events were in book publishing (and selling). But we're talking Canada: the busiest and healthiest area was of course academic. And to me, inquisitive immigrant, the most intriguing phenomenon was half-hidden under the surface of the literary mainstream.

As I read Canadian authors, and met them personally, I kept finding myself touching what I think of as "science fiction head space." Sometimes it was overt SF imagery, or a certain way of thinking about environment, a casual mixture of magic-and-realism, or an oddly familiar structural tension in the work. Then, one by one, leading Canadian authors began telling me about the impact of science fiction on their development: Berton, Laurence, MacEwen, Acorn, Purdy, Engel. Finally, I began to catch up on Canadian criticism. CanLit, I was told, is about *survival* and, characteristically, the environment may become almost a character in the story!

Of course! Just like SF. (Is this why Canadian mainstream authors, when they turn to SF, usually do a good job of it? U.S. and U.K. mainstreamers generally muck it up.)

Another (used-to-be) Canadian Fact I was learning was the prevalence of "secondary materials." You know—Canada was famous for documentaries, but never made feature films? That kind of thing.

In 1968, when the prestigious Modern Language Association officially declared the study of science fiction a suitable pursuit for scholars, Canadian critics and teachers were already doing it. Harry Campbell, then Chief Librarian in Toronto, must have followed a sure Canadian instinct when he offered to relieve me of my unwieldy collection and establish SOL (the Spaced Out Library) in 1970. By that time, Arthur Gibson and Peter Fitting were already organizing science fiction classes at the University of Toronto, Madge Aalto (the first SOL librarian) was teaching at York, Darko Suvin had a course at

McGill and Tom Henighan was just about to start at Carleton.

SOL provided a focus, and increasingly, a resource. In '72, SOL and McGill co-sponsored *SeCon*, the Secondary Universe Conference which brought scholars, critics and teachers of SF together from all over Canada, along with their counterparts from other countries, and a scattering of SF writers. In 1973, a serious scholarly journal, *Science Fiction Studies*, began publishing in Montreal.

By the mid-seventies, most major Canadian universities had SF courses, and colleges and high schools were rushing to catch up. Some of the best teachers were encouraging students to write original stories for their term papers. And there were at least five-and-a-half working SF writers across the country, because Spider Robinson had moved up to Nova Scotia from the States, and Britishers Michael Coney and Andrew Weiner had settled in Victoria and Toronto.

(Actually, it was at least six-and-a-half, if you count the blessedly brief extrusion of Harlequin's kid brother, Laser Books, into the field. Laser published a whole series of a single cloned novel—same plot, same characters, different names, titles and bylines—before they discovered SF readers don't like predictable formulas. I won't count them.)

Other publishers were doing better, sometimes spectacularly so. True, most of them didn't *know* they were publishing SF, and most of the authors didn't know they were writing it, but at least twenty at-least-readable novels and one short story collection of Canadian science fiction were published in Canada during the seventies, and some of them were very fine science fiction indeed: Ian Adams' *The Trudeau Papers*, Christie Harris' *Sky Man on a Totem Pole*, Blanche Howard's *The Immortal Soul of Edwin Carlyle*, Bruce Powe's *The Last Days of the American Empire*, and others of varying quality by John Ballem, Stephen Franklin, William Heine, Basil Jackson, Richard Rohmer, David Walker and Jim Willer. Monica Hughes, Suzanne Martell and Ruth Nichols, writing juveniles, were genre-identified; so was Marie Jacober, with a prize-winning adult novel in Alberta. H. A. Hargreaves' short-story collection, *North By 2000*, in 1975, must have been the first book labelled specifically as Canadian Science Fiction. Gotlieb, Coney, and Robinson, of course, were publishing novels and short stories regularly under SF labels in the U.S. and U.K., and towards the end of the decade two new Canadian novelists were launched by U.S. genre publishers: Crawford Killian in 1978 and Edward Llewellyn in 1979. (Llewellyn's *The Douglas Convolution* was the first of only five novels completed before his untimely death in 1984.)

Actually in 1979, you might well have used up all your fingers and toes counting Canadian SF writers—if you could find them. One man did. No one, not even John Colombo, would seriously have tried to produce an anthology of contemporary Canadian science fiction at that point, but he did bring out a very different collection: *Other Canadas*.

John Robert Colombo is a good deal more than just another CanCult household name. I called myself an improbable anthologist; Colombo is the real thing: scholar, historian, careful compiler, indefatigable researcher, voluminous reader, aggressive correspondent. The marvel is that an editor of these accomplishments should have had the imaginative flair to wish to use them in the service of a genre hardly anyone (except thee and me, John—and sometimes I wondered about *me*) believed existed—indigenous Canadian SF.

*Other Canadas* used the broadest possible definitions of source, form and content. It brought together a discriminating collection of science fiction and fantasy written by Canadians and/or about Canada over a time-span of more than two hundred years, including short stories, poetry, novel excerpts and critical essays. The selections, enriched with Colombo's informed and engaging notes, established once and for all the existence of the territory, and in effect proclaimed it open for exploration and settlement.

I am *not* a scholar. My files are famous for their gaps, and my notes for their irrelevance. It is time to apologize in passing to all the people unmentioned here (Susan Wood! How could I never have spoken of Susan Wood?) who were creating Canadian science fiction in the seventies, as I hasten to disclaim any ability to document the burgeoning productivity of the eighties.

(I was straying into television, returning to work on a novel. Still—)

Even the most casual reader had to be aware of the emergence of Eileen Kernaghan (choice science



*fantasy*), William Gibson (all over *Omni*) and Donald Kingsbury (Hugo Award nominee for *Courtship Rite*). I knew that John Bell and Lesley Choyce brought out an anthology in 1981 similar in its premises to Colombo's book, but more modestly limited to the Atlantic provinces. I knew that an annual Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy Award had been established. I was invited to *Boreal*, the Francophone SF conference, and realized that on the other side of the language barrier a positive ferment of activity was going on. And back in Anglophonia I kept hearing names I hadn't heard before.

So when Ellen Godfrey of Press Porcupine suggested a new anthology in 1984, I was only briefly surprised. Of course—the time was right (again). Canadian SF—a uniquely Canadian expression of perspectives on change and the future—had developed as inevitably as (say) Canadian feature films or Canadian Studies courses in foreign universities, from the same ongoing Canadian dynamic: a dialectic of international/immigrant influences and a growing awareness of a specifically Canadian cultural identity. Colombo did not *invent* the concept of *Other Canadas*; he located and described it.

The first *big* surprise then was realizing I really wanted to try to do the book.

Twenty is a nice round number. I guess I'd been away from it long enough. (Like sex and bicycles, it seems to come right back when you start again.)

The surprises kept coming. The next big one was not having to fight with my publishers (or educate them). Right from the beginning we were in agreement about the book we wanted to do: a sampling of some of the best contemporary Canadian SF—as described in the Foreword. ("We" were Godfrey, myself and Gerry Truscott, the Press Porcupine editor who did all the nitty-gritties: correspondence, contracts, copy-editing, and consultation on selections.)

Another early surprise was the size of the mailing list compiled with help from John Colombo, John Bell (Ottawa-based editor/ author/archivist), Rob Sawyer (young author with wide SF fandom connections) and Doris Mehegan of SOL. Announcements of the project went out initially to more than seventy authors. Some were novelists who just *might* do a short story; many were mainstream writers who had occasionally done a bit of SF; but almost half of them were actually published science fiction writers!

The numbers were great as growth-figures, but they were still small seen as a field to choose from; I think we were all astonished at how "contemporary" the book finally came to be. *I* certainly was.

We started out hoping—trusting—we wouldn't have to go back for material earlier than the seventies, but I was prepared to fall back on reprinting a few sixties classics from *Other Canadas* — Laurence's "A Queen in Thebes", Hood's "After the Sirens", Theriault's "Akua Nuten". And while we waited for the first submissions to come in, I speculated on the possibilities of excerpts from some of the novels (Adams, Howard, Kingsbury, Llewellyn, Powe...) and dug out the old marmalade file. There was Dennis Lee, Chandler Davis' "Hexamnia", and selections from Dave Godfrey's *Death Goes Better with Coca Cola*, Ray Smith's *Cape Breton is the Thought Control Centre of Canada*, Gwendolyn MacEwen's *No-man*, P. K. Page's *The Sun, the Moon, and Other Stories*, J. Michael Yates' *The Man in the Glass Octopus* . . . .

We did not, as you know, use any of these; they kept getting bumped back into history because the really big, continuing surprise was the stuff that kept coming in the mail. Altogether, we received some 400 manuscripts from almost 140 authors, and (*talk* about surprises!) no more than half of them were first-reading rejects (for assorted reasons of literary inadequacy, banality, didacticism, or because they fell outside the boundaries of our shared concept of "SF"). It's worth mentioning—happily, from where I stand (upon my prejudices)—that very little of what we read seemed to have been spawned by the proliferation of so-called Sci-Fi in the visual media. (We SF elite pronounce it *Skiffy* and never *never* use the term to describe *the right stuff*.) We had hardly any UFO-riders, cutesie ghosts, space battles, Wild West conquests of alien terrain, killer robots, virgin knights of the space orbits, or born-again mythology.

We did have a handful of submissions—mostly fantasy—that fell outside our preconceptions, but persuasively enough to put them to the test: stories and poems from Mary Choo, Greg Hollingshead, Carlan LeGraft, Tom Marshall and Libby Scheier, and two dazzling, elegant pieces of writing from P. K. Page ("Birthday", a short story) and Gwen MacEwen (an excerpt from her new novel, *Noman's Land*).

We agonized over these last two (which will both be in print elsewhere by the time this book is released; look for them), but in the end confirmed—surprise again! —that we were indeed in agreement on what did *not* fit within our otherwise amorphous definition. And of course we knew by then that we were getting more than enough quality work that fell well within our boundaries.

Of the thirty-two selections in this book, seventeen are published here for the first time (in the English language); only two were first published before 1980.

Talk about embarrassments of riches....

By the time half the selections were fairly definite, I was still juggling about fifty more pieces of (very) roughly equivalent merits: a little flaw in logic here, a bit of battered syntax there. Toss a coin? Are some shortcomings more remediable than others? (We did, in fact, ask for and get two rewrites—but both were stories we had already decided to use.)

At this point in any anthology—well, anyhow, my anthologies—editorial decisions no longer rest solely on the excellence of the individual submission. The book is acquiring a *shape* that exercises its own influence. A story may be discarded because it is too close in theme and mood to one already chosen; or one piece might edge out another precisely because it *is* similar to something already included, but treats the topic very differently. At the same time, each reflective re-reading magnifies small flaws—and some flaws magnify more horrendously than others. The process is no longer *fair*.

That's when anthologizing stops being fun.

At this moment I can envision the pile of photocopies in my desk drawer organizing a protest march on my typewriter, demanding equal rights, while I snivel pathetically, "Hey, the book just wasn't *big* enough." Leading the march would be John Bell's "Centrifugal Force", Charles de Lint's "A Witch in Rhyme", Tom Henighan's "Tourists from Algol", Patrick Kernaghan's "Weekend Warrior" and Andrew Weiner's "Station Gehenna". Right behind them would be stories from David Beck, H. A. Hargreaves, B. C. Jensen, Christopher S. Lobban, J. M. Park, Ursula Pflug, Robert J. Sawyer, David Sharpe, Graeme Skinner and Ann Walsh. (Magazine editors and anthologists, please take note.)

*It's not fair*, I said. This is the time to talk about leaning over backward, particularly addressed to those authors who received rejection letters from Gerry Truscott, the author of "Cee". This was one of the stories I juggled for weeks, and not until it landed inside the target did I know that the pseudonym "Pat Laurence" on the title page was Gerry's.

Did you ever try leaning over backwards *both ways at the same time*?

I owe some apologies and acknowledgements as well, in connection with French-language selections. We started out on a very high plane, determined to honour both official languages. I asked Elisabeth Vonarburg, the editor of *Solaris*, who presides over the effervescent Francophone science fiction conference in Chicoutimi, to spread the word in French Canada. Sure, said I, submit in French; we'll get the things we want translated. I blush now for three of us, Canadian editors who read only one language. My thanks to Peter Fitting and Katie Cooke, and (much too late) to Marian Engel, who all read for me and advised me. (But somewhere deep inside I am wickedly grateful that I did not have *another* fifty stories to compare and match against each other.)

Leaning over backwards in two directions simultaneously, and assuming someone *else* on the team knows French—how Canadian can you get? I have written many pages, and discarded them, trying to dissect or describe why (beyond the author's addresses) I feel this is truly a contemporary *Canadian* SF anthology. Now I wonder if pointing to Vonarburg and Truscott doesn't do it best? Not just the circumstances of their selections, but the statements of their stories as well.

*We have met the Alien and it is us.*

Maybe Pogo was a closet Canadian. Identifying the alien within is not an easy state of mind for Yanks or Brits. On the record, in this book, it seems a relatively confident assumption in the prevailing Canadian voice—even the immigrant voices.

Someone else can write the dissertation on those interactive dynamics of immigrant and native-born (and Native-born) Canadians/Canadiens. I am satisfied to sense, after months of immersion in Canadian futures, that there is something one just might call a Canadian consciousness, and that this unique sensibility of accepting-and-coping might just have something of value to offer to the uncertain future of a

planet in perilous pain.  
JUDITH MERRIL  
Toronto July 1985

## FOREWORD

I hate writing introductions.

I never read them myself, except perhaps *after* I have read the book: sometimes I like a piece of work enough to want to know more about how/why it came to be; some less loving times, I simply want to find out what justification the author might have had. For those of you who share my prejudice against prejudgements (and therefore are not reading this), I have provided an afterword with my post-editing joys, judgements and (of course) justifications.

One function a foreword can fulfill. For those of you intrigued by title, cover, by-line, back cover and sub-title, but still uncertain, this opening will compose one further essay at getting you to buy/borrow/read the book itself. To that end I offer, not the usual advance gloss, but a form of descriptive glossary.

*Tesseract*s. A cube is a three-dimensional square. A tesseract is a four-dimensional cube. Since the human eye and brain normally perceive, at most, three dimensions, the tesseract on the cover looks like any other flat-surface representation of a cube. The easiest way to visualize the added dimension is to imagine the cube in motion through *time* (one possible fourth dimension). Or you might conceive of an extra dimension in *space* by remembering that the volume of that cube-shape on the cover is arrived at by multiplying the square on one side by one side of the square—so multiply the cube by one side again, and recognize that the "inside" of the tesseract is enormously more capacious than the outside (as we see it). It is only deceptively easier to opt instead for an additional semantic or symbolic dimension, in which the visible spaces and/or events of "solid reality" acquire a Jarry-esque *paraphysical* enhancement of meaning.

*Canadian* is both harder and easier to explain. Nobody knows what it is even supposed to be, let far-out-alone what it actually *is*. In this case, the word specifies that the selections in this book were 'all written in Canada by human beings who make their homes here—all of whom, as it happens, are either Canadian citizens or landed immigrants.

*Science fiction* is easier than *Canadian* only because it is possible at least to say what it's *not*. (For starters, it is not necessarily either fiction or anything to do with science.) As for what it *is*—

Long ago, and in another country, I sometimes used to stay up till the dawn (not, as mature successful writers do, only for deadlines, sex and taxes, but) in heated discussion and debate in the company of fellow-seekers after science fiction fame and fortune. More often than I'd care to try and count, the topic on the table as the street-lights went out was yet another attempt to agree on a definition of science fiction. Then someone would say, "I may not know what it is, but I know it when I read it!" And we'd make another pot of coffee.

Now, nodding over dawn coffee (with my deadline) I am inspired to set forth a composite of some forty-five years of approximations.

So-called "science fiction" is speculative or extrapolative literature (or sometimes visual art or music) dealing in some way with the idea of *change*—*most* often changing human responses to the altered, or shifting, environment of some alternative reality. *Most* often, simply, "future fiction."

The key words are *change*, *environment*, *alternative*.

If it does not deal with *change*, it is not science fiction. If the human conflict, problem, or experience is not integrally related to some external *environmental* stimulus (which might be simply the process of change) it is not science fiction. Unless the environment posited is not in some way *other* than the familiar assumptions of here-and-now (or past) reality, then it is not science fiction.

Given all these qualifications, it will still not be science fiction, unless the approach to it is either speculative or extrapolative, or both. Definitions aside, the genre demands that every piece in its domain

be based on either *What ...* or *If this goes on. . . .*

Well, then, go on

*If you do, look me up at the end of the book.*

JUDITH MERRIL

*Toronto July 1985*

## Afterword

by Judith Merrill

Once upon a time, in the shining years of the youth movements, the time of turning on and tuning in, the days of draft dodgers and deserters and Fuller domes, first moon landings, and Whole Earth Catalogues, there was a high rise building in Toronto called Rochdale College: a "free university", student-owned and run, dedicated to a concept of education that had everything to do with learning and almost nothing to do with teaching. The elder members, like me — anyone over 35 was an elder— were not Professors, but "Resource Persons". It was a good place to be, for a while; and of course, it lasted only a short while. But for a few years, Rochdale was a moiling boiling collective centre for people — artists, social scientists, planners, politicians—trying to create (yes!) a truly new world order, to carve the future to a shape and in a substance better suited to the planet and its humans than the painful present we were experiencing, let alone what we knew of the past.

Most of the people at Rochdale read science fiction.

The Rochdale building is now a senior citizens' residence, and I, for one, am now a senior citizen. The Space Race fell off the pop charts long before the US-USSR wargames (and the Soviet Union itself) collapsed, and the liberation generation students of the 60s and 70s are now mostly struggling with middle-age middle-class mortgages and migraines. The new youth are addicted to nostalgia instead of novelty, and prefer medieval fantasy to speculative future fiction.

The future seems to be on hold.

I came to Rochdale in 1968 from a fairly cushy spot in the world of US science fiction— a world that was just then in the process of exploding out of a dirty-little-genre ghetto into both literary and commercial respectability. I came to Rochdale, and for that matter to Canada, for the same reason I have invested the largest part of my adult life in speculative fiction: I wanted to change the world.

I still want to change the world. We are supposed to get over that as we "mature". Perhaps I just got old without maturing. (No mortgages, no migraines.) The longer I live, the more urgently, the more thoroughly the world seems to need changing—in wider, deeper and more demanding dimensions. At thirteen, when this lifelong obsession was just seizing upon me, I had sure simplistic/socialist goals of reshaping the political economy, establishing social justice and eliminating war as a game for powerfreaks and hunger as a byproduct of profiteering. At thirty, I was beginning to think it might be at least as urgent to open our eyes and mouths and bodies to sensory awareness and full communication potentials. At sixty, I was no longer willing to indulge in triage politics and sociology: all logic insists that food for the belly comes first; yet people still die of hunger for love, dignity, "honor" and simple human contact; still others are killed for refusing to starve, or suppress, their minds.

Now I approach three-score-and-ten, and in the past decade many of us Earthlings have come to understand that all our hungers, honors and ailments may be irrelevant in view of the damage inflicted by humanity on Gaia, the earth, the planet from which our very lives derive, and without which we can not as yet survive.

Somewhere in this progression, I seem to have lost the personal compulsion to make my statement through science fiction. Perhaps it was just the suspicion that any medium both profitable and respectable can hardly be subversive. Perhaps the fancy-dress, the masque, of fiction now seems too frivolous: we are living in truly terrifying times, where utopias become literally inconceivable and the visibility ahead is closing down to zero.

Many—most—of my generation of science fiction writers seem to have succumbed to the same malaise. Some of the best have moved to writing (splendid, and sometimes, some ways, still speculative) mainstream mimetic fiction; others have turned clear around to write (clever, delightful) historical "what-if s." Most, sadly, have acceded to the bottom-line blandishments of mass-market publication and now write endless formulaized sequels, sets, and set-in-the-world-of read-alikes.

The future is on hold?

Not quite.

This Ark of Ice has no solutions, few fine visions or vistas; but it is blessedly full of the seeds of discontent, of finely visualized delineations of problems for which we have little or no precedent and small scope for understanding. Some of these stories are simply refinements of by-now "standards" of SF, but many others are probing attempts to expose new realities at the center of life-and-death decisions we must, very soon, find the energy and acumen to deal with.

The questions that come at us here have much to do with bio-technology, the new or imminent ethics and practices that relate to birth and death and sustenance in a changed and changing set of ecological equations. But, equally, they deal with the technology—both electronic and psychological — of control and decision-making. And, finally, with the act of perception itself: how do we penetrate the multi-veils of illusion (education, media, tradition, authority, sciencism, mysticism, high-tech glitz) so as to perceive the (real?) problems?

If future fiction cannot, or does not, at this juncture show us a way forward, perhaps it can at least illuminate some barriers and byways: point us toward explorations of new paths to hope — or to as-yet undefined hazards.

Unless we can find and move through or around the obstacles we have set in the paths we already know, the future will no longer be on hold; it will be out of service.

#### Introduction to PELT by Carol Emshwiller

Does your science-fiction magazine look different lately?

If it does, there's a fair chance (one in six, by my count) that Carol Emshwiller is a good part of the reason why.

The reason for that is that Mrs. Emshwiller—who is now a housewife, mother of three pre-schoolers, married to a rising young professional man, in the world's most suburb, Levittown, Long Island—once went to Italy on a Fulbright fellowship to study art.

No, she does *not* illustrate her own stories. Her husband, the young professional man who was also in Italy on a Fulbright, usually does; Carol just poses. (Frequently, I mean. You'll find "Emsh" on the cover of just about every third s-f magazine these days; on just about half of those you'll find a girl who is—usually recognizably—Mrs. "*Emsh.*")

Carol Emshwiller is typical of a number of new authors in the field in that she has been writing for about five years, on a part-time basis. She is completely atypical (of anything or anybody) in the individuality of her style, the uniqueness of her perceptions, and the seemingly effortless clarity with which she conveys them.

"Pelt" is the story of a dog and a man on a hunting trip on a far distant planet in a future perhaps not too remote.

#### Introduction to TRIGGERMAN by J. F. Bone

The ideal of the brotherhood of man is hardly new. But the purely practical, businesslike necessity for immediate and enduring Peace on Earth—on Earth equipped with space missiles and atomic weapons—is original with this generation.

The development of modern warfare, of rockets, radioactives, and robot controls, has been taken for

granted in science fiction for some time—and with it the recognition that international rock-tossing is just too extravagant an entertainment for modern man.

Stemming perhaps from this basic "One World or None" philosophy, and/or from the conflicts of science vs. security (and space goals vs. defense needs), a certain tradition of military-mind-mocking has grown up in s-f. Though here too history is overtaking us. Or at least General Douglas MacArthur has caught up with *Planet Stories* and the bug-eyed monsters. "Because of the recent development of science, the countries of the world must unite," *True Space Secrets* quotes him as saying. "They must make a common front against attack by people from other planets!" (My italics.—J.M.)

It is slightly less startling, but still of interest, to note that in a book full of animal-heroes (a dog, a cat, a mouse, a bear), it's the story about the General that was written by a professor of veterinary medicine.

#### Introduction to THE PRIZE OF PERIL by Robert Sheckley

This may come as a bit of a letdown, after Emshwiller and Bone, but Robert Sheckley is neither a cover boy nor a professor of extraterrestrial medicine. He is a writer of science fantasy, and has applied himself with exceptional competence to that profession for the past ten years or so.

"The Prize of Peril" is a story that needed the professional touch. Satires about television have cluttered the pages of too many magazines for several years, and the topic has by now been handled with more unoriginal thinking, pedestrian prose, and all-round mismanagement than any other theme I know. But this one is neither second-rate nor secondhand; this is hot-off-the-griddle, emphatically first-rate Sheckley, and is, incidentally, the favorite story in this year's volume of the gentleman who edits Dell First Editions.

#### Introduction to HICKORY, DICKORY, KEROUAC by Richard Gehman

The most frequent focus of speculation in s-f these days is on the cultural potential of humanity. One story may explore uncharted territory deep in the darkest interior of man; another may try to trace the tangled relationships between men and the world around them; a third might be a sort of aerial-photo view of the environment itself.

Richard Gehman is one of America's most prolific magazine writers, and is an inquisitive and earnest student of our mores, including our fads in jazz and literature.

This story was first published under the by-line, *Martin Scott*. The name was new to me. I queried editor Ray Russell at *Playboy*, who wrote to tell me the author's identity, and also said, "It certainly is an extremely clever piece, but I must admit I don't see how the satire fits into your book."

This shook me, because Russell is a type that digs s-f, mostly, and if this is not science fiction, it is what I mean by s-f, and—like, man, I mean, it *is* the greatest. ...

#### Introduction to THE YELLOW PILL by Rog Phillips

"The best laid schemes o' mice and men," that Scotsman said, "gang aft a-gley." Which, in American, means: man or mouse, one can be just as crazy mixed-up as the other.

The late Robert Lindner, in his fascinating *The Fifty-Minute Hour*, wrote about a patient whose fantasy-world took the form of a space-travel story so credibly constructed that the psychiatrist himself kept drifting into near-acceptance of the reality of the alien planet. Now Mr. Phillips asks: How does the doctor know—for sure—who's crazy?

#### Introduction to RIVER OF RICHES by Gerald Kersh

For some reason, s-f has enjoyed a rather more reputable name in Great Britain than it has here—or at least a good many more "literary" British authors have written it. (Kipling, Wells, Dunsany, Doyle, Chesterton, Priestley, Collier, Coppard, to name a few.)

In this country, fantasy, beginning with Hawthorne, has a long record of respectability; but even the best science fiction (with the notable exception of a few offbeat efforts by "major" writers, such as Stephen Vincent Benet's "By the Waters of Babylon") could be found ordinarily only in pulp magazines.

All this, of course, was B.B.—Before the Bomb. Then when s-f did achieve a measure of popular approval here, one of the first science-fiction stories printed in a top national magazine was by a British author. (Not the first. Heinlein beat Kersh to *The Saturday Evening Post* by about two months, early in 1947.)

Though Mr. Kersh lives in this country now, and is one of the more colorful lights in the New York literary firmament, much of his work retains the flavor of the traditionally English adventure story. This one is a tale told in a barroom, by that classic adventurer, the "younger son of a younger son,"

#### Introduction to SATELLITE PASSAGE by Theodore L. Thomas

Back to Cain and Abel, and ever since that time, there have been restless men, dissatisfied ones, the rovers, explorers, and adventurers. They are the men who traveled to India, discovered China, stumbled across America, pushed through the jungles of the Congo and the Amazon, charted the oceans, crested the mountains, and dog-sledded to the poles. To the stay-at-homes, these wanderers are sometimes heroes, sometimes worthless bums, depending as often as not on whether they do bring home nuggets of real gold (or silks, spices, slaves, oil leases). Now, very soon—as matters look, within our own lifetimes—the rovers will be going out to space. They will man our satellites and space stations, mine our moon, and colonize the other planets; eventually, it is they who will represent us to whatever alien life may have spawned from other stars.

Ted Thomas has a faculty for imagining life in space with such sharp realism that you can almost see and feel and *taste* it as you read. Here he tells the story of an embattled, proud and lonely man, a wanderer and a fighter, who must make a split-second decision for or against the community of mankind.

#### Introduction to CASEY AGONISTES by R. M. McKenna

Ted Thomas's hero was a sailor turned spacer; Richard McKenna is a sailor turned writer. "Casey Agonistes" was his first published story, and beyond question the brightest new entry in the s-f field last year.

Born in Idaho in 1913, Mr. McKenna reports a "desert and cowboy-type youth. To Navy, 1931. China Station, 1932.

"Meant to retire and die out there. . . . Double-crossed by history...." He spent the war years in the Naval Transport Service "...all oceans. No decorations", then found himself in 1949 in a Navy Public Information Office in Chicago.

"... Liked the journalistic word-carpentry. Decided to write some day. S-f, of course, voracious reader thereof from early age ..."

In '53, after a cruise to Korea, he was mustered out Chief Machinist's Mate: "... That's steam engines, refrigerators, lathes, etc. Felt lack of formal education keenly. In U. of North Carolina, summer, 1953." He took a variety of science courses, majored in psychology, and got his B.A. in English Literature in February, 1956. "Married next day. Time out for one year. First dribbles of writing, spring, 1957. Casey first thing sold and published. Age 44 then....

"Hope to live to 100 and write something every day of it. ..."

#### Introduction to SPACE-TIME FOR SPRINGERS by Fritz Leiber

Some people will tell you that Fritz Leiber was born backstage, in the traditional trunk, during the witches' scene in *Macbeth*. This is *not* true. But he did grow up in an atmosphere of greasepaint and iambic monologue; and he did put in at least one season of Shakespearean barnstorming himself. He also

studied for the ministry, acted in Hollywood, taught at a college, worked in a factory, and edited a science magazine. But all that time he was writing, too.

Very few authors are equally successful with fantasy *and* science fiction. Leiber already had a reputation in *Weird Tales* when, in 1943, two novels of his appeared almost simultaneously in *Astounding* and *Unknown Worlds*. "Gather Darkness" is still generally regarded as one of the best American science-fiction novels; "Conjure Wife" is a modern fantasy with the unique distinction of being the only story that has ever frightened me the third time through.

Two years ago, after a silence of five years, Leiber began writing fiction again. (*HE'S BACK!*, one magazine cover shouted.) Last year, a two-part serial of his in *Galaxy* took the "Hugo" award for best novel of the year at the World Science-Fiction Convention. Most hopeful news we've had this year is that Leiber at last is writing full-time. (Well, almost—just a bit of tournament chess on the side.)

#### Introduction to OR ALL THE SEAS WITH OYSTERS by Avram Davidson

Kersh, McKenna, Leiber, and (I *think*) Thomas too, set forth the premise that there exists in man a soul, spirit, psyche—call it what you will—separate and independent from his consciousness. Each one of them portrayed the fleeting image of the soul against a different aspect of experience: man-and-nature, man-and-death, man-and-beast.

Now Avram Davidson probes the relationship between man and the products of his own creation. Can a soul (or a consciousness) inhabit a machine?

Since his appearance in the first annual SF, as a new fiction writer of remarkable talent, Mr. Davidson has carved himself a solid niche in both the mystery and s-f fields. Two years ago, he took first prize in the Ellery Queen Mystery Contest. Last year, he won the "Hugo" award for the best shod science-fantasy story of the year. This is it... .

#### Introduction to TEN-STORY JIGSAW by Brian W. Aldiss

The wider range and subtler definition of subject matter in modern s-f makes, I think, for better reading—but much more complex anthologizing.

Time was when the editor of a collection such as this could sit down and sort out the stories into tidy piles under such subheadings as Space Travel, Time Travel, Planetary Adventure, Marvelous Invention, Alien Visitors, Mutation, Atom Doom, and the like.

Presumably this could still be done. The space ships, inventions, and mutations are still there—but that's not what the stories are about. The end result would be only to multiply confusion. If I used subheadings here, the two main ones would have to be: Whither Civilization? and Inside Man.

One of the old labels would still fit, though—Atom Doom—and the next three stories could be grouped under it. The first of them is the work of a young British author who has only recently begun to appear in print in this country.

The time: After World War III.

The place: Sydney, Australia.

The hero: A junkman.

#### Introduction to FRESH - GUY by E. C. Tubb

Another Britisher presents what you might call a double-doom story—set in a graveyard, around the tombstone that marks the underground retreat of the war-torn remnants of humanity. Mankind dug under long ago; but the scent of fresh-turned dirt is present still—appetizingly, for some.

#### Introduction to THE BEAUTIFUL THINGS by Arthur Zirul

A story about bears—but no Goldilocks.



Like Mrs. Emshwiller, Professor Bone, and Patent Attorney Thomas, Arthur Zirul has been writing and publishing s-f, on a part-time basis, for the last five years or so. As with them, s-f was favorite reading for him long before he tried writing it. "Science fiction to me," he says, "is the last, and likely the only, refuge for genuine satire ... the biting kind only fantasy can provide."

Mr. Zirul's more usual, workaday refuge is an out-of-the-way back building in Greenwich Village which he describes as "1,500 square feet of a former night club, filled with fine dust, a dozen assorted machines, shelves full of very odd odds and ends, and me (I'm the one that's moving)."

Sorry. No *Things* or *Shuttlebops* or genii-jars. He calls it Diorama Studios, and builds industrial models there.

#### Introduction to THE COMEDIAN'S CHILDREN by Theodore Sturgeon

There is very little remaining to be said by any editor or anthologist about Theodore Sturgeon, whose stories have been so thoroughly collected and so assiduously introduced that every scrap of biographical information has been worked thin.

And I have found, in the course of introducing my own share of Sturgeoniana, that his stories are seldom susceptible to summing-up or finger-pointing. You can't say, "Here's what it's about." It's about too many things...

#### Introduction to THE SHORT-SHORT STORY OF MANKIND by John Steinbeck

Maybe you go for Hemingway. Faulkner? Thomas Wolfe? (With me it's Dos Passos.) But no matter whom you pick for first place, Steinbeck is probably high up on your list; and for many people he is indisputably *the* realistic modern novelist.

What's he doing *here*?

I may as well say right off that this piece is *not* science fiction—or science fantasy, or "fantasy-fable" either, I'm afraid (though "fable" and "allegory" are what Playboy called it when they printed it).

But it stops just short of "future history" which would make it legit s-f. And it's pretty realistic, too.... You could call it historically fantastic realism ... Or really historical fantasy ...

Or fantastically realistic history ...

Anyhow, it's speculative; also it's *satire*. And it's Steinbeck in an unexpected and delightful vein. So here it sits, behind the fiction, and before the fact...

#### Introduction to MAN IN SPACE by Daniel Lang

In the welter of wordage published during 1958 about the prospects of manned space flight, very little was at once comprehending, comprehensive, and comprehensible. Mr. Lang's article combines these virtues with the authoritative documentation and stylistic excellence for which his reportage and the pages of *The New Yorker* are both known—and a certain skepticism of viewpoint is, I expect, a healthy thing.

#### Introduction to THE THUNDER-THIEVES by Isaac Asimov

S-f writers are restless types, generally. They seem to come from—and be forever going off to—bizarre employments and unlikely places. Even inside the field there are few "name writers" who have not at some time switched teams, and tried their hands at editing or criticism.

Dr. Asimov lives quietly in Boston, and his career as a Professor of Biochemistry is just what one might expect (but seldom find) in a science-fiction writer. He has never edited a magazine or conducted a review column? Apparently he is content with two fictional personalities (the other is juvenile author Paul French). Co-author of five (at last count) biochemistry textbooks, Isaac Asimov has a growing reputation for non-fiction science writing. As a notorious composer of hoax and spoof articles, he is among the leaders of the slim ranks of s-f humorists. He is the author of many, many short stories, and a versifier

and parodist of note.

The verse reprinted here, which goes to the tune of "The Flowers that Bloom in the Spring," was first published in *Future Science Fiction*. The article following was written especially for this book.

#### Introduction to THE HANDLER by Damon Knight from *Rogue*

In one of the two very small towns where both he and I live—Milford, Pa., a river valley resort on the edge of the Poconos—Damon Knight is known as, "You know, the one who always walks down Broad Street reading."

Milford, with more than a thousand year-round regular residents can, and does, offer a sort of pleased, affectionate, perhaps slightly proud, understanding to its reckless-reader street-crosser. The other (and much smaller) town we both live in—the curiously close-knit community of "science-fictionists"—is less indulgent by far: not that anyone minds how much reading he does; it's what he says afterward that hurts.

When Anthony Boucher retired as reviewer for Fantasy and Science Fiction, the only logical successor to the post was Damon Knight, then already firmly established as "the other critic" in science fantasy. (I do mean "critic." Damon has been known to like a book—but rarely to say so. All in all, he has probably poured more vinegar on troubled authors than any other monthly columnist ever thought to keep in stock.)

It is a double pleasure then, to an author-editor like myself, to see him turn his acerbity, auctorially, on a field once removed from publishing—the world of entertainment.

#### Introduction to THE OTHER WIFE by Jack Finney from *The Saturday Evening Post*

In a recent volume of considerable arrogance, ill-considered opinion, and unconsidering slovenliness of research, a British humorist with pretensions to critical judgment of science fantasy, one Kingsley Amis, refers to the (unnamed) writer of a story entitled "Of Missing Persons" as "an author who has yet to make his name."

"Of Missing Persons," says Mr. Amis, "is one of those things that offer themselves for analysis with an almost suspicious readiness." I was not able to determine, in the three pages of quotes and comments that followed, just what analysis was being made, or whose readiness for what was under suspicion—but I may have been prejudiced by having read the story, several times, with great enjoyment, when it was included in the first annual volume of SF.

For the benefit of any readers who, like Mr. Amis, are unfamiliar with the author's work—the name is Finney. Jack Finney. And it has been a familiar one in science-fantasy since Robert Heinlein's 1951 anthology, "Tomorrow the Stars," first offered it to the specialty field.

Mr. Finney's most recent books include *The Third Level* (Rinehart and Dell Book) and *The Body Snatchers* (Dell First Editions).

#### Introduction to NO FIRE BURNS by Avram Davidson from *Playboy*

The same Mr. Amis who was so "suspiciously ready" to attempt to analyze a nameless Jack Finney, says in the introductory chapter of his book that "science fiction" is hardly an appropriate name for the field any longer. Regretfully, I must agree with Mr. A. on this one point (without seeing the need for the emphasis on the first word). And I leap to agree, again, with his next statement:

"... the plea that politics and economics and psychology and anthropology and even ethics are really or nearly as much sciences as atomic physics, is chiefly valuable as an indication of a state of mind...."

Frankly, I am not certain our agreement on this is fundamental; I don't know what Mr. Amis meant, but what he said is very true. The fields of psychology, anthropology, sociology—yes, even ethics, hopefully—are now just at that burgeoning "state of mind" atomic physics was still passing through when

science-fictionists began exploring its potential thirty years ago. As fine an example of the new "science fiction" as I know is this featured story from Playboy.

Introduction to NO, NO, NOT ROGOV! by Cordwainer Smith from If

Cordwainer Smith is the pseudonym of a gentleman who is undoubtedly the farthest-out Professor of Sociology ever to hide his dignity behind a fantasy-barrel. I have yet to see two stories alike from "Mr. Smith"—or one that did not somehow fascinate me.

Introduction to THE SHORELINE AT SUNSET by Ray Bradbury from A Medicine for Melancholy (Doubleday, 1959)

By definition, the only "formula" for science fantasy is no-formula; a genre of speculation and extrapolation can exist only in a state of flux. But even flux, over a period of time, trends to a preferred shape. Against a background of the inevitable ninety per cent of inept or hackster trash, the better stories, as they emerge each year, always show some very definite—and different from the year before—emphasis on one area of speculation or another.

This time the focus is summed up in the title of the editorial reprinted some pages farther on from John W. Campbell Jr.'s erstwhile Astounding, now—take a deep breath—retitled Analog Science Fact and Fiction: "What Do You Mean ... Human?"

In a rather different sense, this is of course the query underlying all fiction, and all art. But the stories in this book, almost all, treat the question also in the special science-fiction sense as well—exploring with postulated answers and what if's the boundaries of distinction by which we define ourselves.

Roy Bradbury, who needs no introduction in or out of the science-fiction field (even Mr. Amis knows his name!) selects a delicate and haunting legendary boundary to explore.

Introduction to THE DREAMSMAN by Gordon R. Dickson from Star Science Fiction #6 (Ballantine Books, 1959)

Every profession has its fringe benefits, and Gordy Dickson is one of science fiction's. A big rangy ex-Canadian from the tall beer country of Minnesota, he turns up, not quite often enough, at conventions and conferences with his guitar over one shoulder and a sort of shining shield of great good humor over the other. One of these days a bright song publisher will introduce nonconvention-goers to the DicksonCogswell-Anderson science-fantasy ballads and blues. Meantime, novels like his explosive Dorsai! in ASF last year, and short stories like this one fill the gap moderately well.

Introduction to MULTUM IN PARVO by Jack Sharkey from Gent.

Once upon a time, little children used to frighten naughty parents at bedtime with a radio program known as "The Shadow." And out of those dim and dear days comes Bruce Elliott, who used to write the show—before he turned to comic books, mysteries, science fiction, magic, and heaven-knows-how-much-else, only to wind up respectably editing a happily not-too-respectable magazine duo.

For satire, fantasy, wit with spice, and all around fun, Genf and The Dude are giving some stiff competition these days to a magazine which will not be referred to here as Playboy. These excerpts from a still running series of historical frictions (Return of Parvo, Parvo Rides Again, etc.) by Jack Sharkey have been selected as those most appropriate to a family science-fantasy anthology.

Introduction to FLOWERS FOR ALGERNON by Daniel Keyes from Fantasy and Science Fiction

Daniel Keyes is a reformed science-fiction editor (Marvel, some few years, ago) turned high-school

English teacher. Either of these dubious professions should be enough to keep a sensible man on the spectator's side of a byline. If he didn't write the stuff when he could buy it from himself, one might think the rigors of New York City's blackboard jungle would prevent him from beginning now.

One way and another, it is difficult to believe that this is Keyes' second published story—much more difficult after reading it than before.

Introduction to "WHAT DO YOU MEAN . . . HUMAN?" by John W. Campbell, Jr. from Astounding Science Fiction

The incredible Mr. Amis singles out John Campbell several times for special notice. This is not unusual; almost anyone writing about modern American science fiction finds himself paying respects to the man under whose sometimes daft but always deft—and vigorous and enthusiastic—guidance, ASF (which you can take as Astounding Science Fiction or the new title, Analog Science Fact and—gasp—Fiction) has been the consistent leader in the field—both as to sales and influence. Mr. A., however, limits his comments about Campbell's influence to a snidish remark about cranks whose rapid departure would benefit the whole field and a description of the editor as "a deviant figure of marked ferocity."

I am here to say that I have talked with Campbell, literally and actually—and lived to go back for more. (I don't want to give the impression that talking with John is easy. But listening is lots of fun too, you know.) But we had lunch together, and both ate spaghetti, and there were no fangs, claws, or horns in evidence.

The following selection is a Campbell editorial from ASF. And now that I think of it, I suppose it is rather ferociously deviant of Mr. Campbell to want to "play robot."

Introduction to SIERRA SAM by Ralph Dighton from Associated Press

Some years back I got tired of that aching feeling in my head, and resolved never again to pit an opinion of mine against one of John Campbell's—his are so much stronger.

By now, the habit of responding to Campbellian emphasis only with a) questions, or b) facts, is so ingrained that, lacking a really good question-story ...

Introduction to A DEATH IN THE HOUSE by Clifford D. Simak from Galaxy

My first conscious acquaintance with Cliff Simak was in the body of a Jovian "Loper"—a lizard-sort-of-thing through whose keen senses we—Simak and I, along with the hero of the story, and his dog—were able to perceive for the first time the true grandeur of the giant planet's beauty.

If this sounds like a travelogue, it's just because it is. I doubt that anyone who read "Desertion" when it was first published in Astounding, or later as part of the prize-winning book, City, has ever quite forgotten the fresh tingling scent of that ammonia storm....

Well, that was way back; and that was when I started looking for the Simak label on story titles. Exactly what sort of awareness Mr. Simak has that enables him to understand with a unique clarity the nature of strange beasts, I do not know; nor what specialized talent it is that contrives to communicate this empathy so sharply even to such a human-jingoist as me (as cool a clam as ever you've come across when it comes to cats and dogs and canaries, yet, let alone alien entities). All I know is that he is a newspaperman in Milwaukee, which is almost far enough away from Milford, Pa., for me to believe—most anything.

Introduction to MARIANA by Fritz Leiber from Fantastic

The first definite and absolutely unchangeable selection made for this edition of SF was Fritz Leiber's story, "The Silver Eggheads," from Fantasy and Science Fiction.

That was in January of '59. For some sixteen months since, F&SF has remained incurably readable. In the same period of time, Leiber has been turning out stories, and yet better stories, at such a rate that Fantastic broke every rule in the business and published one complete all-Leiber issue last November.

The arithmetic of anthology selection, in such a case, is evident, and so is the usual lady's prerogative. But I mourn for the "Eggheads," and urge you all to storm your back-number magazine stores for it.

And one more thing (that's the other prerogative, no?)— We're all going to have to stop saying scornfully, "I mean good science fiction—not that Buck Rogers stuff!" Leiber is writing the Buck Rogers comic strip now. ...

#### Introduction to DAY AT THE BEACH by Carol Emshwiller from Fantasy and Science Fiction

The first Milford Science Fiction Writers' Conference was held in 1956. Among those invited were a number of artists, agents, editors, and publishers in the field. So artist Ed "Emsh" came up for the week—with his family.

Carol Emshwiller had then published two or three stories; but she didn't know she was a writer, and the bated-breath humility with which she asked if she possibly might be allowed to sit in on workshop meetings has come back to haunt us Older Hands each summer since. Each summer, I mean, when Carol pops out of the playpen-and-baby-bottle laden car, an infant (at least figuratively) under one arm, and her newest manuscript under the other. (Ed carries two kids and his brushes in his teeth—nothing to it when you get the knack.)

The first time I read Day at the Beach was in one of these workshop sessions. After that, I just waited for someone to print it first, so could next....

#### Introduction to WHAT THE LEFT HAND WAS DOING by Darrel T. Langart from Astounding Science Fiction

What is human? How different can it be, and still seem "one of us"? How much can one of us change, and not be one of them? (And who are they? Or are they what?)

Earlier selections here have approached the line of definition in a variety of ways. Mr. Langart, an author new to science fiction (so far as I have been able to determine from his tight-lipped agents), here presents an exceptionally thoughtful and convincing examination of one of the potentialities for human development.

#### Introduction to THE SOUND SWEEP by J. G. Ballard from Science Fantasy

It was Fletcher Pratt who first brought to my attention the use of fantasy, or more specifically of the fantastic or science-fictional environment, to spotlight or enlarge human reactions: "The intensification of emotion," he called it. Very often, this is the main function of a fantastic backdrop: to set the stage for a close-up view of an emotional interchange which, under "normal," "realistic" circumstances occurs at such low intensity as to be almost imperceptible; or to magnify a "normal" experience of the "real" world to, for example, Faustian proportion.

J. G. Ballard, one of the young British writers whose work has been much too little seen in this country, here provides an example of this sort of emotional intensification performed on a (literal) future stage-set of the past.

#### Introduction to PLENITUDE by Will Worthington from Fantasy and Science Fiction

There seems to be some doubt as to whether this was the first, second, or third story of three bought and published by three different magazines almost simultaneously. It marks, in any case, one-third of the debut of yet another striking new talent in the s-f field. Unlike Mr. Keyes, who has a long background in publishing, or Mr. Langart, who has written—I understand—in other fields, Mr. Worthington has turned

to writing after years of experience in government work. There is a freshness of language and vigor of thought in all the stories of his I have seen which are rarely equaled by the more experienced writers in the field.

Introduction to THE MAN WHO LOST THE SEA by Theodore Sturgeon from "The Best from Fantasy and Science Fiction: Series Nine" (Doubleday, 1960)

... But science," they're still telling us, "has caught up with science fiction...." Or: "What are you guys gonna write about now you got space flight?"

Obviously, not about space flight. Not one of the eighteen selections preceding this has been concerned with rocketry or astrogation or planet-hopping, except as an occasional incidental background touch.

Science—at least nuclear physics and space-flight technology—have caught up with us enough so that the speculative gleanings in these fields are sparse indeed. We are migrating to the less well-harvested neo-scientific fertile acreage of the "humanic studies."

I say, "migrate," and I do mean like a flock of birds. Thing now is to figure out whether Solo Sturgeon stayed behind on this one—or went way out, reconnoitering the next flight.

Introduction to MAKE A PRISON by Lawrence Block from Original Science Fiction Stories

A special feature of your enterprising annual anthologist: the self-help do-it-yourself diagnostic puzzle, as provided in all the best general magazines.

Your problem is to make your mind up, sometime before you hit the final paragraph, about which human is the human here?

Introduction to WHAT NOW, LITTLE MAN? by Mark Clifton from Fantasy and Science Fiction

It is just about ten years now, since Mark Clifton hit the science fiction world like a cloudburst, pouring out a seemingly inexhaustible flood of provocative, exciting, irritating, and informative thinking. I know of no contemporary author, with the possible exception of Robert Heinlein ten years earlier, who has exercised so much developmental influence, not just on the readers, but in the basic thinking of other writers in the field. There was a short spell, I recall, when some disgruntled souls referred to Astounding (now, Analog) as The Clifton House Organ.

For the past almost five years, other work has kept him too busy to leave much time for s-f. Now it would seem the spring floods are back, or so one hopes, on the basis of this story and the new Doubleday novel, Eight Keys to Eden.

Introduction to DOUBLE, DOUBLE, TOIL AND TROUBLE by Holley Cantine from *Fantasy and Science Fiction*

Between the purely imaginative and the solidly speculative, as between speculation and science, the boundaries can never be entirely resolved. Just now—when yesterday's *impossibles* are so often today's probables and tomorrow's *certainities*—the once sharp dividing line between "scientific" and "supernatural" (or "reason" and "mysticism" or "science-fiction" and "fantasy") is especially hazy.

Hypnosis, for instance, is such a respectable adjunct of medicine today that it is difficult to recall how recently the words *mesmerist* and *charlatan* were almost synonymous. "Faith healing," of course, is still medically suspect—but "psychosomatic" is a vital part of every GP's new vocabulary. And while ultra-scientific pharmaceutical laboratories are rediscovering, renaming (and peddling) the curative agents in long-discredited witch-doctor drugs, a startling number of solid conservative public utilities are

making use of "water witching" techniques for everyday chores.

It does seem about time to reopen the question (imaginative or speculative) of magic in general ...

Introduction to THE NEVER ENDING PENNY by Bernard Wolfe from *Playboy*

It is of interest to note that the calling card of the author of the preceding story reads: "Holley Cantine—Writer...Agitator ... Editor ... Publisher ... Printer ... Carpenter & Builder ...Brewer ... Trombone & Tuba (funerals a specialty)... rates on request." Further investigation by your editor has revealed that Mr. Cantine also lives in a house in the woods which he built himself—for himself, his wife and child.

Bernard Wolfe's approach to the Great Deception of the Carbon Copy lies clearly across the nebulous and shifting line that currently divides the possible from the distinctly improbable. His setting, treatment, and outcome all differ radically from Mr. Cantine's. I cannot vouch for Mr. Wolfe's experience with demons, imps, or well-dwellers in general, but his Mexican background should be authentic: his eminently readable biography of Leon Trotsky came out of the years he spent in Mexico as Trotsky's secretary. He is also the author of the memorable s-f novel, "Limbo."

Introduction to THE FELLOW WHO MARRIED THE MAXILL GIRL by Ward Moore from *fantasy and Science Fiction*

In just one year's time, the change in the climate of our thinking in a "breakthrough" area is staggering. A year ago (while the public-at-large was still goggling at the official use of the word "Astronaut," applied to the seven men selected for Project Mercury training), a select group of scientists embarked on a systematic search of space for radio signals indicating the existence of other intelligent life in the universe. They called their project, charmingly if self-consciously, "Ozma"; and Harvard's eminent Dr. Shapley (who was, you must understand, a guiding spirit in the venture) referred to it as "high-class science fiction." The astronomers could no more help believing what half a dozen converging lines of research had already indicated than they could stop feeling slightly silly about believing it.

Two days ago, as I write this, the country's most staid newspapers headlined stories of the discovery of lifelike hydrocarbons in a sliver of meteorite: "Evidence of Life Beyond Earth Reported Found," and "Wax a Clue to Life in Outer Space—Trees, Plants, Even Men May Be Behind Meteorites."

We—and the pronoun becomes daily more inclusive, less exclusive—have begun to believe we are really not alone in the world. With this awareness comes (as for the babe in the process of distinguishing self from others) the first acute sense of need for a working system of communication.

Introduction to SOMETHING INVENTED ME by R. C. Phelan from *The Reporter*

1960 was the year for breakthroughs and breakdowns in communications. The most dramatic to my mind (after "Ozma") was the device called the "People-Machine" built by an outfit called *Simulmatics, Inc.*, the machine is a conventional IBM 704; but programmed with a—sensationally —unconventional "mathematical model of the United States electorate," distilled from thousands of pollsters' files. Designed by a Director of Columbia's Bureau of Applied Social Research and a Yale psychologist, the machine's first job was for the Democratic campaign committee in the Presidential election.

Meanwhile, Cornell researchers were teaching another electronic brain how to read. The "Perceptron" is designed with "electrical counterparts of eyes, nerve fibers, and nerve cells," to enable it to read and use ordinary language, instead of mathematical codes. During the same year, the Air Force put a new type of IBM to work translating technical works from Russian into English.

All this might have been happier news had it not coincided with a rash of metal-wig-flipping by Brains already in use: wrong scoring in college tests, for instance, and a hilarious series of goofs in a robotized Providence, R. I., post office. Tends to make one wonder if we may not be "building in" more parallels—with the human brain than we intended?

Introduction to I REMEMBER BABYLON by Arthur C. Clarke from *Playboy*

To build the better mousetrap has become—in this day of technological marvels—the easiest part of the job. It's getting the word to the path-beating public that really counts. And the path itself tends to resemble a nightmare behaviorist's maze (to switch rodents and metaphors) in which all the entrances are through opinion-taking and all the exits by way of opinion-making.

This was never so evident as in the year that began with the TV quiz scandals, progressed with "payola" and "public images," and included the launchings of the "Echo" and "Courier" satellites, advance scouts of moon-relayed worldwide no-fail radio, telephone and television communication.

No one is better qualified than Arthur Clarke to write about the possibilities inherent in the Echo program: world-traveler, cosmopolite, and lecturer of note, Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society, and past President of the British Interplanetary Society, Mr. Clarke is the very model of a modern major science-fictionist. In addition to a quantity of superior fiction (see Harcourt Brace's 1959 omnibus collection, *Across the Sea of Stars*), he has written both technical and popular books on space flight, at least one vividly descriptive book on skin diving in Australian coral reefs, and any number of short articles. Between lecture seasons, space conferences, underwater explorations, and appearances before House Investigations Committees, he makes his home, in Ceylon.

Introduction to THE LAGGING PROFESSION by Leonard Lockhard from *Analog Science Fact & Fiction*

Readers of previous *S-F* annuals will remember Theodore L. Thomas's "The Far Look" and "Satellite Passage" particularly for the vivid personal realism of his near-future portraits of man in space. Mr. Thomas, who first trained as a chemical engineer and now practices law as a patent attorney, started his writing career under the pseudonym of Leonard Lockhard, and still uses that by-line for his series of humorous-instructive tales about the patent pursuits of Mr. Saddle and Mr. Spardleton.

In the introduction to "I Remember Babylon," I made a point of the real-life elements involved in the story. Obviously this is just as true of "Leonard Lockhard's" piece. Both authors are trained scientists as well as first-rate storytellers. Both are writing here about the same (genuine) idea of Mr. Clarke's concerning the television satellite which has been so much discussed in the post war (and may have become a reality by the time this reaches print). But it is important to remember that of these two pieces, only one is fact-written-like-fiction. The other is fiction-written-like-fact.

Introduction to REPORT ON THE NATURE OF THE LUNAR SURFACE by John Brunner from *Astounding Science Fact & Fiction*

The confusions, complexities, and internal contradictions of man's fumbling first steps off Earth are by no means confined to legal or political aspects. (Perhaps there are some readers, in other countries, who have not yet heard the one about the little boy in first grade at the Canaveral school who was asked to count backwards. "Ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one ... Back to the drawing board, men!")

While the rocket men struggle toward mechanical perfection, a whole new field of applied biology called "Space Medicine" is working feverishly to reduce the margin of human error to a reasonable risk by the time the man-carrying ships are ready to launch. I rather wonder, though, how much thought they've given at White Sands to the sort of human failure Mr. Brunner suggests?

John Brunner is one of the growing group of young British writers who have developed primarily in association with the consistently surprising Nova magazines—*New Worlds* and *Science Fantasy*—edited by Ted Cornell. (Both magazines, I am happy to say, are now being distributed in this country.) This selection is not from either of the British publications, but from *Astounding* (now *Analog*) representing the increasing trend toward the exchange of material on both sides of the Pond.



Introduction to J. G. by Roger Price from "J. G., the Upright Ape" (Lyle Stuart, 1960)

Best way to eliminate the human error factor is to dispense with the human? This excerpt—the first five chapters—from a book described on the jacket as "a novel about The Way Things Are, as discovered in the adventures of an innocent Hero . . ." tries (like NASA) using an ape instead.

It is hardly necessary to state that Roger Price is a funny man. (This is "Doodles" Price, "Mad Libs" Price and TV-comic Price we are talking about.) It is well worth stating, however, that his novel is not only funny, but very good satire indeed.

Introduction to CHIEF by Henry Slesar from *Playboy*

Henry Slesar, like several other new young writers, works at both mystery-suspense-psychological-thrillers and science-fantasy. In this vignette, he makes the jump from How Things Are to How They All Too Well May Be....

Introduction to THE LARGE ANT by Howard Fast from *Fantastic Universe*

There is no need, at this late date, to introduce to anyone the author of "Citizen Tom Paine" and "Spartacus." But for those of you who have not been aware that America's foremost chronicler of historical rebellion has turned his hand to the literature of contemporary social and scientific revolution as well, I should note here that this and other Fast science-fantasies (mostly from *F&SF*) are now available in a Bantam Books collection, "Edge of Tomorrow."

Introduction to A ROSE BY OTHER NAME by Christopher Anvil from *Astounding Science Fact Fiction*

Although the devices have ranged from magic formulae and well-bound voices to satellites and cybernetics, the essential criticism leveled at The Way Things Are (and Where Are They Going?) by the authors so far, contains one common theme: Our failures are those of communication.

Sometimes the failure is one of intent, sometimes of ability. There may be perception without comprehension, or comprehension with no power of articulation. The missing link may be mechanical, semantic, emotional. Often it is no more than the value-deafness that comes of mistaking volume for information. But over and over again the trouble seems to lie in some part of the semantic act: the process of abstracting, symbolizing, and reciprocally conveying, mutually meaningful symbols.

Mr. Anvil here proposes a hair of the dog....

Introduction to ENCHANTMENT by Elizabeth Emmett from *The Saturday Evening Post*

No matter how indistinct the boundary between fantasy and science fiction, there are clearly defined areas on either side—and this story is undoubtedly "pure fantasy," quite outside the limits of what I ordinarily call "SF" ...

Introduction to THIOTIMOLINE AND THE SPACE AGE by Isaac Asimov from *Analog Science Fact & Fiction*

This remarkable report does not actually concern a major breakthrough of the past year. The original publication of the discovery of Thiotimeline is, after all, fourteen years old now. But I feel that s-f readers have almost a vested interest in the progress of time research—as indeed also in the Good Doctor himself—and that the selection was especially appropriate here between Miss Emmett's strangely convincing traffic with the past, and Marshall King's story of young Purnie's time-play.

Introduction to BEACH SCENE by Marshall King from *Galaxy*

On all the frontiers, new and old, physical and speculative, the perils and hardships of exploration (be it danger of death, deprivation, excommunication, or no more than academic hilarity) attract two very different kinds of men: those driven by curiosity and those drawn to conquest—the seekers of light and the searchers for might. Often the conflict between them is even sharper than the endless quarrel between the frontiersmen (of all kinds) and those less restless souls who hold up the established foundations from which the explorers go forth.

This story is Mr. King's first published fiction.

Introduction to CREATURE OF THE SNOWS by William Sambrot from *The Saturday Evening Post*

The Ugly Earthman has had small chance as yet to assert his antagonisms apace. But all along familiar planetary frontiers, explorers (of both breeds; questers and conquistadors) daily attack the boundaries of the unknown.

Last year, one of the oldest of old mysteries, the Abominable Snowman, was back in the public prints, under examination on two very different fronts.

Fellow name of Tschernezky in London (a reputable zoologist at Queen Mary College), made a plaster cast from photographs of footprints ascribed to A. Snowman; compared the cast's prints with those of similarly made prints of the several animals the A. S. is supposed to be; announced (according to *Newsweek*) that the photo prints had not been made by bear, langur, or mountain gorilla, but by a "very huge, heavily built, two-footed primate...."

Meantime Edmund (Everest) Hillary went back to the mountains to check the whole matter out; came back and published a series of loudly debunking articles, exposing all evidence offered to him as either fraudulent or honest error. (Whether he saw Tshernezky's plaster casts, I do not know.)

In any case, the public prints were full of A. S., and s-f was ripe for it; this was the year for Other Creature stories.

Introduction to ABOMINABLE by Fredric Brown from *The Dude*

Fred Brown, once best known—outside of s-f—for his award-winning mysteries, has of recent years become an irrepressible miniaturizer, publishing trios of fantasy-humor vignettes in one magazine after another. (A snap-crackling sampling of the Brown quickies is in his recent collection, "Nightmares and Geezenstacks," Bantam, 1961.) Here he foreshortens a situation only slightly different from Mr. Sambrot's.

Right up to the end, that is....

Introduction to THE MAN- ON TOP by R. Bretnor from *Esquire*

This story, originally published by *Esquire* in 1951, was reprinted last year in *Fantasy and Science Fiction*—thereby barely justifying my inclusion of it here, to complete my Himalayan set of three.

Introduction to DAVID'S DADDY by Rose! George Brown from *Fantastic Science Fiction*

Call it magic, yoga, illusion, or psi, whichever you like. (What's in the name? Why, the way you go about investigating it, mostly....) The still very much unexplored potential of the human mind is, perhaps, today's most challenging frontier.

Mrs. Brown's treatment of the theme is as different from Mr. Bretnor's as psi and yoga. But in both (as in Miss Emmett's "Enchantment") there h the same odd background quality of truly fearful loneliness that seems somehow integral to such a story.

Introduction to SOMETHING BRIGHT by Zenna Henderson from *Galaxy Magazine*

Readers of those earlier *S-F* annuals in which Miss Henderson's chronicles of The People appeared ("Pottage" in 1956: "Wilderness" in 1958) will be happy to know that the long-delayed publication of the complete series is at last a fact ("Pilgrimage: The Book of the People," Doubleday, 1961).

Miss Henderson is, in private life, a schoolteacher in the primary grades, and most of her stories about children have been from the viewpoint of the sympathetic adult. This time she tells it through the child's own mind and eyes.

Introduction to IN THE HOUSE, ANOTHER by Joseph Whitehill from *Fantasy and Science Fiction*

I said somewhere earlier that this was the year for Other Creatures: extraterrestrials most of all, but by no means all. Again and again the underlying theme in the moss thoughtful stories—be they careful science-fictional extrapolations, or the wildest flights of fantastic imaginings—is the daily more urgent need to learn the means and modes of communication with All Those Others.

What is an Other? We have had (besides a variety of e-t's) dopplegangers and gremlins, computers and communists, apes, ants, and A. Snowman (or woman), a telepath, a tribal chief, a Holy man, and the unclassifiable flora of Pogoland.

Now Mr. Whitehill, an engineer as well as an author ("The Angers of Spring," and "Able, Baker, and Others") offers a description with lab-report conciseness, accuracy, and attention to detail.

Introduction to A SERIOUS SEARCH FOR WEIRD WORLDS by Ray Bradbury from *Life*

I do not know which was the most pleasantly startling: that this article was written by Ray Bradbury, genius of anti-science-fiction: that *Life* magazine devoted fourteen beautifully illustrated pages to it; or that the United States Government, in 1960, should have provided the basis for it.

Introduction to THE BROTHERHOOD OF KEEPERS by Dean McLaughlin from *Astounding Science Fact & Fiction*

Dean McLaughlin is a quiet, self-contained young man who works full time in a college bookstore, and in his spare time turns out, too infrequently, thoughtful and thought-provoking stories, mostly for *Analog* (*Astounding*).

He says that "half of the idea" for this story originated with his father (the Ann Arbor astronomer of the same name): "Xi Scorpii is a genuine bona fide binary star, roughly 80 light-years from here (and Lambda Serpentis would make a very good way-station stop en route). The twin stars actually could play catch with a planet as described in the story.

"The other half of the story's genesis was some remarks in Loren Eiseley's essay, 'The Fire Apes,' with which I didn't entirely agree...."

Introduction to HEMINGWAY IN SPACE by Kingsley Amis from *Punch*

Last year I took occasion to do considerable sniping at some sins of omission, and a few commissions, in Kingsley Amis's critical book on science fiction, "New Maps of Hell." When my first fine fury began to die down, it occurred to me that my fire might better have been aimed at the general literary reviewers (who took the Amis dicta as a sort of newstyle Holy Writ) than at the author, who never claimed infallibility for himself.

One of Mr. Amis's sharpest criticisms of science fantasy in general was the lack of good humorous writing in the field. From the examples he cited, and those he did not, I suspect we do not always laugh at the same jokes. Not *always*: at least one exception (and probably several more) appeared in the series

of parodies published in *Punch* last year, when that venerable institution of humor announced it had ordered "SF stories in the manner of Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, Anthony Trollope " etc.

Mr. Amis's expertise as a critic of s-f was assigned him by reviewers who did not know the science-fantasy field, but did know, and respect (with cause), the author's reputation as a leading "Angry Young Man" novelist and essayist. His expertise as a writer—in this case a superb parodist—is not the property of the reviewers, but very much his own.

Introduction to MINE OWN WAYS by Richard McKenna from *Fact & Science Fiction*

Two years ago I had the pleasure of reprinting in this collection Richard McKenna's first published story, "Casey Agonistes." "Mac" was 44 when he sold "Casey." Since then, he has established himself as a science-fantasy writer, made use of his first two careers (cowboy and sailor) in numerous stories and articles in the men's adventure magazines, sold a story to *The Saturday Evening Post*, and is now at work on a novel derived from his own experiences while based at the Navy's China Station.

Introduction to OLD HUNDREDTH by Brian W. Aldiss from *New Worlds Science Fiction*

In November, last year, the oldest British science-fiction magazine celebrated its 100th issue with an imposing array of stories contributed almost entirely by members of the group of young writers which has grown up around *New Worlds* and its sister magazine, *Science Fantasy*, under the editorial guidance of editor-agent-publisher-reviewer E. J. Cornell.

Some of the group now closely associated with the Nova publications were active in s-f before the emergence of *New Worlds*, and have been widely published in this country. These include such names as John Wyndham, J. T. McIntosh, and John Christopher. Others have become familiar to American readers in the last few years, partly at least through Cornell's energetic efforts to effect a mutual exchange of material. John Brunner, Kenneth Bulmer, and John Rackham are among these; as are Brian Aldiss, E. C. Tubb, and J. G. Ballard—all of whom appeared in earlier editions of this anthology when they were little or not at all known in this country. There are at least a half dozen more whose names—I hope—we will be seeing more of here before long: writers of sustained quality, with ideas that are often fresher and more stimulating than most of what currently appears on the home scene. (Colin Kapp, John Kippax, Philip E. High, Robert Presslie, James White, Clifford C. Reed ...for instance.)

"Old Hundredth" was written specifically for the anniversary issue of *NW*—a story of the remote future when "We" are all "Others," and all "Others" are "We."

Introduction to BLUES AND BALLAD by Theodore R. Cogswell and Gordon R. Dickson

Whether or not s-f did (before *Punch*-parodies) lack humor, it is certainly true that its *best* boffs have seldom seen print. (Or I should have said, *type*.) Fan magazines are usually mimeographed, and only the official programs of the annual fan conventions are ordinarily transcribed.

These Labor Day weekends are virtually impossible to describe (without, at least, technicolor). But for spontaneous humor, song, skit, verse, quick-trigger emceeing, and sufficiency of the *bon (mot or vivant)*, they would be hard to equal. In their songs, particularly—whether at national, international, or purely neighborly gatherings—s-f-ers in general antedated the recent return to roll-your-own, home-made music. Oddly, the music-story did not appear until recently, but s-f music (both in parody and in original) has been on-scene (behind the scenes) for years.

Herewith, a distinctive part of the tradition of the special world Inside Science Fiction....

Introduction to HOW TO THINK A SCIENCE FICTION STORY by G. Harry Stine from *Analog Science Fact and Fiction*

In August, 1957, I doubt there were a hundred men and women alive who rationally expected to see

a man land on the Moon in their own lifetimes. There were, I should say, a couple of thousand, out of Earth's billions, who honestly believed such a development to be technologically possible, or historically plausible. By January of 1958, the swiftest intellectual revolution in history had occurred. But even then, our best hopes were slower than our best performance.

Dr. I. M. Levitt, director of the famous Fels Planetarium, was one of the few men already accustomed to thinking in terms of the challenge of space. Shortly after Sputnik, in an article in *The New York Times*, he predicted a manned rocket into space by 1968; a station in space by 1980; and a manned trip to the Moon about the year 2000.

*Look* magazine, in "Space Timetable" at the start of 1958, did not anticipate the first manned satellite till between 1970 and 1980 (on the basis of pooled scientific opinions); but lowered Dr. Levitt's estimate for the Moon trip, placing it "in the last decade of this century."

G. Harry Stine, a rocket engineer who had been working at White Sands until S (for Sputnik)-Day, when he voiced his opinion of the U.S. space program ("Fat, dumb, and happy," was part of it), was rather more optimistic. He said 1967 for a man in orbit, 1970 for a manned space station.

Two years later—January, 1960—*Look* magazine printed a new timetable, agreeing with Stine's old guess on the space station, but making him look like a stodgy conservative otherwise: men in orbit by the end of 1961, they said, and the first man to the Moon between 1967 and 1969. But they also said 1963 for the Echo satellite which was launched eight months after the article appeared; and they figured the Soviet Venus probe (January, 1961) for early 1962. Once again these estimates were derived from a composite of best-informed sources.

Ex-rocketman Stine is now working for a research and development company in New York City, where he is closely associated with Col. William O. Davis, former chief of USAF Office of Scientific Research. (Stine's "Time for Tom Swift," in *Analog*, January, 1961, some of Davis's ideas on space flight, based on the notion that any practical system of transport must be "suitable for an aged grandmother visiting her grandchildren. . . .") The article that follows is excerpted from a longer essay, "Science Fiction Is Too Conservative."

#### Introduction to ONEIROMACHIA by Conrad Aiken from *Atlantic Monthly*

An introduction to this poem, or to its author, would be certainly tautological, and probably presumptuous. The poem serves rather as an introduction to the book, stating the case for the literature of the imagination far more effectively (literately, and imaginatively) than I should hope to do myself. "Oneiromachia" will be included in a new book of Mr. Aiken's poetry, *The Morning Song* of Lord Zero, to be published shortly by Oxford University Press.

#### Introduction to A PASSAGE FROM THE STARS by Kaatje Hurlbut from *The Saturday Evening Post*

Loosen the rainbow, Mr. Aiken says ... or splinter the light. They are the same thing seen from different sides of any prism. It is this function precisely, and uniquely, that defines the scope of what I mean by the derived initials of my title. "S-F" means all the ways of filtering feelings and ideas through imagination so as to project them in another form—no less "true," but a great deal less expected.

Kaatje Hurlbut has been writing for eighteen years, and is a fairly regular reader of science fiction, but this is her first s-f story. In telling me how it came about, she described graphically the working of this "prism effect":

"I went out before dawn one cold morning in October '57 to see the first Sputnik.... It must have uprooted me, because I began to see how beautiful the earth is in approach ...and these two things impressed me tremendously: first, how precious it is—a flourishing globe of life in the lifeless dark of space; and second, that it is ours, it is home...."

This story was published, she adds, on "the day Shepard made his space flight. I was delighted. I felt launched too." Actually, she was well launched some time before that. Since her first appearance in *Mademoiselle*, six years ago, Miss Hurlbut's stories have been published in a cross-section of leading national magazines, both slick and literary, and two before this have been reprinted in "best" anthologies: a collection from *Mademoiselle*, and *The Best American Short Stories, 1961*.

Introduction to AMONG THE DANGS by George P. Elliott from *Esquire* and *Among the Dangs* (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1961)

*But that's not science fiction...!*

Even my best friends (to invert a paraphrase) keep telling me: *That's* not science fiction!?

Sometimes they mean it couldn't be s-f, because it's good. Sometimes it couldn't be because it's not about spaceships or time machines. (Religion or politics or psychology isn't *science fiction*—is it?) Sometimes (because some of my best friends are s-f fans) they mean it's not really science fiction—just fantasy or satire or something like that.

On the whole, I think I am very patient. I generally manage to explain, again, just a *little* wearily, what the "S-F" in the title of this book means, and what science fiction is, and why the one contains the other, without being constrained by it. But it does strain my patience when the exclamation is compounded to mean: "Surely you don't mean to use that in 'S-F'? *That's* not science fiction!"—about a first-rate piece of the honest thing.

For some reason, this comes most often from other editors—and most irritatingly from the editor who first bought and published the story in question, and does not want to think that he printed *that* kind of story. But the ultimate in frustration is to hear the same thing from the editor who is publishing me. . . .

"Among the Dangs" first appeared in *Esquire* in 1958; in 1959 it was reprinted in *Fantasy and Science Fiction*, and in the *O. Henry Awards*. And in both years, my editors said with dismay (you guessed it!)—"That's not science fiction!"

Last year, it became eligible for inclusion in this volume once more by appearing as the title story in a collection of Mr. Elliott's short stories. It is a multiple pleasure to be able to reprint it at last—partly because I too am a real-science-fiction fan and, in a year when there was precious little of the pure product published anywhere, "Among the Dangs" remains a first-rate sample of what science fiction really is.

Introduction to IMMEDIATELY YOURS by Robert Beverly Hale from *Mademoiselle*

*Now* this one is *not* science fiction. It is, very much, "S-F." Mr. Hale was not concerned with how or why his strange events occurred, or with the logic of the situation—and neither am I.

Rationale here is not just unnecessary; it could have been ruinous. What Mr. Hale has done is to paint an alien viewpoint in an unknown perspective, and do it so graphically that (to return to the earlier metaphor), the resultant rainbow seems the *natural way* for light to be.

Of course, he has some special advantages. Possibly, this story could only have been written by an author who is both architect (by training) and anatomist (lecturer on, at the Art Students' League) as well as a painter and poet of some years' standing, and an editor, writer, and teacher of art. (Among other things, Curator of American Painting and Sculpture at New York's Metropolitan Museum.)

Introduction to PARKY by David Rome from *Science Fantasy*

David Rome is another new writer, whose work has appeared only in the past year in the two British magazines, *New Worlds* and *Science Fantasy*. This is his first American publication.

Introduction to THE FASTEST GUN DEAD by Julian F. Grow from *IF*

*For every change in outlook, there is an equal (and opposite?) shift in insight.*

This dictum, known (up till now, to an exceedingly small group) as Merrill's First Law of S-F Psychodynamics, is admirably demonstrated by the two preceding stories and the one that follows. The basic ingredients of all three are startlingly similar: an Alien with Powers; a central character who is awkward, unconventional, and a Natural Victim; a Shrewd Operator standing by to take advantage ... maybe. Even the widely varied backgrounds have this similarity: that an art colony, a carnival, and the Old West (coming up) are all basically tourist attractions to most of us: real settings that seem more like fable than fact.

A still further coincidence is that this is Mr. Grow's first story too—although he has been a professional journalist for some time, and is currently a News Bureau Chief for a leading New England newspaper.

But this time, the invader from outer space is neither studying sex nor seeking to save civilization....

Introduction to ALL THE TEA IN CHINA by R. Bretnor from *Fantasy and Science Fiction*

I was suitably startled to learn last year that a recent conference of the Modern Language Association had included a seminar on science fiction—but my sense of shock was in no way due to the realization that s-f has exerted its influence on our language, as it has on our literature. What surprised me was that official cognizance of this self-evident phenomenon should have been taken, so readily, by a learned body of academicians.

Actually, publishers of science fantasy have known for some time that the colleges and universities provide some of their best markets: but s-f reading was something almost everybody did, and practically nobody talked about. I wonder how much of this emergence of science fiction from the academic kitchen to its parlor is due to the change in media (so much easier to discuss a story from *Atlantic* or even the *Post*, than one from *Thrilling Wonder*), and how much to the persistent subversive efforts of a few literary guerrillas who have been sniping steadily from positions of irreproachable intellectual eminence at the guardians of literary snobbery. The more celebrated of these have included Anthony Boucher, Clifton Fadiman, and the late Fletcher Pratt; but none have been more staunchly effective than Reg Bretnor.

Linguist, Orientalist, lecturer, critic, and author, Bretnor's last two books have been a translation of Moncrief's *Les Chats* (Golden Cockerel Press; 400 copies; morocco, \$40, cloth, \$20); and a paperback collection of vignette-length extended s-f puns. In the past he has served as adviser on Asian affairs to the U.S. Government; taught writing at San Quentin; edited one of the earliest and best volumes of s-f criticism (*Modern Science Fiction*, Coward-McCann, 1953). His short stories appear, ordinarily, either in literary quarterlies or in s-f magazines.

Introduction to THE PORTOBELLO ROAD by Muriel Spark from *The Go-Away Bird* (Lippincott, 1958), and *Cosmopolitan*

"The incredible we believe immediately. The impossible takes a bit longer."

We live in an age of what we casually—without embarrassment—call "scientific miracles." And if the innate paradox no longer grates on the literate ear, I suppose it is because the contradiction in terms is no longer a contradiction in attitude. The quickening pace of scientific progress has so far outrun the capacity of most of us to comprehend, that we are now in the absurd position of accepting science on faith: prepared to believe almost any statement from almost any source cloaked in the vestments of that same "science" which is the discipline of skepticism, the attitude that accepts nothing without evidence, and credits no effect without a cause.

This very scientific spirit has destroyed, for most of us, the capacity to believe in the witches, elves, demons, fairies, and angels that frightened and delighted our forerunners. *Now*, more and more of our new scientific knowledge rests on proofs as abstruse and mysterious as the motives of godlets and demons once were.

In any case, the modern mind can achieve the "willing suspension of disbelief" much more readily for

a spaceship than a flying carpet, for an equation than an incantation. Concomitantly, the field of "pure fantasy" is out of favor, and its practitioners are few.

Among these, two of the most competent are Mr. Bretnor and Miss Spark. Perhaps there is some significance in the fact that the one was raised in the Orient and has lived since in the pragmatic United States; and that the other was born and raised in commonsense Edinburgh, and then went to live in Africa?

Introduction to OTTMAR BALLEAU X 2 by George Bomber from *Rogue*

Sometimes the labels are meaningful. But sometimes—

This story is a careful, indeed painstaking, imaginative extrapolation from the best available data on a major frontier of scientific endeavor; yet it is not science fiction.

Fantasy—subjective fantasy—is its subject matter; but it is not a fantasy.

Once, it might have been a story of daemonic possession; today, it is not. It mocks certain of our most cherished institutions, with barb-edged humor; but it is hardly true satire.

It utilizes a distinctly alien viewpoint to accomplish an effect of horror; yet it is not really a horror story.

It is "S-F": first-rate imaginative, speculative fiction. It is also, by the way, another FPS (First Published Story, for future referenced—and again, by an already established writer—this time of radio drama, most notably for the CBS Radio "Suspense" show.

Introduction to THE DANDELION GIRL by Robert F. Young from *The Saturday Evening Post*

Devil and ghost, witchdoctor and madman, seer and space-mate: but one kind of *otherness* has not yet appeared.

Space travel and shape-changing, telepathy and levitation, astronomy, anthropology, marvelous inventions and mental marvels: there is still one of science fiction's favorite themes that has not been used.

Sex and psychosis, murder and avarice, friendship, revenge, reform, conquest, hospitality: one major emotion has not been touched.

This is a love story, about time travel.

Introduction to NIGHTMARE IN TIME by Fredric Brown from *The Dude*

Chances are that no one could have composed this short, short-short horror story except a man who worked as a proofreader for some twenty years, before turning in desperation to writing.

Introduction to THREE PROLOGUES AND AN EPILOGUE by John Dos Passos from *Midcentury* (Houghton Mifflin, 1961)

A shift in viewpoint, lighting, or perspective may serve to study the background as well as the figure. Most of the selections so far have been concerned with individual insights; in the group that follows the focus shifts to the outlook for society.

Jules Feiffer's cartoon made graphic use of a device for this purpose that was also effectively employed, recently, in Gore Vidal's *Visit to a Small Planet*: the detached observer's viewpoint (from space *or* time). George Elliott used, instead, the reflection of a single individual in the mirrors of two cultures, to shed light on both. Ward Moore (who follows this selection) makes use of retroflection—a sort of hindsight-in-advance gained by viewing through sympathetic and familiar eyes a society that could result from ours.

John Dos Passos is probably the outstanding contemporary practitioner of a less common and non-science-fiction technique for the same purpose. In his "mural novels," he interweaves and counterposes strands of fact and story lines in such a way as to compel the mental eye to follow a pattern



which composes a sort of aerial view of society. This can, sometimes, constitute Einstein's famous "pause to wonder" in its most immediate form—as in these excerpts from *Midcentury*.

I should like to express my gratitude to the editors of *Audit* (published at the University of Buffalo), where I first saw this printed as a unified whole.

Introduction to IT BECOMES NECESSARY by Ward Moore from *Gent*

It was just about twenty-five years ago, as a high school student, during the period of hope between the Great Depression and the pre-war "recession," that I first read Dos Passos' U.S.A.

That was the day of the WPA, PWA, CCC, and WA. In my school in the Bronx, a dollar was enough for an evening's date; none of my friends owned a car; the burning question among Young Intellectuals was whether to take the Ludlow Oath (never to fight in a war) or to support Collective Security (economic sanctions against fascist and militarist nations). Compulsory military service in peacetime was a practice of undemocratic foreign governments. We worried about civil rights; we were proud that this country held no political prisoners.

The prevailing intellectual tone was agnostic: religious instruction in the public schools was as unthinkable as sex education was unobtainable. The only really strong opposition to Communism here was from the extreme right wing—and the Trotskyites. The failure of the League of Nations had undermined any hope for world government.

In the quarter century since then, we have been acutely conscious of the changes in our physical existence. Synthetic fabrics, antibiotics, the home freezer, television, transistors, fm radio, cloud seeding, DDT, jet planes, radar, atomic reactors—all these were unknown, and almost undreamed, twenty-five years ago.

But the social and political changes—good and bad both—and both greater than all the changes in the first hundred and fifty years of American history—have crept in on us, almost unawares.

Introduction to MY TRIAL AS A WAR CRIMINAL by Leo Szilard from *The Voice of the Dolphins* (Simon & Schuster, 1961)

Another FPS—First Published Story—although first published some time back (1949, in *The University of Chicago Law Review*!—and once again, by a writer already more than well established in other fields (although very little of his work had been published outside Top Classified circles for some years).

Dr. Szilard was born in Budapest in 1898. After teaching in England for several years, he came here, to Columbia University, in 1939. Three years later, he went out to the University of Chicago, where, with Dr. Fermi, he developed the first uranium-graphite reactor.

Introduction to A PRIZE FOR EDIE by J. F. Bone from *Analog Science Fact & Fiction*

It is one of the odder paradoxes of our modern world that the only really functioning internationalists are those same scientists who are regarded by their several national governments as top priority defense materiel.

Of course this paradox has minimized global exchange and communication among scientists, so that the personal acquaintances which were once so common are now less likely to develop....

Introduction to FREEDOM by Mack Reynolds from *Analog Science Fact & Fiction*

Last year, I got a pin-up postcard from Mack Reynolds, who has been touring Europe as Travel Editor for *Rogue* magazine. The handsome astronaut on the back of the card was, said Reynolds, a national hero; his picture hung in every bar and waiting room. Some months later, John Glenn had his historic ticker tape parade, achieving the same status in this country. The man on my card was named

Titov; the card was mailed from a small Eastern European country.

Introduction to HIGH BARBARY by Lawrence Durrell from *Mademoiselle*

*But that's not science fiction?*

I have already elaborated on the several ways in which this question can irritate or annoy. Perversely, it was saddening that no one asked it of me about Mr. Reynolds' story. It would seem we are so thoroughly alienated from the Russians that a simple political yarn, involving no space travel, wonderful invention, time machine, *psi* power, or even far-future speculation, but just the simplest extrapolation from the present situation, should seem as imaginatively remote as an analogy set on Mars. (Which raises the question: Is it science fiction if the author has *been* to Mars? Whether the reader has or not?) This next selection, in any case, is certainly not science fiction—perhaps not even fiction. (Mademoiselle called it a short story; I should incline more to "satirical essay.")

Mr. Durrell is probably the leading exponent of the shifting viewpoint among contemporary mainstream writers. His famous *Alexandria Quartet* is essentially a view of love through four different persons' eyes. But before he turned to his examination of love, the author had an unusual opportunity to study some of the less congenial emotions. Like Mr. Reynolds, he was a "traveling man," but under rather different auspices: Press Officer for the British Foreign Service, and lecturer for the British Council, in Athens, Cairo, Rhodes, Belgrade, among other places.

Introduction to THE QUAKER CANNON by Frederik Pohl and C. M. Kornbluth from *Analog Science Fact & Fiction*

"Social science fiction" is too often thought of as limited either to angry satire or to ponderous utopian novels. Certainly the Pohl-Kornbluth combination has been noted primarily for a highly specialized kind of satirical novel set in a stifflingly overpopulated, advertising-drenched, cold-warlike future.

This kind of novel, whose objective is to pinpoint some of the more flagrant of our cultural absurdities, must of necessity assume the continuation of some sort of peace on Earth, however uneasy or precarious (just as the last group of stories here have done). The novelette that follows is unusual in several respects:

First, it is an atom-war story which is neither about the onset of the war nor its aftermath, but the war itself.

Second, it is a straightforward, serious, subjectively sympathetic Pohl-Kornbluth collaboration (completed by Mr. Pohl after Mr. Kornbluth's sudden death).

Third, it is concerned less with the effects on our society of another war, than with those of our culture on such a war.

Introduction to QUAKE, QUAKE, QUAKE by Paul Dehn and Edward Gorey from *Quake, Quake, Quake* (Simon and Schuster, New York, and Hamilton Hamish, London, 1961)

It is a traditionally slim volume of illustrated verses. The drawings are quaintly Victorian in atmosphere; the verse is conventional in rhyme and meter. And the book as a whole is just about as comfortingly familiar as the latest word (if one could hear it) from a bacteriological warfare laboratory.

Paul Dehn, who wrote the verses, is an established British poet, a movie critic for the *London Daily Herald*, and the co-author of *Seven Days to Noon*. Edward Gorey, the illustrator, has published several pictorial books, the best known here being *The Hapless Child*.

*Quake, Quake, Quake* is divided into several sections: "A Leaden Treasury of English Verse"; "Rhymes for a Modern Nursery"; "Weather Forecast"; "From a Soviet Child's Garden of Verses"; "From a Modern Student's Song Book"; and "From a Modern Hymnal."

Introduction to JUDAS BOMB by Kit Reed from *Fantasy and Science Fiction*

And then, of course, there is still the possibility of peace—if you find the prospect peaceful.

Mrs. Reed here suggests some prospects derived from the present trends in urban teenage gang behavior. (The trouble with these *reductii ad absurdum* is they don't always seem so absurd—ten years later. We can only hope.)

If anyone can cope with the peaceless peace, by the way, I am convinced it will be the Connecticut housewives. There was Mrs. Schoolfield (Kaatje Hurlbut), wife of a New York newspaperman, raising three children exurbanly, writing four hours a day, six days a week for eighteen years (the first twelve without selling a word of it)—and still able to get up and out for a pre-dawn stroll to watch the sky.

And now a "faculty wife," married to an English Professor at Wesleyan University. In the eight years since she finished college, Mrs. Reed has been twice named New England Newspaperwoman of the year; published two novels (most recently, *Mother Isn't Dead, She's Only Sleeping*, Houghton Mifflin, 1961); acquired two children; and published short stories in such diversified media as *F&SF*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Seventeen*, and the Yale *Literary Magazine*. With a two-year-old and an infant son at home, she says she can now manage "only one" freelance newspaper job—besides her fiction, that is.

Introduction to A SMALL MIRACLE OF FISHHOOKS AND STRAIGHT PINS by David R. Bunch from *Fantastic*

Some further thoughts on child care—this time from a mid-western bachelor. Mr. Bunch is another of the growing number of young writers who seem to divide their efforts between the literary and s-f publications. Both of the fields being notoriously underpaid, he earns his living as a professional cartographer for the Air Force.

Introduction to THE TUNNEL AHEAD by Alice Glaser from *Fantasy and Science Fiction*

...And yet another FPS—unless you are the cynical sort who would insist that an article on soldiering experiences in Laos, written by a lady editor who has never been east of Paris, France, is not truly non-fiction. (The men's adventure magazine that published it said it was true.) Miss Glaser, Long Island born and bred, is an ex-expatriate now working as an editorial associate at *Esquire* magazine.

Introduction to EXTRATERRESTRIAL TRILOGUE ON TERRAN SELF-DESTRUCTION by Sheri S. Eberhart from *Galaxy*

The ever-more-pressing probability of planetwide overpopulation is both more real and less remote than it may appear. Certainly, for the smog-breathers of the great centers of modern civilization, as for the emergent peoples of the world's "underdeveloped" areas, the pressures of the new population explosion are daily more evident. And as the cities grow out, and the primitives grow up, the room in the middle grows steadily less. Each new medical discovery, every agricultural advance, every increment in social security, every headhunter converted to some gentler philosophy, each "international incident" settled however precariously without resort to all-out war—each one of these and a score of other proofs of our progress, adds measurably, if minutely, to the factor by which our fruitfulness constantly multiplies.

The problem, of course, is new only in scope, and (through Malthus back to Moses, and no doubt before) in the more limited test cases, it has proved, drastically, self-regulating. Unless new land was found for the overflow, war, famine, and pestilence have always cut problem and population both down to size.

The recent historical alternatives are especially familiar to Denver's Regional CARE Director, Sheri Eberhart. An ex-saleswoman, -secretary, -draftswoman, and -pottery-painter, she also became an ex-short-story-writer when after two sales, and "enough rejections to paper a wall" her daughter advised her to quit because, "You don't *think* like a grown-up." Mrs. Eberhart promptly turned to children's plays—including a handclapping version of the Pentateuch (*The Beat Bible*), which has made her the

swing-ingest Sunday School teacher in town.

Introduction to THE COUNTDOWN by John Haase from *The New Yorker*

In the catalogue of natural wonders, along with such unlikely miracles as the existence of self-conscious intelligence, the fecundity of humanity, and the evolution of communication, we may now add this marvel: that, after two decades of possession of a means of destruction volatile enough to match our mob furies, we (the people, of the third planet) are still very much alive.

The almost incredible indication is that we are—slowly, with utmost caution—approaching a real awareness of the irrevocability of the global interdependence our technology has created. Not only is it increasingly obvious that the worst *they* can do to *us* (from either viewpoint) is less terrible than what *we-and-they* can do to all-of-us; it is also becoming clear how much we-and-they might do, if we chose, for all of us; and further clear that the most we can do will be none too much, for if we avoid self-devastation, we may well be faced with self-suffocation.

Mankind, united, will undoubtedly level mountains and plumb the ocean depths; but with the same strength, we can more readily perhaps find our new space out *in* space. The stories that follow this one are all based on the assumption that man can and will go out to other worlds. This one is still set on a near-future Earth, but it concerns a pioneer of the still-uncertain emigration. It is the first science fiction (to my knowledge) by an author best known for his novel, *The Fun Couple* (Simon & Schuster, 1961), from which the hit Broadway play was adapted.

Introduction to THE BEAT CLUSTER by Fritz Leiber from *Galaxy*

The latest thing in subnuclear theory (I learned from an article in *The Saturday Evening Post*) is that the sub-particles have subparticles—and those subparticles have ad *infinitum*. That is, it may be impossible to reach the ultimate submicroscopic unit of the atom.

A similar likelihood has been evident for some time in the case of scholarly-literary distinctions. For instance: science fiction is a subform of science fantasy, which is a subform of fantasy, which is a subform of fiction—and still, within s-f, the aficionado subdivides repeatedly.

The subspecies most widely identified with the field as a whole is, of course, the space story: this is what is commonly considered the "science fiction" that "science has caught up with." Science fiction (meaning: the space story) is dead—they say—because it has become true-adventure; and they would be right, if science fiction (or even the space story) were limited to speculation about rockets and orbits. But when we consider the people in those now so-nearly-true adventure orbits ...

Introduction to IN TOMORROW'S LITTLE BLACK BAG by James Blish

An observer of the s-f scene once commented that science fiction-writing was less a means of livelihood than a way of life. It could as easily be said that s-f is not so much a kind of reading as a way of thinking.

Reginald Bretnor and Robert Heinlein (notably, in *The Science Fiction Novel*) have advanced the proposition that the identifying fundamental of science fiction is not the specific science content, but the writer's awareness of science, and in particular of the scientific method.

To utilize this discipline—(observation, hypothesis, experimentation)—in fiction it is necessary, first, to get the best reliable information whether on weather, whales, witches, or whatever; then, to relate data and drama in such a way as to obtain a story line; finally, to devise the most useful environmental situation against which to play out the drama.

One might approach the same area of definition from another viewpoint, and say that the identifying factor in s-f is the interaction between man and his environment. "Mainstream" writing ordinarily confines itself to situations resulting from man's reaction to only one phase of environment: his fellow-men. "Straight fantasy," by definition, deals with unreal—fantastic—environmental factors. S-f, specifically,

considers the effect on/of a human being of/on a realistically modern or logically predictable future environment (physical, technical, natural, or manmade).

Part of that physical environment for each man is the body his subjective self inhabits. Mr. Blish, who writes science fiction by night (as a way of life), is by day (for a livelihood) a public relations man specializing in the highly esoteric field of institutional drug promotion. Out of this combined background, he considers some of the possibilities inherent in our persistent efforts to modify, amend, and improve our own fleshly surroundings.

#### Introduction to THE SHIP WHO SANG by Anne McCaffrey from *Fantasy and Science Fiction*

The idea of a human brain connected to a mechanical "body" is at least as old as Frankenstein, and as new as the latest advance in prosthetics. The first story I recall which specifically considered the hooking up of a living brain to a spaceship was, coincidentally, James Blishes "Solar Plexus," almost twenty years ago. The difference in focus and treatment between that story and the one that follows are almost a two-step lesson in the Developmental Trends of Modern Science Fiction.

Anne McCaffrey describes herself as "the perfectly normal, well-adjusted wife of a public relations Dupontier," in support of which she points to a Wilmington home, three young children, and an ambitious canning, sewing, and den-mothering program. All nice-normal enough, till you add: she raises German Shepherds; sings in the Wilmington Opera Society and her church choir; translates opera. A trained linguist specializing in the Slavonic languages, she is also an ex-advertising copywriter.

#### Introduction to A PLANET NAMED SHAYOL by Cordwainer Smith from *Galaxy*

A little more than ten years ago, a story by a completely unknown writer, published in an otherwise unremarkable semi-amateur magazine, provoked a storm of interest and inquiry among other writers and editors. "Cordwainer Smith" had all the true ring of the pseudonym, and the quality of the story was professional; but its content and style were so fresh that the pen-name could not be attached to any established writer in the field.

Mr. "Smith," as it turns out, is a VIP (for Professor) of Sociology at a school near enough to Washington to make things convenient when the State Department calls. (He is surely the only ambassador—small "a," generic, not diplomatic—of the U.S. who has ever established friendly relations with an asiatic governmental official by asking science fiction all night.) Outside s-f, his writing is almost all in his main field of specialty; inside the field, a large part has been devoted to speculation about the possible physiological evolution (externally caused or self-effected) of mankind.

#### Introduction to THE ASTEROIDS, 2194 by John Wyndham from *Amazing Stories*

The "space story" (the one science caught up with) was originally concerned with the techniques of space travel—with our ability to manufacture and control what we now call "the hardware" of space flight. The "planet story" has traditionally been rollicking-romance-adventure (prototypically, Burroughs' "Princess of Mars.") Both of these varieties dealt primarily with man's effect on the environments of space. A third type, and indeed the earliest one, has been the philosophic novel, in which the space (or, most usually, Moon, setting) was essentially a stage for a passion play; in these there was no real interaction; the voyageur was primarily an observer.

Now, more and more, writers confronted by the imminence of space travel, are considering the effects of the trip into the unknown on mankind. One hears the old phrase, the "conquest of space," less frequently now. That there will be immediate and perhaps profound effects on us, physiologically and culturally, is clear; equally obvious, but much less clearcut, are the potential effects on our psychology, philosophy, religion, and mystique.

#### Introduction to THE LONG NIGHT by Ray Russell from *Rogue*

This short sad story of the last days of Argo III—as lost a soul as ever lifted jets—is included (along with some happier interludes in the Emperor's early life) in Mr. Russell's collection, *Sardonicus and Other Stories* (Ballantine, 1964). The author, who was executive editor of *Playboy* for most of its first seven years, has now turned full-time writer. Besides the short-story collection, and the movie of the same name, he has recently published a novel, *The Case Against Satan* (Obolensky, 1962).

Introduction to TO AN ASTRONAUT DYING YOUNG by Maxine W. Kumin from *Atlantic Monthly*

Mrs. Kumin has published one book of poetry (*Halfway*, Holt, 1961), and several children's books. She is an instructor in English at Tufts University, currently on leave to study on a Radcliffe grant.

(Scanner's note: Since many of the editorial comments in this anthology apply to both the story preceeding and the story following the comment, they are presented here as published. Where you see **Story: Author Source** would be where the story was placed in the anthology.)

1963 was the year of the first rocket probe to Venus and the year in which Medgar Evers and John F. Kennedy were shot to death in the streets of American cities. A complex new electronic brain began translating Chinese, and the proud new atomic submarine, *Thresher*, sank with more than two hundred men on board.

By the time you read this, the record on 1964 will be almost or altogether complete—and we may confidently expect even more contradictions and internal frictions: not in any one country, or in any one field of endeavor, or on any particular economic or social level, religious or political grouping, but within almost all such groups, and between many of them.

There has probably never been so much disagreement among respectable people about morals; among educators about schooling and parents about child rearing; among scientists about basic theories or engineers about specific applications, or doctors about the causes, treatment, or diagnosis of anything from the common cold to terminal cancer.

And it will not get more settled before it is more upset.

Imaginative literature today is preoccupied—necessarily—with the same stirrings, the same conflicts, visions of greatness and of doom that are acting on the imaginations of philosophers, scientists, teachers, industrial and political leaders, throughout the world.

On the brink of more dramatic physical explorations and discoveries than ever before, we find ourselves facing, first and most urgently, a different kind of great unknown: the nature of cultural man; the odds (no less than life and death) on his ability to coexist with cultures other than his own; or the likelihood that natural man can or will learn to adapt to his own technological culture.

In a forum published last year in *Playboy*, "1984 and Beyond," dozen top writers of science fantasy argued the probable future of man. William Tenn concluded a discussion on future social trends by saying:

"Thoreau wrote over a hundred years ago that 'the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation.' Well, the world has changed fantastically since then, but the mass of men still do. History always repeats itself, but on another step of the spiral. We are a wildly imaginative, inordinately idealistic, incredibly persistent, hopelessly naive, incurably corrupt species, and no matter what we do we always seem to wind up somehow or other in the same position on the tree, except that occasionally it's a different tree. Tomorrow we'll be looking for the mechanical bananas in a nickel-plated jungle."

**Story: BERNIE THE FAUST by William Tenn from Playboy**

**Story: FORTRESS SHIP by Fred Saberhagen from If**

"What do you consider the *raison d'être*, the chief value, of science fiction?" The question was asked in a survey of s-f writers and editors in the fan magazine *Double Bill* last year.

Fred Saberhagen's reply: "Ideally, science fiction gives a chance to impose different coordinate systems upon the human condition, and to try to see what will change and what will remain the same."

"Coordinate system" is engineerese for "background" or "measurement" or occasionally "viewpoint." The different coordinate system, i.e., a science-fiction story, may be an alien planet, an alien body, an alien culture (past, future, or sideways-in-time).

In this case, the set of coordinate systems is a set of coordinate systems—which is neither a Steinism, nor a typographical error, but a description of a checker game.

### **Story: MR. WATERMAN by Peter Redgrove from *The Paris Review*, No 29**

Alien ...

What does alien mean to you? Alien corn ... alien concept ... alien national ... alien life form?

Bug eyed monsters, giant squid, robots, supermen, fallout mutations? Snakes, cannibals, Communists, sexual deviants? What shape or posture triggers your recoil from stranger-danger?

Alien: alien . . . adj. 1) Belonging or pertaining to another; strange; foreign; esp. not belonging or owing allegiance to the same country; belonging to the citizens of a foreign state. 2) Wholly different in nature; incongruous; ... n. 1) A person of another family, race or nation. 2) A foreign-born resident of a country in which he does not possess the privileges of a citizen. 3) One excluded from certain privileges; one estranged, as from royal favor. . . .

(Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary)

There were three kinds of aliens in "Fortress Ship": the Berserker, the offstage extraterrestrials, and the dog-ape Newton. The next selection contains still another kind of alienism—and an alienist.

Part of an editor's job, ordinarily, is to find things that go together.

But it is unusual to find two stories (especially from such widely separate sources) that "go together" (in several senses) quite the way "Mr. Waterman" and "Mrs. Pigafetta" do.

"Mr. Waterman" was called to my attention by Carol Emshwiller (whose work has appeared in earlier annuals); otherwise I should hardly have thought to look for material in the *Paris Review*. "Mrs. Pigafetta" appeared in *Fantasy and Science Fiction*—my most frequent source for many volumes.

Peter Redgrove is a British scientist and poet, living in Leeds; Mr. Bretnor is a California litterateur (critic, essayist, fictionist, translator, humorist) and Orientalist (consultant on occasion to the U. S. Government). They have this much in common: both writers' literary interests are divided primarily between the "quality" publications and s-f. In Mr. Redgrove's words: "Science fiction is one of the modes of poetry in our age, and vice versa too, if either has any guts."

### **Story: MRS. PIGAFETTA SWIMS WELL by R. Bretnor from *Fantasy and Science Fiction***

Alien: Adj. extraneous, strange, foreign, outlandish, exotic, excluded. Alienated: disaffected, irreconcilable. Alienable: negotiable, transferable, reversional. N. heathen, gentile, Nazarene; unbeliever, infidel. Alienism: extraneousness, exteriority; mania, paranoia, aberration. V. alienate: transfer, convey.

(Roget's Thesaurus)

In science fiction, the word has come to be almost synonymous with extraterrestrial. In fantasy, most alien beings are terrestrial in origin—very much so. (Demons and leprechauns, trolls, gnomes, and fairies, naiads and dryads: the whole hierarchy of magical descent. The animate plant-being; the possessed animal; the halfway life—were-things, vampires, zombies, et al.) Almost the only non-earthly parts in the

supernatural or gothic casts are angels—who, after all, still belong to the cosmology that centers around Earth.

Yet the science-fictional alien is rarely as fearsome, and more often "human" in nature than the fantastic one. The difference, I suspect, is that the e-t alien is ordinarily a symbol of the real stranger, the geographical or cultural outsider; while the archetypes of fantasy are, rather, externalized symbols of the dark shapes of the subconscious mind.

The "survivor story" which has an honored history in science fiction (Wells, Benêt, Stewart, Wylie, and Golding, among others), seldom contains either one of these alien types. It deals instead with the alienated: with "normal" people in a world suddenly turned alien.

**Story: THEY DON'T MAKE LIFE LIKE THEY USED TO by Alfred Bester from Fantasy and Science Fiction**

It is not only the creatures of the Earth that can turn suddenly from what is known and natural to what is fearful and alien. In some ways, we know less about the ball of rock beneath our feet than about space itself; certainly far less than we should consider safe or reasonable for a house, a car, or spaceship. And for all our terrible armament, for all our incipient Doomsdays, we have not yet created any weapon as potentially destructive as Earth itself.

Gravity alone is the greatest killer we know. Usually, it works its damage slowly and all but unnoticed. But from time to time—just as the unremitting stress eventually fells the man, brings him to Earth—the slow accumulation of its internal stresses causes the surface of Earth itself to buckle and break.

Mr. Danzig's detailed "future history" of an Earth spasm is his first published story. The author is an English teacher at City College in New York City.

**Story: THE GREAT NEBRASKA SEA by Allan Danzig from Galaxy**

The Great Disaster may be natural or man-made; the new environment to which men must adjust may be created by the still untamed forces of gravity, of flood, fire, ice age, sunspots, or meteorites. It may be the by-product of thoughtless technology, or it may be a planned holocaust, the ultimate atomic war, bringing with it such chemical changes in atmosphere, soil, or genes as will change the face (and bowels) of the Earth itself.

But there might also be a new kind of disaster, a trouble truly alien in origin. . . .

**Story: THE FACES OUTSIDE by Bruce McAllister from If**

Ten years or more ago, John W. Campbell opened an editorial in (what was then) Astounding Science Fiction by stating that the first immortal man had probably already been born. His thesis was that medical science and biochemical research were advancing at a sufficient rate of acceleration so that death, at least by decay or disease, might be averted indefinitely.

Last year, in *Worlds of Tomorrow*, Frederik Pohl published an article by R. C. W. Ettinger, which began flatly: "Most of us now living have a chance for personal physical immortality," and went on to argue the immediate feasibility of deep-freezing, at the instant of death, for revivification and treatment as soon as medical arts make it possible. To me, the idea is no less staggering than, and in its way not too different from, the complete-opposite concept of Domsday destruction. Everything in our psychology stems, I am convinced, from the essential drive of mortal man to survive the disintegration of his body: in the spirit (religion); in name (fame and power); in artifacts and products (art, science, the bulk of "civilization"); in a continuation of the flesh (children, family, clan, nation).

I was impressed by the exposition of this philosophy in "The Faces Outside." I was more impressed when I found out it was the author's first published story; and more again when he wrote me about himself.



The first part is a deceptively typical writer's history: Has lived in Florida, Virginia, Italy. Now in California. Interested in "international relations, languages, all sciences, art, and writing." Participated in recent sleep-deprivation experiments. Currently doing a study of "symbolism from the writer's point of view, rather than the critic's." (Among seventy-odd authors: Aldiss, Budrys, Ellison, Golding, Heinlein, Leiber, McCarthy, Merrill, Sturgeon.) One summer in Italy spent studying art at the Belle Arti Institute in Florence. Now supports himself in part, at Claremont Men's College, by "doing 'crazy' drawings and paintings that scare enough people into buying."

It is his first year at college. He is now seventeen. (The story was written two years ago.)

I do not know whether Mr. McAllister has decided, yet, to want to live forever. But I think I do know in Dr. Biggle's case. (No. Not medicine. Musicology.)

**Story: A SLIGHT CASE OF LIMBO by Lloyd Biggle, Jr. from Analog**

**Story: 237 TALKING STATUES, ETC. by Fritz Leiber from Fantasy and Science Fiction**

Mr. Ettinger's article on immortality was completely serious opinion based on available facts; and "Limbo" was at least perfectly rational within its own premises.

The next story is totally improbable...but it deals with a kind of immortality that I understand—personally, subjectively.

Just about here, the words all start to turn inside out: this next story deals with alienation from reality—or deals with realistic alienation between son and father—or really deals out an alien—or perhaps it is just that the son really resolves things with a deal involving alienation. . . .

Some aliens are born. Some are made. Some attain alienness. Some are neither alien in form, nor place of origin, nor status of reality. They are the estranged and excluded; the exotic and unbeliever; the outcast of culture or creed or society.

**Story: THE JAZZ MACHINE by Richard Matheson from Fantasy and Science Fiction**

Fritz Leiber, Richard Matheson, and Charles Beaumont—who follows here—form a sort of magic triangle of masters of the macabre moderne. All three live, currently, in the Los Angeles area: two are movie scriptwriters, the third, the son of a well-known actor. When the classic Leiber witch novel, *Conjure Wife*, was filmed in Britain a few years ago (under the even more classic Merritt title, *Burn, Witch, Burnt*) Matheson was one of the scenarists. Beaumont and Matheson have both worked on the recent gaggle of neo-Poe movies. Leiber and Beaumont are, separately, authors of two of the finest and most fearfully "rear" fantasies of modern city life I have ever read ("*The Vanishing American*" and "*Smoke Ghost*").

Each of the three has written across the whole range of science fantasy, and well out of it; in fiction, essay, and dramatic form; from vignette to book length. (Notable novels: Matheson's *I Am Legend*; Beaumont's *The Intruder*; Leiber's *The Wanderer*.) All three were included in the first issue of *Gamma*, a new magazine of imaginative fiction, edited by William Nolan (author of "One of Those Days," in the 8th Annual).

**Story: MOURNING SONG by Charles Beaumont from Gamma**

It works both ways, of course. Even as the word "alien" evokes the start of fear, so our deepest fears and darkest torments have evolved into symbols of alienness. The symbols must keep pace with culture, it is true. For most of us, a horned-tailed-and-hoofed devil is no longer an apparition of terror; we are more likely to be struck with real fear by the familiar yellow radiation symbol, or by the image of a hairy-legged multi-magnified germ-laden fly.

But the Devil was Lord of the Flies long before the microbe hunters traded in their bells and candles for microscopes and agar cultures. Mermaids sang in wondrous strange seductive tongues hundreds of

years before zoologists began to puzzle out the language of mammalian porpoises. And the archetypal duality of love-hate, good-bad, hope-guilt, took the form (centuries before anyone coined words like "schizoid" and "alienist") of the shape-changer—the werewolf.

... and as far back as the dove meant peace, the crow and raven were croaking portents of doom ..

### **Story: THE JEW BIRD by Bernard Malamud from The Reporter**

Xenophobia: An hysterical symptom characterized by a morbid dread of strangers ... the course of these apprehensions is not in the stranger but in the xenophobic, whose defensiveness is directed actually against his own latent malevolence.... Xenophobia usually inspires elaborate and ingenious doctrine about the motivations, intentions, character and habits of strangers. (The Domesday Dictionary, by Donald M. Kaplan and Armand Schwerner, 1963)

Planaria are worms. Worm-runners are people who run worms through mazes. The Worm Runners' Digest is the journal of the Planaria Research Group of the University of Michigan's Mental Health Research Institute. Worm-runners throughout the country—amateur and professional—use the WRD as an information and idea exchange, discussing via lab reports, speech reprints, research papers, semipersonal letters, art, verse, parody, fable, and farce the latest news about worms, themselves, and the human condition, with special reference to the provocative and productive research initiated by the PRG on the biochemistry of learning and memory.

I was fascinated by WRD. And I not only learned about worms; thought had found out something about the UI Kworm too. Who would be more likely to think of worms than a veterinarian?

So I wrote to Dr. Bone. He answered, "The UI Kworm was built up from terrestrial precursors, but he was made to the requirements of the gadgetry. The gadget is real. NASA had it walking around the banks of the Potomac, shooting out sticky threads and reeling them in for several months before I got the idea for a story. I modified the gadget by making it sessile, but the rest of the machine is about the way it really is. Since NASA intends to shoot it at Mars in the not-too-distant future, I had the planet.

"So all that was left was to build a believable character that could be elemental enough to be trapped by the machine, yet advanced enough to elicit sympathy from the reader. The hunger motivation was inherent in the machine. . . .

"Physically, the UT is a composite of a snail, a starfish and an amoeba, with the protective mantle being my own creation and dictated by Mars' temperature variations. His reproductive pattern was pirated almost verbatim from the coelenterates, in this case Hydra, which reproduces sexually and asexually.

"A far worse problem was to arrange some sort of social order that would make the NASA gadget a problem. By using the hunger motivation and a scanty food supply, I hit upon the idea of territorial strips. After that the formulation of social rules was easy."

Easy, that is, for a man whose profession has accustomed him to thinking and feeling nonhuman thoughts and emotions. We do not all possess this faculty in the same degree; too many of us are completely untrained in its use—or more accurately, perhaps, have had it trained out of us. Call it imagination, intuition, empathy: it is something other than logic; something more than the simple sum of observations and deductions. Children have it, far more than adults—as they have other capacities for learning that most of us can hardly perceive.

### **Story: POPPA NEEDS SHORTS by Walt and Leigh Richmond from Analog**

The distinctions of chemistry, gravity, atmosphere, temperature, nourishment, technology, and overall biological organization between the UI Kworm, for example, and an Earth man are obvious; either one would find it nearly impossible to visualize the other's existence as anything other than a fantasy.

The difficulty of seeing through the eyes of childhood, for adults, is slightly less than the problem a

child must have trying to see a world he has never known (a world of much smaller dimensions, less sharp smells, duller colors, less sunshine and more artificial light, different food and clothes and technology) as adults might see it.

Now here is one more alien's-eye view, from the core of the culture-image itself.

**Story: DOUBLE STANDARD by Fredric Brown from Playboy**

You could call it "canned soul." Or maybe "electropsyche"? Sheerest fantasy when it assumes cognition (ego? sentience? essence?) springing full-blown from the picture tube—but very solid probability when you reverse the sequence, and feed the emotions into the box.

**Story: INTERVIEW by Frank A. Javor from Analog**

Meanwhile, back in the living room ...

**Story: EIGHT O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING by Ray Nelson from Fantasy and Science Fiction**

Three years ago, the sixth annual SF reprinted Ray Bradbury's Life article, "A Serious Search for Weird Worlds," about the origins and objectives of the felicitously named Project Ozma.

Mr. Bradbury pointed out with detailed care that this sort of undertaking would have to be measured in generations rather than years: that it would take twenty-two years, for instance, simply to exchange. Hello's with the nearest possible neighbors.

By this time, we are all well accustomed to the concept of the limiting speed of light: astronomical information cannot travel faster than 186,000 miles per second. But we have also become accustomed to faulty space-breaking timetables. Everything always happens sooner than they said it would.

And here it is four years since Ozma started. So...

**Story: WHERE IS EVERYBODY? By Ben Bova from Amazing**

... or they may not even watch. Could be, the star charts show Sol III as "unmapped; uninhabited; nonarable; overrun with poison ego, infectious entropy-accelerator."

Or we might be succulent pickings for any number of star-market buyers. Does the peach tree know about canning and slicing? Do you have yourself announced by an aphid butler if you spend an hour watching an anthill?

On the other hand, will you really worry about whether the ants know that you are watching? Or what interpretation they may put on it, if they do?

In what he himself calls "a satire of hasty conclusions," Andre Maurois here sets forth a first lesson in alien-watching. If there is some small confusion in identifying the true alien, bear in mind that it is a parable, not a primer. As for who watches the watchers—it is an old question, and adds a certain spice to the game.

**Story: THE EARTH DWELLERS by Andre Maurois from The Weigher of Souls & The Earth Dwellers (Macmillan, 1963)**

**Story: THE NOBEL PRIZE WINNERS by W. J. J. Gordon from The Atlantic Monthly**

In his introduction to The Earth Dwellers, M. Maurois mentions a book which delighted and exasperated me when I read it: Jean Henri Fabre's essays on the "social insects."

"He described some extraordinary feats performed by insects, and kept on warning the reader: 'Do not believe there is any intelligence in all that. It's just instinct. Bees have no patriotism with regard to the

beehive nor ants toward the anthill.' " And in an epilogue, Jacques Choron adds a quotation from Bertrand Russell: "...animals behave in a manner showing the rightness of the views of the man who observes them."

Which brings us back to the more advanced sport of watcher-watching. "The Nobel Prize Winners" is a long hard look at some engineers and scientists, by a scientist and engineer. W. J. J. Gordon, besides being the author of occasional brilliant farcical fiction in the Atlantic, is a lecturer in the Engineering Department of Applied Physics at Harvard, and also President of Synedics, Inc., a "consulting firm concerned with augmenting the creative output of industrial research organizations."

In 1954, the late honored Albert Einstein astonished more laymen than fellow-scientists when he said that if he were about to choose a career, "I would not try to become a scientist or scholar or teacher. I would rather choose to be a plumber or peddler...."

Norbert Wiener had written, earlier: "The degradation of the position of the scientist as an independent worker and thinker to that of a morally irresponsible stooge in a science-factory has proceeded even more rapidly and devastatingly than I had expected...."

And earlier still, J. Robert Oppenheimer watched the explosion of the first atom bomb at Alamogordo, and could think of nothing but the line from the Bhagavad-Gita: "I am become death—the shatterer of worlds."

The quotations are all from Lewis S. Feuer's *The Scientific Intellectual* (Basic Books, 1963), and his conclusions seem inescapable. The Laugh-O-Rama of Big Business Research is no happenstance; the decline of creative scientific thought is a natural consequence of the compromise—and compromising—of scientists.

Science: A broad inquiry, by means of numerous subsidiary disciplines, into the true nature of the universe. Its chief exponents liken it to humanity in general, whose perpetuation requires the intermittent observation of its own errors.

Scientism: The promotion of goods, services, values or decisions in the name of scientific method. Hence science as practiced. One who practices science is called a scientist. The practice allows for a large variety of human inclinations. Scientists are variously idealistic, ambitious, ordinary, academic, practical, foolish, careless, trustworthy, decent, and indecent; some are comic, some tragic, some vulgar, and some ate in the grand tradition. (The Domesday Dictionary)

### **Story: HOT PLANET by Hal Clement from Galaxy**

If the several examinations here of the species Scientist (his habits, habitat, habiliments) seem less than conclusive, it may be due to a sort of "atmosphere problem."

The astronomer, evaluating star spectrograms, must make allowance for the known composition of the intervening atmosphere. The thicker the atmosphere, or the more unknown elements in it, the less accurate will be the analysis; observatories are built on high ground, away from city smog and smoke. In addition, the less similar the subject of study, the more alien it is to the native atmosphere, the more accurate will the analysis be.

The atmosphere in which we observe each other is murky, to say the least. In an article in the *Saturday Review* last year, Robert Graves delivered himself of much unhappiness, after spending two weeks as a guest on the M.I.T. campus. "It is politely assumed here that scientists have souls as well as minds," says Mr. Graves, expressing his disapproval of the new chapel. "But what modern scientist has ever learned the technique of meditation?" Meanwhile, the distinguished editor of the *Worm Runner's Digest*, and chief of the Planaria Research Group, Professor James V. McConnell, in a speech to the American Psychological Association, attacked the "humanistic value system" in the teaching of psychology with at least as much enthusiasm as Robert Graves generated against his image of the scientist. "Our reaction to the word humanism is a powerful, non-logical, gut reaction. Did Pavlov's dogs stop to ask why the dinner bell had such a pleasant sound? No, the dogs merely salivated each time the bell was rung, much as humans unthinkingly 'light up with an inner glow' whenever someone extolls the merits of the humanistic approach." But, he adds, "if humanism is nothing but an arbitrary set of values we

accept chiefly because we've been trained to do so, what about science? Is it something different, something better? The truth is of course, that science, too, is a way of life, a set of mores and values that our society in general tends to venerate (at least in principle) much as it Venerates humanism."

Having made the admission, Dr. McConnell unfortunately proceeded to ignore its implications in the remainder of his address. But all this meant was that it was true, and the significant truth had been stated long before:

No man is an island. When we look at each other—white and Negro, male and female, child and adult, Communist and Bircher, scientist and humanist—no matter what labels we pin on ourselves, we look to some extent into a mirror. Creators and creations both, each of us is part of the total culture and environment in which we meet and observe each other. Whether we will someday meet an intelligence alien enough to be accurately observed, remains to be seen. For now, perhaps we had best just accept the existence of the scientist, the engineer, and even the TV technician, as inalienable parts of our society. We may then, instead of trying to isolate components, begin upon the useful study of (take your choice; take both) scientific humanity and human science.

Cliff Owsley is a representative of another subspecies unique to contemporary society: the PR people. As chief of press and writing for the U. S. Forest Service in Washington, he occupies a position commanding a superior view for observation.

### **Story: THE MING VASE by E. C. Tubb from Analog**

Extrasensory Perception: Also ESP. An inadmissible mode of cognition in which an external event presents itself to none of the five known senses. Telepathy and clairvoyance are two common modes of ESP; the former is the extrasensory perception of the mental activities of another person; the latter is the extrasensory perception of events that have already happened, or that are happening, or that are about to happen. Though investigations of purported ESP phenomena manage to discredit most of them, they do not discredit all of them; moreover, there is a small body of experimental data strongly suggesting paranormal cognition in certain subjects. However, at this point ESP is more an embarrassment than a legitimate concern of science (q.v.). Like soup spilled at a banquet, it is seen but ignored  
(The Domesday Dictionary)

In the introduction to a story called "The Last Day of Summer," in the first annual SF, I referred to the author, E. C. Tubb, as "almost unknown in this country, but probably Britain's most popular writer of s-f ..." The next annual included the first published story of a young writer named J. G. Ballard: "Prima Belladonna." In the third, Brian W. Aldiss, then already becoming known in England, made his American debut with "Let's Be Frank."

All of these stories, and many that appeared in later volumes, were from the British Nova publications, Science Fantasy and New Worlds, both of which were, at that time, as little-known here as the authors.

I am happy to say that this is no longer true either of the magazines or of the substantial group of authors (John Brunner, John Rackham, James White, among others) who developed in their pages under the editorial guidance of E. J. Cornell.

In the past year Mr. Carnet, who has been publicist, critic, business manager, and (probably at times) mailboy as well, since the beginning of the publishing venture, went on to a new position at Corgi Books. The magazines were to cease publication, but happily passed into new hands instead. Some of the best and brightest new ideas in science fiction in the last decade have come from this source.

Nova has not, however, been the sole source of good British s-f. Arthur C. Clarke, John Wyndham, A. B. Chandler, John Christopher, to name a few, were writing for the American magazines all along, as were several others whose reputations were primarily "mainstream."

Whether Gerald Kersh, now residing in New York State, can still be called a British writer, I do not know. That he is one of the finest and most consistently entertaining writers of imaginative literature, I am sure.

### **Story: A BARGAIN WITH CASHEL by Gerald Kersh from The Saturday Evening Post**

Throughout these notes, I have placed much emphasis on matters of definition. Time, as a coordinate of space, has been defined with some degree of precision, mathematically; but time, as we ordinarily use the word, a subjective measurement of awareness, is even more difficult to pin down than, for instance, subjective or awareness.

In the Playboy symposium, William Tenn mentioned "intelligence of some sort" as a prerequisite for civilization, and added that the factor we were most likely to share with an alien civilization would be "imagination, the essential ingredient of our culture."

All right. But what is imagination? What is the relationship between intelligence and imagination? What is intelligence?

And these are all "easy" words; we can usually understand each other when we use them in ordinary conversation, even without clear definitions. But what about intuition, neurotic, creative, secure, art?

Or how about curiosity, wonder, humor, communication? Writers and philosophers have repeatedly pointed to one or another of these qualities as setting mankind apart from other Earth animals. But what—exactly—do we mean when we say them?

The search for practical, working definitions is going on in many fields of sociological and psychological study today. A new kind of science is being born in the process.

When we understand, in the way that we now understand the word atmosphere (composition, behavior, etc.), what we mean by subjectivity, we will be able to make the same allowance for it, in our study of "humanics," that the spectrographer now can make for the content of Earth's atmosphere.

We may then come to a further understanding of the true and complete potential of the (subjective) human mind.

### **Story: DRUNKBOAT by Cordwainer Smith from Amazing**

Introduction to THE HOOFER Walter M. Miller, Jr.

Walter M. Miller, Jr., is best known for his only novel, *A Canticle for Liebowitz* (Lippincott, 1959); he has also published two collections of short fiction, *Conditionally Human* (1962) and *The View from the Stars* (1965).

Born in Florida in 1923, Miller served in the Air Corps during World War II as radio operator and gunner, flying 55 missions over Italy and the Balkans. He began writing in 1950 during his convalescence from an automobile accident which interrupted his G.I.-bill studies at the University of Texas. He took his degree in electrical engineering a year later, and shortly afterward returned to Florida, where he still lives with his wife and four children.

Miller's first short story was published in *American Mercury* and received an Honorable Mention in *The Best American Short Stories* for 1950. Between 1951-1957, he published approximately 40 stories in the science-fantasy magazines, including the three novellas in *Fantasy & Science Fiction* in 1955-57 on which *Canticle* was based; among the stories most widely reprinted since are "Command Performance", "Crucifixus Etiam", "Memento Homo", and "Darfsteller", which won science fiction's annual "Hugo" award for short fiction in 1955.

He has also written for television, most notably for the gone-but-not-forgotten *Captain Video* show of the early fifties.

"The Hoofer" was first published in *Fantastic Universe*, September, 1955, and is reprinted from the 1st SF Annual.

Introduction to BULKHEAD Theodore Sturgeon

Theodore Sturgeon is probably science fantasy's most-reprinted author: of the hundred-odd short stories, novelettes, and novellas published in magazines between "Ether Breather" in 1939, and "Tandy's Story" in 1961, almost all have since appeared in book form; some of the best-known ("Microcosmic God", "Killozer", "Thunder and Roses", "Saucer of Loneliness") have been reprinted five or six times in English-language collections alone. His outstanding novel, *More Than Human*, won the International Fantasy Award in 1952, and a short story, "Bianca's Hands", was awarded the British Argosy \$1000 prize in 1947.

Born on Staten Island in 1918, Sturgeon grew up in Philadelphia with one basic ambition: to become a circus acrobat. When rheumatic fever made that career impossible, he worked as a roustabout for a while, then went to sea in the merchant marine. Sold his first story at eighteen, to McClure's Syndicate for \$5.00; shortly afterwards came ashore to stay, and except for short spells (as hotel executive, bulldozer operator, literary agent, etc.), has been a full-time writer since. He now lives in Woodstock, N.Y., with his wife and their four children.

Sturgeon has published seven novels (one under the pen name, Frederick R. Ewing, and one a "novelization" of a movie), and almost a dozen short-story collections, the latest of which was *Sturgeon in Orbit* (1964). In September, 1963, the magazine *Fantasy & Science Fiction* published an issue in his honor, centered on one of his rare stories of recent years, "When You Care, When You Love". Since then, most of his time has gone to critical writing (*If* and *National Review*, primarily), and to television work; only two pieces of fiction (in *Playboy* and *Sports Illustrated*) have appeared until the recent Doubleday anthology, *Dangerous Visions*, which included his new "If All Men Were Brothers, Would You Let Your Sister Marry One?"

"Bulkhead" was originally published (as "Who?") in *Galaxy*, and was reprinted in the collection, *A Way Home* (Funk & Wagnall, 1955) and in the 1st SF Annual. Other stories of Sturgeon's—"The Other Man", "The Comedian's Children", and "The Man Who Lost the Sea"—appeared in the 2nd, 4th, and 5th SF Annuals.

#### Introduction to THE ANYTHING BOX Zenna Henderson

Zenna Henderson is a schoolteacher ("mostly first grade, but have taught them all—up to Adult Group Teaching in Eloy now") who has lived all her life in or near Tucson, Arizona, except for two years in France (teaching in Army schools) and one in Connecticut. Her first story, "Come On, Wagon" (1951), was included in a 1965 collection of which *The Anything Box* is the title story; "Something Bright" and "Subcommittee", in the same collection, also appeared in the 6th and 8th SF Annuals. In 1952, she began writing the "People" stories, for which she is best known; these have now been collected in two book-length volumes: *Pilgrimage: The Book of the People* (1962) includes "Pottage", which also appeared in the 1st SF Annual, and "Wilderness", which was in the 3rd. *The People: No Different Flesh* was published earlier this year by Doubleday.

"The Anything Box" first appeared in *Fantasy & Science Fiction*, January, 1956, and was included in the 2nd SF Annual.

#### Introduction to PRIMA BELLADONNA J. G. Ballard

J. G. Ballard is the most controversial author in science fiction today: doubly controversial, because American fans and critics are still arguing over his latest novel, *The Crystal World* (1966), while British readers are battling over his more recent surrealistic short fiction ("condensed novels") now appearing in *New Worlds*, *Encounter*, and *Ambit*, but not yet published in the U.S.

Born in Shanghai in 1930, Ballard was repatriated to England at the age of sixteen, after his release from a Japanese internment camp. He read medicine at Cambridge, and won the annual short-story competition there in 1951. "Prima Belladonna" was the first story he sold, in 1956. He now has six short-story collections in print in the U.S. and four in England, as well as four novels. His most recent American book was *The Impossible Man* (Berkley, 1966). Two new collections are scheduled shortly, by Berkley, and by Doubleday.

"Prima Belladonna" originally appeared in *Science Fantasy*, Dec., 1956, and was reprinted in the 2nd Annual and in the author's collections, *Billenium* (U.S., 1962) and *The Four-Dimensional Nightmare* (U.K., 1963).

#### Introduction to CASEY AGONISTES Richard McKenna

Richard Milton McKenna (1912-1964) was the author of the best selling Harper prize novel, *The Sand Pebbles* (1962). Born in Idaho, McKenna had "a desert and cowboy type youth" and joined the Navy promptly at eighteen. He spent most of ten years stationed in China, decided to become a writer while on postwar assignment to the Public Information Office. In 1956, three years after his discharge (as Chief Machinist's Mate), he graduated from the University of North Carolina, got married the next day, and began writing.

He was a slow, painstaking writer. His unfinished second novel, *The Sons of Martha*, was published posthumously by Harper and Row. His handful of short stories have been widely reprinted, and one, previously unpublished, appeared in Damon Knight's 1966 *Orbit*, and received a Nebula Award in 1967.

"Casey Agonistes" was McKenna's first published story, in the September, 1958, *Fantasy & Science Fiction*. It was reprinted in the 4th SF Annual and in the anthology, *The Dark Side* (Doubleday, 1965). Another story, "Mine Own Ways", was in the 6th Annual.

#### Introduction to A DEATH IN THE HOUSE Clifford D. Simak

Clifford D. Simak left his job as news editor of the Minneapolis *Star* in 1959 to initiate an educational program, the Science Reading Series, for the *Star's* sister paper, the *Tribune*. The program is now used in 3,500 classrooms, and has won him a Westinghouse—American Association for the Advancement of Science Award (1966) and a Minnesota Academy of Science Award (1967) to put next to his 1953 International Fantasy Award (for City, the novel-length collection of his "Webster Family" stories), and his two "Hugo's" (for the novelette, "The Big Front Yard", in 1958, and the novel, *Way Station*, 1963).

Born in 1904 on a Wisconsin farm, Simak worked his way through a one-year teacher's training course, then taught rural school to earn enough to enter the University of Wisconsin; but the depression hit early in the midwest farm country, and in 1929 he left college for his first newspaper job, on the Iron River, Michigan, *Reporter*. In 1931, when his first science-fiction story was published, he was editor of the *Reporter*. Over the next few years, he changed jobs and markets regularly, producing only a handful of science-fiction stories; but by 1939, when he started on the *Star*, he had settled down to (what was to remain for twenty years) a fairly steady production of four or five science-fiction stories a year.

He has published twelve novels and short-story collections, and three books of non-fiction. Most recent: *Trilobite, Dinosaur and Man* (St. Martin's Press, 1966) and *Why Call Them Back from Heaven?* (Doubleday, 1967). At present, he divides his time between a weekly science column for the *Star*, work on his Science Reader Series, and turning out approximately one science-fiction novel a year. A new novel, *The Werewolf Project*, is due from Putnam's shortly.

"A Death in the House" was first published in *Galaxy*, October, 1959, and reprinted in the 5th SF Annual and in *Ideas in Literature* (Merrill, 1966).

#### Introduction to SPICE-TIME FOR SPRINGERS Fritz Leiber

Fritz Leiber is the author of seven novels and five short-story collections; since the appearance of his first story in 1939, he has published close to 200 magazine stories, almost all science fiction and fantasy, and a large number of critical and scholarly articles on the combined fields. His work has appeared in more than fifty anthologies, a number of stories have been dramatized for television, and his memorable novel, *Conjure Wife*, was made into a movie under the title *Burn, Witch, Burn*.



Born in Chicago in 1910, Leiber spent his first years touring with his actor-parents in Robert B. Mantell's Shakespeare Company. Later, he lived with two maiden aunts in Chicago during the school year and spent summers at his parents' off-season home on the Jersey shore. He began writing while at the University of Chicago (Philosophy, Phi Beta Kappa), creating with Harry Fischer the background of the first "Grey Mouser" stories.

He spent a year studying for the Episcopal ministry, two years acting in his father's Shakespeare Company, and two years in the movies, during which time he initiated a close correspondence with H. P. Lovecraft, a major influence on his early work. Other jobs included a year of teaching at Occidental College, and editorial work on an encyclopedia and at *Science Digest*. Since 1957 he has devoted his full time to writing.

His first book was a collection, *Night's Black Agents* (Arkham House, 1947), followed shortly by the novel, *Gather Darkness*. He has received two "Hugo" awards: for *The Big Time* (1958) and *The Wanderer* (1964). Most recent titles: *The Night of the Wolf* (Ballantine, 1966), and a "novelization," *Tarzan and the Valley of Gold*.

He is currently working on a book on the fantasy novel for the University of Southern Illinois Press and completing a novel version of some of the "Mouser" stories. A new short-story collection will be published shortly by Rupert Hart-Davis in England.

Seven Leiber stories have appeared in the *SF* Annuals: "The Beat Cluster," in the 7th Annual, also appeared in the short-story collection, *A Pail of Air*. "The Man Who Made Friends with Electricity" was in the 8th Annual; "237 Talking Statues, Etc." in the 9th; "Be of Good Cheer" the 10th; "Moon Duel", the 11th. "Mariana", from the 5th Annual, is also included in this volume. "Space-Time for Springers" was first published in *Star Science Fiction* #4 (Ballantine, 1958), and reprinted in *Star of Stars* (1960); and in the 4th *SF* Annual.

#### Introduction to PELT Carol Emshwiller

Carol Emshwiller is more typical of the writers who came into science fiction in the sixties than of most of the others in this volume. Graduated from the University of Michigan in 1949, she went to France on a Fulbright to study art; when she switched to writing, she began with science fiction, published some fifteen stories between 1956-1961. Her work was distinctive from the beginning; by 1961, she was considerably "far-out" for the then-standards of the science-fiction magazines, and turned her sights to the literary and *avant-garde* markets. Her work has appeared recently in *Transatlantic Review*, *Cavalier*, and the one-shot *City Sampler*. She is married to Ed Emshwiller, the science-fiction illustrator and producer of experimental films (*Relativity*, *Life Lines*, *Thanatopsis*, etc.); they live with their three children in Wantagh, Long Island.

"Pelt", originally published in *Fantasy & Science Fiction*, November, 1958, was reprinted in the 4th *SF* Annual. "Day at the Beach", from the 5th Annual, also appears in this anthology.

#### Introduction to STRANGER STATION Damon Knight

Damon Knight has worked at every conceivable job in science fiction: writer, editor, critic, translator, anthologist, illustrator, agent. A founder, and now sole Director, of the Milford Science Fiction Writer's Conference, he also helped to found, and became first President of, the Science Fiction Writers of America, and edited the first volume of its annual *Nebula Award Stories*. He is currently a consulting editor for Berkley Books, and editor of the Putnam-Berkley *Orbit* anthologies of original science-fiction.

Born in Oregon in 1922, Knight came to New York in the aftermath of a science-fiction fan convention in 1941—the same year his first story appeared in *Stirring Science Stories*. In 1950-51, he was editor of the magazine, *Worlds Beyond*, and his first book, *In Search of Wonder*, a volume of science-fiction criticism for which he received a "Hugo" award, was published in 1956. Since then he has published five novels and five story collections, and almost 20 anthologies. He now lives in Milford, Pa., and is married to author Kate Wilhelm. Latest books: *Worlds to Come*, a juvenile anthology (1967); and

a new and enlarged edition of *In Search of Wonder* (Advent, 1967). A translation of a novel by Rene Barjavel, *Ashes, Ashes*, is due shortly.

Knight's stories have appeared in three SF Annuals: "The Country of the Kind" was in the 1st, and "The Handler" in the 5th. "Stranger Station", from the Dec., 1956, *Fantasy & Science Fiction*, appeared in the 2nd Annual.

#### Introduction to SATELLITE PASSAGE Theodore L Thomas

Theodore L. Thomas is a patent attorney who started his writing career doing a weekly science column for the Stamford, Conn., *Advocate* in 1949, branched out into articles for the science-fiction magazines in 1952 (as "Leonard Lockhard", sometimes collaborating with another lawyer-writer, Charles L. Harness). His first fiction appeared in 1953; he has published about 70 stories in magazines, ranging from *Planet Stories* to *Playboy*; still writes for the *Advocate*, and also does a science column for *Fantasy & Science Fiction*. He has written one novel, *The Clone* (1965) in collaboration with Kate Wilhelm.

Born in 1920, Thomas studied chemical engineering at M.I.T., then took a second degree in law, with time out for the artillery, and for court-martial work in Japan, during World War II. He now lives, with his wife and three children, in Lancaster, Pa., except when they are scuba-diving off their cabin cruiser in Atlantic coastal waters.

"Satellite Passage" was reprinted from *If* (Dec., 1958) in the 4th SF Annual. Thomas' story, "The Far Look", also appeared in the 2nd Annual, and "The Lagging Profession", by "Lockhard", in the 6th.

#### Introduction to NO NO, NOT ROGOV! Cordwainer Smith

Paul M. A. Linebarger ("Cordwainer Smith") (1913-1966) was Professor of Asiatic Politics at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. At the time of his death, he and his wife, Genevieve Linebarger (a political scientist specializing in Southeast Asia), had recently completed a book, *Confrontation and World Peace*, based on a tour of Asia and the Pacific in 1964-65.

Dr. Linebarger was born in Milwaukee, but just barely: "Father wanted a boy who could be President, so I had to be born in America." He grew up in China: "father," a former U.S. Judge in the Philippines, was legal adviser to Sun Yat-sen. (Years later, Dr. Linebarger business cards bore his name in Chinese characters, and at least two pen names, "Felix C. Forrest" and "Cordwainer Smith," were derived from the literal translation of the name, Lin Po-lo: Forest of Incaro descent Bliss.)

The first "Smith" story, "Scanners Live in Vain", appeared in a semiprofessional magazine, *Fantasy Book*, in 1950, and was immediately reprinted in Heinlein's classic anthology, *Tomorrow the Stars*. His first book, *You Will Never Be the Same*, was published in 1962. The last was *Quest of Three Worlds* (Ace, 1966).

"No, No, Not Rogov!" was first published in *If*, February, 1959, and reprinted in the 5th Annual. "A Planet Named Shayol" also appeared in the 7th Annual, and "Drunkboat" in the 9th.

#### Introduction to COMPOUNDED INTEREST Mack Reynolds

Mack Reynolds burst, rather than broke, into print in 1950, with almost 20 stories in the SF magazines alone. Shortly afterwards, he began wandering through Europe, Asia, and Africa (with wife, van and typewriter) as travel editor for *Rogue*, and his SF production fell to only six or seven stories a year, on average, and even less when he began concentrating on longer work. Since 1960, he has written one or two magazine novels a year, and adapted probably (at least) as many again of his shorter pieces for publication by Ace Books. His agent claims he is "the most prolific—by published wordage—contemporary writer of science fiction," and possibly the claim can be upheld, now that he has settled in Mexico, concentrating almost all his time on science fantasy.

His latest book (as I write) is *The Rival Rigelians* (Ace, 1967), and he is reported to be at work on

"a major book" to be published "in connection with the 1968 Mexican Olympics."

Four Reynolds stories have been reprinted in the SF Annuals: "Freedom" in the 7th; "Earthlings, Go Home" in the 8th; "Pacifist" in the 10th; and "Compounded Interest", which was published in *Fantasy & Science Fiction*, August, 1956, and in the 2nd Annual.

#### Introduction to JUNIOR Robert Abernathy

Robert Abernathy published some 40 science-fiction stories between 1942 and 1957. (His last story, "Grandma's Lie Soap", was reprinted in the 2nd Annual SF.) When last heard from (1957), he was living in Tucson, Arizona, and doing something Highly Classified for a nearby U.S. Government Establishment—presumably something involving his triplex of specialties, physics, photography, and Slavonic languages. He has since moved to Seattle, where rumor has it he is employed at something unclassifiedly professorial.

"Junior", which first appeared in *Galaxy*, January, 1956, and then in the 1st Annual, is reprinted here with the author's permission, but without any precise knowledge of his whereabouts. Any information leading to the possibility of paying him for this inclusion will be deeply appreciated by the editor.

#### Introduction to SENSE FROM THOUGHT DIVIDE Mark Clifton

"Remembrance and reflection, how allied;  
What thin partitions sense from thought divide."  
Pope

Mark Clifton (1911-1962) had an impact on science fiction entirely out of proportion to the quantity of his published work. His first two stories, "Star, Bright" and "What Have I Done?", appeared almost simultaneously early in 1952 in *Astounding* and *Galaxy*, followed by nine more in rapid succession. Between 1954 and 1962 there were, altogether, another nine, and four novels. Yet at one time he seemed to dominate the pages of *Astounding* (then the leading magazine in the field) so completely that some disgruntled fans began referring to it as the "Clifton House Organ."

Born in Oklahoma, Clifton was teaching rural school when he was thirteen; got fired for teaching evolution; went to the city and worked his way through college-equivalency by ghosting papers and theses for enrolled students. He spent 20 years in personnel work and industrial engineering, retired at forty-one after a serious illness, and turned to science fiction. His last novel was *Eight Keys to Eden* (1960), and he wrote one nonfiction book for college students, *Opportunity Unlimited* (1959).

"Sense from Thought Divide" first appeared in *Astounding*, March, 1955, in a slightly longer version; it is reprinted here from the 1st SF Annual. His story, "What Now, Little Man?" was in the 5th Annual, and "Hang Head, Vandal!" in the 8th.

#### Introduction to MARIANA Fritz Leiber

"Mariana" was selected for the 5th SF Annual from *Fantastic*, Feb., 1960.

#### Introduction to PLENITUDE Will Worthington

"Will Worthington" is the pseudonym of an author who published ten stories altogether between 1958-1961. "Plenitude" was selected for the 5th SF Annual from *Fantasy & Science Fiction*, October, 1959.

#### Introduction to DAY AT THE BEACH Carol Emshwiller

"Day at the Beach", originally published in *Fantasy & Science Fiction*, August, 1959, was reprinted

in the 5th SF Annual, and in the British anthology, *The ABC of Science Fiction* (1966).

#### Introduction to LET'S BE FRANK Brian W. Aldiss

Brian W. Aldiss is the author of some 20 or more books in England and America, and editor of half a dozen anthologies, as well as a book reviewer, Literary Editor of the *Oxford Mail*, and co-editor (with Harry Harrison) of the critical journal, *S. F. Horizons*.

Born in England in 1925, Aldiss had a tour of Asia with the Army during World War II, and a tour of Yugoslavia, with his wife, in 1965; they now live just outside Oxford in what is certainly the only thatched cottage in England with central heating.

His first story was published in 1954; in 1955, his first book, *The Brightfount Diaries*, came out, and he was also in his first anthology, as author of the prize-winning story in a London Observer contest.

His first U.S. publication was in 1958; in 1959, there were two novels and a collection, and there have been one or two books a year since. His 1965 novella, "The Saliva Tree" (title story of a 1966 Faber collection), won a Science Fiction Writers of America Nebula Award; and he took a "Hugo" in 1961 for "Hothouse" (part of the novel of that title, in England—*The Long Afternoon of the Earth* in the U.S.). His last U.S. book was *Who Can Replace a Man?* (Harcourt, 1966); a new novel, *Cryptozoic*, will be out soon from Doubleday.

"Let's Be Frank", reprinted in the 3rd Annual from *Science Fantasy*, June, 1957, was Aldiss' first hardcover publication in the U.S.; it also appears in *The ABC of Science Fiction*. Three other Annuals contained Aldiss stories: "Ten-Storey Jigsaw" in the 4th, "Old Hundredth" the 6th, and "Scarfe's World" in the 11th.

#### Introduction to THE WONDER HORSE George Byram

George Byram explains his single excursion into science fantasy as a sort of daydream-on-paper. Born in Mississippi in 1920, Byram grew up in Florida, and, after a desultory two years of college, wandered west and "fell in love with the vast, mean, windy, cold, murderous, wonderful country of north-central Wyoming," where (except for two years in the Army Signal Corps in WW II) he stayed until 1950; then "caught the universal postwar disease of securityitis," and left the range to go to work (eventually) as a television announcer.

In 1950, he also sold his first story to *Colliers*; the next, in 1954, was to the *Saturday Evening Post*; then a broad assortment including *True West*, *Atlantic* and *Sports Afield*. Meanwhile, he started a horse-breeding program in Colorado, "paying for what I lose on the ranch out of what I earn in television and writing." He has published two novels, *The Piper's Tune* and *Tomorrow's Hidden Season*.

"The Wonder Horse" first appeared in *Atlantic* (August, 1957), and was reprinted in the 3rd Annual.

#### Introduction to NOBODY BOTHERS GUS Algis Budrys

Algis Budrys is in a sense the prototype writer for this anthology: first published in 1952, he had an immediate success, wrote prolifically through the fifties, and tapered off, after 1957, to a full stop in the early sixties. Typically, too, his work was primarily sociological and psychological in orientation.

In no other way is Budrys typical of anything. The son of a Free Lithuanian diplomat, he came to the U.S. at the age of five in 1936; wrote his first story (science fiction) six years later, and sold his first (science fiction) ten years after that. He had half a dozen books in print, and was widely published in magazines, in and out of s-f, when he moved to Chicago in 1961 to become editor of Regency Books, and then editorial director of Playboy's book-publishing division.

Except for a few articles (*Esquire*, *Saturday Evening Post*), he virtually stopped writing until 1966, when his first suspense story, "The Master of the Hounds", was nominated for an "Edgar" award, and he began selling to the SF magazines again. A new science-fiction novel is now completed, and a suspense

novel is in work.

Budrys' work has appeared in three Annuals: "Silent Brother" and "The Edge of the Sea" were in the 2nd and 4th; "Nobody Bothers Gus" was first published in *Astounding* in November, 1955, under the pseudonym, "Paul Janvier," and reprinted in the 1st Annual.

#### Introduction to THE PRIZE OF PERIL Robert Sheckley

Robert Sheckley was born in New York City in 1928, but grew up in Maplewood, N. After high school, he spent two years in Korea with the occupation forces, then enrolled in N.Y.U. in 1948; graduated in '51, and sold his first story the same year; published ten stories in '52, and close to fifty in '53. His first book, *Untouched by Human Hands*, was published in 1954, and he has hardly slowed down since, although his short-story production tapered off sharply after 1957, in favor of novels and scriptwriting. He has now published 17 books, among them *The Game of X*, a spy novel, and *Mindswap* (Delacorte, 1966). His television and film credits include *The People Trap*, and *The Tenth Victim*, which he wrote twice—as a short story, "The Seventh Victim", in 1953, and as a "novelization" of the film based on the first version. Three other stories are now being filmed, and a new novel, *Maze of Mirrors*, will be published by Delacorte in 1968.

"The Prize of Peril" was reprinted in the 4th SF Annual, from *Fantasy & Science Fiction*, May, 1958.

#### Introduction to THE HANDLER Damon Knight

"The Handler" was selected for the 5th SF Annual from *Rogue*, August, 1960.

#### Introduction to THE GOLEM Avram Davidson

Avram Davidson is the author of nine books (plus one, *Joyleg*, in collaboration with Ward Moore) and editor of three, two of them being the annual collections of *The Best from Fantasy & Science Fiction*, representing his two years as editor of that magazine. His first crime story took first prize in the 1957 *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* contest, and in 1962 he edited a fact-crime collection, *Crimes and Chaos*.

The title story of his first collection of short stories, *Or All the Seas with Oysters*, won a "Hugo" in 1958, and was also included in the 4th SF Annual. (Two others, "Now Let Us Sleep" and "No Fire Burns" appeared in the 3rd and 5th Annuals.) His first hardcover collection, and first hardcover novel, *Bumberboom*, are both scheduled by Doubleday for this year.

Davidson says he "was born during the halcyon days of the Millard Filmore administration; he has one son, Ethan; and now lives at Mon Tsourice, the family plantation on Mauritius, where he raises dodoes for the export market." The facts are, he left Yonkers some time after his birth in 1923, for California, where he studied sheep raising and wrote scholarly articles until the publication of his first story, "My Boyfriend's Name is Jello", in 1954.

"The Golem" was his second story, in *Fantasy & Science Fiction*, March, 1955; it is reprinted from the 1st SF Annual, and also appeared in *Or All the Seas with Oysters*.

#### Introduction to THE SOUND SWEEP J. G. Ballard

Six Ballard stories have appeared in the SF Annuals.

"Prima Belladonna" (2nd Annual) and "The Insane Ones" (the 8th) were also included in the 1962 collection, *Billionium*.

"The Terminal Beach" (in the 10th) was also the title story of two (only partly matching) collections: one from Berkley in 1964, and one in England (Gollancz), which also included "The Volcano Dances" and "The Drowned Giant" (both in the 11th). "Giant" (titled "Souvenir" in *Playboy*) also appeared in the

first annual *Nebula Award Stories* (both 1966).

"The Sound Sweep", originally published in *Science Fantasy*, February, 1960, was reprinted in *The Voices of Time* (Berkley, 1962), and *The Four-Dimensional Nightmare* (Gollancz, 1963), as well as in the 5th SF Annual.

#### Introduction to HICKORY, HICKORY, KEROUAC Richard Gehman

Richard Gehman owns nine typewriters and an unknown number of pen-names. Since leaving the Army for the freelance life in 1946, he has written some of everything for virtually everybody. (Reputedly, he once wrote six pieces for a single issue of *Cosmopolitan*, under six different names, in three days.) Born in Lancaster, Pa., he now lives with his wife and four children in Kent Cliffs, N.Y. His recent books include *Bogart* (Gold Medal, 1965), *Haphazard Gourmet* (Scribner, 1966), and *Playboy's Playboy* (Trident, 1966).

So far as I know, "Hickory, Dickory, Kerouac" was his only venture into fantasy—but I wouldn't have known about this one, either, since it appeared originally (in the March, 1958 *Playboy*) under the pseudonym of "Martin Scott." It is reprinted here from the 4th SF Annual.

#### Introduction to DREAMING IS A PRIVATE THING Isaac Asimov

Isaac Asimov is the author (or editor, or collaborative author) of more than 80 books: science fiction, mystery, popular science, scientific textbooks, juveniles, and philosophic essays. His short stories and articles have appeared in publications ranging from *Esquire* to *Astonishing Stories* to *TV Guide* to the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*; although writing and lecturing engagements now prevent his maintaining a teaching schedule, he is an Associate Professor of Biochemistry at the Boston University School of Medicine.

Born in Russia in 1920, Asimov was not yet three years old when his family moved to Brooklyn, N.Y. He sold his first story at the age of eighteen; three years later, when he took his M.A. in Chemistry at Columbia, he had sold almost two dozen more, including the first of the positronic robot stories (postulating the now classic "three laws of robotics") recently reprinted in *I, Robot* (1962) and *The Rest of the Robots* (1965). The stories composing *The Foundation Trilogy* (1964) were largely written while he was working for his Ph.D., after wartime service at the Naval Air Experimental Station in Philadelphia.

Asimov's nonfiction career began with a curious article in 1948 entitled "The Endochronic Properties of Resublimated Thiotimoline", which was responsible for his being the first science candidate for a Ph.D. to be asked a science-fiction question during his oral examination. In 1950, when his first S-F book (*Pebble in the Sky*) was published, he began writing his first textbook. By 1958, nonfiction writing was occupying him almost exclusively: among (many) other things, he began the monthly science articles still running in *Fantasy & Science Fiction*, and published (in 1960) the first edition of the recently revised, monumental, *New Intelligent Man's Guide to Science* (Basic Books, 1965). He is now (among other things) working on a volume called *It's Mentioned in the Bible*, and a book on Greek history.

He is also, happily, returning at last to writing some fiction (notably, "Eyes Do More Than See" in the 11th Annual).

"Dreaming is a Private Thing" first appeared in the December, 1955, *Fantasy & Science Fiction*; it is reprinted here, from the 1st SF Annual, with the author's permission. His storks, "Each an Explorer" and "Let's Get Together" also appeared in the 2nd and 3rd Annuals, and an article, "The Thunder-Thieves", in the 4th.

#### Introduction to THE PUBLIC HATING Steve Allen

Stephen Patrick Valentine William Allen is the author of six books (most recently: *Letter to a Conservative*, 1965) and about 2,000 songs, among them "Gravy Waltz" (for which he won a Grammy

Award), "This Could Be the Start of Something," and "Picnic." Born in New York City in 1921, he became a radio announcer in 1942, worked as comedian, disc jockey, scriptwriter, actor, musician, in radio, films, and television until (and after) starting his own TV show in 1950.

"The Public Hating" was selected for the 1st Annual from Bluebook, January, 1955, and was included in Allen's first short-story collection, *Fourteen for Tonight* (1955).

#### Introduction to YOU KNOW WILLIE Theodore R. Cogswell

Theodore R. Cogswell is an Associate Professor of English at Keystone College in Pennsylvania. Primarily a poet and songwriter, he published thirty science-fantasy stories between 1952-1958, with only an occasional title since then; a collection, *The Wall Around the World*, was published in 1962.

Born in Ohio in 1918, Cogswell graduated from high school just in time to join the International Brigade in Spain; back home, he wandered his way through several colleges, with time out for the Pacific Theatre in World War II, and wound up teaching English at the University of Minnesota, where Gordon Dickson and Poul Anderson got him interested in writing science fantasy.

He also was the founder and editor of the unique and sorely missed authors' journal, the *Proceedings of the Institute of Twenty-first Century Studies*.

Two of his songs, "Radiation Blues" and "Blowup Blues", were reprinted in the 6th Annual. "You Know Willie" originally appeared in *Fantasy & Science Fiction*, May, 1957; it is reprinted here from the 3rd SF Annual.

#### Introduction to ONE ORDINARY DAY, WITH PEANUTS Shirley Jackson

Shirley Jackson (1919-1965) wrote comparatively little outright fantasy; virtually everything she wrote, whether macabre suspense novel or domestic essay, was illuminated with a rare consciousness of the fantastic quality of reality (and/or the reality of the fantastic and incredible), a perception of truths one level farther in than those available to most of us.

Her most famous story was "The Lottery", first published in *The New Yorker* in 1948, and then in the 1949 collection of the same title. Among her other books were *Life Among the Savages*, *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*, *The Bird's Nest* and *The Magic of Shirley Jackson*. Most of her short stories appeared in the larger-circulation quality magazines—Harper's, *Story*, *Mademoiselle*, *American Mercury*, etc.—and in such national women's magazines as *Woman's Home Companion* and *McCall's*. Five short stories were published in *Fantasy & Science Fiction* between 1953 and 1958, including "One Ordinary Day, With Peanuts" (January, 1955), which is reprinted here from the 1st SF Annual.

### From Science Fiction to Science Fact: The Universe and Us

Last year's edition of *SF* devoted a special section to non-fiction coverage of the beginnings of space flight. The innovation was so well received (I mean the section, though its subject is also doing pretty well) that it has been made a permanent feature of the anthology.

Space flight as such is now almost out of the range of fantasy or science fiction, but the adjustments to it, the challenge of new technology to human habits, the unknown potentials—for satisfaction, fear, delight—of the unguessed-at environments men will face beyond earth: this is the stuff that science fantasy is made of.

The present attainments and near-future promises of physical science leave little scope for speculative thought. It used to be a joke: "The difficult we do at once; the impossible takes a little longer." Now, I do not think any conception of the most imaginative mind, within the realm of physical science, could pose a problem that would cause the appropriate expert to answer, "No one knows" or "Never!" ... just "I don't know, quite yet."

The great frontiers of the unknown now lie at man's own door. The urgent questions now are not

"What is it?" or "How does it work?" or "How do we make it?"

Rather, we are asking, "Who are we?" and "What are we doing here?" . . . "Where are we going?" and "Why?" and "How will we make out when we get there?"

These are the themes of the best new science fantasy and also the working problems of the new generation of scientists. The first set of answers will derive, it seems, from studies now being made of man's chances for surviving out in space.

[\(for rear cover and jacket blurb, click here\)](#)

## BETTER TO HAVE LOVED

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And, of course, all my love to Jesse, for being there every day and convincing me to believe in myself.

— Emily Pohl-Weary

## **Chronology:**

### **Important Events in Judith Merrill's Life**

#### **1923**

Judith Josephine Grossman is born on January 21 in Boston to parents Ethel and Samuel (Shlomo) Grossman.

#### **1929**

The Great Depression begins; lasts to the end of the 1930s. Her father Shlomo Grossman commits suicide.

#### **1933**

Judith, an avid young Zionist, starts sixth grade at the Girls' Latin School.

#### **FALL 1936**

Moves with her mother, Ethel, to the Bronx, New York City, when Ethel gets a job at the Bronx House. Starts high school at Morrows High.

#### **1930-38**

Goes to Zionist summer camp, reads the Communist Manifesto.

#### **1937-39**

Forms an inseparable trio with her best friends Saul and Willy at Morrows High School. Graduates from high school in June 1939.

#### **1939**

The Soviet Union makes a pact with the Nazis. Zionism begins to lose its appeal for her.

#### **1940**

Meets first husband Dan Zissman at a Trotskyist Fourth of July picnic. They marry on October 26.

#### **1940-41**

Judith and Dan live with his parents in Philadelphia. She has several different jobs, ranging from waitress to curtain examiner.

#### **1942-43**

Gets pregnant with first daughter, Merrill, who is born in December 1942. Dan is drafted.

#### **1943-44**

A camp-following Navy wife and mother, Judith moves seven times to army bases in Chicago, New York, and San Francisco, among others. Merrill starts at a nursery school for very young children.

#### **1944**

Dan's Trotskyist background catches up with him and the army sends him overseas, into action.

#### **1945**

In New York City, Judith meets Johnny Michel, Bob "Doc" Lowndes, and literary agent and editor Virginia Kidd (then Emden), among other literary figures. Shares a railroad flat with Kidd and her daughter Karen, who is the same age as Merrill. Judith gets a job as a researcher/ghostwriter.

#### **1945-46**

Becomes involved as president of Merrill's school Parent-Teacher Association. Fights for broad access to public nursery schools. Moves with Dan into an unheated apartment on 19th Street. There is increasing trouble in Judith and Dan's marriage, and they separate. She becomes friends with Jay Stanton and Ted Sturgeon. Takes Merrill's name as her pen name.

#### **1945-46**

Judith is in agent Scott Meredith's stable. She supports herself as a single mother by writing, under pen names, nineteen sports-related short stories for pulp magazines.

#### **1946**

Meets Frederik Pohl when he returns from overseas. He moves into her apartment.

#### **1948**

In February, divorce from Dan is finalized. In May, Judith's first science fiction story, "That Only a Mother," is published in *Astounding Science Fiction* magazine. She becomes engaged to Fred Pohl, and they marry on November 25.

#### **1949**

Writes her first novel, *Shadow on the Hearth*.

#### **1950**

The "McCarthy Era" begins in the United States, including widespread sensationalist investigations into suspected U.S. Communists, blacklisting, and political persecution. Judith's first novel, *Shadow on the Hearth*, is published, as well as her first anthology, *Shot in the Dark*. Her second daughter, Ann, is born in September, and she writes her second novel, *Outpost Mars* (originally "Mars Child"), with Cyril Kornbluth, under the pen name Cyril Judd.

## **1951-52**

Her novel *Gunner Cade* (with C.M. Kornbluth, as "Cyril Judd") is serialized in *Astounding Science Fiction*, and then published by Simon and Schuster. She separates from Fred Pohl.

## **1953**

Lives with writer Walter Miller for six months. Divorce from Fred Pohl is finalized.

## **1954**

The Communist Party in the United States is virtually outlawed. *Motorola TV Theatre (ABC)* produces a television dramatization of *Shadow on the Hearth* under the title "Atomic Attack."

## **1956**

Her first *SF*: *The Year's Greatest* anthology is published.

## **1956-60**

Organizes the first Milford Science Fiction Writers' Conference, with Damon Knight and James Blish. Continues to act as director and board member until 1960.

## **1960**

Pyramid Books in New York publishes her short story collection *Out of Bounds*. Marries merchant mariner and union organizer Dan Sugrue on September 24.

## **1963**

Pyramid publishes her novel *The Tomorrow People*. Separates from Dan Sugrue, but divorce is never finalized.

## **1965**

The United States bombs North Vietnam.

## **1965-69**

Book review editor for *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*.

## **1967**

Moves to England for one year. Edits the anthology *England Swings SF*.

## **1968**

Total number of U.S. troops in Vietnam reaches 550,000. Judith attends the Chicago Democratic Convention with her daughter Ann, where Vietnam War opponent Eugene McCarthy runs for the Democratic presidential nomination but loses to Hubert Humphrey.

## **1968-69**

In August Judith immigrates, with daughter Ann, to Canada to become a Resource Person in Writing and Publishing for Rochdale College, Toronto's "Free University."

## **1969**

Doubleday, New York, publishes her short story collection *Daughters of Earth*. Judith helps organize the Committee to Aid Refugees from Militarism (**CARM**).

## **1970**

Donates her collection of science fiction literature to the Toronto Public Library system, to found the Spaced Out Library.

**1971**

Lecturer for science fiction course at University of Toronto. Organizes major international science fiction convention, Secondary Universe Conference, at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), Toronto.

**1971-83**

Writes 25.5 hours of documentaries for CBC-Radio *Ideas*, *Kaleidoscope*, and *Radio International*.

**1972**

Spends several months in Japan. A collection of her essays on science fiction is published in Japanese.

**1972-73**

Runs a weekly science fiction seminar at SEED alternative high school, Toronto.

**1973**

Vietnam War ends. The Writers' Union of Canada is founded.

**1976**

Warner Books publishes a reprint of short stories, *The Best of Judith Merril*. Judith becomes a Canadian citizen.

**1977**

Kakabeka Pub. Co., Toronto, publishes a short story collection, *Survival Ship and Other Stories*.

**1978-81**

Creates sob mini-documentaries of three to seven minutes each, to be played following broadcast episodes of *Dr. Who* on TV Ontario.

**APPROX. 1983-95**

Spends winter months in Montego Bay, Jamaica.

**1983-84**

Runs writing workshops at SEED alternative high school.

**1985**

Founds the Hydra Club North for Canadian science fiction writers. Edits *Tesseracts*, the first-ever anthology of contemporary Canadian science fiction and fantasy. Runs "Out of This World" reading series at the International Authors Festival, Harbourfront Centre, Toronto.

**1986**

McClelland & Stewart in Toronto republishes a collection of her short stories under the title *Daughters of Earth and Other Stories*.

## 1991

Toronto Public Library's Spaced Out Library is officially renamed the Merrill Collection of Science Fiction, Speculation and Fantasy. Judith has triple-bypass heart surgery.

## 1992

Moves into the Performing Arts Lodge (PAL) near St. Lawrence Market in downtown Toronto. Tribute to her life held in October at Harbourfront Centre, Toronto, as part of the International Authors' Festival.

## 1994

Writes "Message to Some Martians" for a CD-ROM, *Visions of Mars*, which is sent by space shuttle to Mars.

## 1996

Judith attends Wiscon: The Feminist Science Fiction Convention, held in Madison, Wisconsin, as Special Guest of Honor.

## 1997

Dies from heart failure on September 12.

## WRITING MY GRANDMOTHER'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY EMILY POHL-WEARY

*Martha begat Joan, and Joan begat Ariadne. Ariadne lived and died at home on Pluto, but her daughter, Emma, took the long trip out to a distant planet of an alien sun.*

*Emma begat Leah, and Leah begat Carla, who was the first to make her bridal voyage through sub-space, a long journey faster than the speed of light itself.*

*Six women in direct descent—some brave, some beautiful, some brilliant: smug or simple, wilful or compliant, all different, all daughters of Earth, though half of them never set foot on the Old Planet.*

*—from the opening of Judith Merrill, "Daughters of Earth," 1952*

WHEN I WAS SIX YEARS OLD my mother told me she wished she had named me Emma (after the anarchist revolutionary Emma Goldman, I believe). She asked if I would prefer that to Emily, and if I wanted to change my name. I refused, and backed up my refusal with logic by adding, "I'm already used to Emily."

So as an adult, when I reread the introduction to my grandmother Judith's story "Daughters of Earth," I had alternating feelings of shock and dismay. It is hard to believe that Judy wrote these words in 1952, when she was twenty-nine years old. She was already a Great Science Fiction Writer.

Judith and Emily hanging out in the Performing Arts Lodge's rooftop garden, May, 1997. We're talking to Helene Klodawsky (unseen) about her biography of Judith's life, *What If. .. A Film about Judith Merrill*, which aired on the Bravo television network. *Imageries*

Judy must have been describing our family. She must have been thinking about her mother and her

mother's mother. But, in this story, it feels like Judy was also spinning the web of my existence.

This fictional character from her short story "Daughters of Earth," this woman named Emma, speaks deeply to me of a family in which mother influence pervades everyday life. The story, written in 1952, spans six generations of women, making parallels between the lives of grandmothers and their granddaughters. Judy theorizes that if one generation stays close to home, the next one will move far away, and then the cycle repeats.

In my family, as in many families, sometimes it seems like all the women are variations of each other, shaped by known and unknown ancestors as much as through daily experience. This condition fascinated Judy. Many of the stories she wrote were concerned with the kind of change that happens throughout successive generations of women.

My grandmother was not a particularly prolific fiction writer. The importance of her contribution to the literary world rests in the subjects she broached. In the early years of science fiction, when she was the "only smart woman she knew," she wrote with clarity and strength about "female" issues: sex, love, pregnancy, motherhood. She also tackled political issues, including the sensationalist terror of the time—nuclear holocaust—as well as McCarthy-era repression and the House Unamerican Activities Committee. She wrote about the increased fear of difference and of other races (through the concept of alien), especially as experienced during wartime, and about the stifling norms of female sexuality. Although the male-dominated genre might not at first seem like a logical choice for a woman with feminist and left-wing political views, Judy felt at home in the New York City world of science and space-inspired futurist writers of the 1940s. But she couldn't really predict the future, could she?

"Daughters of Earth" continues:

*This story could have started anywhere. It began with unspoken prayer, before there were words, when an unnamed man and woman looked upward to a point of distant light, and wondered. Started again with a pointing pyramid; once more with the naming of a constellation; and once again with the casting of a horoscope.*

*One of its beginnings was in the squalid centuries of churchly darkness, when Brahe and Bruno, Kepler, Copernicus, and Galileo ripped off the veils of godly ignorance so men could see the stars again. Then in another age of madness, a scant two centuries ago, it began with the pioneer cranks, Goddard and Tsiolkovsky, and the compulsive evangelism of Ley and Gernsback and Clarke. It is beginning again now, here on Uller. but in this narrative, it starts with Martha.*

*Martha was born on Earth, in the worst of the black decades of the 20th century, in the year 1941. She lived out her time, and died of miserable old age at less than eighty years at home on Earth. Once in her life, she went to the Moon.*

*She had two children. Her son, Richard, was a good and dutiful young man, a loving son, and a sober husband when he married. He watched his mother age and weaken with worry and fear after the Pluto expedition left, and could never bring himself to hurt her again as his sister had done.*

*Joan was the one who got away.*

Judy swore, "When I was about fifteen, it dawned on me that my mother meant for me to be a writer, and I stopped writing completely. I didn't start again until after I had a baby and I was in San Francisco and my mother was in New York."

Despite the late start, she wrote two novels, co-authored two, and wrote almost fifty short stories. Most of them fall into the science fiction genre, and I believe she chose this medium because it allowed her wider scope than any other genre. Later in life (1956 to 1968) she mutated from a writer to an editor to produce her legendary annual series of best of the year anthologies, under various titles beginning with *SF: The Year's Greatest Science Fiction and Fantasy* and ending with *SF 12*. In 1968 she moved to Toronto to join an experimental college called Rochdale and then became a successful "documentarist" for GB c Radio. For much of her life Judy did not stay long in one place.

In the early 1990s, fellow SF writer Spider Robinson said of Judy:

*She is far more than merely a national treasure. She is a planetary treasure. The one common writer's ailment she has apparently never suffered is carpal tunnel vision. So long as she is loose in the world with a typewriter and a telephone, no bullshit anywhere is safe. And her typewriter has recently been upgraded with seats and an airbag.*

*Without Judith Merril, neither science fiction nor Canadian science fiction nor Canadian literature nor the world at large would exist in their present form. Whatever we may make in future of the start she gave us, we who care about Canadian fantasy and science fiction may take some small comfort in being able to say that it is, at least to an extent, all her fault.*

After Judy died in September 1997 I found myself rereading stories like "Daughters," trying to better understand myself, my grandmother, and my family. I listened to dozens of taped interviews with her and eventually started to complete her autobiography.

Judy had begun work on her memoirs in the early 1990's but had experienced great difficulties in pulling things together. She found it nearly impossible to conceptualize finishing her autobiography, because once she was finished, what could she possibly do next? Together we tried to capture as many of her stories as possible. We even recorded two tapes filled with descriptions of all the sections of "the book" that she wanted to include. I promised her that if, someday, she was unable to finish, I would take on the job.

Many people who knew Judy will understand that the fire-like intensity of her love and interest in people did not always dampen into strong and lasting friendships. Some people were loved briefly and discarded as no longer interesting, while others, like Fritz Leiber and Walter Miller, were never far from her mind. At times it seemed Judy loved to burn bridges. I often wonder whether I too might have been brushed aside if she didn't need me as constant caregiver. I suppose she found me interesting as well; I was her source of information about the outside world. For Judy, the world was separated into two unequal parts: things that interested her, and mundane details. While at times her distinctions between the two categories seemed arbitrary to me, anything that got relegated to the latter category was quite simply ignored.

In the meantime, unfortunately, Judy didn't sit down nearly enough to write, or even talk, about many of the people who were most important to her. She did the interview about Walter Miller (on which chapter 12, "Walter Miller and the Custody Battles," is based) only five days before she died. I didn't do that interview; it was carried out by Ronald Weihs, of Toronto's Artword Theatre. She had been holding out as long as possible on telling the story on tape because it was heart-wrenching every time the memories came flooding back. Several times, late at night when we were looking through her boxes of yellowing photographs, or when we were sitting together over dinner, she would tell me pieces of the story. The hardest part for her was knowing that Walt had died a couple of years earlier, without trying to get in touch with her.

Walter Miller was not the only one she found it hard to think about. She loved many people with an intensity and a strength that seemed larger than life. The actual process of telling her stories was painful for her, and the end of her life was characterized by a tremendous sadness: her lifelong friends, the people she affectionately called "the Crazies," were dying. Each time one of the Crazies passed away, she lost a chunk of herself. She was so alone. We never even got to talk about the people she loved and lost in the later stages of her life—the feelings were still too fresh.

The fourth birthday party of Judith's granddaughter Julia Pohl-Miranda, April 5, 1989, Toronto. From left: Judith, Adriana Rapetti, Emily, Tobias Pohl-Weary, Daniel Pohl-Miranda, Julia Pohl-Miranda, Ann Pohl, Tashi Moscovitch.

*Juan Miranda*

In the end she left me with a very incomplete manuscript and thorough instructions about everything



she wanted included in the final book of memoirs. By the time of her death she had only completed sections on her early childhood and career ("In the Beginning," "A (Real?) Writer: Homage to Ted Sturgeon," and "Getting Started as a Writer"), as well as parts of the sections on feminism, the 1968 Democratic National Convention, and coming to Toronto's free university, Rochdale College. She wrote the introductory essay "Transformations" partly in an attempt to figure out why she was writing this book, and also as part of her applications for grants from the Ontario Arts Council and the Canada Council. Everything else I pieced together from interviews, correspondence, essays she had written earlier in life, and my own memories. Her relationship with Marian Engel and Gwendolyn MacEwen, for instance, was completely pieced together from correspondence. The section on Fritz Leiber (who died four or five years before Judy) also had to be pasted together by scrounging through files and old interviews. Judy had begun her memoirs by writing in a first-person narrative, and so I decided to maintain her personal voice in the pieces I added.

One complicated problem reared its head when I realized that we hadn't captured anything on tape about Judy's everyday life. These things *were* perhaps too obvious to talk about formally. Because of this, I have had to leave out detailed information about her involvement with the Merrill Collection of Science Fiction, Speculation and Fantasy, the Performing Arts Lodge, her dear friends Maureen Gauthier and Valerie Alia, her attempts to reconcile with her oldest daughter, Merrill, and the remaining awful rifts between herself and people who were once close friends. I was also not able to include much about her life in Canada, including great stories about founding the Writers' Union and subsequent battles with Joyce Marshall and others against the "evils of bureaucracy." I got little on her stays in Jamaica or her love of jazz music, except a folder of fading photographs, some flyers and posters for concerts, a dozen tourist knick-knacks, and the short piece "Jamaica: A View from the Beach" (chapter 21).

Due to my lack of information and planning prior to her death, I was forced to leave out entire sections on people she loved, respected, and sparred with during the last decades of her life—such as the people at the Merrill Collection and PAL, John Robert Colombo, Jon Lomberg, Ron Weihs and Judith Sandiford, Stafford Beer, Barry Wellman, Candace Dorsey, Elisabeth Vonarburg, David Hartwell, and Phyllis Gotlieb, along with earlier loves such as J.G. Ballard, Forest Ackerman, and Ted Cogswell. I am sure there's another book (or two) to be written here. In the meantime, I decided that the best way to paint a picture of Judy's later years was to reprint a selection of letters to her best loved and not-yet-lost friends; thus the letters in chapter 24 to Kate MacLean, Virginia Kidd, and Valerie Alia—and beginning with some open letters that Judy wrote about once a year to update family and friends.

In the interests of consistency and clarity we have made minor editorial changes and corrections in Judith's unpublished writings and letters, and in the letters of others included here. In some cases, where the material either seemed irrelevant or obscure, we have made cuts in the letters (indicated by [...]). We have also imposed a standard style or format on the dates and addresses given in the letters.

For me, putting the book together has been a learning experience (which is what we call everything that isn't exactly "fun" but is nevertheless a good thing to do). To be fair, some of that experience was beautiful. My family's legacy of intense and strong women is now much easier to comprehend and accept gracefully. I can see clearly how the patterns repeat themselves and bind with individual spirits; and how they mutate. But much of the experience was difficult. There was the section on her future predictions, for instance. It was so depressing, I put it off as long as I could. I chopped it up and rearranged it, and then set it straight again. I didn't agree with what she was saying and felt like her words greatly reflected the loneliness of her last years. Still, when I came across her 1973 essay "Toronto Tulips Traffic and Grass: The Love Token of a Token Immigrant," I was dumbstruck by the way in which her political and moral viewpoints had so thoroughly succeeded in bouncing down through my mother's generation into mine. It was as if she were writing my own reactions to the violent June 15, 2001, Ontario Coalition Against Poverty protest at the Queen's Park provincial legislature building. I called my mother up immediately and commented on that fact. Her response was interesting: she said that Judy's mother had a similar socio-political analysis, and that no one could ever accuse Judy of softening in her old age. It's true. My grandmother fought injustice until the day her heart gave out.

After more than three years of struggling through the interviews and voluminous correspondence files,

and picking out pieces to add to the already existing material, I found the book was finally taking shape, culminating in a series of stories about the people and places Judy was connected to, and the projects she engaged in—through (as she says in "Transformations") "almost seventy-five years of a life in which almost all relationships and objectives combined literary, political, and personal intensities, inextricably interwoven."

Emily's sixteenth birthday party, November 1989, Toronto.  
From left: Martin Miranda, Julia Pohl-Miranda, Judith, Emily.  
*Juan Miranda*

When I think of Judy, I see stars. She was a person so singular, and possessed of such strength of spirit, that she burned brightly. Of course, those who knew her will remember that she never wore outfits with less than five contrasting colours, that she always left her *silver*-white hair ghost-wild, that she burped and swore freely and yelled and made mischief—just for the hell of it.

Judy loved so intensely that at times she seemed to me merely the sum of all the people and places that had entered her heart during three-quarters of a century. Her passion was not by any means extended only to people. Her microwave was lavished with the tenderness one might bestow on a favoured pet. The electronic cart she used in her later years was decorated with plastic shopping bags, and treasured for the increase in mobility it brought her.

She wasn't exactly the kind of grandmother every granddaughter dreams of. She never baked, had little interest in my boyfriends, didn't care if I had the flu, and would rather argue than utter warm encouragements any day. She smoked pot. She even bought me my own microwave—I believe because she was tired of feeding me whenever I visited.

Anyway, the raw truth is that I miss Judy dearly. And so, part of the difficulty in putting this book together came in the freshness of the stories, and her extravagance as a storyteller. Judy did not leave out details. She told stories about the people she loved, exactly the way she remembered them. (I found out later that many people remembered them differently.) While she was alive, we were close, and, later, listening to her voice on tape was like having her in the same room with me.

Working on someone else's autobiography—even if it was about my grandmother—was problematic, especially because sometimes I just didn't agree with her. Contrary to the predictions she made in "Daughters of Earth," we never were exactly the same people, and so I frequently found myself cringing while I, nevertheless, continued to type.

She was, at times, rather ornery, and extremely stubborn. After she died I found myself making tough choices about whether to censor her stories, however slightly, for the sake of people I love and respect dearly. At a certain point I realized that Judy's ghost would not strike me dead, and I chose to walk the diplomatic line of middle ground.

If I have left anything or anyone out, and I know already that I have, please Forgive me.

## PRELUDE

*'Tis better to have loved and lost  
than never to have loved at all.  
—Alfred, Lord Tennyson*

SADLY, RICHLY, LOVE OUTLIVES THE LOVER. People change, or don't change, just go different, go away. In the end, one of every pair must die first. If you live long enough, the only sure thing is that, one by one, your lovers leave. Is it hardest when they die or when they stay in place, no longer loving?

Every way to lose a lover is unbearable. But any way to lose a lover does not end the loving. Grief is

not knowing where to give the love that does not stop.

## TRANSFORMATIONS

*I don't read introductions myself: not ahead of time. Anything the author, or his friend or admirer, has to say about it may interest me after I have read the book. Occasionally, I go back to a preface partway through the book, hoping for some sort of background to place unfamiliar or difficult material in context; but that's rare, and there really ought to be a different label for that kind of introduction...*

*I understand that the basic function of the introduction is advertising. I am supposed to tell you how good the book is and make you want to read (buy) it. Quickly then—this is a good book.*  
—from Judith Merril, "Introduction," *SF: The Best of the Best*, 1967

AT THE TIME I SIT DOWN to write this introduction, *Better to Have Loved* is a collection of memoirs and mementos I have been working at, erratically and unevenly, for almost six years. It is filled with remembrances and reflections of people, places, events, and ideas I have loved and lost during almost seventy-five years of a life in which almost all relationships and objectives have combined literary, political, and personal intensities, inextricably interwoven.

Judith sitting in her favourite chair next to the stereo, in the Performing Arts Lodge apartment, Toronto, 1997. This photo was taken about four months before her death. *Imageries*

This book has been taking shape, slowly, through many transformations, from the first hint of an idea twenty years ago. I had been asked to write an "Appreciation" for a posthumous collection of Mark Clifton's stories, and I was reading my way through a fat correspondence file I had not opened for many years. (At the time such deaths had not yet become a commonplace of my old age.) I had met Mark personally only once, briefly, but for five years, in the 1950s, we had been fluent correspondents, friends, confidantes, fellow-thinkers, and critics of each other's work.

I was surprised both by the readability of the letters and by the freshness of much of the content (then twenty- five to thirty years old). I wrote the appreciation as an annotated selection of excerpts from his letters. That file led me to others, and I began to feel that some of the best writing I had ever done was in personal letters, rather than the carefully crafted prose of my public work. So the first idea of this book was that of a very slightly annotated "selected letters."

Then some of my (male) friends and compeers began publishing politely laundered autobiographies of their successes and I was snow-blinded by the bleach in the detergent. Here were lists of stories sold, banquets attended, speeches given, editors lunched, even wives married and divorced, with never a shriek or tear or tremor or orgasm, and hardly a belly laugh anywhere. My memory (notoriously bad for facts and figures, but usually good for character and dialogue) insists that in those down and dirty days of ghetto science fiction most of us were young, passionate, frail, tough, loving, quarrelling, horny human beings, testing ourselves against each other and the world. Somebody, I thought, should tell it like it was.

Some bodies were in fact beginning to do so, most notably Samuel R. Delany in his *Heavenly Breakfast* and Fritz Leiber in his autobiographical columns in an SF magazine. But neither of these writers had been involved in the science fiction community I entered in New York in the early forties; that "literary ghetto" spanning the thirties to the fifties, with its brilliant and intricately interactive population and its clear/mad insights into both human and technological evolution (before the possibilities of wealth and mundane prestige brought in less intense practitioners), which constituted a "movement" (literary and sociological, as in "Bloomsbury") of serious potential scholarly interest.

In January 1990 I had a last long visit with Fritz in San Francisco, during which we were videotaped in a memoirsque discussion of extraordinary candour. That same month in New York I talked at length with "Chip" Delany about his experiences with autobiographical work, and on the same trip I went to the

first birthday party of my (then) youngest relative, great-granddaughter Kelli MacDonald. When I came home I was planning, rather than just thinking about, memoirs. A year later, recovering unsatisfactorily from a heart attack, I got to work on the materials I had been uncovering. Heart surgery the following August left me with a born-again conviction that it was then or never.

Of course, the shape of the thing was changing again. I was living now on borrowed time, and looking back to less cautious and more energetic days. I kept rediscovering what a rich life my own (usually dirt-scratching, single-parent, underpaid-writer experience) had been. The book that had been meant to be about the worlds and people I passed through was becoming more about my joy in passage.

I was once a writer of science fiction; that means my practice has always been to make the environment as important as the characters in a story. So at one level the book that has been finding its shape since then is a bundle of oldie-but-goodie gossip for SF fans and also, of course, for lit-crits and academics. Now that the field is yielding up doctoral dissertations, people want to know stuff that Fred Pohl and Isaac Asimov, etc., never told them about how we lived, dressed, ate, argued, dated, mimeoed our manifestos, and (in some cases) learned step by slow step how to write our stories, and (in even fewer cases) how to make sure we got paid for them.

But some things do change, even in writers' habits. When I was a writer of fiction, nobody ever saw the work until I was completely finished. Now I found myself taking every opportunity to read bits and pieces to audiences and to show the work-in-progress to willing readers. And I learned some things I wasn't expecting.

For one thing, there are a lot of younger people out there trying to figure out, before it's entirely too late, where the hell we are going and (maybe) where we might like to go instead. Some of them realize that the ideas we were playing with back in our dirty little ghetto were often serious under the frequently Bat Masterson-variety of silliness. The basic fact is that an audience likes to have a native guide.

Then again, many young women (and a few young men) with little or no interest in the s F part of it really want to know just how far we have come, baby: what was it like for a "gender-bender" forty or fifty years ago, and particularly for one who is perceived as having "made it" in "a man's world"?

The interest does not limit itself to the gender issues. My life has been a history of significant alternative/subversive "movements." I was born into the early Zionist movement and moved myself as a teenager into the Trotskyism of the thirties and forties (the only political stance that was both anti-U.S.-imperialism and anti-Soviet-Communism). From there I moved on to emergent science fiction; then to anti-Vietnam protest and Canadian support to war resisters; which led to the Free University movement, hippie/yippie entanglements, tuning-in and turning-on: all of this accompanied (until they started yelling at us. "Honky, go home!") by involvements with Black issues.

Judith with her grandson, Tobias Pohl-Weary, Emily's brother, St. Catherines, Ontario, 1977.

*Walter Weary*

A NOTE TO THE READER: Editors are paid (however poorly) to deal with writers' obsessions. Readers must pay for this privilege. I do not wish to drive my readers mad (or away). I feel I must, however, warn readers right off that those who feel the need to know what-happened-next might find it uncomfortable to follow my obsessive path.

This is not an autobiography; these are memoirs of my loves, and my most ardent loves have almost always beer intertwined with the excitement of ideas. I can only mow through my life following my own (however idiosyncratic) trail of memory thought, and speculation.

I include, from time to time, chronological updates, fleeting mentions of date and place, and at the beginning of the book is a brief chronology of event that occurred during my life.

Judith Merrill (1997)

## ONE - IN THE BEGINNING

I BELIEVE I HAVE BEEN one of the world's luckiest people.

I feel this way in the face of broken marriages, chronic poverty, some cataclysmic love affairs, and the frequently expressed opinions of many people (who do not know me very well) that I have lived "a hard life." Among the varied reasons for this book is an effort to understand the nature of the magic, the charm, that lasted so long and now—now when they would say my life is "easier"—feels to be fading. Is it a magic fed only by hungers? A charm that fails in the face of repletion—grown daughters, grandchildren, rewards and honours?

I have had a fair, more than fair, number of friends and lovers: mostly men at first, but later mostly women. With all of them I was able to share, to an extraordinary degree, ideas, viewpoints, empathies, ecstasies, hopes, grim humour and grim humours, through written, oral, actional, and subliminal communication.

Most of these people were also writers (most of the rest were musicians), and some of them were also discerning and helpful readers. Some were not people at all, but places, books, music, activities, sensations, or, sometimes dearest of all, ideas. One is tempted to intone an honour roll. But literary logistics demand that my loves enter the narrative one at a time as they did in life—though not necessarily in the same sequence.

In the beginning, I was born to be a writer, and my identity has for so many years been defined, both by the outside world and by my inner consciousness, as a "science fiction writer." Though I have not written new fiction seriously for many years now, I feel I must establish what that odd label means to me. So I begin with the man who was "my editor," because it was he who supplied me with a working definition.

I think most successful writers (and other artists as well?) are so in part because they have found one special person—one ear, one eye—to whom at some vital level all their work is addressed; the mysterious partner who can always perceive what one meant to say, and so can tell whether one has succeeded in saying it.

My editor was a man named Anthony Boucher. That wasn't his birth name. Like me, he had different names at different times in different spaces. In the world of speculative fiction he was Tony Boucher, author, critic, editor, and cofounder of *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*, the first—and for many years the only—literary magazine in the field. His other enthusiasms included detective fiction, opera, religion, mathematics, martinis, and logical debate. He was the only person I ever knew who made me wonder—briefly, but seriously—if the Christian concepts of the soul and survival in Heaven might possibly contain some validity, simply because I had never known him to be wrong in an argument. He was one of the first true loves to leave me by dying—almost twenty-five years ago—and because he did somehow manage to believe in Heaven, I can still occasionally imagine I am addressing him when I write.

Tony liked to describe science fiction as "the literature of the disciplined imagination."

Shortly after his death in 1968, in a keynote address to the first Secondary Universe Conference, I described myself, in keeping with his concept, as a "romantic realist." I think this not-quite-oxymoron is central to the psychic profile of any good science fiction writer; if so, I was born to the trade because I had two grandfathers. I knew only one of them: Barney Hurwitch, my mother's father, who was a master tailor in Boston.

My father's father, Joseph Grossman, was a legend. He was the Great Rabbi of Philadelphia. Possibly he was only a great rabbi: perhaps the Jewish community of that city was strong enough in the early years of the century to have had more than one Great Rabbi. If so, Rabbi Grossman would surely have had an edge for legendary status, because all the members of his large family seem to have been either spiritually or artistically prominent. The Grossmans, when not rabbis, were writers, radical intellectuals, symphony musicians, or, at a minimum, teachers.

Judith as a young girl,  
about eight years old, circa 1931.  
*Courtesy of the Merrill estate*

Rabbi Grossman died shortly before my birth, and I was, officially, named after him: my birth certificate says "Josephine." But the ink was hardly dry—or so the legend goes—when the telegram arrived from my grandmother: "If it's a girl, don't name her after him." My parents heaved a sigh of relief and took advantage of a provision of the laws of the State of New York (designed for Catholics, who take an additional saint's name at confirmation) to call me Judith.

"Judith J." it says on all the school records. For half a century, roughly, I carried Joseph around encysted in my legal identity (until my Canadian citizenship papers made the pen name, by which I was generally known, my legal name).

In the early "Judith J." years, this grandfather seemed more trouble than he was worth. We moved a lot when I was a kid; I once figured out I was in nine different schools by Grade 6. Only one of those was in New York. In Boston and Philadelphia, every time my records arrived at a new school we had to prove again that Judith was indeed Josephine. Most of the bureaucratic hassles were fielded by my mother, but in Grade 4 I was somehow left to plead my own case. When I said, sensibly and respectfully (I thought), "But can't you see I was born?" I was slapped for my impertinence.

I did not love my unknown grandfather.

Later I heard bits of legend, such as surround all famous rabbis, and I am sorry now I never knew him. But as a child, I liked to keep my legends at a distance: Babylon, Greece, Camelot, Robin Hood; The Virginian (whom I otherwise loved) was a bit too recent. I was having problems enough with Shlomo's legend.

My father, Samuel Solomon Grossman—Shlomo—was adored. He was the youngest of a family of thirteen, all of whom adored him. My mother adored him. I adored him. The Jewish community within which he worked adored him. Oddly, I have yet to hear anything to indicate he didn't deserve all this love and admiration, although it is possible his dad, the Great Rabbi, might have had a different view. Shlomo was meant to carry on the family business, but halfway through Seminary he decided he did not actually have a calling and went to live in "bohemian" Greenwich Village and be a writer.

He abandoned the orthodoxy of his family, but not his Jewishness; he worked for the newly formed Bureau of Jewish Education, writing children's songs and plays; he worked for the Yiddish newspaper, the *Forverts*, as a columnist and drama critic; he was one of the founders of the Yiddish Art Theater; he translated the work of Sholem Aleichem, whose stories of Jewish life in Russia in the late nineteenth century were later loosely adapted for the musical *Fiddler on the Roof*.

Simcha, Judith's brother, who died at the age of three, circa 1924.  
*Courtesy of the Merrill estate*

At the education bureau Shlomo met Ethel Hurwitch, from Boston. They married and had a baby boy, named Simcha—Hebrew for "joy." For three years all went well; then, in the epidemic that followed World War I, Shlomo contracted encephalitis. He was in hospital when I was born, and from that time on the legend spiralled downward: Ethel was laid low with rheumatism; Simcha was hit by a car and killed; the quick wit and fluent phrases that had made Shlomo the white-haired boy of the Jewish cultural community dimmed in the aftermath of his disease. Broke, and broken, they went to live with Ethel's family. When I was six, Shlomo jumped out of a window. In 1929 window-jumping was the way to go.

Fifteen years later, when I had a daughter of my own, I wrote a very short story about that day. Rereading it now, I do not remember the events—but I remember remembering every word and gesture

at the time I wrote it. Words are strong magic: when I have written something out, I no longer have to carry it in my head; conversely, I am never sure what I think about a new idea until I have written it out. Here is what I wrote, when I was twenty-one, before I had decided to be a writer.

## PICTURE OF GRACE

*She couldn't go out and play because Daddy would be back very soon, and he had promised to bring her a wonderful surprise if he got the job, so Grace sat in the big chair with Mummy, and watched the other children playing in the backyard under the window.*

*When she got tired of that, she started asking Mummy what Daddy would bring. Would it be a picture book? And how big? And what kind of pictures?*

*After a while she realized Mummy was getting nervous again and she knew she better stop talking about the picture book. She was just trying to think of something else to do when the bell rang.*

*Grace practically rolled off the chair onto the floor, and scrambled to keep up with Mummy hurrying to the door. But Mummy got there first, and Grace heard her quick gasp and the loud sound of the breathless words before she could see that it was Grampa and Uncle William, and not Daddy at all.*

*"It's Mike! Something's happened."*

*Grampa and Uncle William pushed the door shut, and Mummy backed away before them until she was sitting on the couch, and they were standing over her, looking bigger than they really were. Somebody had motioned Grace over to the love seat in the corner of the room, where she knew she wasn't supposed to be able to hear them.*

*She sat there very quietly and heard Grampa say it.*

*"He's dead, Elsie. It was an accident."*

*He said it just like that, and Grace knew she had known all along that was what he had been going to say. The big tears started rolling very slowly down Mummy's cheeks, and Grace just sat there taking up space. She wanted to tell Grampa that he was wrong, and go over and tell Mummy it was all right. She thought she would do it in just a minute, but she didn't.*

*She just sat there and pretended she hadn't heard. She knew they hadn't meant her to hear, and she knew if she had she ought to be crying. She remembered how she had cried for hours and hours when Gramma died, and now it was her own Daddy, and nothing was happening.*

*She sat there in desperation, on the love seat in the far corner of the room, wondering what she would do when they told her, wondering why she didn't cry.*

*Then Mummy called from the sofa, with the big tears still coming down her cheeks though she wasn't crying out loud.*

*"Grace, honey, did you hear?"*

*"No," she lied, and it was quite easy, except that her voice sounded very loud, and she was sure Grampa knew she was lying.*

*"Come here, dear."*

*Obediently she got up and crossed the room. She stood very close to her mother, and heard her say the words.*

*"Daddy's dead, Grace. He got hit by a car"*

*Then Mummy's face got all twisted up, and her whole body was shaking with sobs. Uncle William was pulling out a very large white handkerchief and Grace tried to pat Mummy's hair. She was beginning to understand now. Daddy was dead. There would be no picture book. No surprise. No new job, and no wonderful smile and hug when he got home.*

*She sat down and put her arm around her mother. She found it is really very easy to cry when you try.*

We had been living in Boston with my grandfather Barney and my spinster aunt Nan for a year, more

or less, when this happened. I was not allowed to go to the funeral, and nobody told me the truth. They said he'd fallen down some stairs and hit his head, but I knew better. I knew the "accident" was because my father wasn't making any money. So he had made a dummy and thrown it down the stairs so he could go away on his own and earn a lot of money and come back. I put myself to sleep with that every night for a year before I gave up on it. (I was eighteen before I found out again what it was I had agreed not to hear.)

My private fantasy faded, but the public legend didn't. All the time I was growing up, at holiday gatherings, and Zionist events, and summer camp and Hebrew School, sooner or later someone would come over and pat my head or tilt up my chin, and say—once more with feeling—"So this is Shlomo Grossman's daughter!?"

My Zaidy Barney was the antidote. Nobody adored Barney, and he didn't adore anybody. He was a tailor, and all the men in his family had been tailors, back in Babroisk, in Lithuania.

His oldest brother, William, came over to Boston first, opened his tailor shop, and, one by one, brought the other brothers over to work for him. Barney was the master tailor; with his designs and cutting, William eventually opened a women's wear specialty shop on Beacon Street. William got rich; Barney worked for him. Barney was highly skilled and decently paid, and both he and my Aunt Nan worked right through the whole Depression, but Barney was just too irreverent to get rich.

We could talk to each other. When he was sick for a long time, I was his favourite company because I wasn't unduly respectful and we found the same things funny. He was practical, iconoclastic—probably secretly atheist—and endlessly inventive. When I asked him how his hair got so white, he said it used to be blond but he washed it too much. When I asked how come a Jew had blond hair and blue eyes, he said, "There must have been a Cossack in the woodpile."

All the others of his generation talked an inflected Yiddishized English, but Grampa spoke colloquially. When he first came over, he told all the girl machine operators in William's shop to slap him every time he said something wrong. He sat up there cross-legged on the master tailor's table and got giggling slaps till he could speak Boston English.

I remember only one real clash. My mother and father had both imbued me with Zionism; after Shlomo's death we were always about to go to Palestine (not yet Israel) and live in a kibbutz, and I was a dead-serious Hebrew student. One year I realized that Grampa Barney was skipping whole sections of the readings when he presided at the Seder, the ritual Passover feast, and I called him on it. I guess the only thing Joseph and Barney shared was a passion for language, but even there they were at opposite poles.

My favourite Rabbi Grossman story was one I heard from my first mother-in-law, Sara, who grew up in Philadelphia. Sara had a brother named Ben who was very pious as a child, and who in fact grew up to be a rabbi. One day when Ben was nine years old, his mother sent him to the butcher on Friday morning to buy the chicken for the Erev Shabbos dinner. They were very poor, and Friday night was the only time they had meat. On the way home Ben started to worry; that chicken had not looked just right to him. He took it back to the butcher: "I don't think this chicken is kosher." The butcher told him to get out and go home. He started off again, worried some more, and went instead to the neighbourhood rabbi, showed the chicken, and was told it had not been properly killed.

Ben was desperate. He knew there was no more money for another chicken; he was afraid to go back to the butcher; he could not go home and knowingly expose the whole family to sin. He decided this was a job for Rabbi Grossman.

It was about six miles to the rabbi's home. Ben walked all the way, carrying the chicken. When he got there, the rebbitsin, Mrs. Grossman, answered the door and told him crossly that the rabbi couldn't be disturbed, he was preparing for Erev Shabbos.

Ben burst into tears. She relented. The rabbi appeared, heard the story, looked at the chicken, nodded, and went into a back room. He came out with a giant volume of *The Law*, opened it, put on his prayer shawl, and read at high speed for ten minutes. He slammed the book shut, wrapped up the chicken, and said, "There. It's kosher."



I got the iconoclasm from Barney, and the love of ritual from Joseph; the need to communicate clearly from one and the razzle-dazzle from the other; hands-on practicality here, love of abstruse theory there; I was pre-programmed to be a romantic realist and write stories of the disciplined imagination.

## TWO – A MEMBER OF THE UNIVERSE

A MAN WHO LOVED ME ONCE described his inner image of me: a little girl with her nose pressed against the outside of the bakery window, feasting on all the inaccessible delights inside.

The image felt like a fit: more than that, it felt good. It is indeed where I am most at home, where I feel—uncomfortably—most myself: out there looking in at heaven.

Dorchester, in Boston, 1934: I was eleven. Once again, my mother and I were living with my grandfather Barney and my Aunt Nan.

Our house was at the top of a crescent that rose from the main street and curved back down: a two-family house owned by a large Italian family who made wine and baked bread every week and raised vegetables and fruit and chickens in the backyard.

I had just been to the Saturday movie matinee to see *The Little Minister*, a 1934 film starring Katharine Hepburn and based on the James M. Barrie story about a Scottish pastor falling in love. It was a big reading year for me, and I had just recently devoured all of Sir James Barrie, most famous for his "Peter Pan" character.

Judith's head cut and pasted against an image of the Milky Way, circa 1958. She appears to be about thirty-five years old.

*Unknown origins,  
courtesy of the Merrill estate*

To walk home from the movie house along the streets was half a mile or so, but I took the shortcut across two backyards. It was dusk, just—perhaps late fall or early spring?—a magical light. I stood on the top rail of the fence separating the sandy yard behind me and our chicken-and-garden-filled yard, and my eyes were full of tears, my throat was all lumped up. The tears were terrible sadness and exultant joy and everything, and I joined the universe.

That wasn't the only time. If you're going to be a member of the universe you have to keep joining. You never know when it will happen—Ornette Coleman's "Lonely Woman" in the Vanguard in New York ... mist in the mountains of central Japan ... certain rare secret moments of lovemaking ... parts of Beethoven's "Seventh" ... a meteor shower at midnight by the side of the highway in the Texas panhandle ... first sunlight at dawn on the waters of Montego Bay ... Duke Ellington's "Diminuendo" and "Crescendo in Blue" ... sometimes city lights coming on at twilight, in New York, San Francisco, Toronto ... the home-birth of my youngest grandson ... LSD with a beloved friend in an orange grove in Florida ... a clear soprano voice, a cappella, singing "L'cha Dodee"—"Come, O Sabbath Queen"—from the last row of wooden seats under the great tree where we had Saturday morning services at Camp Tabor—most often outdoors or with music or both, but where- and however, a thrill races along all your nerves and a smile explodes from your very centre onto your face.

*The Little Minister*/back-fence time was not really the first, but it was the first time I knew that I was joining the universe.

I have a thick folder of fragments in my files. One of them is from my first try at writing about this; no date, but it must have been 1969 or 1970, shortly after I moved out of Rochdale College in Toronto.

*I have never been able to feel quite at home in any of the restricted-membership clubs. That's a tautology of course, because all clubs are membership-restricted: that's what they're all about. So what I mean is, anything less than the universe seems like too damn less. Once, twice, three*

*times, I found clubs that felt as if they included all I knew of the universe. They had people in them with some of that tear-shimmering vision, and each of them let me feel comfortable and at-home inside for a while—a place a little smaller than the whole starry-skied cosmos to settle in—a place, say, to look out the window from. But the thing about a window is, it's in a wall. All clubs are restricted. After a while you either settle for some part of the universe, a corner somewhere with perhaps some gorgeous or instructive views—or else you find out little by little, and with a terrible acceptance of loneliness, that all the walls you can really stand to live with are already built into your skin.*

*Any corner is only a corner.*

We had the top floor and attic in that house on the crescent, and there was a little square cupola on top—what they used to call a "Widow's Walk" in New England. It was my place. The only way to get in was a trap door at the top of a ladder and none of the adults could—or would?—go up there. It had windows around all four sides, and the house was on a bit of a rise; no matter which way I turned, I could see what seemed to be all the world, except for one small arc where high hills cut off the horizon. At age eleven I found that it was enough to look out at, and looking down felt good in those days too. (Now I prefer to look up.)

Eleven was a big year, in several different ways. I fell in love for the first time, with Errol Flynn as Captain Blood. (I was reading my way straight through the Rafael Sabatini shelf in the library.) Then I read myself out of the children's section, and my mother went down and intimidated the librarian, so I could take out adult books. I read my first Thorne Smith novel, *Skin and Bones*, and my first Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*. (The librarian did question that one, but I assured her it was on my school reading list; I thought I was taking out *The Good Earth*.)

I started smoking. My mother never noticed while I was stealing her cigarettes, but when I bought a pack of my own and she found them in my old doll carriage in the attic, she blew up.

I got my first bra, after some boys in the schoolyard yelled something about "sandbags." With it came, of course, in those days, the first girdle—something called a "pouf." I got my first period, and a stern talk about not letting boys "touch" me now, because I could get pregnant. And I got my first boyfriend: Cyril Hirsch Brown (!!! Where did that come from? I can't remember the names of people I met last week!!!), who took me to Open House Day at M.I.T.

I got an astronomy book. It wasn't from the library; somebody gave it to me; it was my own. It was beautiful, with unusually glossy pages and glittering star photographs. I think it was a book for young people by Sir James Jeans, but I may be confusing it with any number of star and cosmology books from later years, because the whole thing was traumatic. I loved it until I got to the Infinite Universe in Chapter 7. Infinity, the book said, was beyond measurement. I did not understand.

There were a few adults in my life who had sometimes given me usable answers to difficult questions. I asked each of them, and they all said the same thing: the universe was indeed infinite, and "infinite" meant "beyond counting."

Before I tangled with Chapter 7 I had almost decided not to be either a lawyer or an architect, but an astronomer. I gave it up. I never finished the book. (Did I throw it away or give it away?) I was troubled and confused, but more than anything else I was angry.

Astronomy clearly was a clever and cruel hoax. How was one to live in a universe that was beyond perception, beyond numeration, beyond conceptualization? Beyond even definition, because nobody could tell me what infinity was, only what it wasn't. And that answer was simply absurd: you can always keep counting—just add one more, indefinitely—indefinitely, if you have (as in an infinite universe) infinite time to keep counting!

I had neither the information nor the will to contradict all these authorities. I was, quite simply, terrified. So I devised my own cosmography.

I constructed a mental model of the universe composed of two infinities cancelling each other out: the scientific and the theological. I did not believe in the mystic/anthropomorphic biblical God; no more than did any intelligent adult I knew. Now I disbelieved equally in their mystic/"scientific" cosmology. The

universe is "infinite"? "Infinite" means more than we can count or measure? Fine! Outside that infinitude is a Great Big Box—much too big and remote for us to perceive or count or measure it; and on the Box sits God, in a rocking chair, white-bearded, stern, kindly, rocking.

I remember the relish with which I used to describe my little model, and the silences that ordinarily followed my scientific heresy. They never were quite sure it was a joke.

After a while I was able to keep on joining the universe.

### **THREE - HIGH SCHOOL**

ONE OF MY MANY childhood moves was from Boston to New York just before my sophomore year of high school, because my mother had been offered a job running a place called the Bronx House, which was a settlement home for young offenders. It was the first job she had been offered that was not as a dietitian.

I loved returning to New York. I didn't like the settlement house so much. My mother had a room there, and initially I shared it with her. We had already been through several live-in job situations where I had been uncomfortable as her daughter, and to my mind this one was even more awful. Living in a settlement house meant I had to deal with a lot of potential delinquents.

Eventually I complained so much that she found me a place to live a couple of blocks away from her with a woman who was, in fact, the writer Jack London's widow. She was a real thrill: European, ultra-clean, ultra-severe in her approach to everything. There was no conceivable way I could live there and satisfy her. I was always too dirty, too messy. Inevitably, I ended up back at the settlement house with my mother.

I did not love the Bronx House. But high school I loved from the beginning. The Bronx neighbourhood was a new and different world for me—I was a sponge soaking up the ambience, not a cultural connoisseur. I don't know how to describe it exactly; there's nowhere else like the Bronx, and it was nothing like it is now.

Judith around the age of sixteen, circa 1939.  
*Courtesy of the Merrill estate*

Mainly, of course, I was concerned with what was going on at school. I learned to fit in quickly, but still I felt very much like an outsider. When I first came to New York, I had a Boston accent, which sounds affected to people in the Bronx. The first semester I was in high school, my way of speaking was being influenced by living in the Bronx—bit by bit my accent was changing. I was anxious to sound like the rest of the kids.

I remember one particularly humiliating day when I was reciting in geometry class. In the same sentence I said half with a Boston accent and then half with a Bronx accent. The entire class broke up in five minutes of hilarity. The laughter seemed to go on and on and on.

The other kids were convulsing because they had just discovered that, as they suspected, my accent was fake and phoney. All because I had slipped this once. As a teenager, you don't make mistakes about that kind of laughter. When it happens, you know what it's about. It's about hating and fearing smart ones. I knew it even then.

In retrospect, I owe a lot to that moment because I stood up there in front of the class while everybody else was laughing hysterically, and the teacher just looked around bewildered (he was a little old man with chalk dust all over his jacket), and I swore to myself, "I am going to learn to speak in such a way that no one will ever know where I'm from."

And I did.

In Boston, where I was living before the Bronx, there was a school, the Boston Public Latin School, which had a long and honourable history. It was the first secondary school in the colonies, and had always been a college prep school.

A companion school, called the Girls' Latin School, was opened. To get in you had to have a high average from grade school. It was located downtown and drew the best students from the entire city. For my mother, it was an honour and an achievement that I got selected to go to that school. I don't know if she was impressed, exactly, but she was pleased.

No boys for me, then. It was all very academic. The best part of Girls' Latin, to be honest, was the gym classes. It was the only time I ever went to a school where the phys ed was for girls, instead of imitation boys. We didn't play baseball. We had tennis, swimming, fencing, archery, and dance. It was extraordinary to finally be doing things I wasn't naturally bad at. I could never catch or throw a ball, I could never run well, I was always the last one chosen for any team. While I was at Girls' Latin, I found out I was a good swimmer, and good at water sports.

I also found it interesting that everyone at the school was a good student—you were expected to be good—so we didn't have a lot of drag in the classes. It was an all-girls' school, and we were expected to be able to achieve.

I don't remember any of the teachers from the girls' school. There was one teacher who read poetry marvellously, but I don't remember her name or recall her doing anything else that was interesting. I don't think I learned much there honestly.

It was great going to a girls' school for those two years. But it was much greater going to Morrows High School afterwards.

Throughout my two years at Morrows, I had some memorable teachers. (I had some bad teachers too, but that's to be expected. In comparison to the bad, the good teachers were even more of a surprise and delight.)

Geometry came to me like water. There was the teacher who was totally in love with math but couldn't teach for shit. Fortunately, I didn't need anyone to teach me geometry, so we were really on each other's wavelength. According to the rest of the class (and this is probably the best example I can give of how everybody really does hate the smart girl) I was too smart in geometry. I made them look bad. I couldn't be bothered memorizing everything. We were supposed to memorize both the axioms and the theorems and then work out problems. The axioms were fairly obvious, but I never learned all the theorems. I just worked everything out each time by starting with the axiom and working my way through. After a while I would have my hand up for every question, but the teacher wouldn't call on me until he was sure no one else could do it.

The Latin teacher, Mr. Coyle, was Irish, close to retirement, and a dedicated classicist. Morrows High did not offer Greek, but Mr. Coyle volunteered to give private classes. Anytime there were at least four students who wanted to learn Greek, they could just come to his office and have a private class there. Mr. Coyle's heart broke when I wouldn't take the Quenelle exams. I had had two years of Latin at the Girls' Latin School, and then two more years at Morrows High. At the end of the second year at Morrows, I took a regional mid-term exam that was really supposed to be taken after three years. I got 96 per cent. Mr. Coyle talked me into repeating the class so that I could take the exam again the following year and get 100 per cent, because the average got sent out for consideration for state scholarships. Mr. Coyle was also active in the student government, so he was really my advisor, my guidance director, and everything else. I disappointed him bitterly when I went to City College. That wasn't what he wanted for me. He wanted me to become a person who studied languages, or an academic. I had never the faintest inclination to become an academic, but he was a wonderful man.

Another person who left a great impression on me was my economics teacher. He was young, maybe in his first or second year of teaching. It was only a one-semester course. When we got onto the subject of yellow journalism, he said, "Now there is one publisher in this country, whose name I will not mention, but whose initials spell R.A.T." And the whole class started yelling, "Hearst! Hearst! Hearst!" We were referring to the head of the *New York Journal*, William Randolph Hearst.

Then there was the history teacher who knocked my self-esteem down a bit. When his class started, I found the textbook incredibly fascinating and read the whole thing in one week. He quickly realized that I had read the entire book, and knew all the material. He required us to keep a notebook, with notes on each week's assignment of so many pages of reading, but he excused me from this, since I had already

done the work. He said to me, "Judith, just be sure you review before class. Glance through the relevant pages and see what the lesson is going to be about."

Of course I never reviewed any of it. Then, when we were up to the French revolution, he asked a couple of people to tell him about the fall of the Bastille. Nobody seemed to know anything about it. After a time he turned to me and said, "Now Judith, will you please tell us in your most dramatic and literary terms about the fall of the Bastille?"

I remembered nothing of that section of the book. I did remember riffling through a copy of *Life* magazine from Bastille Day the previous summer, and I remembered a lot of the pictures, so I told them all this fascinating story about the mobs in cars storming the Bastille and tearing it down stone by stone and freeing all the prisoners.

At the end of my story, the teacher said, "Very interesting story, Judith, I wonder where it happened."

My high-school boyfriend was a guy named Willy, who was a year ahead of me. He was an artist who grew up to be an economist. He was already quite involved in economics while we were still in high school. His parents were from Czechoslovakia or Poland, but he had grown up in the United States. His home life was European intellectual. His mother was into all kinds of health foods, and Willy and I were given a great deal of freedom: he was supposedly painting, so nobody would interrupt us.

We did a lot of petting and making out but I remember us having this entirely serious conversation on a park bench. We had been debating whether we should go all the way. Finally we both agreed that although he, being a boy, needed some release I, being a girl, was better off postponing anything like that. Ultimately we decided he should go find sex somewhere else.

It was agreed upon between us, but I think it was probably my idea. It was a painful decision, but it seemed to make the most sense. I would have been fifteen or sixteen when we came to this conclusion. (When I was seventeen I met Danny Zissman and we didn't actually screw until after we decided to get married.) It had nothing to do with him being respectful. It had to do with what we thought was appropriate and proper in the entire context of the politics of physiology.

Willy got me involved in student government. He was school president in his last year there and I was also involved. I don't remember what rank I attained, but I wasn't that interested in being a power figure. Willy was—he went to City College initially, but he wound up at Princeton as a really hot-shot economist in the Institute for Advanced Studies.

I had a tumultuous and lonely adolescence, and I do not confess that easily. I didn't know I was good-looking, and therefore nobody around me knew I was good-looking. Some guys were specifically interested in my mind, but when they told me that I was good-looking, I knew they were either lying or else inflamed with passion, so I never got any satisfaction out of it.

I hear that lots of girls languish their way through high school without a boyfriend. But I didn't seem to know any. Everybody else had a boyfriend. It was the Depression, you understand, there was nothing else to do.

I didn't "date" any of the guys I knew in high school. Willy and I didn't really go out on dates. We just hung out together. We spent most of our spare time at his house, or my house, or in parks. We didn't go out on real dates, and for me, at the time, real dates were where it was at.

The first real date I ever had was with a guy named Charlie Starr. He was a couple of years ahead of me in high school, and he invited me to his high-school prom. Charlie had a big crush on me. He was an oaf, basically—a nice agreeable oaf, but an oaf nonetheless.

We went to the prom with two other couples. Every year the high-school prom was held at the Astor Hotel, so before it started we took the bus down from the Bronx to Jack Dempsey's, which was a bar on 49th Street, and ordered three cocktails. We passed them around so that everybody got a taste. Then the boys filled their pockets with peanuts and we went off to the prom by taxi, even though it was only seven blocks away, so that everyone would see us arrive in a cab.

That trip was Charlie's first time out of the Bronx. I used to go downtown once in a while to buy tickets for standing room at a theatre. I also used to go downtown to the museums. I knew how to

behave. Charlie had never been out of, probably, a thirty-block circuit around the Bronx, and he didn't find this at all odd. He was a Jewish boy from the Bronx who was going to grow up to be a more contemporary version of my Uncle Al, who had a factory and was a patriarch. Why he got fixated on me I will never know.

But that was my first experience of dating. I had been to the movies with a few guys, but always in the afternoon after school, never as an evening date. After that I had a couple more dates with Charlie, but nothing as memorable as the trip we made to Jack Dempsey's and the Astor.

It was the Depression, so nobody had any money, and dates cost money. There were four or five girls in my home-room class who dated regularly. These were the queens of the class. For some reason, the fact that I had no real dates was significant and, indeed, torturous for me.

Willy and I used to ride the 5th Avenue open-top buses all the way downtown. The route flowed near where I lived. There were two variations of this route. One took you down to Washington Square and back, giving you about three or four hours all together of necking on top of the bus. The other route took you down to Times Square.

To put things in context a bit, the 5th Avenue bus was a pretty expensive "date" because it was a ten-cent fare to go down to Washington Square and back. All the other bus fares were only five cents. The great thing about the bus (and what made us take it again and again and again) was that on 42nd Street, in between the burlesque houses, there was a hot dog stand where you could get a hot dog and a malted for a nickel. (Also, in New York at that time, the only place you could neck, other than the movies, was on the top of the 5th Avenue bus.) So for thirty cents Willy and I could pay the 5th Avenue bus fare, spend ten cents on food, and have an entire glorious evening of pleasure.

However, I could never tell my friends, "I have a date for Saturday night. I'm going to dress up for my date. We're going to such-and-such a place." It was more like Willy and I would already be hanging out, doing whatever we normally did, and we would figure out whether we had enough money to ride the bus. We always pooled our money, if we had any, and the person with money was more often me than him.

There is one other important high-school guy who was much more significant to me than any of my boyfriends, although he was never technically one himself. The name I knew him by was Joe Smith. Joe was the ranking young communist at Morrows High. He was the organizer for the American Student Union, the front organization for the Young Communist League.

At that point I had not yet encountered the Trotskyists, so I was still a socialist. Joe and I spent most of our time together arguing politics. It was the time of the Moscow trials, and I used to describe myself as the only kid at Morrows High who went directly from socialist to Trotskyist without passing through communist. This was because nothing in this world would have seduced me into the Stalinists—not just because of the Moscow trials, but because the tyranny in the Soviet Union was obvious to all those of us who cared to see it. I knew even then that Stalin's regime was the opposite of everything my socialist principles were concerned with.

Camp Tabor: Judith's Zionist girls' summer camp, circa 1938. She is fourth from the right in the third row up.  
*Courtesy of the Merrill estate*

That said, Joe and I enjoyed each other's company without any element of sexuality being involved. We were straight politics, all the way. We went to see *Snow White* when it came out, and even though we were both absolutely gripped by the movie, when it was over we sat down and hashed out a whole political analysis of it.

Later, after high school, Joe told me that he had been assigned by the Young Communists to go to Morrows High. He also told me that the name he was using was a false one he had created to use while

organizing.

It is important to remember that the entire context of my high-school time was a political one—fully half of the students in that school were confounders of welfare. The strongest single group in the school was indeed the American Student Union.

back: Signatures of all the Camp Tabor attendees.

There is one example from back in my early high-school days where a guy didn't initially run from me. At my girls' summer camp we had Saturday morning Shabbat services, and all the boys from a camp across the lake would come to join us because they didn't have any services over there. Occasionally we also had dances with these boys. At the dances I was a complete wallflower. Nobody ever danced with me, except one of the boys' counsellors named Bob, who seemed dedicated to teaching me some of the flirting skills I didn't know anything about. He was the sweetest guy in the world. He tried to show me that I knew how to dance, and he did mock-gallant things such as offering me a flower down on his knees.

Meanwhile I had become friends with one boy who was quite nerdish, because we were both left out most of the time. It seemed to me that he was not totally stupid, so one day when he came over to services I lent him my copy of *Das Kapital*. I think this might be what piqued Bob the counsellor's interest in me.

However, a couple of weeks later two other boys brought the book back to me with the message that my so-called friend didn't want to talk to me any more. I think it was because a counsellor (not Bob) had seen him reading the book and told him to return it immediately to whoever gave it to him.

The funny part is that these other two boys who had to bring the book back to me were visibly curious, and wondering, "What is this stuff? What kind of girl can this be?" They weren't analyzing anything on a political level, they just had a kind of extreme curiosity.

## **FOUR-WHAT KIND OF FEMINIST AM I? (A SHORT HISTORY OF SEX)**

MY MOTHER RAISED ME to be a man. I don't mean she dressed me in boys' clothes, or fought to get me onto boys' teams. Quite otherwise. She scorned athletics. And being a tailor's daughter herself, she made over good-fabric hand-me-downs for me and made them beautiful. (But not me; I wasn't beautiful.)

My mother came to Boston from Russia with her parents when she was five. Soon she was assistant mother to six younger siblings. She was a reader, but for the eldest daughter of hard-working immigrant parents, post-secondary education was a romantic dream. She did manage to take a couple of extension courses at Harvard with philosopher and psychologist William James after she started working in the family dress shop. She was a bluestocking, a suffragette, and one of the founders of Hadassah. I have to *feel* back for memories through the years when I did not want to hear anything she said. I would guess she had little use for other women, and no use at all for being one. Although she was beautiful in the style of the day, she remained a spinster till the advanced age of thirty.

She never trained me to hide my light. I was encouraged to argue analytically, to assert my opinions, to demonstrate in every possible way how smart I was. Mom kept telling me it was too bad I was so plain, too bad I had no talent for music or art, too bad I was no good at sewing or cooking—but then I didn't need any of those things, did I? I was smart, and I could write.

I didn't know I was supposed to need a man's protection, because I never had it. I wanted to have "dates" like other girls, but the few times I actually went out on them I felt stiff and awkward—and usually bored. I wasn't lonely; there were always boys around, almost all my friends were boys. I did send away for free makeup samples, but I never let my mother know, and I hardly used them, because I had

nobody to try them out on.

I didn't want anything my mother wanted. When I was fifteen I realized she meant for me to be a writer, and I even stopped doing any serious writing. I didn't start again until much later, when I was a mother myself and living far away from my mother.

My mother was always righteous, perhaps even puritanically so, about giving me full sex information when I was small. But she warned me not to share my information too freely, since many parents did not tell their kiddies these things. (I was utterly astonished, in conversations with schoolmates, to discover this was true: even in the third and fourth grades there were kids who didn't know where babies came from.) I felt privileged.

Most of her information was clinically correct, but as she (presumably) observed me approaching menarche, she began to get a little skittish. Though now that I think about it, the bits of misinformation she fed me were probably more honest errors than actual evasions. She took pains to create occasions where I would see her in the bathroom during her period, and to make sure I observed the use of belt-and-pad. We don't know exactly why the bleeding occurs, she said, but it has something to do with "washing out poisons." She intimated that I might be starting to get "unwell" (does anyone still use that once-common term?) myself, and warned me that I must now become very careful not to let boys touch me, because I would soon be able to get pregnant.

And wouldn't you know? Just weeks after that impressive warning, my cousin Danny (thirteen to my eleven, a man of the world, whose father owned an electric-stuff factory—very glamorous to me, I guess my first true love)—relayed a request from his friend, Dwight, who wanted to know if I would fuck? I was saved from having to ask what the word meant. I knew at least it involved "touching," so I said with sincere apology that Mummy had told me I mustn't let boys touch me any more because I might have a baby. I felt bad about it on two counts: I hated refusing Danny anything, and I really wanted to find out what fucking was—but I had promised.

Of course, I knew all about intercourse. I just mean that I still hadn't figured out how a penis got into a vagina, and I certainly didn't know about fucking.

Ethel and Samuel (Shlomo) Grossman, Judith's parents, circa 1920.  
*Courtesy of the Merrill estate*

Judith with her first husband, Dan Zissman, circa 1941.  
*Courtesy of the Merrill estate*

In high school I had three friends, all boys, two of them at different times in the role of "boyfriend." I knew they were attracted to me because of my mind. It had to be that, because I didn't have a pretty face or a cute figure or cute clothes. I saw the tricks and wiles girls and boys were practising on each other and despised them. In retrospect, when I have looked at old snapshots, it is clear I had it inside out. I wasn't "cute" (a very important word in those days), and I didn't play by girls' rules, but I was somewhere between good-looking and beautiful, and I had a sexy body. It wasn't that those three boys liked me for my mind. It was that they were the only three who were not terrified by my mind, and could therefore enjoy (or try to enjoy) my body.

I met my first husband at a Trotskyist Youth Fourth of July picnic in Central Park. His name was Danny Zissman, and he was tall and blond and witty and handsome and we fell instantly, madly, moon-July in love. At the time we met there was a war coming. By the end of summer we were determined to be married. Both families were nervous, for identical/opposite reasons: they knew how we had met and neither of us looked Jewish. But when the Zissmans found out I was Rabbi Grossman's



granddaughter, I could do no wrong. I was seventeen, and a virgin. He was twenty-one and likewise. We didn't hardly even think about Doing It until we had decided to get married. It turned out to be a lot of fun.

Sex, I mean, not marriage. I have been married three times, and almost married one other time. The first marriage lasted seven years, the second one three, and the almost-marriage and then the third marriage just one year apiece. They were, I'm pleased to say, four quite different men, so that wasn't the problem. By the third time I was married, I knew what at least part of the problem was, and I watched it starting to happen on the way back from the Justice of the Peace.

There are no quick fixes for this problem, nothing slogans or laws or sisterhoods can command. The only solution is generations. Every one of us has at least one Role Model, or maybe Rule Model says it better. For some of us, from big happy families, for instance, it is complex, involves much more than one role/rule, and is almost unbreakable. For those of us like myself, from "dysfunctional" families, the number of roles is reduced, and sometimes the possibilities for remodelling are greater. But for most people there are clear unquestioned images of Father, Mother, Husband, and Wife, and when we assume those roles as we mature, we step, unquestioning, into the model.

In some societies, marriages are put together by specialists—arrangers who examine the models in the two families, and pair young men and women who will recognize and conform to each other's role or desired image. In our way of doing things, two people may live together for a dozen years, and only after they formalize the arrangement do they discover that their meanings for Wife and Husband are, so to speak, in different languages. Or two people who managed that first shift quite nicely may find when they add a baby that Mother and Father have no relationship to each other.

Although I desperately wanted to be a boy when I was younger, now I am not at all sure I would prefer to have the restraints that are put on men over those that people have attempted to put on me as a woman. Bear in mind, of course, that I am speaking from a middle-class perspective, and that this is not necessarily true for a working-class woman.

For years, many of the sexual experiences I wound up having were the result of meeting someone with whom there was an enormous amount to exchange; a great deal to be learned on both sides. In most cases, we almost needed to get rid of the sexual tension in order to free up all the rest of the stuff and be able to just talk. Sometimes it was exactly that calculated, but most of the time we just shared the feeling that everything we were exchanging was good. There was no sense of having to plan for the future. We did not ask each other questions like, is this love? Is this going somewhere? Do we want to make a commitment?

It's just that I truly believe one of the best places to talk is in bed. With the exception of three or four relationships in my life, almost every one was a mixture of these things: the sex wouldn't have been as good if the intellectual part wasn't happening; and the intellectual element wouldn't have been as enriching if the sex didn't free it up.

I find it really hard to present this opinion today. In the present gender-political scene, as long as it's heterosexual, it's almost heresy to say that it can be a valuable experience to be involved intellectually or professionally with someone you're sleeping with. There's an expectation that it must always be exploitative on one end or the other.

It was easier to present it in the forties and fifties, when the thought of a woman going to bed with whomever she wanted was already so outrageous that the idea she might be learning something was ameliorating rather than intensifying.

Now, if you suggest it's a good way to get an education, all kinds of ugly undertones crawl into it.

At a tribute to my life that was held a few years ago in Toronto, science fiction writer Spider Robinson was one of the speakers. He started out his speech by saying that after he was invited to come, he began to pull his thoughts together by finding older fans whenever he went to a science fiction convention and asking them for anecdotes about me. He found that almost all the anecdotes from the early years were in one way or another naughty-minded, like, "Well, she slept with everybody ..."

Science fiction authors Spider Robinson and Samuel Delany at the tribute to Judith's life at the International Authors' Festival, Harbourfront Centre, Toronto, 1992.

*Albert S. Frank*

I found this sort of interesting, because I was unaware of it at the time. There is only one man who ever said it to my face, and made me stop to think. His implication was that the only reason I was selling my fiction was that I was sleeping with the editors.

At the time, I did a little check-off list, and discovered that there were four men who happened to be editors that I had slept with. Three of them were guys who didn't buy stories from me anyway. (I'm sure that had nothing to do with sleeping with them!) One of them was someone I slept with often, and kept selling stuff to.

Spider said that when he asked for little humorous stories, he thought he would get anecdotes about some of my viewpoints with which other people really disagreed. He was stunned that all the stories he was getting revolved around sleeping around, so he started analyzing each story as if the telling itself was terrible behaviour. That's when he realized that the stories were basically about things everybody does nowadays—the main thing seemed to be that I was doing them too soon.

I didn't do that much sleeping around, so I find myself reacting defensively, much the way I would have if I had known what people were saying at the time. But now my defensiveness is for a different reason: I feel defensive in the face of women who are convinced that all heterosexual gender politics are exploitative.

I suppose, in my life, there have been times when my partner and I were exploiting each other consensually, but that's called a trade. Certainly, I feel I came out of every relationship richer intellectually and creatively than when I entered it. I am still struggling with how to present this fact without either sounding like a naive know-nothing to whom any man could say anything and make me feel like I've gained something, or seeming to apologize for being heterosexual (which I am perfectly willing to apologize for—I think everybody should be bisexual). Often physical acts of love make other kinds of communication between men and women easier. This is only true when love-making is distinguished from those relationships that involve prospective and future expectations or possession, because those things make acts of love all much more difficult.

I believe there is an inequality between the sexes, but that a lot of the inequality is in the minds of women, who have been raised and trained and conditioned to believe that men have more power and will always be sexually exploitative. I don't mean that it's only in the minds of women, but that part of the problem is that women are prepared to accept unacceptable behaviour. If women expect that they must behave in certain ways, then they often put themselves in the position of having to behave in these ways, even if the man they are with is not trying to set up such a situation.

Basically, I think there are three main ways in which men are oppressed in our society: they are taught not to have emotions; to separate their bodies from their intellects; and to be competitive and aggressive.

Part of what has made my view different from that of most feminists is that I was not given the same conditioning when I grew up. My mother was already a feminist from the first wave, and I didn't have a father. There was no male protecting me and telling me I was beautiful.

Science fiction writer Fritz Leiber once wrote a story called "The Nice Girl with Five Husbands" for an amateur press publication he mimeographed in 1952. It was a very short mood piece about an Earth guy who drifts accidentally into a future world.

He's only there for a few minutes, but while he is, he meets a little girl playing a bouncing ball game with a chant. The kickoff of the story was that the child was chanting Einstein's field theory for combining gravitational and electromagnetic forces. At the end of story, the equation was set out.

The guy starts talking to the girl and discovers that she comes from a happy, idyllic family where her

mother has five husbands. I don't remember now whether it was made explicit that the husbands also had five wives. It was clearly a utopian society.

There was a period in my life, which lasted about three years, where I thought of myself rather fondly as *The Nice Girl with Five Husbands*. I was living in the small town of Milford, Pennsylvania, and was involved in a long, drawn-out custody battle over my daughter Merrill, and potentially over Ann. (It was all the rotten things that custody battles can be—with stupid witnesses and leering lawyers. A truly horrible experience.) My daily life was severely restricted because we were constantly being watched. The house had to be absolutely clean, and the children had to be absolutely good. We had to be the model American family, except that we didn't have a father on the premises.

It was a very small town—it was nothing like living in a big city, where you have a lot of intellectual and social contacts. My whole range of social behaviour was restricted. Opportunities for sexual activities, in particular, had to be carefully planned, and they could never happen at home. Except for the week during the annual Milford Science Fiction Writers' Convention, the only people I could talk to about things that interested me were writers Virginia Kidd and Damon Knight. Not Virginia's husband Jim Blish (another writer), because he and I never got along well. The convention was held in Milford because we started it and lived there.

As a result of the situation, most of my social life was carried out almost entirely by correspondence. Another equally real life was taking place in that small town with my children. On rare occasions, some kind of sexual life was mixed into all this, but it had to be completely hidden. It was still, after all, the 1950s.

An intense intellectual/social/sexual relationship became the standard in my life. Whether it was in correspondence or when we met at a conference, my relationships all had their own level of real interest and pleasure—but only when convenient. Convenience, for me, meant that neither of us happened to be attached to somebody else, and circumstances were such that I wasn't going to get into custody trouble.

The husbands would change names occasionally—as one friendship would get deeper, another would drift away—but none of them were actual husbands in the sense in which we normally use the word. They could, however, have been husbands in the sense that applies to the girl's mother in Fritz Leiber's story, where the whole element of possessiveness was not there.

I am quite convinced that most of the worst features of both masculine and feminine gender-related behaviour have to do with this possessiveness factor.

Clearly, I am a feminist. But I am often reluctant to call myself one, because there are a number of ways in which my ideas about gender relations and sexual politics differ from what I will call the "official feminist camps." One such difference is that I believe women are not so much oppressed by men as that men and women are oppressed by the society in which we live. The strict set of rules that apply to gender behaviour is equally oppressive for both sexes.

I have never been willing, or able, to accept the most common gender roles for women, particularly those that applied to my young adulthood. Actually, I shouldn't say never because there have been one or two times in my life when I tried the stereotypes out. I decided each time that they didn't work for me, and at a certain point just stopped bothering with them at all.

I never saw much reason why I should concern myself with pleasing the tastes or ego of someone who wasn't concerning himself with mine; and I don't see why my choice of occupations or public behaviour should be determined by the fact that I have breasts and a vagina.

However, I do see many reasons why there is a natural division of labour in many societies. In a society where an increase in fruitfulness is essential for survival, a good example is the biological imperative—a woman's main job will necessarily be to have children. Men, in these societies, are adjuncts—they are there to keep the women and children safe.

In industrially advanced societies there are few physical dangers. There is no longer any reason why one gender should be keeping the other safe, and multiple births are not particularly desirable.

It is also important to look at who is controlling the actual economic power. More and more this is divided in our society, but it's still not equally divided. For example, if a married woman who works in the home wants to get a bank loan, she has to get her husband's signature. This lays a philosophic base for

the economic power structure.

For the same reason, a man in our society usually has no reason to fear that if he beats his wife, she's going to run away from him. This is because he's controlling the money. She doesn't see how she could possibly manage if she had to leave the house with five dollars in her pocket and no regular income. In relationships where this is the case, the men are exercising the most power and control.

I think the same is true for the relative quality of life of the men and women in those kinds of relationships as it is for prison guards and inmates. The guards have to live in the same kind of high-tension situation as the prisoners. They work in the same physical facility, eat the same terrible food. The only difference is that the guards can go home when their shifts are over. But when the guard is present on the scene, is there a difference in the quality of life experienced by the guards and the prisoners? If one assumes that being in control of another person makes a difference, then the guards have it better.

As between men and women, I don't believe everything is that simple. In most cases, control is mixed. Certain aspects of power (such as who controls the money) fall to the man, others (such as who is going to have a headache tonight) fall to the woman. Aside from control, there are behaviours that society demands of one or the other gender. Women are to be nurturing, concerned with other people's feelings, and generally obedient. Men must be totally competitive and ready to fight. Women are emotional. Men must favour intellect over emotion—big boys don't cry, etc.

Which set of demands gives a better quality of life? It depends on how quality is defined. When I was a kid, I wanted desperately to be a boy, because boys could do things people were always telling me I couldn't. Not that I had any sense of men or boys being in control of women. I wanted to be a boy because they had more freedom. I went through incredible psychic turmoil because an aunt told me if I could kiss my elbow, I would turn into a boy.

This desire to change my sex continued for quite some time—until adolescence, when I began to discover some of the advantages of being female. I never felt I had to be a prisoner of somebody else, but up until that time I did have less freedom than boys and men to do what I wanted to do, and go where I wanted to go. Eventually I began to realize that I could take advantage of many of these same freedoms. I think these days many adolescent girls have taken the freedoms, but some are still timid and timorous.

As I grew older I began to feel that, in many ways, women have the better of it. *We* are not required to lie to ourselves to the same extent as men. We are required to do a lot of lying to other people, but if I feel happy or loving or sad, there is no one to tell me I should not express these feelings. If I feel angry, no one says I shouldn't feel that way, but there are a whole bunch of rules about how I'm allowed to express the anger.

Men don't have any of these privileges. They are allowed to feel a certain amount of all these things, but if they are indeed following the conservative rules of society, they are not permitted to show them. They're required to keep a straight face. If a man twists his ankle, he's not even supposed to say "Ouch Ouch Ouch" with each step. A woman can do that.

When I was involved in the custody battles over my children, there were definitely ways in which it was harder for me because I am a woman. For example, I was watched carefully to see if I was misbehaving sexually—much more so than a man would have been. There were also certain ways in which it was easier. For instance, as long as I managed to feed my daughters, and keep a roof over their heads (however absolutely poor I might have been) I was admired for this. A man, if he had custody of his children, and didn't support them in middle-class comfort, would have been in constant danger of having them removed.

None of what I have just said is meant to suggest that women should accept indignity or depravation. I only mean that we should recognize that in our society, men and women are both constantly subject to indignities and depravations. Neither sex is exempt. The theory that men are on top, and we are on bottom, does not always make our lot worse than theirs.

## **FIVE-(SOME KIND OF) WRITING: SCIENCE FICTION AND THE FUTURIANS**

I WAS SLOW.

I cannot remember a time when I did not write. My first publication was not until I was seven—a poem in a mimeographed summer camp newspaper—but I have a ghost of a memory of a rare quarrel with my father much earlier. I must have been four, had just learned to read, and was demanding half his desk space because I was a writer too—or thought I was.

Then at fifteen I discovered that my mother intended me to be a writer, had been raising me specifically to be a writer—a writer like my father. So I quit—or thought I did.

I kept on writing for the high-school paper, and edited the yearbook. During my single year at university, my main activity was working on the school paper; I was also writing for the Trotskyist Challenge of Youth, but that was all journalism and politics, not what I thought of as Writing. When I was twenty-one and a mother myself, and had the width of a continent between me and my own mother, I started writing seriously again.

Almost all writers—almost all artists—are, to some degree, rebels. Some (non-realist) romantics like to talk about the role of poverty and "suffering" in the making of an artist. The truth is that both poverty and agonizing frustration are close to inevitable in any apprenticeship to any of the arts, in any culture, at any time. Rebelliousness—the reckless rejection of society's manners and morals, of authority, tradition, and, above all, security—is basic to survival during the life-in-a-garret phase.

Some people, and I am one, also believe that art is by nature revolutionary: that a vital function of the artist is to produce and publish "virtual realities" of social change. Certainly the inverse is true: no radical change can ever occur until a believable and seductive new vision is made public. Professors and politicians may seduce, but only artists can create belief in the new vision—the new myth. (Bear in mind: artists—well, artistes—include great orators, and demagogues.)

So: is rebellion inherent in the artist? Is the artist an essential element of revolution? Is a rebellious nature simply a useful defence against the scurvy treatment visited on student-artists in every society? Why quibble? By any and all reckonings, rebellion is part of the job description.

"Authority" expected me to become a writer. So I was slow.

It was my first husband Danny who got me completely zonked on science fiction. Then, not too much later, in 1941, he had the bad sense to get drafted. Before that, in 1940-41, we had lived with Danny's parents in Philadelphia. I helped make ends meet (barely) by taking different jobs ranging from waitress to curtain examiner. The same year that Danny was drafted I got pregnant, and our daughter Merrill was born in December. From 1943 to 1944 we moved seven times to army bases in Chicago, New York, San Francisco, and other places.

So, by 1944, when I started "writing" again, I was a camp-following Navy wife and mother in San Francisco. Danny, my comrade/husband, was in a radar-technician training course on Treasure Island. That summer the records of Dan's political activities (most especially his union-activism while working in a defence plant) caught up with his Navy files, and he was pulled abruptly out of radar school to be shipped overseas. He avoided assignment to the suicidal Pacific beachhead landings by volunteering for the submarine service. He went to Pearl Harbor and I went back to New York with our almost-two-year-old baby girl, Merrill.

There I was, twenty-one, living the life of a young mother in a little apartment in the West Village in New York City, and passionately devoted to SF. I found part-time work with a distant cousin as a research assistant, and I did a bit of ghostwriting. (That didn't count as being a Writer.) Then I met the Futurians, a group of determinedly rebellious, mostly left-wing, science fiction fans just in the process of becoming professionals. There was a woman living nearby named Edith, a close friend of Danny's from back in Philadelphia, who was now living with the writer Paul Goodman. I never actually met Goodman, but she was the one who introduced me to a number of her friends who were members of the Futurian Society of New York (FSNY).

Judith with first husband, Dan Zissman, the year they married, circa 1940. She was about seventeen years old.  
*Courtesy of the Merrill estate*

The Futurians were extraordinary people.

They were a group of young writers who were set to start history, not to repeat it. They each had their own visions about the future; it was coming, and they were thinking about it better than anybody else. They were all gifted and talented in one way or another. Most were without academic discipline; drop-outs, either from high school or after a short period in university. All of them had the weird, erotic erudition typical of teenagers immersed in reading science fiction. Like me, they were in flight from their families. Some of them were nice and some of them were nasty, but they were all very smart. I had been brought up to feel that smart was the most important thing in the world.

Most of the original members were a few years older than me. Many of them were old friends—they had gotten to know each other through the columns in science fiction magazines about ten years earlier. The best-known Futurians, perhaps, are the writers Isaac Asimov, Frederik Pohl, and the literary figure Donald A. Wollheim (DAW Books). Other members I quickly ran into included Virginia Kidd, James Blish, and Damon Knight. Damon eventually wrote a book called *The Futurians*, which has all the details about how the group started.

Like every other social and professional grouping, the FSNY had been fragmented by the war. In the three or four years before the United States entered World War II and the men were dispersed, members had established one or more shared apartments in downtown New York. One of the most renowned was called the Slan Shack. I got the sense that at any one time between six and nine people were living there together. These apartments were essentially communes, long before we talked about people living in communes.

At the time I met the group, several of the members, including Asimov, Pohl, Cyril Kornbluth, and Dick Wilson, were not on the scene because of the war. In fact, the members still in the States were a minority of the Society that existed prior to my joining. Wilson and Pohl were somewhere overseas, and Asimov was doing something for the Navy. A few service-reject Futurians, though, were still in the city, clustered loosely around three central figures: Johnny Michel, Bob "Doc" Lowndes, and Donald Wollheim. Johnny and I became very close friends immediately.

The only women in the group besides myself were Virginia Kidd and Donald Wollheim's wife Elsie, who wrote a little and was nominally called a Futurian. Elsie was the bookkeeper and secretary for her father's jewellery business, and I worked there for a couple of months in the period just before I got an editing job at Bantam Books. Virginia Kidd was a writer, editor, and (later) literary agent. The instant we met, Virginia and I became close friends—and she remained my close friend and literary editor for the rest of my life.

All of us had a tremendous amount in common, because we were living, eating, and breathing science fiction. Most of the Futurians had published at least one or two stories by the time I met them, and a couple were editors of pulp magazines. Johnny Michel was, by Futurian consensus, the brilliant young writer of the group. Wollheim and Lowndes had already achieved their first, shabby, editorial jobs.

At the time I met him, Johnny Michel shared an apartment with his friend Larry Shaw in the middle of the Village. There was a running spar with him, and in part with Donald Wollheim (whom I seldom saw, but often heard quoted from Johnny), because although I had already left the Trotskyists, Johnny and Donald could tell that I was still one in my heart. My thinking was still inherently Trotskyist. In fact, I was a Trotskyist's Trotskyist, because I left the organization when I realized that it was Stalinist, not because I had disagreed with its ideology. I found their authoritarian organizational tactics unbearable. I eventually ran into serious ideological problems and battles with several of the Futurians because they were Communists and I was a Trotskyist. From their point of view, this was a pretty rotten sin.

It rankled Johnny and Donald that I should be so misled, and they frequently took occasion to remind me of this. The situation was particularly difficult for Johnny because of his close friendship with me. He

was getting a great deal of trouble from Donald. Predictably, they didn't try to argue politics with me. The argument I got most often from them was a Stalinist one, which would never, ever reach me: "What's the sense in being a Trotskyist? You've got no organization, you've got no numbers ... Why don't you fall in with people who have some kind of a party behind them?"

For his part, Doc Lowndes was a shoestring editor at a chain of particularly low-paying pulp magazines, mostly westerns and detectives. One he worked on, though, was called *Super Science*. It lasted partway into the war, surrendered to paper shortage, and then resumed again afterwards. Lowndes was chubby, extremely erudite, affected, and slightly dapper—kind of Oscar Wilde-ish, although to my knowledge (which is not necessarily complete) not homosexual, because he was on the prowl for women all the time.

One of my research jobs was on the history of the Old West, and Doc started buying short filler articles from me. Then he and Johnny both began pointing out that I could make much more money out of the same material by turning some of the anecdotes into stories.

I had never written fiction. I told them I didn't know how to write a story. They said, write one and we'll tell you what's wrong with it. I said I didn't want to write westerns. They said, okay, try a detective. I did. They tore it apart. I rewrote. They suggested a few more changes. I did them and Doc bought it for *Crack Detective Magazine*. Ecstatically, I wrote to Dan:

Feb. 19, 1945

Monday morning, W-Day plus one

Sir:

Hereafter in addressing your wife, you will kindly restrain yourself to the use of the official title, "Oh most revered, high and worshipful Professional Hack Writer."

DOC BOUGHT MY STORY LAST NIGHT—beyond dispute or further question, finished, as is, and to undergo no more than the customary amount of editorial revision.

DOC BOUGHT MY STORY LAST NIGHT. It remains now only for him to catch hold of the publisher long enough to get a check signed. 3200 words—I stand to gain exactly 32 bux

I still wasn't sure about becoming a Real Writer, but this was only hack stuff after all: a demonstrably learnable skill, writing "formula" for a cheap commercial market. And, with my new semi-pro status, I was voted into the FSNY.

What was it about science fiction that attracted the Futurians? I think I can answer that best by quoting something said to me many years later. I was at the Milford Science Fiction Writers' Conference, an annual event that I co-founded and used to go to every year. A young writer named Thomas Disch came to the conference for the first time. When we met, he said something that foreshadowed a sense of satisfaction on my part. "I wanted you to know, Judy, that when I was thirteen years old, I picked up an anthology of yours in a little town in North Dakota where I was living, and for the first time I knew that things could be different."

For many people, discovering science fiction is discovering that one can, to some extent, invent what kind of different things will be.

Certainly, for the Futurians, the idea that things could be different was not just a fantasy. When it was formed, the Futurian Society was a group of talented fans who were all, to one degree or another, left of centre. Some of them were mild socialists and a couple were card-carrying Communists, but every single one of them engaged in major intellectual and ideological battles with fans who were not leftist—as well as with Trotskyists like myself.

Virtually everyone in the Futurian Society thought of themselves as budding great artists, political figures, or both. None of us were ordinary human beings. We were loyal buddies. The science fiction world was a tight literary ghetto at the time. There was a song that came out of one of the early conventions, where the Futurians had come into conflict with some more right-wing fans. It was a parody of "In 36 the sky was red/ and lightning threatened over head ..." It had to do with the fact that one fan in particular, named Will Sykora, had committed political treachery, and caused harm to the Futurians.

Everybody who was involved in science fiction read everything—it didn't matter whether the writers were people you agreed with ideologically. In those days the fans were also much more participatory than in other literary genres, and writers were much closer to the fans. There was less inherent hierarchy.

The existence of a semi-organized body of people who were determined to help each other certainly made good luck for fledgling authors happen a lot easier than it would have otherwise occurred. I think this kind of thing manifests itself in classical terms when one is selected to go to Iowa or Breadlove or one of the more traditional writers' workshops where you start to meet older writers who are determined to be helpful.

Whereas in other literary fields you wouldn't dare take an idea from another writer and use it, because that would be considered plagiarism, science fiction people loved to build on each other's stories. The business of giving away ideas and promoting other people's work was a part of the community at large.

The Futurians did this to an amazing extent. For example, every Futurian had a pen name that included the family name Conway. A good number of the stories that appeared in science fiction magazines at that time were written by someone or other Conway. Very few stories were even published under real names.

Among established writers, there was a long tradition in the 1930s, 1940s, and into the 1950s of borrowing from each other's work in an approved fashion. If somebody came up with an invention you liked, and you could see a better or different angle, you added to this person's invention. It was considered perfectly normal and ethical, and so was sharing ideas while you were in the midst of writing.

The first page of the Futurians' *Book of Ghu Ghu*, in which Donald Wollheim is named as Ghu Ghu himself, with Johnny Michel as his high priest. It was written circa 1942 by Johnny Michel and Donald Wollheim.

*Courtesy of the Merril estate*

We shared something of an international scientist's ethic. One of the most fascinating illustrations of this is the series of back covers on the magazine *Amazing Stories*. As early as 1938, and certainly into the 1950s, *Amazing* used to have illustrations out of the future. By the time the actual space program got underway, scientists were producing space suits that looked exactly like the ones from *Amazing*. The fact that a lot of the atomic and space scientists had grown up reading science fiction probably influenced the design. But to a great extent the designs were inevitable, because they were things that would actually work; they had already been analyzed in twenty or thirty science fiction stories. In each new story, the design had been refined: this gasket was added, or that joint was improved. After all the thought that had been put into it, the logical space suit already existed; all it needed was the money to make it.

In the years before I met up with the Futurian Society, the original members had created a religion called

"Ghughuism." They had even written thirty or forty humorous pages of a "Gholy Ghible." Some of it was quite clever.

Ghughuism was always spelled with gh-, and all the changed words (Gholy, Ghible, etc.) became diffused into science fiction. I think the references have probably disappeared by now, but for a great long time, they appeared in the writing of people who had never seen the Gholy Ghible, and knew nothing about it except that this was something people had done. It eventually became part of science



fiction fan mythology without most people even knowing the origins.

Around this same time a number of us started something called the Vanguard Amateur Press Association (VAPA), which was happening parallel to a gradual dissolution of the Futurian Society. A lot of people were publishing fanzines or zines of various kinds. There were two or three different Amateur Press Associations functioning in the New York science fiction community at the time, but the Vanguard was an elitist one. It was not open to just anybody, and had a relatively high literary level. My own VAPA publication was called *TEMPER!* Every now and then I would change the title slightly, the most distinctive one being an issue called *DISTEMPER!*, which was entirely poetry, and criticism of poetry.

There were magnificent arguments carried on between one small press publication and another. One of them was about whether SF was your whole life or just something you did as a hobby. There was a definite sneer aimed at people who did it for kicks.

The young author at work, circa 1949.  
*Courtesy of the Merrill estate*

Science fiction fandom evolved out of the letter columns in the science fiction pulp magazines. People began writing there, and then they began to write to and visit each other. The first SF conventions were held around the middle of the thirties, and they were very small. I believe the first Worldcon was towards the end of the 1930s. During that early decade, literate fans got to know each other at these small conventions. The conventions quickly got larger and larger, drawing fans from right across the United States. Damon Knight, for instance, was initially living in Oregon. He came to New York and met the Futurians when he was a teenager by way of attending a convention in Chicago at which several of them were also present.

There was a fair amount of larger-world politics and conflicts about those politics involved in the conventions. However, they were mainly organized to discuss the world of the future, and were primarily attended by people who wanted to become serious science fiction writers. The significant thing about science fiction fandom, up until perhaps the early 1970s, was that it was almost entirely made up of people who truly thought of themselves as upcoming writers. So these conventions were intensely participatory. Unlike fan groups in most other areas, these were not admirers. They were people who were quite literally on their way to becoming part of the community, or already were part of it.

Inevitably what happened was that the "fans" began creating their own mimeographed magazines because they needed somewhere to publish (and read) their own and their friends' work. At the beginning of the 1940s, when I became part of the community, fanzines were already a well-established means of communication and personal identification. Later, when people settled into either the role of fan or the role writer, and stopped thinking of themselves as moving anywhere, there tended to be distinctions made regarding the kind of fanzine a person published. One was a personal zine, in which you were primarily talking about your own life. The other zine was about science fiction concepts, publishing, and issues of that sort.

## **SIX-VIRGINIA KIDD AND FUTURIAN MOTHERHOOD**

BOB LOWNDES WAS Virginia's particular friend, and one day I bumped into her at Doc's apartment. At the time Virginia was living in some "square" part of the city—square compared to where I was, in the West Village. She had a baby about a year younger than mine, and her husband was also away in the service.

Virginia had started her writerly life in Baltimore, but when I met her, she had recently come to New York City in order to become a "famous writer." In contrast, I started in New York, and was still resisting the idea that I wanted to be a famous writer.

Jan. 30, 1945  
342 East 46th, New York 17, N.Y.

Dear Judy

You may or may not remember me. You met me one night at Doc's—in October, I think.

I know very little about you, beyond the facts that you are also a pro tem Futurian, and a member of the Vanguard APA. [...]

Would you like to come up some afternoon? I should love to have you. Alone, I mean. I hope to see more of you later, and the circumstances then will make little difference—but this first time I should like to talk to you alone. That sounds like Secrets, doesn't it? Not though. Bring your offspring, of course. I have enough toys here, I think, to keep him or her happy. (My infant is still a babe in arms, and on account of a bad leg, I'm afraid to navigate with her. I hope it will be an easier matter for you, because I really do want you to come up. I don't see how else we can get together.)

Any afternoon next week except Monday will be entirely convenient for me. Will you stay for dinner, too?

Most cordially,

Kidd

(formally Virginia K. Emden)

Wednesday, Jan. 31, 1945

Dear Kidd,

Yes, I do remember meeting you—and, if I'd been so inclined, wouldn't have had a chance to forget. I've been hearing about you from Doc and Johnny both—and have been anxious for quite a while to see you again.

I suspect Lowndes of being seriously remiss—I have commissioned him several times with invitations to you. Of course, it never occurred to me to write.

Yes, I have a child—a daughter—slightly over two years old. At present she's in nursery school, but how much longer the family finances will stand for that, I don't know. Anyhow, I'd like to talk over your brainstorm—have had a few myself at various times, but never tried to do anything much about them.

Instead of trying to make a date this way—you will be at Donald and Elsie's Sunday afternoon, won't you? I'll see you there, and we can either arrange then to see each other again during the week, or, if you can stay out Sunday evening (I can't this week), and haven't made any other plans—then come home with me. We can have dinner here, and talk all the Secrets we like.

I'll see you Sunday then—and I'm already beginning to feel a tickling temptation to confuse and confound Futuria by greeting with something sweet and feminine like, "Darling, did the baby get over that colic you wrote me about? I hope you didn't use that awful Barton's Babybloom Business your mother-in-law told you to, because I did once, and—"

You get the idea—uh-uh, I promise I won't. Anticipatorily,

Judy

Judith with Virginia Kidd (then Virginia Emden) and daughter Karen, New York, circa 1945.

*Courtesy of the Merrill estate*

We both had young babies and husbands overseas. It didn't take us long to decide that we should be living together and combining our efforts, which would give us both more opportunity to write.

More than anything else, Virginia was the first smart woman I knew. (Aside from my mother, whom I was not yet prepared to admit was smart.) This common intellectual respect formed the basis of our friendship. Virginia was every bit as intelligent, every bit as well-read, every bit as inventive as I was. And

we found, bit by bit, that there were many, many other things we had in common.

I went for dinner with my baby Merrill, and stayed for two days. After that we started looking for an apartment we could share.

Friday, Feb. 2, 1945

Dear Kidd

Your letter delighted me, and I could fill sheets and sheets right now with ideas and modifications and ramifications of your idea—one that I have held for some time now, but never activated, largely because there seemed to be a distinct shortage of roommates who did 'speak the language'. [...]

Only one thing I feel I must warn you about, before you start building dreamhouses (as I confess I am already prone to do)—I am THE laziest, and probably THE sloppiest and filthiest young mother on record. If you think you can stand it, we can probably work out something pretty good.

I like the sound of you, V.K.E.

With which pronunciamento I retire, blushing.

Try to make it Sunday

Judy

Wednesday morning, Feb. 7, 1945

Kidd-

I owe you an apology. Of course the understanding was in the air that Thursday was replacing Wednesday [for a Futurian meeting]—but I am unaccustomed to people able to pluck their understanding from the air and (cautious good sense again, OK) have gotten into so damned many difficulties of late by making assumptions that this time I decided 'twos better to put it as though it were all my idea.

WHY do you have to write the kind of letters that make me start answering them before the coffee is even ready? I'll return, more lucid, in a moment.

Nothing premature about you. We're all making plans—and I do mean all—the latest being that Damon and Larry, 'tseems, are already working on convincing Chester to move here—to my apartment—after you and I have found another. Everyone is very approving about the whole affair, and I begin to have an idea we'd better plan on an extra room as a sort of Futurian Clubhouse—because Lowndes, Michel, Shaw, et al., could not possibly be quite so delighted unless they saw something very good indeed in it for themselves. [...]

By the way, I have a big laundry basket Merry slept in her first few months. Unless Karen is the overgrown variety, she'd probably fit, and we might even be able to stow her away for part of the evening. And while I'm at it—better bring the milk after all. Sheffield's seems to be an unknown quality hereabouts.

And it might be a good idea if I got Merry to school on time this morning. Foggily,

Judy

Feb. 14, 1945

Dear Kidd:

There is something awry in Hangover House, because this is Monday morning, and I am feeling perfectly fine. I suspect it has something to do with the state of the weather, which I find incredible—but nice, if true—and there is probably a connection somewhere with the unhappy fact that I was in bed at eleven on Saturday night, and twelve last night.

What is still more unhappy, I have not looked upon the vine—red, white or in between—since the last time—when we all looked together and found it good. This is through no choice of my own, but simply because the opportunity has not arisen, and neither has the state of my finances. (There is a rumor about that finances should have another n in it—but don't believe a word of it.) [...]

Now, some thoughts on *Futurian* Home Journal. I am already fond of it, and would like to

see it issued weekly, in more finished form than the first.

One sheet is sufficient, and it COULD be good. I believe there is enough matter of interest specifically to Futuria to maintain such a sheet. For the next copy, suggested, an article outlining specific plans for future Thursdays (I'll go into that later in the letter); an hilarious accounting of the doings of last Thursday, up to seven A.M.; just a thought—if we included news of the doings and happenings in the lives of Futurians—mimeod the thing, say once a month (four issues together), and we will be able, until then, to fill in with detailed accounts of the progress of the apartment-hunt....

Let's have some thoughts on it—and you might put pen to work on "An Hilarious Accounting"—I have an idea you could do a better job than I.

As to this planned Thursday's business, here's my outline:

1. Meals to be as cheap as possible.
2. Wine or beer, as suits the donor, to be contributed each week by a different individual. (Avoid the unpleasantness of last week with Damon.)
3. All those planning to attend for supper to notify HH by Tuesday—or even Wednesday, but at least a day ahead.
4. Work schedule to be posted, and different jobs assigned to each person from week to week.
5. Dinner to be served by 7:30—means the cooking squad should be on hand no later than 6:30. Dinner to be over, and cleaned away, by nine, so as to leave time for other activity during the evening.
6. Such "other activity" to include music, poker, conversation, and anything else the group desires. We might even occasionally work our way up to a mass migration uptown to a play or something. It might be possible occasionally to prevail on Doc to bring over some records—any number of such things.
7. Final suggestion—that is if nobody has anything special planned for that night, Friday would mean more of us could sleep later the next morning. Thursday was originally chosen because I understood Doc went to see you Fridays, and did not know to what extent I could attempt to tamper with that arrangement.

Judy

Two members of the Futurian Society: Johnny Michel and Larry Shaw (front), New York, circa 1947.  
*Courtesy of the Merrill estate*

The January 1946 issue of the Vanguard Amateur Press Association's zinc, *Science Fiction*.  
*Courtesy of the Merrill estate*

The dinners would be followed by long, long, debates that went on throughout the night. I suppose we did what most people who have been to university think of as student talk, except that almost all of us were dropouts. It was very rare for one of us to have a university degree. I had taken some university courses, as had some of the others, but almost all of us now found ourselves unsuited to classroom learning.

We also used to hang up what we called a wall newspaper—which was usually filled with stories that were sheer hilarious invention. One person would come and type out a single-page newspaper, which we would cut and paste up onto the wall for dinner. Then we would mimeograph and distribute it to our friends. Sometimes it would contain scandalous gossip things about what one or another of us had done during the week. But here and there we added some truth; if someone got a story published, there would be an announcement for them.

Feb. 19, 1945

Dear Zissman-let

Oh God—I wish I hadn't done it. But it's too late now. This is my last piece of bond paper, and I am determined to honor (?) you with it. [...]

So far you have done all the work on FHJ [*Futurian Home Journal*] while the ass editor has just tagged along. Full of plaudits, but not visibly contributing anything ... If I don't die before Thursday, I will have An Hilarious Accounting ready—only I think we ought to run an account of the month's evenings in the last Thursday of each month's issue. [...]

My little squib is going to look pretty silly ... Oh, good sentence, Kidd! Oh, what a wonder-par is the liquorary compilation ... Besides it would take care of one issue per month—no scrambling for material and I said I'm lazy ...

Toujours sleepy (wrote Willie tonight)

Kidd

The contents page of the January 946 issue of *Science Fiction* shows a range of SF-themed fiction, poetry, reviews, and non-fiction articles by Judith and Dan Zissman, James Blish, Larry Shaw, Johnny Michel, and other writers using humorous pseudonyms (including Arthur Lloyd Merlin).

*Courtesy of the Merril estate*

Tuesday, Feb. 20, 1945

My liddie kidder; Zissman-let! Hmph! "Nobody," he said

As he guzzled up the house red,

"Nobody," he said "Could call me a snobbish Slan!

But I only love Futurians with liquoracy!" (liquora racy?)

WHAT did happen to the meter?

SO—you're too damn lazy to put out an ish of FHJ all by yourself—well, sister, it's your baby for this week. AND THE NEWS OF THE WEEK—listen, lady, if you don't think Doc buying my story is the most important thing that happened to ANY Futurian this week—then you underestimate my capacity for 1) joy-unbounded 2) expressions of same 3) grabbing the limelight! [...]

Had my first "fan-letter" today. I quote: "Dear Judy, Will be on hand Thursday, I think. Gives food? # Sold a couple of fact articles to Tilden this morning. I eat for another week & a half. Why don't you try some fact stuff? Easy to look up, if you know where to go, and easier than fiction for a beginner to sell. # Been giving some thought to your detective opus. I didn't like it, as you probably gathered, but I think it shows considerable promise.

"That framework is an extremely difficult one to build a good story on, no matter how good you are. A much more rewarding angle on the murder plot is why rather than how. # (Time out for a discussion with Chester about fruits.) # Anyway, the main thing about your story is that it's well-written. Your mistakes were ones of construction, not of style. You can handle words, and that's half the battle. # Now can I get in for half-price? # yours, Damon."

I find myself strangely delighted. Ah vanity, thy name ...

'Bye now—gotta go wash clothes, and impress Sara [Dan's mother] with how clean I've become.

ghugowithyou

Judy

A hangoverhouse EFFUSION

Feb. 20, 1945 Judy-

CONGRATULATIONS!!!!!!!

But I'm not surprised. I knew it was a sale when I read your first rewrite. But I'm so damn glad. Hope Dan is more thrilled than Jack [her husand Major Jacob "Jack" Emden] was.

Someday I'll show you that letter ...

But I expect he will be. Dan seems to be in complete sympathy with your aims.

The hint has been duly recorded and will be acted on.

Have fun—Love Kidd

We found a place together in a really old tenement building on the extreme west side of New York. We were on Washington Street, west of the whole area that's usually called the Village, near the railroad tracks. Virginia and I rented two adjoining four-room flats. They were something like thirteen dollars a month each, because this was the bottom level of New York rent.

These apartments were usually known as cold-water flats, because originally they only had cold water and no heat. Ours were not, in fact, just cold water, and most of the apartments in the building had heat. But a lot of them still had only one toilet out in the hall for all the occupants of the four apartments on each floor. They were best described as "railroad flats," because they were in the undesirable lots located right nearby the railway tracks, and also because of their architecture. The apartments had no hallways at all. You entered into the kitchen, and from that room you entered the next room, then the next room, and then the last room. There were no private rooms with doors whatsoever; you had to walk through each room to get to the next one.

The largest room in each of our apartments, which was also the last room you came to, had a triangular closet. Those closets shared the wall in between our two apartments. We decided to remove the wall inside the closets, thus ending up with an eight-room apartment that wrapped around the entire floor in an enormous U-shape.

Living with Virginia was lots of fun against the backdrop of great intellectual stimulation, caring for children, coping with relationships, buying groceries, and all those things that are part of everyday life as a single working mother. It's hard to describe how much fun those things became, all these years distant. We lived a marvellous Parisian existence in our apartment on Washington Street next to the railway tracks. Our apartment became known as the Parallax, the central place for meetings of those Futurians who were not in service and had remained in New York. We lived there together for two or three years. Virginia stayed for quite some time after I left.

Once a week everyone came over for a communal dinner. Virginia and I would do the shopping and the cooking, then we would proportion the cost of the meal to everyone who ate. Usually the others had some sort of rota to do the after-dinner cleanup.

I must give motherhood a societal context in these strange times. During the war, there was a marvellous, total change on the part of society with regards to women working. In New York City, for the first time, something called the Mayor's Committee on Nursery Schools was established. This organization ensured that in every neighbourhood there was a really good nursery school available for working mothers.

My older daughter Merrill had already started nursery school in San Francisco when I was Dan's Navy wife and therefore had priority. She was in nursery school before she was two years old, and she loved it.

There were times when I had odd jobs, and there were times when I was just writing stuff for Bob Lowndes to buy, and then there were other times when I was working for my cousin doing research. I absolutely needed to earn an income beyond the meagre Navy allotment—so at that time I was mainly writing to make money.

This posed some difficulty because being a real writer also meant that my home was my office. Merrill was two and a half at the time when Virginia and I moved in together. She was fascinated by my typewriter. She would come over to where I was sitting and put her sweet little fingers on the keys and start typing along with me.

After a while I decided something had to be done about this. I bought a two-dollar old typewriter in a second-hand store and gave it to her. That solved the problem for a while.

Later I had another child, Ann, and as she got older the same problem manifested in similar ways. I

told myself that the child's desire to have all of the mother all of the time is not a reasonable one. No system on earth has ever made this possible except the affluent European-North American society of today, where women can afford to do nothing except raise children. This has never ever been possible before: women had to till fields, scrub houses, and work outside the home.

Virginia not only understood but shared with me all the dilemmas posed by our commitment to both being good mothers and great writers. We were both doing serious work as writers and struggling with the conflict between writing and mothering. Sometimes the child couldn't win. I don't think that this was necessarily bad for my children, but of course I must believe that, or I couldn't have made the decisions I have during my life.

Maybe mothers who wish only to be mothers should be totally excused from doing any other work. Certainly, at our society's current technological level, and since we don't really need all the labour force we've got, this is feasible.

I think it is often as damaging to the small child to be the total focus of a mother's attention as it is to have too little of a mother's attention. And I, of course, achieved the perfect proportion!

Not at all. But I think it is in the nature of human relationships that there be conflicts of this sort, and I don't know how to avoid them. I like to think that because of the choices I made, I was a greater resource for my children and a far more interesting mother.

Back in the day to day, Virginia began seeing a lot of my arch-nemesis James Blish, and eventually divorced her husband when he came home from overseas so that she could marry Jim. Because of their relationship, my friendship with Virginia suffered. Jim liked to refer to himself as a "book fascist," making clear that his model was Mussolini fascism, futurism, and so forth, rather than German-scum stuff. Of course, he was not fascist, anti-Semitic, or any of those terrible things, but every time he used the phrase, I saw red.

For some time, the main feature of our Thursday-night (once Wednesday) Futurian dinners was the political arguments between Jim and myself. I was a much better debater than Jim, and what's more, I had right on my side. I thought the whole book-fascist thing was sophomoric intellectual shit, so, week after week, I would grind Jim into the dirt. And week after week, he would come back with the answer he hadn't thought of the week before. Eventually, Jim and I got to be quite unfriendly.

As for my friendship for Virginia, despite my arguments with Jim it was settled that we were the kind of friends who stay friends in one incarnation or another for an entire lifetime, friends who were always able to get past the inevitable ups and downs.

[n.d., around December 1946]

Dear Judy.

It's three a.m. and I'm stalking the Muse with my 'lead tooked oonderneath my arm. Also partly I'm not writing, and partly I'm waiting for the coffee to heat. It seems to me that there is some quality in you—not of equitableness. I know you're hot tempered well enough! ... But of untouchableness ... I've watched you tell slander and abuse and rudeness—and some of it from me (and I'm not taking it back by this letter—when I spoke straight from the shoulder to you about HES ["Wonderful Henry"] I meant it and still think it true)—the hearing of which would have left me with murder in my heart, had I been the object ... I don't see how you take it, or at least I didn't until just now when I was thinking about it.

Pause for coffee. (Y)

You're a rare specimen, Jude.

I meant to write the first page, tell you how very much I enjoyed having you here for dinner the other night, wish you a very Merry Christmas and a good year, and quit—

Love Kidd

P.S. Wish I had some money—but I don't, not to spare, so no presents this year. My love to Sol [a high school friend]. I hope he drops around. Likewise to Maggie.

[n.d., probably 1947]  
Staten Island

Dear Judy

Hi and ok. It's probably what I wanted to hear, anyhow.

I may be able to work it out, commuting, or I may not do it at all. The little heart will not break, either way.

Karen started in nursery last Monday, and there hasn't been a moment's difficulty. There were the usual exclamations about her not crying for her mother, and so on—but I didn't really think she could have got unused to nursery practices in half a year, and she always did love it. Needless to say, we're both happy.

A woman's home is, by damn, her castle, yes. Circumstances forced me to rent out part of my castle, damn it. [...]

Kidd

The "Statement of Independence," drafted by seven members of the Futurians, in which Johnny Michel and Donald and Elsie Wollheim were declared unfit for membership in the group.  
*Courtesy of the Merrill estate*

[n.d., 1947]

Dear Kidd,

All I seem to do these days is compose difficult letters. I restrained myself on the phone yesterday, and shall attempt not to be too annoyed today, because the last thing I want to do right now is sever the somewhat strained bonds between you and me, you and Henry, Henry and Him, and the four of us in general. [...]

'Taint what you do, Kidd, it's the way how ... I think you might have adopted a less imperious and outraged tone, in view of the circumstances leading up to the somewhat one-sided discussion. [...]

I know the reaction at 787 must be largely in terms of That Zissman Woman. I should rather not have you think that I have made off with your friend Henry. I don't believe I could have "had" him, if I wanted to. [...]

I wish you'd think over some of the harsh words. I'm afraid, and again it's stilted, that I am placed in the position of proffering, and demanding, an apology.

with still some friendship,

Judy

Before I became part of the Futurians, the early members had created a constitution that was quite elaborate. There were some interesting things about it. For example, it specified that any time three Futurians were together, the society was in session. Any time it was in session, members who had behaved improperly could be thrown out by the society in attendance. Basically Donald Wollheim and whoever was working with him at the time the constitution was written had created this section to maintain control of the group.

One day Larry Shaw came over to Parallax. He had been sent by his apartment-mate Johnny, but was not happy in that role. It turned out that Donald had convinced Johnny that he must stop seeing me because of my politics. Larry, who was a bit younger than the rest of us, had been sent over with this message and was upset about it.

Shortly thereafter, Damon Knight happened to stop by. We told him what had happened. As a



result, Larry, Virginia, Damon, and I eventually came to the decision that the Futurian Society was in session, and we were going to eject Donald Wollheim and Johnny Michel because they were not good buddies.

Immediately we whipped out our mimeograph stencils and made a fanzine officially announcing that Johnny and Donald were hereby cast out of the Futurian Society: they were rats, and we would never associate with them again. We also included an amended version of the constitution, and quickly mailed it off to everyone we knew.

Donald brought a law suit against us for defamation of character and career damages. I think he had a relative who was a lawyer. The suit was for something like \$5,000, an extraordinary sum at the time.

None of us had any relatives who were lawyers, so we had to think hard about what to do. In the end we paid a lawyer, who managed to get it thrown out of court, but it cost us a lot of money. In the meantime, Damon and Larry took upon themselves the punishment of Donald Wollheim. This they achieved by answering ads in the pulp magazines for weird, useless items that were on sale, like giant frogs, and having them delivered to Donald's home.

Donald was furious. He tried in vain to pin the deliveries on us. He even had postal inspectors coming around to inspect our typewriters, but they never managed to prove anything.

The Futurian Society, as an actual fan organization, was pretty much finished off by all this nonsense. But the Futurian Society, as a fan myth, has prevailed to this day, mainly because so many significant people came out of it.

*Written in 1945, when Judith was twenty-two, for her ongoing Vanguard Amateur Press Association fanzine, TEMPER!, which changed names slightly depending on the content. This particular issue, four pages long, was called TEAPOTEMPERI.*

## SEVEN-GIVE THE GIRLS A BREAK

OF RECENT MONTHS, the digests and women's magazines have broken out in a rambling rash of rhetoric on that most unassailable of subjects, Mother Love. They are joyously enumerating the emotional and psychological pitfalls that lie in wait for the child cruelly deprived of the understanding and constant affection that "only a mother" can give.

The cause is clearer than the complaint. During the war, when women were needed in factories and offices, group care for children received a tremendous impetus. Young girls as yet unmarried answered the call for labour-power; mature women with grown children tossed off their aprons with no great reluctance; and young wives and mothers by the thousands, women with young children and husbands overseas, leaped at the chance to make some money, and to be doing something.

Now the men have come home, and there aren't enough jobs to go around. For good wholesome frolicsome fantasy value, Henry Wallace's sixty million jobs is equalled only by the "two chickens in every pot" of twenty years ago. At the last reading, the number of unemployed had reached three and a half million. What jobs there are, says good old reliable Public Opinion, must go to the men.

*The cover of the July 1945 issue (vol. 1, no. a) of Judith's zine TEMPER! The Family Magazine, which featured poetry and writing by Judith and her friends.*

*Courtesy of the Merrill estate*

## "GIVE THE BOYS A BREAK!"

A good slogan, and with a veteran husband all my own, I'm in favour of it. Let's give the boys the jobs, the homes, the clothes and cars and little luxuries they're entitled to. And maybe if the bright lads who dream up the slogans put their slick-paper brains to work on getting the wheels of industry turning

for peace, the boys would get all those things.

But it's really so much easier to create a smug illusion of peace, and prosperity, by getting the little woman back to her ruffled apron at the kitchen sink, and giving her job to her husband. The understanding fictionists and heart-throb psychologists assure us daily that whatever a woman may think she wants, she's really much happier in a submerged role, as wife and mother, and homemaker. Right after V-E Day, we started getting these little gems about the working wife whose problems are all solved when she discovers she's pregnant, can't work ... and is really in love with her husband.

The only trouble with the ideas was that so many of the little ladies didn't believe. They liked their jobs and in fact didn't want to leave them. So the sloganeers sicced the paper-pulp industry on them. Now bland authority is issuing dire predictions about the terrible fate that lies in wait for the nursery-trained child.

## GIVE THE KIDS A BREAK!

I have a daughter, and I admit I'm partial to her—more than somewhat concerned about her present and future happiness—even if I do work for a living. My girl is past three now. She's been in nursery schools, full or part-time, for two years already, and if I stopped working tomorrow, I'd still whittle the family budget six ways at once to keep her there. I've had too good a chance to make comparisons, watching the children in my apartment house, and the ones who go to nursery school, too.

If it's giving the kids a break to coop them up in an apartment designed for adults, where Mama's every other word, of necessity, is "No!" or "Don't touch!"—if it's giving them a break to let them play on the street, under the guidance and training of older children, better versed in street-lore—I'll let mine go underprivileged in a nursery, where shelves and sinks and furniture are designed to size, and built to withstand a child's powers of destruction, where a trained and interested person is with her all the time. If a child's psyche is really supposed to be better off under either the brooding care of Full-power Concentrated Motherhood, or the nervous yelling of a woman with more work on her hands than she can manage—I'll let mine risk the "deprivations" of nursery school life.

I've had some chance to compare mothers too, the carriage-wheelers and the ones who go to work. Next time you run across one of these "the worst home is better than the nursery" dictums, stop a minute, and think about the homes you know. How many of the women you know are able to give their children as much as one full hour of attention during the day? Are actually, physically, able to drop what they're doing at any moment to run and give Junior the admiration he wants, and needs, when he finishes building a particularly complicated block-house?

And just in case the women you know all have maids, and you think overworked housewives and street-playing are "slum conditions," try this on for size; and see how it fits your preconceptions: in 1935-36, a "good" year, with prosperity just around the corner, approximately one-half of what the statisticians call economic units (which, on the average, is a family of four) had incomes under \$25 a week. I could go into rents, the cost of food and household help, and the etceteras, but it's hardly necessary to get a fair estimate of how much time mother had for her two kids between laundry, cooking, cleaning, marketing, and making both ends meet. In the country, where kids at least have all the room they need to run wild, this might not be so bad. In urban communities, I fail to see how the child benefits from "home atmosphere."

And what about the other half of the "good" homes, full of plenty of free time for the lady of the house? How many women do you know who really care for their children? Who don't have a girl in the afternoons to take the baby off their hands for a while? Who wouldn't honestly rather go shopping, play bridge, work at the Red Cross than stay home with the kids?

What the self-styled authorities don't seem to know is that a real change has come over the world. The old cook-stove is no more, and farm-size families don't fit into city apartments. In the so-called good old days, when a woman had five to ten children to care for, and a big house to take care of, she didn't have to worry either about utilizing her excess energies or about the children's play. They had plenty of space, and a "natural" family group. We couldn't go back to that now if we wanted to, and nobody really

wants to. The good old days were also the days when the infant mortality rate was almost three times what it is now; when hardly a family raised its brood without losing at least one child, and probably more than one; when there were no radios, refrigerators, or automobiles, let alone automatic clothes and dish washers, and imminent atomic power. Science keeps a-pushin' us, and the only loud complaints I've heard are from the people who can't afford yet to buy the new gadgets.

And while everybody worries about how to raise the standards of the lower half, the fortunate women on the top find they just don't know what to do with themselves. The same psychologists who are so busy warning us about our children don't mince words about idle women either. Theoretically, of course, all the modern innovations ought to set women free to take better care of their children. Actually, after Lo! these many years, believing every female was a natural child's nurse, we're finding out that when they get the time and freedom, most women don't give it to their children.

There are enough who do, though. Enough, that is, if they can take care of other people's children at the same time. Enough to provide nurseries with trained, intelligent people, who really want to spend time with children, who are doing it by choice, rather than accident of sex.

A mother in a low-income family is a better mother for being able to earn some extra money while her child is cared for in an atmosphere of affection and encouragement. A mother in a well-to-do family, who is only just discovering that child care is not her secret passion, will be doing more for her youngster by seeing him less, and having something to keep her own mind occupied. You have to see these "pitiable" children, leaving their mothers with a smile in the morning, and running back to them at night, to realize how very much both nursery and mother can hold a place in a small child's life.

### SO WHY NOT GIVE THE GIRLS A BREAK?

The women of this generation were brought up to believe that they were individuals, free and equal persons with a job to do in the world. Let's quit kidding ourselves, then, that as soon as a woman marries she can run right back to the world where Grandma lived as a girl. Women don't even have a place in the home any more—the few who do want nothing more than to be deprived of it. They're free, among other things, of the place they held in an outdated society. Now they have to make a place for themselves in the modern world community. And they've got to do it at the same time that they see to it that their children are getting the best possible training for life in an increasingly complex and interdependent society. If the nursery schools can do a better job, why not give up and admit it?

### EIGHT-A (REAL?) WRITER: HOMAGE TO TED STURGEON

*It seems there was a travelling salesman. There really was. He was seedy and he was sad, and he travelled from door to door in Chelsea—that section of the lower West Side of New York lying between the more famous Village and the more infamous Hell's Kitchen. If he ever sold his wares I do not know, except as I may here bear witness he sold nothing to me; he did, however, carry news of me, a writer barely begun, to the ears of Miss Merril, a writer barely beginning.*

*There followed a letter and a meeting. Her letter contained some flattery of a nature quite overwhelming until tempered by the meeting, at which I was quickly made aware of the fact that nobody who had actually sold a story to a magazine—even a minor story to a minor magazine—could escape her awe. In other words, the status Writer was of greater importance to her than any writer. Even me.*

*At the time she had not yet sold a word, and her chant, her theme was, "I want to be a Writer!" and the anomaly in this was that she was one, and that anyone in the scrivening trade who ever talked to her knew immediately that she was; that she was a writer in every respect, from top to toe to inside to out, who could write and would write and must write if it was on wet cardboard in the pouring rain with a pointed stick; and she didn't know it!*

*—from Theodore H. Sturgeon's introduction to Out of Bounds, a collection of short stories by Judith Merril, 1961.*

Science fiction author Theodore Sturgeon with Judith at Norwescon, early 1990s.  
*Courtesy of the Merrill estate*

March 29, 1946

Dear Mr. Sturgeon:

Dear Theodore:

Dear Ted: (check one)

This is an impulse, long-delayed, but none the more carefully planned for all that. I hope you'll answer, and suspect you will, because you answered the ad ... but better I should begin at the commencement, and work my way up to date.

Once upon a time I knew a character generally referred to as Horrible Henry. He knew and spoke much of a thin pale-faced lad, by name Peter Sturgeon. In the course of time, Horrible Henry being the type of character who attaches himself over a course of time, he discovered a copy of *Astounding Science Fiction* in my house, and told me with great pride and joy that Peter's brother wrote that junk.

Didn't mean a thing, then. Not till I got back to NY in the fall of '44, after a year or so bumping my baggage around the country, and read "Killdozer," and thought with great pride, "I know a man who knows the brother of the man who wrote that."

"Killdozer" was a powerful convincing novelette about a duel-to-the-death between a bulldozer operator and a sentient 'dozer in a construction site on a Caribbean island. (I know how that sounds; if anyone else had written it, it would have been schlock.) It marked Theodore Sturgeon's return to publication after a silence of several years (during which he had been running hotels and bulldozers in the Caribbean).

... Still didn't mean much, until shortly afterwards, when I was introduced to a Futurian, and through him to the whole world of fandom. Everybody else sat around all the time talking about authors they had known, and impressing me to no end, and all I had to hang on to was that I knew a guy who knew—etc.

Then there were more stories of yours, and one day I timidly suggested I'd like to meet this guy Sturgeon. "Him!" chorused the FSNY, "He's one of Campbell's group!"

"Campbell's group" were the established authors; regular contributors to the leading magazine in the field, *Astounding Science Fiction*, edited by John W. Campbell, Jr. Obviously we, rebels on the fringe, brilliant, unrecognized, could not consort with Establishment.

...When I first met them all, I'd suggested brightly, very brightly, that we put an ad in the Villager and see if we couldn't meet lots and lots of charming and intelligent fans in the Village. The idea got batted around, and somehow wound up with an ad in *The Saturday Review*, which I was informed you had answered.

But any mistakes I might have made about getting in touch with you were swiftly corrected. You were still one of Campbell's gang, and undoubtedly dull as dishwater ... Things developed, as things do. Among other things, they developed into the end of the war, and my husband swapping a submarine for an unheated flat. They also developed into me being home, banging at the typewriter, with my files open, and my desk covered with the usual assortment of papers, books, carbons, coffee cups, toys, and paper bags, when the Fuller Brush man came a-knocking.

He saw me, desk, coffee cups, and plunged into a startling sales approach. It appears you once offered him coffee and absinthe, and it had a terrific kick. You used to live on 10th Ave., and now live on Eighth, and you write stories, and he guesses you do have quite an imagination, and no, I don't know what his name is, and anyhow, nobody but Hemingway drinks absinthe, so he probably has you mixed up with someone else. Although, come to think of it, Horrible Henry, who is in all respects a Hemingway character, also drinks the stuff,

so there's no telling.

Me—I am a sort of a cross between a ghostwriter and research assistant, have published two middling bad detective pulps, written some poetry nobody likes but me, and put out a few amateur publications, about which nobody has gone into ecstasy. I am considered quite bright by those who like me well, and you'd probably like Dan, my husband, better than me, if you really know about things like bulldozers, or give a damn. He is about to become an electronics engineer. And it's all his fault, anyhow, because he spent a year after we got married propagandizing me until I finally picked up a copy of *Astounding*.

Now it's your turn ...

Judy Zissman

449 W. 19 St.

New York City 11

We are always reinventing ourselves—our lives and our histories.

Going through these old letters, I was first startled, then bemused, to discover time and again how my memory corrects my life—not substantively, not in major ways, but almost exactly as one revises a carefully crafted piece of fiction—adding telling detail, pinpointing motivations, adjusting the view and the time flow to enhance emotional rhythms—making it all more believable.

Is it only fiction writers who do this, or does everyone instinctively revise reality when it falls short of dramatic credibility?

By the time Ted wrote his introduction to *Out of Bounds*, fifteen years after our first meeting, he remembered me as having "not yet sold a word," and (honestly) believed that "nobody who had actually sold a story to a magazine" could escape my awe. He did not know when we first met that my awe was for the first good writer I had known, simply because he did not, at the time, know that he himself was a very good writer. He began to understand that just about the time I began to understand that I did indeed want to Be A Writer more than anything else in the world. (But even later, he would never know it more than half the time: one of the most curious of writerly traits is the onion-like layering of outrageous arrogance and abject humility—on arrogance, on humility, on—etc.).

March 30, 1 946

Dear Judy,

Thank you for your long-delayed, carefully planned impulse. What a wonderful blend of the studied and the spontaneous!

Your beginning at commencement calls up a wealth of anecdotal material. Wonder what ever happened to Horrible Henry Thomas? I mind me one evening going into Martin's 57th St. Cafeteria to be descended upon by nine of the habitués, all of whom were equipped with handshakes, backslaps, kudos and salaams. When the noise died down and the crockery had been swept up, I elicited the info that Henry Thomas had just been there and had announced, "You know, I'm not going to go see Ted Sturgeon any more. Somehow or other he makes me feel unwelcome." If you knew Horrible Henry at all, you would realize the earth-shaking nature of that statement ...

The pale-faced Peter Sturgeon was elected in the Army and became a paratrooper. He married a swell kid from Brooklyn and then went overseas. After a worrisome time he returned last November.

Was much amused and interested—as was Stanton—at your remarks in re Futurians, and the SatRev ad. Wollheim answered us, you know. Hm. Seems we couldn't make the grade with these exalted people. Dull as dishwater. Those characters ought to see ...

There followed half a page of outrageous name-dropping. In fact, when I met them later, the people he mentioned were almost as funny and interesting as he claimed—but you had to be there, eh?

He enclosed a cordial note of invitation from Jay Stanton, whose apartment he was then sharing.

... About Stanton. He is not a regular author of SF. He has lived most of that stuff—sideways thru time, the odd-numbered dimensions up to and including eight, and so forth. He was born on a satellite of Saturn twelve thousand years ago, and, being a little advanced for his generation (they live twenty-odd thousand years generally, and their culture is older than that of Mars, which has died out) was sent to earth to investigate our particular re-enactment of The Beginning of Things. He has donned human guise and does pretty well—you'd hardly guess that he wasn't a terrestrial. Of course, his playing of the banjo is superhuman, and his basic philosophies are too simple for most diffuse humans to grasp. He is very good about his electronics, pacing the knowledge he doles out to the top pace of humanity, since he feels that we already have too much on Earth which we can't handle. He damn near let that anti-gray thing slip the other day—that was close. Lunch with Campbell, y'know. You have to be careful. Dull as dishwater indeed.

Then, of course, there's Ree, the dark(eyed) angel, who writes exquisite (accent on the first syllable please) poetry. I could, by several hundred thousand words, say more about Ree. But you'll see for yourself, I'm sure.... I want very much to meet you and your spouse, and, extravertially speaking, I want you all to meet us.

Thank the powers I've found some reason to thank that Fuller Brush man. Of all the uninspiring, pity-generating, troglodytic accidents of human generations, he is exceeded in objective misery only by Henry Thomas.

Ted Sturgeon

What I had not told Ted in my letter was that I had actually bought his address from that Fuller Brush man. I had exactly sixty-nine cents in the world that day, and I told him so before he came in. After he told me Sturgeon lived only two blocks away I bought the cheapest thing he had—a toothbrush for thirty-seven cents—and he gave me the address.

We went over to the 8th Avenue apartment. I didn't like Ree. Ted didn't like Dan. Jay was fun. Ted and I didn't quite dislike each other, but I found him surfacey, over-mannered, almost affected. He made too many jokes, far too many puns. His blond good looks were too close to pretty. I had to keep reminding myself about the strength of his stories. I think he found me crude, too bold, certainly (rumours came back to me later) "unfeminine."

Ree left.

Dan left.

(Well, that's too flip. We'd been married seven years and we had a bright blue-eyed, beautiful three-year-old daughter; we had once been true and loyal comrades and now we were mutually embarrassed strangers—but that is another chapter.)

I fell—rebounded—into love with a man named Henry (not at all Horrible). Henry and Ted liked each other, so I saw more of Ted.

Henry left.

In January I moved from my now doubly desolate tenement apartment into an elegant East Side place loaned to me for three months by my Aunt Tim. Ted came to visit and we found ourselves really talking for the first time. He was going off to a friend's country house to do some intensive writing. He left me an address.

The next morning I began the first letter of the rest of our lives. The full correspondence file covers forty years. In its most intense period, between January and May of 1947, it deals specifically with the birth of a writer named Judith Merrill.

Dear Ted:

I had no notion of writing you so soon, but I have a story to tell, brought back to mind, after almost a year's passage, by the discussion we had yesterday. I want to get it down on paper before I quite forget it, and I'd rather not use it anywhere in any way that might cause me to submit it for publication, or even to publish it in Vanguard. It must be in context if it's to be in print; and context in this case would be little short of a novel.

We were both members of the Vanguard Amateur Press Association, in which I published my occasional "fanzine" called *TEMPER!* The topic that had opened the floodgates was a newly announced government initiative against anti-Semitism. My anecdote concerned the inverse: Jewish community attitudes towards the "goyim." After three closely typed single-spaced pages, I wound up:

... There is a consistent effort being made by governmental authorities to stop prejudice. But before you can cure the Christian of his contempt, you have to cure the Jew of his fear; that is the harder job. In the meantime, the very imposition of authority on the weaker side, when it has till now always favored the stronger, is going to create such a wave of reaction that things are bound for a while to be worse instead of better.

This is admittedly self-conscious ... but how am I to bring up my child?

I enclose, as an afterthought, the clipping I mentioned. You'll be sure to return it, won't you? It has a good deal of meaning to me, largely because it's such an unrealizable dream. We can't start all over again, because there just isn't room in Palestine, and because our roots are elsewhere. We've got to achieve full citizenship here, somehow, or go without it. But don't miss the last two paragraphs, nor their connotation. A "new order" of some sort, is what we instinctively look for; it is much of the reason why even strong individualists, like myself, become Socialists (and the number who go through exactly the phases I did is great: Zionism; labor-Zionism; socialism), until we realize that that dream too, is not realizable.

Ten days later he replied.

And now the answer. Sorry I couldn't do what I wanted to do—namely, throw up everything and write right away. I've got to do an awful lot to fully justify this period of hermitage.

How odd    Of God

To choose    The Jews

said a wit whose name I can't recall. How odd, too (speaking with the detachment of a visiting Martian) that a group of sensitive, intelligent people should strike such a dismal medium in clannishness! ... This frightening reaction would not occur if most people regarded their fellows as individuals. Further, such an attitude is the strongest possible defense against such tragic social pressures.

Merril will be persecuted because she is a Jew. You can no more stop every occasion of it than you can prevent her from catching cold. Sooner or later it will happen and only if she is fore-armed with a deep-seated, habitual regard of individuals as individuals will she be able to defend herself. Defend herself not against the little boy who says she can't come to the party because she's a Jew, but against the flux of poison within herself which will be set up. She must be able to say, with conviction, that Hans is excluding her because there is something the matter with Hans. She must be able to do this without beating Hans over the head with it: Hans is out of it, and it must be her own conviction...

Conclusion: that the member of a persecuted minority must not only be an acceptable individual in his own right as an individual. He must cast himself as an ambassador of his kind, as long as "kind" is important to the rest of society. I told that to Phil Klass recently, and he got very angry indeed at me. I could not persuade him that by ambassadorship I did not mean knuckling under, turning the cheek, and so forth.

Phil Klass is better known as William Tenn, arguably the funniest serious writer science fiction has ever had. (Arguably: Stanislav Lem, after all?) When we met, Phil had recently published his first story, and the second, "Child's Play," was about to appear.

Phil and Ted and I were like the Three Musketeers for much of that magic year of 1947. We laughed and argued and roamed the New York streets and picked each other's work apart, brain-trusted, cooked fine food, got drunk, and argued about everything and sang and loved (each other and others)

and argued some more.

One thing that now baffles me: at one of our frequent joint financial bottomings, we invented a cheque-kiting system that enabled us to pass a single sum of ten dollars successively through all three bank accounts for days and weeks on end. (In 1947, remember: ten bucks was money!) Of course, banks were not yet computerized, but all our accounts were in the same branch, and I can no longer figure out just how we did it.

Feb. 13, 1947

Dear Ted:

... Your stuff about ambassadors makes me mad too. Not because it isn't true, but because it is, and I'd bet a pickled penny that's really why Phil got mad. What we resent, or I at least, is the knowledge that because I'm a Jew, I mustn't talk too loud or wear too bright colors, or show any ignorance of the social graces. I don't want to be an ambassador; I want to be me.

I can get by; I am, on the whole, a "white" Jew. But I don't like being among people who talk about the "yids" and I don't like being told, "You're different. They're not all like you," as I have been, too often.

The damnable part of it is that we are ambassadors, whether we choose to be or not ... and you see, you contradict yourself when you say "Be a person." Within my own circle, I am free to be the best person I can be. Out in the very real world, where people insist on classifying and categorizing, whether you or I like it or not, I am not free to be the best person I think I can be; I must first be certain that I am not, by my behavior, shocking anyone in a way that would be regarded as particularly Jewish ...

Incidentally, this does not weigh on me as heavily as these letters might make it appear. I live with certain restrictions as a Jew, certain restrictions as a woman, certain restrictions as a civilized person. I disregard these restrictions when it seems not too dangerous ... so I need not think about being a Jew most of the time any more than I have to think about wearing clothes in the street...

Right now, I am all wrapped up in another argument entirely. Henry's CO friend Vitold was in town, and we spent a long winey evening talking about it. TEMPER! is full of it, an article by me, done months ago, before I knew H., or had had much chance to discuss it with anyone, and one by HES ... I keep saying "it." The reference, of course, is to the entire subject of pacifist resistance to war, conscientious objection, and for that matter, any sort of resistance to war. I shan't get into it now, because it would probably run into pages and pages, and anyhow, TEMPER! will be run off tonight, and I'll send you a copy. Opinions?

"H" and "HES" are (Wonderful) Henry, who was a "CO"—conscientious objector—in World War II.

Feb 22, 1947

Jeer Dewdy,

... Your friend to whom you never said, defensively or otherwise "I am a Jew" was a jerk. If you must run with wide-eyed innocents who drift around blandly unconscious of the facts and facets of life, you will have to pay the consequences. (I wish I was a consequence. Those things seem to get pretty well paid.)

I truly like the way your mind worked on that matter of ambassadors. You please me, at times, you do.... By "be a person," then, I meant that it is desirable ... to live in the greatest concentration of "good taste" as is compatible with sincerity. Civilized functionalism is an overall cover of the human animal, it's true. But it isn't a hard glossy veneer. (That's affectation.) It's "oil plating" like it says in the ads—a fine even layer of clean lubricant, through which the basic steel shows well ...

For God's sake get a new typewriter ribbon.

See you soon ...



Ted

Feb. 24, 1947

Dear Theodore:

Sometimes I like you, too; and sometimes you irritate from here to way out there. Anyhow, I get more backhanded compliments than anybody. Women, in particular, apparently with the best of intentions, are always telling me I should do this, that, or some other damn thing, because I really "could be beautiful." Now this is to start with a contradiction in terms. Beautiful is something that is or is not and never could be if it isn't; the joker in this case is that experiment has made it clear to this particular might-have-been that the best I can do is look like "if I only bothered," I'd make top rating, on account of when I do bother, I may look chic, but I also look plain-and-painted, and who wouldn't rather look almost-beautiful? All of which is doubtless of no interest to you whatsoever, except I'm so glad you like my mind sometimes ...

Also about Jews; frankly I'm sick of them. I haven't talked or thought so much on this subject for years ...

Naturally, it's up to the individual, of whatever background, to adjust himself to the accepted tastes of the environment he seeks out. Only we can't, if we happen to be an intellectual minority, live in the favored environment all the time. The good taste, for instance, that allows you to wear whatever clothing you like among friends of similar standards is hardly acceptable to the police force of the City of New York ...

Ted was, by policy and frequent practice, a nudist. He used to point out gleefully that answering the apartment door bare was a great disincentive to solicitors (whether for votes, payments, or sales). In high school, he had trained to be a circus acrobat, and he had a gorgeous body. We didn't live close enough for home visits when the sagging years came, so I don't know for sure whether his nudism outlasted his beauty.

... The intellectual tastes and emotional attitudes that led me to become a member of a left-wing group at one time are equally unacceptable to the police, as I have had occasion to learn.

Now I'm coming to my point: I have spoken at I don't know how many street-meetings, after which the cop on duty informed me in one way or another, and in varied language that he would, if not for my presence, probably run the whole bunch of Jew-bastards in. But I was much too nice a girl to be dragged in with them, and would I please go home and let the officers do their duty?

Of course I never did go home; the thing that made me join in the first place was a similar incident. I'd been holding out for months because the whole thing seemed so futile and so ingrown, and then I agreed to go to one meeting; after the meeting, we were singing old Joe Hill songs, and a batch of Christian Front lads, out for an evening of fun, started tossing rocks through the window. At that point, the well-known pit of the stomach got the better of the top of the brain, and I decided anyone good enough for those boys to throw rocks at was good enough for me to join.

This was an individual action, as were all my actions in the Party. I spent about 14 months as a member fighting the Party Line, and finally got out, still unconverted to the idea of a party line.

... What are Cajuns?

And have you had the mailing yet? Vanguard I mean? I'm curious about your reactions.

When are you coming back? I want to have one great big party in this beautiful place while I have it, and it might as well be when you're here as when you're not.

This was neither the first, nor by any means the last, friendship in my life that began with all-out debate; it is only the best-documented. There have been perhaps a dozen such friends I have cherished

as People I Can Really Argue With: cogent thinkers with views that are thoughtfully different from mine; tough talkers who can't be easily bamboozled; friends who might conceivably convince me or be convinced, but will in any case still be friends at the end.

Of course it was not all debate. I told Ted how moved I was by his new story, "Maturity." And I sent him some of my poetry.

March 4, 1947

Dear Judy,

Sometimes you irritate me too. Like now. I'm supposed to be working. (Wait'll I fix that margin. Talking to you I got to get a little farther over to the left. Shaddup! I can temper your TEMPER with one of my own.) So instead of working I spend the time I'm not looking for your last letter in thinking about where the hell I put it. I found it stuck between one of my pastel nudes and an atlas. Now what am I doing? How the hell can I get any work done while you sit there goggling at me out of those mad eyes and wait for me to talk to you? Shaddup! Least you can do is sit quiet and listen. This "beautiful is a is or is a is not" deal is for the birds. You know better than that. All things are beautiful, at times, to a degree. Have you ever thought about beauty, just beauty, as a thing apart from other things, rather than as a quality, or appurtenance to other things? I wonder if you have ... do you ever sit quietly long enough to do that? So much beauty is quiet stuff.... Mostly you go around like a man with a paper scrotum in a forest fire ...

I'm not going to talk to you about being beautiful any more. This infant, this newborn, puking, pink-and-mustard friendship of ours has already reached the stage where I can sense the old "there he goes again" reaction when I say anything about it, so the hell with it. Know what that reaction is? Prejudice. Yes it is. Put a stroboscopic beam on the split second reactions of any bigot and you'll see. Here comes the set of factors; I recognize them; I don't like them already.

Beautiful is a state of mind. It is a state of mind where it starts and it is a state of mind where it goes to. It is an abstract compounded of harmony and/or contrast with the environment of the beautiful thing. The environment does not have to be concrete, but it has a hell of a lot to do with the reflexes of the beholder. So be beautiful, and I shall react to beauty to the degree of yours. Be uninteresting, and I shall not react. Be downright ugly, and I'll probably think that you're beautiful, so don't ever worry about that again.

In all this business of bad taste and good taste and so on, I'm beating my brains out against the very things you are—the desire for the right to rebel against that which does not suit my standards. It's a tough battle, particularly when you evolve to the point where you are a hypocrite if you don't face the fact that all too often you are substituting "convenience" for "standards." I can only know my own definition of graciousness, and it is one that precludes hating a man for his black skin, pissing on other people's rugs, going naked when it will distress others, sleeping with other men's wives, violating privacy, and any number of other delightful or uncomfortable or fun-making things. A gracious man avoids many difficulties, true. So does the professional rebel.

"... but with a whimper" is damn good. I'm going to give you a present.

The discerning reader may be surprised to hear that neither of us knew we were conducting a courtship—not until the night he came back to New York, in the first week of March.

He phoned me from a bus station in the morning, said he had a gift for me, and that he did not want to go directly to Jay's: could he come to my place first? Of course! I had, from somewhere, a bottle of sparkling wine; I had an old high-school prom evening gown, and the makeup my aunt had given me (and shown me how to use) before she left. I went out and bought some balloons. It was a fine party, for two.

The gift was a copy of Clement Wood's *The Complete Rhyming Dictionary and Poet's Craft Book* inscribed, "I give this so that Judy can/Become a god-damn artisan."

He advised me to practise formal verse, if only for the sake of my prose. Although we were now seeing each other almost every day, we continued to write letters—often hand-delivered. In fact, he had carried his last letter with him. I answered it the next day, after he woke me with a phone call.

Dear Ted,

Thank you for calling. I feel well-slept, well-pleased, and, well—very well ...

About the beautiful deal, as I've since explained, most of what I wrote was sheer ugly defense mechanism. After all, there's bound to be some reaction to a character who goes around telling everybody how unfeminine I am

Beautiful, however, is what our numerous [Alfred] Korzybski-mad friends would call multiordinal. I was talking about beauty-parlor-beauty, not sunset-and-soul beauty, and wouldn't have said what I did about the second variety even in a defensive mood. I agree with you completely, and now what are you going to do?

Listen, there's something serious I want to talk about. I mean practical-serious. I told you the mercenary calculating reasons why I cultivated you, and they still hold. I like the way you've taken me up on my poetry-scribbling, but I'm much more concerned with prose cause it pays. The more of what I write you're willing to read and comment on, the happier I'll be about it ...

The current admonition is just to warn you that any time you do comment, you'll have to make sure it's rounded. It's easy as hell for me to decide it's all wrong if nothing's said at the same time about its good points. This is not in reference to anything you've said or done in the past ... just a request for the most useful variety of criticism in the future. And for as much criticism as you can take time to give me, too.

Hey the hell with this stuff. Happy New Year. Spring is here. I just took [my daughter] Merry to school and came back, and there's an ad in the paper for a five-room apartment, and I've been reading my new book on the bus, and I got some fine pictures of Merry in the mail today, one of her looking into the living room mirror with a little-girl's grin at the delights of a mirror. Spring is here!

It feels so funny to feel happy all the way through ... clean nice fresh fun young happy. Thank you, Theodore, and thank the nice man who mixed today's clear sky.

The five-room apartment was in the basement of a big old low-rise on E. 4th Street near Second Avenue. (Ten and twenty years later this would be beatnik and then hippie territory; I was premature.) It was too expensive, but the rooms were big, the ceilings high, the windows large, and the third bedroom meant I could rent out a room. I took it.

And I wrote a sonnet—or thought I did:

The world's a whirling ball of fire;  
The world's a slowing mass of ice;  
My world's a wistfully precise  
Geometry of my desire.  
My world's a passionate love-lyre  
Played on a bed of lava and gneiss;  
And I'm an articulate, concise  
Spier and crier and versifier.  
I'm an integral part of the ruse  
We play on us in the same old game,  
Shaping the stars to the eyes of the Muse.  
At the door of my cell I bid for fame  
And codify my cosmic clues

In the human hall of freezing flame.

Ted pointed out, with some restraint, that sonnets are not ordinarily in tetrameter. I revised it. Achieving greater technical perfection did not improve the poetry. Ted wrote me a five-page letter:

... It says stuff. There is little evidence of the worst fault of the sonneteer: the forced shaping and pruning of words and thoughts to fit the rigidity of the sonnet form. It is a rigidity. You are at liberty to write any form, or any kind of vers libre, that you choose. Nobody says you must write sonnets. But if you do, write a sonnet and not something approaching one ...

I shall go overleaf and consider your final version line by line. Is it necessary for me to write here things about "don't take this the wrong way" and "I really think you have talent, and am only trying to help you in a field in which you would exceed me except for the accident that I got into it many years before you did"?

I trust not. Suffice it to say that this is a hell of a lot [of] trouble.... If you had no talent in these matters, I know I could say as much, and do it freely. I'd even gain from it. You'd respect me personally for it. So draw your own conclusions.

There followed a detailed, painstaking analytic dissection of each line—sometimes a sentence, sometimes a paragraph. Then:

Now, you wrote a sonnet. You did it as a challenge, and as the taking up of a challenge. Your next sonnet will be better if you follow these suggestions:

Keep pure and faithful your respect for the form. Violate it nowhere, ever, not in the slightest shift of syllabic value. Our language, with all its faults, is one of the most completely expressive in history.

I find little fault with your punctuation, but it might help you to assume my view of it; namely, that punctuation is inflection in print. To me, "She loves me—" is heard differently from "She loves me ..." and from "She loves me." There is a speaking difference between a colon and a semicolon and a comma. With this quite clear in your mind, punctuate the sonnet as if it were prose; for, as far as idea-content is concerned, it is prose, just as fine prose is poetry ...

Now, about the "rules." They can be violated, and are, by the great. You can cite me hundreds of examples. There are tetrametric lines in Shakespeare. If you would do this, go ahead. But be Shakespeare first.

T.H.S.

I was incredulously grateful for both the faint praise and the detailed criticism. I had by this time sold three or four more stories—detectives and westerns—to Doc Lowndes, and Ted was pushing me to try science fiction. The writing, and rewriting, of the sonnet, and Ted's reactions, had quite confirmed my confidence that I could learn any literary technique, but good science fiction was not just a matter of learned skills. I believed I did not have the capacity for imagination-cum-detailed-visualization it required.

It never occurred to me that the same quality might be a prerequisite for poetry: I took refuge in Clement Wood. (I never did write another sonnet, but I did do one each of some other tricky forms.)

While I practised precise meter and scansion and rhyme, I was cleaning and caring for my aunt's elegant apartment as I had (and still have) never done in any place of my own. I was still doing some of the research and ghostwriting jobs, and writing the odd filler piece for Doc Lowndes. I was taking Merry to nursery school every morning, picking her up in the afternoons, putting Band-aids on her knees, playing with her, reading to her, making dinner and giving her a bath every evening, and I was getting ready to move on April first. (Henry had told me once that the way to deal with painters and plumbers was to smoke unfiltered Camels and offer them during discussions. As usual, he was right. For my new place the painters mixed me the exact shade of grey-blue turquoise I had fallen in love with on the walls

of Aunt Tim's apartment.)

I found tenants for my new spare bedroom: Friedel and Asher, immigrants from Latvia.

Meanwhile, Ted and I were all the pleasures proving, orbiting at e2, the limiting speed of emotion; and I was deciding, Yes! I was going to be a professional writer. Between times, I coped with my mother, who was delighted, but worried, about the last item, and worried-and-upset about all the rest of the above.

I was twenty-four years old. Now, forty-five more years down the line and a practised teller of tales, I know that if I were inventing this story, I would never try to convince a reader that so much could have been packed into so short a time. I did not believe it myself; my revisionist memory had stretched six weeks into six months—but it's all there in the letters.

How can time be so compressed? Where did the energy come from? When did this young woman sleep?

Just nine days after I opened the door for Ted in my old prom dress I wrote:

March 17, 1947 Monday morn, before 3

Ted dear,

I left the phone, and stumbled over to the typer, full of unfinished scraps of conversation, thinking how, since I'd been awakened early, I could spare time to write you and explain something important.

Imagination ... I didn't realize, I think, until tonight, quite fully that it was something that could be developed and wasn't just an "is an is or is an is not" deal. (I love that!) I don't know what factors you had in mind when you said my imagination had been stifled, but I think I can follow it pretty easily. Start with the kind of reaction I had to music when I was a kid—someone would laugh at me, so I'd go away from whatever was beautiful, and forget about it. Toss in an intensely socially conscious environment during my adolescence, where the searching out of the Facts became the ultimate desideratum. Add a husband who called poetry "poultry," which would have been all right if he had ever called it anything else, even when he wrote it. Run through this a thread of enforced independence, personal, and then financial, which kept the sheltering roof anywhere but overhead, and let the sunlight in a little too bright a little too often, so that many things were seen in sharp relief that might have benefited by shades and tone. Combine it with a sharply analytical mind, which I have. My dreams went underground.

So now Sturgeon comes along and tells me sure I've got an imagination, all I have to do is relax and I'll find out.

I started in this game wanting to be an editor, because I was pretty damn sure I'd never make the grade as a writer. I began to understand applied technique from Johnny Michel, who lives by it. Johnny's a guy who's been disappointed by life so damned often he's taken the delicate quivering little center-piece and carefully callous-camouflaged it, till hardly anybody, including Johnny, knows it's there. He could, and did, teach me what I had known when I was ten, but since forgotten, that writing was something you did by figuring people out, and working hard at the images in your mind, and expressing them in certain symbols, with meaningful allusions and touches as often as direct statements. The only thing he couldn't teach me was where the images came from and how to let the pictures come out without having to figure them out.

Anyhow, after a while along came beautiful lovely deep-purple Henry. (I told you I only learn from other people; books help, but I can't get it without people.) Of course he had this business all confused with romance, which made it hard for me to get at sometimes, because the romantic smoke-screen is something I bypassed a long time ago, and haven't much use for. Romance, fun-and-gayety, yes; romance, slick-style love, no. I told Henry things I'd almost forgotten about, like the long involved games I used to play in the attic "observatory" with my one close friend. I was generally a modified version, or an exaggerated one, of Richard the Lion-Hearted, mixed up with Robin Hood, Kim, and a few

early Greek gods, and she the lovely, but independent and troublesome princess, and we spun it out, near as I can recall, week by week, and sometimes day by day, for four years or so, and when I moved back to NY it was probably the thing I missed most. I should have been writing it, not playing it, but my mother plagued me so to write, and kept talking about what my father had done ... and there was always the excellent chance I'd do less well than he.

Anyhow, there wasn't much outlet after that. I did write a little, though unwillingly, when I was fourteen and fifteen. By then I had friends, two budding chemists and one ditto economist, and I thought I was a young economist myself, so I started college and quit after a year in a passion of disgust with the school and myself and the world. It was the summer of 1940, the draft act, and war coming, depression still, and I was the Forgotten Generation, almost all by myself.

The five years between us make a difference here. I was 17 that summer; war was something direct and personal and too hurtful to do anything about but be logical. If you let yourself feel it, at 17, it damn near killed you. I met Danny and got married, fast, and discovered sex, and found out how many things sex can make unnecessary. Sex and a Cause, together, can take care of all the tag ends of emotion and imagination.

You know most of the rest of the story. I was a Party worker for a year and a half, a housewife for two years, and then I was suddenly alone, with a baby, allotment checks, time to experiment, and eventually John Michel, and all the people and trains of thought he brought with him. I couldn't let myself go all the way, and make full use of his (and their) limited value, because there was Dan, in the background, Dan whom I loved like crazy, and who would be back, probably still laughing at all that sort of thing, Dan who was pleased as punch at my first published story, and loved having a writer-wife to brag about, but wasn't likely to go for anything much purpler than Crack Detective. I very consciously did not want to unfit myself for living with him. It happened anyway, but I tried goddam hard not to let it happen.

Alright, here I am. I'm full of lovely little words that bust up near the top and run away again, because they're not used to coming out. I still feel a little embarrassed when I talk about the effect good writing has on me, because whenever I said anything to Dan about it, it didn't seem quite to make sense. His view was 'taint how it's said that counts, it's what. I never accepted that, but I couldn't fight it, because the attack was on something too intimately part of me to be allowed to set itself up in opposition to my love, so I shut it up and turned away from it. It wasn't his fault, because he didn't know; I just subsided into the understanding-without-words of the sensitive inarticulates. He felt things, you see, but found it shameful to say them.

Now I tell you I want, more than anything else in the world, to be a good writer. I do. I want the power of it, the kind of power you described in a bulldozer, the kind that comes from looking at what you wrote in a secondhand store, and knowing it has become a part of at least one person who read it, and that if it was good—if you had something to say and got it across—well, whatever it was, it's part of somebody else now, and you better goddam well hope it was good. I want to be sitting up there pushing words around the way the guy on the dozer pushed the levers, and getting results the same way. You can't insult me or hurt my feelings about it, not if you start from the basic premise that I can learn it, that I've got all the levers and the necessary weight and strength and the machine waiting to be used, and all I have to do is learn its workings. Hell, Ted, just accepting that premise is as big a compliment as anyone can pay me right now.

Now tonight, on the telephone, you tell me I've got imagination after all, and for the first time I realize what happened to it, where it went, and how to get it back, and you ask if I'm insulted!

I'm goddam mad at the people who stifled it; I'm goddam happy and pleased and grateful and full of love for the guy who's willing to let me practice its somewhat dulled workings on him himself, personally, even though it means asking questions and getting

inadequate answers a lot of the time.

Thanks, Ted.

with love and gratitude,

Judy

Ted got a wire from the British magazine *Argosy*: his story, "Bianca's Hands," had won its annual contest. A thousand dollars, but more than that: a mainstream literary award. I watched him, that afternoon, just beginning to allow himself to be aware that he was, by anyone's standards, a good writer, and I began to understand as well the true nature—beyond money or even glory—of the satisfactions a good writer (a Real Writer) might experience. I went home and tried to write what I'd seen and felt.

*This was the taste of victory. He slid it in and out of his mouth, examining it for a moment apart from himself tasting it then as a thing of himself. This was the flavor of triumph, this music, this message, these words, words of himself that had brought forth words of another, life and pain of himself that had come clean and beautiful onto paper, the essence of his own person translated by the message in his hand, by the private meaning of the music he had chosen to hear, into praise and dollars. This was the thing that had happened to him, the memory with which he lived. And a telegram and a thousand dollars changed it, purged it, made it only a memory, no more a part of himself now only a thing that had come from himself that would belong to a hundred, a thousand, and tens of thousands of other human beings.*

*This was the taste of triumph, this once-intimate, once-personal savor that had gone out of him onto the paper, out of the paper into the check, that set him free from pain without losing the knowledge of pain, free from love without losing the glory of love, free from being human without losing the humanity.*

Two days later we were in an ice-cream parlour with Merry, and Ted announced he had the perfect pen name for me. I had already decided I did not want to do serious writing under either my husband's or my father's name. I had, in fact, two pen names already, men's names required for Doc's pulps: Ernest Hamilton combined Henry's and Ted's middle names; Eric Thorstein was in homage to Thorstein Veblen. But this new name had to be just me.

Ted printed out on a napkin in elaborate characters: JUDITH MERRIL. I loved it and Merrill thought it was great, but I said I couldn't use it: it sounded Anglo-Saxon; I wasn't going to try to pass.

Ted got pissed off. For two days I didn't see him. Then he arrived on my threshold and handed me an envelope, with a letter and another envelope inside.

March 18, 1947 5 a.m.

Judy darlin':

Enclosed is a thing.

Now I'll tell you all about it. But first—please! If you can curb your curiosity, just this once, please don't read the enclosure until you are by yourself and will not be interrupted. I'd like to think of your reading it under those circumstances.

I got the idea for it when I doped out the pen-name for you in that ice-cream parlor the other day. The thing you did that I said was bad was to thumbs-down the Merrill spelling, trying to work out a Merol or Meloroll or Merylstein or Cmerilskowski or something. I saw it as Judith Merril; it looks well, it says well, and I can't see it as anything else.

Your reasons for wanting it like that annoy me. You are a far less self-conscious Jew than Phil Klass, yet he means to make his reputation and get his skill as William Tenn and Kenneth Putnam before he uses that patronym. Phil won't eat butter with his meat for anyone at any time, and here you won't publish under an Aryan handle. Is everyone crazy?

The thing that happened that made it all right for me to go ahead was remembering something you said about your Hebrew name. I went to my trusty old encyclopedia and looked it up. It was right in there. It means Jewess. It doesn't mean anything else but

Jewess.

Or would you like better I should circumcise you?

As for the pome (this is the Poet's Craft-book Dep't.) it is a Petrarchan sonnet, which means that its form is extremely rigid and complex. The rhyme-scheme is 1 2 2 1, 1 2 2 1, 3 4 5, 3 4 5. Notice that there is no rhymed couplet at the end, as is found in Shakespearean and Wordsworthian sonnets.

The idea is presented in the octet (the first eight lines) and resolved in the sestet. I'd rather build something like this than eat, which is demonstrable ...

The rest of what I have to tell you I have told you before and will tell you again and again and again and again and ...

T.H. Sturgeon

And in the second envelope:

The Birth of Judith Merrill

As if your life were in itself a god  
And pondered on its past, and on the pain  
And pleasure that composed it; all the grain  
And polish of its growing; how it trod  
The ways of trouble and the flowered sod  
Of laughter ... So created, it again  
Created, Jove-like, from its careful brain  
A child was born mature, armed, clothed and shod.  
This miracle-Minerva is as wise  
As all the wisdom you have shown. Her strength  
Is yours, and all your gentleness and heart.  
Creative, like her forebears, she shall rise—  
She will be heard! and all mankind, at length,  
Shall know her for her worth, her truth, her art.

Yes, he was (briefly) besotted. And yes, I knew it. What was my worth, my truth, my art? Two pulp detective stories, three pulp westerns, and a handful of half-good poems.

But I was—and am—overwhelmed by the knowledge that behind the infatuation was a kind of love—love of writing as much as of me—that could make him give his time, his energy, his knowledge and inventiveness, not to make me his disciple—I was already that—but to help me become my own self, a writer-woman who just might, with enough work and inventiveness of my own, become a colleague. And this extraordinary effort never faltered, even after he fell in love with another woman.

Of course I was blissfully besotted myself, but on a slightly different potion. When he came back the next day, I swooningly acknowledged my new name, never once challenging his specious arguments. But when he began talking about marriage, I stopped swooning.

Maybe there was some worth and truth, even wisdom, after all (if as yet no evidence of art). Where did I get the sense or the strength to back off (just a bit)? Consider not just the honour, the glamour, and the flattery, but the fun and excitement. I knew I wasn't ready yet (if ever) for another marriage, and I suspected Ted was a better lover than husband, but what saved me—saved us—I think, was that I was still partly in love with Henry.

Only partly: not so much that I ever lost sight of what I was getting. On March 20 I wrote:

lissen, lug--

you just called and woke me out of a sound sleep and some fantastic dreams. my imagination's improving. you know i never used to dream? mostly i just want to thank you for last night. for the stars and the crisp air and the way the air whirled and the stars jumped up and down and hugged themselves. also i thank you for the sea surf and the palm trees and the crescent moon lying on its back. these things do not endure for me in the way that the



concentrated essence of people does. I'm a people-lover ... new york is so full of so many people's loves and hates and daily livings. there is a short whitman poem, which i do not seem able to locate at the moment, that says he loves manhattan not for its shops or streets or anything, except the way his eyes meet the eyes of lovers and friends as he walks through the city. that's it ...

i left you quite disturbed, not unhappy, and not disturbed for me, but full of beautiful tears because i wanted very badly to be able to give as much as i was getting ... oh well, why hash it? thank you for last night and just for being in my life.

How can time be so compressed? Reading through these letters, I was astonished to find that the affair I always remembered as lasting about six months was only six weeks long. Wellll—seven? Eight? There was this ambiguous lap-over period between me and my successor—but part of the reason for the ambiguity was that in that same dreamtime I was, in fact, at last, Becoming a Real Writer.

For years I have been telling the story of how I wrote my first science fiction story—the first Judith Merrill story—and telling it wrong.

Once there was a little green man who was not running up the wall. The wall was on the landing outside the Stanton apartment. Ted—who had never stopped badgering me about writing an SF story—was standing there with me.

"Look!" he said. "Look! See the little green man running up the wall?"

I looked. "No," I said. "I don't see any little green man."

"Look," he said again. "See? He's taking quick little steps and he has a long pointy hat and it's sticking straight out—"

"Ted," I said. "I don't see any little green man, and if I did, he'd be taking long slow draggy steps, and his hat would be drooping down."

Ted used the smile that sometimes made him look like a sardonically sweet demon. "Right!" he said happily, "I write fantasy. You write science fiction."

Now this happened as told, I think. (I forget names, faces, places, times; I do usually remember dialogue, precisely and with intonation.) But for years I have believed, and reported, that I went home after that and started work early the next morning on "That Only a Mother," the story that made my new name famous in the little pond of science fiction almost overnight.

Not true.

I made reference to the Little Green Man later in that letter to Ted on March 20. The story was written a month later, while my daughter was having the measles and Ted was dallying with Mary Mair.

April 15, 1947

Dear Ted:

This is no doubt feminine, irrational, and unfair; but I've got to get it off my chest, and if I do it this way you won't get it till tomorrow, by which time it will be a little fairer, if still true.

You started writing a story Saturday. You were hot; you were going to stay right with it till it was done, and not let anything or anybody interfere. Even me. OK? I was right with you, and still would be, if same held true. But you let George Smith interfere; you let Phil Klass interfere; you let a vaccination interfere, and the Argosy girl. They're all either "unavoidable" or "justifiable," I know. But today is Tuesday, and I'm beginning to feel I might be either unavoidable or justifiable myself.

I'm sorry; I know I'm being unreasonable. I am feeling mildly sorry for myself, and that is a dreadful thing to do. But knowing, as you do, what it's like to be cooped up with a sick-but-not-deathly-sick kid (and going slowly crazy at the same time because there's work I've got to get done, and can't)—"Judeee," it yells from the other room right now, "you were going to fix my racing car—"

The spring was busted. And I don't like the tone of voice I used to her. I would give my left ear to be free to stay at this machine steadily for a while, maybe eight whole hours without

an interruption. So I take it out on you because you don't come to see me.

No, there isn't a god damn thing you could do if you did come over. I'm sorry, Ted; this is one bitch of a letter. I just hope you've finished the story by the time you get it, because I don't think I could forgive myself if it did make you interrupt your work.

Ted wrote to me the same day, telling me about Mary.

Intuition? ESP? Call it what you like; we're talking about the times you know stuff you don't know you know. It happens to some of us more than others; it happens to everyone who doesn't simply shut it out.

A few days earlier, when I could still leave Merrill with a sitter because I thought all she had was a cold, I had gone over to the 8th Avenue apartment, and met Mary for the first time. There were several visitors that day, among them an extraordinarily beautiful woman, very quiet, very pleasant. I did not sense anything between her and Ted; at that point there was nothing—she had just arrived.

Next day or the one after, Ted stopped by, and something important happened. Merrill still had a "cold": she was being kept indoors, but not in bed. Ted—unlike me—was fastidious, possibly to a fault. After an hour or so he said, agonized, "Will you wipe that child's nose?" I looked, surprised, and saw a worm of mucous running down to her mouth; recalled vaguely that it might have been there for quite some time; wiped. Of course it was back ten minutes later. After Ted left, I stopped seeing it again.

The same day there was a tiny article in the *New York Herald Tribune*—page 52 or thereabouts. The U.S. Army of Occupation in Japan was denying rumours that many infanticides were occurring in the areas around Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Migod! I thought, remembering the pictures I'd seen in *Science Illustrated*: brain tumours and missing limbs on baby rats whose parents had been exposed to atomic radiations.

Those were the seeds from which the story—The Story—grew. While they gestated Merrill's cold became, officially, measles. I couldn't go out: she had to be kept quiet and resting in a darkened room.

Whenever she was sleeping, or temporarily undemanding, I worked on a western story for Lowndes. Ted was supposedly holed up with a story of his own. On the 15th, he wrote to tell me Mary was still there, and he had made love to her. He was big on monogamy in those days, and could hardly believe he now wanted both of us. He was, actually, in torment.

So was I, but I didn't know it yet. My Story was getting ready to be written. It was about a mother who didn't—wouldn't? couldn't?—see her baby's missing limbs. All my passion, all my sensoria, were bound up in the feelings, the awareness, of that other mother; with what was left over, I wrote Ted a reply that was affectionate, analytical, and quite astonishingly objective.

The best we had to hope for was that, if it went on long enough, and was convincingly good, it might become, "for the rest of our lives." It wasn't made of forever-stuff. I could have played with you and pretended and kept you with me till I didn't need you. It says here. I could do that with some people, I think. I can't, and couldn't, do it with you. No more than you could do it with me, now, when you could have avoided stepping on my ego-toes at a bad moment by playing with me ...

I don't think you will be hurt, or misunderstand, when I say that it wasn't losing you that made me cry. I don't think I've lost you; I never had all of you, and I think I still have most of what I did.

... I barely know Mary, but I've often found I do better analytically when I don't know people too well. She's good for your ego. She'll probably be good for a lot of other things. But you won't be content to have her bring the coffee. You'll want her to talk, too. You'll want her to talk and bring the coffee. She'll either learn to mimic the talk, or else she'll really learn to be part of it, and then she'll stop bringing coffee. You'll give her everything she needs from a man, and she won't be able to give you everything you need. You'll come to me for some things, or someone like me. And because she's not stupid, not "just-woman" enough to sit back and say, "That's my man; he can do no wrong," she'll resent not being able to give you everything.

You've got marriage and love and comfort and companionship all mixed up in your mind. But if you want a woman devoted to you, with all the most powerful and endearing connotations of that word, then stick to the beautiful-but-dumb classification, Mary's not dumb enough. She's got too much brains and sensitivity to be happy as a doormat, and, I'm afraid, not quite enough to be the other kind of thing.

Watch your step, darling ...

If you're not in love with Mary, don't tell her you are. It will hurt less, at least, if she knows what to expect. If you are in love with her, the sort of way that makes a man stop noticing other women's shapes, then do tell me. I don't want to knock myself out against a stone wall of refusals, but just now, if you're still available, I'd rather have you than anyone else who is.

Four days later I sat down to write the story, and it came in a rush, the fastest story I have ever written: eight hours straight, with time out for calls from the other bedroom. When I finished, I decided I could leave Merry with my tenant Friedel for an hour. I knew it was a good story: I thought it was right—but how could I tell until Ted saw it? (I don't think it even crossed my mind that I might run into Mary.)

Ted read the story, glowed, made some small suggestions to tighten up the ending, and said to send it to his agent. It should not, he said, go to the science fiction magazines until it had been tried on the big slicks. I floated home over the rooftops.

That was Monday. Wednesday he wrote me the definitive Dear Judy letter. Of course I had known it was coming; that didn't make it hurt any less. Friday evening he came over and we had the Inevitable Horrid Rehash. I cried a lot. We made love one last time (we thought). After he left, I wrote a piece of very tricky verse:

Another last sweet childhood treasure died  
This night; and love became a dream that once  
Had lived. I don this mirthless night the dunce  
Cap of sophisticated fun to hide  
The child who cries inside while I deride  
The logic of her tears. I let her live.  
This cap's protection I shall gladly give  
To keep the child's fierce passionate wide-eyed  
Protest alive within the calm outside  
Adult who came to growth this tired night,  
When scalpel words dissected, in the light  
Of a new love, the moon for which I cried.

And the next day I wrote a letter apologizing for tears, explaining my miseries away—and exulting!

(Sat afternoon)

... Monday I sat down and wrote that baby, saw you Monday afternoon, came home, went to sleep early, got up at three, and rewrote. I knew I'd done something. I had to see how other people took it. I put it in the box for [agent Scott] Meredith, and came home to wait.

This is my first story, really. I've watched people read, and they start slow with a chuckle here and there. They read quickly thru the midsection.

Then they get to the last scene, and they read slower and slower, turning the pages as fast as they can. If you make a noise they say "hmmmm?" but they don't look up. And I haven't heard from Meredith.

I can do it, Ted, by God, by God, I can do it! Have you the remotest idea what it is to find that out after the years I've been convinced I couldn't? I can sit up there on the dozer and MAKE IT GO.

If I can't sell it now, if I have to do something else for a living, it's gonna break my li'l heart. I'm in a state of excitement like nothing I've known I think since I met Dan when I was 17. And

no one to let it out on at all! When the depression hit, valid or not, it hit hard.

I can see how it looked from your end and I'm terribly sorry it had to come when it did. Try and see how it was from here...

Please call on me if there's anything at all I can do. Love,  
J.

Judith's short story "Dead Center" appeared in *The Best American Short Stories 1955*, edited by Martha Foley.

I wonder what sort of "anything" it was I thought I might do?

"Everything" might have expressed my state of mind better, but my conceit of being in command of the dozer was considerably premature. I know now "That Only a Mother" was not a skilfully written story: I knew it as short a time as a year later. It was—still is, perhaps—a powerful story: a combination of raw emotion, overweening conviction, and nine years—from age fifteen—of suppressing the nascent Real Writer.

In the following weeks I wrote some more stuff for Lowndes and some love stories aimed at the women's slicks. Of all the stuff I've written, one time and another, straight love stories (including my single try at a confession-magazine story) are the only things I have been completely unable to sell.

I learned that Mary had a voice even more angelic than her face. I arranged for her to sing at Merrill's nursery school; it was a great success. Ted was a singer too; in those days he played a great 12-string guitar. (I am a tri-tone: not mono-, mind you; I have three notes, with no sense of pitch and no memory for melody.) Obviously, they were made for each other (for a while at least; I think it lasted two years). I found another lover, and wrote some forty pages of unsent letters, learning the ways to think of Ted and Mary as a couple, without having to lose Ted's friendship and criticism.

## NINE-GETTING STARTED AS A WRITER

I WAS LIVING ON WEST 19TH STREET when I met Fred Pohl.

Shortly after Fred returned from overseas, Doc Lowndes brought him over to my apartment. They came with a bottle of vodka and immediately began to have a drinking contest. I drank a little bit, but they were doing most of it. When the first bottle was finished, one of them went over to beg another full bottle from my neighbour.

Lowndes made it out of the apartment on his feet.

Fred collapsed on the couch and was really sick over the side. He woke up in the morning in the kind of state one does after being thoroughly drunk and terribly sick. That was the beginning of my romance with Fred.

(I later found out that Fred rarely drank. However, when he did, he had to get drunk. The only time it got that bad again was when another writer, Cyril Kornbluth, was visiting. Cyril and Fred, as soon as they saw each other, had to get drunk.)

I had been in love about three times when Fred and I began to get involved. I really didn't want to be in love, but I liked Fred. I enjoyed Fred enormously.

Fred is probably the wittiest man I have ever known. Not the most brilliant, although he has a lot of brilliance. Not the most erudite, although he has a lot of knowledge. But he has a certain dry wit, to such an extent that during my life, I have never met anyone else who rivals him.

I remember one time when we were in bed, making love. Suddenly I had this tremendous need to know how he felt right then. He said, "Bumpety, bumpety, bump." It was gloriously funny, but it didn't tell me anything about what he really felt. In fact, a lot of his dry wit was used precisely to keep anybody from ever knowing what he really did feel. Except with small children, he would not permit himself to open up or even show that he had too much feeling.

For quite some time, the most attractive (not to fall in love with, but to be seen with) male personality

for me was the extreme Anglo-Saxon one. Fred was intriguing. He was dry, cool, tall, and slim; not quite dapper, but certainly fascinating. Intellectually, the man's life has been incredible.

Fred was surprisingly marvellous with babies and small children. He was a terrific father to our daughter, Annie. He was also fabulous with my older daughter, Merrill, who regarded him as a father. (Merril effectively lost her father twice: when Dan and I broke up; and then again when Fred and I did.)

On the down side, I truly believe the things that both appalled and fascinated Fred about me were usually delivered as complaints: "There's no other woman in the world who can get her hair fixed perfectly, get in the car and between the car and the door get it in a total mess." He also frequently commented on how "Russian" I was —a reference to me supposedly always getting hysterical about things.

For each of us, in opposite ways, the cold dry and the hot temperamental personalities were equally attractive and repellent.

I was always horrified that he was called "60-40 Pohl" because as a young editor of science fiction pulps he published his friends' stories and then split the already meagre payments to keep 60 per cent for himself as a kind of finder's and editor's fee. His defence of the situation left me not just unconvinced, but completely contemptuous. Nevertheless, there was something about the spirit of competitiveness and exaggerated chicanery of it all that was attractive.

Fred was indeed clever. He was knowledgeable. He was powerful. He showed me I could be a great success as a writer and editor. And he knew how to make people do what he wanted. That didn't work to a great extent with me, but it made him the central man in any crowd. While we were together, from 1946 to 1951, Fred and I were a total centre in the SF community.

A group of us who lived in New York started something called the Hydra Club. It was a social organization composed of people in and around science fiction. Everybody who was anybody anywhere around science fiction became part of the Hydra Club. There were seven of us who met to write a constitution.

The constitution wound up simply being, "The name of this organization shall be the Hydra Club. The purpose of this organization shall be ...

Once a year, we would hold a business meeting and anybody who wasn't there was likely to be elected secretary, which was the only elected function the group had. The secretary had to make sure that notices for meetings got out. Neither Fred nor I was ever secretary, but for quite some period of time the meetings/parties were held twice a month at our place.

The Hydra Club became the big meeting place for sF writers. Isaac Asimov would attend. German-born scientist and science writer Willy Ley was there. The meetings became the big marketplace for writers and publishers, and editors from the various publishing houses would be there. It co-existed with the development of science fiction as a commercial genre.

Fred and I were able to bring all of this together.

By 1947 I was getting started as a writer. Scott Meredith (who later became infamous as Richard Nixon's agent) was a brash young man with a brand-new agency that supported itself with "reading fee" customers. Unpublished authors were not ordinarily accepted as regular clients. But Arnold Hano, who was then chief reader in the agency, apparently sent "That Only a Mother" in to Scott with a note saying, "If you don't get \$1000 for this, you ought to quit."

I was a client, and Scott Meredith began circulating my story to the first-rank magazines, all of which bounced it vigorously. The first and best rejection letter was from Collier's.

Scott put me on his sports-story roster. He had a deal with a giant pulp publisher to supply the full contents of their (ten? twenty? thirty?) sports magazines. If you were in Scott's "stable," you brought your story in every Friday morning and got a cheque for one cent a word (less 10 per cent commission) and

an assignment for next week: "Football, 5000," "Baseball, 6000," etc. In the afternoon a messenger came and picked up the two-foot stack of manuscripts. (Did anyone ever read them before they went to the printer?)

I knew nothing about team sports, and cared less. I wrote with the rule book on one side, a stack of pulps opened to stories of the assigned sport on the other, for the slang, and the *Encyclopedia Americana* propped up behind the typewriter for the history of the game. Characters and plot in these stories needed only the sketchiest consideration; formula requirements were rigid, permitting exactly four permutations of one basic situation (win/lose, fair-square/crooked). It was great draftsmanship practice in simple story-telling. And I was earning money every week, by writing stories!

(Toronto entered my life for the first time when I brought in a story called "Golfer's Girl." Scott frowned at the title, skimmed a page or two, frowned again, and told me I knew the girlfriend could not be a major character. No cheque that week, but the story was sold to the *Toronto Star Weekly* for \$300: six times what the pulps would have paid.)

I brought out *DISTEMPER!*, an all-poetry issue of my fanzine *TEMPER!* —the final issue as it turned out, the last of my amateur publications.

In August (still 1947), I went to Philadelphia for my first science fiction convention. At a drunken hotel room party, Sturgeon introduced me to the great editor John Campbell. It was friendship-forever at first sight.

"John," I said, slurring only slightly, "John, I wan' tell you, I wrote a story so good I can' sell it to you, 'cause you couldn' pay enough for it." (His magazine *Astounding Science Fiction* paid top rates for a pulp, two to three cents a word.)

"You' right," he said, with his own bit of a slur. "If you' story is that good, I can' pay enough for it." We beamed at each other.

Next morning I woke up more horrified than hung over, but six months later, when the story had finished its rounds of the slicks (Scott, obviously, did not quit), John did buy it. The story was published in the June 1948 issue of *Astounding*.

At the time, Campbell was king. He used to write a monthly editorial in which he presented some idea about the future. He would take authors out to lunch and discuss that month's idea with them. A lot of the stories he published in *Astounding* came out of these lunch discussions. One issue of the magazine stemmed from discussions about an editorial he was writing that concerned love as a weapon. I don't think any naive reader of that issue would have had a notion that all those stories shared a conceptual genesis—because everybody went in completely different directions with their stories. My short story "Whoever You Are" did not appear in that issue, but it definitely had its origins in one of those Campbell discussions.

Anyhow, by that time I was an editor. In the fall of 1947 I answered a newspaper ad for an experienced mystery editor at Bantam Books. I applied for the job even though I had never done any editing work. Before I went in for the interview, I did careful homework. (My mother had been a big mystery reader, so I knew a lot of the authors' names, but I myself had never read the genre that much.) I was able to respond to their questions, and make conversation about how Mignon Eberhart did this, and some other writer did that.

The cover of Judith's May 1947 all-poetry issue of *TEMPER!*, temporarily renamed *DISTEMPER!*. The subtitle says, "In the vanguard of verse and criticism."  
*Courtesy of the Merrill estate*

I thought I had really done a good snow job when they hired me. It turned out afterwards that my attempts had been absolutely useless. The managing editor at Bantam by that time was Arnold Hano—the same Arnold Hano who just before that had been working for Scott Meredith and said, when my first SF story arrived, "If you don't get \$1,000 for this, you ought to quit." Arnold knew right away that I didn't know anything about editing mysteries in particular, but he recognized my name and

persuaded the bosses, including then-president Ian Ballantine, that they would get a bargain out of hiring me. He insisted that whatever they hired me for, I was going to do well. And so they did hire me—instead of at \$60 a month, at \$65. That's about \$500 a week these days, or \$30,000 a year. Mass-market paperbacks then sold for twenty-five cents—there's the comparison—whereas they are now eight or nine bucks, or more.

Bantam was new. It was struggling to make it in the paperback field. One of the really great things about working there was that it was still a relatively small operation, and (aside from Ian Ballantine, who led a totally separate existence from everyone else) there was a lot of humour and face-to-face argument and intensity in the office.

The four of us in the editorial department were in a sort of unstated competition to write the most interesting possible reports. Our publishing was entirely reprint—we didn't do any original books—so the reports we wrote on the books we read were almost incidental. Witty, intelligent, educated, devastating reports were being written on books daily.

Ballantine was different. He was an interesting man with an unconquerable naivete. He had a special status at Bantam Books. He was the first president of the company, and stayed there until he started Ballantine Books. The truth is, Ian didn't know books. He knew selling books, but he didn't know literature. His opinions were almost always totally different from those of everyone in the editorial department. He seldom tried to overrule the editorial department, but Ian had one golden rule: what people wanted was new information.

Time and again, Ian proved to us that any book that contained what was new information for him would sell out in the market. For example, we had one book, *The Chinese Room* by Vivian Connell (1942), that was our all-time bestseller during that period. The reason *The Chinese Room* was a big bestseller was because the woman in the novel rouged her nipples. This was a novelty for the readers.

After my first year at Bantam (and many halts, much hesitation, and repeated Gallup-testing) the rest of the editorial department finally agreed to my proposals for a science fiction anthology. (This was the single career move I can remember actually fighting for.)

Meanwhile I was (really!) writing, and I started a short-short story that grew. When it reached ten thousand words, I began to understand that it wanted to be a novel.

I went into agonizing reappraisal: I had a full-time job, a child in first grade, an anthology to learn how to edit, and a new husband. Fred had a full-time job and was also building up a literary agency on the side; he had no time to pick up the pieces for me.

Ian Ballantine's secretary, Corinne Rosenthal, was a highly literary one hundred-words-a-minute typist; Corinne had read some bits of the story as it grew and, astonishingly, volunteered to stay after work each day and take dictation, then type out a draft for me. I arranged for the Scots warbride who was coming in to look after Merrill after school each day to stay a bit later and get dinner started.

I hit twenty thousand words before Christmas. Then, during the school holiday, Merrill's teacher came to see me. With tears rolling down her cheeks, she told me how my daughter's fiendishly clever disruptions were destroying her class and her self-esteem. Okay. Too much warbride, not enough Mom. My dream-plan didn't call for a novel till 1957 anyhow. I stuffed the messy draft-and-revisions out of sight in the bottom desk drawer.

Then I went to a party and met Walter Bradbury, Doubleday's first-ever science fiction editor. Brad had heard I was writing a novel; could he see what I'd done? No use, I told him, I couldn't even take time to retype the scribbled-over pages for reading. Brad was insistent; if I had a publisher's advance, he pointed out, I could take a leave of absence from work and finish the book. He took the stuff as it was, read it and produced a contract.

When I left Bantam, it was not my intention to do so. When, after many ups and downs, and typical young author psychoses, Doubleday finally bought the book—that is, they signed a contract for it, it was then maybe twenty thousand words—I had to finish the book and didn't think I would be able to do it within the time limit if I continued to work full-time at Bantam. I wanted to take a year's leave of absence.

I told all this to Ian Ballantine (who in his strange and marvelous know-nothingness was so often right), and he responded, "No, you can't have a leave of absence. You're going to quit." I was heartbroken, but then he explained, "You're not supposed to be an editor, you're supposed to be a writer."

Judith's first novel, *Shadow on the Hearth*, 1950.

Ian was right again ...

I did quit that job, and never again in my life have I gone back to work in a full-time job where I was doing something, day after day, for somebody else.

My novel *Shadow on the Hearth* (Doubleday's dismaying title), which was about life in America under the threat of nuclear war from the point of view of a young housewife and mother, and my anthology *Shot in the Dark* (a good description of how Bantam felt about it) were both published in 1951. The novel was a "critical success," but made only a few dollars on the side from a small book club. The anthology sold out in two months and went back to press.

The title of my book had been chosen by the publishers in preference to about a dozen other titles I had provided, all of which pointed towards the idea of atomic war. On the cover was an attractive young mother, obviously in great distress: it could have been a gothic novel, or basically anything.

At the time they warned me that the book would get me a little money but no critical reaction. The publication of the book was an absolute non-event. There was no launch. There was no card from the publisher. Nothing.

It just happened that on the morning of the first day it was out, the washing machine in the building where I lived went on the fritz. I had been washing my baby's diapers, and had to cart them back to my apartment. I was cleaning them in the kitchen sink when a friend of mine called to say, "Congratulations."

"On what?"

"The *Times* review," she said.

"What?" I was in disbelief: I mean, a review in the *New York Times*!

Although the baby was sound asleep in the crib, I violated all my principles and went dashing out to the corner to buy the *Times*. I read this marvellous review, which said that they didn't think I was as good as H.G. Wells or Orwell, but allowing for that, *Shadow* was a pretty interesting book.

I called up Doubleday and got a hold of my editor. "Hey, what did you think?" I asked him.

He said, 'About what?' They hadn't even bothered to look at the *New York Times*. They didn't know the review was in there.

Doubleday had also, without consulting me (only my agent, who had sense enough not to consult me, if it was going to be done), changed the ending of the book. In my version the husband was trying to make his way home through the atomic catastrophe, getting to the alley behind his house and being shot by civil defence patrollers. Doubleday changed the ending so that he made it into the house and survived.

Sometime afterwards, *Motorola TV Theatre* bought the novel and made it into a television drama under the title "Atomic Attack." Motorola pulled out all the stops, trying to pick up on some of the things that had happened to Orson Welles in his famous radio broadcast of *War of the Worlds* in 1938. The program hired John Daley, a popular news broadcaster at the time, and had the news broadcasts in the novel done by him. They put little squibs in the trade papers and whatnot that people should not get worried when they heard John Daley making broadcasts about an atomic attack—it was part of a work of fiction.

Here it went the other way. *Motorola* expected it to be a big thing and it was sort of a fizzle. But one of the things I really want to write about here is my reaction to watching the show. *Shadow on the Hearth* was a very political novel. It was written for political reasons, and one of the central characters was a physicist who understood about atomic warfare and what it meant. Of course, this content was all modified in the TV presentation. For the first time I became aware of the major differences in the media: not in terms of misusing television (*Motorola* did attempt to maintain the essence of the novel), but in



terms of how writing for television is entirely different from writing for presentation in a book.

Watching the adaptation was sort of like having a different lens on each of my eyes. One part of me was saying, "They've killed my book. They've killed my book." The other part was saying, "But they did the best they could to translate it into television."

## TEN-KORNBLUTH AND LEIBER AND ALL ...

I MET CYRIL KORNBLUTH right after my second daughter Annie was born in 1950. Fred and I had been married and were living in an apartment on East 4th Street in New York City.

While all of the friendships within the Futurians were very close, Fred and Cyril were particularly close, so I had heard a great deal about him from my husband. Most of what I heard was recognition of his tremendous talent—there were a lot of good writers in the group, but Cyril was up there, above all the rest.

Physically, Cyril was a very small man, just a little taller than five-foot-three. He was short and stocky, not in a cartoon style, but in a typically New York, Jewish-looking style. He was dark-haired, and had not quite olive skin. He wore thick glasses.

Cyril was away overseas during the war, and when he eventually came to visit Fred and me, he stayed for a week.

About that time I had started to write a story based on an idea of Fred's, something that he had never been able to put down on paper. He was, in fact, not writing any fiction at the time, so he just handed me the idea and I began to develop it. I finished about twenty thousand words of what was turning into a novel, but as soon as I got pregnant with Annie, I couldn't cope with work at all. I became totally submerged in biology and couldn't do anything. The manuscript ended up sitting on my desk for months and months.

Judith poses for an author photo in front of the big house in Redbank, New Jersey,  
with co-author Cyril Kornbluth (*Gunner Cade* and *Outpost Mars*), circa 1951.  
*Courtesy of the Merrill estate*

When Cyril came, he read what I had written, loved it, and asked, "Do you mind if I have a go at it?"

"Go ahead, I can't do anything with it," I told him.

Cyril proceeded to hole himself up in the office of our apartment for three days, and produced something that was thirty or forty thousand words. It was considerably changed, but not in such a way that I felt violated.

Then he went back to Chicago, where he was living and working for a wire service.

When I was ready to work again, I wrote Cyril and suggested that we pursue the project as a collaboration. He liked the idea, and we started to work on it by mail. I rewrote his section, as he had done with mine, and then sent it to him in Chicago. He would rewrite mine, and all the previous sections as he went, then continue the story with another new section, and so on and so forth. By the third or fourth pass, we had about half a novel. Fred showed it to Horace Gold at *Galaxy Science Fiction* magazine, and Horace decided to buy it. Shortly thereafter, we had two serial installments ready for publication.

We had one more installment left to write, the last third of the novel, but the manuscript was starting to just go back and forth between us—the story wouldn't end. Finally Cyril and I decided we had to do something differently or our novel wouldn't be ready in time for *Galaxy* to publish the first installment.

We decided I would have to go out to Chicago for a week so that the two of us could work directly on it. I would stay at the studio apartment he shared with his wife Mary.

Mary was thin, stern, and sculpted. She was a sculptor. There were at least six or seven guys who had all wanted Mary, but Cyril got her. By the time I knew her, she had been through all kinds of shit and

seemed to me pretty sour, so I never really understood Mary's attraction for all of them. Perhaps she was the first really bright, creative woman they had known—maybe there weren't many who showed their spots in those days.

For the week I was in Chicago, Cyril and I had a tight schedule. He would go to work every day at the wire service. While he was working, I would write. Then Cyril would come home and write more or less all night, grabbing only two or three hours of sleep somewhere along the way.

This meant that while Cyril was writing, I had my evenings free. Cyril and Mary's apartment in Chicago was close to where Fritz Leiber lived. I started going over to see him at night. Fritz and I had met at a couple of conventions and had started to become good friends. There was a great deal of attraction between us.

I first met Fritz at a science fiction convention in 1949. It would have been a memorable night anyhow; I met a lot of people either already legendary in that tight little world, or—like myself—novice myth-makers who would be friends and colleagues later. Poul Anderson, Randall Garrett, Joe Winter: we all wound up at a uniquely bemuraled restaurant called The Purple Cow (such as could only happen in Paris or the American Midwest).

But that was later. At the beginning it was just a crowded hotel room, and I was the almost-unknown author of two published stories, and I could not seem to find a single face I remembered meeting earlier in the day.

I was quite certain I had not met the man sitting on the window ledge, darkly handsome, remote ... brooding? a bit amused? Our eyes met, and he began to stand up. (It took a while. Fritz was six-foot-four.) We both smiled tentatively.

"I'm Fritz Leiber," he said.

I said nothing. (This was a man I had been in love with through his writing for six years.) When I got my breath back, I said, "I'm Judy Merrill." And he said, "Judith Merrill? You mean you wrote ...?"

The next thing I remember clearly is that I was in deep conversation with Leiber (Fritz Leiber! Who remembered my story!) and that the room was even more crowded. (Eventually we found talking air in a bathroom, and had a memorable discussion of, among other things, men's clothing.)

His interest in fiction had started at college, where most of the time left over from his education in utopian socialism, pacifism, fencing, and chess (the only subject in which he would gain an official "expert" rating) was devoted to literary correspondences. The most significant of these were with H.P. Lovecraft (and other members of the "Lovecraft Circle") and his friend Harry Fischer of Louisville.

His writing, therefore, began under the sepulchral Lovecraft spell. His first efforts were all directed at the "weird" market—stories of neuromancy, midnight, murder, and madness. In the early years he published the novels *Conjure Wife* and *Gather, Darkness!* (1943) almost simultaneously, and his first collection of short stories, *Night's Black Agents*, with Arkham House, came out in 1947. He continued to write throughout the fifties (*The Green Millennium*), sixties (*The Wanderer*), and seventies ("Catch That Zeppelin!" and "Fahfrd and Me").

Erratically, inconsistently, and sometimes clumsily (often, one felt, almost absent-mindedly), Leiber continued, astonishingly, to introduce and combine concepts, images, and techniques that kept him not only abreast of the best in the field, but also—in his own best work—recurrently making quantum jumps that landed him (sometimes unsaleably) far ahead of the rest again. Altogether, he won some six Hugo Awards, four Nebulas, and twenty others.

That was Fritz Leiber.

Two significant things happened during that collaborative time in Chicago.

One was a real problem, and also the reason Cyril and I had to get together in the first place. Our manuscript was turning into a four-installment novel, instead of the three installments Horace Gold wanted to publish. Somehow we had to bring the whole thing to a conclusion a hell of a lot faster than it wanted to go.

In the process of doing this, we made a fascinating discovery. We had introduced a character early in the second installment who had begun to take over the novel. He was interesting as a character, and just

kept intruding in all the scenes, but he was totally irrelevant to the plot or the thesis of the novel.

We discovered this when we tried to lift him out entirely. We realized he wasn't really involved in the book at all. We found we could remove him from most scenes, and the character who spoke after him was really answering the character who had spoken before.

It went well after that. Cyril and I ended up spending most of our time taking this guy out of the novel, and doing some other muscular work on the manuscript. By the end of the week, we had finished the book in three installments in time for Horace.

The other significant thing that happened during the trip was that my relationship with Fritz Leiber was taking shape.

There was one extremely humorous (in retrospect) day, somewhere in there, when Fritz and I had gone to a hotel together. After we came back, we were sitting in an old café across the street and down the block slightly from Cyril and Mary's apartment.

I remember that two songs kept playing on the jukebox. One, which was very popular at the time, was called "If," which I associated with *The Thing*, a science fiction movie made from John Campbell's story "Who Goes There?" about the Antarctic (the movie location was changed to the Arctic). The other song was "She Had a Dark and Roving Eye." Fritz and I were just sitting at a table, gazing into each other's eyes and having lots and lots of laughs.

All of a sudden Fritz looked over and said, "Isn't that Cyril at the door?"

There was Cyril, with his nose pressed against the glass door of the café, staring in at us. I don't know how long he had been there. When he realized we'd seen him, he turned and left. He didn't come inside.

Fritz and I stayed there for another hour or two and then I finally went back to Cyril's place, where I was staying. Their apartment was a storefront converted into an enormous studio space for Mary. It was filled with long sawhorse tables and such. I walked in to find Cyril sitting by himself at one of these tables. In front of him was a large jug of his favourite drink, Vin Chartreuse. Cyril was leaning over the table with a glass in his hand. He looked up as I entered and slurred what became a recurring line of his: "There she is. The little mother of science fiction."

We did no work that night. We never even discussed the matter of Fritz. He knew what had happened. I knew that Cyril was not pleased with my spending that much time with Fritz—because Fred was his buddy—but we were not to talk about it. So far as I know, he never said anything to Fred, but it was a live thing sitting there between Cyril and me all the time.

Now there are authors one admires, authors one agrees with, and authors one loves. Fritz Leiber was my good friend, but the fact is I had fallen in love with him years before we met. This is not at all to say that my passion was a purely literary one: simply that the man and his work are not separable.

Anyone in the author-meeting business (critic, editor, anthologist) quickly comes to know that the writer of the grisliest murders will turn out to be a wiry, milky little man; the author of the "Noble Doctor" story probably suffers from chronic acne complicated by gout; and the authoress of those innocent ladies' romances will undoubtedly not just be a tart, but a tweedy one.

Not so with Leiber.

The rhythms of his prose were those of his speech. His letters and conversations seemed to pick up where the last story stopped, and run into the start of the next, if not in topic then in theme and style. Writing about him, I find it difficult to remember whether this phrase or that image was from our public or private communications.

This kind of personal response—although less accountable and much less self-conscious—is shared by thousands of other readers, and has been made clear on several occasions. For instance, the November 1959 issue of *Fantastic Science Fiction* had the big black headline on its cover: "LEIBER IS BACK!"

He had just come out of one of his recurrent dry spells, and editor Cele Lalli bought up all his new material until there was enough to fill an issue.

There was also the memorable occasion when I saw—and heard—an ovation from hundreds of fans

and fellow-writers when Leiber took an award at a convention hotel fancy dress ball. His costume? A cardboard military collar slipped over turned-up jacket lapels, plus cardboard shoulder insignia, an armband, and a large spider black-pencilled on his forehead. It was designed to turn him into an officer of the 'Spiders' in the Change-war of The Big Time, and "No Great Magic."

Judith's short story "Survival Ship" was printed in this anthology  
edited by Robert A. Heinlein, called *Tomorrow the Stars*, 1950.

Horace Gold published that first collaboration between Cyril and myself in three installments under the title "Mars Child," later reprinted in book form as *Outpost Mars*. Shortly afterwards, Fred and I bought an enormous house in Red Bank, New Jersey. Cyril quit the wire service, on the strength of having made the one sale of ours and his having written a couple of other things. He decided he was going to work full-time as a writer. He and Mary came to live in the house Fred and I had bought.

The house was not actually in tiny Red Bank; it was across the river in a "suburb" of Red Bank. It was located on an acre of land right at an intersection, with roads bordering two sides of the property. The only architectural detail I still remember about the outside of the house is that it had a great verandah that wrapped all the way around two sides.

Inside there was a spectacular living room, which ran the full depth of the first floor. When we moved in, right in the middle of the room, there was a huge mantelpiece over top of the frame of a fake fireplace. We replaced the fireplace with a full-length mirror, which dominated the space. This became the only distinctive feature of the room.

Cyril and Mary arrived while I was suffering from hemorrhaging after an abortion. Fred and I had been having an increasingly difficult time keeping our marriage together. Annie was then about a year old, and it had seemed inadvisable to have another baby considering the state of affairs between Fred and me. So I had this abortion and then hemorrhaged, and was laid up in bed for quite some time.

My situation coincided oddly with the arrival of Cyril and Mary, who had been trying to have a baby for years. Mary had been a serious alcoholic, and although I wasn't aware of it at the time, I think she was already on heroin. Anyhow, she had sustained a lot of body damage, and the doctors thought she wouldn't be able to have children.

Somehow, finally, she did become pregnant. But she had been told that if she was going to have the baby, she would have to stay flat on her back for the rest of her pregnancy. So that was when Mary and Cyril decided to come live at the house with us.

It was a really big house. There were about thirteen large rooms. There was even another Futurian buddy named Jack Kilovski, and his girlfriend Lois, who were living with us. Jack had a full-time job in a factory or some such thing. Lois, Cyril, and I were doing all the housekeeping because, in each case, the other partner was unavailable.

May 11, 1951

A room on Christopher Street To Fritz Leiber

Well, I did finally get a couple of thousand satisfactory words past the title—a tithe, literally, of what is still to be done, but the rest now begins to seem possible—and the whole world proceeded to revolve once on what must have been its four-dimensional axis. I have a room of my own to work in—for four weeks, anyhow.

Firstly, as you know, I was having all sorts of troubles, not yet entirely conquered, rooted in lack of confidence and all types of neurotic difficulties; I was mad at everybody, on account of they ought to have been encouraging me and helping me, and were they? No!!! Poor me. About the time I wrote you the last couple of miserable letters, I went over and had a heart-to-heart with ol' Horace, whose only contribution outside of the most needed item, two ears, was to try and talk me into taking analysis. Now this far I don't go, but he did succeed in pointing out to me that I couldn't very well expect other people whose problems

were at least as great as my own, to solve mine for me—not free anyhow. Those characters get ten and twenty bux an hour. [...]

Still one page is my self-imposed limit until I am farther along. For other news, I'll say only that we have our vegetable garden planted out at the house, that we're increasingly preoccupied with house and moving problems, that we've acquired some wonderful picture of Ann by grace of her charm and L. Jerome Stanton's camera. When we get prints, I'll send you-all one of her and Merrill together which is a beaut. That is, if you've written me by them. I take it, from your silence, that you're working like mad, but I'd be more constant knowing it's that, and not further troubles at the office, illness, unhappiness, ghosts or demons.

Back to work!

Affectionately, Judy

P.S.—I think it's next week's Life your name will be in, if not the week after—this info by way of THS [Theodore H. Sturgeon].

May 14, 1951

An Office on Ontario

Dear Judy,

Have a lot to get into this letter and not too much time to get it in. Ah for those glorious days of carefree youth when one could dawdle away a whole day or two evenings just writing a nice long letter, sinking into its atmosphere as if it were the beginning of a fantasy!

I've been waiting to finish *Sex and Temperament* before writing. Incidentally, I've also been reading Horney's *Neurosis and Human Growth*, so will probably start the novel with my head all stuffed with women's ideas—to say nothing of the ones I get out of "Mars Child." (Still watching the stands for #2.)

The main thesis of *Sex and Temperament* (cut off the AMEN-T and you have a fine paperback title?) has influenced so many other books and become a part of my thinking in such a number of ways, that I find myself thinking most of incidentals. Especially the transitoriness and catastropheproneess of these small sub-cultures. [...]

The general effect of all this is rather melancholy, yet not unpleasant. [...]

Writing's always been hard for me and I've gone through enough unproductive periods. I've been especially hampered by a tendency not to let myself go, not to take advantage of inspiration and feel, but to hold back and quit too soon in the good stretches. Freud said something about Oedipus Complex and, I imagine, the idea of a person being able to attach affection to another only by a slow process of transference, of grafting onto the new person feelings that one had toward a parent or another love. I think writing has worked the same way with me. Started with super-naturals and only painfully learned to write s-f by grafting supernatural atmosphere, etc., onto s-f (Gather, Darkness!) and then slowly winning free of the supernatural influence. Now, maybe, by writing about the near instead of the far future, I am starting another graft—with realistic, or rather, present-setting fiction. Of course along with the graft there's always growth, it's no simple, literal-meaning transference. [...]

Much agog at the news about the Life SF piece.

Affectionately, Fritz

Thursday, May 24, 1951

Dear Judy,

Spent yesterday evening being jealous of the second installment of "Mars Child." You know, it's the things closest to us, most intimately linked to our own thoughts, and that stir our own feelings most, that we're most jealous of. But it's with such things that jealousy is most inappropriate, least to anyone's advantage—and always best (I mean jealousy) when one rides out the feeling until it fades into a warm sense of appreciation. (Ye jealous people everywhere take note of this profound principle!)

I think you and Cyril have produced a landmark of American SF in "Mars Child." A combination of realism, competent writing, political and social sophistication, and imagination. It's odd that last year's best SF novel was, in my opinion, Heinlein's *Farmer in the Sky*, while "Mars Child" will likely be the best for 1951. Very different stories in treatment and attitudes, but alike in being stories of colonization, with the prospect of a doomed earth in the background. But I like your cooperators better than Heinlein's noble space-patrolmen. Of course, Heinlein has a weakness for thinking the best of people (except tiny coterie of villains) while Cyril Judd is rather bitter about folks (an understatement?). You press Heinlein closely when it comes to technology (the description of spaceship landing was succinct and effective, while the treatment of Martian agronomy shows a lot of scope), and I think you outclass him in social-political insight. [...]

The gunther is a nice surprise, the liquor dealer a good character, and I like the way the non-individualistic feel of the Sun Lake colony is maintained—also those constant behind-the-scenes peeks at family life that having Tony a doctor makes possible. It isn't easy to make a colony a hero and you do it well. Needless to say, the raw realism of abortions, brothels, suckling problems, etc., is one of the best things in the world for present SF and one of the items that makes "Mars Child" a landmark. [...]

'Fectionately, Fritz

Tuesday, June 19, 1951

Dear ol' Fritz:

The sun is shining, the sweet-peas are blooming, the tiger lilies are riotous, and the corn is three feet high. We are eating lettuce out of our very own garden, and are promised beets any day. Lois is sulking because Jack is taking a job she doesn't like; my mother is fussing interminably around the kitchen; Merrill is trying to talk somebody into going boating with her. And I, after two endless weeks of housewifely chores, chauffeuring duties, shopping, moving, unpacking, arranging, rearranging, straightening out, organizing, and squabbling all around, I have retired to my top-floor seclusion and am actually, literally, and truthfully at work again.

I have set up "office" hours for myself, and anyone who so much as speaks to me between the hours of 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. is likely to have his, her, or its head bitten off, which vastly improves my temper the remaining nineteen hours of the day. We also have an intercom system (salvaged from Transradio when they moved their offices last year) half set up. It is to be all connected tomorrow, and after that no one will be allowed even to come tapping at my door (which they do little of; two flights up), then I just flip a switch to growl warningly at them.

Now I can try to match your speed, which I still find impressive. Yes, I do know what you mean about that kind of jealousy; I am more than prone to it myself, but I think you ought to bear in mind the old noblesse oblige business. When you're so far and away ahead of the field you've no right to envy us any of our small achievements. (Overstated, but meant; I do think you're about the best in the business today, in science fiction, and am far from alone in my opinion. [...])

Have just reread *Poor Superman* by the way, in page proofs. And by the way, though the new title is a stinker, I don't think changing it was too bad an idea. It gives the last line a little extra something. [...]

Judy

Fred was then running a literary agency called the Dirk Wylie Agency full-time. He sort of inherited the agency, where he had been working on and off, from Dirk, another Futurian, who had been injured during World War II. I never met Dirk—he came back from the war to the hospital, where Fred used to visit him. Then Dirk died, and for some time after his death Fred kept up the agency as a non-participating partner with Dirk's widow.

So although we were living in Red Bank, Fred was spending by far the largest part of his time in New York, working at the agency. I had a year-old baby and a nine-year-old girl. Mary was flat on her back, determined to have her child. Lois wasn't all that much help either. As soon as Mary went flat on her back, Lois became ill and had to spend all her time in bed as well. So, basically, Cyril and I were running everything in this enormous house.

From the time Cyril arrived, it was also part of our agenda that he and I would be doing another novel together. This second novel turned out to be *Gunner Cade*, and it started from a complete synopsis that Cyril had for a book. We began with his existing synopsis, broke that down, elaborated on some stuff and added more. Then we broke the whole project into sections that we estimated should be roughly five thousand words each.

Our intention was to write the book in three weeks. Then we would sell it to John Campbell at *Astounding Science Fiction*. We were all desperately broke. It did, in fact, take us six weeks to write it. And we did, in fact, sell it to John Campbell. (Or maybe Fred sold it to John Campbell—somebody sold it to John Campbell, at any rate.)

On this second novel, the way Cyril and I worked was that each of us had a major responsibility for the household, the baby, and all such things. But every night, one of us would work on the manuscript. So that from the time I was able to get up again after the hemorrhaging, we were both working alternate nights. As far as our basic writing went, Cyril would write what was supposed to be a five-thousand-word section in about three thousand words. I would then go back and rewrite his section to make it five thousand words. Then I would write the next five-thousand-word section in eight thousand words. He would rewrite my section to shorten it, and so on, and so forth.

In the end, when we looked back at our first novel, it was really difficult for us to ever untangle who had written what. That was because it had been rewritten over and over again. With *Gunner Cade*, although each piece got written and rewritten by both of us, later we were able to say that Cyril wrote the barracks and war sections—I had hardly changed anything in those. I wrote the love sections, and he hardly touched those. But aside from those particular sections, neither of us was able to say definitively who wrote, thought, ventured, or generated what.

While Cyril and I were planning *Gunner Cade*, the whole time we were consciously trying to write something that John Campbell would like. We did a really interesting analytical breakdown of what Campbell would and wouldn't buy. The scientific stuff had to be there, but the sort of spiritual fantasy element had to be there as well. Also, the novel had to contain the sort of humor that made sense to Campbell, and so on. We analyzed, in particular, Robert Heinlein and Fritz Leiber as prototypes. In the end, the way we plotted this novel, departing from Cyril's original outline, leaned on Leiber's *Gather, Darkness!* as a model. We really came to the conclusion that *Gather, Darkness!* was the ultimate typical Campbell story.

So when Campbell did indeed read it overnight and bought it the next day, we went out and did two things—bought \$70 worth of groceries, and sent a telegram to Fritz saying, "Congratulations. *Gather, Darkness!* has sold again."

As far as I know, with all the authors Cyril and I talked to, we never met any other writer of quality who ever recognized that they had done something like that. No one has had our level of awareness about the extent to which writers plagiarize, model themselves after, or derive inspiration from other writers' work.

A portion of the novel *Gunner Cade*, written with C.M. Kornbluth as  
"Cyril Judd," serialized in *Astounding Science Fiction*, 1951.

The cover for the second printing of *Gunner Cade*, by "Cyril Judd" (C.M. Kornbluth and Judith), 1952.

At the time I knew Cyril, he really did not have any integrity about being an author, or sense of self.

He might have developed some later, I'm not sure. He knew how good he was as a writer, but he lacked the integrity.

I could only morally justify doing something like this because it was a collaboration. Somehow that made it totally different for me—I could never have done what we did if I had been writing under my own name. By that I mean it was just a cheap evasion for me. I assumed that by putting another name on it, I could do something I wouldn't normally do.

I did a similar thing years later in an entirely different context. That time there was no issue about having less integrity, though. As a result, the second piece of writing might even have had more integrity. The second time I did it was when I wrote under a pen name, and was able to work with male protagonists in a way I had never before been able to do under my own name. I was able to get completely into the men.

What I mean is, my image as a writer demanded certain things of me, so long as it was under that image that I was writing. As soon as my work shifted out from underneath that image, I could be what I thought of as less honest.

But it is truly extraordinary that Cyril wrote a lot of the stuff he did, with all the power it has, when these things really didn't matter to him. All his earliest writing didn't have his own name on it. All his Futurian writing was under pen names. His image of himself as a writer had nothing sacrosanct in it. He felt that kind of integrity or holiness for Mary as a sculptor, but not for himself as a writer.

Meantime, we were all living together in this close situation. I never got to know Mary well. I mean, I knew her the way you know someone you're living in the same house with, but Mary was a strange, faraway person. She was also experiencing this weird pregnancy, whereas I was living an extremely active life with a baby and a toddler.

Cyril and I got to know each other like only two people who are collaborating can, but our relationship was entirely confined to the office I used on the third floor of the house. In that room, we got to know each other absolutely and intimately. There was nothing in the world we could not talk about or did not sometimes argue about. We were exploring our feelings and exploring the world through the book we were writing.

We were both thinkers who could be quite detached, analytical, and frequently cynical. But we were also intensely involved with our characters, and passionate about our views. I also learned that Cyril and Mary had a trunk full of Victorian equipment, like black lace corsets, that was part of their married life. If we were up in that office, there was never a problem discussing these things.

But when we were in the living room downstairs, Cyril and Mary suddenly became the old-fashioned couple. If Cyril thought of a dirty joke that he wanted to tell, he would take Mary out of the room, tell it to her, and ask her to tell me. He couldn't do that kind of thing with both sexes present.

Fred and I, on the other hand, were barely talking. Fred was usually not at home. When he was, he and I were a sort of super-sophisticated Manhattan couple.

Sometime during this whole period my friend Katherine MacLean, yet another budding SF writer, came to stay at the house for a month or so. One significant day Kate, Cyril, and I had an argument about morality, ethics, and the whole smear of personal human behaviour.

It went on all day long, throughout the entire house. It started, I think, in the kitchen, but I have visual flashes of it continuing in every part of the house. It ended on the third floor. Not in my work room, but in the room across the hall, which had a little kitchenette in it.

One of the things that kept coming up in the argument was Cyril's time in the service, and his real belief in the virtue of World War II. He utterly rejected a lot of the cynicism I had about it. In fact, he got quite angry that Kate and I did not sufficiently honour his experiences.

He seemed to feel that the war had been a holy war against Hitler, and wholly a war against Hitler. The notion that there were other elements to the situation, and that perhaps it was not entirely a virtuous war, was an anathema to him. He was also, for a long time, of the school of thought that would not buy or have anything to do with anything German.

I also remember that down in the kitchen, there was a funny point in the argument when Kate said to Cyril, "You know, when I was in college, I had very little opportunity to experiment with anything like this



for myself, but I really believed in free love. Now that I'm a little older, and have had a lot of opportunity to experiment, I still believe in free love."

Cyril got this look like a fish gasping in air.

Finally, hours later, when we were upstairs, the argument came to a close with Kate saying to Cyril, "Now I suppose you believe you were born fully clothed!"

Cyril drew himself up to his full five-foot-three and said, "I certainly was." Then he turned and walked, in a dignified manner, right out of the room.

I realized years later that I knew virtually nothing about Cyril Kornbluth. I've learned more about him now from reading Damon Knight's book *The Futurians*, with its background material on people in the group. But in all that time we spent together, I don't recall him ever telling me about himself as a child, for example. He talked a lot about some things, such as his time in the service, meeting the Futurians, and his development as a writer. But never, to my recollection, did he talk about himself growing up, or his family.

It's important to remember that Cyril was the youngest of the Futurians. He was about fourteen or fifteen when he began writing, and associating with all these other guys who were anywhere from two or three to eight or ten years older than him. Despite this, he became the Significant Writer, to a great extent.

I cannot recall Cyril ever being happy. I can recall Cyril being very much amused. I can recall him chuckling with glee about accomplishing something. The day we made the Campbell sale, and went rioting through the supermarket, was the closest to happiness that I ever saw him. But no, Cyril was not a relaxed, happy person.

Eventually, during the time that Cyril and Mary were still living in the house, Fred and I decided to break up. Contrary to public appearances, things between Fred and me had been getting more and more unhappy.

It was one of those situations where you sit in the middle of it all, saying, "What is my problem? I have everything. I have this house. I have had a novel published on my own. Had two novels published with Cyril Kornbluth. Fred and I ghosted an anthology under the name of Robert Heinlein. Fred has all these publishing connections and I have many others, because I worked at Bantam and he has worked at other places."

But after a fairly prolonged period of problems, I had got to the point where I felt I could not continue living with Fred. My biggest hesitation, the biggest barrier to breaking up the marriage, was what it would do to the science fiction world in general. We were glued together by everybody else's awareness of us. We agreed that I'd say I had decided I could no longer hack it, which wasn't exactly the way it happened. We started making plans for separation.

Cyril became tremendously upset about this, and delivered to me, for several days, a protracted lecture about the copybook marital virtues. Chief among which, for Cyril, was loyalty. I was being disloyal to Fred. This was so important to him that it totally terminated any possibility of our doing work together again. As soon as possible, when they knew I was going to stay in the house and not Fred, Cyril and Mary moved out. Cyril started immediately working on a novel with Fred. I believe they wrote five or six books together. Fred hadn't been writing at all up until that point, so this was a big event.

The dissolving of our marriage created a certain distress on the part of our mutual friends, because there was an immediate feeling that they had to line up behind one of us. When we found ourselves on the same platform at a convention, or in the same room at a party, we had to be completely civil. Not just barely civil, we had to be able to argue about differences in literary opinion together, if necessary. We were excessively careful not to do any public quarrelling about our intimate problems, and not to ask for people to pick sides. Nevertheless, people quickly decided to which team they would remain loyal.

Fred wrote a novel while we were together. This was a serious novel. He only let me read one chapter of it before he burned it. He didn't think it was good enough to be read. The opening sentence of this novel was something like: "He ran around inside his own hard shell for twenty years, until he met the

woman he could take inside the shell with him."

This opening sentence was so sad. It expressed, better than I ever could, the emotional constraints on Fred. Feelings were not allowed to come out of that shell. If you wanted to get close to him, you had to climb inside. I think several people got inside his shell to a certain extent, but I don't think anybody ever got Fred out of it. Cyril Kornbluth probably got inside more than any of the rest of us, and little children were able to run in and out at will.

After he burned the manuscript, Fred stopped writing altogether for a while. Only when he and Cyril started writing together, after we split up, did he begin again.

A few years after this whole period, Cyril and Mary were living in Long Island. They had, finally, two children, both of whom had serious development problems of various kinds.

There was a snow storm. Cyril went out to shovel the snow, and fell down with a fatal heart attack. He was only thirty-six or thirty-seven.

## **ELEVEN-KATHERINE MACLEAN AND THE ESP LETTERS**

AFTER FRED LEFT the house in Red Bank, Katherine MacLean came and lived with me for a while. At the time, she and I were doing a lot of ESP and associated investigations. One of the things that really interested us was whether we could change our appearance by deciding to do so. I had brown hair and had always wanted black; straight hair and wanted curly. Kate wanted to change the shape of her upper lip.

Kate and I spent hours in front of the huge living room mirror, looking at ourselves and working at changing our appearance, such a tragically funny female thing to do. Part of our strategy was to imagine the change. But in order to do this, we also had to find out things like what makes a hair curl. I discovered that the way a hair's root grows determines whether it will be curly or straight. So I just kept thinking about changing the shape of the root. Same thing with the colouring.

My hair did not turn black, but everybody began to see it as black. It did become a darker brown. And it did get curly.

Kate didn't manage to change her lip.

No one ever believes this story, but I have before and after photos. My hair stayed curly for a long time—it still has some curl in it. When I was younger, my hair had absolutely no curl in it at all.

Science fiction author, scientist, and friend, Katherine MacLean, circa 1955.  
*Courtesy of the Merrill estate*

Kate was impressive (and so lucky!) because she was a second-generation science fiction person. I don't mean that she was a second-generation science fiction writer, but that her father had read science fiction, so she sort of grew up with it. (This is in contrast with my own situation and my mother's extreme disapproval of the genre.) Kate's father was a food scientist. Her mother was absolutely charming, but completely off the wall.

Kate grew up in a part of New Jersey called the Nave Sink. The Nave Sink is in the same basic area as the house in Red Bank, although I knew her long before Fred Pohl and I moved out there because she was already writing science fiction. She got to know Ted Sturgeon and Phil Klass, who were close friends of mine. It must have been through them that I met her.

When I met her, she was relatively new as a writer. She must have published only two or three stories by that time, whereas I had published quite a few. My first consciousness of Katie is at a party that Phil Klass was having. Phil was, at that point, close friends with Cyril Sells. He also had a brother named Mort, who subsequently became an anthropologist. The party was being held at Mort's studio apartment in the Village. We had all converged there, and had been doing quite a bit of drinking. At some point in the evening, we decided to go to Carnegie Hall, where a friend of Sells named Reuben was living and performing as some kind of artist.

We all poured out of Mort's place, and went to get a taxi, in a state of enormous hilarity. We had trouble flagging down a cab, so we spread ourselves across the street and stood there waving.

To this day, that *scene* is one of my recollections that has the most complete joy in it. The essence of poetry, the essence of happiness; the bunch of us spread across the road trying to get a taxi at the risk of our lives. In fact, I have a distinct memory of one of us suggesting we were too drunk to be on the road, and that we might get hurt.

Eventually, we did make it alive to Reuben's place in Carnegie Hall. Reuben was playing Beethoven's "Seventh" on the hi-fi as we arrived. There was a little passageway where the hi-fi was, and then there a big back room.

At one point I wandered out of the music area and down the hallway. At that instant, Kate was coming back from the big room. We met in the middle of the hallway, threw our arms around each other, and swore eternal friendship.

The first woman with whom I could really feel level was Virginia Kidd. Katie MacLean was the second. A total human being, not somebody designed to be another person's sidekick. Kate was also a good writer, much more scientific than me. She had and does have a natural understanding of science and logic (which I, to my chagrin, have never had). She did her B.A. at Barnard University, New York, and later did postgraduate work in psychology. She's also a little crazy, and I say this in the fondest way imaginable, but part of her is a little batty like her mother. However, most of her is smart and logical.

She had four brothers, and a wonderful father. These were the people she grew up admiring. She had always felt protective towards her giddy, silly mother, but she had a very low opinion of women in general.

During that long period when she stayed at the house in Red Bank with me, we were all experimenting with extrasensory perception and early Gestalt therapy, the school of psychology concerned with the tendency of the human mind to organize perceptions into "wholes." At around that time, Kate and I realized we had a strong sexual attraction for each other. It has always been impossible for us to act upon it, but it has always been there.

Over the years we lived together in a number of different situations. She was always much less practical than I was, in terms of the outside world. Our relationship had a kind of symmetry. She has always been muscle-bound and agility proud. She was the one who would do things like carry bundles, and repair the roof. I was the one who could get us invited to parties and cook.

Kate lives in Maine now. Every time we've seen each other over the last fifteen or so years, which is maybe six times, we've had not necessarily a quarrel, but some sort of sharp digression or estrangement.

Every time, after a few months, we're eager to see each other again. So when we swore eternal love, I guess we really meant it.

### **THE ESP LETTERS (1952-53)**

When I wrote this first letter to Kate, I was already separated from Fred and still living in the big house near Red Bank. She and I were starting a series of long-distance E s r tests, and experiments in Gestalt therapy.

Feb. 1, 1952

Dear Kay:

I am running around in circles these days, trying to catch my own very elusive tail.

Anyhow, I now have my own private Delphic oracle and crying shoulder tied up neatly into one sturdy stocky bundle of masculine charm and eager curiosity. Some results are surprising; others are bewildering. My temper is unpredictable, my work runs slow but much smoother, and I am sitting around wondering why I have to be so damn responsible?

Take one gob of panic generated by pressure and apply to same.

Do I really have to do this? What is the worst possible thing that will happen if I don't? (The answer in every case so far is, I don't have to, and nothing more than trivial will happen

if I don't ... except in the one single case of taking care of my kids, where if I don't, someone else will—horrible thought!)

Since I don't have to, let's examine ... am I able to? (Answer has in every case so far been, yes, I am able to. There seems to be nothing I can't do while busily introspecting.)

The catch ... do I want to do this? If so, why and if not, why not? and if the answer comes first, yes I do—but I'm not doing it—find out what the reasons are for not wanting to, and decide what I really want. Also vice versa.

This worked fine for the silicon story, on which I had come to a dead stop ...

Did I tell you about the hard-cover anthology I was waiting for the word on? It's sold; contract in a few weeks, semi-secret till then. Back to the silicon... and love,

Judy

Thursday, April 10, 1952

ESP Test—starting 11:30

(written by Kate)

The first that happened is that in putting on my coat, which I'm using for a wrap, I knocked over a paper cup full of watery coffee into my letter box—(cardboard box full of paper & misc.). Now business of checking key-in idea. Reading it I think of winter.

I planned to visualize to you the anagram looking diagram in the symbolic logic article in the *Astounding* with William Tenn's short story "Firewater," but didn't get to it, what with one thing and another—it puzzles me because I haven't read the second half of the article yet.

Interested to see what you wrote.

Great Love,

Katherine

(Was going to type this but typewriter broke. Hope you can read most of it. Will send typed copy later.)

April 17, 1952

Katie darlin'

After days and days of no mail or just bills, comes today from you and Sol and also (surprise!) from Les Cole (surprise because it's a nice rational letter like his early ones). And yours gets answered first, yet, already. Why? I'll tell you.

When I left you at the bus station I had a sudden swirly conviction of grief-loss-tears I'll-never-see-her-again. Couldn't rationalize it any which way. Couldn't account for it. Decided to decide my pre-cog was out of order, but didn't really believe it. Didn't expect to hear from you, ever.

[...] Hano took the novel without further revision.

FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS ACTUALLY COMING IN! GLORY BE!

more soon, love

Judy

April 19, 1952

12:10 Saturday afternoon

Kay

Just got your ESP transcript.

You caught some stuff. What I was doing Wed am was finishing Joe's book—not sure exact time. He does wear similar doctor-glasses ...

Did you curl your top front hair or just looks that way? Something red, too—red corduroy dress maybe? No, not cord dress, red in hair or near head, no sleeve, somehow bow? collar?

Here's a picture of a room  
Any relation to yr. or a memory room?  
Judy

Tuesday, April 22, 1952 noon

Dear Kay:

A transcript of period of ESP just ended:

Lay down on couch in my office, face down, one arm leaning on your big red Hubbard survival book, on which I had yellow paper ready to be written on. Your letter, not recently re-read, was on the couch within touch, as were my notes of Saturday's attempt at contact. Did not read any of this material today.

Lay still and tried to visualize you. Got pretty clean visual image, then another, several in different dress and position; some trouble filling in face, though hair was there. Finally saw the face after I felt it. (below) Couldn't get your voice-tones at all. Felt distinct tension in diaphragm as visualizations became clearer. Then shoulders-upper arm to lower arm sensation which felt the way your shoulder-arm carriage looks. Pulled in muscles over upper lip to resemble yours before you changed it; clenched lower jaw similar to yours—all this semi-deliberate, partly compulsive. Could have stopped it; wanted to do it; hard to tell whether action or wish came first. [...]

Began to get "gone" feeling, scalp was actually prickling—chill prickles, like in horror stories with ghosts around—consciously tried to empty conscious thought from mind; words in mind: "I'm here. I made it." (triumphant ... greeting ... happy) "How's the painting going?"

Judy

April 23, 1952

Judy,

ESPers Unite. We have nothing to lose but our chains.

So here it is, 11:30 and I haven't anything specific in mind except pictures of people's mothers. That's what I get instead of pictures of me—most unflattering—it takes constant reassurance of looking in the mirror to feel I don't look like that. Must be my maternal expression. Can't resist occasional There-There broadcasting and sometimes get immediate hasty retreats and escapes by students. Afraid I'm spoiling this class' production too. Everyone has a sniffly cold anyhow so I can't test by that anymore.

Love—concern—I love you too Judy. Please not so much—you'll make me cry. Send something like a message—something specific.

Kay

Sunday, April 27, 1952

Raining. Has been  
raining for three days.

Judy,

Jeeze, how are you getting along without a baby-sitter? Your Mother standing the grind? Hope you can get someone. [...]

By the by Judy, you've never seen me really operating. I'm speaking strictly from pride, ordinarily thru' my life I work like a fiend, sixteen hours a day of doing anything and happy doing it because nothing to do makes me restless and or sleepy. And I like using my hands and brain to the top of the dial (lousy wording). [...]

At all the up levels work is play and done for fun, at the middle levels it's no fun, and there's no energy surplus for play, at the bottom level, which I found myself on once when I thought my brother Don had crashed in a plane he was supposed to be passengering in that

crashed, life all of a sudden is real and life is earnest and no game and you get efficient and do everything that ought to be done without wasting any motions or asking yourself whether it's fun or not. [...]

About ESP. There was some definite contact on two points, but Jeeze Judy your technique! Telepathy contact, if we both wrote down our mind contact and reactions at time of contact, should be a generally fused or parallel thinking around the points of contact, like the identical key thought of ESP being perhaps possible now because therapy-knowledge makes it shockless and safe. But holy smokes if you empty your mind you're emptying my thoughts out with yours. How can you tell one from the other off hand? And what am I supposed to be picking up from you? I had a tremendously strong feeling of emotional contact, a feeling of your personality that was more intense than anything I'd felt in your presence, and great friendship colored both as from you and returning from me. It was practically overwhelming, but hell no wonder I didn't get anything but emotion if you were lying there trying not to think. You were not thinking my thoughts as well as your own. Also, kid, I don't think in words. I think fast in concepts.

Kay

Thursday, May 1, 1952

10 Baltimore Avenue, Rehoboth Beach, Delaware  
11 p.m.

Dear Judy,

Anything happen to anyone Saturday night? I felt a jolt of loss-sorrow around 10:15 PM and an impression of fright through to 10:30. How's with you?

Katherine

May 14-15, 1952 Wednesday–Thursday 11:30-3:20

Wot I'd like to know Judy is how much your fluctuations of yen for Joe correlates with my fluctuations of yen for Phil. I suspect we're sharing a common yen battery, keying each other off ...

Kate

In September 1952, during the time Katie was staying with me in Red Bank, the writer Walter Miller (author of *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, among others) came to visit, and my relationship with him immediately began progressing apace.

Wed, Dec. 17, 1952

Dear Kay:

I hoped this wouldn't be necessary. The fact that I owe you a large sum of money makes it very hard to do; is only the reason I've waited so long; and is partly, I guess, the reason behind it.

Look, kid, you shouldn't be here. I don't want you here. I wish to hell there was some way I could give you what I owe you and know you could leave with some comfort and security. I'll give you all I can as quick as I can. Starting with a miserable ten bux out of Fred's check. [...]

I need to be alone, Kay. Either alone, or with someone a hell of a lot more sympathetic to my current emotional state than you are. I'm not alone when you're in the house, even up in your room. [...]

I'm moody, these days. Regardless of whether you can empathize with it, or understand it, I am going through a tough time for me. I'm up and down all the time. The only kind of people I can afford to have around are indifferent or calm ones, or people who will subordinate their moods to mine.

You won't and shouldn't. You're also going through a different kind of crisis and you ought to be the hell away from me—and my kid. I WILL NOT LISTEN TO ANY MORE CRACKS, COMMENTS, OR BITS OF ADVICE FROM YOU ABOUT ANNIE! Maybe irrational, too, but I want to shriek at you and hit you when you tell me something I'm putting on her is too small, or some food I'm preparing is something she doesn't like, or how she never whines with you, or anything else about her. I'm taking care of her. I don't, by God, even want to have anyone around to leave her with for an afternoon or an hour on short notice. I need the full-time responsibility right now. I'm jealous of it. I need something to make me sleep and eat at fairly regular hours, and do the marketing and sweep up a little.

I write better when you're out of the house, and Annie behaves better. I suspect I may be provoking trouble with Annie, just to express the rages I don't let out on you.

All right, so you're growing up. You're turning female. You want to be a mother. YOU'RE NOT MY MOTHER. [...]

I'm not living entirely in present time and place, Kay. I'm just trying to get along as best I can while staying as close to Walt, past, present, and future, as I can.

That means all kinds of reactions that are perhaps unfair and unreasonable. Maybe even my conviction that you feel so much hostility toward him is unfair. Nevertheless, I feel it. Let's just say I owe you a grudge to the extent that you were an extremely irritant factor while he was here. Which doesn't mean it was your fault. Maybe it was his. [...]

Regardless of where what started, I don't want you living in the house with me now. [...]

AND BEAR IN MIND that I wouldn't be writing this agonized thing at all if I didn't, very much, want to stay friends with you. I wouldn't get mad at all if I didn't love you. But if the present state of affairs keeps up much longer, I think I'll be full of too much suppressed rage against you to be able to be your friend for a long time to come.

In short, and in last: GET OUT QUICK, PLEASE, BEFORE I ATTACH ANYMORE OF MY TROUBLES TO YOU, AND START HATING YOU!

Love, yet! Judy

Feb. 19, 1953

440 Riverside Drive, NYC 27 Gloomy Thursday 7&8 p.m.

HELLO JUDY

Feeling basically happier and dancing slightly as I walk, and it's turning into spring so my window opening on many trees and some river will really mean something besides a cold draft soon. Feeling sulky and neglected, nobody loves meee. But I love myself better than yesterday when I felt cold and isolated and efficient and love never even got within thinking distance, and everything was bleak. [...]

So far my studies have consisted in buying Durant's The Story of Philosophy in Cardinal Pocket Edition and reading most of it. Startlingly levelheaded and clear. I'm for Spinoza. There's a good process-structured view of life! [...]

Honest Judy, living with you these last two months was like being keelhailed twice daily, especially after that startling stuff in the first letter that I should stop being antagonistic or get out, and in the second letter when damned if I was anything but overflowing with love and unsuspectedness, saying the equivalent that you loved talking with me in the kitchen and couldn't stand having me in the house when I was upstairs. After that time, when I was with you I just hid in a shell and tried to be absorbed in something else and not there as much as possible. [...]

This "antagonism" between me and Walt I always thought was a lot of fantasy, since I never noticed any.

Love K

May 2, 1953 Congers

Lo Judy-honey

Wasn't writing before because no good news.

It's a really beautiful spring, with only a few dreary drizzly dark days stopping yesterday. Yesterday afternoon was wonderful and so was today. Arthur C. Clarke was over for dinner and stayed the night and was a very sweet slightly distant man, very shy. Marion made a wonderful paella which is a sort of sea food jambalaya, startling Clarke, who apparently is traditionally English in avoiding anything but mutton chops, beef and mashed potatoes and had never tasted lobster or clams and was suspicious of shrimp. [...]

I think [Walt's] "I Dreamer" was superb and it twisted my guts so much at the end that everybody in the damned subway where I was reading it started coughing and sneezing at once while I sat trying not to bawl. A story as complex in surface and background and as simple in depth and undercurrent as that gives me the kind of theme music I write to when I write my best. From stories like that, as well as from life, I have learned feelings to use in my own stories. Do it again Walt. Do it some more. Jesus Judy, has your kid anthology been filled? Could you grab that story?

Any attractive men out there? Send them to New York?

Don't fall over backward to be tactful to not write me about Walt for Christ sakes. I'm not mad at Walt, that was a mad based on a misguided suspicion and he pled not guilty. [...]

A week later,

I'm now in the typing homestretch of the first half of the novel we're collaborating on. It's tedious steady work but should be done by tomorrow, unless I can get Phil on the phone and persuade him to offer some diversion and sabotage [...]

A piece of my typewriter just fell off, trying to cooperate ...

Love Katherine

May 9, 1953

Dear Katie

Just a note to express pleasure at your letter.

In case you've been seeing people, like it sounds like you have, why don't you maybe write me a news-gossip type letter? I don't want to know anybody's bed-secrets. Just what's going around, and who's talking about what? I find myself very timid about re-entering the water, what with the shoals and undercurrents and all that. [...]

I feel real deepdown satisfied about things, Kay. [...]

Back to work. Write me quick before I leave, huh?

Love, Judy

Oct. 23, 1953

Dear Katie:

Do me something. Write to Walt, will you? He's still at the same address. Offered to show him carbon of the letter I wrote you, but he was drunk-mad at the time, and refused, being certain I'd so written it as to try to get your one-sided "sympathy." If you write him (I hope) in the same vein you did me, I believe he will understand I didn't do that, and also, more importantly, will realize HE HAS GOT ONE FRIEND. [. ..]

You mind if I babble on some? I just this morning finished the termite story! (at 30,000 words, the last 10,000 of which was written out of about 8 pages of notes and draft, since I left Orange City—and the last half of that in the past two days, since I left the last place in which Walt could come.) Now I feel like I've earned an afternoon off and some letter-writing time, and Annie is being self-reliant for a change this afternoon (she always is in the mornings; in the PM, somehow, she feels she needs me for every small step), and your letter cut through me like they say a hot knife through butter, though I never tried that. But as long as I had the story to finish, on account of Walt having got into such a thing every time I tried



to work on it at home, I was sort of buoyed up with a "this is necessary" feeling. Now it's done, all that remains is to think up stories to write so's to earn back money and prestige and public respect, so's to keep Annie. And where'm I gonna be then? A famous writer, maybe, with an only child too possessed and too possessing. [...]

Not married, I don't think. Love in this same sense I don't really believe will happen again, and marriage without it I've tried too. I got one outside chance, but it'll be too late for Annie, I'm afraid. So far, my old friend Mark Clifton has been startling accurate, though cold-blooded (which I recall from my own cold-blooded days is a good way to be accurate, but no way to live), in his predictions and criticisms. Among them a letter I got in Chi last Feb. which I simply ignored and never answered I thought it so petty and mean-minded, full of phrases about guys who "hide behind an altar" and clearly implying in his world-weary opinion I had a snowball's chance in hell of ever getting married to Miller, so why didn't I wise up and decide I wouldn't marry him?

I've found this out a lot of times before: that the more you empathize, the more you try to understand motivations, the less likely you are to be able to predict futures. You have to do that on patterns, strictly, I guess—observed behavior extrapolated toward an objective. It doesn't matter that I know all the reasons (and have not tried to explain more than a little) why Walt couldn't marry me right now, and understand them, and love him and miss him, and know he loves me and misses me ... all this is irrelevant from the point of view of anyone watching the events. There are other circumstances under which Walt could and would have rushed to put a ring on my finger ... but maybe part of the predicting business is knowing which circumstances the folks are likely to get into. So Mark was right about that, as about not kidding myself that I'd be able to write and be wife to Miller both, as about several other things. My hopeful note here, which started this dissertation, was that he hinted once I could get married okay when I'm a lot older. But that'll be too late for Annie, like I said. [...]

Well, I can sign their goddamn slave contract. I guess I was breaking my neck coming as close to it as was possible for me (woman, artist, "brain," 20th century America) in what I was trying to do together with Walt. For him the union was a visit to Bohemia; for me a voyage to conformity. Neither worked. But I've gotten along with society before in two different kinds of ways, pretty effectively. One, which I tried for only a short spell, and is suspect because it led me to where I am maybe, is just plain openness and affection infinitely extended in all directions. I was getting along happily that way, but have a hunch it was a fool's paradise, even without the Big Love development.

The other, tried and true, way was a lot like Clifton's. Sit on the outside, do as you please pretty much, but calculate your chances ahead of time. Never make an impulsive move unless you plan it to be impulsive. Etc.

Oct. 26, 1953

Dear Judy,

Since you said nothing about keeping the news quiet I went around keening the news abroad like an ambulance siren. [...]

I took the lack of request for secrecy in the letter as permission to run around and retract statement that you were married and necessarily explain why not, and since it had me pretty hard hit I probably sounded like I was announcing world's end. Consciously I just felt furious at you for getting into troubles I have to empathize with (my friends should be happy) but for a whole day and a half I felt sick when offered food, though not aware of being sad. After sad came up to awareness I started eating again. I worried like hell about you maybe not being able to write now, and now I'm glad as hell to hear you've finished Termites at last. You've still got that old-back-against-the-wall ability to stop feeling the hurts and begin to work with total efficiency, when things get too tough,

Mad at Judy but instinct for self preservation = instinct for Judy preservation.

Very strong aff., Katherine.

## TWELVE-WALTER MILLER AND THE CUSTODY BATTLES

*A man lives all his life inside the wall of his own skull, making words into sentences, moving muscles to form gestures, so that he can make his existence and purposes known to others; and in the same way, absorbing his perceptions of the people and things around him, trying to interpret as best he can, so as to understand some part of their meaning for himself. But he never gets outside the bony barriers of his own head, or past the hardening defenses of others. For every human being, the word or gesture has some slightly different meaning.*

*No two people ever meet completely without some slight or great distortion of intent or understanding, occurring in the jangled complexity of living cells that make up the expressive and interpretive mechanisms of the man.*

*Todd Harmacher made this discovery, as most men do, when he was very small. Each contact of the thirty-odd years since had served to confirm it. Each contact until, for a few brief minutes this evening, he had let himself believe that he was truly, entirely in communication with another human being, rather than with some strangely shaped and ill-ported section of his imagination.*

*Now he paced the city streets, oblivious to rain and cold, defiling noise and light, aware of the potentialities of total loneliness as he never quite envisioned it before.*

*He crossed another street and turned a corner, for no reason except the inner urgency that said, Turn! Here!*

*Stop!*

*He stopped.*

*Perception invaded him. He was standing in front of an old stone building, a relic of the city's first pride in size and strength, grey and massive and dirty. A lamppost down the street threw a flood of light along the rainsoaked sidewalk, but the doorway directly in front of him was dark. And her smiling face was in his head again, framed by the soft scarf the drifting mist of her hair touching gently against the bitterness and anger in his mind.*

*I'm sorry dear, she told him, but I got scared! I used to think I made you up, then for a while I thought you were real. Then I told myself that was nonsense, and I learned to live with a dream ...*

*I know. I know!*

*And then when I saw you, I got frightened. And when I started doing things I didn't mean to do*

*...*

*Poor darling! I shouldn't have ...*

*No! Don't you see? That's when I knew it was real!*

*But then ... ?*

*But then I knew you still didn't believe it yourself and I thought, if I did as you asked each time, you'd never never know which one of us it was, or whether I was really here. So ... so when you weren't looking, I ran out, and came here and called you and waited ...*

*— Judith Merrill, "Connection Completed," 1954*

WALTER MILLER AND I first collided, the way two stars collide, in September 1952, at the big house near Red Bank, New Jersey. I had just separated from Fred, and Katie was temporarily living with me. Walt was working for a short time in New York City on a script for the TV program *Captain Video*. At Katie's invitation, he came out to our place for a visit and ended up staying for three days. Then he went back to New York to finish his script.

When the script was completed, his wife Anne came up from Kyle, Texas, where they were living. They had a long-standing arrangement that as soon as the script paid off, she would make a trip to the Big Town. Then the two of them went back to Kyle. While he was staying with Katie and me, he told us he had an assignment for another script, which he thought would give him enough money to make a break

from Anne. They had been discussing separation for some time.

Later on, when he was on a trial separation from Anne, Walt lived with me in Red Bank for a couple of months. We decided on our course of action: he would go back to Anne to reach some kind of custody settlement, and to arrange for a divorce. He figured that the lump of money he would receive from his contract to write a sequence of *Captain Video* scripts would give us some freedom to get together and figure things out. We thought at first that it would all wind up with their children being separated: two would stay with Walt and two with Anne. It didn't though, because Walt and I ended up caring for some or all of his four children at various times.

Meanwhile I changed the separation arrangement I had arranged a year prior with Fred. As part of the settlement he had given me his interest in the big house in Red Bank. I made arrangements to sell him back the house and go down to Mexico to get a divorce.

I waited for my next move until I heard from Walt that things in Texas were settled. We met in a motel in Austin, Texas, during my trip out to Mexico. During our few days together in that motel, we were happy. There was one night in particular when he said to me, "You know, the two of us are like absolute hams. We have each found the perfect audience for our work. And now the question is, having found the perfect audience, will we ever think of performing for anyone else again?"

On my way back from Mexico, I met him again in Austin, and then he was ready to go.

We spent a few months driving around Colorado in a big wooden station wagon with his two small daughters and my Annie. Then we drove back to Texas to pick up his little boy, Mike, because Walt had to fly to New York about a two-day script he was working on, and he was taking his children on the trip. He also took Annie back with him when he went, so she could spend some time with Fred.

In the meantime I took the train back from Colorado to New Jersey in order to meet Merrill, who was coming to live with me for the summer. I needed to find a place to stay. When Walt was finished with his work in New York, he was going to join up with us. We would have all five of the children together for the first time—my two daughters and three of his kids.

It was while I was travelling on the train to New Jersey that I wrote the short story "Connection Completed," more or less to and about Walt. It's about what was going on between us, how two people can find each other and no longer feel at all alone.

In New Jersey we first set up house in a little apartment over a garage in a small town. The garage was owned by the parents of my friends Catherine and Dwayne. By that point Fred was living in the big house in Red Bank again, which was only about five or six miles from where we lived.

One day Fred came over and told us he wanted Annie to spend two weeks with him. Fred was about to marry Carol, his fourth wife, and her mother was coming to visit. Carol had a daughter from a previous marriage who was living with them. Fred wanted to bring Annie back so that he could present this whole happy family to Carol's mother.

"No," I said. "We're just getting these kids to accept each other as one family, it's not a good time to break them up." I was holding Annie in my lap at the time; she was just a baby.

Fred stood up and went as though to take her from me. I refused to let him. Suddenly Walt was standing in the room with his deer rifle pointing at Fred, yelling, "Get out!"

Well, this is what you call old-fashioned cultural violence. Both Fred and I were New York City raised, basically. I had lived in some other cities, but they had all had pretty much the same socio-cultural rules. Walt was from Florida and Texas. He kept a rifle with him all the time. It was never loaded because there were kids around, but it was a definite statement to Fred: "You're in my house. Get out."

Fred must have felt his life was in danger, because he leapt at Walt to grab the gun. Next thing I knew, we had a movie-style wild western battle going on, except that neither of the men had ever been in a fight before. Fred had the reach on Walt, and Walt had the fighting instinct. The gun fell forgotten on the floor.

Finally, it reached a point where Fred was holding Walt off, and Walt was swinging with both arms and legs. All the kids had been in the house with us when this started. I chased them out, but I still held little Annie to my chest, soothing her and telling her not to look.

Finally Fred put Walt down.

Merril, who was standing at the screen door watching all of this, came back in. She picked up the pieces of Fred's glasses and put them in his hand. Fred went off to find a cop. In desperation I phoned Milt Amgott, an old and trusted lawyer friend in New York, and told him what had happened. I ended by yelling, "Fred's gone to get the cops!"

His response was, "Well, this might not be so bad. In New Jersey, like Transylvania, a man's home is his castle. If he tells someone they've got to leave, they've got to leave."

So Fred came back with a cop, and told him the entire story. The more the cop heard, the more disgusted he became with Fred. Eventually Fred and the cop left, and we finally managed to get the kids into bed for the night.

As Walt and I were settling down onto our own mattress in the living room, he turned to me and said, "If anybody thinks they're going to push you around ..."

He didn't finish the sentence because we both broke up. We realized there were two completely different, and equally ridiculous, endings to that sentence:

"If anyone's going to push you around, they're going to have to deal with me" and "if anyone's going to push you around, it's going to be me."

Judith with her two daughters, Ann and Merrill, circa 1954.  
*Courtesy of the Merrill estate*

The first custody suit occurred during the summer of 1953. Early that summer Walt and I and our combined family moved to Florida, to Arm City, a town near Orlando. (Since then Arm City has been subsumed into Disney World.) Merrill came to join us after having spent a year living with her father. It was her first experience of living with Dan for that length of time. She had previously always stayed with me. Dan and I had made an agreement that she would spend a year with him, and at the end of the year she would come back and spend a summer with me. Over that summer, she would decide what she wanted to do.

We had very little money and our scant subsistence level was very different for Merrill after the way she had been living with Dan. Towards the end of the summer, Dan came down to see Merrill and took her into Orlando for a weekend, where he bought her a lot of clothes and toured her around. When they returned from the trip, he announced that he wanted her to return to his house. It was a terrible thing to put her through. Merrill had already clearly said that she wanted to stay with me and Walt. She was placed in a difficult situation. Dan and I were both in the house, and she was being asked to say what she wanted to do. She had to decide between us. She reiterated that she wanted to stay with me in Florida.

Dan left in a fury.

Shortly after that, a man I didn't know came knocking at our door. He asked if I was Mrs. Something-Or-Other Miller.

I responded, "No, I'm Mrs. Walter Miller."

It turned out he was a private detective who had been hired to establish the incriminating evidence that I was living with Walt as man and wife. We were, in fact, at that time. Walt's divorce from his first wife was about to become final in a couple of weeks, and we were planning to get married.

After the private detective came, everything changed. Two days later, Dan and a sheriff picked up Merrill from school unannounced and drove off with her. As it was happening, Walt and I saw the car pull off with Merrill in it. We had absolutely no idea whose car it was. Terrified, we chased them down the road, trying to figure out what was going on. Merrill was frantically trying to talk to me through the window, and being pulled back into the seat. Eventually we recognized Dan in the front seat.

Walt and I went back home to wait. Finally, about an hour later, Dan made a stop to pick up Merrill's toothbrush and clothes, and some other personal things. I don't remember whether the sheriff was still with them. That was when Dan informed me that the custody hearing would be held in the Florida district court, and Merrill would be staying with him until a custody decision was reached.

He knew that Walt and I were flat broke. I mean flat, flat broke. We certainly couldn't afford to pay a lawyer's fees—we were just barely making ends meet. Once again I phoned Milt, my lawyer friend in New York. I explained the entire situation to him and asked, "What do I do now? Can you find a lawyer for us?"

He said, "There's no sense hiring a lawyer because you have no money. If you have to borrow money in order to pay a cheap one, it isn't worth it. It's better to throw yourselves to the mercy of the courts and conduct your own defence. I'll give you all the guidance I can." Which he did.

Then Walt and I approached his family, who were truly a strange mixture of people, and asked for help. His father, Walt Senior, was of German extraction, and a really hard-headed atheist. His mother, Ruth, was a southern Baptist lady. Her mother, Walt's grandmother, lived with them as well, and she was even more of a southern Baptist lady than Ruth.

His family turned out to be very supportive. Ruth totally astonished us by volunteering to come to court as a witness on our behalf.

Looking back with the distance of time, I can say that some really funny things happened during that hearing in Florida. Dan had hired an aggressive lawyer who tried to bulldoze his way through when he realized we didn't have anyone representing us.

The judge, though, was a local boy, so the fact that Walt's mother, who was a local lady, was testifying for us held a lot of weight. In his eyes, Dan was a damn Yankee from New York.

Most of Dan's testimony had nothing to do with our immorality, although that was the grounds on which the hearing was being held: it had to do with our poverty. Dan emphasized that he could properly provide for this child, and we could not. At one point he described a meal he had eaten at our house. Walt used to go over to an empty lot next door to our place that had a lot of cabbage-palms growing in it and pick the cabbage out of the palm, put it in a pot with an enormous joint with shreds of meat that he got from the butcher's, and we would eat that with rice and biscuits. We considered the cabbage-palms to be our green vegetable for the meal.

Anyhow, cabbage-palms are weeds in Florida. But Dan was unknowingly describing a meal which was, by Southern standards, not only fairly conventional, but also downright delicious. And he was describing it to this Southern judge in terms of utter contempt—including the fact that the biscuits were made from scratch. This did little to influence the judge in his direction.

Judith's third husband, Dan Sugrue, in Milford, Pennsylvania, circa 1962.  
*Courtesy of the Merrill estate*

Then Walt's mother came in and said she could not imagine a home in which she would rather see her own grandchildren raised. Her testimony went a long way.

In the end the judge's decision was based entirely on the matter of adulterous cohabitation. He said, "Well, the laws of Florida do not permit me to make any other decision except that this child must be in the custody of her father."

Cohabitation meant sleeping in the same bed. We could, perhaps, have occupied the same house if there was no indication of cohabitation—if it were possible to establish that we slept in separate bedrooms. The laws of Florida required the judge's decision to reflect the fact that we were known to be having an adulterous sexual relationship. We were living together; I think the wording was "as man and wife." Although my divorce was final, Walt's was still at least two or three weeks away from being official.

The judge said that under the circumstances, he wanted to provide for liberal visitation rights. He specified that Merrill was to spend summers and all school holidays with us—at her father's expense.

After the hearing, Merrill returned to our house to get the rest of her clothing. She had half an hour to talk to me away from Dan for the first time since the sheriff had grabbed her. She told me that she had overheard phone conversations between Dan and Fred, and that all along the plan had been for Fred to now come down for Ann.

So I called up Milt again and asked, "What do I do now?"

He said, "Well, the first thing you do is get out of that court's jurisdiction. The next thing you do is make sure that if you maintain any contact with Walt, nobody finds out about it. You do all your communicating with people through me, and nobody is to have your address."

Indeed, there was more than a bit to be concerned about there, because our terribly broke status partly had to do with the fact that Walt and I were running off together and to all appearances, there was poor, virtuous Fred being left behind—and Fred was a notable figure in the science fiction world at the time.

When the custody calamity hit, I felt a huge rush of parental guilt. We had destroyed this child's life for lust. We should have waited. We should have heeded Milt's advice so that I wouldn't now lose Annie.

The biggest problem was that neither of us was getting a lot of writing done—which is why we were so damn broke. We were both trying hard, but as long as we were in the same house, we weren't writing.

We kept wondering how prophetic Walt's statement in that Austin motel had been, because as soon as I found another place to stay near Orlando, which was a different jurisdictional area, we both started writing like mad. This productive phase continued for a long time—what we were still, at that point, thinking of as the remaining weeks of waiting—during which we were both getting an enormous amount of work done.

Florida also happened to be having one of its epic flood spells, so the business of communication between Walt and me became really weird. He knew every backroad and byroad in that part of the state, so he simply assumed he could come see me by being careful he wasn't followed. But when the floods hit, there were only certain roads that could be used, and it became harder for him to drive around. It turned into a major marathon for him to come at all.

Meantime, Walt wrote his almost-ex-wife Anne that we were going to get married. As soon as he did this, he got a phone call from his almost-ex-mother-in-law telling him Anne was having a nervous breakdown, with asthma attacks, and had taken to her bed. She was crying all day. She only wanted him to come back.

Both Walt and I were writing like mad again, because we were apart. Under those circumstances, it seemed as if the only sensible thing was to let somebody get what they wanted. So he told Anne he would come back.

I had meanwhile found a room for Annie and me in an ancient mansion in Orlando (this is pre-Disney Orlando, mind you) just off skid row. This huge estate was broken up into small rooms, and the slave quarters were slightly refurbished to turn it into cheap housing.

The first time I arrived at this place, I pulled up in front of the Big House in the old wood-panelled Ford station wagon in which Walt and I had travelled all around the country with our kids. Sitting there in rocking chairs on the verandah, like a cover illustration for an Erskine Caldwell novel, were four or five old Southerners. There was one woman and several men, and they were all either very skinny or very fat.

One of them yelled out, "Where's your man?"

I yelled back, "Ain't got one!"

Then they saw me getting out with a kid, so the woman turned to the men and said, "Guess you're gonna have to help!"

So the men got up and helped me unload all my boxes, which were mostly books and records.

I had loaded up the station wagon with all the stuff I could manage, and left everything I didn't think I needed right away to be picked up later. I had to make several trips back and forth to get more stuff from Walt's. For a while I was doing a lot of driving back and forth on circuitous routes in the midst of this terrible flooding.

So here I was living in this great old Southern ex-mansion as a woman alone without a man. People were quite startled, but not at all troublesome when I explained that no, I was not a working girl. They

couldn't imagine a woman being alone, at least in that area, but they were fine with it.

There is an interesting story about one of the men who lived there. His name was Old Buddy, and he shared a room with his friend Herbie. Old Buddy was a sweet man who had been in the "death march" on Bataan, in the Philippines. He was taken prisoner by the Japanese and incarcerated for two or three years. Most of the thirty-six thousand troops captured died of starvation and ill-treatment when they were forced to walk barefoot through seventy miles of jungle to prison camps.

When U.S. forces recaptured Bataan, the Japanese released all the prisoners, including Old Buddy. He came back to the United States and gradually regained some weight. He still had trouble with his feet, but they were largely healed.

Then he developed a severe drinking problem. He and Herbie were both drunk most of the time, but Old Buddy was a really interesting guy, and very sweet. The friendship of Old Buddy was one of the things that softened somewhat my experiences of that period. At one point, he even said to me, "We should get married."

"Why?" I asked.

He answered, "Well, if we're both going to be miserable, wouldn't we be better off being miserable together?"

Interestingly enough, about six months after I left Florida, Old Buddy moved back up to Cape Cod, where his family lived. He stopped drinking, met a woman, and fell in love. They got married. About a month after the wedding, he stepped out into the road, got run over, and was killed. That was Old Buddy.

During that Florida Mansion period of my life, the only things other than Old Buddy's friendship that made life bearable were the visits from Walt's parents. Once he was back with Anne, Walt was not seeing me. But Walt Senior used to drive over from Daytona and take me to the supermarket. He would bring gifts for me and little Annie, and visit with us for the afternoon. It was utterly astonishing that these people had remained my friends—I didn't even know they were my friends until all the trouble came.

Throughout all the trouble, and even afterwards, they continued to come visit. I was no longer taking care of their grandchildren, and Anne was back with Walt, but they kept coming. It made an enormous difference in my life. I also borrowed two hundred dollars from them that I never returned. Not for lack of wishing to, but because they had the bad taste to die before I had the two hundred dollars to pay them back.

The only other really good thing I can remember from that period was a package I got via Milt from Ted Sturgeon and family. It was a care box filled with a little of everything for me and Annie: there was Ted's new book, a rag doll, some silly sweets, even some black lacy underwear.

Eventually I left the gloomy Southern mansion and I ended up living with my mother for a while in a minimalist Florida hotel.

She had decided all of a sudden that she should come down and help me out. The whole thing was a trial for both of us.

My most vivid memory of that time is my mother sitting in a sort of courtyard outside our room. There was a small cat that used to run around the motel, and my mother would sit there calling to it, "Here pussy, pussy, pussy."

(She was, of course, totally ignorant of the Southern meaning of the word pussy.)

Her attitude towards my career at the time was mixed. She wanted me to be a writer, but she certainly didn't mean a science fiction writer. She was impressed with my publications and my reviews, but not with the writing itself. Her attitude was, "Why are you writing junk when you could be writing something good?"

To be honest, I cannot remember what she wanted me to write instead. I can only remember I didn't want to do any of it. Apparently I had a complete block against her and anything she said. Eventually my mother decided she couldn't do much for me, and she returned to New York.

A couple of months later, in the spring, I was thinking about my visitation rights with Merrill. I realized that given the current situation I certainly wasn't going to be able to take her for the summer—I couldn't

even write directly to her—all my letters had to go through Milt. If I wrote directly Dan would know where I was and he would tell Fred.

I didn't know what to do anymore. I counted up all the money I had left. I had enough to take the train back to New York, with about fifty bucks left over. So I called Milt and asked him, "What do you think? If I came back, what do you think would happen as far as Ann's custody is concerned?" He told me, "Come back. We'll make it work."

So with Annie, who was then about three and a half, I took the train up to New York. We had a whole bunch of parcels and boxes, but once again I had to leave a lot of my stuff behind. I paid for one week in a hotel room out in the West 50s—the cheap-living hotel area—which cost me twenty dollars. It had a little hot plate, so I went out and spent everything else except ten dollars on enough groceries to last us the week.

In the meantime I made a few phone calls. I was supposed to see Milt the next day, and I also called a couple of old friends.

One of the friends I called was Margaret Bertram, who came bopping over to the hotel that same evening and handed me twenty bucks, saying, "I bet you thought you were never going to get this back!" I knew for sure I had never lent her the money, but she had a job. She also lent me travelling around money, which I desperately needed.

Within a week, I had a contract to do a book for a man I had worked with before.

Amazingly, Milt phoned Fred and managed to convince him, without ever directly saying it, that I had returned to New York because I had come into some dough. It was a stroke of genius on Milt's part. He told Fred I was prepared to battle him up and down the courts for Annie if necessary, so, considering the circumstances, wouldn't he rather come to some kind of agreement?

Fred decided to make a shared custody agreement with me. Ann would spend half her time with each of us.

The second custody suit, the big one, happened in Pike County, Pennsylvania, which is where Milford is located. I was living there at the time. It happened because Merrill came for her summer visit, and decided she was not going to return to her father's. Merrill's custody had been won by Dan in that first suit in Florida, and she had been living with him for the last two years.

This occurred at a curious time for me, because during the spring that preceded her visit, I came to the conclusion that my kids were going to be better off if their fathers had custody and I had visitation rights. That way, at least, I wouldn't have to live constantly looking over my shoulder. I would be in a position to be totally honest with them instead of having to compromise continually between what was expected of me by the courts and neighbours, and how I wanted my relationship with them to be. I also realized that Fred had much more freedom with Annie than I did.

I almost talked myself into surrendering custody of both my daughters. Then Ann came home from a visit with Fred. She had been spending half the time with him and half with me, but she was getting ready to start school and would have to live with one or the other of us. And Merrill came back to me and said she wasn't going back to her father's. Then Ann, who was six years old, announced she wanted to live with us instead of with Fred. She liked living with Fred, but she wanted to stay with Merrill and me and go to school in Milford.

I didn't have an option. You can't tell your kids, "No, I'm going to send you away because it would be better for you in the long run." You can't do that even if you fear it might be best. You particularly can't do it if you really don't want your kids to go.

I went to see Sid Krawitz, the best local lawyer and a member of the only other Jewish family in Milford besides us. I laid it all out to him and asked, "What are my chances?"

In Merrill's case there was a previous custody court decision, and she had been awarded to her father. But Sid told me, "Because she is thirteen, her wishes would be paramount. She is the one who is going to have to decide."

I said, "That's what has already happened."

He said, "Yes, but now she has to tell her father. If she is prepared to tell him she wants to live with you, I think we can win this in court."



So I went back and explained this to Merrill, who said, "Yeah, I'll tell him." I assumed that what she meant was, "Yeah, I'll tell him, as long as I don't have to go face to face."

She wrote him a letter, and from that point on, all hell broke loose.

I only saw Walt on two occasions after that time in Florida.

One of those times was in 1956, during the time I was still living in Milford, Pennsylvania. The big custody suit had already commenced, but was not yet completed. I was enjoined not to take the children out of the state until things were decided, but the World Science Fiction Convention was being held in New York.

I had told Walt earlier that I wasn't going, but it was very tempting. I wrote him to ask whether he would be there and he answered that he couldn't possibly go. So I thought it was safe for me to consider it. Based on the fact that he wasn't going to be there, I made quite complicated arrangements for the kids, which I felt were safe.

The first thing that happened when I arrived, when I was still in line to get my credentials, was that people were coming up to me and asking, "Have you seen Walt yet?"

I couldn't believe it. We spent the weekend walking around the hotel together, side by side, and once in a while we would touch slightly. It was like lightning struck and we would bounce apart. Fred was there, mind you, so we had to be careful.

The second or third night Walt made a big pitch—he wasn't staying at the big hotel, he was at a small hotel in the Village—attempting to get me to come down to his hotel room. The only thing that prevented me from going was that I was having my period, and it was an extremely heavy one. I was practically hemorrhaging. This kept my urge intact.

*SF. The Best of the Best, 1967. Included stories by Walter Miller, Jr, Isaac Asimov, J.G. Ballard, Damon Knight, Theodore Sturgeon, and others.*

However, having grown up in New York, something I had always wanted to do was take a hansom cab ride through Central Park. So we took a hansom cab ride, and necked like mad. Unfortunately, the entire time I was conscious of the fact that I was not only wearing a pad, but had a whole wad of cotton stuffed inside my pants. And that despite all this, the blood was still coming through. In those days, we used to worry a lot more about this kind of thing than people do with the current menstrual technology. That alone is what kept me from going back to his hotel.

At six or seven the next morning, there was a knock on my door. I was sharing a room with another woman, and we stumbled to the door in surprise to find Walt! He wanted me to come to mass with him. I had not previously deduced the Catholic element in him, but it turns out Walt had been not quite excommunicated—there's a step before that—for allowing his wife's tubes to be tied after the fourth child was born on the advice of a doctor.

So I think that time in New York was the first chance he had to attend mass in a long, long time. We went to St. Patrick's Church, a church where nobody knew he shouldn't come. I had never been to a Catholic mass, and this was a high mass with two cardinals. One was a visiting cardinal from somewhere in Europe. It was an incredible experience.

At the absolute emotional peak of this whole procedure, right before the raising of the chalice, a funny thing happened. All of a sudden, everything stopped. In walked a little priest from a tiny little spot near the arched roof, and he started this long monotonous speech, "Ladies and gentlemen, I want to welcome you. I particularly want to welcome the visitors from the shrine in Ohio, who are here today ..."

This really dull speech went on and on. I looked around and saw quite a few people moving in the aisles. I realized that this was when mothers took their children to the toilet and stuff like that. Suddenly this made me remember my own situation. I started to feel really wet, and I was wearing a powder blue suit. I nudged Walt and told him I was going to the ladies' room.

I got up and left the church. I edged my way back to the hotel, which was about two blocks away. I

didn't want to show my backside to the street, because I had no idea what it looked like. I edged my way around the lobby of the hotel, into an elevator, and went straight to my room.

It was all sweat.

I thought, "Well that has done it. That has really finished it off."

About three-quarters of an hour later, there was a knock on my door. When I opened it, Walt was standing there saying, "This had better be good."

During that whole period, and for several years, we maintained contact through written correspondence. Walt stayed with Anne for the rest of his life. They raised their four children, none of whom I ever saw again.

Walt died about a year and a half before I sat down to tell this story. It always startled me that there was no longer any chance of seeing him again. However, it may have been even more of a blow to find out that his wife had died six months before he did and he made no attempt to see me.

### **THIRTEEN-IN APPRECIATION OF MARK CLIFTON**

*(Originally published, with minor changes, as "A Memoir and Appreciation," in The Science Fiction of Mark Clifton, ed. Malzberg and Greenberg, 1980.)*

THE PHRASE "MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIP" was not yet current when Mark Clifton and I plunged into our long-distance mutual exploration. Doneto-death as it is now, still it is the phrase that fits.

I was twenty-nine years old and a fledgling writer. He was "established." A vividly meaningful relationship of personal, literary, and ideological valences exploded to fill some seven hundred pages of typed, single-spaced letters—nearly five hundred of them in the first three years.

June, 10, 1952

Red Bank, New Jersey

Dear Mark Clifton:

If anybody had asked, and I don't see why they should, I'd have said up till today that I'm far too professional, blasé, and sophisticated to write a fan letter to anybody.

But nobody hereabouts seems to know anything about you, so I can't just let it off in talk. And I couldn't raise a response when I tried to ESP you yesterday, after I read "Star Bright." So here I am, reduced to the simple direct system of writing to tell you how much I liked your story.

And to ask, of course, who are you anyway? It's not often that a new name hits science fiction with two stories like this one and "What Have I Done?" Even less often that a writer, new or old, happens to hit so close to my own current preoccupations with two stories in a row.

I don't know ... maybe you're a true Bright, and worked this stuff out for yourself, all alone. Seems more reasonable (or at least more comfortable) to believe you are part of what impresses me increasingly as a really widespread trend of thought, coming up from all rooms at once, and beginning to achieve some sort of direction that points to the possibility of a new synthesis of social sciences.

Obviously, from the two stories, you have some familiarity with what the book Gestalt Therapy calls "experiments in self-awareness." Does yours come from the same source, or some other derivation? And the psychosomatic approach to psychology is not often as thoroughly integrated into thinking as it appears to be in yours ... not to mention the application of the self-awareness "techniques" to ESP ...

I send this, I might mention, with some hesitancy. Maybe you just got a couple of ideas for a couple of damn good stories, and the philosophic-scientific background that hit me so hard was pure invention; but it doesn't seem that way in the reading. Seems much more like

a significantly successful effort at exposition of some very difficult subject matter. Anyhow, I risk being Intense, which as we all know, is the Great American Crime. He who laughs first gets laughed at least. In any case, maybe I'll get to find out who you are, and whether you meant what you were writing?

Sincerely, and most curiously,  
Judy Merrill

June 15, 1952

Dear Mark Clifton, hello again ...

After I wrote that one, I decided to hold on to it, was going into NY that evening, and figure Horace Gold might have your address. I could have sent it through Ackerman of course.

HLG not only knew your address, but so much more about you too that I'd had most of my questions answered. However, he added that you are a fluent and fascinating correspondent, and that you brag incessantly about how fast you can type, so that you will write to anyone at the drop of a postage stamp. This I want to see.

A rare photo of science fiction writer and friend, Mark Clifton, circa 1955. The hand-written caption says: "Dear Judith: A camera is sometimes more accurate than ESP ."

*Gladser LD*

Dead serious: Horace satisfied my first curiosities and piqued some new ones. He seems to think well of you; so do a goodly number of folks who've read the two stories. I was particularly startled to learn that you're a new writer, not just a new writer to SF. Still find it hard to believe. You have a smooth and expert touch in the difficult job of interweaving the emotional and informational ... was propaganda writing part of personnel work?

Hope to hear from you ... soon?

(A scribbled postscript to this letter expressed dismay and puzzlement about the problem of writing with a ballpoint pen on "corrasible" paper in warm weather.)

June 19, 1952 Redondo Beach, Calif.

Dear Judy Merrill:

At the drop of a postage stamp

So Horace has disillusioned you. My friend! Still, perhaps it is just as well. I'm accused of enough oddities without allowing any illusions to stand. You see, hesitant pause, I too am intense. I bridle a bit at his accusation that I brag incessantly about my typing skill. I did a little personal favor for him once, and to remove any sense of obligation he might have, I tactfully pointed out that since I was a rapid typist it really was no chore. If this be bragging—but then it is the sad lot of man to be perpetually misunderstood. Heavens, how would we ever hang on to the shreds of our superiority without it? Understand a man and you have dealt him mortal insult. So Horace, as usual, does the most gracious thing of all.

I was delighted with your letter. Never, never get too blasé. Think how much pleasure you would have denied me had you not written and sent it!

Your fourth paragraph on the widespread evolvement of some new form of awareness. Again our thought parallels. I quote from a letter I wrote recently to a chap who was being pretty bitter about it all:

"I have the feeling that things are not as black as they seem. I have the feeling that we are, right now, stumbling around the door of our next evolutionary level, that if disaster can only be staved off a little while longer, man can take such a step. I have the premonition that only the thinnest door separates us from the landing above ours, from homo superior. I think

there is an astonishing number of people ready to take such a step—perhaps a critical mass which can explode into homo superior, if we can find a way of passing through that door."

Not to him, but to you who have progressed farther: I am convinced that the door is composed of editorial fear. Something is happening to our editors and publishers. The fear of getting a few objecting letters, of losing an advertising account, of being hauled up before a congressional committee, has pulled all the teeth, and the literature served up is no more than pre-masticated pap. I suspect this is the reason why people flock in great droves from one damn fool-ism to another. It is as if our flood came from worn-out soil. It looks good on the surface. The volume is certainly there. But the trace minerals and vitamins are gone. It does not sustain us.

There is enough food to be found by searching in literature for a youth to get his growth. But beyond that point, when he gets into current literature, he finds carefully predigested volume, carefully packaged and wrapped in cotton wool so that no one might feel the impact—and no substance. However much he may absorb of the volume, if there is no value in it, he will start looking to other sources. I do not need to cite examples of such crazes, or why a good American man will be caught up in the fallacies of Communism. He hungers for food substances which we fear to provide him. A man, hungry enough, will do desperate and foolish things. And if he still hungers, he dies.

I wonder what our nation would have been had that small but critical mass of patriots responsible for our nation been fearful of the criticism of a few stupid, or the raised eyebrows of England's social set.

I hadn't realized this until lately, for I am new to the writing game. You complimented my work, but I know I have a long way to go before I can make my written word match my skill in the spoken word. I do not react in pique when an editor tells me that a story is thin, fuzzy, or unconvincing. But when a whole series of editors write, in essence, "Gad Clifton, this is wonderful stuff. I wish I dared print it but I don't," I am filled with foreboding and concern for the future.

I am accustomed to hearing editors and publishers talk about the low mass level of intelligence, and how the writing must be slanted to that level; saying nothing because it will either be misunderstood or not understood at all. I am accustomed to hearing this, but I do not believe it. For more than twenty years I have been intensively interviewing people. Very early I learned the skill of shearing away all the froth and getting down to the real body of the brew within a few sentences.

I mention, not as horn blowing but as fundamental, that it was the custom for a number of years for psych professors, students, and others to come into my office in pretense of applying for work, so that they might study my interviewing techniques. An amusing sidelight was that within a few sentences they not only confessed their identity, but also confessed they had not intended to reveal it—but that since this had turned into a man to man discussion and was entirely off the record they now felt free to do so. It never occurred to them that that was the technique—that all my interviews were man to man and off the record, and therefore each person felt he could talk freely—without fear.

I have had over 2,000,000 such interviews, almost all of them off the record and man to man. During all this time I looked for this stupid mass level. I never found it. With only a small percentage as exception, I found each man was open for thought, hungry for thought. True, the educational, social and emotional levels varied greatly. I have interviewed everyone from Mexican peons to bank and college presidents, but I was seldom able to find anyone who was not receptive to thought or a new idea—if it was given in his language.

The practical application? During all those years, either as a labor relations director or as a consultant, I never had a strike. Most of my companies were strong union, most of them had been hot spots, the challenge; but I never had even ominous labor trouble because I had never been able to find that stupid mass level, and therefore could not treat the people as such.

Invariably, when I was called into a hot labor dispute, I found it existed because management persisted in giving the workmen what it thought was good for them, instead of finding out what the workmen really wanted. And in the majority of cases it would have cost management far less in dollars. For the problem was, perhaps surprisingly, not one of wages—that was merely a symbol, a "get even" mechanism for subtle frustrations which would sound foolish if expressed to unsympathetic ears.

This God complex of feeding the people what the publishers think is good for them in literature is a parallel.

People are far more willing to think than we give them credit; and the younger generation—we'd better start giving them something solid, something they can get into, instead of the frayed old hokum, or we're really going to have a mess on our hands.

With me it is not idle speculation, or science fiction extrapolation, or amusing sophistry—I know the evolvement is there, that it is springing up on all sides, the force of new life behind it. What is this terrible fear we have that our egg will crack and a chicken emerge? Why are we clamping steel growth? Either the steel bands themselves will shatter and destroy us with flying shrapnel, or we will succeed again, as has happened so many times in past civilizations, in killing the chicken still in the egg.

Intense? Perhaps. But when a civilization arrives at a point where the only acceptable reaction is to titter scornfully, that civilization dies. England arrived at that point. "Look here, old boy, there's some things one doesn't say, don't y'know"—and England died. In Japan it was bushido—the one correct reaction to every given circumstance—and Japan died. And in our culture? It may be quite the thing for the flower of our culture to raise a delicate eyebrow, shrug a white shoulder, and die gracefully on the vine; but I believe the plant is still powerful and strong, and if we concern ourselves too much with the flowers and not enough with the roots, there soon won't be any flowers.

To me, it is basic tragedy that our literature of today does no more than titter scornfully. There are tremendously powerful things to be said, and there are the writers to say them, and they may not be pleasant to the delicate shell-formed ear of the flowers of our culture; but as long as this door of "I wish I dared print it, but I don't" is closed

Well, Judy, I touched on one point of your letter—and somehow it just lengthens out and out. But you can't say Horace didn't warn you. At the drop of a postage stamp—

Drop another, will you?

Cordially,

Mark Clifton

Mark and I met, in person, on only one occasion: the Thirteenth World Science Fiction Convention, in Cleveland, in the summer of 1955 (where he and Frank Riley took the Hugo award for the novel *They'd Rather Be Right*). The meeting was cordial—at times delightful—but some curious inverse chemistry sent each of us away with a sorely wounded sense of rejection by the other. The feeling was strong enough that neither of us found a way to articulate it until several years later. Our correspondence lapsed entirely for a while, and when it resumed (for another five years) it was both less obsessive and more intimate—rather like the letters of old, fond, but spent, lovers.

We were, of course, never lovers in the usual explicit sense. Indeed, the symbol of rejection on each side in Cleveland was our failure even to embrace upon meeting. And it may well have been that this wounding abstention was necessary: that the sort of sounding-board function we served for each other, through most of a decade of critical experience for both of us, could only work between people whose actual physical lives were in no way interconnected: that we were instinctively, however painfully, protecting the very meaning-fullness of the relationship.

In any case, most of my thinking and awareness, during that dramatic fourth decade of my life, was filtered, or refracted, through Mark's extraordinary perceptions, and modified by his philosophies.

Of course, I was not alone in this. Everyone who read his prolific output (in the days when other writers irritably referred to *Astounding* as the "Clifton House Organ") shared the experience to some

extent. Because the important thing to understand about Clifton is just

He meant every word of it.

When he was not writing simply out of his personal history, he was writing with excruciating honesty out of his personal beliefs and ideals. Among these were his years of "extrasensory" or "paranormal" phenomena—and his years of practice of one particular ability—a sort of hyper-empathy that he called "somming" (from somatic), because it required the physical presence of the other person, and which consisted of experiencing the other's somatic awareness.

Aug. 4, 1952

Mark Clifton to Judith Merrill

... My difficulty lay not in the reluctance to accept ESP (or, as we called it, "esper") phenomena, but in the realizations that all didn't have them developed to a high degree. Much of the pain of my childhood and youth lay in my belief that everybody knew these things and were simply hypocritical in not conducting themselves accordingly. I was quite grown up before I began to realize that what I thought was hypocrisy was simply blindness. It still requires conscious effort on my part to make allowances ...

And yet, everyone is. That was what bothered me in childhood. I sommed that each person could esper—it was the fact they didn't, and would not, act accordingly to their esperance which gave me my difficulties. It was like the hysterical blindness so often found in case histories of psychological trauma. Nothing wrong with the eyes, the nerves, or the brain mechanism—the patient simply refuses to see light and therefore is blind. Now if that trauma was a widespread thing, a majority-of-the-people thing, we'd have a good analogy of the esper factor. Perhaps it has roots in the eons of savagery, when the witch-doctor saw to it that he had no competition—and the racial fear became fixed. A real fear then—the possessor of the quality would find himself eliminated. It wouldn't be the first folk trauma to persist down through "civilization."

Mark was a private person, almost a recluse: but this was primarily for reasons of (ill) health. He began writing after suffering a general physical breakdown that led him to retire from a long and successful career in personal and industrial relations. This also coincided, roughly, with the breakup of his marriage. He seldom referred to his physical problems in any detail (a reference once to some problem with his heart, once to a disturbance in his white cell count). His own diagnosis was that he suffered from essentially psychogenic ailments—that he had, in effect, OD'd on people. He shared a small house with a close friend who functioned to some extent in the capacity of nurse and made sure he kept himself to himself sufficiently to avoid serious setbacks.

He was reticent, then, about personal affairs but even more concerned about the privacy of his statements concerning his interests and beliefs.

With rare exceptions, he exposed his experiences and convictions only through science fiction. There were reasons for this.

The first was simply deeply ingrained wariness. Mark was the classical American Success Story: from poor orphan boy in the Arkansas hills to manicured executive in forty pain-packed years. Some of his stories of Christian Charity in Arkansas are blood-chilling. This one was rather mind-chilling—for him. His letter of Aug. 4 continued:

... When I was thirteen years old I got a job teaching school in the swamp country of Arkansas, a little one room country school, sixteen miles south of Little Rock. (I might mention that I, myself, had never been to school; but I could read and write, which was something of an accomplishment in that community.) I was fired for teaching that the world is round—you see this was 30 years ago. There was a sort of school board made up of farmers, the justice of the peace, the preacher-moonshiner. The J.P. (know how the southern country folk love sonorous oratory?) handed down the decision in these words:

"Solomon plainly says that the earth is flat, has four corners, and is the center of the universe; that the sun and stars revolve around the earth for the glory and benefit of man." Then with an avenging look of stern reproof, "Who are you to set yourself up as being wiser than Solomon?"

Individually those men might possibly have admitted privately that there might be something to this round world business, but collectively—

I have traveled over most of the world. I have been lucky in knowing some of its great people. I have mingled with scientists, philosophers, the rich, the poor, the educated, the ignorant, and the Great Majority. I have never met a group, as such, who were, in any respect, different from that swamp country school board. Oh, they may admit that the world is round; but their minds are collectively just as tightly closed against other equally obvious facts—particularly when it comes to looking at man, himself.

There was little to ease that wariness in the ambience of the time in which we were writing these letters. In the We/They atmosphere of the Eisenhower-McCarthy years, Clifton's rejection of either/or politics, if it were not actually treachery, could be understood only as idiocy. The idea that "Amuricanism" and Communism could both be at fault, or that Labor and Management did not represent automatic polarities, was largely incomprehensible, and almost entirely unpublishable, outside of SF. And in the drab self-defined "realism" of the times, the spectacle of a presumably rational intelligent adult giving credence to the existence of modes of communication and awareness unaccounted-for by existing scientific bookkeeping often called forth something like anathema.

Even among "open-minded" science fiction people, there was a fine-but-hard line drawn between speculation and acceptance. Mark explained what had seemed to me to be a certain coyness in his letters:

... Have been overly timid, but perhaps it was because of a recent experience ... I mentioned a bit of my ESP to Horace in a letter. He blasted back with expletives of disgust which shocked me into realization that I had broken one of the strict rules which has governed me all through adulthood: that I, never under any circumstances, reveal myself. Painful as all hell even to tell you this much.

Horace Gold was his first science fiction editor. Mark's correspondence indicated that he was more cautious with John Campbell:

Aug. 20, 1952

You and I have gone far enough now that I don't feel the need to stick to your matrix; but others not so. John Campbell and I, for example, are trading letters back and forth with speed. Last one from him was 10 single spaced pages. But, my God, Judy, I can't see myself stepping very far out of his matrix. The man has such a long, LONG way to go before he would consider some of the things you and I say as being more than drivel. And seeing some unconsidered words could harm him greatly. I think I've already led him farther away from his matrix than he ever went before; but there's a limit. It isn't just a matter of keeping a sales avenue open (I scorn money when there's something interesting in the wind), but he does have a good mind—he is going through the self awareness exercises I used in my teens; he may learn to som! He's trying, but you have to remember the steel strong strands of cocoon which formal education spun around him to protect him from ever thinking again. Thinking is painful, searing and blasting, and he could easily retreat back into his cocoon, never to emerge again. How many ever outgrow college? No, it is disastrous to show an individual a thought trend before he's ready for it. All we can do is tease a little, coax them out a little farther and a little farther until they find to their surprise that they've grown so much they can't fit back into it again.

And of course he had to keep his science fiction lines open, because he was convinced

that the only audience he really cared about was to be found there—Star Bright and her compeers, if you like—the "emergees." His letters are studded with references to the emergees, speculations on what new abilities they might have, and how they might use them, and the urgency of his own need to communicate with them—to tell them all he himself had learned and guessed—little as he felt it was.

June 24, 1952

Judy, that is why I started writing science fiction; because the emergees read it. It is the only place they are able to find thoughts to match their own ... We must not join the ranks of those who cannot bear to see something superior than they, and join in pulling it down to our own level. Who is to say that man cannot reach the stature of gods? I would not be one to deny that to the emergees simply because I could not achieve it. I wouldn't want to be that human. And neither do you; of that I'm confident.

September 9, 1952

I think perhaps we should all be comparing notes, building up this picture of the emergee pattern.

How do I know whether I am an emergee or not? We have built up no pattern of what one is. We throw the concept around too loosely ... I don't know. The emergee may not be one individual at all. The complete emergee may be a somgroup

June 24, 1952

I suspect that we can build that framework, that synthesis—but not from our own brilliantly warped minds. We want to build up a structure for the emergees? Then let's ask the emergees what they want! Startling

revolutionary! But anyway, ask 'em. And listen. You won't like what they say. I won't like what they say. I know it. But ask them. And listen. They'll tell us. Even if it is logical, let's grit our teeth and listen anyway.

Two years later, in a period of comparative good health, he rallied his resources to attend his first science fiction convention, and wrote with unprecedented excitement:

Sept. 8, 1954

Who are these fen? I'm just positive they are, or conceal among them, the emergees; but how do you get to know them? They stand for hours just looking at you, and maybe the bolder ones will catch your eye, gulp, blush, and then ask you a carefully-prepared-well-thought-out-significant-question. But it is all in a sort of daze, and you're not really getting through.

You know, Judy, and I'm completely serious, I wonder if they're not the ones really worth exploring—more than we who are on exhibition—but how do you break through? And would it destroy something for them if you did? Hell, I don't know. I saw some awfully interesting faces among the fen, but I botched it every time ...

I'd have given any six conversations I had with other writers to have had one real conversation with one of these lads—but no luck. And, Judy, I don't have trouble getting through to people I really want to see. But I had trouble here. It was like trying to pick up mercury with the fingers.

It is appalling to me that I still do not know exactly when Mark died, or how. The last letters between us were in 1961. I am not even sure who finally failed to reply to whom. He died in 1963. I heard of it on



the science fiction grapevine some time later. (How much later? I don't know.) It was a wrong time for him to die. A few more years, and he would have seen the beginning of the emergence of the young people he was waiting for: the people who have begun to turn the world around.

He missed the free university movement and the landing on the moon. He missed the ventures into biofeedback and acupuncture. He missed the antiwar movement and the ecology movement.

How much did he have to do with seeding them?

I think he got through to his emergees more than he knew.

## FOURTEEN-WHERE DO YOU GET THOSE CRAZY IDEAS?

(Written in 1973 as author's notes for the collection of *Survival Ship and Other Stories*.)

MY FIRST SCIENCE FICTION story was published twenty-five years ago. It was called "That Only a Mother" and appeared in *Astounding Science Fiction* (now called *Analog*): It was an extremely unpleasant story about the possible (probable?) effects on one small ordinary family of life during a comparatively "clean" controlled atomic war in (what was then) the near future.

That was 1948, and a lot of us were very worried about World War III: not just about death and injury, injustice and destruction, but about the much more insidious after-effects—the cancers and leukemias that might follow years later for apparently untouched survivors; the lingering radioactivity; the sterility and mutations that might affect plants, animals, and people in the aftermath.

In 1946, 1947, and 1948, a great deal was being published about these things. One read the *Smythe Report* and *No Place to Hide* and *The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* and World Federalist publications and the daily newspapers; and if one read the SF magazines, the total amount of information available was staggering, unarguable, and terrifying.

There has been very little change in either the extent or character of this information in the past twenty-five years—as far as atomic war is concerned. We have, of course, learned a great deal about the long-range effects of chemical and bacteriological warfare, both in the laboratory and in practice. The two significant differences now, as far as the effects of atomic wars are concerned, are t) that the expected global holocaust has not yet occurred perhaps in part because the information that was already available in 1948 is not widely understood by many people, including ordinary small families and even heads of government.

"That Only a Mother" dealt with mutation: not in broad statistical terms, and not among victims of a bombing, but as a single side effect due to casual exposure in one family in the "winning" country.

Its specific sources were two: a tiny article in the *New York Herald Tribune* announcing that the U.S. Army of Occupation in Japan had definitely established that the "rumours" of widespread infanticide due to mutations in the areas of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were unfounded (even in those days some of us automatically read certain kinds of U.S. official pronouncements backwards); and a domestic incident that brought sharply home to me how easily a mother can fail/refuse to notice a child's imperfections.

The result was a story whose horror ("I can't get this out of the office fast enough," one letter of rejection from a national woman's magazine began) was the familiar, available information which most people (in 1948) were unwilling to connect with.

Where do I get those crazy ideas? From the same newspapers, books, articles, broadcasts, and daily experiences everyone else has. It's all in how you put them together. The "realistic" fiction writer adds one and gets two: or perhaps more, for three. The "fantasy" writer operates with the square root of minus-one and comes up with "imaginary" results. The science fiction writer multiplies three by two, and naturally gets six (not five).

It's not the ideas that are crazy: it's the real-life ingredients that go into them that are so strange—or seem so strange because they've been put together in a different way.

Which doesn't mean that SF is "prophecy." It's "probability." If you put this and this and this together in a certain way, here's what could happen. 'When I wrote that story in 1947 about an armless-legless

mutation, I was thinking of radioactivity, not thalidomide.

"Realistic" fiction is about things that have happened. "Fantasy" is about things we are fairly sure don't happen. SF is about things that might happen.

The first story in this collection, "Survival Ship," was originally published in 1950; in an excellent but short-lived magazine called *Worlds Beyond*. At that time the idea of a self-sustaining life-support system that would enable a two-generation trip to another star system was "crazy"—except to SF readers and a few rocket nuts.

Where do I get those crazy ideas? Sometimes they seem to beget themselves. When I started work on "Survival Ship," I was attempting a simple literary exercise: I was trying to write a story that used no personal pronouns. I couldn't do it, or perhaps I just lost interest after I found where the attempt was leading me: I wound up writing a story with almost no gender pronouns.

At the time the story was liked primarily as a "clever" trick-ending job. Remember: in 1950, everyone who was keeping up with space travel (seven years before Sputnik, about twenty years before women's liberation, and about ten years before the beginnings of the NASA promotion for the Apollo flights) knew that women were the logical choice for astronauts—if only (but not only) for reasons of size and weight.

The story was reprinted twice shortly after its appearance and then forgotten—until a few years ago, when suddenly everyone was playing the no-gender-pronouns game, and it was rediscovered by anthology editors looking for evidence that science fiction had something to say about women's lib.

Of course it said nothing at all about that, but perhaps it has something of the same effect on readers that it had on the author: because after I wrote it I began thinking seriously about a novel-to-be-written that would make use of the "survival ship" background to attempt an exploration of sexual-role behaviour. How much of what we consider "feminine" or "masculine" behaviour is cultural, how much biological? One of the SF games is psychodrama-on-paper. Set up an environment-shift or a role-switch, and see what happens.

Over a period of about ten years, I kept adding notes to a card-file outlining the "future history" of the "mother-ships" sent out by the "matriarchy" (a puritan backlash anti-war feminine oligarchy Earth Government), and in particular, the genealogy of the first "Survival Ship" and the experiences of its second generation.

The novel was never written—except for one short story, "Wish upon a Star," which appeared in 1958, eight years after the "accidental" first story, in *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*.

I grew up in the radical 1930s. My mother had been a suffragette. It never occurred to me that the Bad Old Days of Double Standard could have anything to do with me.

The first intimation I had, actually, was when the editors of the mystery, western, and sports pulp magazine where I did my apprentice writing demanded masculine pen names. But after all these were pulps, and oriented to a masculine readership. It was only irritating: and as soon as I turned to science fiction, the problem disappeared. It didn't get serious until the end of World War II, when suddenly the working mothers' day-care centres closed, and from every quarter of society came the news that woman's place was in the home, that children who had less than constant attention from their very own mothers were doomed to misery and delinquency, and that the greatest joy available to the "natural" woman was the delight of building her man's ego. (There were not enough jobs for returning veterans, until the women went home.)

There was a lot of pressure. One worried: could it be true?

I didn't think so; neither did my returning husband. We were thirties-radical, after all, so what if it was the forties now? But I had started to write during the war, and even he found it embarrassing and uncomfortable to notice that some people thought I was becoming a good writer. Equality, yes, but possible superiority?

Bit by bit, more people began to like my work: ten years later I had much respect, a lot of good

colleagues/friends (men and women) and two divorces. Complicated. One worried. And kept trying to work things out. (1973: still trying.)

"Exile from Space" was published in 1956 in *Fantastic Universe* magazine. A year later the first man-made satellites would go up, and there would be much speech-making about the space age, and "science has caught up with science fiction."

Actually, science fiction was no longer much preoccupied with space flight as such. We knew that was coming. We were more concerned with areas of lesser certainty, like the survival potential for the human race on or off Earth, the prospects for co-existence between our species and others (terrestrial or otherwise), and the possible/probable directions of our future developments, assuming we had any.

In common with a good many other SF writers, I was particularly interested in examining an area of human experience that was at that time still considered largely outside the realm of "science." Some people called it ESP, some called it "psionics"; but most of those who had any interest at all called it spiritualism. To me it seemed (and seems) to be much more closely related to those equally undefinable but fully accepted phenomena called "hunch" and "intuition" and "creativity" and "empathy" and so forth, than to any assumptions about afterlife or astral planes.

My story "Communication Completed," first published in *Universe* magazine in 1954, was one of many attempts to examine/understand/articulate something about the still only slightly understood area of human experience that is commonly called "vibes" or (ugh) "astral projection" by most young people today. I think the name I like best is the one used by Cleve Backster, the polygraph man who's been finding out how to communicate with plants. He calls it "primary communication."

Several other stories in this book, as well as a novella ("Homecalling," in the book *Daughters of Earth*) and a novel, *The Tomorrow People*, took the explorations in more complex directions. The novel, in particular, examined an idea that continues to intrigue me: that primary communication on a cellular level 1) might be responsible for many instances of "miracle cures," "stigmata," "psychosomatic" diseases, etc., and 2) might, under conscious control, allow a sentient organism to make much greater changes in morphology—so that, for instance, a diffuse individual might be able to exist in "empty space," utilizing radiant energy and that odd hydrogen atom.

"The Shrine of Temptation" appeared in *Fantastic Stories* in 1963, and it was my first attempt to write a story around a cover painting—one of the not uncommon practices in the heyday of the pulp magazines, when batches of four-colour covers for a whole chain of publications were often printed before the actual magazine was made up. Other pulp fields—western, detective, sports, love, war stories, for instance—could often find a story in inventory to suit the cover. But with science fiction and fantasy, where each bit of background was likely to be unique, cover stories were often assigned.

The cover in this case was a jewel-toned representation of the "gateway" in the story. Whether the story classifies as fantasy or science fiction depends, of course, on the extent to which one can accept the idea of non-magical shape-changing. But obviously, that's not what the story was about. It was written at the height of the McCarthy era (Joseph, of course) in the United States, at the time of the Oppenheimer trials, in the depths of look-alike, think-alike, blink-alike conformity-security-togetherness.

People are always saying, "Where did you get those crazy ideas?" But one time a young man said to me, "Growing up in Minnesota in the fifties, the only thing that gave me the idea anything could be different was science fiction."

The story "Peeping Tom" was first published in *Startling Stories* magazine in 1954—before Vietnam, but after Korea.

In the mid-fifties—even after Hiroshima and Nagasaki and Dulles and Joe McCarthy—it was still possible to regard one's sense of taintedness as an American as something remediable. McCarthy, after all, was finally defeated; Korea was over; the Japanese occupation was coming to an end; the International Geophysical Year was about to inaugurate the Space Age.

One could hardly visualize (or elected not to do so) that satellite-launching would become one more

bawdy gambit in the Cold War—that great year of international co-operation would generate a "space race" whose competitive budgets would go up, not to look out at the stars, but to keep the "other side" on earth under surveillance—that repetitive TV-spectacular moonshots would somehow coincide with fresh bombing waves in Indochina. (As I write, there is a change for the better, I guess: Brezhnev's visit to Nixon is edging Cambodian bombing and Watergate out of the headlines.)

In any case, for a few years there, before the Bay of Pigs, and Tonkin Gulf, and the Assassinations, and other unpleasantness, it seemed as though we might start thinking, not about how to avoid destruction, but how to make use of what we had, and all the great things coming.

Collection of three novellas, *Daughters of Earth*, 1969.

The step into space would (of course) bring human beings of all languages, cultures, and colours together in understanding and co-operation.

All sexes too?

In retrospect, it is both bitter and amusing to remember that when "Lady" was first published in *Venture* magazine in 1956, it appeared under the pen name Rose Sharon, because I was involved in a custody suit and was worried about my authorship of a "dirty" story being brought up in court.

Perhaps there was some reason to feel hopeful?

"Auction Pit" is both the oldest and newest piece in this book. It was written in 1946-47, before I thought of myself as a "writer." When I began publishing fiction, that still seemed a quite different thing from being a "poet." I still don't think of myself as a poet, something obviously higher and finer than just a writer. But when I came across it in a yellowed folder two years ago, I thought, if I updated a few images (charm schools, movie magazine, fur "hubbies"), it might still make sense. On second thought, I left them all: the central image, after all, is just as dated. Isn't it?

A good deal of new science fiction in short story form is published in "book magazines" these days. The first venture of that sort in SF, I believe, was Frederik Pohl's *Star* series: "So Proudly We Hail" was written for the first of these, in 1953.

In selecting stories for this volume, I followed a general rule of eliminating anything readily available in print elsewhere (such as the three novellas in *Daughters of Earth*, and my two best-known shorts, "That Only a Mother" and "Dead Center," and then dropping everything I found embarrassing to reread, or (as will happen with SF) impossibly dated. "So Proudly" was a borderline choice.

When I wrote it, *Collier's* magazine was publishing big spreads on space travel based on live symposia at the New York Planetarium. Everyone in the little SF world was confidently awaiting the building of the first space platform. NASA and its sleek promotion campaigns had not yet soured one's simple idealism. Rereading the story in 1973, I found that the counterpoint I thought I was writing when I used the tarnished glory of the "rocket's red glare" as background for the new glory has merged into one ironic theme.

The prospect for those outgoing ships seems rather more remote now, and the question of who will or won't pass the examinations more pressing.

A cover of a mid-1950s issue of John Campbell's magazine  
*Analog*, featuring a story by Futurian James Blish.

"The Deep Down Dragon" was first published in *Galaxy* magazine in 1963. Obviously, the question of the examinations-for-space was already beginning to appear at least a little more complicated.

It is worth noting that the idea of using a projected image as the basis for the test came directly out of the happenstance that I myself was doing just that: this was another assigned story, written around a cover that depicted the opening scene of the "test."

"Whoever You Are" was first published in *Startling* in 1952; it stemmed in part from an editorial by

the late editor of *Astounding/Analog*, John W. Campbell, Jr., discussing the idea of using love as a weapon. The other major ingredient came from Mark Clifton, friend and fellow author, now also dead, who wrote me the story of the little girl who threw the messages over the orphanage wall, as part of a discussion about child-raising and education.

It is probably my own favourite among the stories here.

"Death Is the Penalty" was another one of my early s F stories, published in 1949 by *Astounding*. It is also another of the borderline choices here: the political fury that generated it in the early days of "security" and "classification" has been dulled, perhaps, by familiarity—and perhaps can stand rekindling, as we move towards elimination (perhaps) of some of the weight of classification that has accumulated in the twenty-odd years since?

If it is not quite as bad in Canada as in the United States, perhaps that helps account for why many other things are also a bit more liveable north of the border.

"The Lonely" appeared first in *Worlds of Tomorrow* magazine in 1963. It was another cover assignment, based on a painting of the giant statue of a woman holding a rocket in her lap, seated on an alien-looking plateau: the whole thing fell immediately into the pattern of the matriarchy and the mother-ships background, but I had long since given up on the idea of the long novel—so this one emerged as written long after the period of the voyages.

Selecting a group of one's past stories for a book is a curious experience: all the mysteries one once set out to solve; all the conflicts one tried to resolve; all the unwritten stories one remembers in between the ones in print; all the issues one feels the years in between should somehow have settled.

There are no answers here, I guess, but perhaps what is most needed is more questions?

## **FIFTEEN-A POWER IN THE GHETTO: SWINGING LONDON, SOUR AMERICA, AND "FREE" CANADA**

I WAS A POWER in the literary ghetto.

By the late 1960s I had been editing the SF annuals, the self-proclaimed "best of the year" in science fiction, for over a decade. For four years I had been books editor of *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction* in New York, the literary pacesetter in the North American field. After a stay in England in 1966-67 I was variously acclaimed and reviled as the American prophet of the avant-garde British New Wave movement.

I did not like being a Power. I did not like it when an author who knew I was considering his story for an annual quietly let me know that if I used it, I need not pay for it. I did not like it when another author—feeling mistreated when I failed to use his story in an annual and failed to review his short story collection—wrote me into a TV script as a vicious critic who got her jollies wrecking young writers' careers. I did not even like it much when a good young writer got a long-delayed paperback reprint right after I gave his novel a rave review. Most of all I did not like being booted upstairs out of my "family." The judge and arbiter cannot also be a confidante and drinking buddy, eh?

When I eventually immigrated to Canada, I thought it was because I could no longer accept the realpolitik of being an American citizen. No, I didn't just think so: it was the truth, and nothing but the truth. But not quite the whole truth. Another truth was that I needed to get far enough away from the centres of power to decide what to do with my uncomfortable portion of it.

In 1966-67 I spent most of a year living in London, England. I found a little bedsitter a couple of blocks away from writers Hilary Bailey and Michael Moorcock, in the Notting Hill Gate area. I moved there partly because my daughter Ann was starting at a new school down in the south of England, and partly because I was fascinated with the cultural trends—including free universities—occurring in the country. I was also doing research for my anthology *England Swings SF*. I went for a few months, and wound up staying a good deal longer than I expected.

*You have never read a book like this before, and the next time you read one anything like it, it won't be much like it at all. It's an action-photo, a record of procession in change, a look through the perspex porthole at the momentarily stilled bodies in a scout ship boosting fast and heading out of sight into the multiplex mystery of inner/outer space. I can't tell you where they're going, but maybe that's why I keep wanting to read what they write.*

*The next time someone assembles the work of the writers in this well, "school" is too formal ... and "movement" sounds pretentious ... and British "SF" is ludicrously limiting ... so let's just say the work of these writers and/or others now setting out to work in this way, it will probably have about as much resemblance to this anthology as this one does to any other collection of science fiction, social criticism, surrealism—BEM's, Beats, Beatles, what-have-you—you have ever read or heard before. Meanwhile, I think this trip should be a good one.*

— Judith Merril, "Introduction," *England Swings SF*, 1968

While I was in England, I wrote extensively about something new and different happening in British science fiction. It was a revolution led by J.G. Ballard and including a circle of about twelve writers. A couple of them, such as Thomas Disch and Brian Aldiss, were already established in other genres. Behind the force of this movement were young new writers, and the most dynamic of those was definitely Michael Moorcock.

It was just the time when Michael was transforming a formerly mild science fiction magazine called *Flagship* into what became known as *New Worlds*. This magazine was the publishing thermometer of the trend that was dubbed "the New Wave." In the United States the trend created an intense, incredible controversy.

Science-fiction author Jim Ballard, circa 1965.  
*Courtesy of the Merril estate*

In Britain people either found it of interest or they didn't, but in the States it was heresy on the one hand and wonderful revolution on the other. I was then books editor for *Fantasy & Science Fiction*, and somehow it was widely assumed that I initiated the phrase "New Wave in Science Fiction." In actual fact, I never even used the term.

The New Wave controversy became bitter. There was virtual warfare inside the SF community. While the controversy did not in any way interfere with my work options or my reputation, it was firmly plastered on my forehead. I was the heinous person who had brought the New Wave to the United States. It was a very strange sensation.

Most science fiction that is considered to be distinguished nowadays would have been called New Wave back then. One example of the trend was the film *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), directed by Stanley Kubrick and based loosely on Arthur C. Clarke's 1950 short story "The Sentinel." I returned to New York from London when the movie was first released, and there were simultaneous previews in Washington and New York. Thousands of invitations were sent out to everyone who had anything to do with science fiction and who could make it to one of the cities. I went to the New York showing, on April 1, 1968, at which there were many special appearances simply due to the fact that so many science fiction writers lived in the city.

That original showing was about twenty minutes longer than the version that was later shown commercially, and there was even an intermission about halfway through the film. One of the biggest changes made was to shorten the initial period of pure visuals before there were any words—the "Dawn of Man." This was the part where they showed images of the early tribespeople and so forth. Another scene clipped was when the astronaut was jogging in the centrifuge. In the original the jogging went on for about twice as long, so that it became incredibly boring. You just kept watching this guy jog, and the camera angles would constantly change as the gravitational pull on the ship itself changed.

At intermission time, the audience was absolutely grim. People were saying things like, "What has

Kubrick done to Clarke?" By the end of the film, those determined people who had not already escaped during the intermission were standing up, putting their coats on, and getting ready to leave. I had to get up and stand on my seat so that I could see the last few shots that showed the "star child" in the bubble in space.

That movie taught the audience two things. It showed irrevocably that life on a space station was boring. And it changed the viewer's entire perspective about what is down and what is up.

*England Swings SF, 1968.*

There were only about two people from the SF community who were as excited as I was by the film. One was the writer Samuel Delany, and the other was an editor named Hans Santesson. It seemed like every single other person was appalled at this business of an indeterminate ending and Kubrick's failure to follow the rules of pulp fiction.

More than once, while I was living in London, I became confused by the country's cultural expectations. Hilary and Michael were my touch point whenever something was going wrong. All three of us were living just a couple of blocks from the famous Portobello Road, a tremendous outdoor market which is, among other things, known for its cheap prices.

Time and again I kept finding that the market wasn't really all that cheap for me. Eventually I realized that it was because I kept getting shortchanged. I became aware that people were deliberately unhelpful or unfriendly because I had an American accent. In fact, this was happening in London whenever I tried to get information or directions.

One time I was expecting a shipment from the States by air cargo. I'd been having a tremendous amount of difficulty getting the package. I wasn't sure what airline it had been sent on, but I knew it should have arrived. I called all the different airlines, asking for information, and nobody would help me out. In exasperation, I dragged myself over to see Michael and Hilary, and pleaded for advice. "Why can't I get any information from people?"

They looked at each other and diddled a little bit. Finally, Hilary turned to me and said, "Well, it's probably because you're rude."

"What?" I exclaimed.

"For instance," she continued. "If you want to get information about trains to East Grinstead to go see Annie, you will pick up the phone and dial the railroad. The way to get the information is to say, 'Pardon me. I hope I'm not being any trouble.' They will say, 'Oh no, no. No trouble at all.' You say, 'Well, I, I want to get some information about trains to East Grinstead.' They will say, 'Oh yes, of course. What was it you'd like to know?' You: 'Well, I don't want to be any trouble, but I wonder if you could let me know what trains there are in the morning?' Them: 'Oh, of course, it's no trouble at all ...' and they'll tell you exactly what trains there are in the morning."

Hilary did this endlessly with me, in a number of different scenarios, explaining that for each question, you always start out with, "I hope I'm not taking too much time" or "I don't want to be any trouble." At first I thought she was making fun of me. It couldn't possibly be this extreme. I couldn't quite comprehend that even though a person is speaking to you for the purpose of answering your questions, you had to go through this elaborate process. The whole system of politeness was quite different than it was in the United States.

British science-fiction author and friend Michael Moorcock, London, circa 1967.

*Courtesy of the Merril estate*

In the States, if you want to be polite, you say, "Excuse me. I wonder if you can tell me about the fares and schedules for East Grinstead?" But in England, you had to take everything one step at a time,

and each new question had to be introduced with, "I don't want to be any trouble."

When she was done explaining, I felt miserable, but picked up her phone to try it out. I called one of the airlines and said, "Excuse me, I don't want to be any trouble."

The woman answered, "Oh, no no. You're no trouble at all."

I said, "I know this is stupid of me, but I'm not certain if a package for me was sent on your airline. They didn't tell me what line they sent it on ..."

I went through the whole conversation being every bit as extreme as Hilary had been, and the woman gave me all the information I needed.

Hilary drilled all this home for me, and she didn't stop right there. She continued: "If you're at someone's house, you just stopped in for a visit, and they say, 'Oh, would you like a cup of tea then?' you must say, 'Oh, no, no, no. I don't want to be any trouble.' They say, 'Oh, well do have a cup of tea!' And you must refuse three times. If at the end of the three times, they don't offer it again, they're really glad not to have to make your tea. But if they really want to make something for you, then that's when you can say, 'Oh, well, if it isn't going to be too much trouble.'"

She informed me that I must also say thank you and please at every single opportunity. In the States, people hardly ever say thank you or please. It's indicated with a smile, or a tone of voice. My problems stemmed from the fact that when I first got to England, I was treating the people there like they were American.

Once Hilary explained the politeness markers to me, I realized that it wasn't just my American accent that was causing problems. Still, it did cause trouble for me. I stood out like a sore thumb. My pride was smarting all the time because in the United States I had been sure that I was accentless.

So I began to study the way British people formed their words. I watched their faces and discovered that the big difference between how Americans and Brits spoke was the energetic use of the tongue, lips, and teeth. That made all the difference in sound.

I began speaking energetically when I dealt with people in shops. It was a hoot. My accent didn't resemble any known English accent, but it clearly was not American. People started saying things to me like, "Well, are you from the West Country, then? Or perhaps Ireland?"

I found that when I was trying to buy things at Portobello Market, three things were going on. One was the difference in markers of politeness, another was my American accent, and the third was on the level of cultural context. For example, in the United States or Canada, if you want a quarter-pound of something, you ask for "a quarter-pound." In England you just say "a quarter." I would say "I want a quarter-pound of beef," and they wouldn't understand, they just heard "pound."

Both the American and British codes of politeness, I was to learn, are different from the Canadian code. Canada was halfway between the two extremes. I could get along either way, by negotiating the balancing act carefully. Proper Ontario people still found me a little bit brash if I didn't use the right "thank you" and "please" phrases. The biggest problem in Canada is appearing to be pushy. People found my American manner brash, because I was blunt and stated outright opinions.

In a way, I was lucky to have had the time in England (and to have learned from my mistakes) before I went to Japan a few years later. Everything that is true of the politeness system in England is even more true in Japan. By the time I got to Japan, it was easy for me to make this adjustment. The Japanese have dozens of ways of saying "excuse me" and "thank you." They say "please" with everything. They use these modifiers almost as a way of marking the beginning of a new statement.

One major difference in politeness between Japan and England, however, is that in Japan they always serve you without asking first. They never ask, "Would you like a cup of tea?" It is more like, "Here's the tea."

Little changes that I made in my everyday communication, like learning the politeness rules, made life in England and Japan possible. I realized that formal politeness is much easier to negotiate than the code I had learned in the United States, which is a kind of tightrope act in which you never use formal words but have to be gracious at all times.

Meanwhile, the news about Vietnam was getting worse and worse. My British friends kept saying to



me, "Now that you Americans have taken over the world and we don't have to worry about it any more, what are you going to do with it?"

I had been very much aware of the wickedness of my country for a long time. This was not a sudden discovery on my part. The Vietnam War brought it to a whole new quantitative level. There was something telling in the fact that the particular group of people I knew in Britain were all terribly relieved they were no longer running the world. I was not a bit happy about the idea that my country was now running it, and doing a miserable job. At some point I realized I had to go home and see if there was a revolution I could join. If there wasn't one, I felt strongly that I couldn't go on being an American citizen.

So I went home and ardently looked for a revolution. I kept searching until the Chicago Democratic Convention in 1968. I went to Chicago partly to seek out a revolution, if there was one happening, and partly because my seventeen-year-old daughter Ann and her friends Peter and Martha wanted to go. In New York the kids were the backroom squad with paint stains, the "McCarthy Art Department" who had been silkscreening all the campaign posters and visual propaganda for would-be Democratic presidential nominee Eugene McCarthy.

By then, I was shaken up. I hadn't been able to do any work since getting back home from England. I decided to drive the kids out to Chicago in my station wagon of medium vintage so they could bring their silkscreen equipment. About four or five of them went with me. I was also interested in going because Paul Krastner, editor of *The Realist*, had reported a few issues earlier that the hippies planned to put LSD in the Chicago reservoirs during the convention. I thought, "My god, if that actually happens, I want to be there."

*Daley City, they're calling it, Fort Chicago, and now Prague West. Barbed wire and security checkpoints. Chemical Mace and police clubs; sequin-spangled Humphrey Girls—street-scene Yippies, sleepless, beaded, bandaged, bearded, V-signing clean-for-Geners, earnest smiles and angry eyes; incongruously baby blue bright helmets of Chicago's Finest, and the long slow convoys of army-drab Guards on Lake Shore Drive.*

*The kids I drove out here are a backroom squad, not-so-clean Geners, doing their thing here the way they were doing it in New York, with silkscreen and paint stains, but working on cloth now, block-letter STOP THE WAR posters for delegates to smuggle, folded, into The Hall.*

*The buses and taxis are on strike. The kids tell me, wear your McCarthy button, and any McCarthy-stickered car will stop. What will they do when the miracle doesn't occur? If they get through the plank battle today, nominations will happen tonight, and the mood here is more and more mortuary—a growing feeling that they may even Dump the Hump tonight and Draft Byrdman—if the Kennedy Heir Presumptive doesn't come forward: whoever it is, it won't be McCarthy.*

*If he agrees to a fourth party, they'll get some sleep and get back to work, I guess; and if he doesn't—the SD S is waiting on the corners, and the police make the Yippies look better all the time. Black Chicago growls and glowers and grins in the ghettos (except for the watchers patrolling the Loop: "Go home, sister—no black blood spilled here tonight."), but what happens if the next reporter the cops club down and Mace spray on the ground is Black?*

*From here and now, the batch of books I brought out to review seems remote and pallid.*

This was the Democratic Convention at which Lyndon (Byrdman) Johnson handed over the reins of power to Hubert (the Hump) Humphrey, and the Chicago police clubbed down anti-Vietnam War kids in the streets: Yippies (radicalized hippies), SD S (Students for a Democratic Society), and Eugene McCarthy's (clean-for-Gene) supporters. THE WHOLE WORLD IS WATCHING, the kids shouted into the lenses of the TV camera, and they were close to correct. Nobody who watched it will ever forget it, but decades later only the ones who were in the middle of it still remember the acronyms, the slang, the jokes, and the terror.

I still have my red, silkscreened cloth banner that says "STOP THE WAR," which my kids made with their silkscreen press. These banners were unfurled in the balcony of the convention because the Democratic committee was not allowing McCarthy's people to bring in any literature, or posters. This

was their prize item. There was this one marvellous moment on television when all these young people stood up in the middle of the convention, opened up their banners, and sang "We shall overcome." But that was the only three minutes of the entire week that was anything other than completely horrifying.

I wrote the Daley City piece holed up in a friend's apartment in South Chicago, where I was watching TV in between attempts to do my book review column. When I saw tanks rolling down the streets on the screen, I forgot it was the same day that the Russians were invading Czechoslovakia. I stopped trying to write.

In the end my book review column began:

*Milford, Pa., September:*

*Too remote. The peace plank was defeated, the kids' cloth STOP THE WAR posters made some prime TV time, and all the savagery of the streets up to that point seemed nothing at all beside the film clips the networks (finally aroused) began showing alternately with the Amphitheater Nominations coverage that Wednesday night. The whole world is watching, they chanted in the streets, while Delegates' Ladies aimed cocktail glasses from the windows of the Conrad Hilton at the cops below. Next morning, I phoned Ed Ferman in New York, warned him there'd be no column from me, packed up the typewriter and drove up to Lincoln Park. Later, I drove a Medic team between the hospital station at St. Chris' church on the near North Side, and Michigan Avenue. ("Don't mind her, she's a good kid," the med student said when the student nurse screamed at him: "She's just been gassed. It makes them irritable.")*

I had reached such a level of despair that my conscience demanded I either find a revolution to join NOW, or I would have to get out of the United States—back to Swinging London, maybe. My review column continued:

*For two days, I interviewed medics and patients, and took names and addresses of people there was no time to talk to on the spot. (But no one who wasn't there wants to believe it the way it was; some of the publishers I approached said they'd be glad to do a new science fiction anthology.) And here I am, with the same stack of books, and some more. Some of them are pretty good reading, too. But almost all of them are—remote.*

At the end of the Convention week, the taste of America was sour in all our mouths. I had not found any revolution to join, but I had seen a copy of the *Toronto Anti-Draft Manual*, which was telling people how to come to Canada. I had also learned a great deal about the anti-draft program. We decided to drive back to Milford by way of Toronto—we figured we'd drive home in a free country.

When we came across the border into Windsor, we were elated. If we had been wearing hats we would have been tossing them up and shouting, "Yippee! We're free!"

I phoned an old friend who was living in Toronto, a mathematics professor named Chandler Davis. He had been teaching at the University of Toronto since he got banned from all U.S. universities because he wouldn't sign the loyalty oath. He was happy to hear from me and said, "Sure, come along, all of you. We can put you up."

We stopped to see him and he was eager for news of what had been going on in Chicago and New York. He invited a friend of his to come over, and the friend turned out to be poet Dennis Lee, who was then very much embroiled in starting Rochdale College. Dennis told me all about the plans for Rochdale.

Suddenly I realized, "This is where people who have even more urgent need than I do to leave the States are coming. I should be here too, because I can be of use."

So I signed up with Dennis as a resource person for Rochdale, went home and packed up all my goodies. Shortly after that, I wrote to him.

Nov. 17, 1968 Milford

Dear Dennis:

I think the last delay is now past. I was foolish enough to drive on the Long Island Expressway in a storm, thereby losing car (not that much damage, busted radiator, but unbelievable situation whereby it costs more than the value of the car—unless virtually new—to get towed off the highway for repairs!) which complicated all arrangements. Now have definite arrangements, reservations, etc. Will leave here 6 pm Friday evening, with local friend driving hired trailer. Depending on customs delay, should arrive in Toronto any time after 3 am on Saturday.

If you have not already done so (Chan was going to try to phone you after I phoned him last night), can you send me a formal/proper sort of letter of a sufficiently pompous nature to reassure the customs/immigration people that I am entering Canada as a (staff? faculty? resident?) member of the College, so as to make sure I don't flunk out on your immigration point system? I think anything giving the impression I am Honorably Employed and with Assured Residence will do...???

Sending copy of this to Chan so whatever message you leave there will not need any explaining. See you Saturday—or whenever you get back from wherever you are then

Best, Judy Merril

I returned to Toronto as a landed immigrant. I left the repression in the United States and came to the freedom of Rochdale. Of course, it was months later when I paused to think and realized that truly, in my heart, I had immigrated to Canada.

Rochdale, and Toronto at that particular time, meant different things for different people. I think the best illustration I can give of what it meant for me is something that occurred when I was living in the first apartment I had in Rochdale, which was on the third floor, overlooking Bloor Street.

I had been there only two or three weeks when I got a phone call from Peter Turner (who had been Ann's boyfriend in New York—Ann was, she thought, on her way back to England to register for a psychiatric nursing course. As it turned out, she stayed in Toronto to start the first youth clinic in the city.) He told me he had just gotten his draft notice and wanted to leave the States. He asked if I had room for him. I told him I did.

The day he arrived he was sitting in the living room of the apartment, looking out the window. I was in the back of the living room, and out of the corner of my eye I saw him suddenly jump back, away from the window.

I was surprised, and then I realized what was going on. The taxis in Toronto, or at least the most frequent taxis on Bloor Street, were the same colour and appearance as cop cars in New York. A whole string of them would park or cruise along the street in front of Rochdale. The first couple of days I was in that apartment I did exactly the same thing, because I had taken the precaution of going downstairs, standing out in the street, and realized it was possible to see up into my window.

We had gotten that kind of consciousness in New York, where you would notice what was supposed to be an electric company van parked across the street for several days, and you knew that there was a listening device in there. So every time something that looked like a cop car drove by, I jumped back out of sight of the window, and now Peter was doing it.

I started laughing and said, "Peter, they're taxis."

He sighed with relief

That situation was, in distilled form, the essence of the difference I felt between the Toronto of 1969 and where I had come from; this felt like a free country.

In 1992 I was asked to write an Afterword for a new anthology of Canadian science fiction, *Ark of Ice*:

*Once upon a time, in the shining years of the youth movements, the time of turning on and tuning in, the days of draft dodgers and deserters and Fuller domes, first moon landings, and Whole Earth Catalogues, there was a high rise building in Toronto called Rochdale College: a "free university," student-owned and run, dedicated to a concept of education that had everything*

*to do with learning and almost nothing to do with teaching. The elder members, like me—anyone over 35 was an elder—were not Professors, but "Resource Persons." It was a good place to be, for a while; and of course it lasted only a short while. But for a few years, Rochdale was a moiling boiling collective center for people —artists, social scientists, planners, politicians—trying to create (yes!) a truly new world order, to carve the future to a shape and in a substance better suited to the planet and its humans than the painful present we were experiencing, let alone what we knew of the past.*

Most of the people at Rochdale read science fiction. I came to Rochdale in 1968 from a fairly cushy spot in the world of U.S. science fiction—a world that was just then in the process of exploding out of a dirty-little-genre ghetto into both literary and commercial respectability. I came to Rochdale, and for that matter to Canada, for the same reason I have invested the largest part of my adult life in speculative fiction: I wanted to change the world.

## **SIXTEEN-ROCHDALE COLLEGE: A "WHAT IF" TIME**

DO YOU KNOW How hard it is to write about sex? Or love? If you try to describe either one (whether as pornography or in an artsy/erotic mode) you—well I, at least—just make yourself (myself) sound ridiculous. Writing about Rochdale College after the fact is much the same. There have been five or six books about it, and at least two TV documentaries. I'm not the only one who has failed foolishly.

Yet I must try ... Some of it is clear and simple: Rochdale College came into being as a Noble Experiment initiated by idealistic academics at a time when "free universities" were in. This one was an eighteen-storey high-rise co-op near the University of Toronto. It combined a residence with experiments in restructuring education. Administration, finances, housekeeping, and education were all under the total control of the student body: that is to say, almost everybody in charge was under the age of twenty-five. There were a number of "Affiliates," substructures inside or connected to Rochdale, several of which outlasted the college: the Indian Institute, one of the earliest Native cultural organizations in Canada; a film series run by Reg Hartt, specializing in classic surrealism and cartoons; an experimental theatre group known as Theatre Passe Muraille; a new small independent publisher, the House of Anansi (one of the co-founders was Dennis Lee; its office was on nearby Spadina); and the Coach House Press, located in a back alley off Huron Street, just behind the college.

Judith, after moving to Toronto.  
*Courtesy of the Merrill estate*

I came there as a Resource Person in Writing and Publishing. My salary was my room and board. When asked what exactly a Resource Person did, I usually answered, "Learn to be resourceful enough to live in Rochdale." I loved it.

The year I lived there, and the two more I participated from outside, turned my life and psyche around. It was truly a place, a time, an experience that was far better to have loved and lost than never to have lived at all. I can't describe it any better than I might describe a twenty-five-years-ago loving act of sex, but two things I wrote at the time get some of the feeling.

One was in a letter, dated June 29, 1969:

I am too much involved with Rochdale to be able or willing to give the sort of simplistic semi-descriptions Newsweek, or other such sources, offer. Yes, we are a "dormitory for U. of T(oronto)"—or so thought about 500 U. of T. students who lived here till last month [...] Yes, we are the Drug Palace of North America—or so think hundreds of speed freaks and dealers who come pushing in, and are pushed out. Yes, we are a "free school," "experimental university," "intentional community," "co-operative," student-activist and/or

draft-resistance centre. Yes, we have free love, happy families, virgins, homosexuals, you-name-it. No, we don't have classes in Black Power. Most of the kind of things we do are listed in the Catalogue [...]

The 1969 Rochdale Spring Catalogue was a seventeen-by-twenty-two foldout sheet published by Coach House. I wrote it.

**THE ROCHDALE CURRICULUM:** *Nobody knows exactly how many Education Things are going on here. Seminars come and go before anyone has thought to write them up 1...1 Quantitative measurements will get you nowhere, and all descriptions are on their way to being out of date 1...1*

Still, a college catalogue has to have a curriculum: the catalogue listed seminars in everything from Greek philosophers to revolution, the activities available through the affiliates, and a variety of workshops (chess, and sculpturing, for instance), but the best space went to our specialty, the "Living Laboratories." These included two projects of mine, The Pub(lishing Centre) and the Spaced Out Library. But the central gems of the catalogue were the descriptions of the Governing Council and the Maintenance Squad:

**GOVERNMENTAL AND SOCIETAL DYNAMICS:** *Mon, Wed, Fri, 3:30, Room 202; alternate Wednesdays, 8:30, main lounge. Attendance, 10–100, usually including a quorum (6 out of 12) of the Rochdale Governing Council. (Non-Council members are all, in theory, auditors.) The planned curriculum includes: Fiscal management; Intercorporate relationships; Government by General Manager; Government by discussion; Tourism and immigration; Population dynamics; The microcosm as a state. Spring semester extras, to date: Public Health (making a clinic, er corridor cat-shit control); Donation acceptance techniques (making a library); Security: crime control, police control, firearms control, theft control, vigilante control; Penology in the unstructured society (Is banishment the ultimate punishment or the only available one?); The media—making overexposure pay; Inter-institutional relations—making sociology surveys pay; N-dimensional space-time allocation.*

**HOTEL AND BUILDING MANAGEMENT:** *Andrew Raney, craftsman/ designer in metal work, and brewmaster extraordinary, Director. A continuous seminar and laboratory course with 12 student/instructors under the supervision of Property Manager Raney, plus an indefinite number of specialist, part-time, and temporary participants. An 18-storey high-rise building in downtown Toronto with a hyper-active shifting 24-hour population of 1000 or more has been secured for laboratory facilities. Typical projects include: The Otis Trip—elevator and overworked computer maintenance; Garbage compression and chute clearance; Locksmithing and master key control in an individualistic society; Bulletin board theory and practice; Plumbing for overcrowded Ashrams; Fire alarm suppression; Supplies: theory, distribution, and control—furnishings, cleaning equipment, linens, light-bulbs, etc.; Property management in the co-op and/or communal and/or chaotic society. This course has had notable success with vocational training of philosophy, poli-sci, art, and poetry students.*

*Or, summing up—*

**EDUCATION AT TOCHDALE IS—**

*--happening, in flux, multi-level, unpredictable, dynamic, continuing, many-sided. You discover tomorrow what you learned yesterday. Nothing is extra-curricular.*

*—yours to make, take, find, give, design, improvise. If that sounds like freedom, remember it's also the heaviest load of responsibility you've ever carried. You have to start by learning what it is you want to learn: you may be surprised at the answer. A lot of us have been.*

Right away, given my position of Resource Person in Publishing and Writing, I decided to start things

moving by establishing a learning space. We used two rooms on the second floor of the building which we called the "Pub," short for "Publishing." The Pub contained typewriters, mimeograph equipment, and various pieces of low-tech equipment that could be used for getting whatever was in your head out on paper. Anyone in the building was welcome to use the Pub's resources, which included any knowledge contained in the heads of myself and another resident, poet Victor Coleman. There were also a couple other people who made themselves available.

The first summer at Rochdale was the summer of the first moon landing. It was the perfect time to open up the first version of a science fiction library, which we called the Spaced Out Library. The Rochdale library was nothing more than a collection of books owned by people in the building who were prepared to lend them out knowing that they were going to lose some. The books weren't actually donated to Rochdale. It was understood that they were to be temporary donations. I think I put in the largest number of books, but a lot of other people contributed. The Toronto Public Library System (Harry Campbell was then chief librarian) helped us establish the library by lending us display shelves and giving us information about how to catalogue publications.

The little library opened spectacularly during the first Rochdale Summer Festival in July 1969, held specifically to coincide with the landing on the moon. The festival featured a group of science fiction writers and literary figures who had travelled to Toronto from various places around the world. One of the most notable personalities was Ed Emshwiller, an artist and filmmaker. It was a big event on the night of the moon landing, and it occurred fairly late so as to happen simultaneously with the actual event. Leading up to it we held a seminar with four science fiction writers and four astronomers from the University of Toronto. They discussed the moon landing and its predicted ramifications.

This was a "what if?" time in history. A time of complete change, when fiction—especially science fiction—had an important role to play in questioning the existing social structures. People were rejecting values that had been enforced on them by society or their parents, and were now searching for new values. Young people were travelling across the continent and around the world looking for other ways to live. Rochdale was one of the places they came to from all over North America, Europe, and South America.

The first time any long-haired kid who entered Toronto saw another longhaired kid they would ask, "Where can I crash?"

The answer would always be, "Rochdale."

It was built to accommodate 850 people, and at any one time there were about 650 who were paying rent. By Christmas of the first year we had a population of two thousand, most of them just crashing temporarily. People were even sleeping in closets. There were a lot of problems to deal with, and the people who had to deal with them were the same ones who were living there, trying to sort out their own lives. Of the two thousand people who lived there, only about twenty of us were over the age of thirty-five.

Rochdale had more Michaels than God, but there were four Michaels who were mine: Goldstein, Phillips, Price, and MacDonald. At one time I shared a large apartment with two of them and another person. At another time I shared a smaller apartment with one of the Michaels. In fact, there's only one Michael I never shared an apartment with, and I shared a library with him.

Michael Goldstein was the genius of the maintenance squad at Rochdale. He was about sixteen or seventeen at the time, and a really brilliant kid, totally competent at all things mechanical or electrical. He had not waited to get his draft notice before coming up from the States. His family had backed him entirely—they agreed it was better if he didn't have to run, either psychologically or physically, when the time came. So he came to Rochdale and joined the maintenance squad.

Mike Goldstein was the New York Jewish whiz-kid of Rochdale, and there was something incredibly sweet and innocent about him. This stocky, sturdy sweetness has somehow survived to this day. I don't think he has ever done anything unkind to anybody. Since the Rochdale years, Goldstein has moved out to Vancouver, married a quite interesting young Japanese woman, and had some kids. He became a soil chemist, and removes toxic soil for various companies. He's also into computers in a big

way—owns numbers of them, far more than what he needs for his business, and evangelizes them to people.

Mike Goldstein, Mike Phillips, and I shared one of Rochdale's large suites, which were called Zeus suites. The middle-sized ones were called Aphrodites, and the small ones were not suites, they were communal living arrangements.

Phillips was slim, dark, and intense. He came to Rochdale from Montreal when he was nineteen years old. While he lived there he was rental manager for the entire building, and somehow managed to juggle the incredibly complex rental situation. Somewhere after the middle of the first year, Phillips suddenly decided to leave. His departure from Rochdale was so abrupt that he only had about a week to put down on paper everything that he had been holding in his head. This was essential, so that someone else could take the reigns and the building could continue to operate smoothly.

There was a tremendous sense of betrayal from the community. I don't recall the reasons he left (if I ever even knew them), but I do know that Phillips had a kind of double agenda in life. I don't think he discovered this until he was at Rochdale. He was fascinated by performance, in particular dance, at the same time as he was seriously interested in medicine and psychiatry. For some years after he left Rochdale, Phillips alternated these interests. He would do a year of university and then take six months off and join a dance company. Then he would do another year of university, and take six months off and go abroad somewhere to do some performance. He kept on doing this right through medical school, and eventually become a psychiatrist.

When I saw him last, in the early 1990s, he was on a short trip home from China, where he had spent six or seven years working in a psychiatric institute. Before that he worked at a geriatric/psychiatric facility in Vancouver. When I saw him he had a fairly newly acquired wife and a baby. There was still somehow a kind of purity in this man—the sense of someone who had found a way to live his own life with integrity in a totally corrupt and polluted world.

D.M. (Michael) Price, my third Michael, was a poet and artist. During that Rochdale year he was a little older than the first two Michaels, maybe in his early twenties. He had no money, no job. He was crashing on a mattress in the large cupboard of someone's Zeus suite rent-free. This was fairly common; many people used the cupboards as free bedrooms.

When we decided to open the library there, Price, a devoted reader of science fiction, volunteered to start organizing the collection. We found enough money in the so-called "education budget" to give him free meals at a restaurant that was part of Rochdale, and put him to work. Later on we also gave him a bed in one of the Ashram facilities.

For six months he read his way through all the science fiction books and catalogued them. After that we found a small stipend for him, which was perhaps \$50 or \$100 a month on top of food and board, to work in the library. Then, because he had incredible sums of money to buy records, go to plays occasionally, and date girls, he wasn't nearly as efficient a librarian as he had been before.

Later he too moved out to Vancouver. I don't think he's even writing poetry anymore. For quite some time his preferred two jobs were working in a bookstore and in child-care facilities. He's in a bookstore now on a fairly steady basis. He has also become a fanatical birder.

Mike MacDonald (Mike number four) was certainly not sweet and innocent.

He was considerably older than the others, and not part of the same scene at all. He was originally from New Brunswick, and had maybe one-eighth Native blood. He and I shared an Aphrodite for part of the time I was at Rochdale. MacDonald worked for the Addiction Research Foundation as a sort of undercover man in Rochdale. (He wasn't really undercover because everyone knew what he did, but his job was not at all high-level or visible.) He collected samples of all the street dope, and took it back to Addiction Research for tests, so they could find out what was toxic. Then he would tell the results to people in the drug trade, who came in and out of Rochdale. He also let the Rochdale people know what they shouldn't be fooling with. Mike basically kept Addiction Research, which hardly ever dealt directly with street people, in touch with the street drug scene.

Eventually Mike MacDonald also went out to Vancouver, and he became involved with the Native scene there. Once, when I was out in British Columbia doing a reading tour that took me all over the

province, we travelled together throughout the northern part of the province. I cashed in the air tickets the Canada Council had bought for me and dedicated the money to gas, because Mike had a car and wanted to go up to the same places. We went to Hazelton and Terrace, Prince Rupert and the Queen Charlottes. We covered a lot of territory.

Mike knew Native people in all these places, so it was a really exciting trip. We went to the Haida community in the Charlottes, and it was salmon-smoking time. We went to a cultural centre in Hazelton, where they were doing some work with totem poles. In Terrace he had a close friend named Dora Fitzgerald, who was living there at the time. She was also involved with Native affairs. The three of us spent a fabulous evening at the local bar patronized by mostly Natives, listening to Native country music, and dancing. Mike had total entry wherever we went—he had become accomplished in video work and made a lot of videotapes for Native groups for political purposes.

So those are my four Michaels. Mike MacDonald has by now just about disappeared from my life; when I go out west I can never find him. But when I talk about loves that are lost, the first three Michaels were only ever lost by distance.

At the time (1969), many places called themselves free universities. In most cases this simply meant that students didn't have to pay to go, and that they, rather than a faculty of academics, determined governing policies and educational modes. In the case of Rochdale, the concept was carried even further: various people had combined their talents to put up a high-rise building in which all of this could happen (for a variety of reasons—not all pure and holy).

The fact that we had a dedicated building was wonderful, and Rochdale was one of the more successful attempts at operating an experimental school. But, as in any experimental institution, major problems will arise. There are only two things that can happen with such a large-scale experiment.

First, it can get co-opted by the conventional system. In this case, the mainstream pronounces it "successful," as soon as it stops being an experiment and starts being the status quo. Second, it can fall apart after a little while, because it doesn't have the infrastructure necessary for growth, maybe even survival.

This second situation is indeed what happened with Rochdale: partly because there was confusion in everyone's mind about whether Rochdale was an intentional community, or whether it was a school. I believe it was an effective school, but once you had reached the point where you knew what you wanted to do, and had started to train yourself in it, you had to get out of Rochdale, because you could no longer function there.

After a year or so, I moved into a shared house down on Beverley Street with five or six people, and kept doing some stuff with Rochdale from a distance. By that time I was also active in a group that we had formed specifically to help people who had come up from the States get settled and make their way into Canadian life. We worked directly with, or after, Toronto Anti-Draft, which helped people get up here in the first place.

The Rochdale experiment didn't last so long—after much tribulation it was finally shut down in 1975. The Rochdale building is now a senior citizens' residence, and I, for one, am now a senior citizen. The Space Race fell off the pop charts long before the U.S.–U.S.S.R. war games (and the Soviet Union itself) collapsed, and the liberation generation students of the 1960s and 1970s are now mostly struggling with middle-age middle-class mortgages and migraines. The new youth are addicted to nostalgia instead of novelty, and prefer medieval fantasy to speculative future fiction. The future seems to be on hold.

## **SEVENTEEN-TORONTO TULIPS TRAFFIC AND GRASS: THE LOVE TOKEN OF A TOKEN IMMIGRANT**

*(From a typescript written around 1973; source unknown. It appears to be a draft essay prepared for a proposed book in which Judith Merrill, as an American, would be the "token immigrant".)*



*People here have some pride in where they live! — Kevin Israel MacDonald*

KEVIN IS NINE years old. He lives in Philadelphia. He was talking about Toronto.

He's my grandson. It was the third day of his first visit to Toronto. He had been to "the Ex" (the CNE—the Canadian National Exhibition, held annually in August). He had been to the Island and the Ontario Science Centre and Honest Ed's discount shopping emporium, to Peter's Restaurant, to a grocery store and a laundromat and a branch of the Toronto Public Library. He had been on the ferry, the subway, buses and streetcars, in a taxi, for a walk on Bloor between Manning and Spadina, and in the back of a truck from Bloor to Palmerston, where I was living.

Can you have pride in your home and not know it? If you live in Toronto ...

*Gentle reader, if you are not from Toronto there is no way I can describe City Hall and have you believe it.*

— Duncan Macpherson, 1970

Duncan Macpherson is a great political cartoonist. Great cartoonists are symptomatic of highly complex, sophisticated cultures. *The Toronto Star*, which publishes Macpherson's cartoons, is almost as simplistic/anachronistic as Toronto City Hall (cast and direction, not stage or setting). It is the total-surround of Toronto that produced Macpherson. ("Total-surround" is a well-known contemporary communications phrase that also came out of Toronto.)

*Gentle reader, if you are Toronto-born-and-bred, there is no way I can describe Toronto and have you believe it.*

— Judith Merril, *Token Immigrant*

Toronto is a city of foreigners and immigrants. And students. Like all great cities. (Well, I warned you, this quota status wouldn't be so bad if I could get out of character. This kiss-the-soil-of-the-promised-land enthusiasm is just as embarrassing to me as it is to you, dear Toronto.)

Toronto is one of the great cities of the world. It is cosmopolitan, corrupt, mannerly, creative, historic, innovative, multivalent, gentle, bold, concerned, and exciting. It is Toronto the Good and also Hogtown. It is probably the most active centre of intellectual, artistic, political, educational, and communications ferment in North America today.

Well, I did warn you. I've had a few dismal glimpses into what it used to be like here and what most Canadians still seem to think it's like now. Maybe only us immigrants (and students) know the city I can't tear myself away from. I promised myself I'd never live in a city again, but I'm rediscovering why cities were invented. It begins to make sense to try to clean the place up instead of throwing it away. In Toronto, I even imagine it might be possible. (I was born in New York, so I was born knowing You Can't Fight City Hall. But in Toronto ... ?)

I wasn't born here. I came by choice.

My Toronto is small. It looks something like an egg inside an amoeba.

Depending on the day, the mood, weather, and company, the amoeba contracts or spreads itself out. In an average state of consciousness, the pseudopodia are probably about as far out as they show here. The whole thing exists inside a vast expanse of flat grey housing tracts punctuated by vertical grey-and-glass slabs. The egg (or cell nucleus) changes shape and size only very slowly, and always in the same direction—out—though sometimes irregularly. As shown here, it is about 2.5 miles long and 1.5 miles at its widest point.

If you're better than I am at figuring out the areas of eggs and cities, you now know just how small it is. If not, the dotted subway lines might help. The astonishing thing is how much, or many, it contains (not just the properties—the people and processes).

I don't know how to get official population figures for egg-shaped territories, but they'd probably only confuse the issue, since many people who live in the egg sleep somewhere else, officially. But I'd guess at perhaps a quarter of a million, effective population—not including the thousands and thousands who work in the office buildings, department stores, banks, restaurants, etc., but carry on their real lives in Don Mills or Etobicoke or Mimico or Willowdale.

A simple, if esoteric, calculation would be to take the total number of hotels, hospitals, university residences, ashrams, student co-ops, communes, over-the-store flats, hostels, and missions; add the St. James Town and Ontario Housing Corporation properties; subtract the total space occupied by office buildings, parking lots, department stores, garages, restaurants, government buildings; throw in an unknown factor for museums, lecture halls, laboratories, seminar spaces, research foundations, experimental theatres, boutiques, charitable organizations, churches (since there's no way to tell which ones people work at and which ones they live in); and then remember the side-street and back-alley pockets, everywhere, of five- or eight- or twelve-room houses; consider the combined registration of the University of Toronto, Ryerson Polytechnic, the Ontario College of Education, the Ontario College of Art, and the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education; add Rochdale College. What do you get?

The important thing is not the figure, which could be one hundred thousand, or five hundred thousand for that matter, but the percentages: in this part of town, almost everyone is a student, and probably no less than 75 per cent are immigrants.

The immigrants may be from no further away than Orangeville—or East York. Readjustments from Scarborough are sometimes difficult as from Singapore. The students may be studying philosophy or barbering or medicine or theatre or shorthand or welding or theory of communications (with Marshall McLuhan himself, or at night-school English classes) or just Canada. But most people move out of the nucleus when they stop studying something.

SEPTEMBER 3, 1968

*We drove into Toronto in deepening twilight, en route "home" to Pennsylvania (but not at all sure where home was) after that Very Bad Week in Chicago. There were three embittered young radicals who had been "Clean-for-Gene" McCarthy-liberals a week before, and me. We came of the 401 and drove down into the top of the Yonge Street pseudopod, watching for St. Clair, according to instructions: on our way to talk to an old friend about the idea of moving to Toronto.*

*We saw gardened parks that seemed to have been designed to draw us in off the street. We couldn't really tell if how good it felt was Toronto or just thank-god-not-Chicago! But—strangers, looking for a strange place—what we noticed most of all were clearly legible lit-up street signs—with house number indicators on them yet. Our questions were half-answered already. This was a city for people to live in.*

Just inside the southernmost point on the shell of my egg is the Toronto-Dominion Centre: the veritable symbol of the faceless commerce-warren, endlessly cubicled into office, display, and sales space by day; brilliant, mysterious, and endlessly rewarding after dark. The view from the top at dusk is more than you bargain for: after sunset, when you can bring yourself to look closer at things, you find yourself at every turn revolving in space/time between glass-enclosed inner-case displays of Eskimo sculpture and glassed-in outer-brace frames for white man structures. Gleaming polished sandstone seals inside: shine-surfaced bright-light highways outside.

The block I used to live on, contained by Phoebe, Beverley, Sullivan, and Huron streets, consists of a large parking lot, two and a half streets of co-ops and communes, the Huron Street Hall, and the Toronto RCMP headquarters. On Beverley, all the neat Canada Trust fence-rails were taken down by mutual consent, so that the whole row now shares a long narrow backyard-park. The RC M r

headquarters is about to move. When it does, another big development deal will go up in the dust of the Hall along with the stained-glass windows—unless the "counter-culture" types turn out to be more stubborn than the Chinese families and welfare people who lived there until Canada Trust took over the properties in 1969, painted them all clean grey, repaired the floorboards, and raised the rents \$100 a month.

What remains of the Chinese residential area runs north and south of Dundas to Spadina: bright red-painted houses with tiny front gardens brilliant from spring to fall, lavishly tended and lovingly arranged. Cornflakes and jasmine tea crowd the shelves of the small corner grocery stores; children on errands buy ginger root and Popsicles and Chinese cabbage.

The eggshell curves around Kensington Market: Toronto's inevitable crossbreed of London's Portobello Road and New York's Delancey Street—plus some. It's the "Jewish Market" to one generation of Torontonians and the "Portuguese Market" to another—where you can buy West Indian fruits and vegetables, Romanian candy, Spanish rolls, Dutch cheese, Italian wine grapes, German sausage, fresh Ontario eggs, and fish and poultry. The Portuguese gardens on Augusta are just as lush as the Chinese yards, but more in vegetables than flowers.

The old synagogue at Bellevue Square has been for sale since I first saw it. So is Bathurst United Church, maybe. There's a difference of opinion, as I write, between the "regular" and "experimental" congregations. The building has been functioning for a couple of years now as a community centre and theatre centre. Even the critics have begun to notice that Toronto is a "theatre town," and periodically pay cautious acknowledgement to Toronto Workshop Productions, Factory Theatre Lab, and Theatre Passe Muraille for accomplishments recognized in London or New York by the filmmakers. Eventually, perhaps they will notice how many young talents from New York and London are coming to work with these theatres, and with other groups not yet respectabilized in Toronto, like THOG, at Bathurst United.

Try this on for size: Toronto is where things happen for the first time nowadays. One minor item, probably a world's first, is the special science fiction collection maintained by the municipal public library system. Spaced Out Library (SOL) marks the tip of the Toronto egg for me in so many ways it's hard for me to write about it at all. Too much of dream-come-true, and too much of the paper-concretization of a quarter-century of my own life and work on the shelves and in the file drawers there, and one more old-house-soon-to-be-torn-down.

I have an office in the library. When we were first sorting things out and getting the place set up, during my third year in Toronto, I took a place on Bloor, halfway between SOL and Honest Ed's. Tetsu Yano, a friend from Japan (we translated Japanese science fiction stories into English together), was coming to visit me there, and in preparation I sent him a long letter full of practical and other information. Some places mentioned, like my own apartment, have since changed hands: the area has a lot of mobility, but this is how it was in the summer of 1971:

*When you walk down the street from the library to Honest Ed's, you see people from about four feet tall to six-foot-six—Swedish blond to African purple—speaking in every conceivable accent, and a few completely inconceivable languages, in every style of dress (and undress). Barefoot students in jeans and shorts—the boys as often as not without tops; "WASP" Canadian ladies in dresses to just-below-the-knees and stockings and hats even in August;*

*Indian ladies in saris; the occasional older Korean lady in long pleated skirt and short jacket; young Canadian and American girls in African or Amerindian or just "old-fashioned" costumes—or in hot pants or miniskirts. The Greek men tend to be very sleek and trim in tight-fitting trousers and open-necked fitted shirts; the West Indians often in bright-striped cotton slacks or tailored lacy shirts.*

(The word "ethnic" fascinated me: Canadians—well, Torontonians, at least—seem to use it so wonderfully impartially to grace all manifestations of non-Anglo-Saxon-non-French culture—but one senses so much more of envy than of patronage in its use—as if they think English/French/"Canadian" means acultural—non-ethos?)

I read somewhere that there are fifty-four foreign-language newspapers published in Toronto, in twenty-eight different alphabets. I think every one of them is read by someone within three blocks of Bloor and Bathurst. I think if you stood on the corner there long enough, you might hear every language of the world spoken.

It's the way I used to think of London and Tokyo. I still think of Hong Kong this way: I haven't been there. Washington D.C. has just as many languages and nationalities (or New York), but everyone tries to look and sound all-American.

I also warned Mr. Yano about the high cost of alcohol and tobacco here, and of books and magazines (astronomical by Japanese standards): 10 to 50 per cent higher than the United States. But entertainment is very cheap—I don't really think about it as a "budget item" at all, because there is always more going on (theatre, films, lectures, galleries, happenings, everything) that I want to go to that is free or just nominal-charge, than I have time for. Except when I get a spell of listening to a lot of jazz, and then the cost is basically just doing a lot more eating-and-drinking than usual.

I was trying to pre-see the city through Tetsu Yano's eyes. When he got here, early in September, I re-saw a lot, and saw some other things for the first time. It happened when my grandsons came too, but of course Mr. Yano's eyes were more-different.

*One:* The Ex is really great. I had been there the year before with Toronto friends who steered me past the kitsch to the worthwhile things. Now Mr. Yano and I just wandered and got more and more euphoric. Never mind the ridiculous exhibits—it was the life, the colour, the colours and the people. Maybe the greatest County Fair on Earth? It was his first night here. "I am a Torontonion forever," he kept saying in the sleepy Bathurst streetcar afterwards.

*Two:* The reason why I do so little eating-and-drinking-out (except when gripped by my cyclic music addiction): the sad fact is, with liquor licences so hard for restaurants to get, you need a sky-high budget to have wine or beer with good food; very few places that serve drink take any trouble with the quality of their food.

*Three:* The reasons why I do eat out a lot: the really phenomenal number and variety of excellent restaurants in the two to three dollar dinner class. (Mr. Yano learned to say "thank you" in at least eight or nine languages before he left.)

*Four:* The wedding parties in High Park. Pink, red, violet, green, yellow, orange and blue parties of bridesmaids floating alongside black and frosted bride and groom along the paths and bridges of the formal gardens. (It just happened I had never been to High Park on a summer Saturday afternoon before.)

*Five:* "Welcome to Canada!" is almost a Toronto reflex: at least in smiles and small friendly acts, and usually in just those words. In all the encounters in restaurants, subways, parks, museums, everywhere (fifty? eighty? two hundred?) where my friend's desire to learn made him explain that he was newly-from Japan, I recall only one (shocking! by that time) instance in which there was no immediate welcoming response.

Of course, this had happened to me, too: but I had somewhat forgotten, and never did get quite as much response; neither the people I met, nor I myself, were as aware of my new-foreignness.

*Six:* No two people in Toronto seem to speak in exactly the same accent, whether "ethnics" or "Canadians." Welcome to Canada! comes in every shape and colour.

The first time I went to England, I discovered quickly the wisdom of (whoever) first said the "British and Americans are divided by a common language." (At one point, I was going to compile a U.K.–U.S. / U.S.–U.K. dictionary.) The problem is even more complex here, because even if the Americans are not, the British are very conscious of the differences. But Canadians—"nationalist" types even more than others—seem convinced it's just the same here as below the border (except of course less glamorous, poorer, and much more mannerly) and Americans coming up (myself once too) tend to believe they're in Cleveland-North. The dislocation in the first few weeks here is considerable—and for most of us a disorientation of pure delight. But some are so geared to uptight, the only answer is to go back. (Or to

Montreal.)

JULY 1971

*The Immigrant (me; this time not Token) is being interviewed for a CBC program on "intellectual refugees." The interviewer is a brilliant and perceptive man, warm, easy to talk to. I use up a lot of tape. I get a bit lyrical.*

*[...] I can remember when I was a kid in high school in New York—more than thirty years ago—feeling great swells of pride and patriotism and—and joy. I remember thinking (it was true then): New York is the cleanest big city in the world, and I remember saying contemptuous snobbish things like, about South America: Well you know the way they change presidents is by assassinating them! And the awareness—the absolute thrilling awareness of living in a country, which I lost and which I am now regaining. I feel this way in Canada ... in Toronto. I don't know Canada. I don't think it feels the same in Quebec.*

Later, the interviewer said, laughing (but I'm not so sure how serious he wasn't): "Watch out, Judy. If you don't learn to be a little bit more critical, we might not let you become a citizen."

Well, I am critical, of course. I came here to Rochdale, not Rosedale. I was critical of Rochdale, too: and totally, enthusiastically, immoderately committed to it. I like to think of this apparent contradiction as "romantic realism"; but not everybody understands the concept of Pollyanna as Revolutionary. I was a "resource person" at Rochdale for ten months and two weeks. I wouldn't have missed it for anything in the world. I couldn't have stayed another week: the commitment was just too much for flesh and bone.

I'm still a member of Rochdale. More extraordinary, I still live in Toronto. I moved out of New York twenty years ago, when it was just beginning to go bad, and after that the longest time I spent in any city larger than five thousand, until I came here, was nine months (in London, you understand, where you can breathe again).

I get a lot of questions about Toronto. The word is getting around here and there (I mean, there: outside of Canada, of course) that Toronto is where it's at. People who don't like where they're at, want to know more. It's not easy to know what to tell them. Except a few, a certain kind of writer/artist/thinker/scientist/ explorer/world-citizen, for whom Toronto is exactly where it's at, all considerations of economics, politics, or circumstances notwithstanding. There are no jobs, of course: but for anyone with the resources to qualify for immigration without a job, life in the fertile egg can be very inexpensive. Students and artists and poets and musicians and dreamers in the Beverley and Sullivan area are sharing nine-ten-eleven-room houses at a basic monthly room and board cost of \$ 50 to \$100 each. And the combination of intellectual resources, artistic ferment, cosmopolitan colour, psychic freedom, communications, and contact is unique. (You can go by foot anywhere inside the egg—it's so together.)

Clockwise eastward along the eggshell: a wave to Casa Loma in the first northward extension of the amoeba, where I now live—but is the fresher air really worth being so far up? Then just above the "border," the Toronto Free Clinic at Spadina and Dupont. Another old house, which served as a student co-op/ commune and "external Rochdale" unit in between commercial life as a funeral parlour and public service use as the clinic.

We honestly didn't know, when we put out that Rochdale Spring Catalogue, whether there would be a Rochdale for people to come to in the fall. As I write, no one knows if it will be there by the time this book is published. But the important thing was, and is, the fact that it happened at all. It couldn't have happened anywhere else: not for the first time. Not anywhere in the United States, or in England, Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland, or Japan. Not in Montreal, Vancouver, Ottawa, Calgary, Fredericton, St John's, Halifax ...

And one intriguing question continues to be: how much of the rest of where it's at in Toronto is Rochdale spin-off? People drawn to Rochdale who couldn't get it together there, but found a few others to work with and rented a house somewhere? People who came to Rochdale in formlessness or desperation or freakout, found out what they wanted, and went off to it?

Or, how much of what's happening now is simply coming out of the same nexus, matrix, atmosphere, vibes, that also produced the potential for Rochdale? (The theatre groups ... the church happenings ... the Ontario College of Art ... Environment-environment ... A Space ... Toronto Dance Workshop ... Stop Spadina ... the Huron Street Hall ... the Baldwin Photo Gallery ... the U. of T. Daycare Centre ... Toronto Free Clinic ... The Electric Gallery ... *Guerilla* and *Cabal* ... New Press ... the new jazz renaissance ... the Spaced Out Library ... Vulture Press ... SEED alternative high school ... CBC's "Bringing Back the Future" ... St. Lawrence Centre Town Hall's public affairs meetings. Some of these began at Rochdale, some were/are staffed by Rochdale dropouts, some seemed to arise independently, around the same time.)

Which came first, the Rochdale chicken or my egg?

Almost across the street from Rochdale there's a complete inversion: the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE)—beautiful spaces, wall-to-wall secretaries, even the janitors (they say) are Ph.D.s. I am inclined to dismiss it. But maybe the parallel is not just incidental? Counterpart manifestations, perhaps, of the same (however reluctant) new fertility?

If you think about it, where else is so much tax money so well wasted? The *Bonaventure* aircraft carrier? Chemical warfare? Scarborough expressway?

Try to figure out how to educate kids for a future not one of us can anticipate and for which the schools today offer little better preparation than my own did. Where do you start? At OISE, as at Rochdale, ninety-nine starts out of a hundred are false ones. At OISE, of course, they have to keep records of all that money, so they know what they've tried that didn't work, and maybe why, and maybe what to try next. At Rochdale, they have to keep trying the same inexpensive things over and over, because they have no money and no records—and sometimes something works after a while. Which way is worse?

Draw a line of tennis ball stitching down my egg: call it yin/yang. Try to figure out what to put where as you go through the massive egg-within-an-egg that is the University of Toronto complex.

Maybe U. of T. is not remarkable at all. Maybe the handful of genuinely bright creative students I know who think they're learning something there are duplicated in other multiversities, or are just deluded. James Eayrs, whom I respect, and who should know better than I, says the environmental aesthetic/intellectual experience is not to be found there. But I look at the little blacked-in building blocks on my map, and remember: a Sonny Greenwich concert at Hart House ... the Chicago Seven lawyer Bill Kunstler pouring a pitcher of water on someone's head at Convocation Hall ... the old Red White and Black office in the Student Activity Centre (SAC) building basement at 44 St. George Street ... the lab where I saw how they analyse the moon-dust ... Vosnesensky reading his poetry in the Medical Arts Building, and Auden showing up to read a translation ... the philosophy prof on the Interdisciplinary Studies Committee, explaining the relationships of physics, sound, and thought with the hand-crafted clockwork mechanisms and souped-up electronic organ in his office ... the Daycare Centre Occupation ... the Madness Conference being planned as I write ... and all the rest of the complex, which multiplies itself through interaction with the university ... Carl Sagan talking about extraterrestrial life in the old grey Ontario College of Education ... Buckminster Fuller and Marshall McLuhan celebrating Irish Arts (!) at St Mike's ... the Clarke Institute of Psychiatry ... the Royal Ontario Museum ... Metro Reference Library ... the Planetarium ... the rock benefit one lovely summer day on the green circle in front of Hart House ... talking science fiction with priests at St Mike's in front of a fireplace in a panelled room ... the Festival of Underground Theatre in 1970 ...

St. Joseph's College School cafeteria: endless coffees with Sister Bede Sullivan (talking filmmaking) and the writer/broadcaster Stanley Burke (talking politics) and Munoz and Mike Malone and Dave Dexter (not talking, dreaming music), after the sunrise memorial service outside the legislative building at Queen's Park for the four students killed at Kent State College ...

SEED School: maybe it could have happened without the time and space university people made available the first year to high-school students who wanted to learn something—maybe—or—

Maybe what happens in and around the university generates some of all the rest: maybe, again, it is

just further manifestation of the Toronto ferment.

APRIL 1970

*A street corner barely inside French Montreal, waiting for the friend I drove down with. He's late, when you're driving in Montreal, you're usually late, unless you're a Montreal driver.*

*The snow has been melting, first real thaw. All the litter of last November lies on the streets, soaked and redried, sooted and crumpled. I open afresh pack of cigarettes, remove the cellophane, look around for a receptacle, see none, crumple film and foil into my pocket to dispose of later. And realize*

*I have become a Torontonian.*

*In New York, Boston, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, Cleveland, Orlando, Newark, Washington, Denver, Austin, St. Louis, London, Paris, Brussels, I might have looked for the trash can; in many smaller towns, I might have even held onto the wad till I found one. But in Toronto, where no one (outside of Rochdale) had ever told me not to litter, and no signs matter, public trash bins are few and far between—in sixteen months in Toronto, I had somehow become a person who put the cellophane in my pocket to throw out at home.*

*The trip to Montreal was my first visit away from Toronto since I arrived with fresh immigrant status, eight thousand books and magazines, fifteen file drawers of jumbled junk and value, a couple of mattresses, sheets and blankets, pots and dishes, in November 1968. Driving back into Toronto this time, we left the 401 at Yonge and laughed in unison—home again!—as we took our place in the minuet of stately traffic merging south.*

For some reason, most of the people I've come to know in Toronto— who live any distance outside the nucleus are either in the pseudopod that reaches due west to enclose High Park and Gothic Avenue, or in the one that runs north along Yonge and Avenue Road to Eglinton, the thick base of which includes Yonge and Bay, Yorkville, the galleries and filmmakers of Hazelton and Avenue Road. A little farther north, there's the pop radio station CHUM, and overall, a significant portion of my church connections in Toronto—which constitute an overwhelmingly significant portion of my church connections anywhere.

The main reasons for this rises from the complex of motives that brought me driving down Yonge Street, watching the lit-up street signs for St. Clair, that first time in September 1968. When I decided to leave what had been my country, I was in no danger of enforced military or penal service, but rather of taking up arms myself against the enforcers. I will never know with absolute certainty whether some Greater Ethic might not have been served by doing just that. I only know that from the instant of awareness of gleeful relish at the prospect of cop-killing, I could no longer live with myself in the United States.

One of the many reasons for Toronto in particular was the large number of young war resisters coming here: the idea that it might be less "copping-out" if I went where I could be of some use to others alienated for the same basic reasons, but with less resources or options than I had. In this connection, Rochdale was an inadvertent perfect choice that first year, when the street grapevines all led to 341 Bloor West.

When Rochdale's hospitality became strained, Red White and Black was organized late in 1969, as a reception and reorientation service, to provide for immediate physical necessities and an anchor through that first period of dislocation, the time of discovering that it is another country. Through RW&B, and later CARM (Committee to Aid Refugees from Militarism), I came into close contact with more church people than I'd known even casually in all my life before.

Meetings with Canon Maurice Wilkinson, Gordon Stewart, and Gerald Loweth at the Canadian Council of Churches office on St. Clair Avenue: the always somehow unexpected juxtapositions of compassion, practicality, and high humour.

—More meetings (the Interfaith Committee for Draft-Age Immigrants) at Jim Young's Glebe Road Church: and the monstrous Christmas dinner mounted there one year by the Voice of Women.

Rabbi Abraham Feinberg—again and again—whenever we needed someone.

The whole roster of Toronto denominations who turned out for the Queen's Park Memorial Service after Kent State: the passion and human dignity of those who spoke.

But not all the sudden clergy in my life came out of one bag. Edgar Bull (who also came to Queen's Park) I met first in his church, St. Thomas' Anglican, on Huron behind Rochdale. Someone had told me, "It's a good place to be when things are too uptight—good vibes—and the door's always open." Not only that, but when the pastor saw me coming in, he made sure to welcome me, without pressing me to worship.

St Thomas', Trinity, Avenue Road, Bathurst, the Fred Victor Mission, the Unitarians—all of these have opened themselves to the people of the city, in different ways, but as one in not demanding a farthing of ideological repayment.

Ann Pohl, Judith's second daughter, at age eighteen,  
shortly after they arrived in Toronto, 1968.  
*Courtesy of the Merrill estate*

These are the places I happen to know. I am sure there are many others in Toronto. I am almost as sure they exist in other cities—the churches are changing, along with the rest of society. But my experience of church people like this, before Toronto, was measured on less than the fingers of one hand.

FEB. 14, 1970

*My daughter's wedding at the Unitarian Church ... everyone gets a balloon ... the music is a tape pre-*

*pared by an audio freak of theirs, the music they like ... the ceremony is one they wrote themselves, saying only what they mean to say to each other and the world ... guests in their party-best, everything from morning coat to dayglo orange plastic overalls ... Alan's grandfather has come from his midwest farmhouse to be at his deserter-son's wedding! Neither Ann nor Alan belong to any church, but the minister is a man they know and care for, Al Fowlie, whose aid and advice from his position on the staff of Addiction Research Foundation helped form and foster the Rochdale Clinic, where Ann and Alan met each other. A happy wedding. A happy place to have it.*

MAY 4, 1970

*A camp forty miles outside Toronto, at the conference called to form the Interfaith Committee for Draft-Age Immigrants. This is my first meeting with many of the people I will be calling upon time after time for aid.*

*Red White and Black, together with a mixed bag of young Canadian "street" and "youth" workers, is trying to find a good place for a reception, information, and activities centre for transient youth—Canadian and immigrant. We've found a cheap rundown hall on Huron, a perfect place, but Canada Trust is doubtful about renting to us: maybe some Respectable Church backing can help. They seem interested.*

*About five, we break up and start back to town, and get our first outside news of the day. Four students have been killed at a state college in Ohio. There is going to be a lot of work for the new committee.*

MAY 9, 1970: "CITY IS FOR PEOPLE DAY" IN TORONTO

*A day of booths and music and communication in Nathan Phillips Square had been officially proclaimed by Mayor William Dennison weeks earlier as a final compromise between the campaigners for a "Leave Your Car at Home Week" (with a downtown mall closed to traffic) and the appalled response of City*

*Hall's Old Guard. A bad bargain, but we were getting set to make the most of it—except that*



*May 4 came before May 9.*

*There's a solid mass of flesh jammed onto the sidewalk in front of the U.S. Consulate—hands linked, some smiling, a line of Metro police prevents them from spreading out into the street ... occasionally the mass opens up a crack, we can distinguish arm-banded May Fourth Movement students, shiny-eyed Maoists. The mixture under compression is an explosion waiting to happen.*

*Across the street, the Vietnam Mobilization marshals a highly disciplined picket line on the east sidewalk, behind another linked-hands line of Metro cops, not only smiling, but joking. Plenty of space there, placards parading in an endless oval, a good Torontonion demonstration—five hundred people or more.*

*Some forty-five hundred more people are either packed into the mob on the Consulate sidewalk or with us on the median. The traffic flows freely up and down the Avenue.*

*On the median, there is a Sunday spring parade mood. We walk up and down, find friends, join small groups singing folk songs on the grass, watch left and right, the orderly procession to the east, the even tighter-packed crowd to the west. A flag is burned, cops charge in, put the fire out, red ink is splashed—who? Can't see the faces. We look nervously for reassurances from each other.*

*We are Americans, exiles, dodgers, deserters, political/cultural/social/psychological/ethical refugees ... traitors? We are not alone on the median, there are Canadians too, quiet sympathizers, angry humans, who feel the same need to be in this place at this time—but no desire—maybe an anti-need—to join the "activists" on the west sidewalk, and for us, a somehow un-invited feeling about the picket line on the east.*

*We are the aid-group members, writers of letters to editors, anti-war joiners, the nucleus, receivers of midnight phone calls—I just got in from Detroit, someone gave me your number in Buffalo, is there a place to crash? Bill just got busted, we're getting evicted, I took Al down to the Clarke, can you give them some groceries? Tom is freaking out, can you ... Almost all of "us" are there.*

*Four students have been killed by the Ohio National Guard at Kent State. Six students have been killed in a free-fire zone by Mississippi storm-troopers at Jackson State. We all knew it was coming: since Chicago, since the Panther shootout in L.A., since the Pentagon, from the beginning the growing grim awareness that it would come to this. What now? What are we doing here?*

*Walking on the mall. Politely staying off the streets. Traffic keeps flowing, the roads roll. We're no longer Americans, not yet Canadians, roots torn, futures unknown, not in the mob, not the ordered picket line, greeting each other with glances left and right. We who have formed a habit of the word revolution, make little jokes, hum songs, grow sad, swap gossip, look again nervously to left and right ...*

*Is killing a pig better than killing a commie? Basically, "we" are the ones who couldn't kill for peace. Now we climb on the ledge bordering the brilliant blossoming tulips to see what's going on across the southbound traffic strip. The roads keep rolling. Something is happening—deep crowd-throat noises!*

*They're burning a flag. For an instant, I see faces that I know—Canadian student-activists. Why do they want to burn that flag? I want to, but I lost my right to such symbolic fire when I crossed the border north. American flags should be burned in America, by Americans.*

*I wanted a vigil at the Consulate, with armbands of black, not red, inside, during work hours, mourning Americans come to the piece of ground inside Toronto that is America, to heap our ashes of grief and shame. These student-warriors should be at Queen's Park or in Ottawa, telling their government to stop: stop the magnesium and nickel, the oil and water, message-passing, piously neutral aid that keeps the slaughter-machine going. Stop! Before it happens here.*

*It won't happen here. I teeter on the inside ledge of the flower bed, not quite wide enough to stand on securely, straining to see over heads balanced on tiptoe on the further ledge. Something is happening. The traffic's stopped. Happening here? What? I can't see ...*

*I have to see—and then it hits me, as I look back and forth along the tulip bed: we are all straining to see, and yet (Oh Canada! Oh Toronto-the-Good!) all teetering on the ledges, the spaced tulips perfectly intact and undisturbed between our two ledge-fulls ... It can't happen here*

...

*The horses!*

Can't happen here? It did. But it didn't. Ninety-three arrests, no injuries reported. Two serious aftermaths:

1) *The tulips*. No editorial rehash failed to mention the battered tulips. But none of them explained what happened: maybe no one noticed, because the reporters and photographers were all concentrating on the action with the horses—just like us. The tulips were still okay until the horses rode up on the sidewalk in front of the Consulate to push people off into the street. That's when we forgot to tiptoe and pushed forward: right afterwards, the horses pushed the people who had been on the sidewalk off the street onto the median—that's when they jumped up on the ledges without thinking about the tulips. The horses were marvellously well trained: I watched a hoof start to come down on someone's foot and lift it again before it could do any injury. The tulips on University Avenue died because hundreds of miles away, police and militia were killing children—and the well-mannered police of Toronto used their well-trained horses to keep the street clear for traffic while protecting the Consulate of the child-killers.

2) *The mayor*. The newspapers of Monday, May 11, described it as "Anti-War Riot ... The Fury of Dissent ... Clash with Police ... Three Hours of Violence ... Downtown Toronto Chase ... " Most of this was reaction to, or justifiable by, the run through downtown streets after the demo was broken up, where several hundreds each of athletic exhilarated kids and motorcycle cops between them succeeded in smashing a bunch of windows and heads, and overturning a lot of ashcans and ideas. Eleven days after the event, Mayor William Dennison told a dinner meeting of the Engineering Institute of Canada, "I have been trying to educate American hippies and others in the etiquette of big-city life here." What he actually taught us was something entirely new to Americans who had grown up knowing that "You can't fight City Hall" was not only tried-and-true, but also included every vested authority right up through the White House.

We found out, in Canada, that you could do it legally and quite non-violently.

By Tuesday, May 15, we began to think the worst was over. The first court hearings had been held; bail money had been raised; fifteen lawyers had formed a volunteer defence team; apparently there had been no serious injuries. Ron Haggart wrote the first of several columns in the *Toronto Telegram* that began to set the public record of reportage straight. Police Chief Harold Adamson issued a statement withdrawing his own earlier imputations—promptly picked up by Mayor Dennison—of "instigation" by U.S. organizers. Only thirteen of the ninety-three arrested turned out to be U.S. citizens, and almost all of those were landed immigrants. The "mystery buses" parked near City Hall turned out to be regular Saturday sightseeing tours from Buffalo. (One load of Eastern Star ladies was doing City Hall through the excitement.) "U.S. citizens in Toronto," said the police chief, "do not appear to be the leaders who caused the problem Saturday."

All week the papers were full of retractions and modifications of the absurd riot-expanding first coverage. The only thing we were still worried about, in Toronto, aside from a couple of possible deportations, was the unhappy potential of the new confrontation-seeking May Fourth Movement group to create difficulties for new immigrants through a false identification with the anti-war movement.

So right. And so wrong. Early next week, back to business, I went to see the rental manager about the Huron Street Hall (now likely to be more needed than ever). No more reservations: flat-out negative. They couldn't possibly rent to a group connected with "violent demonstrations." He understood RW & B had not promoted the "riot," but after all he had the newspapers and the mayor to consider—something about "corporate image."

Canon Wilkinson said he would phone Canada Trust. It might have helped, but the next day the *Star* had a banner headline in red splashed across page 1: "Dennison Warns U.S. Deserters against Violent Protests."

*The Globe and Mail* was more restrained: "Keep Your Pet Hates away from Canada, Mayor Tells U.S. Exiles" was the page 5 head. The *Telly* dredged up a weekend item: "Student-Imported Riots Criticized by Stanfield," which continued, "Young Americans should not import violent methods of dissent to Canada or try to form a sort of government here, Conservative leader Robert Stanfield said."

It was no longer a question of such comparative luxuries as a reception centre. People who had offered housing and help to newcomers in the past were getting uneasy. Simple survival was at issue now: slated for goats, we could no longer try to play at sheep.

We called a press conference for the next day. The St. Lawrence Centre gave us the time normally slotted for its Town Hall meetings. We asked the mayor—he was busy. The media newspeople came; and afterwards the mayor phoned and asked us to a meeting at his office.

We went to call on Mr. Dennison and spent an hour of mutual non-communication. The reporters waited outside eagerly. Next day the mayor issued a statement backing down—sort of—and made another speech. The *Star* had an item, "Mayor Steps down on Draft Dodgers," and the following morning's *Globe* said: "Welfare Brings Hippies from U.S., Mayor Says." That was the one where he explained he was trying to educate the American hippies. But it didn't matter. The letters to the editor had been piling up. The press had made a complete switch. We had been able to present a strong case forcefully, with evidence and reason on our side—and the press and public had listened.

Canada Trust decided to rent us the hall.

When Ontario's premier Bill Davis stopped the Spadina Expressway from being built through the heart of the city, after a vigorous urban grassroots protest movement against the highway, the only surprise was who did it, and the style he did it with: I knew by then that Toronto was the place where shortsighted self-interest and bureaucratic death wish can be stopped.

When ten thousand students converged on the U.S. Consulate in November 1971 to protest nuclear testing at Amchitka in the Aleutian Islands, there were no arrests, there was no undue police action, and University Avenue was closed to traffic.

Gentle reader, if none of this seems at all extraordinary to you—you must have grown up in Toronto. Can a person have pride in her home and not know it?

I keep hearing about the "Canadian identity." Most of what I hear sounds like some kind of treasure hunt: if we invest everything we've got in the search, maybe we can inherit someone else's lost or abandoned gold. It's a con-game, friend, and a particularly dangerous one. "Ethnicity" is one of the identifiable Canadian traits, a kind of hanging-loose that most hung-up cultures envy.

I remember a little item in the paper: a school trustee in a Toronto suburb—I wish I remembered who and where, to honour him—indignantly rejected a proposal for a daily salute to the flag in the public schools, pointing out that the two countries he knew of where that type of patriotism was common—Nazi Germany and the United States—were not examples to be followed.

"Identity" is not a uniform, or even necessary-uniformity. It's what you are. From outside, it's what you show: the characteristics that identify. Does Trudeau have an identity? Diefenbaker? Montreal? Eskimos? Calgary? Banff? Victoria? The Prairies? The ROM? CBC?

If I were in the middle of, let's say, the Indian Ocean, with no program title or announcer's name or station-break to guide me, I believe I could tell a CBC radio broadcast from any British, U.S., Australian, or probably other Canadian offering, no matter which accent the CBC program happened to have. CBC-Radio has a distinctive and unmistakable personality: it hangs loose. If I say non-commercial or non-professional, probably no one will understand that I mean to praise: so I'm back to people. CBC voices may sound British- or French-accented or U.S. or Maritime or Albertan or Upper Canada College: but they sound like people, instead of announcers or experts or entertainers, or other kinds of media-machines.

I have this notion that anyone in Canada—in Yellowknife in the far North or Cabbagetown in Toronto—if they have something they want to say badly enough, can get to say it on the CBC. CBC-Radio is open: in style, structure, and subject. Maybe CBC-Radio is the "Canadian identity" ...

One reason I want to be a Canadian citizen is that it seems the closest I can come, in a foolish world,

to being a world citizen. Perhaps the reason I put up with Toronto's foul climate, smelly air, unshovelled snow, grey flatness, is that it comes as close as I can get to a World City, and that, for me, perhaps more than any other part of Canada, it represents the national open and hang-loose and people images.

## **EIGHTEEN-LIVING AND WORKING IN THE TORONTO CULTURAL SCENE**

I CAME TO CANADA with the draft dodgers because I could no longer be a U.S. citizen. As for hopes and dreams, I had none. When I arrived, I had no intention of staying forever, Toronto was to be the "in-between" place where I would figure out what I really wanted to do with my new, un-American life.

Due to the political situation in the United States, several public figures had recently left and outwardly renounced their citizenship. The most outstanding example was a guy named Garry Davis, who declared himself the first Citizen of the World and invited other people to join him. Basically, that's what I wanted to do.

Garry Davis was profoundly influenced by his experience as a U.S. bomber pilot over Europe in World War II. His father was Myer Davis, the society band leader, so before the war Garry grew up expecting to be a song and dance man, and he did indeed become a Broadway actor. After the war he heard about an American who went back to Europe to help rebuild after the destruction, and he decided to go to France to help out.

In France in 1948, at age twenty-six and within a few months of his arrival, he renounced his U.S. citizenship. He was objecting to a world that, he said, in the absence of an international government, was "a naked anarchy." In a "statement of renunciation," he declared, "I no longer find it compatible with my inner convictions to contribute to this anarchy, and thus be a party to the inevitable annihilation of our civilization, by remaining solely loyal to one of these sovereign nation-states."

At the time the United Nations was about to hold a session in Paris and the president of France declared the land around the meeting place, the Palais de Chaillot, to be, at least temporarily, "international territory." When Garry hit Paris after coming north from the small town where he had carried out his act of renunciation, he was left with no papers of any kind—a citizen of nowhere.

So Garry went and sat on the steps of the Palais and declared himself a citizen of the world. He demanded that the United Nations convene a constitutional convention and establish a world government so that he could have a citizenship. This stand garnered enormous public response, and worldwide media attention focused on Garry. Strangers set up a little pup tent for him and restaurants sent food. Prominent personalities, including Albert Einstein, Albert Camus, Albert Schweitzer, and Richard Wright, gave him their support. Eventually the French government got nervous and grabbed Garry off the steps of the Palais and took him back "to France" and threw him in jail. A big crowd followed them to the jail and demanded his release. Eventually he was. For the rest of his time in France, Garry went around wearing his worn-out old U.S. air force uniform. If he had to have it cleaned, he didn't go out. That was his identity. He was trained for the stage, so he carried this whole thing off very well.

In the United States we heard about Garry Davis, but it was through mocking newspapers articles. In Europe, and every other part of the world that had suffered serious damage in the war, the story was of greater significance. Garry started getting thousands of pieces of mail and postcards from Europe, Asia, and Africa. People wanted to join what he was doing, and his response was always: "I am not a leader. I have no organization for you to join. If you like what I'm doing, figure out what you should be doing."

In 1949, though, Garry founded the International Registry of World Citizens in Paris. Over 750,000 individuals in 150 countries signed up for world citizenship. After a year and a couple of months in France, he returned to the United States—still without a passport and official status. It seemed to me he somewhat compromised his principles by allowing himself to get into the United States in an underhanded way—the authorities temporarily cleared the airport's customs hall and walked him through.

I was very excited about this guy, and when I eventually met up with him at a science fiction

convention he was somewhere in between Garry Davis the Icon and Garry Davis the Song and Dance Man. I saw him flip several times between the two personalities, as if he were possessed. When he became the icon he would grow about two inches in size, and his entire personality was different. But during the period when I associated most closely with him he was definitely back in the song and dance man phase. He appeared on Broadway in "Bless You All" (1950) and "Stalag 17" (1953-54). He wanted to write a book about his experiences in Europe, to be based on books of clippings—articles published about him—and statements he had written. He asked me to work with him on it, and I was curious about the job.

Judith and the dragon, during the CBC Radio and TVP years, Toronto, circa 1982.  
*Courtesy of the Merrill estate*

But I was interested in writing a book about the idea of world citizen, and Garry wanted it to be a book about an adventurer, something that he thought would make good reading and sell. Our collaboration lasted only a few weeks.

In the meantime we were in New York one afternoon, along with the writer Richard McKenna, who had done some science fiction before he wrote *The Sand Pebbles*, for which he is best known. Garry was telling us about some of his experiences, and when we made a trip downtown to the 42nd Street area he said, "I can show you photographs of what happened."

He led us to the offices of World Wide Photos, which was part of some larger media conglomerate. When we inquired about the accessibility of the material he wanted he was told he would have to make an appointment to view them. Something about the pieces of paper and bureaucratic procedures triggered Garry. McKenna and I watched him grow two inches, turn around, and walk back out the office door. He waved to us, turned a corner, and walked down to the end of the corridor, where he found another door and went through it. We followed and found ourselves in the file room. Two women working there came over, looked at him for a moment, and said, "Yes? What can we do for you?"

They dug out all the pictures of him that they had on file. We looked at them and Garry pondered the matter of getting copies made. We left. Garry retreated his two inches. It was a startling experience. How did he know where to go? How did these women know that they should give him whatever he wanted? Had I been alone with Gary, I would have misdoubted what I saw and heard, but McKenna saw and heard the same things I did.

Anyhow, it was a rich and agonizing experience trying to work with him. After that period he decided to establish an increasingly bureaucratic World Government, and the organization he founded in 1954, the World Service Authority, still exists. His book was eventually published, in 1961: *The World Is My Country* (for some reason the title of the U.K. edition is different: *My Country Is the World: The Adventures of a World Citizen*). Garry also printed passports and money. None of it was illegal, it said exactly what it was, and everything was signed by Garry as First Secretary of The World Government of World Citizens.

The last time I saw him, he had become a guy who was living his own legend entirely—selling passports and handing out World Money—but he could no longer grow two inches.

In 1968 I also thought that what I wanted was to become a World Citizen. In order to do that, I had to locate myself somewhere I didn't mind staying, because once I renounced my U.S. citizenship I would no longer have a passport or any other legal documents. I wouldn't be allowed to travel anymore. While I was still in the United States I thought there was no city in North America that was liveable, and that I would have to tramp back to Europe to find myself a city I could actually live in.

My daughters were grown up enough to be on their own, and I wasn't married ... so many possibilities! I love cities, and I gradually realized that Toronto was a city I could actually live in. The realization happened slowly, over the first year I was here. At first, I was totally involved with Rochdale, and wasn't thinking about the future at all.

After a little while I discovered that I was irritated at not being able to vote. This was exciting,

because for several years in the States I had been absolutely unwilling to vote. At one point I thought to myself, "I guess that means I have to get Canadian citizenship and a passport."

It was about as close as I could get to being a Citizen of the World without having to make that the focus of my entire life. Meanwhile, I could do a lot in Toronto that would make my time worthwhile.

Artistically, in 1968-69, I was not doing anything in particular. I had been editing anthologies for about twelve years, and was really tired of doing them. I thought I wanted to open up more time for writing fiction, but when I did open it up, I wasn't writing. It took me a surprising number of years to realize that I didn't really want to write fiction anymore.

I got involved quite early on writing documentaries for CBC- Radio, and discovered that I absolutely loved writing for radio. For the first time in my life I could incorporate all the "what if?" questions I wanted into my work. All my speculations could be made into direct statements. I know that I could do this partly because I was working in Canada rather than the United States, but mostly I think it was that during the conservatism of the 1940s and 1950s, direct dissonance was simply not possible. For example, in the earlier years, when science fiction writers were dealing with issues like telepathy and special abilities, writing about them directly (as I did at one time in a magazine editorial) was to exclaim to the world, "I am a crackpot." Speculating about them in fiction, however, excited a huge amount of interest. This was true about any idea that was not conservative and conventional at that time.

During the 1960s there was a change in our cultural environment. It was liberating to suddenly discover that I did not have to dress up my ideas in costumes and put them on stage sets behind the guise of fictional stories. People would listen if I just presented my ideas by saying, "This is what could happen. This is how things might be."

Like everything else that ever happened to me (my first pulp story, my first science fiction story, my first anthology, the anthology series ...) the CBC opportunity arose because someone came to me and asked, "Will you do this?" And then they wouldn't let my inexperience answer for me. In this case, sometime around 1971, a writer named Robert Zend, a very unusual man, called me to ask if I would do a segment on an *Ideas* radio program he was producing. The show was about contemporary myths, which I had already written about. I found the subject intriguing. He wanted a twenty-minute segment from me in which I would connect familiar, conventional myths with modern experiences. (For instance, twisting the old myth about twenty-league boots to make it a metaphor for air travel.)

Through that initial Zend experience, I met some of the people involved with *Ideas*, and after that first show, I kept being invited to do more. The first shows I actually did on my own were for *Kaleidoscope*, a children's program, which had some overlap in personnel. After a while I started getting assignments that were mostly speculative in nature. It was through doing those documentaries for *Ideas* that it finally dawned on me that I really didn't want to write fiction any more.

The *Ideas* department, at that particular time, was an exciting place to hang out. They didn't really have an executive producer—poet Phyllis Webb filled that role from 1967 to 1969, but she had since returned to the West Coast. The whole department worked very much as a co-operative. The *Ideas* office was like a twenty-four-hour-a-day seminar. People would drop in and pitch program topics, or talk about the show they were working on, and everybody contributed to everybody else's concepts. It was like a constant jam session. I was completely and utterly involved in it for a period of about three years.

I did one five-hour series, which we eventually cut down to four, called "How to Face Doomsday without Really Dying." It was about ecology, overpopulation, pollution, and the whole host of problems that people were talking about at the time. It happened that at the time I was doing the series, Toronto was planning to have a World Science Fiction Convention (WorldCon). There were going to be a lot of science fiction people in town, so I had been asked to plan a program for the convention.

A whole afternoon was set aside for a major seminar including Isaac Asimov, John Brunner, Fred Pohl, Katherine MacLean, and somebody else (maybe me). Each writer took one aspect of the ecology issue, made predictions and discussed the subject, and then there was a panel discussion afterwards. The seminar ended up being about three hours long. We taped the entire thing, and it formed the starting point

for the Doomsday series. Later we taped interviews with some of the authors in groups of two or three. Then other authors, including Samuel Delany, listened to the tapes and commented on them.

One of the most curiously interesting things I learned during that process was something Richard Rohmer said to me. At the time he was a right-wing writer who had just published his first science fiction novel, *Ultimatum* (1973). I asked him if he thought we were moving towards a world government. He responded, "Yes. It has already started. The multinational corporations are already organizing a world government that has nothing to do with national governments at all."

Each show in the Doomsday series hit on a different topic. For example, the last one was called: "Is There Intelligent Life on Earth?" I used different kinds of music in each one—a lot of Beatles stuff, mainly from "Sergeant Pepper" and a little bit from "Yellow Submarine."

A little later, the idea of doing follow-up commentaries for *Dr. Who* episodes came from a TvOntario producer who was stuck with putting out the show. She taught some part-time courses at a community college and had been around TVO for quite a while. *Dr. Who* was probably TVO's lowest-budget item, but because it got the rights from the BBC the channel needed to add an extra element to it so that they could fill out a half-hour time slot. BBC content was usually a little shorter than TVO's because, although BBC didn't have commercials either, the British didn't operate on the precise time constraints of North American television. There was anywhere from three to eight minutes left over to fill.

At the time, TVO was promoting itself as the educational television channel. Before me, they had another guy, who was a futurist, doing little extros during which he talked about whatever the show had been about. This allowed them to say, "Another learning experience from TVO" at the end of each episode. However, my predecessor suddenly decided to move back to Hawaii, where he had come from. The producer phoned to ask me if I would take over at the beginning of the summer, just when I was packing to go off to teach at Wesleyan University in Connecticut for the season.

Fred visiting Toronto in 1978. From left: Ann, Tobias, Fred, and Judy.  
*Walter Weary*

I responded, "You mean you want an audition?"

She answered, "No. I've already seen you

on talk shows, and I know you're good. I know all about your work. You can do it. You know everything that you need to know. I want you to do these extros."

I said, "Well, I've never worked for television before."

"That's all right. Nothing to it."

I said, "But I'm going to be away all summer."

"That's okay," she said. "I'm going to be away in August, too. We'll start production right after Labour Day. In the meantime, I'll send the twenty-six shows to your office so that when you get back in the middle of August, you can take a look at them. When I get back, we'll figure out what we're going to do. Don't worry, the season doesn't start until the third week of September."

She offered me a sum of money that sounded like a lot at the time. It was, in fact, peanuts for television. But compared to the freelance writer's life and CBC-Radio payments, it seemed like a pretty good deal.

I watched all the shows, and learned how to write and produce the mini-documentaries under pressure for a month and a half at the beginning of the season. We had a mobile unit and together we would decide where to film, depending on the nature of the show—on a street, in a warehouse, etc. It was a lot of fun.

We had a ball that first year, and for most of the second year. Then during the second year my producer left and I got a different producer, and the third year yet another. This third producer, instead of being one of the old trusting types (all of whom they were easing out), was a young untrusting one whom they were easing in. He was very ambitious, and decided we needed a studio setup. He made us use

ChromaKey, wanted me to dress up in costumes, and edited all our scripts to the exact second.

We did a few good shows that year, but it was a lot more work. I decided I would need to get a hell of a lot more money to keep doing it the way he wanted. They responded, "You're absolutely right. You should be getting twice as much, but we just had another budget cut. I think we'll do without the extros altogether."

That was that for my career as a *Dr. Who* specialist.

A year or so after the Spaced Out Library began at Rochdale College, maybe even less than that, the library was closed. Rochdale had run out of education money. There never was much, but the financial situation eventually became desperate. By that time I had moved out (I was still active in Rochdale but I was no longer living there), and I wound up having to reclaim and find a place for those of my things that were still there. I was sharing a house with five or six other people. When I brought all my books home, my tiny room was completely filled with them. They were climbing the walls up to the ceiling all around me. I fell asleep at night waiting for the books to topple onto me. I figured I should sell them, but it seemed wrong to sell them off one by one, so I tried to find a place that would buy them as a collection. The offers I got were so ridiculously small compared to my estimation of the collection's value that I didn't even want to consider them.

Then Harry Campbell of the Toronto Public Library came along. He had heard I wanted to dispose of my collection, and suggested I give them to the library system so that they could start a special science fiction collection. It seemed the perfect solution. In 1970 the Spaced Out Library became an official part of the Toronto Public Library with my donation of some five thousand books and periodicals. In return Harry wrote into the deed of gift that I was to have office space in the collection for my entire life. Over the years this has surely added up to more value than I could ever possibly have gotten from selling them. And in the city's hands the Spaced Out Library grew to become, in John Robert Colombo's words, "the world's largest public collection of such literature." Its mandate is to collect everything published in its subject areas. By 1987 the holdings totalled 35,146, and growing. Later, in 1992, the library changed the name of the collection, against my wishes, to the Merrill Collection of Science Fiction, Speculation and Fantasy.

This addition to the public library system suited me fine. The decision to donate my books was, I thought, a wise and practical move, in the spirit of its tiny Rochdale incarnation. Some years later, I found myself forced to fight against the stripping-down and cutting back politics of the times and stand up for free library privileges. An article I wrote on the issue was published in 1994 in *Quill & Quire*, the Canadian book industry magazine.

#### HERE'S THE BEEF: WHERE'S THE BOOK?

*An alarming erosion of Free Public Library services is taking place across Canada. This is of course fuelled by municipal budget-cutting; but it is shaped by the kind of thinking that is replacing the job of "Chief Librarian" with a "C.E.O.," while schools of Library science are renamed "Information Sciences." Meantime, Library Boards are installing user fees, but finding money in their curtailed budgets to hire Management Consultants to teach them Marketing Strategies for dealing with "customers" who used to be "borrowers" or "patrons."*

Photo of Judith cut out and pasted against an old futuristic cityscape, as part of an article entitled "Future Woman," circa 1982.

*Origin unknown, courtesy of the Merrill estate*

*The concept of the free library in North America began about a hundred and twenty years ago with private charitable ventures. Today most free libraries are in public systems controlled by office-holders and bureaucrats; and all too many vote-hungry politicians have fallen prey to a mindless "downsizing" frenzy that cannot distinguish between a budget deficit and imminent*



*cultural/social bankruptcy.*

*The Big Business response to economic recession is to increase profits by automation—replacing employees with electronics. "Customer service," for instance, becomes pre-taped answers to a limited number of questions accessible only from push-button telephones. This may make some kind of short-sighted sense for companies interested in increasing immediate profits at any cost.*

*But libraries?*

*Take Toronto. (Not because it's unique; I live here, it's the system I know best.) In 1991, the full-time staff in the Toronto Public Library's (TPL) branches numbered about 400. It has now been cut (by attrition, they will assure you, not layoffs) to 326. Part-time staff reductions are as great or greater. I believe they hope to lose another 20 full-timers by the end of 1995 through early retirements and at least that much again by "voluntary separations" (departures with not-so-golden handshakes).*

*The TPL Board is now studying a "Strategic Agenda" for the next ten years; its main goal is set forth as the provision of "cost-effective, convenient access to accurate, in-depth information and library materials—through implementation of the electronic library and continuous innovation in delivery service."*

*Did you hear the word BOOKS anywhere there?*

*TPL apparently dislikes old books, and they feel their two internationally acclaimed specialty collections—the Osborne (rare children's books) and the Merrill (science fiction and fantasy)—are "growing too fast." They've been talking about restricting purchases to new books and limiting donations. They want all acquisitions to be made through one central department.*

*The Writers' Union of Canada is concerned. The health of a literary community is inextricably linked to the health of public library systems. It was in local public libraries that most of us, readers, writers and publishers and editors as well, first experienced the full spell of the magic of books. And we think free public libraries should be as much about literature as about information.*

*Most writers use computers and we think public access to the info-net is a good thing. I happen to be a science fiction writer, and I think the info-net is great! But I also know that the highly sophisticated kind of artificial intelligence needed to replace a good librarian is (if ever possible) many years in the future. Replacing librarians with keyboards today or ten years from now is not going to lead to healthy libraries, increased literacy, or a good prognosis for Canadian culture. It is going to lead to shorter hours, less programming, fewer books—and less publishing, because without library sales, very few companies will be able to print anything but best-sellers.*

*"Freedom to Read" means more than just no-censorship. Free public libraries are not the place to trim municipal deficits.*

*In the interests of cultural-environment protection, the Writers' Union has established a national Libraries Committee, charged with surveying the extent of the damage so far (across the country, not just in Toronto), and determining the best means of preventing further erosion.*

*The Writers' Union hopes other concerned organizations will join us in this effort*

One of the significant things about Rochdale, and indeed that whole period of time in history, was the "do-your-own-thing" aspect of the institution and political scene. People were following their own stars, as it were. This had a great effect on me and my notion of what a utopian social reality might be like.

The people I found most interesting were, by and large, the ones who were doing things—whether it was getting into heavier drugs, more postmodern art, or intense Canadian nationalism—that I would never consider getting involved with. It was great to be there with them, rubbing up against all the energy. For example, it was fashionable at the time for people like Margaret Atwood (I use her symbolically, I'm really talking about a whole bunch of writers) to put forth the idea that Canadian nationalism was not anti-Americanism. Throughout the entire decades of the 1970s it was a popular thing to be a nationalist and to explore the Canadian identity through one's art.

I did not want to be a Canadian nationalist, I did not even want to see nationalism increase in Canada. I feel that, to the extent that I am a Canadian nationalist, I am so because of my anti-American tendencies. Interestingly, that sentiment is the same one that keeps me from being a whole-hearted Canadian nationalist. When I left the United States, nationalism had reached the status of religion. I would even say that nationalism had become the new American religion. My anti-nationalist sentiment extended to "Canadian" science fiction. I have never specifically been interested in what might be called Canadian science fiction, except maybe in connection with the Spaced Out Library, the Writers' Union of Canada, and my extreme pleasure at being a "free" citizen when I first emigrated, here. But much later, in 1985, Ellen Godfrey at Press Porcupine asked me if I would do an anthology of Canadian science fiction. Although I had quit doing anthologies some years earlier, at that particular point in time I felt compelled to pull one together.

The Spaced Out Library's first home on St. George Street, Toronto.  
From left: Doris Mehegan, Judith, and David Aylward, Toronto, circa 1971.  
*Courtesy of the Merrill estate*

I also thought it would be an opportune moment to start an incarnation of the Hydra North club because there were just enough exciting people around, and just enough happening. I suppose there was a bit of a nationalist motivation, or at least something similar to it in the sense that I was eager to see more stuff being done here. I felt that the anthology *Tesseracts* would encourage that. I expected that we were going to have to look backwards to move forward and involve established writers like Margaret Laurence and Marian Engel to help sell it. It turned out, much to my surprise, that we didn't need them as far as content went, and we didn't even need them to help sell the collection.

To be completely honest, there is little "Canadian science fiction." There are a lot of Canadian science fiction writers, and a lot of them are good, but almost all of them are trying to be as American as possible, because that's where the money is.

Science fiction has become a money field. There are individual authors who are still writing in the genre because they like exciting ideas, and there are individuals who write it from one political view or another. But most of what is labelled science fiction, which includes fantasy and horror, doesn't interest me at all. Some of it I find appalling. A large number of people who might have been good writers are corrupted by the relatively easy money, which is what happens whenever large sums of money are available.

This commercialization of the genre is not something I wish to rail against. I would never discourage writers from cashing in on the benefits of their writing, unless I think he or she is a really fine writer whose work is about to be undermined. Even then my advice would be: "Be aware that the financial temptation is strong, and make your mind up about whether or not you want to succumb to it."

## **NINETEEN-JAPAN FUTURE PROBABLE**

DURING MY EARLY YEARS in Toronto, one of the most memorable things that happened to me was the time I spent in Japan. I went there for the first time on an invitation to participate in the International Science Fiction Symposium, which was to be held as part of the 1970 World Expo. SF people were attending from the States, Canada, England, and the Soviet Union. The initial attraction was that I could imagine no other likelihood of meeting Soviet writers.

Originally they expected the symposium to be part of the World Fair, and to get some funding from it. However, that particular year's Expo wasn't making any money, so the symposium organizers wound up doing everything themselves. They held the first two days in Tokyo, the next day in Nagoya, and the last day at a resort near Kyoto. There were sessions in the morning and afternoon, and then in the early evening, one Japanese, one Russian, and one English-speaking person would each make a prepared speech.

There were interpreters, but they were not high-class interpreters. The best ones were all tied up at Expo, and the symposium's interpreters were the leftovers. They had no problem when a Japanese person made a formal speech—they could translate it into English and Russian without much difficulty. They had hardly any problems when either Russian or English speakers made formal speeches—they could translate fluidly into the other two languages. However, as soon as the speeches were over and general discussion began, particularly when the Japanese people spoke, a tremendous argument would go on at the interpreters' table. Finding adequate translations was a difficult process. Sometimes the speaker would get involved, and chastise them for being wrong.

This was fascinating. The Japanese translators made up a large portion of the people who were attending the symposium, so I started to strike up conversations about the process. I became interested in how the language a person speaks influences how they think. We all started to hang out regularly—they all spoke some English—in local bars and restaurants.

Bit by bit, I began to get clues as to what was going on. The Japanese had no written language until about fifteen hundred years ago. They borrowed, or adopted, the Chinese characters, made some changes to them, and began using them for Japanese. Therefore, each character had an underlying Chinese meaning, and a Chinese sound. Anybody who reads Cantonese, Mandarin, or Japanese can read all of those languages. They can't pronounce the characters, except in their own language, but all of the written information is there.

The Japanese sound that went with a character meant something entirely different. The result was that every character acquired a double meaning. The more formal written language had an enormous amount of portmanteau words, puns, and double meanings that were layered on top of each other. The more literary or literate a person is, the more levels of meaning they will incorporate into their written language.

As a result of my increasing fascination with the language, I wound up going back to Japan two years later, in 1972, to do some team translation.

We were working out a method of translating from Japanese to English that would keep the cultural subtexts. It was a complicated process. I did not know any Japanese, but learned to read simple characters. I'm good at learning syntax, and within a short time I understood how the Japanese language was put together. I'm not nearly as good at learning vocabulary, but I could generally figure out a great deal by looking at the larger context of a story.

Since I knew comparatively little of their language, the translators had to explain, one by one, the meaning of things such as the more complex Chinese characters. One translator explained these characters to me by comparing them to a *Feroshki*, a piece of cloth that was folded on the diagonal, turned into a sack bag, and used to carry things. Each stroke in the characters has its own meaning; you unwrapped the characters stroke by stroke and thus arrived at its total meaning. They were painstakingly unwrapping these *Feroshki* for me, and explaining all the overtones. This linguistic structure seemed much more complex than the linearity of an alphabetic language.

The way you write the strokes has meaning too, like a signature. Calligraphy is arguably the most significant way in which Japanese people express their individuality. Each person's way of making characters is absolutely unique, and can be very much admired by other people. However, this uniqueness doesn't change the actual meaning of the word.

I had a Kanji (Chinese character) dictionary, which demonstrated that characters were composed of radicals, like roots. Each stroke in a character has a meaning that may or may not be its central meaning. The central one is surrounded by others of lesser importance. In any given character, a stroke may just be a little corner of the character, and the amount of weight on it varies with the shape of the character.

Our team translated four Japanese science fiction stories into English. Our process represented an attempt to avoid the way translation was almost always done before: a native Japanese speaker who knew English would write a draft, and then a native English speaker would rewrite it. After those two completely distinct steps, the original Japanese story would have been reformulated into an unrecognizably westernized story. The translators read English sensitively, but they could not write it as well. When they did it with me, for instance, they would provide a direct translation for something and it

would almost always contain at least one wrong word that would throw off my understanding of the text. In order to avoid these problems, our team developed a complicated process. We were trying to avoid the misuse of English. Together we created a draft English version of a section. Then I would rewrite it so that it expressed what I thought the original text was saying, and after that I would show the result to the translators. They would read my draft and tell me where the meaning was not exactly right. When they wanted something changed, we would have an entire discussion about why it wasn't right, but they wouldn't try to tell me how to rewrite it. Each draft got better and better, and in this way, we got some really good translations.

Unfortunately, our elaborate technique was not commercially practical because of the length of time it took to do each story. It was a start, though. What ended up happening after I left was that a number of English-speaking people who knew Japanese started working with the original team. They used a modified system of translation, which meant that the process went faster, but they were still getting good translations. However, these faster translations were still done directly, not through the multi-stage process we developed.

During that second visit to Japan, I also did a lot of interviews with New Left students, linguists, and assorted interesting people. I had set up a contract with *Ideas* to do a program before heading off. The CB c didn't specify how long it should be so I ended up putting together a ten-hour series that I called "Japan Future Probable." The title of my *Ideas* show came from the fact that in the Japanese language there is no future indicative tense.

What English translators of Japanese call the Japanese future tense is really a subjunctive. You cannot directly say that something will happen. You can say it should happen, you will make it happen, or it will probably happen—depending on the context in which you use the verb. The only way to be definite about the occurrence of an event is to use the past tense alongside the word tomorrow. Basically, in Japanese, in order to express an event that will happen in the future, you must use the present or even past tense (that is, this happens tomorrow or even this happened tomorrow). In this way people know that the event will definitely occur.

Japanese locates time with adverbs, and the verb tenses simply indicate the relative probability of an event's occurrence. The whole idea that there is no future certainty in the culture fascinated me. It seemed to me that everything about the actual, pragmatic culture, and the physical realities of day-to-day life, reflected this cultural facet, including the crowdedness and the incredibly uncertain climate in which tornadoes, typhoons, and earthquakes are expected. I'm talking about real Japanese people's culture, not the Americanized stuff you hear about like temples, shrines, and Zen. These social factors are inseparable from the language itself.

Another example of how the culture influences the language appears in the many different ways of saying thank you. You can say "*aregato*," which simply means "thank you." But rarely do people just say that. They say "*domo aregato*," which means "thanks a lot." People also sometimes just say "*demo*," even though the literal translation is "a lot." To indicate informality, you might say "*demo, demo*." And if you are being quite formal and want to express serious thanks, as in "I thank you," in Japanese you would say "*aregato mash*"—where you add an honorific verb of moderate intensity. If you want to go all out and say "thank you so much," you would say "*aregato gotsei mashta*," because "mashta" is past tense, and "gotsei" is the honorific root. Therefore, the very strongest possible thank you is "*domo aregato gotsei mashta*."

Also, the slower you say something, the more emphasis you're giving the statement. When people speak casually among friends, they tend to speak Japanese very fast. This is called "rude conversation." That is not meant to be a criticism, as it would have been in England; it is a way of describing how you talk to friends.

When I was learning the syntax, my knowledge confirmed what I had already suspected. Japanese was a matrix, as opposed to linear, language. I got so excited about this discovery because I had been doing a lot of thinking about the transition our Western society was undergoing in the change from what I had identified as a kind of linearity to a matrix-layered thinking process.

## TWENTY-THE WHOLE WORLD IS WATCHING: CONSIDERING THE NOTIONS OF PRIVACY AND PUBLICITY

*(An early draft of an unpublished essay written around 1975.)*

There comes a time in the affairs of human beings when it becomes necessary to reconsider conceptual basics and redefine terms of reference.

We are living in such a time. Big Brother HAL sees all, knows all, studies lip movements, thought movements, REMS, student movements, bowel movements everywhere: spins them through computer relays to map presidential campaigns, market analyses, and Buckminster Fuller's "World Game."

A "classical age," as Samuel Delany describes it: a time of myth-making. Or like the commercials would say, a New Dimension of Living.

Some of the new words and concepts are already familiar: global, pluralistic, multimedia, mosaic, planetary, interdisciplinary, relativity, quantum-leap, ecology, synergy, matrix, multiplex, and lots more. That's not to say the words are meaningful to most of us yet. (Maybe a lot of them aren't meaningful at all, except to describe transitory quanta.) But we are, perhaps, approaching reformations by exercising new semantic structures.

I want to put forward another (hopefully) quantum-jumping word: publicity.

Publicity is a quality/quantity roughly opposite to privacy.

The whole world is watching!

You watch.

*Beyond the Barriers of Space and Time*, an anthology edited by Judith in 1954.  
It was released the same year in the U.K. under the title *Human?*.

You watched Chicago '68, Biafra, Vietnam. You watched Nixon in China and maybe (how old are you?) Oppenheimer in D.C. (1954). You watched Jackie Kennedy mourn, and *This Is Your Life* and Mamie Van Doren and *Laugh-In* and the Moon landings. You saw Lee Harvey Oswald and Bobby Kennedy die, and students riot, and Bengalis starve. You've watched breakfasts and birthdays and floods and heat waves and typhoons and tea parties.

Publicity also has to do with such contemporary phenomena as computer credit information, traffic jams, housing developments, the "welfare state," the "population explosion," communes, nudity, the drug culture, religious revivals, TV, holography, automated libraries, universal literacy, Public Information Officers, Public Relations Experts, advertising and market analysis, "corporate public image," promotion campaigns, international money crises, balance-of-trade figures, environment-and-pollution control, weather satellites, atomic testing, PCB and Strontium-90 percentages—and lots more. If you can extract the common essence of these phenomena, you know roughly what I'm talking about.

Who's watching you? (Have you ever watched yourself, watching yourself?)

How important do you have to get to start being watched?

In 1952 the U.S. government had a dossier on me because I was the author of a science fiction novel about atomic warfare, and I lived in a "sensitive" area where Joe McCarthy was doing a lot of investigating.

When Arthur H. Bremer was arrested for shooting George Wallace, it turned out the Canadian police had a photo of him because he'd been standing in the wrong part of a public gathering when Dick Nixon went calling on Pierre Trudeau in Ottawa.

Crime prevention? Security? Invasion of privacy? Well ... It is routine humanism/liberalism nowadays to deplore, or actively oppose, the collection and computerization (other kinds of storage systems don't seem to upset liberal ethics as much) of biographical data and personal (financial, sexual, political, etc.)

information for commercial or political purposes.

The motives for this opposition are many and varied and mostly honourable—but not always well-considered. Take, for instance, the objection that much of the "information" is misinformation, hastily secured by ill-trained or corrupt investigators. The same people who protest misinformation in the computer files usually object even more vigorously to any increase in surveillance efficiency.

If you don't happen to think that national security or credit card systems or even law-n-order are good enough reasons for being watched and weighed into the computer, what about heroin control, automobile licensing, gun registration? What do you think about the prevention of airplane hijackings, assassination attempts, political kidnappings? How about Medicare, weather prediction and modification, famine prevention, flood control and pollution warnings?

One or more of these you'd probably like to see handled intelligently and efficiently. And at the present level of population and realpolitik, the only way to handle any of them is through publicity-oriented policies of information-gathering, storage, and dissemination.

(Am I in favour of public snooping into private lives? What difference does that make? I've been living with it for a long time. So have you.)

In European and North American society, the privacy mystique provides a major indicator for the more subtle gradations of the social snobbery scale. If you came from a certain sort of "background," you never open a closed door without knocking; and you pause in discussing last night's bed-adventure with your best friend while the waitress is setting down the coffee cups. Chances are, even with the bed-adventure confidante, you don't discuss family finances.

On some other social levels, prices and money may be discussed in detail, and continuously, but bed is verbally completely taboo. The combinations may vary, not just on economic class lines, but also by sex, age, region, and sometimes occupation, among other possibilities. Within any definable social grouping they are (or have been) as rigid as they are distinctive.

Aside to women's liberation: 1) "Never ask a lady her age"; 2) It seems to be part of the unwritten law—in the United States, at least—that a certain margin of perjury is permitted a lady to "protect her chastity," that is, to maintain the privacy of her sex life. But please note I said "lady." I doubt the privilege applies to prostitutes, hippies, yippies, zippies, bra-burners, strip-artists, sun-and-nature nudists, or anyone else who has already publicly violated privacy.

Privacy/publicity is not a simplistic linear polarity. It is not truly susceptible to quantitative gradient measurements. It is not quite an orthodox dialectical thesis-antithesis formation. It is rather a spectrum of coloration running through all planes of behaviour, experience, and consciousness.

On any familiar plane (like politics, literature, sex) it may manifest itself as a duality or polarity or synthesis, but it is more fruitful to consider it in matrix or gestalt or ecological terms. With this kind of conception, it is easier to recognize that a distortion or modification of the spectrum on any one plane will be reflected on, or resonate to, all other planes—sometimes in almost unrecognizable forms, and on a number of levels of consciousness and experience we have not yet learned to identify clearly through definition or measurement.

I cannot provide a sharp, tight definition for the concept as a whole. The ideas expressed here have come together very slowly in my mind over the past two or three years. The fact is, much of the concept is still outside my own present frame of reference. I am just beginning to learn how to handle multiplex, pluralistic/relativistic perceptions and concepts.

J.G. Ballard talks about "three levels of characterization" in his work. "Subjective" and "objective" are familiar to everyone. He describes the third level as being, for one thing, a character "displayed on an enormous billboard as a figment in some vast CinemaScope epic" or again "the world of public events, Cape Kennedy and Vietnam mimetized on billboards." Billboards. Media. "Admass" in England. "Mass-comm" in Japan. "Public image."

What killed Marilyn Monroe? What is "astronaut's syndrome"? Why do movie stars and heads of state, baseball heroes and generals and chess masters, all seem to get wackier and wackier? Is it just that they can't hide behind a false front with cameras poking in the bathroom windows? Or do the cameras make them crazier? What's it like to know a million or a hundred million pairs of eyes are watching you? (Desiring, despairing, admiring, envying, hating, cursing, even loving you?) How do you learn to live with it?

We're all going to have to learn. A little bit more all the time.

## **TWENTY-ONE-THE 1980S: FRIENDSHIPS AND LETTERS—MARIAN ENGEL AND GWENDOLYN MACEWEN**

In the years after I arrived in Canada I slowly discovered that I was not as I had been in the United States: a very large frog in a very tiny pond—a big name in science fiction, but totally unknown elsewhere. It was not unusual for mainstream Canadian writers to know some SF, and indeed to write some themselves, so a good many of the leading Canadian authors turned out to have read my work. Three extraordinarily good writers who became close friends were Margaret Laurence, Marian Engel, and Gwendolyn MacEwen.

Among them, the most extraordinary, I think, was MacEwen, but on a certain level it is hard to say who beats whom. In each case we shared so many ideas, so much intellectual property, and so much identity as women that the friendships established were easily, readily formed and had a quality as intense as the friendships expressed in my long correspondences with men during the earlier period of my life.

Judith, getting older, but still loving life fiercely, Toronto, circa 1993.  
*Courtesy of the Merril estate*

Jan. 22, 1979

Dear Judy,

Funny I was thinking about the house and what I would do when I got back to it and I thought of the big round table and you were at it. Gosh, it will be good to see you again. You are remembered here with affection.

I guess you're through at Centennial [a community college in Toronto]. I just cleaned my desk and found an invite from them. How the hell can I find words to apologize for a five-month delay in answering? Fall was hell, Will in dreadful shape and me learning how to teach and do PR for Glassy Sea, the crits of which were so bad. But things are more fun now: a few social things are happening and Will is going off his drugs and getting much nicer. But there is something that is not me about Edmonton and I'll be glad to get home. It's about 100 per cent short of loose people, that's it. I keep pondering the purchase of a parrot.

Have been reading Maureen Duffy's erotic world of faery which ends up discussing SF. Fun if you like Freudians.

Keep the flame alight, baby  
love, Marian

Jan. 29, 1979

Dear Marian—

Nope, Centennial is still on—the full year, except not doing it right now for two reasons. I am just emerging from convalescent period following Horrible Illness in December. I thought I was food poisoned—turned out to be an abscess in the intestine, due (probably, they say) to a perforated appendix that walled itself. The three weeks in hosp, days on IV,

lots of drama. Scary but interesting. Part has been slow convalescence slush/snow weather.

So—now I'm ready to start getting back into commitments, the Ontario Community College support staffs have all gone on strike. So far it has been impossible even to reach people on tangled switch boards to discuss ways and means of functioning without crossing picket lines!!!

So I have time to answer letters.

Do thou likewise. (Depending on what happens with the strike of course ... I think Jack David would still like to have you come this spring.

Lessee—what's happening here? Or has been? I've been out of things pretty much. From the moment I got back from Connecticut at the end of August till the end of November, I was working nonstop on performer-educating for TVO's *Dr. Who* series, with time out only for twice-weekly treks to Scarborough and that piece for Chatelaine.

One of the things that happened in the 1980s was that I fell in love with Jamaica—and the people there. For a decade or so, until my health wouldn't allow me to go back there any longer, I spent three or four winter months there. The following article appeared in *Departures* magazine, spring/summer 1981.

#### JAMAICA: A VIEW FROM THE BEACH

*You must bathe in the sea at seven in the morning—then the whole day will be good.*

*This is accepted Jamaica wisdom. The first time I heard it was from the wise-and-kindly marimba player in the calypso trio at my first Montego Bay hotel. When I tried, the seven-o'clockers explained that it is only in the morning before the wind comes up that the beach water has a full concentration of ocean salts and minerals.*

*My day in Jamaica this past winter began early and ended late, at the beach. The tourist-area beach strip in MoBay runs about two miles roughly northward from the centre of town, a mixture of public and private areas, sand beaches interspersed with woodsy and rocky stretches. There's the big, new (free, public) Fletcher Beach; the famous old (private) Doctor's cave and a dozen other favourite spots. My place is the tiny perfect cove the old-timers still call Sunset Beach. Most of the newcomers call it Carlyle, for the hotel across the street.*

*At seven, in February, the sun is still behind the top floor of the hotel. The beach is in the shade, yet for some reason the water is warmer than at any time later in the day; and quiet—no wind yet, just the gently lapping tide of a barrier-reef bay. The street is quiet too, but the morning regulars are already gathering on the beach: a handful of hardy tourists and perhaps two dozen Jamaican locals. Rastas are off to one side, washing vigorously, and singing.*

*When I got back to my beach in late morning, after my last-day shopping downtown, one sailboat was out on the horizon. Jim, from Toronto, was giving his first windsurfing lesson of the day. 'just Lee,' the all-day patty-and-beer pushcart man, had just been joined by "Sir Morris," operating the lunch cart with roast beef sandwiches and ackee-and-saltfish and sour sop drinks. The beach was lined with fruitwomen (their head-baskets set out on display) and the "higglers" selling black coral, wood carvings, straw goods, and peanuts. White, pink, red, tan, bronze, brown, and black bodies were moving in and out of the water, stretched out on towels, examining wares, playing backgammon, drinking Red Stripe beer.*

*Usually, it rains at night. That afternoon, it rained. It was a long rain for MoBay—twenty minutes. I went back in for a swim, then spent the hot part of the afternoon over fruit punch at the shaded bar, picked up jerk chicken at the Pork Pit, and climbed back to my guesthouse to watch the sunset as I ate on the terrace.*

Jan. 21, 1983-60 years filled!

Dear Marian

This birthday letter can only be to you, because at least you were here, you have some



image of my surround; you met Zach, however briefly—What instincts that man has!

Where to start? With horror story, I guess, from—what? 8-9 days ago. The Nights, rather. I had gone to bed early, for some reason totally exhausted, and was apparently sleeping very deeply indeed, in some involved dream which I do not remember, when I heard—in the dream, I thought—a rushing sound, which seems to be the sound the field rats make when they rush over the roof of my room at night (once just after dark, once just before dark—where do they migrate at night?). This result (dissolved?) in the dream, to a sensation of tiny feet rushing over me. The rats? My pad my pad—platform was still down on the floor, I leapt up (stark naked) and DD used (forgive clichés, there is no other expression so apt) in horror at the sheet where, in moonlight coming through the windows slats, I saw small shapes on the bed. Migod! Not rats, giant cockroaches! Divebombing?

Gradually became aware that an urgent whisper from the window was saying, "It's all right, it's Zachariah—it's Zach—don't make noise—open the door—it's Zach—Judy, it's Zach, open the door. Don't make in the noise—it's Zach."

Trembling, in total shock, still not connecting the two events, I grabbed my robe, turned on the light, saw that what the bed was full of was pebbles, opened the door and let him in, in muddled combination of terror, delight, disgust, desire, surprise, and (most of all still I guess) shock, which is quite beyond me to describe.

The man slipped in, put down his shoes, reached for me, bragging happily about how successfully he had sneaked in through the yard, and, said in dismay: "You didn't have any clothes on before."

He was already starting to take his off. I was totally incapable of speech—with the exception, I found, of two words, which were essentially all I spoke for the next half-hour:

"No, man!"

It got through to him everything was not cool.

(Jamaican exchange, standard greetings: hey, man wha' hopen? Everyting cool man, everyting cool.)

I did manage to get out a few words about pebbles, rats, and roaches—not coherently, but enough to slow him down. Also, there was a burst of lights and laughter through the hole in my closet as the teachers prepared for bed.

(Digression—one of how many to come? Is this a letter to you or the pretentious Jamaican journal I never did start? The big fat trunk with my fridge, my pots, my Underwood noiseless, the rest of my priceless supplies of whiskey, toilet paper, etc., was to have arrived about Jan. 10. The latest of three calls to the custom-brokers in Kingston said they believed the ship was on the way, probably due to arrive this weekend, but had not received the documents, so not sure my trunk was on it. Call back Thursday. I figured that meant call today, Friday. Maybe they will give me a birthday present too—a call to Kingston is J\$3.80. That means 38 "10-centses"—I spent two days trying to make the first call before I found a phone that worked and their line disengaged. Then the phone wouldn't take my coins—it was too full. Now have arranged a deposit-against-the-bill system with little white-goateed retired watchmaker and his warm plump wife, Iris, who somehow maintain a chirpy English-tooting style menage Studies in their retirement cottage just off the beach.)

So: man says, "Turn on the tape?" At midnight, I thought aghast and said—you guessed it—"No, man!" (Recognizing in split sec after refusing that it would have surprised, upset, unsettled, awakened no one to hear music suddenly spill out at midnight.)

Impassioned pleas about the way we feel about each other, the something "special" between us, life is to be lived, stop denying myself, etc. He came because he knew I was waiting for him. (True, even in the state of shock, I knew that was true, did not say no, man—for days he had been making love with eyes and gestures during every brief meeting, on the street, in the bar, etc., and I had been, yes, waiting.) Impassioned explanations: "This is Jamaica, man!" He knows how things work, everything will be cool, it is not natural or expected that a woman will stay alone all the time, he knows what he's doing, this is Jamaica. This room is my own, I can do what I want.

No, man, no, man, no, man ...

But by the time he left I was very pleased indeed. (That could be misleading.) It was, no, man, all the way. He never got his clothes off. Finally said, okay, it was all up to me now. Let him know when I was ready. I was very pleased.

Lay awake and thought. He was right, obviously, about everything except throwing pebbles in my bed. (An old Jamaican rite, I now understand.) Next morning I sought out my friend Jeannie in a quiet moment, and invited a bit of gossip. Background—A local school teacher of high repute, Dell Gibbs, who is a close friend of the household (and another expert on herbal healing) had just separated from her husband when I got here. He brought another woman to their house; she moved out to their older, smaller house, on the same lot (Jamaican: "in their yard"). During the long holiday here she spent most of her time in this yard, doing washing, kitchen work, eating here, playing games with the kids, and also conversing in the bar. I had the idea she was also spending most of the nights with Patrick, the other boarder. So I broached it with Jeannie. (It's none of my business but I'm curious ...) And sure enough, she and Patrick were having it on, with the knowledge of the whole household. (So: risking the children knowing about something is no problem.) (A teacher in their school, frkrissake, not just a nutty foreigner!) Jeannie proved eager to go into details, was obviously enjoying (a) the situation itself and (b) my interest in it. I got a strong impression she also understood why I was asking, and was telling me, go ahead. [...]

So I thought a bit more, and went over to Zach's and found him alone, and said, I have to explain something about the other night. Made clear what had happened about rats and roaches. So, two things. One, I have to get my bed up off the ground, because I can't sleep down there. Two, you were absolutely right about everything except the way you came. I have to know beforehand. Okay?

Amused: "You me to have to make it date?" Serious: will find you some cement blocks.

That day my bed got hoisted. Next day he got hold of the windshield-less truck he shares with a friend (or three?) ("The next man has it now") and took me to the lumber yard to get the way to attach my desk-section. Monday he brought the carpenter around to saw it up and bang it together. One way or another he showed up somewhere every day, loving eyes, helping hand, murmured intimacies, but always the "runnings" were not right for that night. Soon. When the runnings were cool.

Judith, returning to Toronto after wintering in Jamaica, circa 1982.  
*Courtesy of the Merrill estate*

Yesterday noon he stepped through the empty bar to the back, saw no one around, found my door with my improvised latchstring, broke it, and stepped in, waking me from a light nap, and stepped right out again, because the window slats were open and Blossom (resident poor relation) who was washing in the side yard, could see right in. (Rooms are very private. You will recall all the visiting was on the verandahs.) No one was home at his place; he wanted me to come over. I went to the beach.

I guess he figured that was notice enough.

I guess it was, at that. When he called through the window about 11:30 last night, I was sleeping, and had smoked-up a little before I went to sleep. I entered my 60th birthday feeling young and tender and good all over and very grateful.

(Wow! He was really disappointed when I sent him home at one a.m.! I explained I was a bit rusty from disuse, and had to get into practice for more athletic bouts. He smiled and went half-asleep in my chair, playing footsies with his bare feet, we waited for Manley and friends to abandon the backyard.)

xoxo Judy

Feb. 1, 1983

70 Marchmount Road, Toronto

Dear Judy,

It's shrink day and tonight I went down and started cleaning the front room of the basement. It amuses me when I do something that instinctive and it does my heart good to throw out old bicycle inner tubes nobody got around to fixing and bits of wood with pieces gouged out of them, the kinds of things other people keep in one's basement because they might come in handy. Well, if next week someone comes and says the plumbing can be repaired only with an old bicycle inner tube I guess I'll feel like shooting myself, but right now I'm durned glad to get rid of all that junk.

The boy moved out last week. Earlier than we planned, but he'd blew a gasket and messed up Char's room [Charlotte, her daughter] and beheaded all my plants so we said enough was enough. It's good, he's got a room on Dovercourt in a house where another ex-patient of Phil's lives; it's a zoo but the rate isn't too bad and I've lent him money against his grandmother's inheritance, for first and last month's rent, etc. After that nothing, though I'll pay Phil until his 18th birthday. [...] I've had a bad week, the shade of my mother in my dreams talking about castrating tom cats, but I'm coming through it.

I've dreamed a lot about Jamaica, too and lollipop black lovers, so the visit didn't do me badly, did it!

This letter is therefore to confirm that you can stay here for a while when you're home. [...] I gave your address to the Women's Press, who wanted to do a written interview. They were incensed when I tried to get them to pay you. Fuck them.

I'm reading in Vancouver next week and then going to Victoria for a couple of days. I'm going to stay at the Empress if I can ... me with no bloody income. But I figure I can get a short story out of it and need a couple of days' depaysement after all this uproar. Desina will stay with Char. So I've got that, and then a Union translators' Conference March 11 while you're at the house, then Edmonton on the 18th March (\$500 yummy) and then two readings in April because Randy's raised my prices and I'm selling! Not often, but a couple of people are coming through.

So you'll have a bed here when you want it. I'm painting the room a nice pale grey and getting the old bedstead up from the basement. I know you like the floor but the bugs do too; and this bed is as hard as iron.

Then no—income bit he says worrying as the outgo continues; but I am working hard on the book. Gosh, I wish I was down there right now. It's a mild winter, but a gloomy one. Much love now and take care. Regards to Jeannie and brudder, love,

Marian

Thursday ... Yours in the mail this morning ... unbelievable: brudder and the dancing cockroaches, what a story. Happy 60th indeed. Will I get anything as good for my 50th? Some things have happened already, Will left after a minor blow up, but on good terms. The two of us lived like mice again, happily. Some bits of the book are good though I fear my agent doesn't think so. She hasn't called. I have to write a story about Mobay to claim my expenses on the income tax. Mary Abbott pretending she is a poached egg in deep blue sea, I guess. And meeting whom? A man who looks like a baby in a plush jump suit?

What news? Marker is still good and mad, damn her, my neighbour Willie streaking on booze, getting himself good and beaten up. Good thing I don't keep anything in the house. He put the shower and dishwasher in okay, though. If I paint that room myself I'll get paid on the broadloom. Our reading at London in March, going up with Austin and dining with the West Indians afterwards. Going to Van and then Vic on the 15th, staying with Aritha and then in the Empress hotel which is only \$33 a night.

Gotta go write the Van. People to meet my plane. Much love. I'm glad you're repaying the loan: I'd forgotten about it until yesterday. [...] Must buzz love and happy returns and lots of papaya and all those good things. Marian

[n.d., probably March 1983]

Dear Judith

Thank you for reminding me that there is more to be written, and that perhaps something has been written ...

Gwendolyn

April 3, 1983

PLEASE KEEP THE STACK OF OLD GLOBES FOR ME. I NEED THE BILL FRENCH COLUMNS. THEY COULD GO IN MY OFFICE.

Judy: welcome, in case I am not here. You're the first to arrive and ought to know that David Hunter at No. 63 and Mary McDonald at No. 33 have keys to the house, to look after pipe and cats. Perhaps you could tell them you have taken up residence.

Please take my room. The bed is as clean as I can make it this morning, i.e. I am about to look for another clean bottom sheet and the pillow cases are fresh. I haven't washed the duvet cover but I take a lot of baths.

Char arrives 10 April; give her a hug for me and tell her to phone either my sister Helen (844-6711) or the hospital to find out where I am. Hunters have said they will keep an eye on her! Please take the cats over from Mary. Sophie gets one can a day, Bennie half a can, There's oceans of cat food but you have to make sure Sophie lets Bennie eat his. Please do not shut Sophie away from the kittens for any length of time. She likes to go out for 2 hours only, so if you're going out for half a day, push her away from the door.

[...] Sheets and towels are in the wooden trunk in my room. The basement's a bit of a mess, I had to get J's bed out and couldn't put it back in order. On the bulletin board are operating instructions for the house. Give me a call and meanwhile enjoy, enjoy. My surgery is scheduled for the 7th, if there's to be some, and I'll be in the General. Best phone my sister, tell her who you are, and get the details.

Kitchen light is behind fridge.

Use office and typewriter. If you can pick me up some new Coronamatic black nylon ribbons please do; I'll pay you back. This is all I can think of!

Lots of love

ME

Sept. 5, 1983

To: TWUC [Writers' Union of Canada]—The Inner Circle

I recently received a request for permission to reprint several of my poems in an anthology in preparation entitled "Canadian Women Writers Anthology." The letter was from one of a group of six graduate students working under the supervision of a professor; it described the work as "a comprehensive anthology of Canadian women writers," which would run to around 650 pages and include about 100 authors.

I wrote back, saying that I would prefer delaying my decision to grant permission until they had found a publisher for the book, and added that I also wanted to think a little about the anthology, because (and I quote from my letter):

"I confess to having a certain bewilderment about its nature and intent. Writing is the property of both sexes; surely it is not your intention to suggest that women are a breed apart?—or that we have been so suppressed in writing (which we haven't) that we need a whole anthology of our own to set matters straight? What would a book entitled "Canadian Men Writers Anthology" look like?"

Hmmm?

Gwendolyn MacEwen

cc. Judith Merril

Feb. 13, 1985

JUDITH MERRIL WSBEACH  
MARIAN VERY CRITICAL BUT NOTHING ANYONE CAN DO IN PERSON PHONE ANY  
ONE OF US FOR UP TO DATE DETAILS  
GWENDOLYN [MACEWEN]  
COLL LT

Feb. 16, 1985

JUDITH MERRIL WHITESANDS  
VERY SORRY MARIAN DIED FRIDAY NIGHT FAMILY FUNERAL MONDAY  
AFTERNOON MEMORIAL SERVICE ABOUT A WEEK LATER ORGANIZED BY DAVID  
YOUNG HOPE YOU ARE OKAY  
GWEN & BEVERLY

Feb. 19, 1985

Dear Judy-

I just returned from the funeral and thought to write you. Learned about your appendectomy from David, and phoned the hospital half an hour ago; they said you were comfortable. (Had a bad connection and couldn't get more out of them.) Hope you'll phone one of us soon and let us know how you are. So PHONE SOMEBODY when you can!!!

The week of agony with Marian is over, blessedly, for her. Hard on us, but no longer on her, is how I see it. She looked so bad when I last saw her (and spoke to her though I doubt she even heard) that I prayed for her sake she wouldn't come out of it if it meant a prolonged period of further torment. We still don't know what caused the seizures and what was the specific reason for the deterioration. As ever, everything was linked to everything else, and one can get bogged down in medical jargon.

Thought you'd like to see these obits (at least I hope you'll like to have them, didn't want to send them if they would depress you). A marvellous thing that I heard this week was when the sister Helen was talking to Charlotte about heaven (or something) and Char said: "Mom knows all about heaven and she doesn't want to go there." (!) Bless her for that, and Marian, who would get a kick out of it too.

DO WRITE OR PHONE.

love, Gwen

P.S. Memorial service at 7:00 on Feb. 28—don't yet know where.

THIS LETTER MAY GET TO YOU BEFORE THE OTHER, BECAUSE REGISTERED

Feb. 27, 1985

Dear Judy

Ann phoned to say you were out of the hospital and OK. Good! It must have been rotten for you, and even worse being down there alone with the grief of Marian's death. I told Ann I had sent some clippings, etc. (this is one time you might appreciate my insanely methodical nature)—and am enclosing more things now.

The memorial service is tomorrow, and in a way, this letter will help me organize my thoughts on what to say. (By the way, it is extraordinary that Marian also underwent an appendectomy when they did an exploratory operation a few days before the end.)

I think I'm going to say that Marian and I were light years apart as writers—I was never a great reader of fiction, and she didn't quite understand my poetry—so it was wonderful—we didn't have to be literary! Also, some recent memories, including you and I with her in the

hospital room last summer with the awful hamburger and the laughter and us talking about what we might have been if we hadn't become writers.

Also—she brought me a marble egg from Paris (something magical for Gwen, she had written on her shopping list)—and me visiting her at home about a week before the end saying Marian, let me do something USEFUL—so she suggested I straighten the books on the shelves (perfect job for me) and I came across the children's classic *At the Back of the North Wind* [by George MacDonald], which she said I should take. Marian, I said, do you realize you're always giving me children's books? Oh, Oh, I should watch that, she said, taking a long drag on her cigarette and giving me that sideways grin. You read me so well, I told her.

Also—an amazing conversation about a month before when she said she was thinking again of finding her twin sister, but she didn't really want to ... and I said (God help me) Marian, I think the sister you're looking for and don't want to meet is your celestial twin, your spiritual twin, your ka, your soul ... Another long puff on the cigarette, then, with absolutely no malice or sarcasm—Oh Gwen, you're so smart.

Then I guess I'll end my piece tomorrow night with the poem (enclosed) and hope to hell all I've said will hit the right note, the right tone, and be a proper tribute to our brilliant and gutsy and much-to-be-missed friend.

What else can I say? I know if you were here you'd make a far better job of it than I will ... but I thought you'd like to know that I'll mention you in the course of things, and I know you'll be there in spirit.

Take care, write if you can or want to—I guess it won't be long til you're back.

Love, Gwen

[December 1985]

#### THE YEAR OF THE EARRING, 1985

—for Judith Merrill

This was the year it all hung out, Judy—life, death, everything.

Our best friend died, and I transferred half of her garden

To half of my garden

Where some of it still blooms in the cold thrill of the autumn.

This was the year we got rid of our appendages,

Including your appendix which got removed in some Jamaican hospital

And various lovers who rode off into their respective horizons.

This was the year when earrings were the currency, the gelt,

The coinage of the realm, pure fantasy.

People had so many earrings they were coming out of their ears.

They had cruise missiles hanging from their ears.

This was the year both of our books came out, but I knew

Something was wrong when I found myself facing Barbara Frum

On the Journal, and she said: All right, Gwendolyn, I want

To talk earrings.

I didn't worry when I saw you walking down College Street

With the rings of Saturn hanging from your ears—why?

Because we both knew we were living in Interesting Times

It was some year, and we danced our way down University Avenue

With Caribana, and the street was a sea of sweat and laughter

And earrings. But I began to worry, Judy, when you wore nothing

In your ears, and you feared for my sanity when you saw me

In High Park with this great Zero hanging from my left ear.

God, it was some year.

And things reached their head when we got a free week at 21 McGill  
And were turned away at the door because they said:  
We don't like your earrings. And things were going too far  
When I stopped giving poetry readings because none of the earrings  
Matched my shoes, and now none of my earrings match my thoughts  
And I am temporarily in hiding until I can set things straight.  
But this was the year when everything was possible,  
And we let it all hang out—life, death, everything.  
But now our interviewers are no longer asking us about our latest books  
But our latest earrings, and our plans for future earrings.  
So you'd better head for Jamaica and get away from it all.  
—Gwen

Jan. 17, 1986  
White Sands Beach, Jamaica

Dearring Gwendolyn

Yesterday, for the first time in these 6 weeks (see enclosure at leisure) I got to the library with enough time to suss out books I wanted instead of grabbing the first two possibles from the just-returned rack, and came home with, for one, Wilson Harris' *The Age of the Rainmakers*—which I commend to you (probably) along with other "companion" titles. He's dealing with Arawak myth in a somewhat-parallel to what you were doing in *Noman's Land*—which I have with me, and began rereading in snatches this morning.

One of the things that I find suspect in myself—syntax don't work, though that's the wording I wanted—well, then, sometimes wonder about myself is whether I love the people I do love AS people or as wordifiers (primarily). Anyhow

Today I love and miss you very much, and as it happens

Tomorrow a friend of a friend is returning to TO and will carry letters up, so I have a sense of immediacy in writing to you that is impossible with the usual anticipation of two weeks or so delay in delivery.

I have been wanting to write to you not only since I arrived here, but since the last evening I saw you—when you came to pick up the stereo which you may not remember too clearly, because you were (not uncharmingly, but) very drunk at the time.

Are you still reading? Please, I hope so.

I had in fact been wondering, from various familiar signs, whether you were back on the booze again, but was disinclined to ask about it, because I know how you feel people are always watching/waiting to see you Fall From Grace. Well, I don't give a shit about Grace, but I do about you, and that night you were not only acting, but smelling, drunk. So I had my answer, but it took me a while to figure out just what business I had saying anything to you about it—not to mention getting clear in my head exactly what I meant to say.

Okay, with luck, I've waited long enough so you have things under control again, and all that follows is unnecessary. If so, please file this letter for next time it starts to get bad enough for you to reach for a bottle, because I might never be in just this space to say it again.

So *Rainmakers/Noman's* has made that clear—while renewing ponderings about myself and the nature of my affections. In your case, right now, you know, I love you dearly. I love your wild chatter and space-people humour and the serious giggling we do together, and having someone with whom to share some (sane? mad? irrelevant) parallax-making visions of the mad? sane? surround. I don't want to lose all that—especially so soon after Marian.

Of course I don't have all that when you're drunk anyhow (brace yourself, this is Straight-Arrow Judy on the computer now) because (this is what I meant above, see word "familiar") you start repeating the same joke over and over and can't hear what I'M saying (DEADLY sin!). So if you drink enough to kill yourself, I lose a friend who matters a lot to

me—and if you just drink enough to keep the pain fogged out, I lose most of it.

(Note I'm not talking about what you lose, because that's YOUR choice, of course, and how the fuck do I know if you're losing or gaining more, in YOUR experience?) But what I realized this morning was something (more important? silly word—anyhow)-

Flashback: I had another friend I loved very dearly indeed, and indeed still do, though I have little contact with him now, because he too is a writer whose work I also love—sometimes—and what I found out eventually with him was that the work I most want to see from him gets written ONLY WHEN HE'S DRINKING—and the person I want to be with is at home, so to speak, only when he's not. Okay, this guy has an incredible constitution, and at almost-75, after 40-45 years of getting on and off the juice, he's still relatively healthy. Maybe that could work out for you, if necessary

NECESSARY? That's what I've been getting around to. I THINK *Noman's* and the new poems were written sober. If indeed they were written drunk, the hell with my personal loss—just keep drinking, baby, because my loss is the world's gain—and also my own. But if that is the case, try and bear in mind that whether you've been seeing me or not, any time the booze starts to threaten your physical well-being and your ability to write, if you holler I will come and try and get you back on your feet. I mean, in your chair, at the desk.

BUT if my first guess was right, and you had not started secret tipping when you were doing that work,

(This rotten machine, for which I did NOT get extra memory chips before coming down, chose this point to flash MEMORY FULL. So I had to print out this far, and hope to hell MY memory will carry me through the paragraph.)

... so—if you did that writing on water and coffee (fkrissake, Pepsi or even PERRIER!), and if you ARE still boozing now

Pick up the phone NOW and get hold of your friend Mack and ask him to get the hell over and help you get out of it. AND/OR

Pick up the phone next time you wake up relatively sober and phone 809 952 5096, where (if it is morning) you will almost surely find me home, and if I'm not and anyone else answers, just leave word for me to call Gwendolyn. (We now have a phone extension from the landlady's flat upstairs in our place so sometimes you get Peter or Janetta upstairs, but two stations are cheaper than one personal.)

Latest hot news since writing the 6-weeks report is that our little dream house may still be available. I am to go and see Miss E tomorrow morning. But we'll still be here at least till the end of the month. (130 address will stay the same in any case.)

Hey, maybe you'd phone even if you don't need me, just to let me know you're still speaking to me? Or send a night-letter? Or anyhow write? Much love, dammit!

Judy

March 13, 1986

TO JUDY MERRIL CARE WHITESANDSBEACHPO, JAMAICA  
THANKS FOR LETTER. RIGHT ON WAS SICK. BUT HAVE RECOVERED THANKS  
TO JOYCE, MAC, AND TWO DAYS HOSPITAL. SEE YOU SOON  
GWEN

## **TWENTY-TWO-THE CRAZIES ARE DYING.**

*(Originally published in NOW (Toronto), 1986.)*

I DON'T THINK I'm really crazy enough. I don't know if I can handle it all. I have always thought of myself as a survivor but I'm getting old and honoured and of course that makes it much tougher. Plus, it's hard to be crazy enough when you're crying.

Milton is gone. First it was Marian, then Robert, and now Milton. The crazies are dying.



Never mind Borges, Calvino, Dali. Never mind Herbert, Hubbard, and Sturgeon. These are the Proper Crazies, kooks from the down-home Krazylands: Argentina, Italy, Spain, and U.S. science fiction. It's easy to be a crazy some places and there are always more coming up to fill the ranks. But—Canada?

I mean, I'm not talking about mean-crazy, hide-in-a-hole crazy, catatonic crazy. I'm talking moon-mad and sunstruck; I'm talking flaunt it and shake it. I'm talking fiery-eyed and magic-mouthed. I mean true far out flamboyant Crazy.

Like Milton. Like me, I guess, when I came to Toronto. And from the time I came (to Rochdale, first), people kept telling us about each other.

*You mean you've never met?*

Milton Acorn, the People's Poet—I'll tell you how we finally met.

It was in Thunder Bay, maybe eight to ten years after I came north from Pennsylvania, a lot more than that since he came east from Prince Edward Island. The library people began apologizing as soon as they met me: the audience for my reading might be small because Milton Acorn was reading at the university. We try to avoid conflicts but we didn't know ... Milton Acorn!

I didn't mind small readings, I told them. I just wanted to meet Milton.

*What? You mean you've never met?*

We figured the university reading would go later than the library one, so we raced over as soon as I was done and tramped through empty corridors until somebody said: Okay, I know where Milton's got to be.

It was an enormous beer hall. There were three rooms, each about the size of the main hall at Toronto's Union Station, filled with large round tables, the kind of table in Chinese restaurants that takes eight, ten, twelve people.

In the first room, all the tables were taken except one, right in front of the (loud) speaker. Nobody saw Milton anywhere. Half of us sat down, and the rest went to scout the other rooms. A waitress came and loaded the table with beers. I didn't take any; I was coming down fast from the performance high, starting to feel cranky, and where was Milton anyhow?

So this Neanderthal-looking type, with untied running shoes and sagging cotton work pants and some bare belly between the pants and rumpled shirt, and a scraggly beard and the craziest blue eyes in the world came over and swayed a little, standing over me, and smiled a big lopsided smile around his cigar and said—shouted—YOU'RE JUDITH MERRIL!

Then you've got to be Milton Acorn. I told him we had been looking for him all over, but how did he know who I was?

Those crazy eyes! he said.

We found out we were living just a couple of blocks from each other, near College and Spadina, and for a while we saw a lot of each other. In those days Milton was living at the Waverley Hotel on Spadina and hanging out just down the street at the Crest Grill. When you walked by the restaurant you could look in through the windows and see who was sitting in the booths. If he was there I went in, and if I was there he went in.

But let me detitillate: we were never lovers, in the flesh; in fact, we hardly ever visited each other's rooms. Just for that time we sought each other's spaces, confided, quarrelled, roared with laughter, argued, anticipated, every bit as lovers might. Then Milton moved out of the Waverley and did his cafe-sitting elsewhere and we found others, closer, to confide in and confess to. When we bumped into each other, our conversations were mostly about politics and outer space. Milton was an addicted reader of science fiction magazines—much more so than I was.

Frederik Pohl, Elizabeth Anne Hull (his wife), and Judith discussing the state of the world at Emily's dining room table, Toronto, 1995.

*Emily Pohl-Weary*

He would tell me what to look at in the new issues and spin out marvellous plots for SF stories he was going to write. But more than science fiction itself, it was the sensibility of free-ranging through cosmic space and time that we shared: ultimate adventurers reaching out from the corner of College and Spadina.

Of course we shared a lot of other, vital, heart's-blood things. (Or people would not have kept saying, all those years—You mean you've never met?)

Somehow it is hard to write about this. I don't mind talking about sex, which is important, or personal love, much more important, or love for space and adventure, which many people think is childish or "escapist" or even "reactionary"; but I am oddly shy about proclaiming that love for humanity and passionate social anger that is called idealist ideology. This is what we shared most deeply.

(Milton was once given an award by other poets, who felt it was his proletarian politics that had kept him from getting the Governor General's Award for Poetry. They gave him a medal that said he was The People's Poet, and he wore it around his neck, under his clothing, and never took it off.)

We both had this passion, then, for quaint notions with embarrassing names like democracy and freedom and justice-for-all, a sort of perverted taste for things not only proletarian but lumpen, and a wistful desire to be as underdog as possible. And of course that's what our mightiest battles were about: fierce unbending fights that stemmed from crucial, often trivial differences about social ills and their remedies.

Mostly these quarrels ended with one of us walking away grim and tightlipped, making sure that his notorious physical anger did not explode to ruin everything for good. Next time we bumped into each other we would start fresh, talking about his latest multidimensional or space/time idea, but more and more often drifting again into battle.

The last few times I saw him before he went off to Prince Edward Island he was heavy into Islam and anti-abortion. I was not sorry to see him go, but I never expected him to stay on his Island. I only saw him twice after that.

He was in Toronto for a reading, and had a heart attack. I went to the hospital to see him. He sat on the side of the bed, a greying man in a grey hospital bathrobe with stubbly grey on his cheeks and his eyes all greyed out. He had nothing to talk about, and everything I thought of seemed unkind to mention. The Crazies —my Crazies—had already started dying, and I had been very sick once myself, and I was scared, and couldn't stand it. I kept promising myself I would go back, but I didn't, and I was relieved when I heard he was back on the Island.

Life, by its nature, is full of unfinished business: incomplete expressions, untidy pauses, unrounded sentences. Stuff you're going to get around to tomorrow or next week or next decade. Or never. If you die in the middle—of anything—you're forgiven, of course. But if your friend dies, how do you forgive (yourself or your friend) for the unfinished business?

I had to cope with that, in different ways, when Marian Engel died, when Robert Zend died, when Ted Sturgeon and Elizabeth Smart died. In the nature of things, it would have been that way when Milton died, but it wasn't.

When the Poet's League met in Toronto in June 1986 I crashed their Saturday night dance, and the first person I saw was Milton, spruce and spry and red-cheeked, with his eyes on fire again. We talked and laughed and when the music started we danced. Milton was a lousy dancer; he sort of wanted to polka to everything. We had a wonderful dance. At the end he was dripping sweat and panting. He went up to his room to rest and someone told me he was still having heart problems. But the dance didn't kill him. It was good. No unfinished business between us. Just all the unfinished business of the vanishing Crazies: the people who will shout what they think needs to be heard, and flail away at any windmill that needs flailing.

Well, hell, I know I'm not the only one left, but we seem to be an endangered species, and I think I have let my flail get rusty, and every time another one dies there's that much more crazed the rest of us have to be. And it's really hard to be the right kind of Crazy when you're crying.

## TWENTY-THREE-EXORCISM ON PARLIAMENT HILL

*(The press release was issued by the Writers' Union of Canada; the speech that follows was delivered at an exorcism on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, 1990.)*

June 21, 1990

### PRESS RELEASE

*For immediate release:*

*The House of Commons and the Summer Solstice*

*The Writers' Union of Canada, frustrated in the conventional avenues with the imposition of the impending Goods and Services Tax on READING, the postal subsidy cutbacks, and the lack of democratic political leadership in the management of changes to Canada's Constitution, calls on all politicians to become statesmen and stateswomen of the highest rank. To assist them in this endeavour, The Writers' Union of Canada today enacts, at the time of the summer solstice, an honoured date for the aboriginal peoples and witches, a ceremony of exorcism. This ceremony, performed by Robin Skelton, Judith Merrill, and a Wiccan Witch, is to dispel all evil spirits lurking in the corridors and chambers of power. Thus enabling honest, forthright, considered and creative thinking to prevail and deliver us from these dark times.*

*The Writers' Union of Canada is a national organization of professional trade book writers.*

*For further information contact:*

*Trevor Ferguson, Chairman (Montreal)*

*Jo Anne Williams Bennett, National Council Representative (Ottawa) Penny Dickens,  
Executive Director*

I AM A CRONE, and I speak for Gaia.

A crone is a granny, an old woman who has outlived the years of traditional female service, and has earned the right to be rude, and the rudeness to be forthright. Crones are assumed to have acquired a certain amount of—usually disagreeable—wisdom. We are sometimes suspected of being witches and often thought to have certain powers of prophecy

Because I have thought and written about the future for many years, I will accept the role of seer. It needs no mystic magic to foresee the disasters that lie ahead on the suicidal paths most of our decision-makers are pursuing—crises, confusion, and catastrophes for nations, cities, towns, and villages—for the seas and the continents—for farmland, water, and the very air we breathe—for our families and the individual men and women who compose them—and above all else for the children whom our families, religions, and social and political institutions are meant to nurture and protect.

Our leaders seem to be impervious to common sense and reason. So now, on this solstice day of power—the longest day of the year in Ottawa, the day of absolute balance between dark and light at the equator, the day the sun never rises at the South Pole, and never sets at Canada's North Pole—on this day, as futurist and as woman, I call upon whatever powers of magic I may have acquired to speak for our children, and our children's children.

I speak in the name of Gaia—the ancient name of our planet, Earth—a name now revived to mean the LIVING PLANET, the fertile mother of all life on Earth, the dust from which we come, and to which, one day, we all return. I do not speak on BEHALF of Gaia. She does not need my pleading. She will survive, in some form, whatever foolishness or malice we, her creatures, may commit—but her survival will not necessarily guarantee our own.

There is a tide in the affairs of people and of planets which, taken at its flood, leads on to fortune, peace, and plenty and the fulfilment of human aspirations. Throughout our history, power-blinded empires have failed to seize this flood tide—and perished. We live today at a time of power and of danger unprecedented in all the millennia of human history. For centuries we have multiplied our numbers, and with each multiplication we have sought more and greater tools to compel the environment, the planet, to

yield up to us greater and ever greater resources to support our growing numbers.

Judith arguing onstage during the tribute to her life at Harbourfront Centre, Toronto, 1992. She spent several days shopping to get this particular look.

[<www.readings.org>](http://www.readings.org)

Our ancestors learned to till the soil, make fire, mine metals, and manufacture tools. When their growing clans, tribes, and nations needed more tillable land, more water, more metals, our forbears learned to turn their tools into weapons to rob, by conquest, the resources of neighbouring clans, towns, and nations.

When humankind was thinly enough spread across the Earth, and our engines of destruction were no more than spears and torches, our leaders began to learn the lessons of cruelty, conquest, and control, of power-posturing and political gamesmanship. Skill in these crafts became the criterion for successful leadership.

In recent decades our technology has multiplied even more rapidly than our population. Today we can cut down the forests too fast for the trees to regrow. We can burn the fuels too fast for them to replenish or for the air to recover. We can eradicate vast areas of farmland and of habitation in minutes. But the old habits of chest-beating and stick-whirling are still in practice.

The governments in which we trust to restrain, indeed, retrain us and guide us to new patterns that can make use of our astonishing technology, not for destruction, but to enable both the people and the planet to survive in harmony and comfort—these governments are caught in the old patterns of pride and place even more ruinously than the individuals they claim to govern.

I now call upon the power of Gaia, imminent in every spark of sentience on this planet, to say to the minds and spirits that inhabit this house of governance:

In Gaia's name, I beseech you—Pull yourselves out of the tawdry trappings of yesterday's dreams and address the urgent needs of today, and the hopes and demands of tomorrow—the world we will leave to our children and their children's children.

In Gaia's name, I require of you—Put aside, from this moment on, the perilous politics of pride and power, preening, position, patriarchy and prestige, personal profit and patronage.

In Gaia's name, I command you—From this moment forward, invest your high office with the intelligence and the awareness that you MUST summon to resolve the true crisis that confronts humanity today: to find the ways to feed the hungry, house the homeless, free the oppressed—not only of one province, culture, nation, but also of the world.

If you, the chosen leaders of a uniquely fortunate country, fail to find a way to deal with domestic shortfalls and shortcomings so as to achieve decency and dignity for all—not just for the most populous, most prosperous, or most politically astute groupings—then there is small hope for this same process on a planetary scale—and we shall, indeed, all perish in our pride.

## **TWENTY-FOUR-GROWING OLD IN THE 1990S: DEAR FRIENDS**

IN 1990 I MOVED to the Performing Arts Lodge (PAL), a wonderful co-operative housing community for mostly retired but still incredibly active members of ACTRA (Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists). PAL is a breath away from the Toronto lakeshore, and close to the downtown St. Lawrence Market. Since its inception, the building has been filled with colourful people who share the space in happy disharmony.

I moved in like a storm, settled, and became active in the community, the board, the newsletter, and the daily Coffee Klatch. The co-operative aspect of the place was its greatest strength. Here's the statement I wrote the time they tried to get me to sit on the board.

*Statement for PAL Board Elections from Judith Merril*

*If enough of you want me on the Board, I'll serve, but I'm not sure it's a good idea.*

*I'm often disturbed about (a) the inadequate communication we get from the Board and from Community Relations, and (b) the frequently autocratic/ bureaucratic management style of Park Property.*

*I'm an experienced shit-disturber, and so far I have been able to make some of my (and others) dissatisfactions heard. I think people like me are often more useful outside the power structure.*

*(Like: look at our Premier, Bob Rae!)*

*Judy Merrill.*

One of the things I worked on was the idea of a "monthly supplement" to the new *PAL Insider* newsletter. In February 1996 I sent a memo and a "draft/suggested copy" of the column to fellow board member Sharon Dyer:

To Sharon Dyer

Draft/suggested copy herewith. Maybe in March newsletter? Maybe solicit a few real items to replace the "frinstance"? You can redesign/rewrite or give me needed info and suggestions.

JM

*Announcing:*

*THE PAL TENANT'S ASSOCIATION INSIDE/OUTSIDE*

*A monthly supplement to the new PAL Insider*

*PAL has got to be the most public private place in Canada. People who live here are appearing on television every day. We're in the movies, on the stage—but most of the time we don't know when to watch or where to go to see our friends and neighbours do what we do best.*

*Inside/Outside will keep you informed about your neighbours' public appearances, and let you keep your neighbours informed about your own.*

*When you get hired to act, sing, dance, direct, opinionate or just spear-carry on stage, screen, TV or at a public event, just tell Inside/Outside, and Inside/ Outside will tell the (PAL) world.*

*Inside/Outside will be a regular feature of the new Tenants' Association newsletter, the Insider; in the months between issues of the Insider it will be posted on lobby bulletin boards and distributed to members of the Tenants' Association. But you don't have to be a member to get listed: you just have to live in PAL and give us the information.*

*TO SUBMIT: (UNDER YOUR DOOR, SHARON? A BOX IN THE GREEN ROOM? WHAT?) Give us the information any time. It will appear in the next Inside/Outside.*

*KEEP IT SHORT: Frinstance-*

*Janie Doe and Dickie Joe will be featured on a commercial for Ruff-RuffRufie's Dishy Dogfood starting (date).*

*Patti Prime is doing her stand-up comic routine at Kuy-Kuy's (address) for three nights, July 14/15/16. Showtime II PM, \$5 cover.*

*John Q. Jingle will play the role of Puck in A Midwinter's Night Dream at the skating pool at Toronto City Hall. 8 PM nightly, March 15-31. Free.*

Meanwhile, I tried to keep friends up to date through letters.

Aug. 22, 1991

An open letter to friends, colleagues, well-wishers

This is a cheap, scurvy, inadequate way to acknowledge the heart-warming, health-hoping notes, cards, messages, letters, and books with which so many of you have blessed me over the last ten months of extended gestation for my rebirth into borrowed time. On the other hand it is surely overkill for those of you who have simply been waiting for a reply to correspondence that had nothing at all to do with my travails. But any other method of trying to wade through the stack on my desk would probably mean some of you would be waiting most of another year.

I thought the invalid life would give me lots of time (and boredom to spur me on) to answer letters. Time and boredom were plentiful; motivation, and often simple intelligence, were lacking. Between October 1 and, I guess, about midsummer I seemed to need all my meagre energies to work at the onerous business of daily life and the urgent business of healing. All this was overlaid with what I'd like to think was a realistic, and not just morbid, awareness of mortality—so that almost the only mail I could make myself attend to was what was necessary (financially, etc.) to keep things from being unbearably messy for my heirs.

The last month or so I have been joyously/painfully picking up the pieces of a life that now seems to promise (note the caution—"promises, promises!") a bit of usable future. I have renewed subscriptions, paid (cannily) delayed annual dues, begun a bit of work again on memoir projects—and am, herewith, cheating my way to an empty in-basket.

Double-cheat, I guess: I'm not writing most of this (letter?) new, but compiling it out of one (THE one) I actually did complete during the Bad Days, and another one that more or less broke the logjam in July.

P.S.: Just because I send it is no reason you have to read it. For most of you, there is probably far more here than you want to know, and probably some you already know—but I haven't yet learned how to program my computer to give me coded sections to individualize for each recipient—and how could I tell anyhow who actually LIKES medical detail? So just heft-and-riffle if you like, as long as you credit my correspondence-debt Paid. Fact is, there was nothing to write about all this time except How I Spent a Year's Vacation In and Out of Hospitals. The NEW news, just about to start, is that I will be Writer in Res at U. of T. this year—a fine genteel job for a senior re-entrant.

March 12, 1991:

So yet another day I came in to the office; I have been doing this on all but the most impossibly bitter days (when I dared not venture out), sitting down at the computer and waiting to see if I could summon up the energy/will/ optimism to write some vastly overdue letters.

This grim effort was not aided by the demon in the boiler room, or more accurately in the airflow system. My office is in a library building; I was gifted with the space when I donated my personal SF collection to start a special branch of the Toronto Library—til recently the Spaced Out Library, now, embarrassingly, the Merrill Collection. The building contains, as well, a notable collection of rare children's books, and rare items in the specialty collections have been crumbling for years due to inadequate climate control; land has recently been purchased (after ten years of site-hunting) for a new modern building, but the ground is not yet broken; meantime the library system is reluctant to do any repairs, and the heating/cooling system gets worse and worse. In the winter heavy-heating time, MY office, at the end of the line (a bridge with an adjoining building) is alternately at C30 above or C15 below, with occasional deviations toward the centre. I have not really been aware of the problem before, because for the last twelve years I've always been away during the serious winter.

(Today, it is about C18 above in the office, which means I can work for a bit—but not likely long enough to finish what must be a very long letter.)

My pattern for some years has been to spend three or four winter months in Jamaica,

swimming, walking, thinking, dancing, some years doing some writing—relatively isolated, unplugged-in—then come home in time to do my income tax, try to catch up on accumulated mail and jump back into all the in-plugs (Writers' Union of Canada, the new Spec Writers Assoc. of Can., family, politics, etc.). It used to be when I came back up, I would be healthy and energetic and really ready for the hectic life, but over the last few years I have been disintegrating. Eyes and ears slowly fading; acute arthritic flare-up in one knee a few years ago; needing to be more careful about diet, blah blah, otherwise known as getting old.

Reason for unwonted presence in the cold is an infarction I suffered on October 1. Recovery has been slowed by a Catch 68 (Do you too have to stop to marvel at your age?) which has to do with vigorous exercise being needed, and the difficulty of (arthritically) walking even one block on ice-paved surfaces.

Dinner celebration after Ann Pohl's wedding to Juan Miranda. From left: Emily Pohl-Weary, Oscar Miranda, Judith Merrill, Ann Pohl, Juan Miranda, Tobias Pohl-Weary, Toronto, 1984.

*Courtesy of the Merrill estate*

I'd have been better off in the south, except that (a) the IMF et al. have taken their toll on Jamaican medical services; (b) even if there were a doctor or hospital I could trust in emergency, the place I stay (and can afford to stay) is at the top of a hill on a bad road, where taxis will not drive in, and I (this year) would have trouble walking in and out even if (relatively) healthy; and (c) they have STILL—after three years—not been able to get a telephone at the house.

Well, then, the Heart Attack (with some digressions into associated matters such as descendants, archives, memoirs, travels, jazz): Last year, I did a trip from Jamaica to a science fiction convention in San Francisco, with stopovers in NYC and Philadelphia. (In S.F. I stayed a few extra days to visit with Fritz Leiber, one of the few Important Old Friends who is not already dead; in Philly I spent our joint birthday with my then one-year-old great-granddaughter Kelli Nicole MacDonald!). The previous year, I had come to the startling realization that I not only WASN'T writing any fiction, but that I didn't WANT to. Took me quite a while to believe this. COULD you stop wanting to? Once I got used to the idea, I realized what I really did want to do was write about my own life.

Not an autobio. Just the interesting parts. While I was in N.Y., I read Chip Delany's book of memoirs and decided to get started by doing short pieces on special people, times, events. Started researching my old letter files (closest thing I have to a journal).

My papers are in the National Archives in Ottawa. I went up and sorted out a bunch of stuff; began reading, remembering, writing connective stuff. Meanwhile, it was a big year in the busy-stuff departments. Readings, workshops, stuff about Native writers; a political exorcism (of the House of Commons); Toronto's first annual Book and Mag Fair; and blah some more blah.

September was madness. In the last week I squeezed in three more days in Ottawa. The Archives is open 24 hours for registered researchers. I was sleeping three to four hours a night, then caught the train back to T.O. Sat eve, hit the street for a brunch reading with Spider Robinson at the B&M Fair Sunday morning, and an interview for a TV program, *Prisoners of Gravity*. Met my friend Valerie [Alia], just back from the Yukon, in late afternoon. We went with a bunch of people for dinner, then on to a favourite jazz bar, and out for pizza and talk. Home about three. At six I woke up feeling dizzy and light-headed and broke out in a sopping sweat that lasted about ten to fifteen minutes. Then somebody fastened a steel band around my chest and began tightening it.

Fortunately that "band of steel around the chest" metaphor was a familiar cliché. Astonished, sort of embarrassed (surely-I-was-exaggerating—?) I phoned my daughter, Ann, told her I just might be having a heart attack, started thinking about what I'd need for the hospital, heard sirens, looked out window, saw a fire truck, knew it wasn't for me.

It was, of course. Seems they always send the firemen first, because ambulance drivers

don't have equipment to break in if needed. Fire truck, ambulance, Ann, all seemed to arrive on each other's heels; in retrospect, Ann could not have arrived in less than a half-hour (from being wakened to phone to clothes to car, and 5-6 miles thru downtown). Lo and behold in the hospital emergency, they said I had had a heart attack!

The odd chest pains I had been having, and the shortness of breath, were not indigestion-cum-smokers' bronchitis, they were bigod angina.

I still have some trouble believing this. I have always known I would die of cancer, and just hoped despite the smoking it would be some kind other than lung. I don't have high blood pressure or high cholesterol or a family history of heart deaths. The doctors of course know it was smoking that did it but that's partly because they haven't asked, and don't seem to want to hear, about life-style. (No, I am not trying to say smoking isn't a major cause.)

So I have cut down from about forty to fifty a day to a max of ten. When I tried to stop completely, I gained 15 lbs. in two weeks, besides getting into frightening rages and tantrums. The weight gain is serious, because about 15 lbs. more would make me diabetic. I got that high once and fortunately was able to diet and exercise down to safety but it's waiting for me up there. I am shopping for a therapist who can help me find the magic button to turn off my infantile need for constant oral insertion.

Meantime, I have been building up a serious case of outrage about the failure to query my lifestyle, and a bunch of other medical behaviour that goes along with that. It's funny—for years, ever since reactivation of feminist momentum, people have been urging me to tell them about condescension/oppression I suffered as a female SF writer. All I could ever think of was one rejected wannabe making up a list of every editor I ever sold to and circulating it as a list of my lovers. (Fact is, the two editors I did sleep with never bought anything from me after. Non-literary criticism?)

But now, bigod, here is a whole medical establishment—and most of all my cardiologist—patting me on the head as a sweet little old lady who better listen to what Doctor says. Never mind that this year's heart disease buzzword is the "Alpha" personality. Alphas are middle-aged MALES, right? So: Got to locate a different doctor; working on it. Got to find a way to quit smoking completely; working on it. Got to get myself into a phys rehab program; working on it. At least, I'm in Canada, where it's all free. (And now I'm senior, even the prescriptions are free. Wheeee.)

July 18, 1991:

My memory of that whole period is skewed. Recap

After the heart attack in October, I was told I had had a minor infarction —what they called "10 per cent"—and I was expected to be able to "get back to normal" within six months. My progress was slower than predicted, but did seem to be moving forward until spring weather began to make more activity possible. From late March I began having more "unstable angina" attacks, was in-and-out of hospital and finally in late April was given an angiogram which showed (a) a 30 per cent infarction, and (b) blockage in all coronary arteries severe enough so that my heart was only getting about 10 per cent of normal blood supply. All of which added up not to wondering why I was recovering so slowly, but rather why I was still alive.

They said IMMEDIATE BYPASS! I said bypass yes, immediate no: got to get my affairs in order (5-10 per cent fatality risk in operation, plus another 5-10 per cent chance of possibly disabling stroke or heart attack). Three weeks later another angina attack was so severe we all thought at first it was another infarction. Fortunately, no—but scary enough to make me realize it was more dangerous to wait than to have the operation, which I did on May 24.

Today is eight weeks after. First six weeks you have to be very careful because the breastbone, which they saw open, takes that long to heal. So now the incisions (second one where they take a vein from the leg) are pretty well healed and I don't have to worry about



damage to the mending bone from jolts and jostles. As far as I can tell, I am this time healing as expected—only remaining post-op problem is with the breast muscles, but this is not bad enough to interfere with most activities. I'm still very slow and get easily fatigued, but that is—I think—mostly due to nine months of extremely limited activity (following about two years of diminishing activity before I knew I had a heart problem). Will probably take a year or two to rehabilitate muscles; I will start in a rehab program end of August; meantime I just keep increasing the amount of walking, and doing yogic-type stretches (non-aerobic).

Aug. 25, 1991:

Well, the objective was to finish this, get it copied, and add the wee personal notes in time to mail for delivery before the rotating postal strikes turn total.

Aug. 26, 1991:

They just did. So now I got plenty time, but no more space. I think this will almost exactly fit four pages.

So thanks, and love, J

May 21, 1992

To Kate MacLean

Dear Katie:

I'm starting this with only about twenty minutes till I have to leave but part of what I want to tell you is something I need to spell out for myself—my schedule the next few months—and when I come back tomorrow the unfinished letter will pop up on my screen.

So—thinking of a visit, which I hope you still are—

Between now and the end of June, I am trying to do some actual writing, and a bit of editing of old letters, toward assembling a sixty-page section to apply for an Ontario works-in-progress grant. I have shunted aside almost everything else—except physiotherapy, a cardiology checkup, and the AGM of the Writers' Union of Canada (which is in Ottawa, where I need to go for some consultation with my younger self at the National Archives anyhow) —so as to have least possible excuse for not actually putting words on paper.

(I did do part of a piece yesterday.)

(Or: so what else is new?)

Once this submission sample is done—if it does indeed get done, because what else is new is in fact that I don't/can't work-binge any more; either it gets done in moderate doses or it doesn't get done—I have only one specific plan for the summer, which is to go to a conference in London, Ontario, Aug. 1-2-3, because Fritz (and Bob Bloch) will be there.

I haven't seen Bob for about thirty years; I saw Fritz in San Francisco about three years ago. At that time he was half-blind, bent over from spine-shortening, and moderately racked with emphysema. Since then he has had a stroke—has largely recovered from its effects—his eyes are worse, etc. But he is still doing some writing, and seems to think he can manage this trip.

(Actually nothing less than maybe-the-last-time-to-see-Fritz would take me out of Toronto Aug. 1, which is the day we have the giant Caribana carnival-mas band-parade in Toronto.)

My plans for July and August (and indef. future) are to continue with what I'm doing now, but with less emphasis on the memoirs and more on the other three major activities: exercise, improving my knowledge of physiology (specifically, my own, and how best to keep it functioning), and making my apartment more comfortable and appealing. This last is because for the first time since I was housebound with kids/poverty, I feel the need to have a place friends can enjoy coming to—and for that matter that I can enjoy staying in whenever it is that exercise and physiology are not enough to keep me moving around. (I don't come from the kind of long-lived stock you do, nor have I worked at maintaining my bod as you

have done.) I'm doing much less moving around than I used to, but at the moment that's improving.

I'm hoping to do one trip down to N.Y. and Pennsylvania over the summer —see Virginia, Chip, Merrill, grandson Kevin and family (did you know he has a daughter, and I am a great-gran?), and maybe Lorna Moore—but that's contingent on the energy curve increasing—and also on when you decide to come.

The apartment is a small one-bedroom in the same general area of downtown Toronto where I lived last time you came, but my latest acquisition is a loveseat-sofa bed which makes having a visitor much more comfortable. I'm in the middle now of a major throw-out campaign, trying to pare down enough to install an Exercycle. After a lifetime of avoiding planned exercise, which I would never do just because it was good FOR me, I now have to admit it makes me FEEL so much better I have to get used to it.

(Fixing her apartment, eh? you say. Nope; I am NOT asking you to come help; just to visit.)

(Well that's not completely true. There is some help I'd like if the idea and the time suit you. So—)

Suggestion #1: Come June 24/25, planning to stay about a week, or at least over the weekend. I have to have made final decisions on the submission sample by Friday evening, the 26th. Selfishly, I'd very much value some feedback from you, but will not be startled if that is not high on your list. The main event in any case is just hang out-and-catch up time, which would start on the 27th.

Suggestion #2: Any time from June 27 thru the rest of the summer: sooner, better; if you're in the mood for it, can include Con weekend, which will be virtually cost-free, as I have had to take a room for two nights, and hope to find someone to share it, but a third person can come in for no extra cost, and there should be rides available to/from.

Note: Told Ann you were thinking of coming, and she'd like you to spend some time with them. Did I tell you she has a loving husband (Argentine, electrician) and two more small children, Julia and Daniel?

Mostly, it's just been too long. Come soon, eh?

Much love, Judy

June 18, 1992

Hey Kay!

M'god a real letter. I have become very envious of my former self, doing all this reading of old correspondence, and of course part of it is because I knew so many great people and DID so much all the time, but a good part as well has been just that the letters themselves—in both directions—were so great, and I got out of the habit years ago. Getting a letter like yours is now a rarity —and of course the only way to get 'em is to write 'em, so no time like the now, eh?

(Please note I have become a true Canadian. I say both "eh" and "zed.")

With which I went dead in the head. A lot of stuff I want to write about, but every avenue of approach seems roadblocked somewhere. No. Wrong image. It's that we don't have the substrate any more—like you worrying suddenly about whether you were boring me with your talk about your woods. Actually, I loved it probably more than I would love the woods. I would never have the patience or the energy to do the kind of job you're doing, but I can fantasize doing it; in Jamaica I learned a lot about living outdoors that I never experienced before—

Nope. That's not quite right. I always loved "outdoors," loved water, almost any kind, but especially lakes and rivers, and part of that was the surrounding woods. (I think lakes and rivers more than ocean mainly because I don't really like sand or beaches.) I loved walking in the woods, and in tall grass, campfires, cooking outdoors—almost all my "religious" experiences ("joining the universe") were outdoors. But I hated "nature walks" and came to

react against the word "nature"—and more recently, the pious use of the word "natural." Did I feel my mysterious universe was being profaned somehow by the "nature" teachers? Something more than that, because I also did NOT (actively did not) want to learn biology either. I have of course regretted my ignorance in this area repeatedly, but never moved to repair it—though I have recently developed a necessary interest in physiology, and actually managed to learn spotty bits of it.

That needs some thinking about. Back to Outdoors. I think part of its excitement for me was that I was always a bit afraid of it, never felt quite "at home" in it—much the same as my basic fear of almost all animals, just not UNDERSTANDING them. I feel ashamed of these lacks and gaps, but there they still are.

Living outdoors, however, I learned first not in Jamaica but with/from Walt. Hated it, welcomed it, feared it, could handle it only because he was there.

Well, I don't know if I will ever actually walk in your woods. With luck, and application, I may be able to build up my leg muscles again enough to overcome the weakness of the joints and be able to keep my footing on uneven terrain well enough to enjoy it. But your talk about it delighted me in the same way I enjoyed watching a Jamaican friend rebuild a piece of the beach. Or—Jamaica again—my fascination watching an old-fashioned masonry job: one strong man collecting rocks from vacant land, one cracking them with a sledgehammer, the master mason chipping off edges and fitting them into a foundation for a porch; I didn't have to believe I could ever do it myself to delight in seeing it done.

22 June now.

Half of the stuff above I just wrote. And I come to this sentence, left from the earlier version, where it followed the remark about "substrate": Well, maybe if I deal with small stuff first I will fall into some seriousness along the way.

I didn't know computers got old and tired and forgetful like people. I am constantly being disillusioned about the machine interface. I have a friend here, Mike, who is my computer maven—bought my machine for me and comes (usually) when it gets temperamental, or when I try to do something I KNOW I ought to be able to do (like double space) and it won't. A few weeks ago, it lost a file; the file was an earlier version of the stuff I included for you in this letter, begun the day Asimov died. It was gone, completely gone:

ISAAC ASIMOV...

*One of the commonest cruellest recognitions of advancing years: Lovers, beloveds are not forever.*

*Some drift away; some storm off some gently disconnect; the rest, at last, simply die. The only way not to lose them all is to die first.*

*Minimally, it is clearly better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all. The experience of the grief of final loss is evidence, if needed, that oneself is still alive.*

*Curious, too, and interesting to learn that there is grief the last proof of residual love, still waiting on the deaths of otherwise long lost—one would have thought forgotten—loves.*

*As I write this, Isaac Asimov has just died. We were never, in the most common and narrowest use of the word, lovers, but we did love at one time: the heroic, I suppose, love of colleagues, comrades: comrades-at-arms says it best, a very special, specialized love I have heard described (by a fighting Irishman who was in all senses once a lover) as "a man I'd want at my back in a fight."*

*Face-to-face Ike and I sometimes amused, sometimes consoled, sometimes bedevilled each other. But back-to-back, we were on occasion a beast with eight busy limbs. We met—*

*I cannot quite remember. I knew him first through his stories, when I had not yet written my first science fiction, but I don't recall a Big Impact/First Contact physical meeting. It would have been 1945-6-7, somewhere close to fifty years ago when we were both members, first of the Futurian Society and then of the Hydra Club.*

*Those memberships and my graduation in 1948 into sf writer status made us necessary comrades. Simply being two science fiction writers, in those days, was almost enough; sf was a ghetto in the literary cosmos, mocked and despised by a smug Mainstream—a rich, seething, yeasty ghetto whose members all understood (quite correctly as it turned out) that we were the province and the provenance of the future. But even within sf, the Futurians were a nexus; dispute and debate were constant amongst us, yet we shared certain essential sensibilities and worldviews that cemented us into a sort of Young Lions' network.*

*Two years after my first story appeared in Astounding Science Fiction, Asimov reviewed my first novel, Shadow on the Hearth.*

*Read this book on a warm sunny day, with the birds singing and the summer in full play; and, as you read, the sun will dim out, the birds will fall silent and the cold will creep in. Yet the story is only the quiet account of five days in the life of a Westchester housewife....*

*Yet exactly this becomes an exercise in grim horror, since the story takes place during the five days after the atom bombs fall on New York City....*

*When you have lived them, it may take a while for the sun to strike a light again and for the birds to clear their throats and find their places in the musical score. It may take a long time, and that, perhaps, is how it should be. There should be a permanent chill in every man's soul while the menace of atomic war remains.*

*That was June of 1950. Neither Isaac nor science fiction in general had as yet hit the big time, but he was already a fixed star within the science fiction galaxy; he had already published, in fact, all of his most memorable fiction: the robot stories, most of the Foundation series, and the unforgettable, startling, story, "Nightfall." I should have been overwhelmed by his praise, but I was only pleased that someone who understood precisely what I meant to do had access to a major newspaper.*

*The last time I saw Isaac was at a symposium I organized in Toronto.*

Anyway, the damn thing wasn't on any directory, wasn't on the Windows list, wasn't halfway down the stairs—I take that back. Halfway down the stairs is where it must have been. Mike came down and got addictively more and more fascinated, hunting for it, finally pulled back, shrugged, and said, I dunno, maybe some static, nothing else wrong. Two weeks later it showed up again on the Windows list. So yes, I know the damn machines are temperamental, irrational, perverse, et al. But old and forgetful? Sheeeittt!

June 22 add: So when I came in on Friday to finish this letter, and decided to move a block of type from lower down to higher up in order to get into the rest of the stuff up there, my menu went weird, giving me only call-caps instead of words: F for Files, etc. Then the Windows list vanished completely. Then everything vanished. C-A-D did nothing, neither did Reset. I could hear the computer burping away trying to perform, but NOTHING on screen. Couldn't find Mike. My no.2 and no.3 experts were out of town. Couldn't reach Mike all weekend. Bumped into knowledgeable guy yesterday who said, first, had I checked all the plugs? I hadn't, because I got misbehaviour before silence; when I gave him more detail, he said it sounded more like the gizmo that (regulates? manages? I can't even remember the fuckin LANGUAGE!) the hard disk than like the disk itself. Reached Mike this morning, he said he'd come down this afternoon; then I came in about noon, checked all the plugs (all okay). Turned on the computer. Works. EXCEPT the Windows list, which had about twenty items, now has six. And the cursor has been, and still is, wandering when I stop to think. So go understand, huh?

I return to you now on June 18:

I am trying hard to hope you get lucky with the unemployment insurance bills, but I really

want to see you. Maybe if you get extended we can have a death in the family you have to come to Toronto for? I do not recommend coming in December; aside from the weather (but due to it) with any luck I won't be here myself. Last winter was the first I had spent here in twelve years—no, the second, but the winter before, between the heart attack and the angiogram that sent me for surgery, I was hardly even aware of the weather, or much of anything else. Every now and then I would call a taxi to take me to Emergency, and in between, people would come and bring in groceries, clean up, etc. But this past winter I was supposed to be Okay, and was doing the Writer-in-Res job, which meant going to the university office twice a week, and starting physiotherapy and trying to take over caring for myself, and I discovered I was now one of the Elderly who are warned in weather forecasts not to go out at certain times. If I tried, I'd get about as far as the corner before my whole body was exhausted: simply couldn't get enough oxy into my blood.

So now I'm trying to figure out where I can go; Jamaica's out, medical services there have been IMF'd out of existence. But I don't want to be a part-time prisoner in my little apartment again.

\$300 doesn't sound surprising to me. If you can get it down, that's fine, but I figured it would be somewhere around there when I made the suggestion. I have a surprising amount of money: old age stuff from Canada and U.S. adds up to almost \$1,200 a month, and Public Lending Rights and the odd reading to at least another \$1,000 a year, and to my astonishment there is about \$50,000 in stuff accrued from the ACTRA (radio and TV) pension fund and the remains of the money I got for my papers. I've thought of this accrual in terms of interest income for some years now, but interest rates have fallen drastically now, and I expect the interest and possibly the principal to disappear (perhaps along with the pensions) when the stock market crash materializes, so I am trying to learn to spend money and get pleasures while I can and also possessions I will still have when I have no money. (I am also, like you, expecting to start earning again, but have less faith than you in WHEN my book will be finished.) This morning I bought a neat little Sony Walkman player/recorder/radio with really good sound and more micro-size buttons and functions than one would think this gadget—JUST large enough to hold a cassette—could contain. Ann is trying to persuade me to buy a cottage.

I might actually do it. I have resisted all temptations to home ownership because it has seemed to me that it is the home that owns the owner. Kept saying if I had enough to pay cash and some built-in arrangement to include someone who could handle the maintenance, I'd do it. So here's this cottage at Camp Naivelt.— This is at the far end of Brampton, a sub/ex-urban dormitory of Toronto, mostly quite unlovely, but the far end is a park, and part of the park is this relic: a camp started in 1936 by Communist (secular) Jews. Until recently, you had to be both Jewish and at least left-wing to own a place there; now they theoretically can't discriminate, and there is some mixture. Anyhow, a couple of years ago Ann and Juan got a place there, a minimal two-room-and-screen-porch shack, for \$1 and a promise to repair roof and floors, etc.

Now there's a much more sophisticated place (shower, fridge, stove, furniture, storm windows!) two houses away going for \$1,500, and Ann wants me to buy it—I suspect so they can shower without having to go to the shower-house. But here it is, a place I can pay cash for; now if I can pin down Ann's casual assurance that they will do any needed maintenance work ...

... then I will have a place I can use about five months a year IF I get a successful cataract operation that will permit me to drive again. Meanwhile I can use it when Ann is driving in or out.

I mentioned in the last letter that she hopes you will spend some time with them when you come. I reassert this now vigorously; Emily, her eldest, who is my friend, my assistant, and cleaning woman (I can't kneel on the bad knee to do floors, or balance for high spots; can't lift more than about ten pounds without getting post-incision muscle pains), reports that Ann has been telling all the kids about you.

June 18 ends here. Now June 23.

Appointment with cardiologist this morning. He sat still for all my questions, told me which aches and pains I might just have to get used to (surgery detritus) and made suggestions about remedial ones; reduced my medications by one; pronounced heart and arteries apparently in good working shape.

So. Going by the scribbled addendum on your letter, I figure if you can come at all it will be end of July. If so, you may want to plan to stay through a second weekend, because that will be the big weekend for WOMAD, which is World of Music Art & Dance, at Harbourfront (the big waterfront park). I love it; I think you'd like it. They really do mean "world": mixture of performers from Africa, Asia, South America, and Native people, plus plain old Canadians. Everybody does one indoor paid gig and at least one outdoor freebie; unlikely combos come together, like a drum session with people from North and South America. Natives, Chinese, Indian, and African, last year. Lots of colour, excitement, and exotic foods.

Do you like Caribbean music—calypso, soca, reggae? If so, I will see if we can get a ride out to Waterloo AFTER the Caribana parade on the first of August. The Con runs thru Monday so we'd still have (more than?) enough time there.

I was going to write more about the memoirs but I have to get this out and off so that I will write more memoirs.

Much love,  
Judy

July 24, 1993  
To Virginia Kidd

Dear Kidd:

I will try to think this out at you, then decide whether to bother you with the actual letter. I had lunch with Louise Dennys Thursday. It was thrilling.

Not only do I think (based on talks with people who've worked with her, as well as the quality of the list she edited at Lester & Orpen Dennys) she is probably the best editor in Canmade, and one of the best anywhere—I also (like? too weak) have been somewhat infatuated with her ever since our first meeting. (In case of doubt after all these years, no, no sexual content there.) Each time we've met, we've both expressed this attraction, and promised ourselves/each other to find time to explore friendship. Of course, her life and mine being what they are, we have never done so.

July 26

I was interrupted there by a friend of Ann's, come to carry me out to her shack (not-quite-cottage) at Camp Naivelt. Due to pollens?/citronella?/ chlorine pool? eye was nonfunctional yesterday—only a bit better today—and now you have received your letter with the second check from Italy, so will pause to say I cannot follow the deductions the way you have the statements made up. I need to know all the numbers to know which way to do it on my income tax, and so far I can't arrange them any which way to arrive at the final figure. That's for the short-story check as well as the one for *Shadow*.

So. Back to Louise, who says she is "captivated." The fact that it is the world of science fiction I'm writing about gives it an extra—exotic?—touch for her. (No. More than that. When I told her about the "Message to Mars," she was genuinely thrilled.) But the two aspects that have grabbed her are the story of becoming a writer, and the Young Woman story.

You know, I've been converted as I worked on this. All these years, when people went on about my supposed feminist role-modelling in SF I laughed and laughed, because I knew I wasn't doing anything like that. SF was ready for that change; it accepted me eagerly (as a writer—the sour stuff later was to do with being an Authority); nobody but nobody advised me to use a man's (or neutral) name; some stories were hard to sell because editors said

they wanted "the woman's angle" from me. Etc. You know all this. Now I hear over and over (most recently a show last week on A&E, apparently from the BBC) how in THE SIXTIES AND SEVENTIES women at last, through struggle, achieved the right to use their full names, write female heroes, etc. etc.—most frequently quoted authority/liberator, Joanna Russ. Bullshit. BUT—

I also hear eloquent testimony—as from MacLean and Elisabeth Vonarburg at my Tribute, and perhaps a dozen younger women—writers and readers—for instance at Readercon, that it was reading my work/ anthologies in the fifties that made them realize they could write/expect to read stuff that included them in SF.

The responses I have had from non-SF women, and most recently and fluently from Louise, tell me that the exhilarating/terrifying experiences I was having in the forties and fifties were indeed twenty years ahead of their time in the Big "Real" World. They say in astonishment, How did you manage without any support network? For a while they had me convinced I never had one—but of course I did: it's just that the only FEMALE members were you and Kate (and later Barb Norville).

Where am I going with all this? I dunno. I'm just letting it take me wherever.

No. The stream of thought is wherever, but it comes out of a central theme. I want/need an editor/reader on this book who can juggle all the perspectives and keep reminding me of them:

Growing old, approaching death, accepting limitations, above all surviving the deaths of friends/lovers/network.

Offering as true a picture as distance will allow of the magical world we lived in forty or fifty years ago, a world where ideas were as important as dinner, and love could not be readily sliced up into sexual or social, agape or caritas, and where (all concomitant hostilities nonetheless) sharing was a societal norm.

A true statement about indistinguishability of learning and sexual activity in my life—and perhaps in many others' as well? This is feminist-politically incorrect these days, I know. love, J.

Oct. 5, 1995  
To Valerie Alia

Dear Valerie,

I have been about-to-write for a couple of weeks now, and kept putting it off because it's so long since I've written, I figured I should do another of my infamous catch-up letters-to-everybody first. I mean, you are not the only one I haven't written to

Now suddenly it's less than two weeks till I leave home, so I better at least let you know I'm going to be in Vancouver for the Writers Festival. Stats: arrive Tues. evening, 17th at the Hotel Vancouver, should be checking in by six or seven o'clock; leaving noon Monday the 23rd; hosting three panels on SF & F, Wed. and Thurs. at 1 p.m., Fri. at noon; reading (briefly) from *Memoirs* Sun. at three. Lots of free time, obviously. With any luck, I'll get that letter-to-everybody done before I come out and save time when we see each other. Meantime, here's a chunk from a letter I finished in October '94, to give you some idea what it's been like since I moved here in February '93.

Have just come out of a stretch which included going to Winnipeg to give out an award, doing a deadline column for the Canadian trade paper *Quill & Quire*, and creating reams of material for the Friends of the (you should excuse) Merrill Collection, as well as for the new Libraries Committee of the Writers' Union to try to save, not just the Merrill Collection, but the whole Toronto Library system (and others elsewhere) from the ravages of the deficit-mad politicians and electronics-mad library board. (Q&Q column to do with this also.) These things coincided with conducting an SF writing workshop for Ryerson University—something I've managed to put off for two years since I first agreed to do it, and got stuck with this fall. Same time I am re-reading (and in some cases reading—stuff I missed when I couldn't see

so good) the [Ursula] Le Guin oeuvre against a writer/writer interview I am to do with her in two weeks at the International Festival of Authors here.

Also, a piece I wrote last fall on invitation from the Discovery channel, probably the most important part of my serious thinking these last two years. (They didn't use it.)

Technology is neither god nor devil—not magic, just stuff you do things with. To do anything useful, it must be appropriate to its purpose, affordable, sustainable—and someone has to know how to run it and maintain it. A spaceship won't fly without a programmer (astronaut or ground-control) and enough fuel—and you can't even use a milking machine without power, a mechanic, and enough food for the cow to produce milk.

Right now the planet is running out of resources, and our governments are racing towards bankruptcy while we keep draining the Earth's substance to sell technology that is neither appropriate nor sustainable. When the Big Crash comes, we will find ourselves in a Mad Max landscape of parched earth and leftover fragments of hi-tech under the control of local warlords. The power-base in these little tribal tyrannies will of course be muscles and guns—but also intelligence, ingenuity, and enough understanding of the leftover technology to make it appropriate and sustainable. With luck, we might even have a few satellites still in orbit, so that savvy young computer hackers can maintain a scientific data base, and keep communications open between tribes until the Earth and its inhabitants can heal themselves.

Dinner at Ann's during a rare visit by Katie MacLean, Toronto, August 199z. From left: Julia Pohl-Miranda, Emily, Tobias Pohl-Weary, Ann Pohl, Daniel Pohl-Miranda, Katie, Judith.  
*Juan Miranda*

So. I can get some comps, for my own programs, and some others. If there's something you'd like to attend, let me know. But mostly, I just hope for a chance to visit. Let me know your free time—write quickly, fax up thru Monday night, 16th (but check your files for address and phone below) or leave a message or call me at the hotel?

Judy

## **TWENTY-FIVE-A MESSAGE TO SOME MARTIANS.**

*(Originally published as an "Introduction" to an anthology, Visions of Mars, produced by The Planetary Society, 1994, and produced on CD-ROM. It included a picture of Judith Merrill. The CD-ROM was sent to Mars on a Russian space shuttle.)*

WE HAVE ALWAYS DREAMED Of Heaven. This cannot be the same for you, whose consciousness as a culture began with your ancestors' flight through space.

Also—however you may have scattered and spread across your planet, you will have begun with some shared social and linguistic base. Human cultures and consciousness on Earth evolved in many languages from widely scattered and vastly varied enclaves: some broiling hot, some bitter cold; desert-dry or drenched with rain; on mountaintops, at the seaside.

But the earliest legends of each and every unique culture show that we were all, from the beginning, gazing in awe at the night skies, imagining ourselves somehow descended from those wondrous lights, looking to them for blessings, fearing their displeasure, hoping somehow, some day, to ascend once more to the brightness of the stars.

Long before there was any science of astronomy, we knew the difference between planets and stars. Pre-sciences of astrology everywhere endowed the planets with control of human life.

Great religions were shaped in the image of the constellations. We reached up; we built pyramids, towers, cathedrals, skyscrapers, aircraft. As I write, it is just over forty years, two terrestrial generations, since our first spacecraft broke free of Earth's gravity ...



That venture—and this one, carrying messages to you who may some day inhabit the planet we call "Mars"—was made possible by a curious collaboration of science and romance.

Scientists and social/political thinkers had for centuries made use of fables, "future fiction," and imaginary voyages to preach controversial or heretical ideas. As the advancing technology of astronomy refined our knowledge of the solar system, Earth's Moon became a prime destination for imaginary voyages. Then, in 1877, Giovanni Schiaparelli observed what was mistranslated as the "canals" of Mars.

This apparent "proof" that Mars had water—and so probably air and, perhaps, life—inspired a new literary form, the tale of interplanetary adventure. The word "Mars" became synonymous with "space"—"Martian" with "extraterrestrial."

Most early space-faring stories were patterned on the sad history of Earth's partisan warfares: Martians invading Earth were literally monsters; Terrestrials invading Mars were brave pioneers, "civilizing" colonists. But the dramatic growth of astronomical knowledge in this century, plus the ever-closer prospect of actual space flight, kept pushing the writers of these romances to more serious speculations.

What technology would be needed to escape the "nursery" of Earth? What sort of life form might inhabit an alien planet? How could Terrestrials best survive in space or in the different surface conditions on another planet?

Typically, each advance in astronomy or rocketry stimulated space fiction writers to new extrapolations. Typically, the thinking of astronomers, rocket engineers, and nascent spacecraft designers was being inspired—and conditioned—by reading "science fiction."

Now the earth sciences are making us frighteningly aware of the damage done to our native planet by our philosophies of conquest and dominion.

Our stories of Mars are moving away from the old idea of the Conquest of Space. We want to revise, not replay, the history of Earth.

We have progressed from the idea of Martian-as-monster through Martian-as-mentor to Martian-as-just-other.

We are beginning to rethink our old dream of "terraforming" Mars, and speculating instead on how best to adapt ourselves to suit the planet when we can, finally, reach there.

The stories we send you here, taken together, tell a larger story.

We who have lived and worked in this confluence of science and speculation send a message of hope:

When our descendants—your ancestors—come—came—to live on your planet, we pray they came seeking not to conquer a planet, but to find consonance with it.

## **TWENTY-SIX-IMPROBABLE FUTURES**

*(From an interview taped six months before Judith's death and carried out by Helene Klodowsky of Imageries PB., Montreal; the work was done for the documentary What If ... A Film about Judith Merrill, which aired on Bravo! television and the Space Channel.)*

THIS ESSAY ISN'T exactly about a person, place, or thing I have loved, but it must be included because a cloud of future prediction has been hanging over me for some time now. I have a fairly dismal view of where our race is headed, and I worry daily about my six grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

I have even begun to feel about Canada more or less the way I felt about the United States when I had to leave that country. The only difference now is that there's no place left for me to go. Things are changing rapidly. There isn't a single place in the world that is changing in a way that makes me optimistic about our future. Fortunately, most of my grandchildren have grown up with a fair amount of survival skills, not just for living in a "civilized" society, but for basic relations with the planet.

The way I see things, civilization has come to mean industrial density, control, and high technology.

For anyone who has seen the Mad Max films, that's a pretty easy way of explaining my fears: a future landscape where what we now call civilization is limited to small enclaves that are totally corporate and controlled. Those who are still alive after numerous environmental disasters, and warfare, are living in little isolated settlements. These communities are basically little baronies run by little dictators who keep slaves.

It won't be quite as bad as the medieval dark ages. The main reason it will be slightly better is that we have personal computers. Just like in the Mad Max movies, pockets of technology will still function as long as there is someone around who knows how to work them. Ordinary people live in a primitive fashion, with bits and pieces of technology at their disposal; one guy has an airplane and knows how to fly it, someone else has a radio that works, except nobody is broadcasting anything on the radio anymore. A laptop computer can work off the electricity in your skin. I think some of the satellites will stay in orbit, and as long as there are satellites, there will be computer communication. We should be able to keep databases a little bit better than the ones the monks kept through the dark ages.

In this decade it has become the norm for the more articulate and socially concerned artists in all fields to focus on exploring the human-machine interaction. As human beings, we have used machines since the day the first person picked up a branch to club a little animal. The objective of machines has always been to make life easier for human beings. Sometimes this holds true. However, enormous amounts of time and energy are spent figuring out how to make our machines more and more complex.

Machines are now fulfilling the role of slaves. Throughout history, many human beings have loved having slaves. Those civilizations that didn't have slaves have often been opposed to them, but those people who did have them, enjoyed them. As long as we are able to stave off the complete collapse of our society, we're going to enslave machines more and more. Those human beings who don't have access to machines will, quite literally, starve.

I don't see much alternative to this horrible future, with the iron grip that multinational corporations have on what is essentially world government. Companies are boasting record profits, and the daily news tells us that the economy is improving, yet somehow more people than ever are unemployed. This trend results in more riots, more crime, more starvation, less medical care, and less social services of all kinds. There is a tremendous distance easing itself between the "haves" and the "have-nots." It's no longer a question of discrepancies between South and North, or even what we call industrialized and undeveloped. Major inequalities occur within a single region. Things are happening in Canada at a slower pace than in some other countries, but I don't know any place in the world where the socio-political trend is moving in a different direction.

There was a time when we thought that the developing of factory automation and computer technology would be a tremendous boon for humans. When we won the forty-hour workweek, we saw the future as a time when people would be working reduced hours—maybe fifteen or twenty hours a week, total—and there would still be lots of everything to get distributed around. Now we are the future. People are not working fifteen or twenty hours a week.

Kelli MacDonald, Judith's first great-grandchild, who shares the same birthday  
(January 21), Philadelphia, circa 5994.  
*Kevin MacDonald*

Some people are working much more than forty hours a week, while many others are not working at all.

Politicians avoid the problem. Corporate structures are only concerned with increasing their profits; they have a single function: the bottom line. Nobody who is on the "lucky" side wants to make changes that would be necessary to improve the situation.

This is because the essential nature of a corporation is not a human one, even though under our laws it is treated like a person. The notion that the individuals who compose a corporation might have preferences or needs is not meaningful to the corporation. If firing fifty staff people because they can be

replaced with one computer is cost-efficient, that's what a corporation will do. The structure is not designed to allow for the fact that once all the companies have fired fifty people, there won't be anybody left to buy the goods. Their concern is only to produce goods at the lowest possible cost, and to sell them at the highest price.

So how do you fight a giant multinational corporation? How do you fight a hundred giant multinational corporations? How do you fight a total global ideology concerned with deficits when people are going hungry? I have no idea. Until there is a total economic collapse, which I anticipate, this will not change. Among the "what if?" writers I respect, more and more are making the same kind of predictions. I don't even know that asking "what if?" will do any good any more.

We used to have a simplistic, clear-cut picture of things: there were righties and there were lefties. The lefties were those of us who were on the side of "good" and believed that stuff should be shared and that there was really, finally, for the first time in human history, more than enough for everybody. But that's not where we're at now. There is more than enough for everyone—there are stockpiles of goods locked up all over the world, just waiting to be consumed—by those who can afford to pay for it. There is no sociological or political will to make it be distributed evenly.

Things cannot continue to work indefinitely within the existing frameworks. Dialectically speaking, capitalism created socialism. But when the Soviet Union went bust everybody said, "There. This proves, beyond a doubt, that capitalism works! Hurrah!" It didn't prove anything of the sort. It proved that capitalism's antithesis did not work in that incarnation. Now we are approaching the day when the capitalist countries go bust and I fear there won't be anybody around to clap their hands, hurrah!

Judith sitting in her electronic cart on the rooftop of the Performing Arts Lodge, a couple of months before her death, 1997. Behind her is the downtown Toronto nightscape.

*Simian Posen*

The problem is not just economic. We cannot continue to harm the planet indiscriminately. I'm not worried about the planet itself, because I believe it has its own hydrostatic measures. Before we get into this dire strait, the planet will simply decide it can't afford this particular set of parasites anymore. It's already happening; we are seeing more natural disasters like earthquakes, storms, and landslides. They are happening partly because of specific things we humans have done, but maybe our great planet is already shrugging us off.

I don't know of anything that could make a difference, short of a major new religion based on deification of the planet itself. The last novel I tried to write was about the growth of such a religion, but the trouble is I don't believe in the religion myself, so I couldn't write it.

To my mind, such a religion would be all-encompassing, but essentially non-authoritarian. Out of necessity, there would probably be an authoritarian period at the beginning because things have moved too far already for gentle, quiet, peaceful preaching to change much. There's going to be violence. There's going to be even more violence than there is now. There's going to be at least local warfare. We're already seeing it, although it isn't exactly happening in this country. It's occurring in Eastern Europe where people, like the Serbs and Muslims, have managed to live with uneasy tolerance for years, and are suddenly raping and killing each other. It is also happening in the United States, Central America, and Africa. Because of racism, we call it tribalism when it happens in Africa and nationalism when it happens in Europe. When it happens here, we'll probably call it crime.

## **Appendix I**

### **The Work of Judith Merrill**

## Fiction

### NOVELS

*Shadow on the Hearth*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Family Book Club, 1950; also U.K., Italy, Mexico, Germany.

*The Tomorrow People*. New York: Pyramid Books, 1960, 1962; also Italy, Germany.

*Gunner Cade* (with C.M. Kornbluth, as "Cyril Judd"). As three installments, *Astounding Science Fiction*, March/April/May 1951. As book, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1952; New York: Ace Books, 1958; New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1959; also U.K., Italy, France.

*Outpost Mars* (with C.M. Kornbluth, as "Cyril Judd"). Appeared originally in three installments as "Mars Child," *Galaxy Science Fiction*, May/June/July 1952; as book, New York: Abelard Press, 1952; New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1953; also U.K., Germany.

*Sin in Space* (retitle of *Mars Child/Outpost Mars*). New York: Beacon Books, 1961.

### SHORT STORY COLLECTIONS AND NOVELLAS

*Out of Bounds*. New York: Pyramid Books, 1960, 1963.

*Daughters of Earth: Three Novels*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1968; New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1970; also U.K., Germany.

*The Best of Judith Merrill*. New York: Warner Books, 1976.

*Survival Ship, and Other Stories*. Toronto: Kakabeka Pub. Co., 1977.

*Daughters of Earth and Other Stories*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1985.

### SHORT STORIES

(WRITTEN UNDER THE NAME JUDITH MERRIL)

"Barrier of Dread." *Future*, July/August, 1950. Also in *SF Quarterly*, 1951; *Journey to Infinity*, ed. Martin Greenberg (New York: Gnome Press, 1951).

"Connection Completed." *Universe Science Fiction*, November 1954. Also in *Science Fantasy*, 1956; *Out of Bounds*, Merrill, 1960; *Survival Ship, and Other Stories*, Merrill, 1985.

"Daughters of Earth" (novella). *The Petrified Planet*, Introduction by John D. Clark, New York: Twayne Publishers, 1952. Also in *New Worlds* (London), 1966; *Daughters of Earth*, Merrill, 1969; *Daughters of Earth and Other Stories*, Merrill, 1985; *The Best of Judith Merrill*, Merrill, 1976.

"Dead Center." *Fantasy 6- Science Fiction*, November 1954. Also in *Fiction* (Paris), 1955; *The Best American Short Stories 2515*, ed. Martha Foley (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1956); *A Treasury of Great Science Fiction*, vol. 2, ed. Anthony Boucher (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1959); *The*

*World of Psychology*, vol. 1, ed. G.B. Levitas (New York: George Braziller, 1963); *Out of Bounds*, Merrill, 1960; *The Best of Judith Merrill*, Merrill, 1976; *Daughters of Earth and Other Stories*, Merrill, 1985.

"Death Cannot Withier" (with A.S. Budrys). *Fantasy & Science Fiction*, February 1959. Also in *Out of Bounds*, Merrill, 1960; Rod Serling's *Devils and Demons*, ed. Serling (New York: Bantam Books, 1967); *The Ninth Fontana Book of Great Ghost Stories*, ed. R. Chetwynd-Hayes (London: Fontana Books, 1973).

"Death Is the Penalty." *Astounding Science Fiction*, January 1949. Also in *Beyond the End of Time*, ed. Frederik Pohl (Garden City, N.Y.: Permabooks, 1952); *Survival Ship, and Other Stories*, Merrill, 1973.

"The Deep Down Dragon." *Galaxy Science Fiction*, August 1961. Also in *The Seventh Galaxy Reader*, ed. Frederik Pohl (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1964, and London: Gollancz, 1985); *Thirteen above the Night*, ed. Conklin Groff (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1965); *Survival Ship, and Other Stories*, Merrill, 1973; *Galaxy: Thirty Years of Innovative Science Fiction*, vol. 1, ed. Frederik Pohl, Martin H. Greenberg, and Joseph D. Olander (New York: Playboy, 1980).

"Exile from Space" (novella). *Fantastic Universe*, November 1956. Also in *The Fantastic Universe Omnibus*, ed. Hans Stefan Santesson (New York: Prentice Hall, 1960); *Flying Saucers in Fact and Fiction*, ed. Santesson (New York: Lancer Books, 1968); *Survival Ship, and Other Stories*, Merrill, 1973.

"The Future of Happiness" (three short-short stories). *Chatelaine*, 1979.

"Golfer's Girl." *Toronto Star Weekly*, 1949.

"Hero's Way." *Space*, 1952.

"Homecalling" (novella). *Original SF Stories*, November 1965. Also in *Impulse* (London), 1966; *Daughters of Earth*, Merrill, 1969; *Daughters of Earth and Other Stories*, Merrill, 1985; *Il Richiamo* (Milan: La Tartaruga Edizione, 1989).

"The Lady Was a Tramp" (first published as "Rose Sharon"). *Venture*, March 1956. Also in *Out of Bounds*, Merrill, 1960; *Survival Ship, and Other Stories*, Merrill, 1963; *The Venus Factor*, ed. Vic Ghidalia and Roger Elwood (New York: Macfadden-Bartell, 1972, and New York: Manor Books, 1973); *The Best of Judith Merrill*, Merrill, 1976; *Aliene, Amazzoni, Astronauta, Mondadori* (Milan, 1990).

"A Little Knowledge." *Science Fiction Quarterly*, 1955. Also in *Stardust SF* 3,1 (1979), ed. Forrest Fusco, Jr.

"The Lonely." *Worlds of Tomorrow*, October 1963. Also in *Survival Ship, and Other Stories*, Merrill, 1973; *The Best of Judith Merrill*, Merrill, 1976; *Space Mail*, ed. Isaac Asimov, Martin Greenberg, and Joseph Olander (New York: Fawcett Crest, 1980); *Daughters of Earth and Other Stories*, 1985.

"Muted Hunger." *Saint Mystery Magazine*, 1961, 1962. Also in *The Saint Magazine Reader*, ed. Leslie Charteris and Hans Santesson (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966).

"One Death to a Customer." *Saint Mystery Magazine*, 1961, 1962. Also in *Le saint detective magazine*, 1961.

"Peeping Tom." *Startling Stories*, Spring 1954. Also in *Out of Bounds*, Merril, 1960; *Survival Ship, and Other Stories*, Merril, 1973; *The Seven Deadly Sins of Science Fiction*, ed. Isaac Asimov (New York: Fawcett Crest, 1980); *Daughters of Earth and Other Stories*, Merril, 1985.

"Pioneer Stock." *Fantastic Universe*, January 1955.

"Project Nursemaid" (novella). *Fantasy & Science Fiction*, October 1955. Also in *Six Great Short SF Novels*, ed. Groff Conklin (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1960); (as novel) *Mondadori* (Rome, 1962); *Daughters of Earth*, Merril, 1969; *Meta Luna, Meta Marte, Urania* (Verona, 1962).

"Rain Check." *Science Fiction Adventures*, May 1954. Also in *Crime Prevention in the 30th Century*, ed. H.S. Santesson (New York: Walker & Co., 1969).

"Sea Change" (with C.M. Kornbluth, as "Cyril Judd"). *Dynamic Science Fiction*, 1953.

"The Shrine of Temptation." *Fantastic Universe*, April 1962. Also in *Gods for Tomorrow*, ed. H.S. Santesson (New York: Award Books, and London: Tandem Books, 1967); *Survival Ship, and Other Stories*, Merril, 1973; *The Best of Judith Merril*, Merril, 1976; *Daughters of Earth and Other Stories*, Merril, 1985.

"So Proudly We Hail." *Star SF Stories*, no. 1, ed. Frederik Pohl (New York: Ballantine Books, 1953). Also in *New York Post*, May 1954; *Seiun* (Japan), 1955; *Gamma*, 1965; *Survival Ship, and Other Stories*, Merril, 1973.

"Stormy Weather." *Startling Stories*, Summer 1954. Also in *The Best of Judith Merril*, Merril, 1976.

"Survival Ship." *Worlds Beyond*, January 1951. Also in *Bold*, 1953; *New Worlds*, 1955; *Tomorrow the Stars*, ed. R.A. Heinlein (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1952); *Transformations*, ed. Daniel Roselle (New York: Fawcett Publications, 1973); *Social Education* 37,2 (1973); *Anthropology through SF*, ed. Carol Mason (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1974); *You and Science Fiction*, ed. Bernard Hollister (Skokie, IL: National Textbook Co., 1976); *Rhetorical Considerations: Essays for Analysis*, ed. Harry Brent and William Lutz (Cambridge, Mass.: Winthrop Publishers, 1977); *Future Scapes: Explorations in Fact and Science Fiction*, ed. Robert Tompkins (Toronto: Methuen, 1977); *Responding to Reading, Level C*, ed. Robert J. Ireland (Don Mills, Ont.: Addison-Wesley, 1983); *Contexts Three*, ed. Glen Sorestad et al. (Toronto: Nelson, 1984); *Il Richiamo* (Milan: La Tartaruga Edizione, 1989).

"That Only a Mother." *Astounding Science Fiction*, June 1948. Also in *World of Wonder*, ed. Fletcher Pratt (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1951); *Children of Wonder*, ed. William Tenn (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1952) and rpt. as *The Outsiders* (Garden City, N.Y.: Permabooks, 1954); *The Damned*, ed. D. Talbot (New York: Lion Library, 1954); *First Flight*, ed. Damon Knight (New York: Lancer Books, 1963); *SF Hall of Fame*, vol. 1, ed. Robert Silverberg (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1963); *Transformations*, ed. Daniel Roselle (New York: Fawcett Publications, 1963); *The Hitchhiker*, ed. Lorna Downman (Stockholm, Sweden: Wiksell, 1964); *Social Education* 37,2 (1973); *Introductory Psychology through Science Fiction*, ed. Harvey Katz et al. (New York: Rand McNally, 1974); *Women of Wonder*, ed. Pamela Sargent (New York: Vintage Books, 1974); *Vrouwen in Wonderland* (Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 1974); *Femmes et merveilles*, ed. Pamela

Sargent (Paris: Denoel, 1975); *The Best of Judith Merrill*, Merrill, 1976; *Mujeres y maravillas*, ed. Pamela Sargent (Barcelona: Bruguera, 1977); *Galerij der Giganted*, no. 2, ed. Robert Silverberg (Paris: Elsevier, 1977); *The Road to SF*, no.3, ed. James Gunn (New York: Mentor Books, 1979); *Isaac Asimov Presents the Great Science Fiction Stories*, no. to, 1948, ed. Isaac Asimov and Martin Greenberg (New York: DAW Books, 1983; *Countdown to Midnight*, ed. H. Bruce Franklin (New York: DAW Books, 1984); *Daughters of Earth and Other Stories*, Merrill, 1985; *Aliene, Amazzoni, Astronauta, Mondadori* (Milan, 1990); *Women of Wonder: The Classic Years* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1995).

"Whoever You Are." *Startling Stories*, December 1952. Also in *Out of Bounds*, Merrill, 1960; *Survival Ship, and Other Stories*, Merrill, 1973; *The Best of Judith Merrill*, Merrill, 1976; *Daughters of Earth and Other Stories*, Merrill, 1985.

"Wish upon a Star." *Fantasy & Science Fiction*, December 1958. Also in *Fiction* (Paris), 1959; *Survival Ship, and Other Stories*, Merrill, 1973; *The Best of Judith Merrill*, Merrill, 1976; *Daughters of Earth and Other Stories*, Merrill, 1985; *Il Richiamo* (Milan: La Tartaruga Edizione, 1989).

"A Woman of the World" (first published as "Rose Sharon"). *Venture*, January 1957.

"Woman's Work Is Never Done." *Future*, March 1951.

#### SHORT STORIES (WRITTEN UNDER OTHER NAMES)

*As Judith Grossman:*

"The Golden Fleece." *The Tower*, 1939. Also in *Bakka Magazine*, no. 6, 1977.

*As Judy Zissman:*

Two stories. *Crack Detective*, 1945-46.

*As Eric Thorstein:*

Seven stories. *Sports Leader*, *Western Action*, *Blue Ribbon Western*, *Double Action Western*, *Famous Western*, 1947-48.

*As Ernest Hamilton:*

Ten stories. *Sports Short Stories*, *Cowboy*, *Sports Fiction*, 1947 -48.

*As James McCreigh (with Frederick Pohl):*

"Big Man with the Girls." *Future*, March 1953. Also in *Escape to Earth*, ed. Ivan Howard (New York: Belmont Books, 1963).

*As Cyril Judd (with C.M. Kornbluth):*

"Sea Change," 1953. *Dynamic Science Fiction*, 1953.

*As Rose Sharon:*

"The Lady Was a Tramp," 1956, "Woman of the World," 1957, both in *Venture*.

#### NOTES

1. Of a total of 49 short stories written by Judith Merrill over her career, 28 appear in 38 trade anthologies and it collections designed as texts for secondary and post-secondary schools, most notably:

*The Best American Short Stories 1955*, ed. Martha Foley. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1956.

*A Treasury of Great Science Fiction*, ed. Anthony Boucher. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1959.

*The World of Psychology*, ed. G.B. Levkas. New York: George Braziller, 1963.

*The Science Fiction Hall of Fame*, ed. R. Silverberg. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1970.

*Other Canadas*, ed. John Robert Colombo. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1979.

*Women of Wonder: The Classic Years*, ed. P. Sargent. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1995.

2. A total of 33 titles have been translated for publication in French, Dutch, German, Italian, Spanish, Swedish, and/or Japanese.

#### TRANSLATIONS OF WORKS FROM JAPANESE (BY MERRIL)

"The Sunset, 2217 A.D." (with Tetsu Yano), by Ryu Mitsuse. *Best Science Fiction for 1972*, ed. Frederik Pohl. New York: Ace Books, 1972.

"The Empty Field" (with Kinya Tsuruta), by Mono Kita. *Omega: A Collection of Original Science Fiction Stories*, ed. Roger Elwood. New York: Walker & Co., 1973, Fawcett Gold Medal, 1974.

"The Savage Mouth" (with Tetsu Yano), by Sakyo Komatsu. *Rooms of Paradise*, ed. Lee Harding. Melbourne: Quartet, 1978; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979.

"The Road to the Sea" (with Tetsu Yano), by Takashi Ishikawa. *Proteus: Voices for the Eighties*, ed. Richard S. McEnroe. New York: Ace Books, 1981.

#### ANTHOLOGIES EDITED BY MERRIL

*Shot in the Dark*. New York: Bantam Books, 1950.

*Beyond Human Ken*. New York: Random House, 1952; also U.K.

*Beyond the Barriers of Space and Time*. New York: Random House, 1954; also U.K.

*Human?* New York: Lion Library, 1954.

*Galaxy of Ghouls*. New York: Lion Library, 1955.

*England Swings SF*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1968; New York: Ace Books, 1970; also



U.K.

*Tesseract*s. Vancouver: Press Porcépic, 1985.

#### THE SF ANNUALS EDITED BY MERRIL

A 12-year series, with title and publisher changes. All 12 volumes of the series were also published in Japan, and volumes 5-9 in the U.K.

*SF: The Year's Greatest Science Fiction and Fantasy*. New York: Dell Originals, 1956-57-58-59; and New York: Gnome Press (as *SF: 56 /57 /58/59*).

*The 5th [and 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th] Annual Year's Best SF*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1960-64; and New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1961-65.

*The 10th [and 11th] Annual Year's Best SF*. New York: Delacorte, 1965-66; and New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1966-67.

*SF 12*. New York: Delacorte, 1968; New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1968.

*SF: The Best of the Best*. New York: Delacorte, 1967; New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1967; also U.K.

#### **Poetry** (1973-85)

"Auction Pit." *Survival Ship, and Other Stories*, Merrill, 1973; *The Best of Judith Merrill*, Merrill, 1976.

"In the Land of Unblind." *Fantasy & Science Fiction*, October 1974; *The Best of Judith Merrill*, Merrill, 1976; *Other Canadas*, ed. John Robert Colombo, Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1979; *Daughters of Earth and Other Stories*, Merrill, 1985; *Tesseract*s 3, Vancouver: Press Porcépic, 1990.

"Space Is Sparse." *Daughters of Earth and Other Stories*, Merrill, 1985.

"Woomers." Unpublished; written for reading at Harbourfront Benefit for Pages Bookstore, Toronto, 1985.

#### **Non-Fiction**

##### CRITICISM (1952-97)

More than three hundred pieces of critical writing, ranging from brief commentaries in anthologies through individual book reviews, review columns, introductions, and afterwords to annual summaries of the field and a twelve-thousand-word historical overview of speculative fiction, have appeared in critical journals, books, newspapers, and popular magazines.

##### CRITICISM, INTRODUCTIONS, REVIEWS, ETC.

"Summation" and story notes. Annually, in *SF: The Year's Best* anthologies, 1959-68.

"Books." From March 1963 to February 1969, regular book review feature for *Fantasy & Science Fiction*; 26 review columns.

"What Do You Mean: Science? Fiction?" A lengthy historical/critical essay, originally published in *Extrapolation* (at that time the journal of the Science Fiction Conference in the Modern Language Association), nos. 7, 8 (May/December 1956); and still widely used in university science fiction courses. Also in *SF—The Other Side of Realism: Essays on Modern Fantasy and Science Fiction*, ed. Thomas D. Claeson (Bowling Green, Ky.: Bowling Green Popular Press, 1971). The essay was also the title piece in a collection of critical writings translated for book publication in Japan. *NW-SF*, vol. 4, Japan; *SF-ni naniga dekimasuka*, ed. Asakura (Tokyo: Shobunsha, 1972).

"Guest Editorial." *Impulse*, November 1966.

"Introduction." *SF: The Best of the Best*. New York: Delacorte, 1967.

"Introduction." *Once and Future Tales from Fantasy and Science Fiction*, ed. Edward L. Ferman. Jacksonville, IL: Harris-Wolfe, 1968.

"Introduction." *Path into the Unknown: The Best of Soviet Science Fiction*. New York: Delacorte, 1968, and New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1968.

"Introduction." *The Secret Songs*, by Fritz Leiber. London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1968. Also Shobunsha, 1972; Meulenhoff, 1976.

"Fritz Leiber." *Fantasy & Science Fiction*, July 1969. Also in *The Best from Fantasy & Science Fiction*, ed. Edward L. Ferman (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1974).

"Canada's Americans" (book review). *Saturday Night*, August 1971.

"SF-ni naniga dekimasuka" ("SF: What Can You Do with It?"). Collection of critical writings by Judith Merril, ed. and trans. by Hisashi Asakura. Tokyo: Shobunsha, 1972.

"900 Pages (Illustrated) of Tripe" (book review). *The Toronto Star*, 1974.

"Yesterday's Tomorrows" (book review). *The Toronto Star*, June 1974.

"Canadian Science Fiction" (annotated bibliography). *Bakka Magazine*, no. 6, 1977.

"Science Fiction Takes Off." *Weekend Magazine*, 1977.

"Readable SF" (book review). *The Globe and Mail*, June 25, 1977.

"In Memory Yet Green" (book review). *The Globe and Mail*, June 9, 1979.

A Memoir and Appreciation." *The Science Fiction of Mark Clifton*, ed. Barry N. Malzberg and Martin H. Greenberg. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980.

"Women in SF" (an annotated bibliography). *Canadian Woman's Studies/Les Cahiers de la Femme*, 1981.

Afterword." *Ark of Ice: Canadian Futurefiction*, ed. Leslie Choyce. Halifax, N.S.: Pottersfield Press, 1992.

"Emancipation Proclamation." *Gummitch and Friends*, by Fritz Leiber. Hampton Falls, N.H.: Donald M. Grant Publisher, 1992.

"Foreword." *Out of This World: Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature*, ed. Andrea Paradis. Kingston, Ont.: Quarry Press, 1995; and *Visions d'autres mondes*, Westmount, Que.: Editions Robert Davies, 1995.

## OTHER NON-FICTION

"Mars—New World Waiting." *Marvel Science Fiction*, August 1951.

"The Hydra Club." *Marvel Science Fiction*, November 1951.

"Theodore Sturgeon." *Fantasy & Science Fiction*, September 1962. Also in *The Best from Fantasy & Science Fiction*, ed. Edward L. Ferman (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 5974).

"Japan: Hai!" *OSFIC*, no. 24, 1970.

"Science: Myth Tomorrow, Magic Yesterday." *Issues & Events*, February 1972.

"Basil Tomatoes a la Ipsy Wipsy." *Cooking out of This World*, ed. Anne McCaffrey. New York: Ballantine Books, 1973.

"The Three Futures of Eve." *The Canadian*, Sept. 1976.

"Close Encounters of a Monstrous Kind." *Weekend Magazine*, May 6, 1978.

"Beverly Glen Copeland." *Canadian Woman's Studies/Les Cahiers de la Femme*, 1978.

"Questions Unasked, Issues Unaddressed." *Perspectives on Natural Resources—Symposium II*. Peterborough, Ont.: Sir Sandford Fleming College, 1979.

"The Future of Happiness." *Chatelaine*, January 1979. Also in *Daughters of Earth and Other Stories*, Merril, 1985.

"Jamaica: A View from the Beach." *Departures*, April 1981.

"The Crazies Are Dying." *NOW* (Toronto), Sept. 25, 1986.

"Public Disservice." *Quill & Quire*, Toronto, 1994.

"Message to Some Martians." *Visions of Mars*, CD-Rom, *Virtual Reality Laboratories*, 1994. Also in *Witness to Wilderness*, Vancouver, 1994.

## Media Adaptations

## DRAMATIZATIONS/ADAPTATIONS FOR PERFORMANCE

"Atomic Attack." Dramatization of *Shadow on the Hearth* for *Motorola TV Theatre*, ABC, New York, 1954.

"Survival Ship" and "The Shrine of Temptation." Adapted for reading aloud, *Cac-Radio* (1974) and *Theatre Passe Muraille*, Toronto, (1976); *Caedmon Records* (1978).

"Whoever You Are." Adapted with Charles Dewar; dramatized on *CBC-Radio*, *Ideas*, March 1974.

"Headspace." Adapted with Paul Kelman as a stage play based on "Connection Completed," "The Lady Was a Tramp," and "The Land of Unblind," for *Theatre Passe Muraille*, Toronto, 1978.

## RADIO AND TV DOCUMENTARIES

(*Scriptwriter, Interviewer, and Narrator*)

*CBC -Radio Ideas, Kaleidoscope*, and *Radio International*. 25.5 hours of documentaries, 1975-75:

a ten-hour series, "Japan: Future Probable"

a five-hour series, "How to Face Doomsday without Really Dying"

fourteen individual programs of various lengths, including:

"How to Think Science Fiction," *Radio Schools, Kaleidoscope*, four half-hours, 1971-72

"Women of Japan," *Ideas*, one hour, 1972 "What Limits?" *Ideas*, one hour, 1973

"Growing up in Japan," *Radio Schools, Kaleidoscope*, five half-hours, 1973

"Science Fiction Special," *Radio International*, two hours, 1975

"To Make a World," *Ideas*, one hour, 1975 "Apple Bay," *Ideas*, one hour, 1975

"Space Is Sparse," *CBC-Radio*

readings from Elizabeth Smart's journals.

*TVOntario (TVO)*, 108 mini-documentaries, three to seven minutes each, following broadcast episodes of *Dr. Who*, 1978-81.

*CBC Arts National*, readings from Emily Carr's journals, 1987.

## Lectures

(SELECTED LISTING, 1968-97)

"Living in the Information Society." Keynote Speaker, *York University Conference*, Toronto, 1961.

Secondary Universe Conference (SeCon) I. Keynote Speaker, 1968.

Lecturer in Science Fiction. University of Toronto, 1970-71.

"Contemporary Mythology." McGill University, Montreal, 1972.

"Science and Myth." Sir George Williams University, Montreal, 1972.

"Privacy and Publicity." SeCon., W 1972.

Symposium on Popular Culture. State University of New York (s u N Y )-Buffalo, 1973.

Interdisciplinary Course on Extraterrestrial Life. University of Toronto, 1973, 1974.

"History of Atheism" Course. University of Toronto, 1974.

Intermedia Presentation. Erindale College, Mississauga, Ont., 1974.

Hart House Library Committee. University of Toronto, 1976.

MENSA International Congress. Banquet Speaker, Toronto, 1976; Dalhousie University Library School, Halifax, 1977.

"Living with Technology." Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Albany, N.Y., 1977; Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) Group for Research on Women, 1977; Festival of Women in the Arts, Centennial Community College.

Canadian Authors' Association. Conference Speaker, Toronto, 1979.

"Writers Forum." SUNY-Brockport, 1979.

Slide show on "Dream Cities." Heritage Canada Foundation Conference, Winnipeg, 1980.

"The Future of Women and Work." "Bread and Roses" Symposium, Ottawa, 1982.

"Write-On" Conference. Atkinson College, York University, Toronto, 1983.

"Feminism and Culture." Partisan Gallery, Toronto, 1983.

"Arts and the Future." Matrix/Midland Festival, Michigan, 1983.

"Women and Words" Conference. Vancouver, 1983.

"Facing Nuclear Holocaust." Temple University, Philadelphia, 1984.

"Science Fiction Treatments of Aging." American Psychological Association Conference, Toronto, 1984.

"Bio-Ethics in Science Fiction." Westminster Institute/ London Public Library, London, 1985.

"The Informal Economy." Couchiching Conference, Orillia, Ont., 1986.

Vancouver International Writers' Festival. Featured Performer, 1988.

Vancouver International Writers' Festival. Speaker, 1995.

## **Memberships**

### **ORGANIZATIONS (FOUNDER, DIRECTOR)**

Founder, Hydra Club, New York (science fiction professionals), 1947.

Founder, Milford Science Fiction Writers' Conference, 1956; Director, to 1960.

Organizer/Program Chair, Rochdale College Summer Festival, 1969.

Director, "Spaceship Earth" Seminar Series, Toronto, 1970.

Founder/Donor, The Merrill Collection of Science Fiction, Speculation, and Fantasy (formerly The Spaced Out Library), 1970; Consultant, 1970-97.

Program Chair, SeCon IV (Fourth Annual Meeting of the Science Fiction Research Association), Toronto, 1972.

Program Organizer, "Out of This World." Reading Series, Harbourfront, Toronto, 1980.

Co-Producer, Writers' Union of Canada Science Fiction Readings at Amiga Theatre, EXPO 1986, Vancouver.

Organizer, First Annual Canadian Science Fiction Writers' Workshop, 1986.

Founder, Hydra North.

Founding Member, Science Fiction Canada.

Founding Member, Canadian Science Fiction Foundation.

## **Appendix II**

### **Some of the People in Judith Merrill's Life**

MILTON ACORN (1923-86)—Best known as Canada's "people's poet." A carpenter by trade, and a left-wing activist who was at various times a member of the Communist Party, the Trotskyists, and the Canadian Liberation Movement. His books of poetry include *I've Tasted My Blood*, *More Poems for People*, and *The Island Means Minago* (winner of the Governor General's Literary Award in 1975). He married poet Gwendolyn MacEwen in 1962.

BRIAN ALDISS—Prolific writer and anthologist, closely associated during the 1960s with the new wave in science fiction and the U.K. magazine *New Worlds*. His increasingly unconventional works include *The Saliva Tree*, the three "Helliconia" books, and several works of nonfiction.

VALERIA ALIA—Poet, artist, scholar, and journalist, born in the Bronx. She was the first Distinguished Professor of Canadian culture at Western Washington University, Bellingham. One of her fields of research has been the representation of Inuit people in the media; as a professor at the Centre for Research in Media and Cultural Studies, University of Sunderland, U.K., she now specializes in ways of challenging racial stereotyping in the media.

MILTON AMGOTT—Judy's lawyer and friend in New York City.

POUL ANDERSON (1926-2001)—Popular science fiction writer of over one hundred books, including *Genesis*, *The Boat of a Million Years*, *The Enemy Stars*, and *Three Hearts and Three Lions*. A former president of the *Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America*, he has won three Nebula Awards and seven Hugo Awards, as well as being honoured for lifetime achievement.

ISAAC ASIMOV (1920-92)—Perhaps the best-known name in science fiction. Asimov was born in Russia and brought to the United States at the age of three. He began publishing his SF stories in 1939, at the age of nineteen. He was an early member of the Futurian Society of New York, and his vast collection of works includes the "Robot" series, the "Foundation" series, the story "Nightfall" (considered by some to be the best science fiction story ever written), and much non-fiction.

MARGARET ATWOOD—Renowned Canadian novelist and poet. Atwood's books include *Alias Grace*, *A Handmaid's Tale*, *The Edible Woman*, and *Surfacing*. Her novel *The Blind Assassin* won England's Booker Prize.

HILARY BAILEY—U.K. writer of numerous science fiction stories, but perhaps best known for her mainstream fiction, which includes *All the Days of My Life*. She was associated with the New Wave movement in U.K. science fiction throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s. She was married to writer Michael Moorcock (1962-78), and is the un-credited co-author of their novel *The Black Corridor*.

IAN BALLANTINE—New York editor who went from helping to found Penguin U.S. to founding Bantam Books and then, in 1952, Ballantine Books, which became a leading and prestigious publisher of science fiction novels. Ballantine is credited with inventing the "mass-market hardcover," including books by the likes of Shirley MacLaine, Lee Iacocca, and Chuck Yeager.

J.G. BALLARD—U.K. writer whose experience in a Japanese civilian row camp in Shanghai 1942-45 formed the basis for his popular (non-SF) novel *Empire of the Sun*. He started publishing science fiction novels in 1956. His writing, heavily inspired by the Surrealist painters, includes the short story collection *The Terminal Beach* and the novel *Crash*.

STAFFORD BEER—Expert in management (operational research and social systems) and effective organization (cybernetics). In July 1971 he visited Chile on the invitation of President Salvador Allende to develop a new cybernetic approach to the organization and regulation of the social economy. He has written numerous articles and books, and is president of the World Organization of Systems and Cybernetics (Paris).

JAMES BLISH—U.S. science fiction writer, married to writer Virginia Kidd for sixteen years, and one of the founders of the Milford Science Fiction Writers' Conference. He is best known for his "Cities in Space" series. His "Star Trek" novels were based on the television scripts.

ANTHONY BOUCHER—The pen name of William Anthony Parker White, the founding co-editor (with J. Francis McComas) of New York's literary *Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction* (1949), as

well as a mystery writer, critic, and anthologist. He is perhaps best-known for his story "The Quest for Saint Aquin," his stint as mysteries editor for *The New York Times*, and his yearly *Best from Fantasy & Science Fiction* anthologies.

WALTER BRADBURY—The science fiction editor at Doubleday during much of the period (1940s to 1960s) when Judy and her contemporaries were most active.

The group of early science fiction writers known as the Futurian Society of New York. From left: Lester del Rey, Evelyn Harrison, Harry Harrison, Isaac Asimov, Judith, Ann Pohl (in Judith's tummy), Frederik Pohl, Poul Anderson, L. Sprague de Camp, P. Schuyler Miller, New York, 1950.  
*Courtesy of the Merrill estate*

JOHN BRUNNER—British writer of SF and thrillers, whose novels *Stand on Zanzibar* and *The Shockwave Rider* are credited with paving the way for the cyber-punk movement because he discussed topics such as computer hacking and genetic engineering and described various bits of software that run by themselves as tapeworms or worms. Brunner died in 1995.

OCTAVIA BUTLER—One of the top African-American science fiction writers. Her novels and short stories combine anarchistic future societies with highly intellectual explorations of the alien perspective. Her novels include *Patternmaster*, her "Xenogenesis" trilogy—*Dawn: Xenogenesis*, *Adulthood Rites*, and *Imago*—and *Parable of the Sower*. In 1995 Butler was awarded a "genius grant" from the MacArthur Foundation for her unique synthesis of science fiction, mysticism, mythology, and African-American spiritualism.

HARRY CAMPBELL—Chief librarian of the Toronto Public Library system, 1956-78. Campbell was responsible for obtaining Judy's book collection (the Spaced Out Library) for the Toronto Public Library, establishing what would eventually be called the Merrill Collection of Science Fiction, Speculation and Fantasy.

JOHN W. CAMPBELL (1910-70—Science fiction writer (pseudonym Don A. Stuart) who edited the magazine *Astounding Science Fiction* (later renamed *Analog Science Fiction and Fact*) for thirty-four years. As editor of *Astounding* he was credited with "discovering" many science fiction authors, including Isaac Asimov, Robert Heinlein, Arthur C. Clarke, Poul Anderson, L. Sprague de Camp, Jack Williamson, and Ray Bradbury.

MARK CLIFTON (1906-63)—U.S. writer, long fascinated by extrasensory perception. He produced three novels and a couple of dozen stories for magazines, mostly *Astounding*. Clifton won a Hugo Award in 1955 for *They'd Rather Be Right* (with Frank Riley).

THEODORE COGSWELL—U.S. writer, perhaps best known for his short stories, although his most noted work was the novella "The Spectre General." His one novel was the historical first "Star Trek" entry, *Spock: Messiah!* co-authored with Charles Spano.

ORNETTE COLEMAN—New York jazz musician born in 1930 who played alto saxophone, trumpet, violin, and tenor saxophone. Since the late 1950s, Coleman has been teaching the world new ways of listening to music. At first, his revolutionary musical ideas concerning atonal jazz were so controversial he found it difficult to get public performance opportunities. In 1959, with the release of his debut album, "Something Else!" he ushered in a new era in jazz history.



JOHN ROBERT COLOMBO—Directly responsible for over 135 books, most of them about Canada and things Canadian, including *Canadian Quotations*, *Ghost Stories of Canada*, *Colombo's Famous Lasting Words*, *1000 Questions about Canada*, and *The Penguin Book of Canadian Jokes*. He is known as Canada's Master Gatherer for his reference books and Canada's Mr. Mystery for his books relating matters of the supernatural and paranormal.

JOHN CLUTE—Born in Toronto in 1940, graduated from New York University in 1963, and moved to England in 1968. His books include *The Disinheriting Party*, the Hugo-winning *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* (which he coauthored), and *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy* (with John Grant). With David Pringle and others he edited five "Interzone" anthologies, and with Candis Jane Dorsey he co-edited the anthology *Tesseract 8*. A recent novel is *Appleseed*.

CHANDLER DAVIS—Since 1962 a professor of mathematics (now professor emeritus) at the University of Toronto. Davis publishes research articles on mathematics, writes science fiction, and has authored several essays, such as "The Purge," in *A Century of Mathematics in America* and *Science for Good or a Booklet in the Waging Peace Series* (1990). In the late 1950s Davis was fired from the University of Michigan and served a sentence in federal prison for refusing to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee.

Milford Science Fiction Writers' Conference. From left: R. Garrett, T. Thomas, unknown, Anthony Boucher, Mildred Clingerman, Judith, Ted Cogswell, James Blish, Phil Klass, Damon Knight, Robert Silverberg, unknown. Milford, Pennsylvania, circa 1958.  
*Courtesy of the Merrill estate*

GARRY DAVIS—Established a self-proclaimed World Government of World Citizens (1953) based on the notion of a borderless world and global citizenship. The organization claims that there are over 950,000 world citizens and is known for its "World Passport," which is granted to refugees as well as supporting citizens of the world. See <[www.worldgovernment.org](http://www.worldgovernment.org)>.

SAMUEL R. (CHIP) DELANY—Publishing since 1962, and best known for the novels *Babel-17*, *Empire Star*, and *Dahlgren*. In the 1990s he published several book-length collections of non-fiction memoirs and literary criticism, including *The Motion of Light and Water: Sex and Science Fiction in the East Village*, *Silent Interviews: On Language, Race, Sex, Science Fiction and Comics*, and *Longer Views: Extended Essays*.

LOUISE DENNYS—Came to Canada from the U.K. in 1972 and worked in various capacities within the book-selling industry until 1978. At that time she joined with Malcolm Lester and Eve Orpen (Lester & Orpen) to form Lester & Orpen Dennys. Dennys concentrated on literary fiction, as exemplified by the company's international fiction list. In 1991 Dennys moved to Knopf Canada and became its publisher and the vice-president of Random House Canada.

PENNY DICKENS—Long-time executive director of The Writers' Union of Canada (TWUC).

THOMAS DISCH—Author of over a dozen novels, five story collections, seven volumes of poetry, two books of criticism, and more. Disch has been publishing since the early 1960s. His best-known SF novels are the critically acclaimed *Camp Concentration* and *334*. His book of SF criticism, *The Dreams Our Stuff Is Made Of* won both the Hugo and Locus Awards.

CANDIS JANE DORSEY—Edmonton-born author of six books (including *Black Wine*, *Hardwired Angel*, and *Vanilla and Other Stories*), and several volumes of poetry; her collected short

stories can be found in *Machine Sex and Other Stories*. A recent book is *A Paradigm of Earth*. She co-edited *Tesseract 8* with John Clute, *Tesseract 3* with Gerry Truscott, and the "Prairie Fire WorldCon Issue" in 1994. She is publisher of Tesseract Books (SF) and River Books (literary).

HARLAN ELLISON—Science fiction writer who has produced pulp gangland dramas, magical realism novels, and political criticism. As of 1994 he had published some thirteen hundred stories, essays, scripts, and reviews and written or edited seventy-five books.

CAROL EMSHWILLER—Magical realist and feminist best known for her books *Carmen Dog* and *The Start of the End of It All*. A recent novel is *Leaping Man Hill*, the sequel to *Ledoyt*. She teaches writing at New York University.

ED EMSHWILLER—Went into film from a background in painting and science fiction illustration, often creating cover art for pulp magazines. He married author Carol Fried (later Emshwiller) in 1949 and made his first two films in 1959.

MARIAN ENGEL (1933-85)—Toronto author of seven novels, two collections of short stories, and numerous articles and essays. She won Canada's Governor General's Award for her novel *Bear* (1976) and played a major role in the establishment of the Writers' Union of Canada.

MIGNON EBERHART (1899-1996)—Educated at Nebraska's Wesleyan University and renowned for writing novels that mix mystery and romance. She was awarded the Grand Master Award from the Mystery Writers of America in 1971. Her sleuths were usually from rather ordinary backgrounds and almost always women, in the mould of her first detective heroine, Sarah Keate.

EDWARD FERMAN—Became editor and publisher of *The Magazine of Fantasy Science Fiction* in January 1966, following his father's resignation; he remained in the position for over twenty-five years, during which time he garnered seven Hugo Awards for best magazine or best editor. He sold the magazine in 2000 to Gordon Van Gelder.

ELLEN GODFREY—Canadian author Godfrey started Press Porcupine in Vancouver, B.C., with her husband. Since 1996 she has been writing full-time. She has published several mystery novels under her own name and "ghosted" a series of mysteries under a pseudonym.

PHYLLIS GOTLIEB—Toronto novelist and poet considered by many to be the "mother of Canadian Science Fiction." Her books include *O Master Caliban!*, *A Judgement Of Dragons*, *Son of the Morning and Other Stories*, *Emperor*, *Swords and Pentacles*, *The Kingdom of Cats*, and *Violent Stars*. Gotlieb's poetry has been nominated for a Governor General's Award, Canada's most prestigious literary honour.

ARNOLD HANO—Editor-in-chief of Bantam books when Judith Merril's first anthology, *Shot in the Dark*, was published. Judith was working there at the time, as a mystery editor.

DAVID G. HARTWELL—Senior editor of Tor/Forge Books, publisher of the *New York Review of Science Fiction*, chairman of the board of the World Fantasy Convention, and an administrator of the Philip K. Dick Award. He is the author of *Age of Wonders* and the editor of several anthologies, including *The Dark Descent*, *Masterpieces of Fantasy and Enchantment*, *The World Treasury of Science Fiction*, *Year's Best SF*, and *Visions of Wonder*.

ROBERT A. HEINLEIN (1907-88)—Wrote speculative fiction starting in his late twenties after he retired from the Navy. His fiction often anticipated scientific and technical advances, such as the atomic

bomb and the waterbed. His novel *Stranger in a Strange Land* became a hippie handbook.

VIRGINIA KIDD—U.S. writer and, later, literary agent. She has represented a wide range of feminist science fiction writers, including Judith Merrill, James Tiptree Jr., Ursula Le Guin, and Carol Emshwiller.

PHIL KLASS—Writer, under the pseudonym William Tenn, of many short stories throughout the late 1940s and early 1950s, including the chilling "Down among the Dead Men" (1954), dealing with the use of reanimated corpses as front-line troops in a savage interstellar war. Tenn's sole full-length novel, *Of Men and Monsters*, deals with an alien-occupied Earth in which humans live, mouse-like, in the walls of the aliens' dwellings.

HELENE KLODAWSKY—Quebec documentary director of several movies, including *What If... A Film about Judith Merrill*, *Shoot and Cry*, *No Time to Stop: Women Immigrants*, and *Motherland*.

DAMON KNIGHT—Began writing and editing science fiction in 1941, at the age of nineteen. His novels include *A for Anything* and *Why Do Birds*. His non-fiction book, *The Futurians*, tells the story of the group of sf writers who lived in New York City during the 1940s. He is a founder of the prominent Milford Science Fiction Writers' Conference and the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America association and the Nebula awards. He is married to writer Kate Wilhelm.

CYRIL KORNBLUTH—Member of the Futurians who published a number of short stories between 1940-42. In 1952 he collaborated on two science fiction novels with Judith Merrill and a few years later wrote three science fiction novels and two non-sf books with Frederik Pohl. Kornbluth died prematurely at the age of thirty-five in 1958, at the height of his writing career.

DENNIS LEE—Toronto poet who helped found and served as editor for the House of Anansi Press. His overtly political collection *Civil Elegies and Other Poems* won the Governor General's Award in 1972. Lee is perhaps best known for his children's books such as *Alligator Pie* and *Garbage Delight*.

STANISLAV LEM—Polish science fiction writer, one of the few SF writers working in a language other than English who has had the results widely available in English. He is perhaps best known for the novel *Solaris* and his series about the adventures of Ijon Tichy, intrepid explorer of satirically absurd worlds.

WILLY LEY (1906-69)—Rocket scientist and, later, science fiction writer. In pre-war Germany he was an important player in rocketry experimentation. When the Nazis established a foothold in rocketry development in the mid-1930s, Ley fled to the United States. He turned to writing in order to popularize the idea of rocketry and space travel as serious scientific subjects. He died a couple of weeks before the launch of the Apollo 11 moon flight in 1969.

JON LOMBERG—One of the world's best-known astronomical artists and a space science journalist. His work includes the cover of Carl Sagan's novel *Contact* and the most accurate painting of the Milky Way galaxy ever made. He has been associated with the search for extraterrestrial intelligence (SETI) since 1977, when he was the design director on the team that created the Voyager Interstellar Record, messages for extraterrestrials and destined to travel in interstellar space forever. He was project director for the CD-ROM *Visions of Mars*.

ROBERT "DOC" LOWNDES—U.S. science fiction writer who started writing in 1940 under

various assumed names. Lowndes edited several magazines and collaborated on novels and stories with James Blish and Donald A. Wollheim during the 1940s and 1950s.

GWENDOLYN MACEWEN—Canadian author of twelve books of poetry, two novels, two collections of short fiction, drama for radio and theatre, translations and children's drama, recipient of two Governor General's Awards for Poetry (*The Shadow-Maker* and *Afterworlds*). She died in 1987, at the age of forty-six.

KATHERINE MACLEAN—One of the earlier U.S. women SF writers; best known for her short stories, many of which have been anthologized in two collections, *The Diploids* and *The Trouble with You Earth People*. Her postgraduate background in psychology and interest in telepathy greatly influenced her hard science fiction writings.

JOYCE MARSHALL—Among the most renowned translators of Quebec literature, Marshall's own writing explores the creative lives of Canadian writers Gwendolyn MacEwen, Gabrielle Roy, and Adele Wiseman. She has translated many of Roy's novels, and edited *The Selected Letters of Marie de l'Incarnation*. She is also a founding member of the Literary Translators' Association of Canada.

SCOTT MEREDITH—Founded and ran the Scott Meredith Literary Agency from 1946 to 1993. He engineered early book deals for many well-known SF writers, including Marion Zimmer Bradley, Ellery Queen, and Arthur C. Clarke.

JOHNNY MICHEL—Early member of the Futurians in New York, Michel introduced Judy to the group.

WALTER MILLER—Best-known for the novels *A Canticle for Leibowitz* and *The Darfsteller* (both of which won Hugo Awards). Miller studied engineering at university and converted to Catholicism at the age of twenty-five, after flying combat missions during World War II. He wrote profusely during the 1950s, exploring religion, war, and social issues.

MICHAEL MOORCOCK—Well known for his heroic fantasy novels, such as *Elric of Melniboné*, *Warrior of Mars*, and *Hawkmoon*, which featured the recurring character of the Eternal Champion. By the late 1960s his writing was prolific—he often produced several novels a year. He edited *New Worlds* magazine for many years, and brought many New Wave writers into the spotlight, including J.G. Ballard, Samuel R. Delany, and Thomas M. Disch.

ROBERT PRIEST—Canadian poet and songwriter. His works include *The Mad Hand* (1988), *Scream Blue Living* (1992), and *Knights of the Endless Day* (1993). Much of his work is written for children or to be performed out loud. The work for adults is often sensuous, politically engaging, and humorous.

FREDERIK POHL—A prolific writer living in Chicago who has authored dozens of science fiction and non-fiction books since he began writing at the age of seventeen. He was married to Judith Merrill from 1949 to 1952. Particularly in the early years of his career, Pohl tried out the roles of critic, literary agent, teacher, and book and magazine editor before settling on writer. He later married Carol Pohl and then professor Elizabeth Anne Hull.

SPIDER ROBINSON—A science fiction writer since 1972, Robinson was born in the United States and immigrated to Canada. He is the recipient of numerous awards for his many novels, which include *Starseed*, written with his wife Jeanne Robinson, and *Callahan's Key*.

RICHARD ROHMER—Born in 1924, a former commander-in-chief of the Canadian Forces Reserve, chancellor of the University of Windsor, lawyer, and friend of the wealthy and powerful. Rohmer is a popular Canadian novelist, with his political stories regularly becoming best-sellers. His novel *Referendum* dramatizes the possible effects of Quebec separation.

JOANNA RUSS—science fiction author, perhaps best known for her novel *The Female Man*. More recent works include the novels *We Who Are About To ...*, *The Two of Them*, short story collections *The Zanzibar Cat* and *The Hidden Side of the Moon*, and essay collections *How to Write Like a Woman* and *Puritans and Perverts*.

HANS STEFAN SANTESSON—U.S. editor who headed *Fantastic Universe* magazine during the late 1950s. He edited several anthologies and later the U.S. version of *New Worlds* magazine (founded by Michael Moorcock and others in the U.K.).

LARRY SHAW—A Futurian who is now primarily known for his position as editor of *Infinite Science Fiction*, one of the most prominent science fiction magazines in the 1950s. Later he edited the science fiction line for Lancer Books, including a handful of anthologies, and then worked as editor for Dell Publishing Co.

ROBIN SKELTON—Born in England, and author of more than one hundred published works of poetry, fiction, non-fiction, art criticism, and biography. He immigrated to Canada in 1963 and became a professor at the University of Victoria. Co-founder of the *Malahat Review*, he is also a practising Wiccan Witch.

ELIZABETH SMART (1913-86)—Canadian novelist and poet, best known for the novel *By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept*.

L. JEROME (JAY) STANTON—Assistant editor of John Campbell's *Astounding* in 1946 and 1947, and author of articles and reviews for the magazine. In the 1950s he was part of the Hydra Club. Stanton eventually drifted away from science fiction and made his living as a technical writer. He died in 1993.

THEODORE STURGEON (1918-85)—Sold his first story, "Heavy Insurance," in 1938 for five dollars to McClure's Syndicate for publication in newspapers. In the early years he wrote historical, mystery, and western novels, like many of his peers. Later he shifted to science fiction. Many of his short stories were adapted to television scripts, including several for Star Trek. His sensual writing led him to being both blamed and credited for bringing sex into SF.

WILL SYKORA (1913-94)—An active participant in early SF fandom in New York. Months after establishing the five-member New York City chapter of the Science Fiction League in January 1935, Sykora, along with Johnny Michel and Donald Wollheim, was expelled by League president Hugo Gernsback for criticizing his administration and non-payment of debts to authors. He was one of the people who ran the First World Science Fiction Convention held in New York in 1939, and in his role as "enforcer" he expelled the Futurians (Wollheim, Pohl, Kornbluth, and others) from the convention in the "Exclusion Act."

LORNA TOOLIS—Head librarian at Toronto's Merril Collection of Science Fiction, Speculation and Fantasy (formerly the Spaced Out Library). A personal friend of Judith Merril, she edited the anthology *Tesseracts 4* with her husband and SF writer Michael Skeet.

ELISABETH VONARBURG—Originally from France, moved to Quebec in 1973. She was editor

of *Solaris* for eleven years and helped launch the careers of many of Quebec's best SF authors. She is also responsible for the first Quebecois SF convention in 1979. She is best known for her novels *In the Mothers' Land*, *The Reluctant Voyagers*, and *The Silent City*.

BARRY WELLMAN—University of Toronto professor who studies community, communication, and computer and social networks. He founded a professional society called the International Network for Social Network Analysis. He has written many articles and is also the co-editor of three books: *Living through Networks: Using Personal Communities*, *Networks in the Global Village: Life in Contemporary Communities*, and *Social Structures: A Network Approach*.

KATE WILHELM—author of novels and short stories. Her first novel was a mystery, published in 1963, and in recent years she has returned to writing mysteries, although she is still better known for her thoughtful science fiction, including *Mrs. Bagley Goes to Mars* and *Forever Yours, Anna*. She is married to author Damon Knight.

DONALD A. WOLLHEIM (1914-90)—U.S. editor, anthologist, and writer and a 1938 founder of the Futurians. A number of novels appeared under the pseudonym of David Grinnell. He worked for Avon Books (1947-52) and Ace Books (1952-71) before founding his own publishing house, DAW Books, in 1972.

DIRK WYLIE—The pseudonym for Joseph H. Dockweiler, a member of the Futurians group who wrote several stories with Frederik Pohl and Cyril Kornbluth. He died very young, after an injury during World War II.

ROBERT ZENO (1929-85)—Experimental writer and the author of *Nicolette*, *Daymares*, *From Zero to One*, *My Friend, Jeronimo*, *Arbormundi*, and *Beyond Labels*.

SOURCES: *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, ed. John Clute and Peter Nicholls; the Who's Who in the Writers' Union of Canada directory; the University of Calgary's "Canadian Poets Online" website <[poets.ca](http://poets.ca)>; the Science Fiction Writers of America's website <[sfwa.org](http://sfwa.org)>; the Writers' Union of Canada's website <[twuc.org](http://twuc.org)>; <[worldgovernment.org](http://worldgovernment.org)>; George Willick's Spacelight website <[www.eyeneer.com](http://www.eyeneer.com)>; <[www.strangehorizons.com](http://www.strangehorizons.com)>; <[www.fictionwise.com](http://www.fictionwise.com)>; and various other websites.

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When Merrill died in 1997, she left her granddaughter Emily Pohl-Weary with a partially-completed manuscript, a dozen tapes of interviews they had conducted during her last year, and complete

instructions about everything she wanted included in the book. *Better to Have Loved* is the result.

Judith Merrill was a pioneer of twentieth century science fiction, a prolific author and editor. She was also a passionate social and political activist. Her novels include *Shadow on the Hearth*, *Gunner Cade*, *The Tomorrow People*, and *Sin in Space*.

Emily Pohl-Weary is Judith Merrill's granddaughter. She co-edits *Broken Pencil* magazine, and is completing a novel called *Sugar's Empty*.