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HEEL

by Philip Jose Farmer

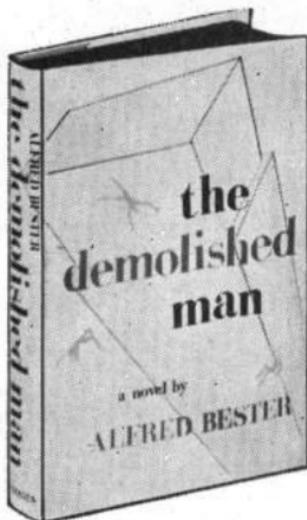


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MAY 1960

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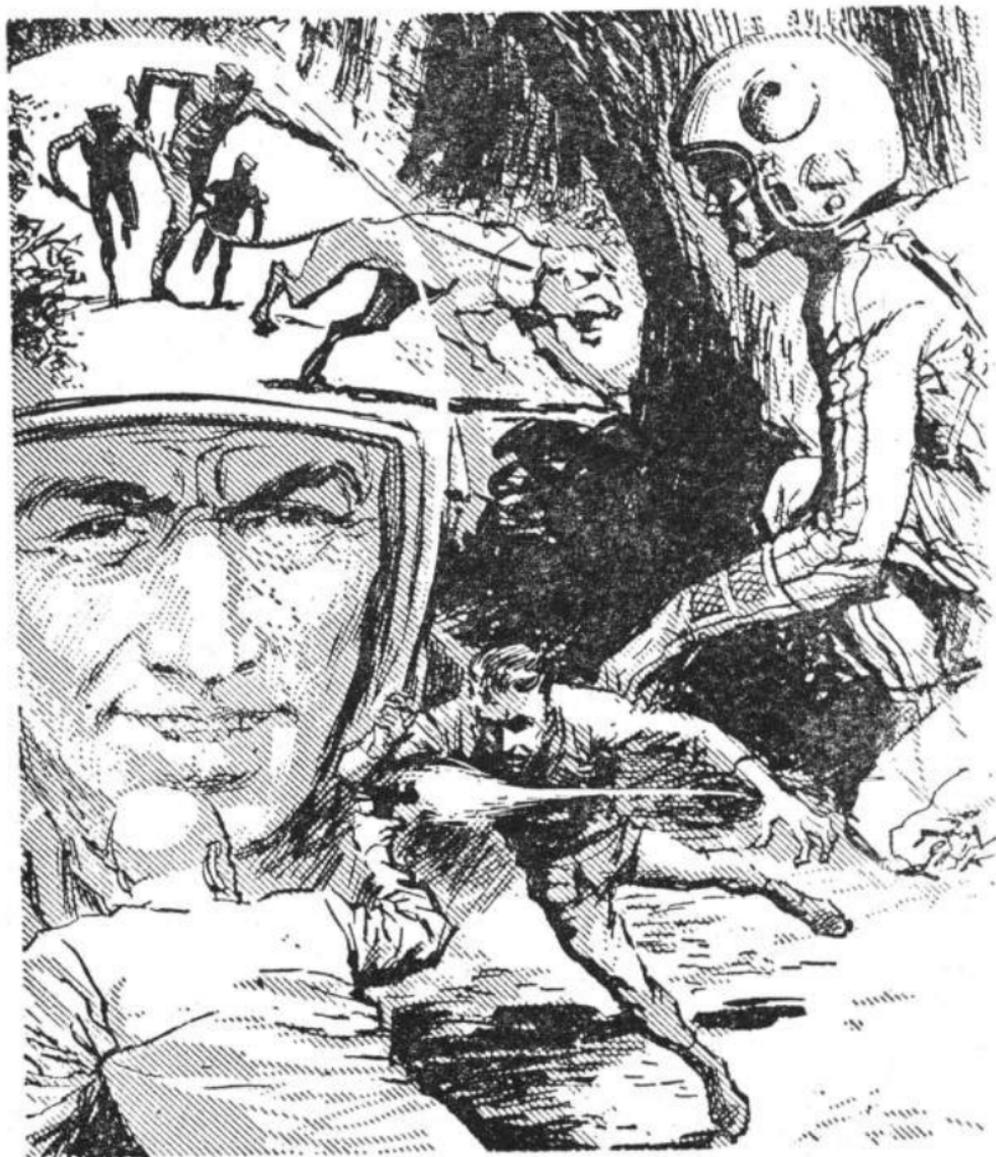
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There was something rotten in the planet named Truth

A Tourist



...rotten enough to call for the intervention of...

Named Death

By CHRISTOPHER ANVIL

DAN REDMAN walked swiftly and quietly down the broad hallway toward a door lettered:

A SECTION
J. KIELGAARD
DIRECTOR

As Dan opened the door, his trained glance caught the brief reflection of a strange, strong-featured face, and a lithe, powerful, and unfamiliar physique. Dan accepted this unfamiliar reflection of himself as an actor accepts makeup. What puzzled him was the peculiar silent smoothness with which his hand turned the knob, while his shoulder braced firmly and easily against the opening door. He stepped into the room in one sudden quiet motion.

The receptionist inside gave a visible start.

What kind of a job, Dan asked himself, did Kielgaard have for him this time?

The receptionist recovered her poise, to usher Dan into the inner office.



Kielgaard—big, stocky, and expensively dressed—glanced up from a sheaf of glossy photographs. He said bluntly, "Sit down. We've got a mess to straighten out."

"What's wrong?"

"A few years back, Galactic Enterprises discovered a totally undeveloped planet with no inhabitants. They claimed development rights and got to work to find an economical route to the planet, which is called Triax."

Kielgaard snapped a switch on the edge of his desk and the room lights dimmed out. Three stellar maps seemed to hang in space in front of Dan, one map directly above the other.

Kielgaard's voice said, "Galactic found a route to Triax that promised to be very economical. Watch."

ON THE lowest map, the word "Earth" lit up, and a silver line grew out from it along the stellar map, then jumped up in a vertical straight line to the second map, traveled along this map almost to a place where the word "Truth" lit up. The line then jumped straight up to the third map and traveled along it to the word "Triax."

The room lighted and the maps vanished.

Kielgaard said, "In two subspace jumps and not too much normal-space traveling, Galactic can ship a cargo

from Triax to Earth. That's a good, short route, but it comes too close to that planet called Truth."

Dan said, "Truth is the native name for the planet?"

"Exactly. Truth is inhabited. The inhabitants look much like us, and they're very highly developed technologically, though there is no sign that they use space travel in any form. The problem is that Galactic's cargo ships will pass close enough to Truth so that the inhabitants—call them Truthians—will eventually detect them and may or may not like the idea. Galactic's worry is that after sinking a lot of money into the development of Triax, and just as it's about to make a profit on the planet, these Truthians may blossom out with a fleet of commerce raiders, or else claim sovereignty over all contiguous space and land Galactic in a big court fight." Kielgaard glanced at Dan with a smile. "Suppose you were running Galactic and had this problem. What would you do?"

"Try to vary the route. But subspace being what it is, a mild variation of the starting point can produce an abrupt shift in the place where they come out."

Kielgaard nodded. "There's probably a usable route, but there's no telling when they'll find it. Meanwhile, the development license only runs so

long before Galactic has to show proof of progress."

"What's this Truth look like?"

"Earth-type, with cities and towns scattered over its surface at random, some of the cities remarkably advanced, some antique, with forest and wilderness in between, and only haphazard communications between cities."

Dan frowned. "Well, then, I'd set down an information team, brain-spy some of the inhabitants, and ease agents into key cities and towns. At the same time, I'd go on looking for a new route, and do enough work on Triax to keep the development license. When things clear up on Truth, I'd develop Triax further."

Kielgaard nodded. "A sound and sensible plan. That is exactly what Galactic did. And after a slow start, things began to straighten out very nicely, too. The more Truth cleared up, the more Galactic invested in Triax. And then, one day, this photograph came in."

Kielgaard held out a photograph showing a busy street corner in a city at night. A brightly clothed crowd was walking along the sidewalk past store windows showing a variety of merchandise.

Kielgaard said, "Look down that street. You see a low building, part way down the block, with a wide chimney?"

"Yes," said Dan, "I see it."

"Look just above the top of the chimney."

"You mean this arrow-shaped constellation?"

Kielgaard nodded. "There is no such arrow-shaped constellation visible from Truth."

"Then this photo is a fake?"

"They're all fakes. What apparently happened is that someone managed to get a spy into Galactic's planning division, and through him found out when and where Galactic's agents were to be set down. They grabbed the agents one by one soon after each agent landed. Since then, they've sent back reports to build up a purely synthetic picture of the planet. The only reports Galactic can rely on are the original impressions of the information team they set down to begin with."

Dan whistled. "So someone is working Galactic into position to jerk the rug out from under it."

"Exactly."

"What's Galactic doing?"

"They're trying hard to keep this quiet. But meanwhile, no one knows for sure who the spy is."

"A nice situation," said Dan. "What do we do about this planet Truth?"

"**W**ELL," said Kielgaard, "the first thing we do is set a man down and let him get the lay of the land. We get more agents ready to

move in right behind him. We intend to use the best men available, and nothing but the latest and best equipment. If things turn out as we intend them to, whatever organization started this will come out slit up the middle, stuffed, roasted, and with an apple in its mouth."

Dan said cautiously, "Who's the first agent we set down on this planet?"

"You," said Kielgaard. "And you're going to be up against a deadly proposition. Our opponent is established on the planet, and we're going in cold. Fortunately, we've sunk a good part of our profits into research and it's about to pay off. We have, for instance, installed in your body cavity a remarkably small organo-transceiver. It uses a new type of signal which should escape detection under any circumstances you're likely to face on Truth."

"SO I can be more or less constantly in touch with you?"

"In any period of relative calm, yes. During violent action, the interference of other currents in your brain would drown out the signal. But we've also run a series of delicate taps to your optic and auditory nerves, so we should have continuous contact by sight and sound."

"You mentioned that the cities and towns on the planet

were separated by wilderness. How do I travel?"

"We have a new type of unusually small mataform transceiver." Kielgaard reached in a drawer and tossed on his desk a smooth olive-colored object little larger than a package of cigarettes. "The range is only a few hundred miles, but it uses the new type of signal I've mentioned, which eliminates the problem of orbiting a set of satellites to relay the signal. The problem of first putting the mataform transceiver in the place where you want to go is tricky, but we have a little glider that ought to do the trick."

He showed Dan how to use the glider, and several other new items of equipment, then frowned and sat back. "The worst of this is, we don't know exactly what to expect on the planet. Some big organization could even be trying to take over the planetary government. If so, a lot will depend on what stage things are in when you land. To give you as much chance as possible, your body has been carefully restructured to give you exceptional strength and endurance. The neuro-conditioning lab has recreated in your nervous system the reflexes of one of the deadliest agents ever known. Don't be surprised if you perform certain actions almost before you're aware of your own intentions.

It has to be that way to cut down the risks."

Dan and Kielgaard shook hands, and Dan went out to check his equipment.

Early the next day, he was on a fast spaceship to the planet called Truth.

DAN was dropped low over the night side of the planet in a vaned capsule that whirled straight down, burst open on contact with the water, and sank. From this capsule, a small boat nosed out toward the coast.

In the cramped space inside, Dan checked a little gauge to be sure the boat's outer layer had adjusted to the water around it, so that there would be no sharp difference in the radiation of heat to show up on any infrared detector that might be in range. Then the boat nosed down with a *suck-swish* from the water-jet engine and began to pick up speed.

Several hours later, a thin flexible cable shot out from shallow water at the edge of the junglelike coastline. The cable whipped around the trunk of a tree well back from the water's edge, there was a faint low hum, a grating noise, and something slid up over the rocks and pebbles and came to rest among the tangled trunks and roots of the trees. A moment later, Dan was out and dragging the boat further inland.

When he was satisfied that the boat was safe, he glanced at his watch. The planet's large moon should soon be up and he intended to waste no time making his position more secure.

He broke open a carton of the little mataform transceivers, clipped several of them on small, almost completely transparent gliders, and checked to be sure the little auxiliary motors of the gliders were in working order. He slid on a helmet that fit tightly over his head and eyes, and sent up the first glider. As the faint whir of the small engine receded, Dan could see before him in the helmet a clear view of the sea, with the thin rim of the planet's moon just rising, huge and blood-red, over the horizon.

The small sensor unit on the glider sent back an image from a safe height above the forest, and Dan switched the helmet from this glider long enough to send up another.

By dawn, he had landed gliders, with their small mataform transceivers, in isolated spots outside three moderate-sized cities within range of the boat. Dan then took another of the mataform units and buried it. Standing nearby, he mentally pronounced a key word.

As he did this, the electrochemical change in a nervous tract triggered a tiny implanted device that sent its

imperceptible signal to the mataform transceiver. The transceiver interpreted the signal, and for an instant Dan sensed a shift in the pattern of things around him.

Abruptly he was standing in the clearing where he had brought down the first glider. Around him were several tall wind-thrown trees. In the gray light of early dawn, he could barely make out the glider and little mataform unit clipped to it. A few minutes later, the unit was temporarily hidden, he had returned the glider to the boat, and he was picking up the second glider in a badly burned tract of forest near the second city.

WHEN the three mataform units were all hidden, Dan paused for a moment to think through the next step. The three gliders, invisible to the naked eye as they passed high above the tree tops, might possibly have shown up on any of a number of detection devices, to give away both the starting point and the places where they had landed. It was now Dan's problem to outwit these detection devices.

Dan clipped another mataform transceiver to a glider, put on the control helmet, and sent the glider dodging low and carefully through the trees. He found a spot about two miles away that suited

him and landed the glider. He swiftly unloaded the boat and carried its contents to the buried mataform unit, where he mentally pronounced a new key word, which triggered the unit and took him to the glider and transceiver he had just landed. In a short time, he had the contents of the boat stacked beside the glider.

Dan then disassembled boat and engine, and stacked the parts beside the boat's piled-up contents. By now, the sun was well up, and Dan was becoming aware of a thrumming drone that grew steadily louder. He quickly dug up the buried mataform unit, clipped it to a glider, and hung the glider to an overhead limb by a green string knotted so as to come undone at the first sharp pull.

Dan glanced around carefully and listened to the increasing drone. He looked up and studied a bumpy blue-green limb well overhead. This limb was so located that a spy unit on it would cover most of the place where the boat had been. Dan carefully gauged the speed with which the droning was coming closer, then went by mataform to the pile of goods he had transferred, came back with a long tube, and sighted at the overhead limb. There was a *whoosh* and a small colorless blob with a tiny bump in the center spread out on the limb. The blob gradually turned

blue-gray, matching the limb, and then the spy unit was indistinguishable from the limb's other bumps and irregularities.

The droning noise was now quite loud.

Dan went by mataform to his new camp and put on the helmet he used to control the glider.

An instant later, the glider gave a whirl and jerked forward. The knot came untied, and the glider, carrying the mataform unit and a length of dark-green string, flitted out of sight amid the big tree trunks.

Dan, his hand on a knob at the side of the helmet, shifted his vision rapidly back and forth from the glider to the spy unit over the spot where the boat had been.

There now came into view, in the place where the boat had been, something that looked like a cross between an oversize bloodhound and a tiger. Right behind this came a man with a rifle. Then another man, and another. The angle of vision did not let Dan see exactly where the men came from, but he supposed there was a jetcopter just overhead.

The tigerlike animal snuffled around, pawed at the ground, made trips into the jungle on all sides, and finally ran back toward the shore. The men followed close behind.

DAN, shifting his attention back and forth from this scene to the glider, landed the glider nearby just as the last of the men left the place where the boat had been. Dan quickly went to each of the three places near cities where he had landed mataform transceivers, and moved each of them by glider well away from the places where they had landed. He left behind in each place a small spy unit.

He had just finished doing this when several loads of heavily armed men in jetcopters came down in all three places. The men, Dan noticed, wore no uniforms, and the copters were unmarked.

Dan said mentally, "Can you hear me, Kielgaard?"

"Loud and clear," came the familiar voice. "We're getting sight and sound perfectly."

"Have you got your corps of experts working on everything that comes in?"

"Naturally," said Kielgaard. "But I wouldn't advise you to stop and chat right now. Those boys seem to mean business."

"Do they look like planetary police to you?"

"No. They don't look like anything that was born on that planet."

"That's exactly the way they strike me. Well, maybe I can make them some more trouble."

Dan got out a map and

noted a long, fairly straight road from one of the cities near which he had a mataform transceiver to another distant city. From this distant city, a winding river curled away to a city even more distant. That night, Dan intended to make use of road and river alike. But right now he spent an hour or so moving his goods to a place further away from the landing; then he partly reassembled the boat, and catnapped till evening. He was woken at frequent intervals by sudden drops of men and more of the tigerlike animals, at each of the four places where they had been before. Each time there was sudden activity at one of these places, a little alarm buzzed in Dan's ear, and he slid on the helmet to watch a renewed search of the ground.

He had the impression that someone had reported nothing was to be found, and that this word had been passed along to someone who had said there *must* be something there, and it had better be found or else. The search this time was much more careful. But it was not till the last place was searched that one of them came very close to the spy unit, and reached out toward it.

Dan regretfully slid back a protective cover at the lower edge of the helmet and pressed a button underneath. There

was a dazzling flash, and then the scene was gone.

Dan would much rather have kept them thinking that maybe there was nothing to look for after all. But he could tell from their numbers and zeal that he was not likely to have very much his own way on this planet.

THAT night, Dan sent a glider under power down the long road to the distant city. The glider was low enough to avoid the usual detectors, but happily free of the need to dodge an endless succession of tree trunks. The river served much the same purpose, so that well before dawn, Dan had mataform transceivers planted near each of the two new cities, and also at a place right at the edge of the river. From this spot, Dan threw out into the river a heavily weighted mataform transceiver. He returned to the partly assembled boat and methodically put it together again. This time, however, he fitted sections together differently and left the heavy engine out entirely. He put his arms around one end of the thing he had put together and mentally said a keyword.

The river water rushed coldly around him, gritty with silt sweeping along the bottom. There was a *chug* in his ears as the water triggered off the grab anchors around the rim of the shelter. Dan

said another key word and he was inside. He snapped on a light and looked carefully around, but found no sign of a leak.

He transferred the rest of his goods, checked to see that the selective membrane panel was keeping the oxygen at the right level inside, then lay down to catch up on sleep.

The following day, he took three of his small transceivers, and went by mataform to a place outside the nearest city.

A short walk along a winding trail took Dan past a series of huts and cabins to a rough covered stand displaying combs, brooms, and other simple merchandise, along with a dusty case of what looked like soda pop, and a dust-covered carton of what appeared to be candy bars. The soda pop was labeled "GAS," and the candy had a card labeled "TOOTHROT." The girl in charge of the stand smiled and said, "Good morning, Death."

There was no one else around, and the girl spoke in a perfectly natural way, so Dan smiled back and said, "Good morning."

But as he walked on down the trail, he said mentally, "Kielgaard?"

Kielgaard's voice replied, "I heard it, Dan. We're checking at this end to see if it's some error in the vocabulary we implanted in your brain." A

moment later, Kielgaard said, "As nearly as we can tell here, 'Death' is the word she used."

"Funny."

Dan rounded a bend in the trail and came to a moderately wide road, paved with smooth blocks of stone. To his right was a wall about ten feet high, with an open gate and a city street visible behind it. From somewhere came the steady beat of a drum. Dan started toward the gate, but had to jump aside as a heavily armed column of troops marched out, their faces set and their feet striking the ground in an unvarying cadence.

As the last of the troops went by, a man standing nearby turned to Dan and said, "Well, there they go. We won't be seeing some of them again in this life."

Dan nodded noncommittally, and the man looked at him sharply, then grinned and said, "Good hunting."

"Thank you," said Dan. He could hear a faint muttering somewhere in the background, which he took to be Kielgaard and his experts, trying to understand this latest exchange.

Dan followed the man through the city gates, and walked past a variety of small shops selling baked goods, meats, groceries, hand tools, books, and appliances.

Dan noted the location of the bookstore, so that on the way back he could buy some books. He wanted to transmit

the contents of the books; the staff of experts could learn a great deal from a cross-section of a planet's fiction and non-fiction.

AS DAN walked toward the center of the city, he noted that the buildings grew larger, and the shops turned into big department stores. These all looked much the same as the ones on Earth, or on many other technologically advanced planets. The merchandise showed only minor differences in design. Looking in a hardware store, for instance, Dan discovered that ordinary screwdrivers had a short curved crosspiece on the handle—apparently a thumb rest to give greater leverage in turning. Aside from such minor differences, everything seemed the same.

Dan had just decided that the planet looked almost like home when he came to a low building with a paved yard. Into the yard trundled several small carts, similar to the kind used to transfer baggage in railroad and mataform depots back home. On these carts, however, were canvas covers, which were thrown back to reveal fully clothed human forms. On all but one cart, the human forms wore the same kind of white garment, trimmed in various colors. These forms—bodies, Dan supposed—were lifted from the carts by attendants

who handled them with the greatest care and respect.

On the other cart, though, the bodies wore street clothes. These bodies were grabbed under the arms, dragged to a black door like the door of a furnace, set in the wall of the building, and shoved through the door head first. As the bodies were shoved in, Dan saw the sunlight glint on what looked like tight metal cords around their necks, bearing oblong metal tags.

Several men had stopped while Dan glanced in to watch this scene. Dan now overheard their comments, which were made in tense angry tones:

"Look at that. If this referendum isn't over soon, it'll dust the lot of us over the forest."

"It's all these charges and accusations that make the trouble. Why we can't do it like civilized human beings, I don't know."

"The trouble is, there's no precedent."

The men walked away.

Dan had the out-of-focus sensation of a man who comes into a room where a joke has already been half-told.

He glanced at the low building. "Are you getting all this, Kielgaard?"

"We're getting it. But I hope it makes more sense to you than it does to us."

"Well, it doesn't."

Dan glanced around, noted

the discreet word "DISPOSAL" printed on the face of the small building where the bodies were shoved through what looked like a furnace door. Dan thought he could see what was going on here, but the reasons for the things that were happening were totally obscure to him.

It was in the next block that he began to get some sort of an idea, when he saw a large poster bearing a blue triangle standing point down. Stamped over this triangle were large letters: VOTE YES!

Several blocks away was a big poster showing a green triangle, its base down, and bearing the words: VOTE NO!

BOTH posters were dented, scratched, and spattered, as if stones and rotten fruit had been thrown at them. But, though Dan watched carefully as he walked on toward the center of the city, he saw no clue as to what the voting was about. He was also puzzled to find that, though there were many stores, and a fair number of what looked like hotels, office buildings, and apartment houses, there seemed to be no factories, large or small.

The people passing here were another source of uncertainty. As Dan approached the center of the city, he began to sense the peculiar air of freedom that he had no-

ticed in resort towns on a dozen planets. And yet this did not look to him like a resort town. Moreover, it was hard to gauge the mood of the people passing by, because nearly all seemed to react to his presence in some way. Some looked suddenly alarmed, a few looked furtive, others seemed pleased and smiled at him. A considerable number of the women had a thrilled look when they saw him.

Dan walked another block and saw part of the reason for the resort-town atmosphere. Across the street was a sweeping expanse of green. In the far end of this green was an enormous swimming pool, with floats and concrete islands dotted through it to hold diving boards that were almost constantly in use.

Dan, wanting to watch the passersby without their watching him, stepped into a quiet, old-fashioned-looking bookstore that fronted on the green. He looked out the many-paned front window and immediately noticed a change in the people. Without his inexplicably disturbing influence, nearly all of the people fell into two distinct categories. One group had a depressed and angry look. The other group looked cheerful and carefree. Aside from their mood, they didn't seem to differ noticeably in dress, age, or any other way.

Dan glanced around the bookstore and saw that it, like the other stores, could be transplanted to Earth, and—except for the unfamiliar lettering on storefront and book titles—would hardly be noticed. He nodded to an elderly woman working at a small desk to one side of the store, then walked to the rear, where the stacks of books left a far corner partially in shadow and out of sight from the front of the store. Dan stooped, glanced at the dusty row of books on the bottom shelf, and slid a mataform transceiver behind the books.

He walked back to the front of the store, stepped out on the sidewalk, and saw a cart come slowly along in the street. This was the kind of cart he had seen earlier. The outstretched figures of men lay bumping loosely on the cart, metal cords with oblong tags tight around their necks. Dan stepped over to note that the tags he could see all read:

— KILL —
UNAUTHORIZED

THERE was a buzz of indignation from the crowd on the sidewalk as the cart went by.

Then there was a sudden silence.

Dan glanced around.

Walking along the sidewalk toward him was a man about his own height and build, who

moved with controlled catlike steps.

The man looked directly at Dan and called out: "Hello, Death!"

The people on the sidewalk rushed to get out of the way. Abruptly the man's arm swung back and forward.

"Catch."

Something flashed in the air.

Dan's impulse was to jump aside, then tackle the man. Instead, his body turned slightly. His right hand, already partly raised, whipped in a short arc, caught something, flicked it to his left, and blurred straight out again.

The man opposite Dan blinked and jumped aside.

At the same instant, Dan's left hand shot out.

There was a gasp from the crowd. The man collapsed with the butt of a knife jutting from his chest.

A voice behind Dan said warmly, "Superb! A return attack complete in one stroke!"

Dan turned to see three alert, strong-looking men. One counted bills from a thick roll. The second opened up a square case with carrying handle. The third was unwinding an armband with a badge on it.

The man with the case held it out. "If you'll just put your fingertips on these plates, so we'll be sure to get your mating credits—"

Dan sensed from the wait-

ing attitude of the people watching that this was some kind of test. Unhesitatingly, he held out his fingertips. There were also two bright flashes as a small tube was held to Dan's eyes.

Once Dan could see again, everyone seemed relaxed and friendly. The crowd was excitedly arguing the details of what had happened. The man with the roll of bills handed over a small fistful, saying, "Double, for the return at one stroke."

The man with the armband put it on Dan's arm as he rapidly recited the words of some rote formula, of which all Dan caught was a frequent reference to "the Code," and the words "peril and deadly danger," and the last words, "now say, 'I do.'"

"I do," said Dan, fervently wishing he were somewhere else.

The man with the case was beaming as he snapped the little rod inside. He said genially, "I always know an honest fight when I see it. And these days it's a real pleasure to—"

Just then, he clapped the case shut.

The case gave out a clang like the general alarm on a space cruiser under surprise attack.

The crowd gave a shout. "Unauthorized kill!"

The three men beside Dan jumped forward.

Dan's left hand lashed out to smash the nearest of the three men in the midsection. The flat edge of his right hand struck the second man just below the nose; then Dan had thrown the first man back against the third, had whirled around and seen the crowd start to surge across the sidewalk to block his escape. He sprinted directly past this crowd, so that when it completely blocked the sidewalk an instant later, he was cut off from the view of the three men he had just knocked down.

Dan did not doubt that these three men were officials of the planet, and he strongly suspected that they were armed and knew how to use their weapons.

ACROSS the street, at the edge of one corner of the green, was a tall hedge of flowering shrubs, back of which was a grove of young trees. Dan dodged past carts and small, square, silent automobiles, and ran through this hedge. Behind him there was a shout of anger.

To Dan's left were two young trees, growing close together. Dan still had with him two of his little mataform units, and he quickly thrust one of them between the two dark, slender tree trunks.

An instant later, he was in the dark corner of the bookstore, hearing the angry

shouts dwindle into the distance outside. The door of the store closed as the elderly woman who ran the store stepped outside, apparently to see what had happened.

A moment later, Dan was in the shelter under the river. He worked quickly with a small brush and some dye, then got out another set of clothes. He checked his appearance swiftly and thoroughly.

Then, with more of a tanned look than he had had before, with much darker hair, and wearing entirely different clothes, Dan mataformed back to the bookstore. The elderly woman was standing by the front window as he came forward, to pick up a thin scientific volume lying on a table and say, "I believe you were outside when I came in."

"Oh," she said, "the most frightful thing just happened." She then gave a highly inaccurate account of Dan's fight with the knife man, and described how the crowd was hunting him down right now at the far end of the park.

Dan took his change and said, "I'll have to go look."

He stepped outside and could see the path of the crowd with no difficulty. The flowering shrubs were flattened, and the ground under the trees showed the marks of many feet. Dan recovered his mataform unit and walked a short distance to look down

toward the far end of the green, where the swimmers were all out of the pool—probably so that it could be searched for Dan.

He turned around and noticed near the bookstore a large restaurant, built in a style that made him think of an old English tavern. Several men looking well contented came out. Dan realized he was hungry.

He went in, and from a weird merry-go-round serving apparatus got a steak indistinguishable from those at home, and a selection of unfamiliar side dishes that looked good to him, but made other diners nearby wince. Dan paid for his selection and sat down.

During the meal, someone at a nearby table began to talk loudly, and someone else shouted, "Spacerot!" There was a momentary hush in the restaurant, and two burly men in white jackets quickly crossed to the table and spoke firmly to the diners. Peace was restored, and the two burly men wove back through several parties just leaving the restaurant, and separated to stand quietly but alertly near the far wall.

As Dan ate, he thought, "Kielgaard!"

"Right here."

"Do you make any sense out of what we've seen so far?"

"I get the impression some-

thing's about to snap, but I don't know what. Or as my experts here tell me, 'It's too early to venture an opinion.'"

"That," thought Dan, "is likely to be the trouble with this place. By the time we find out what's going on, it will be too late to do anything about it. We're going to have to play hunches to crack this one in time."

Kielgaard said fervently, "How we crack it makes no difference to me, so long as we do crack it."

WHILE Dan ate, a considerable crowd of people went out the front door, and two couples came in. The restaurant, however, remained very nearly full.

"Something tells me," Dan thought, "that there must be a lot more to this planet than meets the eye."

He got up and walked toward the back of the restaurant. What he had taken for the rear wall turned out to be merely a wall that divided one section of the restaurant from another equally large, where waitresses served individual tables.

A flight of carpeted steps led down to men's and women's rest rooms and a gently sloping, softly lighted hallway. People were coming up the hall in considerably greater numbers than they went down, and Dan was startled to see that they reacted to him

exactly as the crowd outside had, before he had gone into the bookstore to watch them unnoticed.

Dan went to the men's rest room, washed, and inconspicuously studied himself in the mirror. He looked very much different than he had before. Why, then, did the people react in the same way?

Dan concealed a mataform unit in the dimly lit lounge outside the washroom, then went out and down the hall. He had gone perhaps thirty steps when a lithe man coming the other way saw him, whipped out a gun, and shouted, "Death!"

One instant Dan was walking down the right side of the hall. A split fraction of an instant later, he had thrown himself to the other side of the hall.

There was a swift, bright flash.

Someone screamed.

The gun went spinning and Dan had the man on the floor, both hands locked at his throat. It was a severe struggle for Dan to loosen his hands.

A crowd gathered so quickly that there was scarcely room to stand. A man carrying a small box with a handle forced his way through. Dan had his captive, half-unconscious, on his feet. Improvising rapidly, Dan said, "I think that was unauthorized."

The man with the carrying

case said grimly, "We'll soon find out." He held the man's fingertips to plates in the case, flashed a small tube in his eyes, and shut the case. There was a loud clang.

Two powerfully built men wearing armbands with shields stepped up. One glanced at Dan and said, "Want to finish him? He's yours, by rights."

Someone in the crowd said, "Question him! Find out which side is behind this!"

The man with the carrying case said sternly, "That's neither here nor there. The only question is, which side is right?"

There was a tense silence. It occurred to Dan that this planet might not be called Truth for nothing. He was still gripping his captive by the arms and wanted in the worst way to question him. But how, in this crowd? And then he remembered that he still had one mataform unit with him.

The man with the case was saying to the sullen crowd, "Maybe you think something's wrong. Maybe it is. All right, you know what to do—go to the War Ruler—"

Dan mentally pronounced a key word, then opened his hands as he pronounced another.

A momentary flash of dense jungle, and then he was in the corridor again, his prisoner gone.

IT ALL seemed to take a moment to register. As soon as it did, someone shouted, "Spacerot!" This word acted on the crowd like a blazing torch thrown into an explosives shack. They began smashing each other violently around in the crowded corridor. Dan barely recovered his mataform unit, which had fallen to the floor when he transferred his prisoner, and had a rough time merely staying on his feet. The savage pressing and crowding in the jammed corridor seemed to drive the crowd to hysteria.

Dan realized there was no way to tell when he might get loose. For the second time, he used the mataform unit to get out of the corridor. This time he went to the shelter under the river. He got some strong cord, went to the place in the jungle where his prisoner was, and tied him up. Then he returned to the shelter, fitted a set of small filters in his nostrils, and went back to the lounge outside the wash-room near the corridor, carrying a small egg-shaped object. Someone happened to be looking at the spot where he appeared. Dan ignored the staring onlooker, went out to the corridor, and found that things were even worse than when he had left.

He threw the egg-shaped object at the wall of the corridor and ducked back into the lounge.

There was a loud *bang*, followed by a number of smaller explosions. Abruptly the lounge was filled with bright points of light and little popping noises. The air was permeated with a gray vapor. The people in the room sagged in their seats or collapsed on the floor, and Dan was very careful to breathe only through the filters in his nostrils. He mentally said a key word and he was in the corridor, standing on a mound of unconscious people. He worked till he found the transceiver, went by mata-form back to the lounge, took the transceiver there in case the lounge should be searched, and walked back through the corridor over heaps of people, picked up the other mata-form unit, and went on down the corridor.

He wasn't happy about the people behind him. When the concentration of the drug in the air reached a low enough point, those on top of the heap were going to come to, then those under them, till there was one writhing hysterical mass that would be even worse than it had been before he threw the bomb. The only good feature—if it could be called that—was that they would all very soon be violently nauseated, with an urgent need for fresh air, and yet would be too sickened and weak to head for the outside in a rush.

Thinking this, Dan rounded a corner and came to a dead stop.

DIRECTLY before him was a short, wide, high-ceilinged cross-corridor with half a dozen doors swinging open as people hurried in, walked a few paces, and collapsed. Either side of this short hall was made of shiny metal containing numerous slots. As Dan watched, a man came through a door, and in one automatic motion jammed a coin in a slot, ripped off a ticket that popped out another slot, then suddenly blinked and jerked around to stare at the pile of people on the floor of the corridor. Then he collapsed.

Dan glanced from this man to the wall above the doors, which was brilliant with lights and moving letters, forming a maze that made him dizzy to look at:

SKL MACH OPS—80L6h4 S
WANTED ON LEVEL 10
MNL LERS-647L25h2*MN
*MEN WITH FAST REFLE
PENSES PAID HOUSING

Dan strode forward and through a door with the numeral "1" over it. —

Directly before him was a short dead-end hallway that abruptly vanished, and he was walking toward a crowd of hurrying people in an immense room.

GLANCING around, Dan again felt at home. The immense room reminded him of Grand Central Mataborm Terminal back on Earth. One wall even had the same kind of huge map of the tunnels and cross-tunnels that gave underground access to stores in the area. But the map here was even larger and more complex. Near its face were spidery walks and moving stairways, so that people could examine individual parts from close at hand if they wanted.

Dan looked over the terminal carefully, then walked slowly along looking for a place to hide one of his mataborm units. He spotted, near a door in a corner, a poster on a stand showing a strong young man in uniform with a series of numbers, apparently dates, stretching out like a road before him. The stand held a poster on either side, and there was a place between them where Dan could slip one of the mataborm units. An instant after he did this, he was in the shelter under the river.

Quickly, he got out a very light, strong two-man tent, an air mattress, a hypodermic, and a shiny half-globe with web straps at the back. He immediately went to the spot in the jungle where he had left his prisoner and found him thrashing furiously in an attempt to get loose. Dan in-

jected a small quantity of a fast-acting hypnotic drug, and the man lay still. Then Dan set up the small tent and got the man inside on the mattress.

It was now getting dark outside, and, with the darkness, there was a rumble of thunder in the distance. Dan went back to the shelter, returned with a light, and adjusted the half-globe over the man's face and head, then fastened the straps behind his head. He inserted in the man's ears two little thimblelike devices, then said mentally, "Kielgaard?"

Kielgaard's voice answered, "We'll know in a minute." After a considerable pause, he said, "Yes, he's responding. Watch."

Very slowly, the man's right arm lifted from the mattress, then dropped limply.

Dan said, "You can handle it all from that end?"

"Easily. We've got a team here that will do nothing else but question him."

Dan nodded, aware that the voices of specially trained psychologists were now speaking in the man's ears, so that he heard nothing else, while he saw only what the screen in the half-globe projected directly into his eyes. Soon he should begin to talk, and what he said would be transmitted through subspace to Kielgaard's team of ques-

tioners. Then it might be possible to learn something of what was going on on this planet. But there was another way that might also help.

Dan glanced at his wrist-watch and saw that it was late enough so that if this were Earth most stores would probably be closed by now. Dan didn't know how it was on this planet, but he pronounced a key word and was in the bookstore that faced the green. The bookstore was closed.

Dan quickly selected an armload of books, brought them back to the shelter under the river, went back and got another stack of them. He set up a spidery device of light metal and piled the books near enough so the feed arms could reach them. A set of rubber-tipped rods like long skeletal fingers turned the pages, while the scanner on an overhead arm oscillated from a position over one page to a position over the other page.

Dan said, "How's it coming in, Kielgaard?"

"Speed it up a little."

Dan moved a small lever. The pages turned more quickly.

DAN said, "We'll see how the feeder works before I leave it." Then he got out a mirror and went to work to change his appearance again.

The second book fed in with no difficulty, so Dan took four of his little mataform units, which was all he had room for, and went back to the terminal.

The crowd seemed to have thinned out somewhat, so he supposed the evening rush was about over. As in terminals nearly everywhere Dan had been, most of the people moved briskly, intent on their own affairs. No one paid much attention to Dan while he glanced around, noting the wall of flashing lights and moving letters, similar to but far larger than the one he had seen before, and a series of sizable blocky structures with large numerals suspended above them, and the stylized outlines of doorways on their four walls. People appeared in front of these doorways, or strolled directly toward them and vanished, hesitating only when a red glow outlined the door to show that someone was coming through from the other side.

In the center of the room toward either end were large silvery structures with the word "Information" hanging above them. Dan went to one and found that vertical blue lines divided it into twenty-four sections, with room left over for more that weren't there as yet, plus a section headed "General Information."

Dan studied the numerous

slots, went to the General Information section and spent most of his change. He sat down with a small package of maps and folders and soon had before him a cross-sectional drawing showing a series of spherical layers one inside the other, labeled, "Level 1—Retail," "Level 2—Retail," "Level 3—Wholesale," "Level 4—Manufacturing," and so on, numbered from the outside in toward the center of the sphere, from one to twenty-five.

Dan sat perfectly still for a moment, looking at this. He leafed carefully through the folders, and was soon convinced that this wasn't a map of underground layers under just one city, but of an interconnected system that appeared to stretch over most of the planet. The surface was labeled, "Recreation — Ordeals — General."

The complex of underground layers seemed to be much thicker than separate floors of a building would be; the map showed cross-sections of buildings of many stories in the individual layers.

Dan studied the map further and found that Level 10 was marked, "Coordination—Government." Dan walked to the information machine and came back with a general map of Level 10, which was divided into sixteen sections. Sections 4 and 5 were headed "Government Sections," and Dan got

large-scale maps of each of them.

What he was looking at was being reproduced far away on big screens, and instantly recorded, to be examined in detail by staffs of trained men. He was thankful this was so. The map was a maze of colored lines, blocks, and curves, with numbered lists up and down both sides and across the bottom.

Abruptly, Kielgaard's voice said, "Dan, see that dark purple oval a little to the left of the center of the page?"

"I see it." Dan glanced from the number to the list at the side of the page and read, "War Ruler's Control Center."

KIELGAARD said, "The staff going over those books thinks there is some sort of an arrangement by which a 'war ruler' takes over absolute power in an emergency. What would be a better way to take over the planet than to get control of this War Ruler and then provoke an emergency?"

Dan studied the purple oval on the map. "Yes. But what do we do about it?"

"The first of your reinforcements will be coming down tonight. If you can get near that control center and plant a few transceivers, we might be able to make a good deal of trouble for anyone who may have seized it."

"I'll do my best," said Dan. He got up, put most of the maps and folders into a locker, and bought a ticket for Level 10, Section 4. As he turned, he noticed two men standing about twenty feet away, talking. On impulse, Dan went, not to the block that would take him to Level 10, but instead toward the station that his pamphlet had told him would take him to Section 6 of the same level he was on. As he rounded a corner and strode up a deserted corridor, he stooped and slid a mataform unit into the space between a waste container and the wall.

An instant later, he was back beside the posters where he had hidden a transceiver earlier.

Two men were walking in the same direction he had gone.

Dan followed them till they vanished, walking very rapidly now, around another corner.

He picked up the mataform transceiver and looked around for the blocky structure with the big number "10" over it. He saw it, after a moment, near the wall with the lights and moving letters on it.

"Kielgaard," he thought, "what do you suppose that wall is?"

"We think it's a sort of abbreviated classified ad arrangement."

"Sounds reasonable," Dan thought.

Dan was by now near the blocky structure with the big numeral "10" above it. Each of the four faces of the structure had four large doors outlined on it—one door for each of the sixteen sections of the level. Dan stepped up to the door marked "4" and it was immediately outlined in red. A voice said, "Travelers are reminded of the special restrictions now enforced at the governmental sections. To enter, you must present valid authorization papers, or state an acceptable reason for entering."

Dan stood perfectly still. He was fairly sure now that he must get into this section. But how?

At that moment, the lights of the huge wall of moving letters caught his attention, and Kielgaard's voice said, "Dan, look to the left, about halfway up."

Dan looked and saw moving letters spell out:

S WANTED ON LEVEL 10
ALL CREDITS PAID SH
ORT TERM EMPLOYMENT
*MEN WITH FAST REFLEXE
S WANTED ON LEVEL 10

DAN realized he had seen parts of this ad spelled out twice at the terminal entrance. He didn't know if it was a trap or something he could use. He said, "I'm in-

terested in a job on Level 10."

"You have examined the record?"

Dan had no idea what this meant. He said, "I understand men with fast reflexes are wanted on Level 10."

"One moment."

There was a short pause, then a new voice. "What we offer you is a special credit allotment sufficient for all normal mating and purchase needs. On account of these latest restrictions, I can't tell you exactly what the job is, but I can say this: The rewards are great. But you also might end up getting sprinkled over the forest. We've got a situation down here that has to be cleaned up fast. With the special referendum tomorrow, it might boil over and make an interstellar mess. We want you for a night's work. At the end you're either rich or dead. How about it?"

Dan thought of the two words "interstellar mess," used in connection with a "special referendum." He had the sensation that he was getting close.

"All right," he said.

THERE was a blur as mataform stations shuttled him from one place to the next. Then he was walking into a large room holding about thirty men, all of whom had something of the look of big cats alert for prey.

Dan had hardly come in when a lithe man walked out on a raised platform, looked over the waiting men, and said, "I'd like to wait till there are more of us, but there isn't time. I'll come to the point without delay. I'll only explain it once, so listen carefully.

"On this level, we have the War Ruler's control center. Two levels up, there is the planetary zoo. Among the animals in the zoo is an ape about our size and general shape, with a thick layer of fur, strong muscles, and a sense of humor like a white-hot rivet dropped down your collar. By some process I don't understand, about fifty of these apes have gotten into a storeroom in an arms depot attached to the control center.

"With this referendum coming up to decide whether we should join the Stellar Union, every time there is a disturbance the election committee blames it on one faction or another. Using their emergency powers, they then clap on some new restriction to keep order till the referendum is over. If there is now a disturbance near the control center itself, tempers are going to shorten further. If the blame should be stuck on one side or the other, true or untrue, it could swing the vote either way.

"We have got to get those apes out of the arms depot

right away. The trouble is, there's an alarm in the arms depot that can't be shut off except from the control center. Fire any kind of impact or vibration weapon in there, or change the composition of the atmosphere by pouring in gas, and the alarm automatically goes off in guard stations all over this level. If we had more time, we could starve them out. We don't have the time.

"The result is that we have to go after them with knives and clubs. Now, the apes are fast, they gang up, they throw things, and if they can, they'll grab you from opposite sides and pull your arms and legs off. That's very funny—for them. So we'll have to work together as a team and fight as hard as we know how."

AFTER the speaker finished, there was a silence in the room. Dan was thinking over the idea and he liked nothing about it. He had little enough time to do his job, and he did not want to spend it being pulled to pieces by apes. He called out, "Mind if I make a suggestion?"

"I'm willing to try anything. Let's hear it."

Dan said, "I don't know about anybody else here, but I am no team player myself. Let me go in alone first. You wait half an hour and then come in and see if there are fifty apes left."

Everyone craned to see who was offering to fight fifty wild apes singlehanded.

The man on the platform turned pale, but said, "Agreed. And if you win, you received the combined credits of all."

Dan found himself walking down a corridor, surrounded by well-wishers, to a room where several tables were loaded with hand-weapons. He picked up a short weighted club, and a short double-edge, razor-sharp sword. A few minutes later, he arrived at a heavy metal door studded with rivets and painted green.

Dan had intended to hide a transceiver nearby on the outside and spend as little time in the storeroom as possible. But everything had happened so fast, and there were so many eyes watching him, that he had no chance to hide a mataform unit anywhere.

There was a loud clang as the heavy door swung shut behind him. Then he was in a big dimly lighted room with a twelve-foot aisle running down the center, a narrower aisle along each wall, and high piles of wooden crates and wirebound heavy cardboard cartons spaced five feet apart to either side of the central aisle. There was a strong smell of damp dirty fur. On the floor partway up the aisle lay what looked like a clothed human arm.

From the far end of the

building came a series of low gruff barks. A humping motion ran along like a wave up the aisle and over the piles of crates toward Dan.

He glanced briefly to either side at the solid concrete walls of the building, felt behind him. The door was locked.

It flashed through his mind that up till now he had had good luck on this planet.

Dan saw, in the nearest corner of the room, several pipes that ran up from the floor and were bent to travel along near the ceiling. He quickly slipped a mataform unit behind these pipes on the floor, then cut into a cardboard carton about fifteen feet away and put another unit inside. He tossed a third on top of the nearest pile of cartons, mentally said a key word, and was on the pile slashing open a carton to slide the unit inside. Then he was on the floor in the corner.

In the dim light, the shadowy figures came toward him. Their long arms swung up and a barrage of rifle parts, bayonets, scabbards, and helmets smashed into the corner. Dan was fifteen feet away when they hit. An instant later, he was back, kicking the rubble out of the corner. There was a repeated gruff cough, then the aisles were jammed, and he had a brief view of bared teeth in fur-covered faces, and hairy arms that reached out to

grasp him. There was a grisly laugh that started as a low chuckle and ended on a high-pitched wavering note.

Dan mentally pronounced a key word and he was on the pile of cartons with a half a dozen apes. The short sword flicked out and back. Other apes sprang from the next pile of cartons. Dan dropped the weighted club, threw his last mataform unit toward the top of a pile across the aisle, and an instant later had recovered it, dropped to the floor, and raced up the aisle.

THERE was noise like teeth clicking together and then the wavering laugh burst out again as the apes turned to chase him up the aisle. Dan slid the transceiver into a slit-open carton and whirled as the leaders rushed toward him. The short sword flashed out and back in rapid thrusts, and abruptly Dan was on top of the first pile of cartons. He recovered the weighted club, glanced down at the apes turning to rush up the aisles, and then suddenly he was with them, slamming the last few of them over the heads with the weighted club.

He thrust, stabbed, and smashed, now in one place, now another, always striking the gibbering horde where they were fewest and most off-balance.

After a long, hideous interval, there came a silence. Dan

could see that there were four heaps of dead or unconscious apes, the only live ones were a few clinging to overhead beams with their eyes shut.

Dan recovered his transceivers and made his way to one of the few windows in the room. This was about seven feet from the floor, heavily barred, with its glass panes broken out. Dan pulled himself up and looked out at a walk and a high wall a few feet away. He cut the sleeve of his shirt into strips and knotted the strips together with a transceiver tied onto either end, so that one transceiver hung on the outside and the other on the inside.

Then Dan was outside, in an underground part of the planet where no one was supposed to be without an official permit.

The air seemed as fresh as outdoors, while overhead there was the appearance of the sky on a heavily overcast day. There was light enough to see by, but it was apparently dimmed to provide an artificial night.

Dan saw no one, and said mentally, "Kielgaard?"

Kielgaard's voice had a hoarse sound. "Are you out of that place?"

"I'm out of it—thank heaven."

"Amen. But listen, things have taken a nasty turn."

"What's happened?"

"We've questioned that

prisoner. The outfit behind this trouble is Trans-Space. But they don't have the control center. Instead, they've got the headquarters of the election committee that controls the referendum. Trans-Space is representing itself as the government of an interstellar league of planets. They have everything set up to falsify the vote tomorrow."

Dan frowned. "What of it? I can still plant the mataform transceivers and we can bring men down from above."

"Yes, but Trans-Space has a mataform terminal set up in the terminal election headquarters. It hooks into the local system and connects with an outpost in the jungle on the surface. Trans-Space has been building up to this day for over three years. The election headquarters is manned like a fortress. It's in immediate touch with the outpost on the surface where they've got an army of reinforcements."

Dan stood still, thinking. He remembered the official with the carrying case in the corridor overhead, who had said to the angry crowd, "Go to the War Ruler." Dan mentioned the incident and said, "What about this War Ruler and his emergency powers?"

KIELGAARD said, "It looked promising to us at first, but actually that's as if someone should say, 'England

is in peril. Go to King Arthur.'"

"What?" said Dan, puzzled.

"The War Ruler is a myth. A thousand years or more ago, after a terrific internal war, they had a famine. They also had a huge army to disband, headed by a very popular leader. The army apparently threatened to take over the planet, but by a clever gimmick, the government put off the crisis. They announced that their scientists had discovered a way to halt the flow of time after the famine—and the War Ruler marched the whole army loyally into a kind of big mausoleum where they presumably killed the lot of them with a quick-acting gas. That is the War Ruler's Control Center.

"Ever since then, they've been making ritual gestures. They stock new arms of standard design nearby, and recruit a number of fresh soldiers to join the old—as a population control measure. To make the illusion complete, they say that any man or woman who sincerely believes the state to be in peril can enter the control center, by passing through a lethal field that kills the insincere and lets the sincere through alive. A number of people have tried it and got killed, so now they don't try any more."

"Where is this place?" asked Dan.

"If we read your map rightly, that wall in front of you marks the edge of the field surrounding it."

Dan set down one of the mataform units and mentally pronounced a keyword.

He was in the shelter under the river.

An instant later he was back by the wall, a glider and the control helmet in his hands. He clipped a transceiver to the glider and guided it toward a huge, dark-stained building with the look of a fortress. He sent the glider around to the front of the building and saw two huge bronze doors, one of which stood open. There was a totally still, motionless look about the place that Dan did not care for. But the glider had come to a closed inner door and that was as far as it could go. Dan took off the control helmet, drew a deep breath and said a key word.

He was standing in the huge hall, before the closed door. He opened the door.

Before him was a room with tall slit windows, and as Dan went in, he could see dimly, but, like a man in a hall of mirrors, what he saw did not make sense.

Distorted shapes and forms, with bright points and blots of light, shifted as he moved, and shifted again as he moved closer, to see one leg of what looked like a very old, faded table. A heavy cable ran up

the leg to the top, where there was a switch, and a bronze plate with the words, "Open Switch."

Dan reached for the switch, and hesitated. If Kielgaard's theory was right, he would now be electrocuted, or otherwise disposed of.

He swallowed hard, reached the rest of the way, and opened the switch.

A pall of choking dust spread over the room, with the sound of coughing all around him and the rustle of clothing and stamping of feet.

Dan wiped his streaming eyes, and saw a man in uniform behind the desk, all but one corner of which looked new.

The man stared at Dan and said, "So soon? What's happened?"

DAN glanced around. The huge room was filled with tough, weary-looking men in combat uniform, all fully armed and equipped. He thought fast, turned back to the man behind the desk and said earnestly, "Peace is restored to the planet. It's been rebuilt and the damage is all repaired. But now, fantastic as it may seem, an enemy has come down to this world from outer space—"

The man at the desk angrily brought down his fist. "No one lives in outer space! That's foolishness!"

Dan said, his mind racing,

"Whoever they are, they've seized a vital communications center! They've got men on guard, armed to the teeth. They've issued orders through captive government officials to seal off this part of the level from the public. They're trying to take over the whole government!"

There was a stir in the room and a low ugly rumble.

"I knew it," said the man behind the desk, jumping to his feet. "I knew they'd lie low and then creep back again when things are quiet. If we'd been demobilized, it would all have been for nothing. But we *aren't* demobilized!"

Abruptly there were shouted orders, and someone was gripping Dan by the arm. "Just lead the way. Show us where they are and we'll take care of the rest."

Dan said mentally, "Kielgaard?"

Kielgaard said, "Good Lord! Go straight outside and turn right."

Someone threw a switch beside the door. Outside, they followed Dan to the right. Behind him, Dan heard the mutter and cough of engines starting up. They were in a well-lighted street like that of a large city, but there was no traffic, either because it was late or because of the travel restrictions.

Kielgaard said, "Next left and it's in front of you."

Dan turned the corner. Di-

rectly before him was a large white marble building with a lawn on either side of a broad flight of steps, and guards on the sidewalk, the steps, and in emplacements in the shrubbery on either side of the steps.

One of them saw Dan and casually snapped a shot at him. Dan got back around the corner fast and looked around. On both sides of the street, men were lying flat at the bases of the buildings, or crouching in doorways. Down the street, they were running up a block to the left. Up the middle of the street came a tank. It paused just out of sight from the building around the corner, and an amplified voice boomed out, "This is the War Ruler. Get out of that building before the count of thirty, or we clean you out."

A voice began to count. There was a sound of fast footsteps on the sidewalk around the corner, and half a dozen men carrying guns came into view. Dan recognized some of the men who had searched the place where he'd landed his boat. One of them, not yet quite in a position to see the tank, called out irritably, "All right, you. Get out here!"

Then he caught sight of the men lying at the base of the buildings, and crouched in the doorways. He fired.

Flashes of light came from

the men by the buildings. There was a roar and a grind and the tank rolled forward. A whistle blew. Dan heaved a mataform transceiver toward the emplacement at the base of the stairs, and an instant before it landed, he mentally pronounced a key word.

In the emplacement, he jerked the men away from their gun before they could fire a shot. He knocked them senseless, grabbed a rifle, and sprang up onto the staircase, with the intent of sprinting to the other side and diving into the emplacement there. Half-way across the steps, there was a sensation as if someone had smacked him between the shoulder blades with a rifle butt. He saw the stairs coming up to meet him, and then he saw nothing.

HE CAME to with a pretty face smiling at him through a sort of fog. The fog cleared away, and a highly attractive nurse was looking at him very admiringly. She said, "Sir, you have a visitor."

Dan glanced around and saw Kielgaard, a sorrowful look on his face.

Dan said as the nurse went out, "She spoke Truthian, didn't she?"

"She did. You're still on the planet."

"What's this 'sir' business and the pleasant smile for?"

Kielgaard said. "You're a hero. It shows, incidentally, how the best experts can make awe-inspiring mistakes. We gave you fast reflexes, thinking that would make you safer. But it turns out that the planet has a class of authorized assassins who hunt down criminals for a livelihood, and never get too numerous because they fight each other for extra credits and prestige. With your fast reflexes and built-in wariness, the populace immediately spotted you for one of these lawful assassins, so you couldn't have been more conspicuous."

Kielgaard shook his head. "Meanwhile, Trans-Space was bringing in hired killers to knock off the planet's lawful assassins at a huge bonus per head, in order to create an uproar so that the election committee, which they had already captured and conditioned, would clap on more restrictions, thus creating more tension, so that Trans-Space could swing the referendum at the last minute. You see, the most dangerous thing we could have done to you was to give you these extra-fast reflexes. But now, because of it, you're a hero." Kielgaard looked sad.

"Luckily," said Dan, "I'm still alive. And so were all those soldiers."

"Another mistake of the experts," said Kielgaard. "The

highest authorities on Truth strongly suspected something was wrong with the protective field around the control center. This made them fearful that the scientific device to halt the flow of time hadn't worked either. This would have been a terrible catastrophe, so by a set of rationalizations that would do credit to a bunch of habitual liars, they evaded the whole issue. The experts and I made the mistake of drawing the logical conclusion. I'm glad it wasn't so."

"What happened to Trans-Space?"

Kielgaard stopped looking sad and smiled a smile of deep satisfaction. "Galactic has its contract with this planet. Trans-Space is in a very anemic condition. The Truthians don't like people who lie, and they always settle their accounts very strictly."

Kielgaard's face subsided into its gloomy look.

Dan said, "What's wrong?"

"Well," said Kielgaard, "you see, you're a planetary hero for settling that business with Trans-Space. Also, you have—let's see"—he took out a slip of paper—"the equivalent of around six hundred thousand dollars spending money for cleaning out those apes, plus—I don't know how to translate this—six thousand mating credits. They have a weird system for romance, and these credits—"

Dan grinned. "Envious?"

"It isn't that," said Kielgaard. "I'm thinking how I'd feel in your place. These Truthians don't have any give in their system. Right's right, and wrong's wrong, and they hand out rewards and punishments irrespective of persons."

There was a sharp rap at the door.

Dan tried to sit up, but he was still too weak.

Kielgaard said sadly, "I tried to reason with them, but I might as well have talked to a wall."

"Listen," said Dan, becoming alarmed. "What's wrong?"

"I don't have the heart to tell you," said Kielgaard.

PICKING up a large briefcase, he said, "Do what you think best. I might mention that we're giving you a bonus, though I suppose that's no consolation."

The rap at the door was repeated and there were sounds of arguments outside.

"What's in that briefcase?" said Dan.

"A big version of the kind of mataform transceiver you used. There's a dreadnaught of ours orbiting the planet with another transceiver like this on board. The key word,

in case you should have use for it, is 'Krakior.' "

The door burst open and three men came in, arguing with a man in a white jacket.

"That doesn't matter," said the first man, a familiar-looking individual who was opening a square case with carrying handle. "The only question is, was it or was it not an unauthorized kill, and is this the man? We have our checker set up to answer this question and that's all there is to it." He glanced at Dan. "Hold out your fingertips, please, and touch those plates. Purely a routine check."

Behind the man with the case were two men with arm-bands and shields. One glanced disinterestedly at Dan and cocked his gun.

Dan looked at the head of A Section and said fervently, "Thank you, Kielgaard."

The doctor in the white jacket was arguing to no visible effect as the tube was held to Dan's eyes, snapped back into the case, and the case clapped shut, to give its loud alarm clang.

The assassin with the gun calmly leveled it at Dan and fired.

All he hit was a suddenly empty bed.

Dan had said the key word.

END

Thirty Degrees

Cattywonkus

By JAMES BELL

*It doesn't take a heap
of leaving to make any
house a nightmare. One
vanishing door will do
nastily.*

IT WAS a tremendous house. And they were newlyweds. And were still a mite flighty. And for a while that accounted for the whole thing.

At the moment, it seemed to Ernie Lane that in a house which even the real estate agent said had "either" eleven or twelve rooms, it was quite conceivable that he and Mel-nice had overlooked that extra room.

After all, they had only been

living at 1312 Cedar Lane for four days and had hardly had time to make a complete survey of the place.

Now it was quite different. For Ernie Lane had stopped walking hurriedly past that extra door, had stopped giving it only casual curiosity, had even stopped wondering after-ward.

This night he had come home a bit tired, gone directly to greet his loving wife, and

then decided to put a stop to the gnawing question.

While Melinee fried the chicken, Ernie walked carefully and wordlessly to the dim hallway. He went past the staircase, past the telephone, to the darkest spot between the living room and the study. He stood for a strange moment—there was no extra door.

He felt the refinished wall, his fingertips searching for hidden panels. There was none.

"Supper's ready," Melinee called. "Ernie?"

But it had been there last night, the night before, the night before that, and the very first night the real estate agent brought them over. In fact, he recalled, that was the reason the agent had been uncertain about the number of rooms. And why had he passed it off as a joke, simply turning from the extra door without opening it?

Ernie felt again.

It was ceasing to be a joke. He was not a man of hallucinations. He was not a victim of superstition, fear or near-sightedness. He only wanted to know why he saw a door one day and didn't see it the next.

He called a comforting word to his wife, then reached for the telephone book. He found the name of Hartley and Hartley, Real Estate. PLaza 0-6633. Without any undue commotion, he dialed. In a moment, a woman's voice

at the other end seemed to barge into his life.

"Special operator. Number, please?"

"PLaza 0-6633."

"Sorry, sir, we have no such number—"

Ernie let a disgruntled voice thunder into the phone: "Then what the heck is Hartley and Hartley Realty doing with it?"

A pause. Then she replied, "Sir, we have no Hartley and Hartley—"

"Don't be silly," he said. "I just found it in the phone book."

She answered, "We have a Hartfield and Hatley, Realtors, Inc., sir, but no Hartley and Hartley. Their number is in the directory."

Melinee was standing behind him. "Who are you calling?"

He was shaken, but he managed to appear calm as he hung up. He even relaxed against the wall. "I was trying to get the real estate agent on the phone—these lights ought to be brighter—and I thought he could refer us to his electrician."

"His what?" Melinee asked.

"Elec—" He halted. "Never mind, honey. I'm beat—rough day. I need fried chicken." He hugged his trim, prim wife and they walked toward the kitchen arm in arm. But it was not until they settled at the table that he saw, under the bright electric light, that

her hair was red, not blonde, and he immediately felt he'd been gypped.

Her smirky little voice added to the shock. "Darling, don't call me Melinee when my name is Marsha. It just isn't done."

ON PURPOSE, Ernie spent an uneventful evening, arose the next morning, ignored his wife's red hair, conveniently forgot her name, avoided even checking to see if the door was there, and saved up a sneer for the telephone.

During the day, his business life was perfect. He got the Jenkins account, lunched with the boss, and was asked to serve on the membership committee in the Chamber of Commerce drive. However, during the afternoon he developed a terrific headache and excused himself from the office long enough to see the company physician.

The thin, foxy doctor handed him a pill and a glass of water. After Ernie had swallowed the pill politely, the physician leaned forward and gazed at his eyes and forehead. "Tell me, Lane—you're a newlywed, aren't you?"

Ernie nodded.

"Then why the worried frown? You seem to be carrying the Rock of Gibraltar on your shoulders. Is your job too much for you?"

"Of course not," Ernie said,

smiling. "I told you I had a headache."

"Perhaps," the doctor said, smiling back. "You seemed to have been in something of a prepossessed state when you came in. I was just curious."

Ernie laughed it off and at the doctor's request lay on a cot for a period of ten minutes. When he returned to the office, there was a request that he call a "Marsha."

The sudden venomous thoughts of the evening before spun before his eyes. What the devil was going on with the woman? The new name, the new hair-do, the new smirk in her voice—that wasn't the woman he married. He grabbed the phone and called home.

Twenty rings. No answer.

It was a quarter of four when the switchboard notified him that his wife was on the line. "Hello, Ernie? This is Melinee. I'm at the Lee Hat Shop. Can you meet me in half an hour? I want to do some shopping and I thought we'd have supper and maybe see a movie."

Melinee? It was all like a breath of spring. Away from that house, she was a different person. Happily, he agreed to buying her a new hat, supper and a ticket to Loew's State. For Melinee, anything. For Marsha, nothing.

And when they met, surely enough her hair was blonde again and the smirk in her

voice was gone. She was his bride, and he forgot whatever the past, present or future might hold.

The future, however, was not long coming. After the movie, they returned home and were about to settle down when, passing along the hallway, Ernie looked over his shoulder and saw the extra door. Quickly, he reached past Melinee and grasped the knob with his hand.

"Ernie, what on *Earth!*"

She startled him. He laughed, and they went in to bed.

It was around one A.M. when Ernie decided he would not be able to put off any longer the chore of exploring that hall door. It plainly had not been there the night before; it plainly was there to-night.

He tiptoed softly from bed and left the room. Melinee did not even stir. He closed the door lightly and cat-footed his way through the darkness to the wall switch at the foot of the stairs.

Stealthily looking all about him, as if someone or something might suddenly try to stop him, Ernie sneaked up on the door. He grabbed the knob with both hands, turned it briskly and the door swung open.

The pale green wall of the hallway confronted him. It was as if the door were merely hinged onto the wall. No opening whatever.

HE TAPPED it with his knuckles. Then he examined the door. It was a French style thing extending from floor to ceiling with contrasting green slats. Identical with those appearing all along the hallways, most of them closet doors.

Just for the heck of it, he thought he would drag out a hammer and uncork the screws holding the false door—carry it to some conspicuous place and observe as it went through its next disappearing act. But as he turned to head for the tool cabinet, Ernie heard the din of distant shouting—as if a room-full of men were playing cards.

And yet not so distant. For a moment the world became silent. Ernie pressed an ear against the wall behind the false doorway. It seemed to be coming from inside, and there were only a few words of any audible clarity. "Maximum—not much longer—and logarithms—"

Ernie tried the adjacent door. It opened into a small storage room, unlighted. He felt around the wall paneling, but no switch. Gauging the dimensions, it seemed to him that the storage room practically accounted for all the space behind the hall. If the fake door opened onto a room, it could only be this room, and there was nothing here.

He listened. No sound inside the confines of the room.

But the moment he returned, pressed his ear against the outer wall, Ernie heard them shouting again. It was as if the wall were twelve inches thick—as if he were not hearing anything at all—and yet hearing.

The thought struck him—there was a laundry chute opening from the second floor to the storage room. Provided they wanted to install a chute. Meanwhile, the agent had told him, it would remain just a hole in the floor.

He and Melinee had not made any plans for developing the second floor. It was evident that his mother would one day have to live with them, and her own invalid sister, in time. And then whatever children there might be. But so far he and Melinee had actually made only one trip up there with the agent.

In fact, there was no electrical connection to the upstairs whatever. Ernie remembered the layout, however, and made his way up the stairs that creaked in defiance of the agent's compliments. When he reached the top in the pitch blackness, he felt for the wall.

A strange coldness not at all common to the summer season moved out along the hallway. It seemed to hover around him, curious of the intruder.

Imagination.

He walked on, an inch at a time, for he remembered a small table about half way along. But he never felt the table. Ernie reached the end of the hall before he was sure—and where had the table gone?

He returned along the opposite wall until he felt the small square paneling. Then a brass knob. He pulled it open, half expecting the end of the world. And at that point, a bluish haze filled with gaseous, luminous smoke rose out and blinded him.

When the obnoxious odor of the smoke was gone, he took a deep breath and stuck his head in again. Directly below him sat three men, fat and jovial, shaking their pipes at one another. There was a row of red and white lighted tubes, not unlike fluorescents, a mahoganylike counter that might pass for a bar, and a row of bottles against a mirror.

THE dimensions immediately struck Ernie as all wrong. It was far bigger than the hall closet where it was supposed to be. In fact, the portion he saw seemed to be the focal point of a large dance hall or bar room. But the most obvious quality of the scene was the tilted floor. The whole thing seemed to be about thirty degrees lopsided.

Ernie could go immediately back to bed and tell of his

dream tomorrow, or he could make things worse by yelling at the men below.

IT WASN'T necessary to yell. As if they had seen him through the tops of their balding heads, they motioned to the bartender, then pointed squarely at his vantage point. Ernie felt the quavering impulse to run, and yet even in a nightmare you try desperately to learn the ending.

The man in the white coat set the ladder firmly against the floor so that the top ended in the slightest kind of tilt near the chute door. It was not Ernie's intention to crawl through the door, but the way the man motioned, and the way the men turned briefly and waved, simply as if they might be old acquaintances waiting for him in a hotel lobby—it was, to say the very least, overwhelming.

There was a fragrance, an allure about the room. It smelled of apples and tobacco and brought nostalgic thoughts of college days and—and faint wisps of the past that were not nostalgic. He thought of Melinee. He really ought to tell her about this.

The chalky finger motioning at him, the unconcerned old men on the sofa—and the table. It was the antique table, missing from the upstairs hall, that lured him in. There it sat against the far wall. He grabbed a jutting two-by-four

and twisted his body through the opening.

The ladder must have been shoved to one side, or perhaps it was the claustrophobic effect of going through the small opening—anyway, something. It turned his mind, his body, wrong-side out. Like the squeezing out of a wet mop by a steamroller.

At the foot of the ladder, the man in the bartender's jacket led him to the three men. One of them, exceptionally fat, jovial, excused himself politely and took Ernie aside.

"You look pale, Ernie," he said. "Having trouble?"

Groggily, Ernie looked about him. "It's this room. It's lopsided. I think a good thirty degrees cattywonkus."

The man doused a cigar and a quick frown crossed his brow. "Good point. Very good point. Come with me, Ernie."

Ernie looked; the other men paid him no mind. The little man waddled through a maze of foundation columns, as if the whole world were suspended above them. He walked behind the bar to a small glass-encased desk, U-shaped and covered with dials all reading A-B-C-D.

"Kronkite!" the man called. A whirring inside the room shut off. A man with goggles and a metal halo stuck his head out the door. "Kronkite, Ernie here says we are thirty degrees off. Can you shift the

equilibrium? Frankly, I hadn't noticed it."

WITH a silent nod, the man named Kronkite shut the transparent door, turned three knobs, a bell clanged and the floor of the whole affair sank some thirty degrees on one side, rose thirty on the other. Then the whirring in the chamber resumed and Ernie was led back to the bar.

"Have yourself a drink, man," his host coaxed.

"I don't need one," Ernie said. "Listen, before we go on, just one question—"

The man smiled pleasantly.

"Where the heck am I? And what is this going on in my basement?"

The smile continued. It was maddening.

"Well?" said Ernie.

"You are here," the man finally said. "And don't be silly, Ernie. Your house has no basement."

Ernie turned to the bartender. "I think I *will* have a drink."

"Make it a triple," the little man called, and the bartender smiled as if his face hurt.

There was a pained expression on Ernie. He sank his head into his arms.

"Cheer up," the man said. "It isn't worth all that."

"What isn't?"

"Be happy, man."

"I'll be happy when I get out of here, but I'll be hilari-

ous when I find out the score—and I plan to be hilarious before I get happy. Is that clear?"

"You talk as if you had been drinking already, man. Snap out of it. I like men with clear heads."

It was not only a delaying tactic, Ernie thought; it was plainly a case of nerve-busting. They were going to force it out of him. He had already conceded they were not a gang of thieves using his basement for a hideaway; they were not digging a secret tunnel for the Defense Department.

"You like men with clear heads? What am I, some sort of recruit?"

"Now!" the man exclaimed, suddenly thrust into a new frame of mind. "We are now on the same plane. You *are* a recruit and we can understand each other now."

"So where is this?"

"This is your house, of course, but we're not quite there yet. We're in what you would call—oh, another dimension."

Ernie reached for the drink and sniffed it. Its smell fitted the situation. "And what does that mean?"

"Oh, you and I have lived in the same vicinity all our lives, even crossed each other's paths, but we are in different dimensions—different worlds in the same place."

"You mean like Mars and Earth?"

"I mean like Mars *in* Earth, or vice versa," the man answered.

Ernie jumped up and started for the ladder. "I'm getting out of here—"

"Don't be a fool! Climb that ladder and you'll butt your skull in!"

"I came through the hatch. I'll leave through the hatch."

"But we've shifted thirty degrees. You told us to. Now the top of the ladder is thirty degrees away from the door of the laundry chute, which is quite impossible to reach, my friend, because there is perhaps dirt and a foundation and everything else in the way. We'd have to tear out our own structure and gouge into yours. This we cannot do. Too expensive."

ERNIE had heard enough. He climbed the ladder to the top, butted his head and climbed down. "Okay. You win. What's the score?"

"You and Marsha," the man said.

"Melinee," Ernie corrected.

"Melinee in your dimension, Marsha in ours. You and she exist in our dimension as well. Same types, same characteristics inwardly. But not the same outwardly. Different hair, different name—your own features were to be slightly different here."

Ernie sat down on the sofa beside the two old men. He buried his head. "This is the

other dimension? Then where is the other me?"

"Oh, no," his host said. "This is not 'the other' dimension. This is the *experimental* dimension. You are from the second. What we are both in is a third realm sponsored by the government—the federal government of The Unison States. Congrice sponsored this scientific investigation, provided we could accomplish it before the session ends."

The first desire to laugh at the stupidity of the nightmare grappled with Ernie. But when he looked at that ladder and remembered the bump on his head, he knew this was not the time or place for a nightmare.

The man went on, "So we talked Senatore Jumphies into wielding his might in committee, the committee on extra-dimensional perception talked to the President Eisenhower, he addressed the Congrice, and by the single vote of Demorep Martini, this thing was financed for short duration."

Ernie opened his eyes and looked beyond the bar and the experimental lab. It was like the inside of a giant ship in space or a vessel plowing the Pacific. It spread into distant chasms of darkness.

"Our object, of course, is to start out the new dimension with an Adam and Eve," the host said.

Ernie sneered. "You think

you can start a new world!"

"Oh, we've begun it. And we chose your home because here you are two young newlyweds just starting out in life, not too concerned that the future holds nothing more for you than junior assistant to the vice president—ever! Here you have more chance for development, advancement and enjoyment. We have effected changes—your Melinee, for example. You and Marsha will run this dimension. You and she will—"

"We will not, and I'm going to Melinee now. Let me out of here."

The man politely hid a laugh. "Dear sir, I assure you there is no way out of the dimension. You are trapped. You must remain now, regardless, and conduct our experiment for us."

"You got through to our world to find out about us," Ernie said. "How can you keep me here?"

"But we entered your world from our own dimension. Our people pass back and forth all the time, unknown to your people. But from this special contraption which Congrice has rigged up for us, there is no immediate escape."

Ernie got mad. "Then what the devil are these people doing here?"

"Sh," the man said, "those are our Congrice observers." He seemed extremely disturbed. "Don't let them know

how you feel. They get angry at people who take them on wild-goose chases."

THERE was a sudden feeling of hope that Ernie held a monkey wrench in his hand. First, he would find out all about the thing, then he would raise hail Columbia to the two Congrice observers and get them to thumbs-down the experiment. Then, if there was an ounce of humaneness in them, they would free him.

"Okay, I'll calm down. But let me know the rest. When will I see Melinee?"

"Marsha," the man said firmly, "will be along shortly. We must first lift the initial dimension prototype to the exact level of your house. Every coordinate must match each stick of furniture in your own dimension. Then we can begin working outward—"

"Working outward?"

"From your house. It is to be the beginning of this—er—civilization you and Marsha are to create. You will observe in each direction there is still darkness? When we have manipulated the realm into the exact position of the ground floor of your house, we will install a series of transitional burnouts. These will break down molecular resistance which our more powerful equipment creates on solid portions of your house. Everything will fit in-

to place, and you and Marsha will report to us regularly."

Ernie was fuming. "Then we are your prisoners?"

"Oh, but you'll enjoy every minute of it! We created the origin, the nucleus, in the home of some newlywed in your dimension for the mere purpose of convenience of adaptability. We will bring in teams who will plant ersatz crops, trees, cut streams, create weather—put life into the whole place. With your dimension's home and our dimension's scientific advantages, you can have full reign of populating a wonderful new world."

Ernie was madder than he had ever remembered. "And if I refuse?"

"You can't refuse. Marsha will be here momentarily; we have been experimenting with her changes in hair, mood, expression—we hypnotized her on occasions. The extra door in the hallways? Sooner or later she will see it, wonder as you did and open it. This time we will have the magnetic field force turned on. You see, Ernie, you came in the wrong way and—" and here he paused abruptly—"quite a problem has been posed."

"I'll say it has!"

"Yes. You see, you were supposed to come through the door, and you still will, for there was a technical miscalculation in our instruments which, while allowing you to

enter this new dimension, also did not allow you to enter. You yourself suggested we correct by thirty whole degrees. Well, we are not set up for more than one field force entrance per person. The Congrice didn't allot us that much money."

Ernie's eyes grew wild and bright. "So, technically, I'm not even here?"

"Technically, your other self is still up by the laundry chute looking in or going back to bed, or whatever." He scratched his balding head. "Really an unfortunate event. For when the other you enters our hallway door, we shall have to do away with one of you. It would not only frighten Marsha, but the federal government would accuse us of waste, corruption and heaven knows what else."

The wildness in Ernie's eyes turned into a gleam. "You mean your government just wouldn't understand?"

"Right," the man said unhappily. "There's more politics in science than you'd ever believe possible."

"Mister, I think I have a solution."

"You *have*?"

ERNIE walked to the bar, grabbed an armful of magnums, then walked to the plastic experimental table, flung open the door, slung bottle after bottle at the instruments, caused three small ex-

plosions, a sputtering red fire, a terrible burst of black smoke and a sudden explosion that turned the whole new dimension—such as it was—into a white blinding sun.

When the nausea left, he saw the bodies lying on a green grassy area in what seemed to be Washington, D. C. He made his way in torn pajamas to Unison Station, paid a man to go out and buy him a second-hand suit by giving up his gold wedding band, then found the Senatoreale Office Building, located the office of the Senatore of Iowaki, as he had planned to do, and asked for permission to enter the "other" dimension to take home movies. The senatore asked him the name of his home town, accused him of lipping it, handed him a year's free pass to Other World and a two-year pass to the Senatoreale in session.

Ernie, following instructions on the card, walked to a little white building near the Washingable Monument, stepped inside, handed a man his Other World card, then walked through a door, felt sick at his stomach, came out to the streetcar line to Melinee and home.

When he got there, it was almost daylight, and the front

door was locked. He climbed through an upstairs window, looked through the laundry chute, saw nothing and returned to his bed. Melinee was still sleeping soundly.

He wrestled with his pillow a while. Then the alarm went off.

The rest was simple. At breakfast he told her he was taking the day off.

"Darling, why on Earth?"

"We're moving," he said.

"But *why*?"

"There was an explosion in the night. I think it was gas escaping."

"We might have died!" she cried.

Ernie closed his eyes. "Go look in the hall, dear, and tell me what you see."

When she returned, she was in a quandry.

"Well?" he asked. "Did you see that crazy extra door blown off the wall?"

"No, Ernie, but there's a man at the door in pajamas like yours who claims he's been following you."

Ernie squinted. "Who is he?"

"He says his name is Irvin—"

"Irvin?" Ernie barked.

"—and, dear, he's the spitting image of you."

END

When Day is Done

By ARNOLD CASTLE

If there is a bit of the jungle

in every man—why not put

every man into a bit of the jungle?

IT WAS three in the afternoon and quitting time at Utopian Appliances, Inc. Bertram J. Bernard, the firm's stocky, thick-jawed president, waited discreetly at his desk for a few minutes, then closed the file he had been studying, bid his secretary a pleasant evening, and strode calmly out of the office.

He did not want to appear eager, and succeeded superbly in that. Joining several junior

executives, he conversed genially with them as they descended to the rapid-transit floor. Three of the bright, confident young men decided to stop for a quick one at the building's plush saloon. Well, that was okay—Bernard had been a late-runner in his youth. But now, well into middle age, he had learned that life had other demands and pleasures.

"Have a good run, B. B.," said Watkins, the treasurer, at

the rap-tran gate. "Gloria's coming in on the three-thirty and we're going to dinner and then some musical or other she's been dying to see."

So Bernard entered the rap-tran alone, though surrounded by scores of pushing, jabbering strangers. Finding a seat on the aisle, next to a electronics company vice-president whom he knew slightly, he engaged in trade conversation during the five minutes it took the monorail to reach his stop. He and the electronics executive got off, as did about half of the rap-trans passengers, mostly middle-aged men like himself. Early-runners.

The escalator from the monorail stop descended directly into the Jungle Station beneath. In the large lobby the crowd dispersed and Bernard was again alone when he reached the dressing rooms. This was not surprising, he reflected; not many members of his Jungle Station could afford the elaborate private locker unique to this wing of the building. He pressed his thumbprint to the lock and the door slid back.

Inside, he undressed completely, noting with critical satisfaction the strength and color of his body in the full-length mirror at one end of the locker. He quickly packed his clothes, shoes, and briefcase into a small suitcase, with delivery instructions on the top. Then he climbed into

his jungle suit—knee-length shorts, sweat shirt, rubber-soled shoes, and hip holster.

He checked the frequency setting on the sonic pistol, adjusting it to the panthers who were reported in ascendancy. As a last thought, merely a whim, he glanced down at the station emblem on his sweat shirt, just to enjoy the sense of pride he derived from the large red "U-F" above it.

Of course there were getting to be more and more ulcer-frees these days, but that did not make it any less a matter for pride. And anyway several factions were pressing determinedly for a neurosis-free insignia. Though there were complications there. Oh, well, the important thing's the run, he remembered.

In the lobby again he deposited his suitcase at the delivery window. Then he stopped at the bulletin board to read the ascendancy ratings for the day. These were official, therefore several days outdated, but one could extrapolate. Panthers were dropping into third position, behind polar bears, with giraffes at the top by a good margin.

Outside the building he ran into a tipster and decided he had best buy a dope sheet. He gave the seedy little man a dollar bill and looked over the page.

"Keep it right where you got it, Mac," the man whispered hoarsely, nodding to-

ward the pistol at Bernard's side. "I got it straight, dem pant'ers is all over de place. Watch out at de water hole, specially."

GLANCING swiftly over the page, Bernard saw that fifty panthers had entered this sector of the jungle overnight, with a herd of fifteen giraffes headed well toward the south. But he also noted that there had been three deaths from polar bears in the past week in his sector alone. Fortunately, the frequency readjustment from panthers to polar bears was an easy one, three clicks clockwise with the thumb. He would have to remember about the water hole, though it was either that or going above the rapids. The sharks below the rapids were pretty thick during the summer.

"Thanks, bud," he told the tipster. Then he strode, still calm, to the wall. Expertly he clambered up its handholds, till he reached the top, thirty feet from the ground. On the other side lay the jungle, its lush tropical growth hiding from his alert eyes the danger that lurked within. He popped a Verve pill into his mouth and chewed on it thoughtfully.

Far in the distance, some five miles at the narrowest point, rose the outer wall. Between the two prowled a variety of ambivalent robot beasts, now ready to dismember him, but on weekends ad-

justed to take small boys and girls for short rides or simply to stalk about picturesquely.

Drawing his pistol and placing it between his teeth, Bernard leaped to the ground between the wall and a large low palm. At once the pistol was again in his hand. But nothing moved. Now he could see clearly the path he must take.

Bending low, he trotted along through the undergrowth. It soon began to clear, and still no danger in sight. He holstered the pistol and advanced, half-walking, half-running, till he could hear the hiss of the rapids. Enough noise to mask the sounds of a dozen panthers, he thought. But it covered his own footsteps, too, and panthers were more phonotropic than polar bears, the latter having a preference for radar spotting.

Coyotes were the worst, of course, with their damned infrared thermo-sensors. They could spot a runner even when he was in cover. Fortunately they were scarce and getting more so. Bernard had only encountered a coyote twice, deactivating it both times. But he had been lucky. He recalled the story about that city councilman. . . .

An hour later he arrived at the river, a half-mile above the rapids and well away from the water hole. He had seen only one beast in the first three miles of his trek, a gi-

raffe hobbling along in olfactory pursuit of another runner far to the right. Giraffes were mainly a nuisance, though they could kick and trample a man. Bernard had heard of such a thing happening, but it was a rarity. They were too easy to elude.

He crossed the river on a log raft he found, which had evidently been rigged to dump him in about halfway across. At least he had got that far on it, he told himself, as he struck out for the shore. For one horrible moment he thought he detected a shark upstream, but it was merely the shadow of a large palm leaf. He had a strong and sensible fear of sharks.

A mile farther found him crawling over the rocky ground as the growls of panthers reached his acute ears from behind a ridge of brush. If they heard him, they ignored him, perhaps more interested in other quarry. His knees and arms were scraped but not bleeding, and at last he was able to get to his feet to make better time.

It was then that he heard the girl's scream.

NO REGULATION in the rule book discriminated against women becoming runners, but only a few of the millions who worked at offices and plants in the city did so. Also there was nothing in the code about helping other run-

ners. Each was entirely on his own, free to help or be helped, or not helped, if he chose.

Bernard would never have called for help for himself. But the sound of the woman's cry appealed to another side of his nature. He changed his direction, but moved with great caution now. Soon he saw her, and froze.

She was clad as he, different sector emblem, but the same proudly borne "U-F" on her sweater. Her face and body were young and attractive, but her long dark hair was tangled and wet, and her limbs mud-spattered. She had screamed only once, and now her small lipsticked mouth hung open with terror.

Backed against a tree, she gaped in horror, waiting, as three panthers approached from as many directions. Her sonic lay on the ground outside the circle. It was obvious that she was finished if Bernard did not assist her.

Raising his hand till the pistol sight was where he wanted it, he modified the angle adjustment till all of the animals were within its range. Then he depressed the trigger several times. Two fell and the third animal leaped at the girl. But she twisted around the tree and Bernard picked off the panther as it readied itself for a second spring. At once the girl dived for her pistol. Proper response, Bernard thought approvingly. Then she

ran toward him and threw herself against him, breathing deeply in that position for several moments.

Bernard felt strongly the strength and zest of youth as he held the girl in his arms. Then they turned and walked together to the outer wall, which was less than half a mile away. There was no danger from the deactivated panthers, which would remain out of commission for half an hour. So they had no reason to hurry.

Bernard helped her climb the wall, though she seemed quite adept at it herself. On the other side they emerged upon the street. Across the street lay the acres and acres of homes which were the city's eastern suburbia.

"Oh, it was just horrible!" the girl finally cried. "All at once they sprang. From nowhere. I tripped and my sonic fell out of the holster. I'd be *dead* if it weren't for you!"

"Very true," Bernard agreed. "You'll be more careful in the future, I hope."

"If only I could thank you in some way. I owe you so much. My apartment is just up the next street. Only a few blocks. Wouldn't you like to stop in for a drink? I'm sure you're as tired as I."

But Bernard declined. He walked her home, then continued on, unaware of the envious glances of young children as he passed. Unaware of

other runners, early-runners, middle-aged men like himself, also walking the streets, wearily but not stooping, not frowning.

How good a warm shower would be, thought Bernard, as he entered the last mile. His wife would probably want a drink, so there would be that too. And dinner. He was *hungry*.

Ulcer-free and happy, he walked the last mile in contentment. The office was something that had happened long ago, would happen again tomorrow, but could never invade his thoughts that night. And he knew exactly how his wife would greet him at the door.

"HELLO, darling. How was the run?" she asked, kissing him as he came into the house. "You only made fair time this evening. Something happen?"

"No, pretty routine. Panthers are on the increase. I came across three of them attacking a girl runner. Works as a copy writer in the city. She claims that the jungle cured her ulcers completely. Really remarkable."

"Mmm-hmm," said Virginia, taking his holster. "Attractive, no doubt. I suppose she tried to seduce you. I've heard stories about those jungle women."

"Nothing of the sort. Just suggested I drop in for a

drink. After all, she was grateful."

What nonsense, he told himself as he showered, Virginia suggesting that the girl had intended to seduce him. Oh, well, what difference did it make?

Man, that hot water felt good! Even on his scratched legs and arms.

How many years had he been making the run now? Twenty-three, almost. In a

way he could consider himself a sort of a pioneer. And to think that the only reason he had started jungle running in the first place was to please a supervisor! Those days everyone did it.

As he dried himself off, hearing the tinkle of cocktails in the living room, he wondered if the panthers would move south, away from the water hole, before tomorrow's run.

END

THE RELUCTANT BRAIN

Sir Isaac Newton had one of the most powerful intellects ever housed in a human skull, yet it was only with fantastic difficulty that the results of his thinking could be pried away from him.

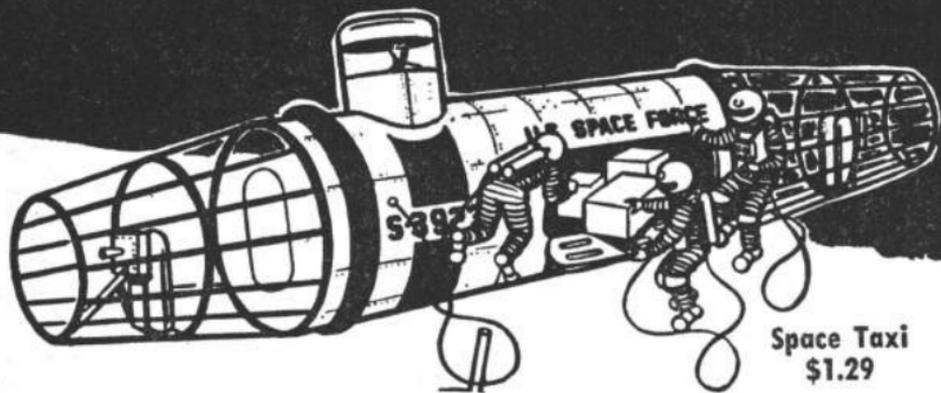
His invention of the calculus is a prime example. Sir Isaac first worked it out as a tool for his own private use in 1666—at the age of 24—for investigating mathematical relationships in his theory of universal gravitation. For nearly a quarter of a century, Newtonian calculus existed only in notes locked in his desk. Not until Leibnitz's somewhat different approach was already the talk of the scientific world did Newton allow his to be published.

Among his greatest practical inventions was the one based on a mistake. In investigating the laws of optics, he came to the conclusion that a lens would necessarily and always scatter the color of light passing through it, like a prism in a spectroscope. So Newton invented the reflector telescope in 1668, at the age of 26.

Like Einstein and many others, Newton proved that youth is the period of intellectual daring and discovery, and that making it defer to the "experience and wisdom" of elders would have suffocated mankind's most dazzling achievements at birth. Sir Isaac continued to contribute to scientific thought beyond his twenties, but he became increasingly involved in mysticism and politics; his last researches were complicated theology, and his last job was Master of England's Mint.

The famous apple? That was a bedtime story told to Newton's grand-niece when she was a little girl. She repeated it to Voltaire years later, and Voltaire told it to the world.

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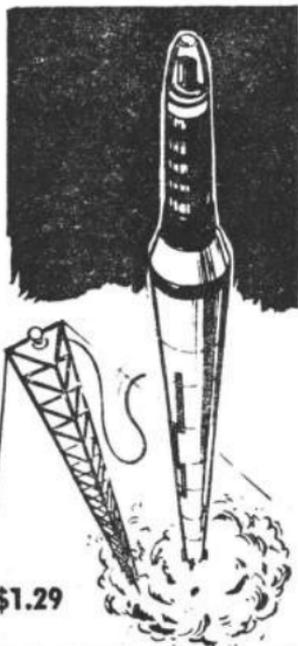
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Of course a planet has a right to be strange

—but so strange that it makes fleas of men?

A Pride of Islands

By C. C. MacAPP



ALYARSMIT clung to the top of a tall swaying hair and squinted toward the ponderous caterpillar-shaped

beast way off in the very far distance.

"It's coming this way, all right," he called down to Bru-



smit, who was leaning against the base of the hair. "It's moved half a length since we first saw it."

"Do you think it sees us yet?" Bru asked uneasily. From up here, six man-lengths above the skin, he looked even

shorter and pudgier than he was.

Alyar grinned down at him, then looked toward the front of their own beast. "I think so," he said. "Our eyestalks are up and signaling. The pincers aren't active, though. It must be a friend-beast."

"I don't see how they can recognize each other this far apart," said Bru doubtfully. "We'd better go tell Paboss."

"He sees it." Alyar looked aft to where the leader of the smit clan perched on another hair, a good shout from Alyar's.

"You'd better come down," said Bru. "He clobbered Jor-smit for being in sight, the last time we met another beast."

"He doesn't care when we're this far away." Nevertheless, Alyar climbed down; it wasn't all comfort at the top of a hair, especially when the beast felt you and twitched. "Let's go back there. He might know who it is."

He started through the thick growth of shorter hair, and Bru followed. They moved carefully, listening; it would be nip-and-tuck if only the two of them encountered a fley. They heard a few, detoured around them, eventually reached Paboss's outpost.

The leader was down from the hair, sitting with his back against it, munching dried meat. Three spearmen with him jumped up when they

heard Alyar and Bru coming, then, recognizing them, relaxed.

Pabosssmit grunted and gestured toward the joint of meat beside him. "Help yourself." He eyed Alyar keenly. "That you on the hair up forward?"

"Yes, boss. But I made sure I came down in time."

"Don't go showing yourself again before we make contact."

"I won't. Could you tell who it was?"

"Looked like the jaksin beast."

"Oh. We don't fight them, do we?" Alyar was a little disappointed; he'd never been in a fight.

Paboss grinned. "No, but we don't trade with them, either. Pabossjaksin doesn't like me."

Alyar remembered something he'd heard. "Was that where you stole Maboss?"

The grizzled leader filled his thick chest and chuckled. "That's right. Stole her right out from under his nose!" He extended his arms, showing some scars. "Here's where he got me, before I knocked him out. Here's where Ma bit me."

"She bit you?"

"Sure. Any girl worth stealing'll put up a fight. I had to haul her along, kicking and screaming, and fight off half the jaksin clan at the same time. It was some party."

Alyar sighed, thinking what

it must be like to go raiding. "I'm old enough to have a woman of my own," he mused.

Immediately, Paboss glowered. "Don't you go getting any ideas, hear? I don't want an open war with the jaksins. We've got enough trouble already, with the grans and the kendies." He put a hand tentatively on his club. "You hear?"

"Yes, boss," said Alyar hastily.

DURING the rest of the day the two beasts halved the distance between them. Near evening, Alyar led Bru, protesting, up to the smit beast's head and down over the edge where they could see forward and remain hidden in the short hair. It was dangerous; the beast might mistake them for fleys and reach up with a pincer-tentacle, which could move fast, considering the size.

When the slow hunching gait stopped and the beast settled down for the night, they went back to the thickly furred spot where the clan lived. Two of the moons were up, and with the excitement of being near another clan, nobody wanted to sleep yet.

Alyar left Bru with an audience of young people who hadn't seen the other beast yet, and went looking for the older men. They were in a clearing, rehashing stories about other clans, especially about the jaksins, which was

an old one with a fine repertoire of legends. Maboss had naturally brought the stories with her.

Just now, Paboss was retelling a fascinating, if ridiculous one, about how people had originally come from another world on a beast that could fly.

Alyar sat and listened for a while, then, when the icy evening rain broke up the session, went to his sleeping place in a patch of protecting curly hair. After the first sleep, when it was midnight and dry again, he sneaked to where Bru slept, hissed at him, and drew him away. "Are you game for a little trip?"

"Where? You mean up front again?"

"No. Over to the jaksin beast. Just for fun."

Bru was horrified. "At night? We'd freeze! Anyway, you heard Paboss!"

"We can find something to put on over our own clothes, and wrap our feet in leather. All Paboss said was I mustn't try to steal a girl. Nobody'll miss us for one day, and the beasts will be together by tomorrow noon. We could bring back some kind of souvenirs."

"You must be crazy! What if the jaksins caught us?"

"They'd only haze us a little, if we hadn't done anything. Think of it—besides Paboss and Maboss, only seven smits have ever been to another beast!"

BUNDLED in extra garments, they sneaked to the curve of the beast's side. Bru acted as if he were going to his own funeral. When they got down to where the hair grew out horizontally, they moved out beyond the short stuff and dropped from one coarse emergent to another; then, finally, to the ground. Apparently no one had heard them. They ran toward the front of the beast, staying as close to the furry belly as possible, for warmth and concealment.

The jaksin beast was due north, half-hidden by the horizon and hard to make out against the background of the tremendous Forest where it had been feeding. Beyond the trees and a little to the right was a volcano, exhaling fiery clouds but not muttering audibly at the moment. East of them was a river; to the west, on the far side of the beasts, another Forest. It was not surprising that the two beasts had met, since they were on a narrow strip of hardened lava between river and Forest.

They traveled in long jumps, gradually closing the distance to the jaksin beast. Near it, they saw that it was awake, with all four front eyestalks and one pair of pincers extended toward them.

They halted out of reach.

"Do you think he'll know we're not jaksins?" Bru whispered.

"I don't think they care *who*

lives on them, just so we keep the fleys down. Let him get a good look at us and he'll see we're people."

He was right, but by the time the huge appendages began to retract, the cold was getting through the clothing. They hurried for the shelter of the hair. Warm again, they chewed some of the meat they'd brought along and considered what to do next.

"We'd better go along the ground to the rear," Alyar said. "The men will be mostly near the front, on guard. Back there, there'll only be women and children."

"But we'll be a long way from home. What if the beasts don't come together?"

"Oh, they usually stop and talk, or whatever they do, for three or four days. We'll have a chance to sneak back."

"Why don't we just cut off some hairs right here for souvenirs and go home?"

"Don't you even want to spy on the clan?"

Bru sighed unhappily. "You're not actually going to try to steal a girl, are you?"

"Well—no. But it would be fun, wouldn't it?" His imagination began to percolate. "We're not far from the Warm Ground. That's what the first smit did. He stole a girl and couldn't get home with her, so they lived for a whole season on the Warm Ground until they found a young beast and started their own clan."

"If you've got any crazy ideas like that, you can count me out. People who get lost from their beasts get caught by Demons, or outlaws, or eaten by terrible animals. Next you'll be talking about going to Iron Mountain and fighting the Iron Fley!"

"Huh. The explorers who came back with all those stories probably exaggerated to make themselves look braver. Anyway, all I'm asking you to do is climb on the back end of this beast and spy on the jaksins."

It took the rest of the night to reach the blunt rear end, which had only one pair of eyestalks and one of pincers. They went through the process of letting the beast see them again, so it wouldn't think they were fleys when they began to climb, then picked a low rigid hair to start on.

It was a good four man-lengths up, too much of a jump even in this light gravity for Bru, who missed and floated back to the ground, contorting, while Alyar tried to control his laughter. He uncoiled a rope. "You need a good lively girl to work some of that fat off you," he chuckled as he hauled Bru up.

Panting, Bru pulled himself onto the hair. "You'll get me killed before I ever have a chance to get married. Do you think they heard us?"

"No. We haven't heard *them* yet, and they're bound to be

jabbering like women always are." He coiled the rope and they began to climb.

WHEN they were halfway up, there were squeaks and rumbles below them. They stopped, holding their breaths, while the tentacle curled toward a spot only thirty or forty man-lengths away and the great claw began digging at the fur. Evidently something itched there; and in a few moments, they did hear the screech of a hurt fley. They resumed climbing.

When the skin was level enough to walk on, they began hearing voices—the giggling of girls and the drier chatter of older women, but no men's voices. They crept forward, parted the hair very carefully, and peered out.

They must have found the quarters of a very important family, for the clearing was freshly cut and expensive woven rugs covered the skin. The walls were evenly trimmed, with several hung paintings. Sleeping places had been cut into one side and lined with soft leather from the underparts of fleys.

Alyar had only a glance for all this luxury, though, for within two man-lengths of him sat a pair of eminently stealable girls. Temptation battered at him. One, evidently the older sister, was well muscled and lithe, but plump enough to have curves every-

where. The other was beautiful too, but more slender. They had the black hair and tawny smooth skin of the jaksins. Each wore a short lounging skirt of dainty leather which left few secrets.

Prudence, overwhelmed, hardly put up a fight.

Alyar maneuvered Bru carefully back until he could whisper. He ignored the desperate protests. "Shut up. All you have to do is stay here and wait for me, and when you hear a commotion, screech like a fley. You can do that much, can't you?"

Bru, groaning, finally nodded.

A length from the clearing, Alyar chose a young hair-shoot and put the point of his spear in the tender spot at its base. He jabbed with all his weight, then dove for the clearing. The beast's involuntary twitch came as he broke into the open.

The women were scrambling to their feet, with cries of "Beastquake!" and right on schedule Bru cut loose with a fine series of fley screeches. In the confusion nobody noticed that Alyar was a stranger until he scooped up the two girls, one under each arm, and jumped for the fur.

It was hard going, with both of them grabbing at hairs to hold them back, scratching him, and in general being uncooperative. He was panting when he reached Bru.

"Here!" he gasped, considerably tossing him the slender one who'd be easier to carry. "This one's yours."

The plump one knew by now what was happening. Slyly, she went limp until Alyar relaxed; then she twisted suddenly and got her teeth at his left shoulder. He yelled as she took out a respectable divot of flesh, and spun her around so she couldn't reach him again.

There was much screaming behind them, but no pursuit yet. Alyar urged Bru to the base of the nearest eyestalk. "Start climbing!"

"But we'll be trapped up there!"

"No, we won't. Go on!"

THEY were ten man-lengths up before a few old men and a crowd of women and children appeared at the base of the stalk. Seeing Alyar's spear-hand free part of the time, none acted anxious to follow them.

Now they were high enough to be hurt in a fall, and the girls had prudently stopped struggling. Alyar's twisted her head and glared at him. "My father will feed you to the fleys!"

Alyar grinned. "He'll have to catch us first. What's your name?"

"Go to hell."

He let go of the scale he was clinging to with his right hand, and pinched her in a vulnerable spot. She shrieked.

"If I have to keep pinching you," he said, "we'll probably fall. You'd better tell me your name."

She hesitated, then said icily, "Janeejaksin."

"Hm. You seem to be rich girls. You wouldn't be the Paboss's daughters, would you?"

Janee wouldn't answer, but the other girl did, rather cordially. "Yes, and my name's Marisujaksin. Are you going to steal us and make smits of us?"

"They'll never get off this eyestalk," Janee said scornfully.

Alyar motioned Bru higher. The figures around the base grew tiny and the stalk tapered to only half the girth of a man. It swayed a little, and they moved around to what would be the upper side if it bent.

Shouts could be heard now from farther forward; undoubtedly the fighters would arrive soon. Bru looked nervously in that direction. "What are we going to do—bargain with them?"

"No. Listen carefully. You know about people riding a pincer. We're going to get one up here, and when it's close enough, jump onto it and ride it to the ground." Alyar grinned at the protests, put his spear-point between two scales, and jabbed.

In a minute the eyestalk began to bend ponderously downward. Far below they could

see the pincer-tentacle starting up to meet it.

"Be lively, now!" Alyar warned.

It took a while for the pincer to arrive. They jumped from two man-lengths, landed on the slanting horny surface, and slid. Alyar, hanging onto Janee with one arm, managed to get the other around a small prong. He threw a glance toward Bru and saw that he'd made out all right too. They waited.

Even though the irritation had stopped, the beast was going through with the scratching after hauling all that weight to such a height. The tip of the pincer sawed deliberately at the place Alyar had jabbed, and then they started down.

The movement was faster than it looked from a distance; still, it was a long way to the ground. Partway down, the beast saw them and the claw halted. They crouched while the stalk bent to bring the immense eye directly over them, but evidently the creature was only wondering what they were up to now, for after a while the tentacle started down again.

Three man-lengths from the ground they jumped, landed, and bounded away out of reach.

MEN, shouting, were clinging to long hairs, but nobody was climbing the eye-

stalk. Perhaps no one wanted to imitate the novel descent. Closer shouts indicated a group coming down through the fur.

"What now?" Bru asked.

It was a reasonable question. Even if they dared go home, they'd have to parallel the whole length of this beast and could hardly avoid interception. Alyar and Bru had discarded their extra clothing, while the girls were almost bare, so warmth would be an absolute necessity when night came.

Alyar looked northward toward the volcano. The Warm Ground was supposed to surround it for some distance; maybe they could reach that before night. There wasn't much time to ponder. Men were already dropping to the ground. He picked up Janee and ran for the nearest cover, which was the Forest. "Come on, we can't stay here!"

Bru didn't have to carry Marisu — she was evidently coming along regardless, even though she wailed a little—so he was able to keep up. "We're not going into the Forest, are we?" he panted.

"Just into the edge to get out of sight. Then we'll decide."

They were still a medium shout ahead when they came to the first colossal uprights; trunks so thick it would take a man many breaths to run around one; towering so high

one tended to forget there were any tops. In between were smaller plants, some with flowers, that formed a thicket as dense as fur.

Alyar paused, thinking of the stories he'd heard about the Forest. But there was no doubt about how real the danger was behind them, so he held his spear at the ready and plunged into the growth.

Janee opened her mouth to scream, and he hastily muffled it with his hand. "Do you want to attract every Demon in the Forest?"

Her eyes widened and she quit struggling.

He listened to the shouts from outside, then pointed north. "That way."

Bru gaped. "But that's away from home!"

"We can't go home yet. Anyway, the jaksins'll expect us to. They're moving south already. Hear them?"

Inside the Forest, in the deep shade, there was less vegetation so that they were able to move easily. Whenever Janee looked ready to scream, Alyar pretended to see or hear something, and by the time she was wise to that, they were out of earshot.

Their luck didn't last long, though. They heard a sound, whirled, and saw a small being on a branch, watching them with malevolent yellow eyes.

The girls whimpered, and Bru moaned, "A Demon!"

It had taken a strange shape,

with four limbs and one other appendage that looked like a tentacle. It was covered with short black fur, very thick and fine. Just now it had a set of claws for clinging to the tree.

Before they could run, it opened its mouth and uttered a curse, which sounded like "Meow!"

"Let's get out of here!" Bru whispered.

Alyar knew better. "There's no use running; we're already cursed. The only thing is to try to appease it."

"Maybe we could give it the girls?"

Alyar wavered. He'd become quite attached to Janee, though he was a little tired of being bitten and scratched, and he had gone to a lot of trouble to get her. "Let's try meat first," he decided.

He got a small piece out of his pouch and extended it on the end of his spear. Heart pounding, he moved closer. The Demon tensed as if to jump at them, then seemed to change its mind. It wrinkled its nose (which Alyar hoped was a sign of favor) and finally stretched out its head and took the meat. It chewed daintily and swallowed.

Alyar let out his breath. Nothing was guaranteed, of course, but possibly . . .

The Demon said, "Meow," in a different tone.

Carefully, they edged toward the open. After a few

steps Bru began to run. Immediately, there was a loud "MEOW!" and he stopped.

In a moment the Demon came into sight, walking on the ground. Alyar noticed that it had ungrown the claws. As he looked (no doubt reading his thought) it grew them again, stretched out its two front limbs, lengthened its body, and yawned.

They started on, but weren't able to make much time until they found that the Demon wanted to be carried.

AT THE edge of the Forest, it was disappointing to see how little distance they had covered. The nearest end of the jaksin beast, hunching slowly away now toward the smit beast, was still within three shouts. However, no jaksins were in sight.

Again, Alyar hesitated; troubles seemed to be piling up. Still, he didn't see any choice. "We'll have to go to the Warm Ground," he said.

The girls sobbed a little, and he frowned at them. "Now what's wrong?"

"There are terrible outlaws there, and Demons, and—and things."

His patience ran out. "To hell with them! We already have one Demon; do you think it's going to share us with everything on the planet? Come on!"

Janee didn't insist on being carried now; evidently she felt

compromised enough to come along. They hurried, stopping only once to finish up their food. They were thirsty, but Hot Water was supposed to come up out of the Warm Ground, and anyway they could wait for the evening rains.

It was dusk, and already beginning to drizzle, when they noticed that the ground under their feet was warm.

This was mostly hardened lava, sloping upward toward the volcano, but with small streams and patches of vegetation.

Before they found a good place to stop for the night, Bru pointed ahead. "Look! That glow!"

They went forward cautiously until they could see what must be a Fire, with people sitting around it. Fascinated, Alyar went closer. Suddenly he heard the girls scream, and simultaneously two pairs of rough hands seized him from behind. He wrenched desperately, throwing himself and the two husky men around, but not getting free. More came shouting, to help pin him down and tie him with ropes. It sounded as if Bru and the girls were being similarly treated.

A man who acted like the leader came running from the Fire. "What have we got here? Scouts?" He began directing squads of spearmen as if he expected an attack. "Two wo-

men with them? Funny. All right, you—who're you spying for?"

"What are you talking about?" Alyar demanded, as indignantly as his position allowed. "We're from the smit clan and we're—trying to get home," he finished lamely.

"Clan? From a beast? What are you doing up here, then?"

"We came to keep warm."

"Keep warm? Why didn't you build a Fire?"

"I—we don't believe in Fires."

Laughter arose. "Let him up," the leader said. "He must be telling the truth. Only a fley-eater would be so ignorant."

They took off some of the ropes. Alyar rubbed at various bruises and abrasions, wondering whether he and Bru would be killed or made slaves. The outlaws would surely keep the girls. He wondered whether the Demon were going to give up its property so easily.

As if in answer to the thought, it came strolling into the light, and the leader made a sign nervously. "Damn! A black cat! Is it yours?"

"A black what? It captured us in the Forest."

"It . . . captured you? In the Forest? Then it's a real Demon!"

"Of course! How can you be so ignorant?"

"And you're still alive?"

"It hasn't hurt us yet, but it won't let us get away and

It makes us carry it. I think we're uncursed right now. I'm not sure; I sort of lost track."

The man gulped and faced the Demon. "Please forgive us, Demon. We didn't know these people were yours."

The Demon looked at him scornfully and uttered a curse. People moved away, except one young spearman who stood his ground. "It—it sounds just like a cat," he quavered.

The leader knocked him spinning with the sweep of a forearm. "Of course it sounds like a cat! How do you think it would sound when it's in cat form? Do you expect it to speak ingils to us?" He beckoned to several women. "Bring food for the Demon, and offerings of iron and jewels!" He glanced at the four captives, and added, as an afterthought, "Better feed its slaves, too."

COOKED meat was easy to chew, but it tasted odd, and the fruit was completely baffling. Still, they were filling.

The outlaw leader eyed the Demon, which had pre-empted Janee's ample lap. "Where is it taking you?"

Alyar didn't want to admit how little he knew of the nature of things, so he said the most awesome thing he could think of. "To Iron Mountain."

There were gasps. "Oh, what unfortunate people you are!" the leader said. Then, eagerly, "When will you go?"

Alyar thought he'd better press his luck. "It wants us to start right away. It only pretends to be asleep like that, to see if we're obedient. Er—I seem to have gotten turned around. Which way is Iron Mountain from here?"

The man pointed with alacrity. "That way! A third of the distance around the volcano. Here, we'll help you get loaded up."

The girls were festooned with necklaces and pendants of rare stones, while Bru and Alyar toted the food and the oddments of iron. The outlaws had hastily gathered a fabulous treasure of the metal—whole spearheads, and even a knife, of it!

Alyar waved and smiled at the outlaws just before they were out of sight, then turned north.

"We'll go upcountry," he said. "They won't look for us there. I'm not sure they won't follow; they probably don't know what this Demon will do any more than we do." He saw some huge rocks not far away, with bushes growing on top. "Let's climb up there."

When they were halfway to the rocks, incredible good fortune struck. The Demon with one hurried "Meow!" scrambled away from Janee and ran back toward the outlaw camp.

"Come on!" Alyar exclaimed. "Maybe we can get out of its circle of influence!"

They climbed the rocks and

found they could see the Fire. Presently they knew the Demon had arrived there, for the distant figures scattered. Moments later, faint laments drifted to them.

They spent the rest of the night awake and watchful. "The outlaws will surely be after us now," Bru said, "to get back all this treasure."

"Marisu and I want to be near our clan," said Janee. "Even if —" she blushed—"you make smits out of us, the two beasts would meet once in a while and we could visit."

Alyar looked eastward, where numerous glows marked other outlaw camps. The volcano was a barrier to the north. The outlaws would bar the way to the south, expecting them to head home to the beasts. The only direction left was west, and he found that it pleased him.

"I guess we'll just have to visit Iron Mountain," he said. "Then we'll be such heroes that Pabosses smit and jaksin will have to forgive us."

The girls looked at him with awe while Bru moaned.

When the sun came up they could see the northern end of the Forest, south of which the jaksin beast had been feeding. Past it, surprisingly visible from this altitude, were the two beasts, head-to-head with eyestalks touching.

The Forest ran up close to the steep side of the volcano, leaving only a narrow pass.

Beyond that was the river which, turning south, passed the two beasts. Farther up the river, according to legend, was Iron Mountain.

They stayed long enough to see what kind of animals prowled the country and to lay out a course, then climbed down and got started. They walked all day with only a few halts and some minor adventures with strange animals, then found another high place to spend the night. In the darkness they spotted a single Fire west of them. The next morning they detoured around that spot, and entered the narrow pass. Before noon they stood looking down at the river.

THE canyon was deeper and wider than Alyar could have imagined, and there was more water at the bottom. The country ahead, though, was so rough that it seemed the easiest way was to climb down and go along the river. It took them half the afternoon to get down.

Not very long after that, Alyar put out his hand. "Wait! I hear voices!"

They were men's voices and seemed to be coming downstream.

He pushed the other three to a hiding place behind some rocks and bushes. When the owners of the voices came into sight around a turn, he gasped. They weren't walking, but rid-

ing on the water itself, in something like a big dish.

"Magicians!" Bru whispered.

Two of the men (there were seven) were stroking the water with some kind of wands, flattened at the ends. They acted as if they were fleeing from something, talking in low voices and staring back upstream. Just before they came opposite, it caught up with them.

The first thing Alyar heard was a loud voice, distorted and with an odd accent. He had trouble making out the repeated words. "Halt or I'll shoot. Advance and be recognized. Halt or I'll shoot. Advance—"

The thing came into sight—flying! He gripped Bru's shoulder. "The Iron Fley!"

It was made of the kind of iron that didn't rust, and had only eight legs, not ten. All of them were folded to its sides except one with a larger, oblong foot; that one was extended toward the fugitives.

When they saw it, they jumped out of their dish and sank into the water.

"Halt or I'll shoot," said the Iron Fley again, then hurled its spell. The dish shattered abruptly into small bits and a hissing cloud burst out of the water.

The terrible creature circled over the floating fragments for a few minutes, then flew off upstream. When it was gone the seven magicians ap-

peared, climbing out of the river on the far side.

"Damn it!" said one. "A good boot lost, and not a bit of iron. I told you we ought to wait for night!"

"It doesn't make any difference," said another gloomily. "It's always on watch. Nobody's gotten away with any iron for three or four seasons."

"Well," said Alyar, after the magicians had straggled off down the river, "now we've seen it. It certainly put a powerful spell on that floating dish, but it didn't hurt the magicians. Maybe if we're careful it won't bother us."

They followed the twisting canyon and eventually began to hear a roaring noise ahead. It turned out to be the water falling over a cliff, and to go any farther they had to climb out of the canyon again. When they were on top they could see, ahead of them, what was undoubtedly Iron Mountain.

Parts of it were broken or rusted, but most of it was the non-rusting kind. Its shape was a surprise. It didn't look like a mountain, but something made by giants, broken off and stuck into the ground.

It was wonderful to stand here, beholding the mightiest magic in the entire world. Still, Alyar wasn't satisfied. He felt he must go closer, even—possibly—touch it.

"You'd better stay here. Bru, if anything happens to

me, take the girls and run. You can get back to the beasts by going down the river."

Bru was dismayed. "Don't go any closer! You saw what happened to the magicians' dish!"

"They were trying to steal iron." He unloaded the metal he was carrying, smiled at them, and went on.

HE'D only covered a hundred man-lengths or so when he heard the distorted voice, coming from over his head. He looked up, then stood rooted as the Iron Fley came spiraling down toward him. He tried to think the purest, most serene thoughts he could, though the fervent wish to be somewhere else kept intruding.

The thing paused a few lengths away. "Advance and be recognized," it said.

He took a faltering hop forward. "Halt or I'll shoot," it said, and he stopped.

"Advance."

He did.

"Halt."

He did.

Finally he was very close to it, and he waited for a spell to hit him.

"Name, rank, and serial number," it demanded. Then, as he was silent, "Speak or I'll shoot."

"I—I'm Alyarsmit! I don't think I'm rank, and I don't know what a serial number is."

"Friend or foe?"

"F-friend. I haven't stolen anything. Just some girls."

The thing made a buzzing sound. "You speak, and you have the requisite number of limbs, and one head. Are you human?"

"Y-yes, I'm human."

"Name?"

"Alyarsmit."

"Smith? Smith?" It buzzed some more. "There was a Colonel John Smith on the roster. Are you his descendant?"

"Yes," Alyar hazarded.

"Mr. Smith, sir, Robojeep twenty-seven four nine reporting. All other jeeps inactivated, sir. No ship's personnel or other passengers accounted for in the last three hundred and seventy-four planetary cycles. Damage to ship unreparable without human direction. Sporadic raids by savages, possibly degenerate humans, repelled successfully. Will you assume manual control, sir?"

Alyar stuck with "Yes."

"Very well, sir." The Iron Fley descended and walked toward him on six of its legs, then squatted.

He stared at its back. Actually, it didn't have one; it was hollowed out from the top, and in the hollow were—seats! Four of them!

Unable to mistake the meaning, he climbed in and sat down. Nothing happened for a while. Then the creature began to buzz again. "Have you

forgotten the controls, sir? The lever on the left is for elevation; the other one for horizontal motion. Would you prefer vocal control?"

"N-no, this is all right."

"Very good, sir." The buzz stopped.

The levers were just in front of him. Gingerly, he reached out and gave the left-hand one a twitch, then yelled and let go of it as they shot upward. They stopped, and he tried again gently. They rose more smoothly.

He experimented with the other and moved forward, backward, and to the sides. He lowered to a height where he was less frightened. "Er—Fley?"

"You spoke, sir?"

"I can go wherever I want?"

"Except into obvious danger, sir. I'm programmed to avoid that."

Alyar flew toward where he'd left his companions. They lay face down, lamenting, Janee loudest of all. He eyed her posterior, and Bru's, with some misgivings. The Fley's seats were a little skimpy.

He landed beside them, cleared his throat, and waited until they raised dumfounded faces.

"Get in," he said.

A GAINST feeble protests from the others, he maneuvered the creature (which preferred to be called "Jeep") toward Iron Mountain. When

they were close Jeep woke up, buzzed, and hovered while a great doorway slid open. It carried the four, clinging together, into the hollow blackness within.

Then, quite suddenly—even though the door slid shut behind them—it was light as day inside.

What a cave! Cylindrical, all of fifty man-lengths across, it slanted down until it must reach far below ground. Far down there, where Jeep was taking them, were some level platforms.

As soon as they settled on one, a terrible, huge, clanking monster, also of non-rusting iron, flew toward them. They huddled while it spoke. "Mr. Smith, sir, Roborepairmit seventeen reporting. Ship's power and drive in order. Unable to complete hull repairs, or repair other working and scouting units, without cannibalizing part of living quarters. Do I have Mr. Smith's permission to proceed?"

Alyar gulped several times, and got out "Yes."

"Thank you, sir. The job will require arc cutting and welding and other high-temperature processes. Will you be here very long?"

"We hope not."

"Very well, sir. I'll begin as soon as you leave."

They sat for a while, wondering what to do. Finally Alyar said, "Jeep?"

"Sir?"

"Would we be permitted to leave?"

"At once, sir."

More buzzing, and the door opened again.

As they flew away, Jeep said, "Sir, Roborepair wants to know whether to repair ship in its present position or move it elsewhere."

Alyar was beginning to feel more confident. "In its present position, I think. For now."

As they turned south, Janee began to sniffle.

"What now?" he demanded.

"I miss my Demon."

Alyar turned to Bru. "Isn't that just like a woman? She wants a Demon again!"

She raised her head and glared at him. "He was cute and soft, and he cuddled against me and made happy sounds. You tamed the Iron Fley, and if you really loved me, you could surely handle one little fluffy Demon!"

Alyar let Jeep stop and hang there while he tried to cope with the effrontery of it. After all he'd been through, stealing her, to have her suggest that he go into more danger just to satisfy her crazy whim!

His hands reached out for the levers again. Shaking his head dazedly, he started north-east to look for the outlaws.

SOME time later, they were headed south again, Janee's Demon asleep in her lap. Jeep was loggy with iron and other treasures extorted from vari-

ous bands of outlaws. In the two rear seats, Bru and Marisu were holding hands.

He was startled to see two more beasts hunching up from the south, beyond the smits and jaksins. Four of them together at one time!

When they circled down, they found Pabossmit on his hair, scowling southward. He cringed when he saw the Iron Fley, then managed to look both dumfounded and furious when he recognized Alyar and Bru.

"You young hoodlums! I'm glad that thing caught you! Look there—those are the grans and the keudies coming, and Pabossjaksin's so mad he'll join them against us!" His face softened into the start of a grin as he sized up the two girls, but then hardened again. "I hope you're proud of yourselves, getting your whole clan killed or made slaves!"

Alyar started toward a clearing. "Come on down, Paboss. We've got so much magic now, we could laugh at all the clans in the world." And, to Jeep, "Jeep, can we bring Iron Mountain over here and fly it around and show these savages they better behave?"

"A bloodless demonstration? Certainly, sir. I'll go aloft at once and radio."

THE four stood in a clearing, with awed smits around them at a respectful

distance. Paboss came pushing through the hair, as awed as any, but less scared.

"Tamed the Iron Fley!" He began to guffaw. "Stole Pabossjaksin's own two daughters! Haw, haw! Young man, when I retire . . ." His eyes covered Janee approvingly, then turned back to Alyar. "You're wounded! What—oh, toothmarks!" He laughed some more. "Didn't I say any girl worth stealing would put up a fight?"

Alyar happened to be looking toward Bru, who had his own knot of admirers. Marisu was standing a little behind him, as a bride should. At Paboss's words, she frowned and her eyes fixed on Bru's smooth shoulder. Her gaze grew more intent. She moved slowly forward, her eyes crossing as they remained on the spot.

Closer . . .

Closer . . .

Bru yelled.

END

ANYBODY HOME OUT THERE?

With an incredible 100,000,000,000 stars in the Milky Way—our own medium-sized galaxy, which is just one of at least millions in the universe—the question of whether the human race is alone in space has a statistical answer:

We are almost certainly not alone; even if we assume that intelligent life can exist only on Earth-type planets, and that Earth-type planets can occur in only a tiny fraction of all the Milky Way's star systems, a tiny fraction of that incredible 100,000,000,000 would yield a very large number of sister-Earths. And to state that intelligent life can exist only on Earth-type planets is pure conservatism, on the order, probably, of the theoretical "proof" that a heavier-than-air craft cannot fly.

But how can we be sure we're not alone?

Two scientists at Cornell suggest listening for messages.

Even transmitters no better than the ones we already have, they claim, could send a radio message that could be picked up quite easily by a really good radio receiver—one, say, like the 600-foot radio telescope now going up in West Virginia—even if that receiver was 30 or 40 light-years away.

And if our transmitters will do it, why wouldn't the transmitters belong to an alien race circling, for instance, the Sol-like Tau Ceti or Eta Eridani? They aren't far, as stellar distances go, and they happen to be located where radio interference from clouds of cosmic dust and gas is at a minimum.

Worth trying? It certainly is—and the first steps are being taken right now. With an 80-foot antenna, the National Radio Astronomy Observatory is getting set to listen for signals from other stars.

It could happen any day—our first contact with intelligent life on another planet!

HEEL

*Great cast! Stupendous
show! If this didn't
make history, nothing
ever would!*

By PHILIP JOSE FARMER



"CALL me Zeus," said the Director.

"Zeus?" said his wife, a beautiful woman not over a thousand years old. "What an egomaniac! Comparing yourself to a god, even if he is the god of those—those savages!"

She gestured at the huge screen on the wall. It showed, far below, the blue sea, the

black ships on the yellow beach, the purple tents of the Greek army, the broad brown plain, and the white towers of Troy.

The Director glared at her through hexagonal dark glasses and puffed on his cigar until angry green clouds rolled from it. His round bald head was covered by a cerise beret,



his porpoise frame by a canary yellow tunic, and his chubby legs by iridescent green fourpluses.

"I may not look like a god, but as far as my power over the natives of this planet goes, I could well be their deity," he replied.

He spoke sharply to a tall handsome blond youth who wore a crooked smile and bright blue and yellow tattoo spiraling around his legs and trunk. "Apollo, hand me the Script!"

"Surely you're not going to change the Script again?" said his wife. She rose from her chair, and the scarlet web she was wearing translated the shifting micro-voltages on the surface of her skin into musical tones.

"I never change the Script," said the Director. "I just make the slight revisions required for dramatic effects."

"I don't care what you do to it, just so you don't allow the Trojans to win. I hate those despicable brutes."

Apollo laughed loudly, and he said, "Ever since she and Athena and Aphrodite thought of that goofy stunt of asking Paris to choose the most beautiful of the three, and he gave the prize to Aphrodite, Hera's hated the Trojans. Really, Hera, why blame those simple, likable people for the actions of only one of them? I think Paris showed excellent judgment. Aphrodite was so grate-

ful she contrived to get that lovely Helen for Paris and—"

"Enough of this private feud," snapped the Director. "Apollo, I told you once to hand me the Script."

ACHILLES at midnight paced back and forth before his tent. Finally, in the agony of his spirit, he called to Thetis. The radio which had been installed in his shield, unknown to him, transmitted his voice to a cabin in the great spaceship hanging over the Trojan plain.

Thetis, hearing it, said to Apollo, "Get out of my cabin, you heel, or I'll have you thrown out."

"Leave?" he said. "Why? So you can be with your barbarian lover?"

"He is not my lover," she said angrily. "But I'd take even a barbarian as a lover before I'd have anything to do with you. Now, get out. And don't speak to me again unless it's in the line of business."

"Any time I speak to you, I mean business," he said, grinning.

"Get out or I'll tell my father!"

"I hear and obey. But I'll have you, one way or another."

Thetis shoved him out. Then she quickly put on the suit that could bend light around her to make her invisible and transport her through the air and do many other things. Out

of a port she shot, straight toward the tent of her protégé. She did not decelerate until she saw him standing tall in the moonlight, his hands still raised in entreaty. She landed and cut the power off so he could see her.

"Mother, Mother!" cried Achilles. "How long must I put up with Agamemnon's high-handedness?"

Thetis took him by the hand and led him into the tent. "Is Patroclus around?" she asked.

"No, he is having some fun with Iphis, that buxom beauty I gave him after I conquered the city of Scyros."

"There's a sensible fellow," said Thetis. "Why don't you forget this fuss with King Agamemnon and have fun with some rosy-cheeked darling?" But a painful expression crossed her face as she said it.

Achilles did not notice the look. "I am too sick with humiliation and disgust to take pleasure in anything. I am full up to here with being a lion in the fighting and yet having to give that jackal Agamemnon the lion's share of the loot, just because he has been chosen to be our leader. Am I not a king in Thessaly? I wish—I wish—"

"Yes?" said Thetis eagerly. "Do you want to go home?"

"I should go home. Then the Greeks would wish they'd not allowed Agamemnon to insult the best man among them."

"Oh, Achilles, say the word and I'll have you across the sea and in your palace in an hour!" she said excitedly. She was thinking, *The Director will be furious if Achilles disappears, but he won't be able to do anything about it. And the Script can be revised. Hector or Odysseus or Paris can play the lead role.*

"NO," Achilles said. "I can't leave my men here. They'd say I had run out on them, that I was a coward. And the Greeks would call me a yellow dog. No, I'll allow no man to say that."

Thetis sighed and answered sadly, "Very well. What do you want me to do?"

"Go ask Zeus if he will give Agamemnon so much trouble he'll come crawling to me, begging for forgiveness and pleading for my help."

Thetis had to smile. The enormous egotism of the beautiful brute! Taking it for granted that the Lord of Creation would bend the course of events so Achilles could salvage his pride. Yet, she told herself, she need not be surprised. He had taken it calmly enough the night she'd appeared to him and told him that she was a goddess and his true mother. He had always been convinced divine blood ran in his veins. Was he not superior to all men? Was he not Achilles?

"I will go to Zeus," she said.

"But what he will do, only he knows."

She reached up and pulled his head down to kiss him on the forehead. She did not trust herself to touch the lips of this man who was far more a man than those he supposed to be gods. The lips she longed for . . . the lips soon to grow cold. She could not bear to think of it.

She flicked the switch to make her invisible and, after leaving the tent, rose toward the ship. As always, it hung at four thousand feet above the plain, hidden in the inflated plastic folds that simulated a cloud. To the Greeks and Trojans the cloud was the home of Zeus, anchored there so he could keep a close eye on the struggle below.

It was he who would decide whether the walls of Troy would stand or fall. It was to him that both sides prayed.

THE Director was drinking a highball in his office and working out the details of tomorrow's shooting with his cameramen.

"We'll give that Greek Diomedes a real break, make him the big hero. Get a lot of close-ups. He has a superb profile and a sort of flair about him. It's all in the Script, what aristocrats he kills, how many narrow escapes, and so on. But about noon, just before lunch, we'll wound him. Not too badly, just enough to put

him out of action. Then we'll see if we can whip up a big tearjerker between that Trojan and his wife—what's her name?"

He looked around as if he expected them to feed him the answer. But they were silent; it was not wise to know more than he.

He snapped his fingers. "Andromache! That's it!"

"What a memory! How do you keep all those barbaric names at your tongue's tip? Photographic!" and so on from the suckophants.

"O.K. So after Diomedes leaves the scene, you, Apollo, will put on a simulacrum of Helenos, the Trojan prophet. As Helenos, you'll induce Hector to go back to Troy and get his mother, the Queen, to pray for victory. We can get some colorful shots of the temple and the local religious rites. Meantime, we'll set up a touching domestic scene between Hector and his wife. Ring in their baby boy. A baby's always good for ohs and ahs. Later, after coffee break, we'll . . ."

Apollo drifted through the crowd toward the Director's wife. She was sitting on a chair and moodily drinking. However, seeing Apollo, she smiled with green-painted lips and said, "Do sit down, darling. You needn't worry about my husband being angry because you're paying attention to me. He's too busy

shining down on his little satellites to notice you."

Apollo seated himself in a chair facing her and moved forward so their knees touched.

"What do you want now?" she said. "You only get lovey-dovey when you're trying to get something out of me."

"You know I love only you, Hera," he said, grinning. "But I can't meet you as often as I'd like. Old Thunder-and-Lightning is too suspicious. And I value my job too much to risk it, despite my overwhelming passion for you."

"Get to the point."

"We're way over our budget and past our deadline. The shooting should have been finished six months ago. Yet Old Fussybritches keeps on revising the Script and adding scene after scene. And that's not all. We're not going home when Troy does fall. The Director is planning to make a sequel. I know because he asked me to outline the Script for it. He's got the male lead picked out. Foxy Grandpa Odysseus."

HERA sat upright so violently she sloshed her drink over the edge of her glass. "Why, my brother means to kill Odysseus at the first opportunity! My brother is mad, absolutely mad about Athena, but he can't get to first base with her. She's got eyes only for Odysseus, though

how she could take up with one of those stupid primitives, I'll never understand."

"Athena claims he has an intelligence equal to any of us," said Apollo. "However, it's not her but Thetis I meant to discuss."

"Is my stepdaughter interfering again?"

"I think so. Just before this conference I saw her coming out of the Director's room, tears streaming from her big cow eyes. I imagine she was begging him again to spare Achilles. Or at least to allow the Trojans to win for a while so Agamemnon will give back to Achilles the girl he took from him, that tasty little dish, Briseis."

"You ought to know how tasty she is," said Hera bitterly. "I happen to know you drugged Achilles several nights in a row and then put on his simulacrum."

"A handy little invention, that simulacrum," said Apollo. "Put one on and you can look like anybody you want to look like. Your jealousy is showing, Hera. However, that's not the point. If Thetis keeps playing on her father's sympathies like an old flute, this production will last forever. Frankly, I'd like to shake the dust of this crummy planet from my feet, get back to civilization before it forgets what a great script writer I am."

"What do you propose?"

"I propose to hurry things

up. Eventually, Achilles is supposed to quit sulking and take up arms again. So far, the Director has been indefinite on how we'll get him to do that. Well, we'll help him without his knowing it. We'll fix it so the Trojans will beat the Greeks even worse than the Director intends. Hector will almost run them back into the sea. Agamemnon will beg Achilles to get back into the ring. He'll give him back the loot he took from him, including Briseis. And he'll offer his own daughter in marriage to Achilles.

"Achilles will refuse. But we'll have him all set up for the next move. Tonight a technician will implant a post-hypnotic suggestion in Achilles that he send his buddy Patroclus, dressed in Achilles' armor, out to scare the kilts off the Trojans. We'll generate a panic among the Trojans with a subsonic projector. Then we'll arrange it so Hector kills Patroclus. That is the one thing to make Achilles so fighting mad he'll quit sulking..."

"Patroclus? But the Director wants to save him for the big scene when Achilles is knocked off. Patroclus is supposed to put Achilles' armor on, storm the Scaian gate, and lead the Greeks right into the city."

"Accidents will happen," said Apollo. "Despite what the barbarians think, we are not

gods. Or are we? What do you say to my plan?"

"If the Director finds out we've tampered with the Script, he'll divorce me. And you'll be blackballed in every studio from one end of the Galaxy to the other."

Apollo winked and said, "I'll leave it to you to make Old Stupe think Patroclus' death was his own idea. You have done something like that before, and more than once."

She laughed and said, "Oh, Apollo, you're such a heel."

He rose. "Not a heel. Just a great script writer. Our plan will give me a chance to kill Achilles much sooner than the Director expects. And it'll all be for the good of the Script."

THAT night two technicians went into the Greek camp, one to Achilles' tent and one to Agamemnon's. The technician assigned to the King of Mycenae gave him a whiff of sleep gas and then taped two electrodes to the royal forehead. It took him a minute to play a recording and two to untape the electrodes and leave.

Five minutes later, the King awoke, shouting that Zeus had sent him a dream in the shape of wise old Nestor. Nestor had told him to rouse the camp and march forth even if it were only dawn, for today Troy would fall and his brother Menelaos would get back his wife Helen.

Agamemnon, though, who

had always been too clever for his own good, told the council of elders that he wanted to test his army before telling them the truth. He would announce that he was tired of this war they could not win and that he wanted to go home. This news would separate the slackers from the soldiers, his true friends from the false.

Unfortunately, when he told this to the assemblage, he found far less men of valor than he had expected. The entire army, with a few exceptions, gave a big hurrah and stampeded toward the ships. They had had a bellyful of this silly war, fighting to win back the beautiful tart Helen for the King's brother, spilling their guts all over foreign plains while their wives were undoubtedly playing them false with the 4-Fs, the fields were growing weeds, and their children were starving.

In vain, Agamemnon tried to stop the rush. He even shouted at them what they had only guessed before, that more was at stake than his brother's runaway wife. If Troy was crushed, the Greeks would own the trading and colonizing routes to the rich Black Sea area. But no one paid any attention to him. They were too concerned with knocking each other over in their haste to get the ships ready to sail.

At this time, the only people from the spaceship on the

scene were some cameramen and technicians. They were paralyzed by the unexpectedness of the situation, and they were afraid to use their emotion-stimulating projectors. By the flick of a few switches the panic could be turned into aggression. But it would have been aggression without a leader. The Greeks, instead of automatically turning to fight the Trojans, would have killed each other, sure that their fellows were trying to stop them from embarking for home.

The technicians did not dare to waken the Director and acknowledge they could not handle a simple mob scene. But one of them did put a call through to one of the Director's daughters, Athena.

Athena zipped down to Odysseus and found him standing to one side, looking glum. He had not panicked, but he also was not interfering. Poor fellow, he longed to go home to Penelope. In the beginning of this useless war, he had pretended madness to get out of being drafted. But, once he had sworn loyalty to the King, he would not abandon him.

Athena flicked off her light-bender so he could see her. She shouted, "Odysseus, don't just stand there like a lump on a bog! Do something or all will be lost—the war, the honor of the Greeks, the riches you will get from the loot of Troy! Get going!"

Odysseus, never at a loss, tore the wand of authority from the King's numbed hand and began to run through the crowd. Everybody he met he reproached with cowardice, and backed the sting of his words with the hard end of the wand on their backs. Athena signaled to the technicians to project an aggression-stimulating frequency. Now that the Greeks had a leader to channel their courage, they could be diverted back to fighting.

There was only one obstacle, Thersites. He was a lame hunchback with the face of a baboon and a disposition to match.

Thersites cried out in a hoarse, jeering voice, "Agamemnon, don't you have enough loot? Do you still want us to die so you may gather more gold and beautiful Trojan women in your greedy arms? You Greeks, you're not men. You're women who will do anything this disgrace to a crown tells you to do. Look what he did to Achilles. Robbed him of Briseis and in so doing robbed us of the best warrior we have. If I were Achilles, I'd knock Agamemnon's head off."

"We've put up with your outrageous abuse long enough!" shouted Odysseus. He began thwacking Thersites on the head and the back until blood ran. "Shut up or I'll kill you!"

At this the whole army, which hated Thersites, roared with laughter. Odysseus had relieved the tension; now they were ready to march under Agamemnon's orders.

Athena sighed with relief and radioed back to the ship that the Director could be awakened. Things were well in hand.

AND so they were—until a few days later when Apollo and Hera, waiting until the Director had gone to bed early with a hangover from the night before, induced Hector to make a night attack. The fighting went on all night, and at dawn Patroclus ran into Achilles' tent.

"Terrible news!" he cried. "The Trojans have breached the walls around our ships and are burning them! Diomedes, Agamemnon, and Odysseus are wounded. If you do not lead your men against Hector, all is lost!"

"Too bad," said Achilles. But the blood drained from his face.

"Don't be so hardhearted!" shouted Patroclus. "If you won't fight, at least allow me to lead the Myrmidons against the enemy. Perhaps we can save the ships and drive Hector off!"

Achilles shouted back, "Very well! You know I give you, my best friend, anything you want. But I will not for all the gold in the world serve

under a king who robs me of prizes I took with my own sword. However, I will give you my armor, and my men will march behind you!"

Then, sobbing with rage and frustration, he helped Patroclus dress in his armor.

"Do you see this little lever in the back of the shield?" he said. "When an enemy strikes at you, flick it this way. The air in front of you will become hard, and your foe's weapon will bounce off the air. Then, before he recovers from his confusion, flick the lever the other way. The air will soften and allow your spear to pass. And the spearpoint will shear through his armor as if it were cheese left in the hot sun. It is made of some substance harder than the hardest bronze made by the hand of man."

"So this is the magic armor your divine mother, Thetis, gave you," said Patroclus. "No wonder—"

"Even without this magic—or force field, as Thetis calls it—I am the best man among Greek or Trojan," said Achilles matter-of-factly. "There! Now you are almost as magnificent as I am. Go forth in my armor, Patroclus, and run the Trojans ragged. I will pray to Zeus that you come back safely. There is one thing you must not do, though, no matter how strong the temptation—do not chase the Trojans too close to the city, even

if you are on the heels of Hector himself. Thetis has told me that Zeus does not want Troy to fall yet. If you were to threaten it now, the gods would strike you down."

"I will remember," said Patroclus. He got into Achilles' chariot and drove off proudly to take his place in front of the Myrmidons.

THE Director was so red in the face, he looked as if his head were one huge blood vessel.

"How in space did the Trojans get so far?" he screamed. "And what is Patroclus doing in Achilles' armor? There's rank inefficiency here or else skullduggery! Either one, heads will roll! And I think I know whose! Apollo! Hera! What have you two been up to?"

"Why, Husband," said Hera, "how can you say I had anything to do with this? You know how I hate the Trojans. As for Apollo, he thinks too much of his job to go against the Script."

"All right, we'll see. We'll get to the bottom of this later. Meanwhile, let's direct the situation so it'll end up conforming to the Script."

But before the cameramen and technicians could be organized, Patroclus, leading the newly inspired Greeks, slaughtered the Trojans as a lion kills sheep. He could not be stopped, and when he saw

Hector running away from him, he forgot his friend's warning and pursued him to the walls of Troy.

"Follow me!" yelled Patroclus to the Greeks. "We will break down the gates and take the city within an hour!"

IT WAS then Apollo projected fury into Hector so that he turned to battle the man he thought was Achilles. And Apollo, timing to coincide with the instant that Patroclus flicked off his force field, struck him a stunning blow from behind. At the same time a spear thrown by a Trojan wounded Patroclus in the back. Dazed, hurt, the Greek started back toward his men. But Hector ran up and stabbed him through the belly, finding no resistance to his spear because Patroclus had not turned the force field back on. Patroclus hit the ground with a crash of armor.

"No, no, you fool, Apollo!" shouted the Director into the radio. "He must not die! We need him later for the Script. You utter fool, you've bumbled!"

Thetis, who had been standing behind the Director, burst into tears and ran into her cabin.

"What's the matter with her?" asked the Director.

"You may as well know, darling," said Hera, "that your daughter is in love with a barbarian."

"Thetis? In love with Patroclus? Impossible!"

Hera laughed and said, "Ask her how she feels about the planned death of Achilles. That is whom she is weeping for, not Patroclus. She foresees Achilles' death in his friend's. And I imagine she will go to comfort her lover, knowing his grief when he hears that Patroclus is dead."

"That's ridiculous! If she's in love with Achilles, why would she tell Achilles she is his mother?"

"For the very reason she loves him but doesn't want him to know. She at least has sense enough to realize no good could come from a match with one of those Earth primitives. So she stopped any passes from him with that maternal bit. If there is one thing the Greeks respect, it is the incest taboo."

"I'll have him knocked off as soon as possible. Thetis might lose her head and tell him the truth. Poor little girl, she's been away from civilization too long. We'll have to wind up this picture and get back to God's planet."

Hera watched him go after Thetis and then switched to a private channel. "Apollo, the Director is very angry with you. But I've thought of a way to smooth his feathers. We'll tell him that killing Patroclus was the only way to get Achilles back into the fight. He'll like that. Achilles can then be

slain, and the picture will still be saved. Also, I'll make him think it was his idea."

"That's great," replied Apollo, his voice shaky with dread of the Director. "But what can we do to speed up the shooting? Patroclus was supposed to take the city after Achilles was killed."

"Don't worry," said Athena, who had been standing behind Hera. "Odysseus is your man. He's been working on a device to get into the city. Barbarian or not, that fellow is the smartest I've ever met. Too bad he's an Earthman."

DURING the next twenty-four hours, Thetis wept much. But she was also very busy, working while she cried. She went to Hephaistos, the chief technician, an old man of five thousand years. He loved Thetis because she had intervened for Hephaistos more than once when her father had been angry with him. Yet he shook his head when she asked him if he could make Achilles another suit of armor, even more invulnerable than the first.

"Not enough time. Achilles is to be killed tomorrow."

"No. My father has cooled off a little. He remembered that the Script calls for Achilles to kill Hector before he himself dies. Besides, the government anthropologist wants to take films of the funeral games for Patroclus. And he

overrules even Father, you know."

"That'll give me a week," said Hephaistos, figuring on his fingers. "I can do it. But tell me, child, why all the tears? Is it true what they say, that you love a barbarian, that magnificent red-haired Achilles?"

"I love him," she said, weeping again.

"Ah, child, you are a mere hundred years or so. When you reach my age, you'll know that there are few things worth tears, and love between man and woman is not one of them. However, I'll make the armor. And its field of force will cover everything around him except an opening to the outside air. Otherwise, he'd suffocate. But what good will all this do? The Director will find some means of killing him. And even if Achilles should escape, you'd be no better off."

"I will," she said. "We'll go to Italy—and I'll give him perpetuol."

Thetis went to her cabin. Shortly afterward, the doorbell rang. She opened the door and saw Apollo.

Smiling, he said, "I have something here you might be interested in hearing." He held in his hand a small cartridge.

Seeing it, her eyes widened in surprise.

"Yes, it's a recording," he said, and he pushed past her

into the room. "Let me put it in your playback."

"You don't have to," she replied. "I presume you had a microphone planted in Hephaistos' cabin?"

"Correct. Won't your father be angry if somebody sends him a note telling him you're planning to ruin the Script by running off to Italy with a barbarian? And not only that but inject perpetuol into the barbarian to increase his life span? Personally, if I were your father, I'd let you do it. You'd soon grow sick of your handsome but uncouth booby."

Thetis did not answer.

"I really don't care," he said. "In fact, I'll help you. I can arrange it so the arrow that hits Achilles' heel will be a trick one. Its head will just seem to sink into his flesh. Inside it will be a needle that will inject a cataleptic agent. Achilles will seem to be dead but will actually be in a state of suspended animation. We'll sneak his body at night from the funeral pyre and substitute a corpse. A bio-tech who owes me a favor will fix up the face of a dead Trojan or Greek to look like Achilles'. When this epic is done and we're ready to leave Earth, you can run away. We'll not miss you until we're light-years away."

"And what do you want in return for arranging all this? My thanks?"

"I want you."

Thetis flinched. For a moment she stood with her eyes closed and her hands clenched. Then, opening her eyes, she said, "All right. I know that is the only way open for me. It's also the only way you could have devised to have me. But I want to tell you that I loathe and despise you. And I'll be hating every atom of your flesh while you're in possession of mine."

He chuckled and said, "I know it. But your hate will only make me relish you the more. It'll be the sauce on the salad."

"Oh, you heel!" she said in a trembling voice. "You dirty, sneaking, miserable, slimy heel!"

"Agreed." He picked up a bottle and poured two drinks. "Shall we toast to that?"

HECTOR'S death happened, as planned, and the tear-jerking scene in which his father, King Priam, came to beg his son's body from Achilles. Four days later, Achilles led the attack on the Scaian gate. It was arranged that Paris should be standing on the wall above the gate. Apollo, invisible behind him, would shoot the arrow that would strike Achilles' foot if Paris' arrow bounced off the force field.

Apollo spoke to Thetis, who was standing beside him. "You seem very nervous. Don't worry. You'll see your

lovely warrior in Italy in a few weeks. And you can explain to him that you aren't his mother, that you had to tell him that to protect him from the god Apollo's jealousy. But now that Zeus has raised him from the dead, you have been given to him as a special favor. And all will end happily. That is, until living with him will become so unbearable you'd give a thousand years off your life to leave this planet. Then, of course, it'll be too late. There won't be another ship along for several millennia."

"Shut up," she said. "I know what I'm doing."

"So do I," he said. "Ah, here comes the great hero Achilles, chasing a poor Trojan whom he plans to slaughter. We'll see about that."

He lifted the airgun in whose barrel lay the long dart with the trick head. He took careful aim, saying, "I'll wait until he goes to throw his spear. His force field will be off . . . Now!"

Thetis gave a strangled cry. Achilles, the arrow sticking from the tendon just above the heel, had toppled backward from the chariot onto the plain, where dust settled on his shining armor. He lay motionless.

"Oh, that was an awful fall," she moaned. "Perhaps he broke his neck. I'd better

go down there and see if he's all right."

"Don't bother," said Apollo. "He's dead."

Thetis looked at him with wide brown eyes set in a gray face.

"I put poison on the needle," said Apollo, smiling crookedly at her. "That was my idea, but your father approved of it. He said I'd redeemed my blunder in killing Patroclus by telling him what you planned. Of course, I didn't inform him of the means you took to insure that I would carry out my bargain with you. I was afraid your father would have been very shocked to hear of your immoral behavior."

Thetis choked out, "You unspeakable . . . vicious . . . vicious . . . you . . . you . . ."

"Dry your pretty tears," said Apollo. "It's all for your own good. And for Achilles', too. The story of his brief but glorious life will be a legend among his people. And out in the Galaxy the movie based on his career will become the most stupendous epic ever seen."

APOLLO was right. Four thousand years later, it was still a tremendous box-office attraction. There was talk that now that Earth was civilized enough to have space travel, it might even be shown there. **END**

Worlds of if

Book Reviews by Frederik Pohl

MARY Kornbluth's *Science Fiction Showcase* (Doubleday) is partly a memorial to her late husband, C. M. Kornbluth. But also it is a collection of excellent stories, chosen with care and perception. Mary G. Byers was a science fiction reader (and writer) long before she ever heard of Cyril Kornbluth. She has some twenty years' acquaintance with the field; she knows a good story when she finds one.

In *Science Fiction Showcase* she gives us stories by Jack Williamson, Theodore Sturgeon, Ray Bradbury, Murray Leinster, Poul Anderson, Richard Matheson and half a dozen others. Some, like Damon Knight's *Ticket to Anywhere* and James Blish's *A Work of Art*, are here published in complete and revised form for the first time anywhere; some, like Robert Bloch's *Nightmare Number Four*, have never been published before at all.

If you intend to buy only one science fiction anthology in 1960, *Science Fiction Showcase* is a good choice—but the other new anthologies run very rich to the ton. Double-

day also has *The World That Couldn't Be*, edited by H. L. Gold and containing (in addition to the title story by Clifford D. Simak) eight other fine novelettes from *Galaxy Magazine*. Judith Merrill offers her selections of the year's best in *SF: 59* (Gnome Press & Dell). The stories are all entertaining and the non-fiction addenda (notably Isaac Asimov's original article on the ill-mannered habit science has of catching up with science fiction and Daniel Lang's *Man in Space*) are even better. And Groff Conklin gives us *Four for the Future* (Pyramid), comprising novelettes by Henry Kuttner, Theodore Sturgeon, Poul Anderson and Eric Frank Russell. The Anderson and the Russell are first-rate. The Sturgeon and Kuttner aren't. But there are treasures in even the minor efforts of Sturgeon and the late Henry Kuttner; they are both simply too good ever to be wholly bad.

In *Deals with the Devil* (Ballantine), Basil Davenport has selected twelve accounts of hellish bargains struck. In six of them the man comes out

ahead, in the other six the devil collects; so that nothing is proved except that Messrs. Kuttner, Boucher, Elliott, Collier, Dunsany and others tell uncommonly good stories.

IN 1958 both Henry Kuttner and C. M. Kornbluth died and so, a little later on, did E. Everett Evans. Evans was a friend and admirer of E. E. ("Skylark") Smith, the man who opened interstellar space to science fiction writers. Evans was also a fan, a familiar figure at science fiction conventions and in some way an odd one, as he had come to science fiction late in life and fandom is a population of youth. Finally he was, in the last years of his life, a writer.

In *Man of Many Minds* (Fantasy Press & Pyramid), all of Evans's facets show clearly. The friendship with Smith produces junior-grade Galactic Patrol (it is called the Interstellar Corps, but no old Lensman will be deceived). The fannish element generates an unfortunately severe case of that most common problem in the writing of fan-turned-pro, the inability to leave well enough alone. Not content with an Interstellar Corpsman for a hero, Evans has to turn him into a telepath; not satisfied with mere telepathy, he has to give him the odd power of dislocating his mind at will and parking

it in the brain of any convenient animal of low intelligence. There is also an intelligent race of plant-creatures called Guddus, a Plot to Overthrow the Guvmint and heaven knows what else. It is all too much.

A Simak or a van Vogt might be able to juggle all the marvels in *Man of Many Minds*, but Evans's fingers were not that supple. He was able to invent them, but not to find a use for them—so that, for example, on almost the only occasion when the hero has any real need for his telepathic powers (he must establish contact with the Guddus, whose spoken language is in the ultrasonic, dog-whistle range of frequencies), the telepathic communication is abandoned almost at once in favor of a clumsy, complicated frequency changer and the laborious study of their language.

Yet there is that third thing about Evans. He was also a writer. When he was able to free himself of the heritage of fandom and the all-but-Boskonian enemy, he made some plausible and telling points. It is really very much too bad that Evans began writing science fiction only when he was in his fifties. An earlier start and a few more years could easily have produced something well worth while.

This is not to say, however,

that reading *Man of Many Minds* is all enjoyment—not with passages like this:

Hanlon threw back his head in a gesture of pride . . . "I'm glad I did it. To be able to free those fine Guddus from slavery, and to save the Federation from that horrible plot—it was well worth the little suffering it'll cost me. But," and his smile was pathetic, "I do miss the uniform. I was so proud, wearing it."

This is the man who has just most bloodily killed a number of opponents and conducted the fiercest fought space war within the scope of this book. He is then given a set of captain's bars to make up for his "little suffering."

Two other aspirants to the mantle of E. E. Smith appear, conveniently bound together in a single volume. They are Robert Silverberg's *The Planet Killers* and Poul Anderson's *We Claim These Stars!* (Ace Double Volume). Both stories owe a debt to Smith; both have to do with an interstellar civilization centered on Earth and the troubles involved in keeping it going against the best efforts of extra-solar enemies; both make use of cloak-and-dagger intrigue and flamboyant sets. There the resemblance stops. In one story you have care, thought, precision and an economy of construction which invents lavish details and makes fine use of every one. The other is purest *Perils of Pauline*. This is

really a gambler's volume, suitable for flipping and calling like a coin: Anderson you win, Silverberg you lose.

REX Gordon's *First to the Stars* (Ace) is a queer sort of novel. It is loaded with shoddy fake-suspense tricks and weirdly unlikely astro-physical detail, and surely its wailing first-person prose is a bore. But the man seems to have something to say. Gordon is capable of having his narrator refer to his space-traveling companion as "E" (not even the courtesy of a period after the initial!) for a page or two in order to attempt to titivate the reader's interest, before revealing that "E" is only "Elvinia" and the big surprise is that she turns out to be a girl. He is capable of asking the reader to believe that an interstellar rocket, careening wildly out of control through the emptiest space in the Galaxy, just sort of happens to collide with a planet—not only that, an Earthlike planet capable of sustaining life—not only that, but in the resulting collision nobody is killed, or even very badly banged up. He is capable of endless incredibilities; and yet he is capable, too, of telling a story that moves and excites.

In *The Sea People* (Avalon), Adam Lukens produces a book just as queerly uneven as *First to the Stars*. Lukens'

imagination can operate on as infantile a level as devising such "alien" names for beverages as "cinot", a non-intoxicating drink made from pressed oysters, and "yeksic"—surely a misprint for "yek-sihw"!—a joy-juice squeezed out of jungle fruit. Yet that same imagination is subtle enough to conjure up a sympathetic and detailed race of fishlike aliens in which the oldest members are grown detached and enormous, so that they are the one important natural enemy of their juniors. Is this a master-stroke of invention? No, unfortunately not, for even the greatest inspiration comes to nothing if it is not surrounded by great and patiently contrived detail. But in a very good book this would be a very good idea indeed. In *The Sea People* it is only surprising.

Martin Gardner is a continuously reliable source of first-class books on scientific themes for the lay reader. *Logic Machines and Diagrams* (McGraw-Hill) traces the history of man's long-term endeavor to carry on part of his thinking process independently of the built-in computer within the skull. Ramon Lull's 13th century experiments in rotating wheels bearing propositions in logic, Lewis Carroll's 19th century "Game of Logic" and scores of other systems are describ-

ed and amply discussed. So are some of the ingenious and baffling mechanical and electrical machines devised for the same purpose.

Having detailed the results of eight centuries of development, Gardner then reveals his own newly developed Notational System for symbolic logic. As we would expect from him, it is thorough, clear and complete. He then adds an 1894 quotation from the Reverend John Venn, he of the Venn Diagrams, so that we may not think the interest in this subject is tainted by any conceivable practical application:

I have no high estimate myself of the interest or importance of what are sometimes called logical machines . . . It is very seldom that intricate logical calculations are practically forced upon us; it is rather we who look about for complicated examples in order to illustrate our rules and methods.

A great work on an extremely important but dismayingly difficult subject is *Gödel's Proof*, by Ernest Nagel and James R. Newman (New York University Press). Nearly thirty years ago Kurt Gödel, a 25-year-old mathematician at the University of Vienna (now at Princeton's Institute for Advanced Studies), published a paper on formally undecidable mathematical propositions. The mathematical world has spent the intervening decades

comprehending what Gödel wrote. "Gödel," Messrs. Nagel and Newman tell us, "presented mathematicians with the astounding and melancholy conclusion that the axiomatic method has certain inherent limitations, which rule out the possibility that even the ordinary arithmetic of the integers can ever be fully axiomatized." As predominant modern philosophies of mathematics rely heavily on the axiomatic method, Gödel thus told mathematicians that their methods were and always would be inadequate to describe their own processes.

IT IS not unusual for the paperbound edition of a book to be shortened, but that master of paradox, Robert Sheckley, has given us one of the very few cases of a paperbound edition revised, retitled and quite a good deal lengthened from its hard-cover appearance. The book is *Immortality, Inc.* (Bantam), previously *Immortality Delivered* (Avalon), and, more previously still, a *Galaxy Magazine* serial under the title of *Time Killers*—in still a third version. Several of tomorrow's doctoral degrees in Comp. Engl. Lit. may await those who have the patience to compare and analyze the variorum editions. But the casual reader will find in any one of them Sheckley's habitual skill plus an unusually

challenging theme—a world in which survival after death is available to all, for a price.

John Brunner's *The World Swappers* (Ace) involves a secret society of humanity-servers who gadfly the stagnant race of man into expansion and progress by various spy-and-saboteur stratagems. This one is very enjoyable, very competent and very like van Vogt. In case you doubt this, you need only flip the double volume over to find van Vogt's *Siege of the Unseen* for comparison. This remarkable story contains what in this reviewer's opinion is the all-time high in ridiculousness of "scientific background"—viz., a method of interdimensional travel which is accomplished through use of the Bates system of eye training.

A much more attractive van Vogt is *The War Against the Rull* (Simon & Schuster), which is five novelettes very skillfully cut and patched into the semblance of a novel. As the principal characters are impenetrably non-human, van Vogt's sympathies are excited and he makes them interesting, formidable and well worth reading about. Each story is the account of one battle in man's interminable war against his competitors for supremacy in space, the light-controlling, voracious, powerful and hateful Rulls.

It is on record that John Christopher's opinion of sci-

ence fiction is low, but that has not kept him from contributing to it a number of very successful stories and a number of very good ones. (Not necessarily the same stories.) *Planet in Peril* (Avon) is one of the good ones. It is Christopher's contention here that capitalism will indeed be buried, but not by any Marxist Messiah. A managerial state will replace capitalism and communism alike. Great trusts will vie for the minds and loyalties of men; Communications will have its spies in Atomics, and Agriculture will fight Chemicals with guns as well as with market monopolies.

In *The Outward Urge* (Ballantine), John Wyndham and Lucas Parkes chronicle four generations in the Troon family history, all of them pioneers, all of them destined to push mankind one step farther out into space.

We Who Survived (Avon) is by Sterling Noel, more often thought of as a craftsman in the mystery-suspense field. This is the story of the fifth Ice Age, when the snow began one day and never stopped. Even the greatest skyscrapers are buried, and only a narrow belt around the Equator remains capable of producing food for the few thousands who are able to survive the endless blizzard. The problem is survival; the solution makes good reading.

Another offering by a mystery specialist is Cornell Woolrich's *Beyond the Night* (Avon), a short-story collection containing six retellings of weary fantasy themes.

The Man Who Could Cheat Death (Avon) does so by transplanting the uter-parathyroid glands of innocents into his own body. The what glands? The uter-parathyroid glands, and don't ask so many questions. As this in time makes him glow with a ghastly green radiance, and besides involves him in a number of murders, society has got to track him down and blow his head off, and it does. Barre Lyndon and Jimmie Sangster wrote this. It is to be made into a movie, which accounts for the ghastly green radiance, but what accounts for the rest of this 160-page dose of silliness?

In *The Dark Destroyers* (Avalon), Manly Wade Wellman sends an invasion of Cold People against the reclining Earth, but provides a hero named Mark Darragh to beat their jellylike heads in, so that everything comes out all right. Well, almost all right. In an epilogue, Mark Darragh's great-grandson is quoted as saying, "Maybe, in the final analysis, my great-grandpa was the most devastating bore in the history of the universe." The boy shows a lot of discernment. Great-grandpa very nearly was. **END**

A GREAT DAY FOR THE IRISH

By A. M. LIGHTNER

Watchdogs have to be watched

or they keep everything out

—including our friends!



BRIDGET Kelly stood at the foot of the rocket lift and watched the loading operation. The freight had long since been inspected and stow-

ed, and now it was the passengers' turn. Bridget was glad that for once she was not responsible. Let others worry and snoop. This time she was

a passenger herself, starward bound. Inspected, passed and okayed, she could have the pleasure of watching others squirm.

Like that beauty coming aboard with the furs and the orchid. She wouldn't be allowed to keep the orchid, of course. Bridget grinned as she saw the flower tossed into a trash can and imagined the words the beauty was mouthing. The man beside her sported a boutonniere. Yes, there it went into the can. He was still smiling, probably cracking wise. Bridget had separated so many travelers from so many items that she could tell what the passenger was going to say before he said it.

Most people knew that strenuous efforts were being made to keep pests and epidemics away from Earth. Ever since the beginnings of space travel, the quarantine of incoming ships at the Moon had been rigidly observed. But the fact that plagues could also spread from Earth seldom registered on the public's mind.

Bridget was all too well aware of it. For several years she had labored to that end in the Quarantine Service. Now that her savings had accumulated and her abilities as an entomologist were recognized, she was about to board one of the shining ships herself. There were raised eyebrows

when her destination was known. An entomologist going to New Eden—a planet where insects were at a minimum. But Bridget only smiled. She knew what she wanted. She was bound for the frontier, where men are men and women are scarce.

The speaker blared. The countdown was beginning.

"Fifteen minutes!" rasped the mechanical voice. "Fifteen minutes to blast-off!"

SHE took a last look at the planet of her birth and squeezed into the lift. The few remaining passengers pushed in with her. A man in a red waistcoat was commiserating with the woman beside him.

"Don't let the officials get you down," he said. "We'll have to put up with them for the journey. But on New Eden, I hear, the conditions are so good they hardly need any regulations at all."

"It isn't that," sniffed his friend. "It's just that you gave it to me and I was hoping to wear it tonight."

"Perhaps I can buy you something in hydroponics. I had no idea they were so touchy or I'd have had the orchid fumigated."

Bridget felt the scorn of the official for the general public. "If you're going to New Eden, you ought to know we want to keep it that way."

The red waistcoat looked down at her.

"Oh, officialdom without stripes?" he said. "Or are you an old hand? Perhaps you can explain the deal before we get there."

So he *was* the type that cracked wise, and she had put her foot in it right at the beginning.

"I've never been off Earth before," she admitted. "I read up on it all first."

The lift was at the lock door, and she slipped through without looking back. The speaker was croaking "Ten minutes to go" as she hurried to her cabin and prepared for takeoff. She'd have to do better than this or the trip would be a washout. Better just concentrate on enjoying it . . . the new experiences . . . the fascination of travel.

The jets roared and Bridget Kelly blacked out.

Several hours later she had recovered enough to spruce up, take the prescribed dose of covitron against space sickness, and make her way to the lounge. She found the table setting with her name on it and had hardly sat down before a familiar voice began at her ear.

"Sure and if it isn't Bridget Kelly, and it's a long time I've been waiting for herself."

She looked up into the same laughing eyes, only this time they were above an emerald-green waistcoat.

"Still determined that New Eden shall not be polluted by

snakes? Oh, excuse me, that was St. Patrick. You're worried about bugs."

She laughed in spite of herself and glanced at the place card next hers. "Mr. Patch Maguire," it read.

"I didn't mean to sound stuffy," she said. "It's just that most people don't realize how important it is . . . how much trouble just a few insects . . . well, I've worked at it and I ought to know."

"Ah, an official entomologist. But in that case, why New Eden? Or are you insurance against people like Carrie and me who might import something?"

"You never can tell. Something may turn up. It's hard to imagine a planet without any insects at all."

"Eden's remarkable that way," put in the young officer sitting across from them. "No stinging bugs or parasites. Makes everything a lot more comfortable. Still, it's pretty new. Only a small part developed so far."

"So we've insurance against the unknown in Bridget Kelly."

"And what might *you* be insurance against, Mr. Maguire?" she countered.

THE officer stared. "Don't you folks know each other? Mr. Maguire's a grower of fancy plants. Sort of goes together . . . plants and insects!" He laughed. "Well, it

looks like the rest of our table won't show up for this meal."

"What happened to the lady without the orchid? She was with you, wasn't she?" Bridget asked.

"Carrie," said Patch Maguire, "is one of those unfortunates on whom covitron does not work. She won't be with anyone for the duration. I was just hoping our whole table was not similarly afflicted."

"It's a pity," mused the young officer. "So many people make the flight across space only once. If they did it more often, they might get accustomed."

"Don't you take covitron?" Bridget asked, beginning to wonder how soon she should repeat the dose. Some people said it made you sleepy, and she certainly didn't want that with things just getting started . . . and Patch Maguire . . . Patch Maguire . . .

Suddenly a window opened in her mind. She saw a letter with short punching sentences. "You think you can get away with this high-handed, overbearing, totally uncalled-for destruction of property? I'll take it to the top! I'll see you idiots in hell . . . or at least out of the Service!" Patch Maguire protesting the destruction of his shipment of seeds imported from Regulus V. No amount of explanation that the seeds had been found

to harbor a blight which, once let loose on Earth . . . Patch Maguire had a reputation as an authority on crossbreeding and mutation of plants . . . and also for throwing his weight around. It was several years ago, but Bridget remembered the consternation in the department.

She realized that Maguire and the officer were talking. They were agreeing that space sickness was only a matter of psychology, and that if you just didn't think about it, no covitron was necessary. She hastily swallowed another pill with her coffee and hoped the coffee would keep her awake.

They toured the ship together, she and Patch. They marveled at the scene from the viewport and chatted with the captain in the control room. The steward inquired about his taste in music and stereo, and he even gave advice to the gardeners in hydroponics. All doors were open to Patch, and there were murmurs about the "handsome couple" as they moved through the lounge. By the end of the trip they were making plans for New Eden. Patch insisted that Bridget was in the wrong profession and she agreed that the science of agriculture might be more rewarding than entomology under certain conditions.

At the farewell dinner, Patch gave her a bouquet he'd

had made up especially by the gardeners. But she was more interested in the small green leaf he wore in his lapel. He took it out and insisted on fastening it in her hair.

"Sure and it's a shamrock!" he cried, as he arranged it. "And have you forgotten what day it is tomorrow?"

"It's the day we land," Bridget replied. "But what day that is in our time or ship's time . . . it's too confusing!"

"It's St. Patrick's Day, that's what it is!" he said. "A great day for the Irish and a great day for us. And I wouldn't be without the shamrock on St. Patrick's Day! They should call the planet New Ireland, that they should. Wasn't Ireland the garden island, all green and fruitful and with no snakes? And I hear this planet's the garden planet and with no insects either to make life miserable. But let you and me be living there a while and we'll make it New Ireland for sure!"

And he planted a kiss on her mouth without a thought of who was looking at them.

AS THEIR tablemates drank their health, Bridget blushed and her eyes shone, and after dinner Patch escorted her to the stereo where they sat very close together in the dark. But as the pictures flashed across the screen and as Patch's arm went

across her shoulder and drew her close, her mind was besieged by an army of little doubts. Shamrock . . . shamrock . . . what had she read about the shamrock?

"Patch," she whispered. "Where did you get it?"

"Get what?" Patch murmured, bending over to kiss her.

"The shamrock, Patch? I don't believe they have it in hydroponics."

"Sure, they must have it." Patch's lips brushed hers and she found it difficult to think clearly.

"I never saw it there. Patch! Are you sure?"

"Saw what? I don't see anything but you. That's enough for me."

"About the shamrock, Patch!"

"It looks beautiful on you. Sure and I wouldn't be without a shamrock on St. Patrick's Day."

Bridget gave up. She lay back in the sanctuary of his arm and basked in the warm feeling of his lips on her hair. But the doubts kept crawling about in her mind. What was the matter with her? Couldn't she be happy when everything was perfect? Had she been a cut-and-dried inspector for too many years? But she remembered the words of Professor Schwarzkopf, the day she received her degree: "The inspectors are the watchdogs

of the planets. Without them, all that man has built can be destroyed."

When Patch had kissed her good night outside her cabin and his footsteps had died along the corridor, she crept out into the passage and made her way to hydroponics.

"Why, no," said the chief gardener, "we never carry clover of any sort. Why do you ask?"

On her way to the control room, Bridget tried not to think. She found the young officer from her table on duty with the captain, and the two men listened in surprise as she outlined her fears.

"I don't want to accuse Mr. Maguire of anything," she said. "I'm sure he doesn't realize how serious—and of course there may be nothing to it. It's just that I remember that shamrocks harbor the golden nematode—that is, in the soil around the roots. And it seems likely that if Mr. Maguire has live shamrocks—and I remember what a serious plague they once brought over from Ireland to America . . ."

The captain pulled his mustache. "It's clearly against regulations. I can't imagine how he'd get it past inspection. But then, Maguire's a very persistent man and he's got pull in odd places. I don't want to rouse the ire of the Irish, but I see your point."

"Couldn't you search his cabin—without his knowing I said to? Oh, I'm sure he'd be very angry. But if I could only look at his plants, then I'd be sure if they're safe. You must have ways of getting in—if there should be a short circuit or something in his cabin."

"Oh, we have ways," the captain said. "Don't we, Lieutenant?"

"Perhaps at breakfast," suggested the young officer. "If Miss Kelly could arrange to make it as leisurely as possible."

"And right afterward you might go to the lieutenant's cabin—with your instruments and without Mr. Maguire."

SHE had no trouble in making her breakfast leisurely. She could hardly choke it down. Under Patch's admiring gaze and flagrant approval she was uncomfortably conscious of treachery. She left as soon as the protracted meal was over, even though she knew it would give him the opportunity to discover the rape of his plants.

The lieutenant was waiting for her in his cabin. He sat behind his desk eyeing a motley collection of clover in an assortment of little jars and boxes. Bridget brought out her pocket 'scope and without a word pulled the first specimen up by the roots and began to examine it. The lieu-

tenant watched in fascination.

"It's a good thing Mr. Maguire can't see you now," he said. "He'd take an entirely different tone from the one I've been hearing lately."

"I'm hoping he doesn't find out," she muttered. "What he doesn't know . . . Oh! Oh! Look here! A fine big cyst! Now if they're all like this . . ."

The lieutenant's face took on a look of respect. He came around from behind his desk and peered over her shoulder. "Found something already?" he asked.

Bridget pushed the scope under his nose. "See that?" she said. "In the right-hand corner."

"You mean that lump? Doesn't look very dangerous."

"No, it doesn't. But it's a nematode cyst, all right. That little brown lump, if turned loose in the soil—give it a few years and you'll have a real pest on your hands."

"You don't say. We'd better get rid of it right away. Do you think there's any more?"

"That's just what I'm going to find out."

But before she could move to the desk for the other containers there was a sound of scuffling outside, the door was flung violently open, and a rich, Irish voice proclaimed in righteous anger: "So here you are, conspiring against me! Both the culprits red-handed! And my shamrocks, my little plants, my babies! Thank

heavens I got here in time!"

The lieutenant moved to intercept him. "I beg your pardon, sir, but these plants are in quarantine, and if you have any others we haven't found—"

"You're no true daughter of Ireland, Bridget Kelly. And I'm fortunate to have found you out in time, false and faithless as you are!"

"Now, now," cautioned the lieutenant, getting between Maguire and the desk. "She was only doing her duty. You should see the things she's been showing me in her microscope. A menace to the whole planet!"

"Don't you believe a word of it!" thundered Maguire. "These inspectors are full of fears and fancies. Puffed up with their own importance. And I'll thank you to give me back my plants that you stole out of my cabin."

"I'm afraid I can't do that," the lieutenant said. "Not until Miss Kelly has examined each one—and then only the ones that get a clean bill of health." And he began to collect the little pots and remove them as far as possible from Maguire's reach.

"Well, come along then, Bridget—give them the bill of health," Maguire ordered. "You'll do that for me, I'm sure. And I don't know what all the fuss is about either, all over a few little plants, and shamrocks at that."

"The few little plants have a few little cysts all through their roots," said Bridget, whose temper was wearing thin. "I've only looked at one so far, but as nice an infestation of the golden nematode I've seldom seen. It's got to go down the incinerator."

"The incinerator!" screamed Maguire. "Woman! My shamrocks! All the way from Ireland!"

"If you hadn't spent your whole life circumventing regulations and pulling wires, this wouldn't have happened. Why didn't you get them-treated and certified before coming aboard?"

"**B**ECAUSE there wasn't time, that's why!" Patch shouted. "They only came from Ireland as I was leaving for the ship. If it hadn't been for a snooping, sniveling worrywart—all about a worm that you can't even see . . ."

"You can see the results right enough!" Bridget's voice was rising to match his. "Did you ever hear of the Long Island potato? The best on the East Coast they were. The golden nematode ruined Long Island for potatoes. That's what the shamrock did for America! That's a sneaking, treacherous worm for you!"

"And who would want to grow potatoes on Long Island, built up into a city as it is?"

"They're going to want to grow potatoes on New Eden,

and I'm here to see they can."

"If that's all that's worrying you, I'll breed you a nematode-resistant potato. And now I'll thank you to let me take my shamrocks and make an end to this disgraceful scene."

But when he looked around, he found the lieutenant had quietly removed himself with the plants, and the door of the cabin was crowded with interested passengers.

"So you think you've put one over on me!" Patch shouted. "It's a good thing I found out in time how I was being deceived by a pair of eyes and a mouth that says one thing and means another!"

"And I suppose you're the soul of honor! With no thought of responsibility to your fellow man! You've had your way all your life, and it's lucky I found *that* out, too—before—before . . ."

But he was gone, elbowing his way through the crowd, and the onlookers drifted away, embarrassed at the sight of the stormy girl who shouted hysterically after him. Bridget slammed the door and collapsed into a chair.

"I'm sorry for the noise," she apologized when the officer returned. "I'd better finish checking the plants before it's time to land."

"Never mind the plants," the lieutenant told her. "I've put them where he won't find

them in a hurry. As a matter of fact, we aren't going to land. We're in orbit now and they're to send a rocket shuttle. They aren't worried about what we're bringing in this time. It's what we might take out. There's a howling plague on New Eden after all. Several of our passengers have changed their minds about landing."

"A plague?" said Bridget stupidly. It was hard to concentrate on anything more deadly than the golden nematode.

"Oh, nothing you or I could catch. Something to do with agriculture and the plants. Which reminds me, I've a batch of telegrams for you. The authorities are delighted to learn we've a registered entomologist aboard. Very few of them have come this way."

By the time Bridget had read the sheaf of papers, she had made the transition from the world of shipboard romance to her accustomed world of science and order. There was work to be done. Her talents were needed in a dozen places at once. She left orders for the confiscated clovers to be destroyed and went to her cabin to pack. She was on the first shuttle to leave the ship.

THE weeks that followed were filled with hard work with test tube and microscope,

at her desk and in the field. The majority of her co-workers were men, but none had time to look for a laughing eye or a smiling mouth. The beautiful garden planet of New Eden was being reduced to a desert by a mysterious *something* that was swiftly attacking all the cultivated areas. Starvation was looming and there was talk of hasty evacuation. The situation was passing out of control.

The villain could not be isolated. Was it an insect, a virus, a chemical in the soil? Some of the few native insects were caught and subjected to experiment. The soils were analyzed and tested. Those were not the answer. The only thing certain was that the previously lush brown loam was turning to a yellow, chalky sand, and everything that grew in it withered and died.

Bridget visited farm after farm and trudged from field to field. She looked at worried faces and tried to think of words of encouragement. Back at the laboratory she studied her specimens far into the night and fell asleep at her desk. She was too tired to think about Patch Maguire, who, she concluded, had never left the spaceship. What would a grower of gardens, a breeder of plants do in a spreading desert? He had gone on to some more flourishing planet.

She was called to the office one day.

"I hear there's a farm that claims they don't have the plague," said the harassed young scientist behind the desk. "Better get over there and see if it's any more than a rumor. Take the heli and bring back all the usual samples. Here's the directions on getting there."

He shoved a torn piece of paper at her and turned back to his cluttered desk. Bridget picked up her collecting kit and climbed into the cab of the machine. By this time she knew her way about the settlements. Without doubt, she told herself, this farm was on the outskirts of civilization, in some valley as yet untouched by the plague. But long before she reached the limits of cultivated land, she could see her destination. It stood out like an oasis in the desert, a little patch of green between a dried-up cornfield and an expanse of stricken wheat.

Bridget brought her heli down on a velvety lawn in front of a small cottage and walked, unbelieving, to the door. A shout from within welcomed her and she entered a clean and simple kitchen-parlor. The owner of the one healthy farm in New Eden was busy in the attached greenhouse.

As she glimpsed the red waistcoat dangling from a hook, Bridget screamed, and

Patch Maguire came through the greenhouse door, a flower pot in one hand, trowel in the other.

"And if it isn't the worm-hunter herself!" he cried. "The czar of the spaceways! The dandelion dictator! And I was wondering how long it would take you to find me out."

"But you—" she gasped. "You couldn't—you wouldn't—aren't supposed to be here!"

"And why not?" he countered. "I'm not like Carrie, she'd rather go on too sick to eat in space than face starvation on this planet. And then the bargain I was offered for this place—you wouldn't believe it! All modern conveniences and they were practically giving it away. Besides, what had I to fear with the best entomologist in five solar systems working for the Department of Agriculture? Sure, you'll be having the problem solved in no time!"

"Don't be giving me that blarney!" Bridget said. "You need only look out the window to know we've solved nothing at all. And you sitting here crowing to yourself! You've been breeding plague-resistant plants, that's what you've done, and keeping them all to yourself! It's a disgrace!"

Patch began to laugh, and the more he laughed, the angrier Bridget got.

"You should be ashamed!" she shouted. "The whole plan-

et dying and you sitting here growing greener all the time!"

"And that's the way it's been," he assured her. "This place was dying on me, too. But only the last few days it's taken a new lease and I'm at my wit's end to explain it."

"You mean you don't *want* to explain it. You're hoarding the secret, and it's a shameful thing!"

"Woman, you're crazy!" he bellowed at her. "I'm no magician to breed a plague-resistant plant overnight. It takes patience and many seasons, and I've only just settled in. I put a few things in the garden and stirred things up in the potting shed. Here, come along—you can see for yourself."

HE DREW her through the cottage, pointing out the advantages of the kitchen so near the greenhouse. She walked about the paths and felt of the rich brown soil without a streak of yellow, and finally her eyes fell upon some little low leaves by the back step.

"Patch," she demanded, "what's that?"

"You've the eagle eye, to be sure. What do you suppose it is?"

"It's clover," she said. "Shamrock to you. Surely not the same shamrock! I gave strict orders!"

Before he could stop her, she had tugged a plant up by

the roots and pulled out her pocket microscope as she bent over it.

"Sure, they were so busy worrying about the plague here, they forgot all about the little plague from Earth. And all I wanted was a bit of old Ireland to bring with me. A few little cysts couldn't be that important. And you've got to admit that's what I've got—a green island!"

"The idiots!" screamed Bridget. "The irresponsible, shirking, doublefaced—"

Her hand went up and Patch dodged involuntarily, expecting her to throw shamrock, dirt and all right at his head. But her hand stopped in midair.

"Patch!" Her voice fell to a whisper of incredulity. "I think I've got the answer here in my hand. Don't say a word till I'm sure, but get me soil samples from all over your place—there—and over there—and *hurry!*"

Patch ran back and forth with the soil samples and Bridget looked in her microscope, and everywhere the golden nematode was teeming and nowhere was there a sign of the sinister yellow streaks.

"Don't you see?" Bridget said. "Whatever it is, the nematodes are killing it."

"It will take some experimenting to prove it, but Bridget, my girl, I believe you're right."

"And while they're proving it, Patch, you and I are going to breed nematodes right here."

And she had a vision of the golden horde, burrowing from Patch's land in all directions, bringing back health and sanity to the land. Whatever would Professor Schwarzkopf say? Dear Professor Schwarzkopf! Sometimes the watch-

dogs are too faithful. They keep out everyone—even our friends.

And that was how New Eden was saved. And the nematodes prospered and the Maguires prospered and the shamrocks grew everywhere. And so there was nothing for it but to call the planet New Ireland.

END

BECAUSE IT'S THERE?

The conquest of Mount Everest was both an achievement and a major letdown for mountain-climbers. The highest mountain on Earth had been climbed, leaving only lesser goals to be won.

But Everest is just a foothill compared with the mountains in the sea! The greatest slope in the world is the stretch from the bottom of the Peru-Chile Trench (on the bed of the Pacific just west of South America) straight up the continental shelf, the littoral and on up to the peaks of the Andes.

Little old Everest is merely a skimpy 29,028 feet, whereas the Trench-to-Andes climb is a majestic 42,000 feet!

These gigantic mountains are scarcely the still, quiet cradle of the deep that sailors sing of.

Avalanches and landslides are fearsome enough on dry-land peaks, but they are miniature imitations of the violent, high-speed, almost cosmically enormous slides that crash down the sides of the submerged mountains.

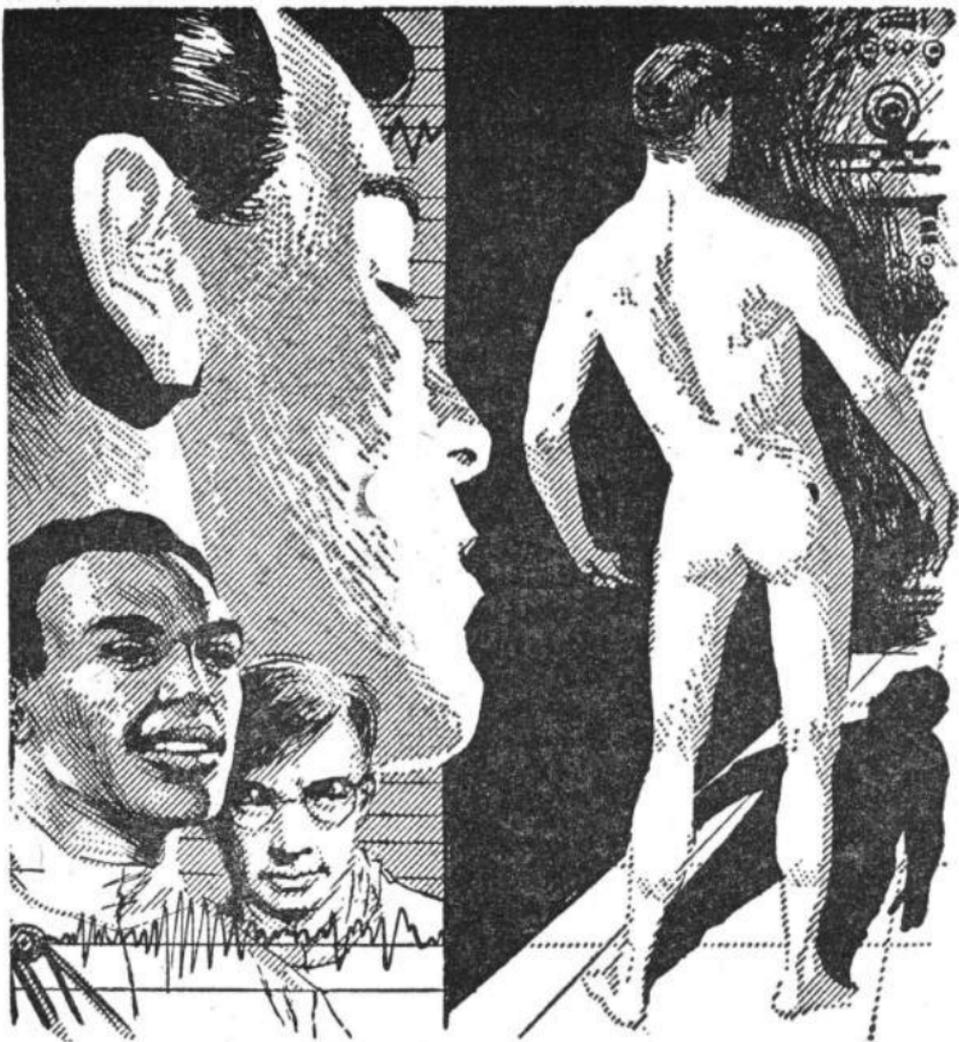
These are mudslides, half unstable to begin with because of wetness, triggered into planet-shaking slips by earthquake, current, or plain accumulation of unthinkable weight to which all of Mount Everest is as but a boulder.

"Oh, come, now!" a mountain-climber who has scaled Everest and knows its size might be justified in exclaiming. "Isn't that stretching it a bit? Exactly how big is one of your blooming mudslides?"

Well, the one in the Grand Banks in 1929 slid *three hundred and fifty miles*.

Not thousand or tens of thousands of tons slipped but *whole cubic miles* of mud that changed the entire contour of the ocean bottom in that area—peaks sheared off, cables covered or snapped, valleys as big as those on land filled in by the hugest Earthmover of them all!

The greatest mountains haven't been conquered yet. Those who must climb them "because they're there" will find plenty "there" in the sea.



MATCHMAKER

Ask a sensible question and you're sure to get a sensible answer—remembering that one man's sense may be a machine's poison!



By CHARLES L. FONTENAY

JASSO laid the bulky report on his superior's desk.

"No one living can solve the problem," he said.

Tern stared at him quizzically and leaned back in the cushioned chair behind his desk.

"That's encouraging," Tern said with a wry smile. "The second generation?"

"The probabilities are high. The most likely father is a man named Lao Protik, a psycho-artist living in New York."

"The mother?"

Jasso grinned, a flashing grin in a dark face. He sank into a chair, pulled out a cigarette pack and offered one to Tern. The older man shook his head, fishing in his pocket for an old-fashioned pipe. Jasso clicked out a cigarette and drew deeply on it.

"That's one of the fascinating angles about dealing with the Calculator," he said. "We combined the fifty most probable fathers, including Lao, with the fifty most probable mothers. Believe it or not, we drew an absolute blank. They just don't jibe at all."

"Not too surprising," said Tern. "It's happened before. But I gather you've already decided to work with this psycho-artist. Why?"

"Lao's so far ahead of the rest, both men and women, it's the only thing to do. And, since life is full of little surprises, we found the probability highest if Lao marries a woman whose own separate probability rating is close to zero." Jasso consulted his notes and added: "She's a language teacher named Grida Mattin, living in Southgate, Tennessee."

"You're pretty sure these results are right?" asked Tern.

"I've checked every angle I could think of," replied Jasso carefully. "Of course, there's always the possibility that two near-zero probabilities would add up better, when combined.

But the probability rating for marriage between these two is very high—you can see for yourself when you check the figures. I think it's the best we'll find."

"It would be so much simpler if we had a high probability among people in this generation," said Tern thoughtfully. "Arranging a marriage between two strangers is a ticklish business."

"It's been done before," said Jasso. "I'll put a team of agents to work on it right away."

THERE were millions of cards—if you could call things the size of a bedsheet "cards." Each punched with holes like a swiss cheese, they filled one of the Calculator's most strategic banks. They represented every man, woman and child in the civilized world.

Through them, the course of history could be guided, the advancement of civilization accelerated. By racing through the backgrounds and capabilities of every person in the United Nations, the Calculator could find the best one to do any job, to solve any problem.

Lao Protik, as he strolled into his swank Nuyork apartment building that July evening, was completely unaware that the Calculator had pointed a finger at him. Life flowed smoothly for him. Not a worry darkened the horizon. His an-

nual salary from Consolidated Ads was five hundred thousand dols — a comfortable thirty thousand after taxes—and he maintained three mistresses in separate apartments.

In the lobby, he paused to open his mailbox. Two letters fell out into his hands; he tore the envelopes neatly across the end.

The first was an advertisement for the 2125 model of the Sky Swallow convertible helicopter. He crumpled it and tossed it into a potted palm.

He grunted in surprise as he read the second one.

"Vr. Lao Protik," he read. "Our firm has been impressed with your accomplishments and growing reputation as a psycho-artist. We are in a position to offer you employment at a salary of one hundred thousand dols annually. Our representative, Vr. Casto Roche, will call on you in a few days to discuss this offer with you."

The letter bore the illegible scrawl of someone who signed himself as president of Colorvue Publicity, Inc. Lao had never heard of the firm.

Lao's lips curled and this missive followed the first one into the potted palm. He felt a momentary irritation at the audacity of anyone offering him a mere hundred thousand dols, then let the entire matter slip from his mind.

Softly whistling the refrain

of the latest hit tune, "The Clouds of Venus Can't Come Between Us," he caught the elevator and ascended to his last untroubled night for a long time to come.

A TERSE memorandum was waiting for Lao at his office the next morning. It was not the sort of thing any employe of Consolidated Ads could ignore—not even a Class A psycho-artist who was an officer in his union. A worried frown creasing his normally smooth forehead, Lao hurried down the corridor to the plush office of Mavo Caprin, president of the firm.

Caprin was in no amiable mood. He grunted at Lao's somewhat querulous greeting. He kept his nose buried in papers, puffing ominously on a fat cigar for several minutes before looking up and waving Lao to a seat.

"Perhaps you can explain these, Protik," said Caprin sharply, waving a thick fistful of letters. Lao leaned over to take them, and glanced through several of them.

The phrases that met his eyes astounded and outraged him.

They were such words as "this insolent effrontery," "the unwarranted audacity of the man," "a deliberate scheme to further rip away the fabric of our tottering moral code"—all applied to his own work!

"I can't explain them be-

cause I don't know what they are talking about, Voter Caprin," said Lao.

"They're talking about these," replied Caprin. With the flourish of a magician taking a rabbit out of a hat, he produced a sheaf of Lao's original paintings from his desk drawer.

Lao riffled through them. At first glance, he saw nothing wrong. Then he looked more closely, and began to compare them with specific complaints in the letters.

His face flushed bright red with anger.

Only one in a hundred readers of the advertisements that carried Lao Protik's artwork would have noticed, but the complaints were justified! The melange which was a competent psycho-artist's painting was carefully confused to achieve a specific psychological objective—in Lao Protik's work, to make people want to buy the products sponsored by Consolidated Ads. But in these paintings the psychological impact had been distorted cleverly. The psycho-art had been turned into effective propaganda for polygamy!

"Somebody has altered my work," said Lao firmly. "I demand a thorough check of every artist on the staff."

Caprin shook his head. "That won't be necessary. I've had these paintings checked by experts, and they all agree this is your original work."

"THAT'S outrageous!" exclaimed Lao. "What 'experts' told you such lies?"

"It doesn't matter," said Caprin, a bit wearily now. "I don't like to do it after such a long association, Lao, but Consolidated Ads has a reputation to maintain. We can't take sides in politics. We have to let you go."

Lao stared at him. Then he hurled paintings and letters in Caprin's face and stalked to the door. Halfway out of the office, he turned and shouted furiously:

"The Psycho-Artists Guild will have something to say about this, Caprin!"

"I don't think so," Caprin retorted mildly, rubbing a bruised cheek.

It wasn't long before Lao realized the significance of that parting remark. His few personal belongings jammed into his briefcase, he emerged on the roof of the huge Consolidated Ads building and looked around for a helicab. The cabstands were empty at the moment. Waiting under an awning, he dropped a dime into a newspaper vending machine. It clucked and ejected the noon edition of the *Star* into his hands.

A good-sized headline on Page One proclaimed: "Art Union Ejects Protik." His eyes bulging slightly, Lao read swiftly:

In a specially called meeting of its executive com-

mittee, the Psycho-Artists Guild this morning revoked the membership of its second vice-president, Lao Protik, chief psycho-artist for Consolidated Ads.

Officers of the union refused to make public the reason for Protik's ejection, but there were reports that some connection with the notorious Polygamy League was involved. Protik could not be reached for comment immediately, and the switchboard operator at Consolidated Ads said she had instructions not to ring his office.

UNSHAVEN and bleary-eyed, Lao argued plaintively over the telephone with his old friend, Major Hobel, personnel chief at Autovance Advertising. Hobel had tried several times in the past to woo Lao from Consolidated Ads.

"It's no good, Lao," said Hobel. "You've been black-balled."

"But it's all a pack of lies, Major!" cried Lao. "You know the inside of the field. How about the foreign firms?" Anything outside of Nuyork was "foreign."

"It's the same in Kahgo and all over, Sorry, Lao."

Cursing, Lao slammed down the receiver and dialed the number of Tinna, his favorite mistress. A voice he recognized as Tinna's answered.

"Tinna," he began, "this is Lao . . ."

"She isn't here," said Tinna frigidly. The telephone clicked in his ear.

Lao's shoulders drooped. He put the phone in its cradle and, without much hope, prepared to dial Phreda, another mistress. It buzzed at him before he could begin.

He answered it.

"Voter Protik, there's a gentleman in the lobby to see you," said the apartment house operator.

"I don't want to see any more reporters!" shouted Lao angrily.

"This isn't a reporter, sir. He says he's a representative of Colorvue Publicity."

"Never heard of it," growled Lao. "But send him up."

He had no time to shave, but he washed his face and tried to make himself a little more presentable before the apartment buzzer sounded. He admitted an elderly man with a gray mustache, who had the well-fed air of a corporation executive.

"Voter Protik, I am Roche of Colorvue Publicity," his visitor introduced himself. "You recieved our letter several days ago?"

Lao searched his memory. Vaguely he recalled such a letter and his hopes began to rise. Wasn't it something about offering him a job?

He asked Roche.

"That's correct, sir," replied

Roche. "A hundred thousand dols a year, one-quarter payable in advance."

"You may not want me now," said Lao gloomily. He had no scruples about putting over a sharp business deal, but any contract he might draw would be invalid if he withheld information.

"We are aware of your recent difficulties," said Roche sympathetically. "I wish to assure you we do not believe the charges that you are associated with the Polygamy League. Also you may wish to know that my firm, while a small one, is a reputable one. A check of the Business Practices Agency will prove that to you."

"I'm not a member of the Psycho-Artists Guild any more," Lao reminded him bitterly, "to say nothing of having been blackballed by all major firms and abandoned by my three mistresses."

"We have no union contract, and your personal life is your own," answered Roche with a slight smile. "Your known ability is sufficient for us. There is one thing, however. Your work will not be in Nuyork, but in Southgate, a small town in Tennessee. If you see fit to accept our offer, we will arrange in advance for your quarters there. There will be no cost to you."

"I hate to leave Nuyork," said Lao slowly. "And I'm frank to say that I hate to come down from half a million

dols to a hundred thousand. But your offer comes as a lifesaver to me, Voter Roche. I'm inclined to accept it."

"Good," said Roche. "Think on it, if you like. I'll put a signed contract in the next mail for you. When you return it with your signature, your ticket and instructions will be waiting for you at Lagwad Airport."

They shook hands on it, and Roche walked out of Lao's life—for a while.

HIS hands in his pockets, Lao strolled into the kitchen, where his landlady, Grida Mattin, was melodiously preparing lunch. Grida wore an apron over her old-fashioned opaque clothing and her head, beginning to show a few gray streaks, was bent over the gleaming stove.

"Grida, do you mind if I use the telephone for a long-distance call to Nuyork?" he asked.

"Certainly not, Lao," she answered, turning to smile at him. Her face was not exceptionally attractive, but she had beautiful teeth. "Nothing wrong, I hope."

"I don't know," he said. "My salary check is three weeks overdue."

He placed the call to Colorvue Publicity on the kitchen extension, and stood by the stove, watching Grida stir and season.

"Cooking is almost a lost

art, Grida, and you're a good cook," he said. "I'm surprised you've never married."

Grida flushed at the compliment.

"It may sound boastful, but I've never courted a man, Lao," she said. "As you may have noticed, I have conservative habits. I'm afraid I'm a little out of place in the modern world. I don't approve of the frivolous attitude people have toward marriage now."

Lao looked at her, not without some affection. Of course he had made advances, as most men did to all unmarried women with whom they associated.

But Grida was a history teacher, and she lived by the outmoded morals of the distant past. She had made it known at once that marriage was her price for intimacy, and she gave no hint she was interested in marriage.

"There's nothing frivolous about it from the man's viewpoint, when only a woman can apply for a divorce," replied Lao. "That's why it's hard for women to catch husbands. With ten women to every man, most men have no trouble finding mistresses."

"I don't approve of that, either," said Grida, compressing her lips firmly.

The telephone interrupted, and Lao went into the library to talk.

"On your call, sir," came the thin voice of the Nuyork oper-

ator, "there is no Colorvue Publicity listed."

"What!" he exclaimed. "There must be! Check again."

He waited a long, anxious moment.

"I'm sorry, sir," came the operator's voice again. "I have checked our directory, and there is no Colorvue Publicity listed."

Lao swore fervently.

"Wait a minute," he cried. "Nuyork? Hold it just a minute, will you?"

He raced up the ramp to his second floor bedroom, fumbled through his dresser drawer until he found his contract and ran back downstairs with it. He had the operator check the name of every Colorvue Publicity official who had signed the contract. None was listed.

"I know there's a Colorvue Publicity!" he shouted desperately. "Get me the Business Practices Agency."

"Just a moment, sir."

A man's voice answered at the Business Practices Agency. It took him several minutes to check the files in compliance with Lao's request for information.

"We have no such firm listed in our records," he said at last.

"**D**AMMIT, I know you do!" exclaimed Lao. "You told me Colorvue Publicity had a Double-A2 rating when I checked with you, not four months ago."

"Was the request for a rating by letter or by telephone, sir?"

"By telephone. It didn't take the girl three minutes to find it."

"There'd be no record of your request if it was made by telephone. There must have been some mistake, sir. If there were a firm named Colorvue Publicity in any city in the world having a population of more than 100,000, it would be in our records."

Lao cursed him and hung up. Grida came out of the kitchen, wiping her hands on her apron.

"I couldn't help overhearing, Lao," she said. "There must be something wrong. That company sent me a check for your first three months' room and board. It cleared the bank all right."

"So did my salary check for the first quarter," he said. "But the Business Practices Agency is supposed to keep records of a firm for a year after its dissolution. I can't understand anybody paying out twenty-five thousand dols and then just disappearing!"

"If you need any help to tide you over, Lao . . ." she said hesitantly. "My salary isn't much—fifteen thousand dols a year. But I have something saved."

"Thanks, Grida, but I'll be all right," he said, turning away.

Lao left the house and strode

down the quiet streets of Southgate, fuming. This had all the earmarks of a conspiracy. First the sabotage at Consolidated Ads, now the utter disappearance of Colorvue Publicity. But he could think of no enemies who would have reason to conspire against him. The field of psycho-art was a highly specialized one, without bitter competition.

Back in his room at Grida Mattin's house were half a dozen canvases that reflected all his co-ordinated skill. Done on the instructions he found at Lagwad Airport the night he left Nuyork, they depicted all the advantages of marriage in a small Southern town. His now-vanished employers had never sent him instructions for their disposal. Now the work was wasted, unless he could sell them free-lance.

The brown autumn leaves were drifting down on the crumbling sidewalks of Southgate, stripping the trees that lined the streets. Blue smoke drifted from chimneys of a few of the old houses, dissipating into the gray sky. It was an atmosphere that fitted his mood of despair.

The most pressing problem that faced him was financial. Lao was a lavish man with his money. His balance at the bank now wouldn't cover his income tax for the year. It was something he'd never had to worry about before, because good psycho-artists were well-

paid and aways in demand. Now, marooned in the Tennessee hills, blackballed by every big firm in the nation, his prospects looked bleak.

Something Grida had said stuck in his mind. Fifteen thousand a year—plus savings. It wasn't a great deal, after taxes, but it was a living. And he could pay his own taxes next March.

He shook his head and turned his steps back toward the house. Marriage was the very last resort for Lao. He'd try free-lancing the Colorvue paintings first.

ROCHE looked unhappy. "While he was working on the paintings he didn't have time to get around town, such as it is," he said. "He and Grida were together a lot. They seemed to get along. Now he's sold the paintings and he's spending the money on a mistress."

"Well, Jasso, this is your baby," said Tern. "What now?"

"A mistress can be scared off pretty easily," said Jasso. "We've got agents pulling strings all over the place right now to stave off a worse problem than that. Grida's sister, Alina, visits her every year and our secondary checks with the Calculator show such a visit would be fatal to any chances of a Lao-Grida marriage. Alina's a doctor in Frisco. We've managed to get the

hospital authorities to postpone her vacation, but we've got to get Lao and Grida married pretty quick. They can't stall Alina off forever."

"It strikes me that you're just as far away from the marriage as you were at the beginning," commented Tern.

"How do you make two people want to marry each other?" countered Jasso. "It's not enough the Calculator has to pick out a woman 20 years older than he is. Checking them against each other, they are basically incompatible."

"Can you tell them? Maybe if they knew how important their marriage is to the world . . ."

"I've checked that," said Jasso. "We can't. The probability would drop to almost nothing."

"Excuse me, sir," interposed Roche. "All the pertinent information on the basic personalities of Lao and Grida is filed in their Calculator cards. It seems to me that all you'd have to do would be to ask the Calculator how to make them want to marry each other."

"Dealing with the Calculator isn't quite that simple, Roche," replied Jasso with a smile. "It's a machine. It has no language that would permit it to tell us *how* things are done, even though we might say it knows, because it has all the necessary information.

"If we ask for information

recorded in the Calculator, it can refer us to the place in the file to find it—if we phrase the question properly. If we ask a true-or-false question, it will answer 'yes' or 'no,' if it has the answer. If we ask for correlation of information, the Calculator can give us the probability of attaining an objective.

"That's why it takes such long training to become a Calculator operator. The Calculator can correlate the emotional factors of Lao and Grida for us, but we have to draw our own conclusions for action from them—and then ask the Calculator for probabilities. That's all."

Tern had listened gravely, without interrupting, his hands folded across the bulge of his stomach.

"You evidently haven't been asking the right questions, Jasso," he remarked sardonically. "It's hard for me to realize that this is the Jasso who stopped the Brazilo-Panamanian War and solved the economic crisis that threatened Pakistan."

"I've still got a few tricks up my sleeve, Chief," retorted Jasso. "The only way to make a pair want to marry is to throw them together and then exploit their psychological weakness. Make them *need* each other. I've got a psychology team checking Lao and Grida with a fine-tooth comb, and we'll check their recom-

mendations with the Calculator."

"From what you've told me, I'd say Lao's biggest weakness is a love of luxurious living," suggested Tern. "That takes money, you know."

"Economic pressure alone doesn't go deep enough to drive him to marriage. Not with so many available women around. Don't worry; we're using economic pressure to keep him off balance. But the psychologists tell us the final motivation must be an emotional frustration. It doesn't have to be a big one, but it must be basic."

LAO had had the letter for two days, and still didn't know what to do about it. It had cost him two sleepless nights.

In the old days in Nuyork he would have aired his troubles to friends at the Psycho-Artists Club and probably acted on a dozen varying bits of advice at the same time. Here there was no one to whom he could turn.

He glared morosely at the unfinished painting. The canvas gleamed with iridescent whorls and lines, from which the face and form of Grida Mattin were beginning to emerge. In the maze of waxing and waning colors could be distinguished, if one looked closely enough, faint countenances of women and babies with expressions of anxiety, of fear,

of hunger for love . . . with occasionally a man.

It would have sold well, he thought. Free-lancing had been a promising idea.

He dragged himself downstairs to breakfast. He usually reacted to Grida's singing. It pleased him mildly when he was in an expansive mood, irritated him when his mind was on something else.

This morning he hardly heard it.

"Alina will be here in three weeks," Grida imparted over the toast and coffee.

"Alina?" he asked, without much interest.

"My sister. Haven't I mentioned her to you before?"

"No, I don't think so. Where is she?"

"She's a doctor in Frisco. She visits me every year, but she's already more than a month late this year."

A doctor. Jasso raised a mental image of Alina as sort of a duplicate of Grida, a plain, elderly woman with graying hair swept back into a bun at the nape of her neck. Right now, however, he had more important matters on his mind.

"Grida, do you know a good lawyer?" he blurted.

"Why, yes. Tello Distane is the best in town," she said. "Is there anything the matter, Lao?"

Silently, he pulled the crumpled letter from his pocket and handed it to her. It was from a

prominent Nuyork legal firm. It said:

On behalf of our clients, Colorvue Publicity, Inc., we are instituting suit against you for one million dols in damages, for having disposed of psycho-paintings you contracted to accomplish for them.

"But isn't that the company you couldn't find any report of?" gaped Grida.

"It disappeared right off the map," said Lao grimly. "Now it's appeared again. I can't understand this at all!"

"I'd take it to Tello," said Grida firmly. "He can tell you what you should do."

HE took his letter to Distane that afternoon. Small towns change little, and the attorney's office was upstairs over a department store, as his great-grandfather's probably had been.

Distane, a white-haired man with a leonine cast to his jaw, listened with fingertips together for a few moments, until the details of Lao's troubles began to unfold.

"Just a moment, Voter," he said. "What did you say your name is?"

"Lao Protik," answered Lao, somewhat nettled.

Moistening his index finger, Distane shuffled through some papers on his desk, peering at

them with intense concentration. At last his face lit.

"Ah, Voter Protik," he said, settling back in his chair. "We have a new partner in our firm . . . an experienced attorney, you understand, but new to our firm. I think Voter Attok is the man who should handle your case."

Getting to his feet with a grunt, Distane led Lao into an adjoining room which gave evidence of having been newly furnished not long before. An urbane-looking man of middle age sat behind the desk, twiddling a letter opener idly.

"This," said Distane heavily, "is Lao Protik, Voter Attok."

Distane left, shutting the door behind him. Lao stared at Attok. Attok raised his eyebrows quizzically.

"Excuse me," apologized Lao hurriedly. "I was just trying to remember if we had met before, Voter Attok. Your face seems very familiar to me."

"I don't believe so," said Attok in a well-modulated voice. "I gather from Voter Distane that you have a legal problem on your mind, Voter Protik. Won't you sit down?"

Settling himself in a chair, Lao handed the letter to Attok. Prompted occasionally by questions from the attorney, he outlined the events leading to its receipt.

"Well, I don't think you have anything to worry about, Voter Protik," said Attok

when he had finished. "If they were delinquent in payment of your salary before you sold the psycho-paintings and you tried unsuccessfully to contact them through the Business Practices Agency, they have no lawsuit. Just leave this letter with me for a few days and I'll get in touch with you when I've completed the investigation necessary to document our case."

Lao left, feeling better but racking his brain for an elusive memory. He was sure he had seen Attok before.

THREE days later, Attok called Lao back to his office. The atmosphere was not nearly as hospitable.

"I thought you understood, Voter Protik, that a man must be absolutely honest with his attorney," said Attok severely. "I can't handle your case properly when you withhold facts from me."

"I haven't withheld any facts," said Lao, surprised.

"You did tell me that the Business Practices Agency had told you there was no such firm as Colorvue Publicity, didn't you? The BPA tells me they have no record of your getting in touch with them about the matter. They say Colorvue Publicity has been recorded in their files for several years. It is a small but reputable firm."

"It was a telephone check," said Lao desperately. "I don't

know who the man was I talked to, but I'll swear he said there was no Colorvue Publicity!"

"Mmm." Attok stared keenly at him. "As I recall, you told me also that you had not received your salary from Colorvue?"

"That's right, and how they expect me to hold onto the paintings when they don't pay me . . ."

"How about these?"

Attok laid the photostats of three checks on the desk. Each was for twenty-five thousand dols, and made out to Lao Protik from Colorvue Publicity, Inc.

Lao recognized one of them as the check he had received as his first quarter salary advance. The other two were exact duplicates, but dated at three-month intervals. The photostats of the backs of the checks—all of them—bore what appeared to be his endorsement.

"It's forgery!" howled Lao. "I only signed one of those checks! It's a conspiracy to ruin me!"

"Conspiracy or not, Voter Protik, we can't win your case if experts say that's your handwriting. The expert I took it to says it is."

Lao collapsed.

"Who's doing this to me, Voter Attok?" he whimpered. "Why are they doing it?"

"On the face of it, I'd say to get your money," replied

Attok sympathetically. "You were a very successful psycho-artist before your . . . ah . . . misfortune."

"I don't have any money. I have saved nothing."

"You are familiar with the law, aren't you? If they win the suit, they're entitled to half of everything you make above a minimum five thousand dols annually, until the judgment is paid."

"I don't make five thousand dols a year. I don't have a job. What can I do, Voter Attok?"

"Why, as long as you make less than five thousand dols a year, they can't touch you," replied Attok. "But to safeguard your finances in the event you do regain your former financial status, I'd suggest you incorporate yourself, with your wife as the controlling stockholder. Then you can limit your personal salary to five thousand dols a year, and the remainder of the income will be under her control. The law can't touch it."

"But . . . but I'm not married," said Lao.

Attok raised his eyebrows slightly.

"Oh, well, it doesn't matter," he said at last. "As long as you make less than five thousand."

The wheels in Lao's brain were clicking as he left Attok's office. He thought he saw through the whole scheme against him. Whoever was behind Colorvue Publicity had

engineered the frauds that got him blackballed and discharged from Consolidated. They had maneuvered him into a position where he would be vulnerable to a million-dollar legal judgment. Now, undoubtedly, the next move was to clear him and restore his reputation, so he'd be financially able to pay off.

It was devilish—and he saw no way out.

LAO moped around the house, his nerves near the breaking point. Daily he dreaded notification that the damage suit had been formally instituted, a move which would cut off his only chance to see his income and his position in the psycho-art field restored.

Marriage? It was on his mind constantly. The idea disturbed him almost as much as the thought of Colorvue taking a big slice of his income for the next decade or so. He might have been inclined to marry one of his three mistresses in Nuyork—before they showed themselves for what they were—but he knew better than to trust his former Southgate mistress with control of his finances. She had abandoned him as soon as the money from the sale of his paintings had run out.

A mailman's visit was an unusual enough phenomenon to create interest, for it meant the delivery of a package. Let-

ter mail was delivered from the post office to each home through a vacuum tube system. Since it was a letter Lao feared, he watched with considerable interest when the mailman approached the front door, and curiosity was uppermost in his mind when Grida called from downstairs to say the package was for him.

He knew no one who would be sending him a package.

Grida, her own curiosity apparent, made no move to leave the room when he took the large, oblong package from her and prepared to open it. A premonition smote him as he noted the return address: "The Nuyork Gallery of Traditional Art."

With trembling fingers he tore away the wrappings. His paintings—all three of them—tumbled to the floor.

He dropped into a chair, limp. The most important thing in his life was lying, broken, before him.

"What *is* this?" exclaimed Grida. She picked up one of the paintings and examined it. "This isn't psycho-art," she said. "This is real! I like this, Lao."

"It's what I've always wanted to do," he said in a tired voice. "Those three paintings have hung in the Gallery of Traditional Art for nearly ten years."

"There's a letter attached," she said, holding it out to him.

"Go ahead—open it, Gri-

MC (302) GERMANIUM RADIO

ILLUSTRATION ACTUAL SIZE

NO BATTERIES NEEDED

WEIGHS 1½ OUNCES

READY TO PLAY

SIMPLE TUNING

HI-FI TONE

POSTPAID

\$3⁰⁰

This perfect radio, a marvel of modern science, is unconditionally guaranteed

Reception range

| <u>Stations Output</u> | <u>Distance</u> |
|------------------------|-----------------|
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| 50 KW | 38 Miles |
| 10 KW | 20 Miles |

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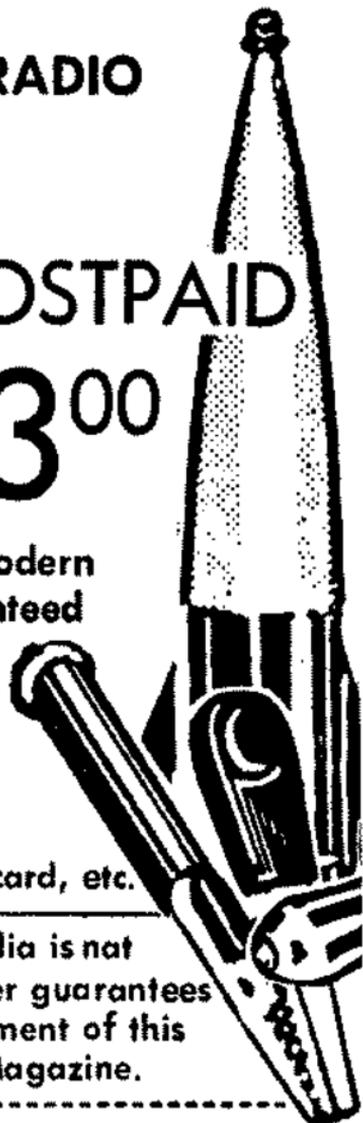
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City State.....



da," he said. "I think I know what it says."

GRIDA tore open the envelope and unfolded the letter.

In accordance with instructions from our board of directors, in special meeting, all the paintings hanging in our gallery have been re-evaluated. We regret to inform you that your paintings were judged to be no longer representative of traditional art. They are being returned to you herewith. We wish to express our appreciation . . .

She stopped reading.

"That's right," said Lao morosely. "They threw my paintings out."

"But, Lao, I didn't know you did this sort of thing," she said, bewildered.

"It's what I've always wanted to do," he repeated. "I never really liked psycho-art. I never believed it's real art. It isn't something the artist feels and thinks, it's something he tries to make other people feel and think.

"But psycho-art is the only kind of art I could make money at. I didn't have the courage to starve in an attic or make a living in some prosaic way and paint as a hobby. I turned my talent into cash and I always spent the cash as fast as I made it—maybe be-

cause I was ashamed that I was a coward."

"But these three?" asked Grida.

"Sometimes," said Lao dreamily, "I've had time to do what I wanted to do. These are the best I've ever done. When I gave them to the gallery, they told me these were among the highest examples of traditional art they had ever seen. I thought they meant it, but I know now it was just because I was a famous, wealthy psycho-artist."

Grida studied the paintings. One was a seascape, the other two mountain scenes. The titles gave some key to Lao's inner feelings: "Peace in the Valley," "The Moving Waters," "The Lonely Peak."

"Your trouble is that you grew up a little boy in a big city," said Grida quietly. "You ought to try to forget the sort of things you knew in Nuyork and settle down to a life among simple folk, like the people around here. I think you could find work here, Lao, that would be a living for you. And you'd have plenty of time to relax and paint the way you want to."

Lao looked at her and saw that her eyes were full of sympathy for him. It was the last little push his overwrought emotions needed.

He did not do it at once; but that night, after supper, he proposed marriage to Grida Mattin and she accepted.

TERN was furious. He did not raise his voice, but Jasso could detect his anger in his eyes and the tone of his voice.

"I put this matter entirely in your hands, Jasso, and I expected you to do a thorough job on it," Tern said coldly. "It's inconceivable to me that you should be so negligent in your investigation."

"It was my fault, I'll admit," said the crestfallen Jasso. "But you can't blame the clerk. He was told to check the personal files on the question 'marriage,' not 'ability to reproduce.' You'll have to agree there's a difference."

"I would think the lowest clerk involved in this operation would be instructed that *progeny* from the marriage is the key factor!" said Tern. "The whole purpose of this marriage from the first has been to produce a child that the Calculator said would have a high probability rating for solving the problem."

"Can you tell me how the devil you bright minds on the project expect a marriage to produce a child—when the wife is sterile?"

"That's one thing that makes me wonder if there isn't some maladjustment in the Calculator," said Jasso. "Sterility has been marked on Grida Mattin's card for the last eight years. I don't think you can criticize the clerk, or me, too harshly for not thinking about sterility when the

Calculator approved the marriage. After all, her card was in the Calculator and . . ."

"Don't repeat yourself," interrupted Tern brusquely. "Of course, those circuits must be checked, but I'll give 100 to one odds right now there's nothing wrong with the Calculator. Sterility must have registered as a correctible factor."

"I don't know why it would," objected Jasso very thoughtfully. "The only evidence the Calculator has is that the sterility is a normal result of her age, and that can't be reversed as far as I know. But the only thing we can do is treat it as correctible."

"Try it," said Tern. "But, Jasso, I want you to realize you're not dealing now with the movement of traffic in downtown Nuyork or even the selection of a president. The solution of this problem is vital to mankind. I don't want any more slip-ups."

ALINA MATTIN'S fresh beauty seemed to light the interior of the antique Twenty-First Century house. She resembled Grida, but more as Grida's daughter might have looked than as her younger sister.

Lao sighed. Had he met Alina Mattin first, he did not believe any conceivable emergency could have persuaded him to marry her sister.

"There's some misunderstanding somewhere, but they won't admit it," said Alina, a puzzled frown wrinkling the bridge of her nose. She and Lao were having supper in the breakfast nook; Lao found her quite as competent a cook as Grida.

After more than a year at Southgate and many months of marriage to Grida, his lean features were filling out.

"I don't think there's been a mistake," he said complacently. "The board of education ordered Grida to enter the hospital."

"For a routine physical check-up, eh?" replied Alina. "That isn't what she's getting."

"What are they doing, then?" asked Lao, startled.

"They're examining her to see if anything can be done to restore her fertility," answered Alina flatly. "Lao, did you authorize the hospital to do that?"

"Certainly not! I never thought about her fertility, one way or another. You're sure you're not mistaken?"

"I'm a doctor. I know what they're doing. But the hospital administrator won't tell me a thing. He just says that's on the record of her admission to the hospital."

"They must have gotten her records mixed up with someone else," theorized Lao.

"Maybe. I don't know whether you knew it or not,

but Grida is too old to have a child."

Supper finished, they piled the plastic dishes in the dishwasher and went into the parlor together. Lao turned the lights low. They sat down together on the sofa. They sat very close together, and after a moment Lao put his arm around Alina's shoulders. She laid her head contentedly on his chest.

"Why couldn't you have stayed out of my life?" he asked, half seriously, half teasingly.

"Would you want me to?" she asked softly.

"No," he admitted, running his fingers through her hair. "But this isn't the way I want things. I suppose we should be thankful for these few days while she's in the hospital, but I'm ashamed to be."

"So am I," confessed Alina, "but, darling, I've been so happy here alone with you. Tell me, why did you marry Grida?"

"I'm not sure I know," he answered slowly. "I'd hate to have to try to analyze my motives right now. I like Grida and respect her, but I don't love her. I couldn't. I love you, Alina."

"Let's end this sneaking about behind Grida's back, Lao," she urged earnestly, looking up into his face. "It isn't fair to her. Get a divorce and let's marry each other."

"You know the law doesn't

permit a man to seek a divorce, Alina. And Grida wouldn't release me now. She loves me."

"Grida will divorce you," said Alina positively. "It will hurt her, but she will. Grida is a history teacher, and her moral code is strict—and out of date. It scarcely gets lip service any more from most people."

"You're suggesting I tell her about us? I couldn't, Alina! I can't let her ever find out."

"But she will," said Alina, her eyes shining. "Lao, I'm going to have a baby."

THE man's face looked familiar.

Then he approached Lao and Alina, standing in the corridor outside the chancery courtroom, and Lao recognized him with certainty.

"You're the man from Col-orvue!" Lao flashed at him angrily.

"That's right, Voter Protik. I'm Casto Roche." The man held out his hand. Lao ignored it.

"I ought to beat you all the way from here to Nuyork!" he growled—with audacity, since Roche was a good deal bigger. "I trusted you, once."

"You trusted me twice," replied Roche amiably. "I think you'd recognize me as someone else with a little different make-up."

He held his hand to his face

and puffed out his cheeks slightly.

"Attok! My lawyer!" yelled Lao. People in the corridor turned to stare at him. "I wondered why you disappeared after I paid you that fee! I see it all now! You were part of this whole dirty—"

"Before you get too excited, Voter Protik . . ." Roche did not complete the sentence, but turned under his coat lapel to exhibit the badge which identified him as a United Nations agent.

Lao gulped and choked off his tirade.

"I'm here to try to stop these divorce proceedings between you and your wife," said Roche.

"Don't you think you've come to the wrong people?" suggested Alina, apparently not nearly as impressed by Roche's badge as Lao was. "My sister is the only one who can stop the divorce."

"Besides, it's too late," said Lao, regaining his voice. "The hearing is finished. The judge will give his decision in a moment."

Roche said, "That can be stopped at a word from you. As a matter of fact, the judge is waiting for me to confer with you before calling the court back into session. I've told your wife why the government is interested in preserving your marriage. She is willing to drop the divorce proceedings if you are."

"Perhaps you'd better tell us why," said Alina coolly.

ROCHE sighed. "All right. But it's rather involved. We haven't let it be publicized widely, but the world is faced with a very serious sociological problem. I suppose both of you are aware that there are a great many more women than men.

"Of course," said Lao, his face brightening with reminiscence.

"Of course," concurred Alina, giving Lao a thoughtful glance.

"If you've read the Sunday supplements, you know why," said Roche. "Always, more boy babies have been born than girl babies, but the high mortality rate among boy babies has balanced the discrepancy. Now the mortality rate has climbed tremendously higher for boy babies. We do not know why. We do know that the ratio of women to men is increasing. At the last census taken by the Calculator, it was 9.78 women to each man.

"Under our present social system of monogamous marriage, this means the actual birth rate is decreasing. Even the large number of illegitimate children doesn't make up for the lack of men in the world. That, of course, is the reason the Polygamy League has gained so much strength."

"Well, don't they have a point?" asked Lao. He added

hastily: "I don't hold with the ideas of the Polygamy League, you understand, in spite of the propaganda that I was connected with it."

Roche smiled.

"That propaganda was manufactured by UN agents," he confessed. "So were all your troubles, including the dummy corporation. Colorvue Publicity had no other purpose but to maneuver you into marriage with Grida Mattin. A little unethical, I'll admit, but sometimes we have to work that way. You'll be happy to know that the damage suit against you has been withdrawn. You can get your old job back with Consolidated Ads and be restored to the Psycho-Artists Guild any time you wish. And we've even arranged for the Gallery of Traditional Art to re-hang your paintings.

"As a matter of fact," he continued, "the government has given serious consideration to the ideas of the Polygamy League, but the Calculator rejected them; it discovered that they would have an unfortunate impact on our social structure. So polygamy is not the answer.

"The Calculator tells us it is very improbable that anyone now living will find the answer.

"But the child of Lao Protik and Grida Mattin can—and probably will—solve the problem."

"I'M AFRAID your Calculator is wrong," said Alina. "Go back and tell your government Grida Mattin is unable to bear a child."

"The government has that information," replied Roche, frowning slightly. "We must consider it a soluble problem, because the Calculator has the information on file and it still gave us a high probability on the marriage. The Calculator is a machine. It doesn't make mistakes."

"It's made a mistake this time," said Alina positively. "Lao and I are going to be married. I don't think he will give up our chance for happiness for any such shaky scheme."

"We have no way of forcing him," admitted Roche, "but I believe Voter Protik should speak for himself, knowing how important this is."

"She's right!" said Lao, anger in his tone. "I think the government has interfered with my life enough as it is! I've done my part, and the government didn't even do me the courtesy of letting me know I was doing it. I love Alina. I don't intend to be tied to Grida for the rest of my life just on the outside chance you'll come up with a cure for her sterility."

He turned his back on Roche.

Roche looked at Alina. She looked back, coldly. With a shrug, Roche left them and

went through the door to the courtroom.

A few moments later the bailiff threw open the courtroom doors.

Lao, Alina and Grida filed in with the spectators and attorneys. They stood as the judge entered from his chambers, adjusted his black robes and took his seat. The spectators sat down then, but the attorneys and principals remained standing at the bar.

The judge put on his spectacles, looked over some papers, and raised his head to survey the courtroom. Solemnly he announced:

"It is the decision of this court that Grida Mattin Protik be granted a divorce, as requested, from the defendant, Lao Protik.

"It is the further decision of this court that the co-respondent in this suit, Alina Mattin, being unmarried and having proved herself by her admitted actions to be an unfit mother, her unborn child by the defendant shall be delivered as soon as feasible after birth into the custody of the complainant, Grida Mattin Protik."

"WELL, that blows it up," said Jasso despondently, laying the newspaper clipping on Tern's desk. "Lao and Alina didn't even contest Grida's custody of their child, even though their marriage before its birth legiti-

matized it. Now Grida has the baby and Lao and Alina have gone off to parts unknown."

"I suppose we could find them, if we tried," said Tern. "But I don't see the point in following this case any farther, Jasso. They made it pretty plain to your agent that the Lao-Grida marriage is through."

"Shall I write it off as closed, then?"

"I'm afraid you might as well," consented Tern reluctantly. "How have your alternate combinations turned out?"

"We've succeeded in arranging several marriages in the highest probability group. But frankly, Chief, all the probability ratings for their offspring are pretty low. We had our only real chance in the Lao-Grida combination."

"I don't want to go to the third generation if I can help it," said Tern. "There's always the chance that combinations of low probability individuals might result in high probability offspring. Let's run another test on direct probability, on just those individuals who have been filed for the first time since we began the Lao-Grida case."

"I'll get started on it right away," said Jasso.

TWO days later, Jasso burst into Tern's office highly excited, a section of tape from

the Calculator trailing from his grasp.

"Chief, this is unbelievable!" he cried. "We have an individual here whose probability tests 82.371 per cent to solve the problem, projecting a life expectancy of 50 years!"

Tern whistled and rolled his eyes.

"Pretty high probability!" he said delightedly. "Pretty doggoned high! Baby, I suppose?"

"Yes," said Jasso. He paused, and added slowly and with emphasis: "The child's name is Nina Mattin."

"Mattin?"

"The daughter of Lao Protik and Alina Mattin! Now the adopted daughter of Grida Mattin."

"What!"

"The strange thing about it, Chief, is that Alina Mattin was one of the higher probability mothers we found first. But we checked her against Lao, and the probability for an offspring of their marriage was extremely low. Do you suppose the Calculator has gone completely haywire?"

Tern did not answer at once. He sat, lost in deep thought, for several minutes. Then he began laughing.

He laughed until tears came into his eyes, slapping his knee delightedly. Jasso stood there, looking blank.

"No, the Calculator's not

haywire, Jasso," said Tern, when he could get his breath. "It just has all the facts, and it correlates facts we don't even think about. The reason we get funny ideas about it sometimes is because the Calculator can't talk. As you explained, it can just answer questions, and sometimes we don't ask the right questions.

"From what's happened, I'd say the question you asked the Calculator when you were looking for second-generation probabilities was not 'the offspring of two people.' It was 'offspring resulting from the marriage of two people.' Isn't that right?"

"It seemed the proper way to put the question," answered Jasso a little stiffly.

TERN began laughing again. "It was the right question to put," he choked, "but illegitimacy was the key to the whole thing!

"Look: the Calculator had all the facts. It knew all about the emotional make-up of Lao, Grida and Alina. It knew that Alina was Grida's sister.

"The probability course is obvious! Given a marriage between Lao and Grida, the probability was high that he would meet her sister, Alina, under convenient circumstances. The probability was high, too, considering the

emotional make-up of the three, that Lao and Alina would fall in love. Under our present social scheme, an illegitimate child was likely. So there you are."

"Chief, I know you've been in this business a lot longer than I have," said Jasso slowly. "I've got to confess now that I can't see the slightest reason why the probability for a child of Lao and Alina should be so much higher under these circumstances than if the two of them just met and got married."

"Environment, my boy! It's just as important as heredity. Lao's marriage to Grida was the key to the whole thing. Grida is a motherly, fiercely conscientious type of woman who would insist on rearing her husband's child—no matter who the mother was. And of course the courts would uphold her."

Tern was laughing again. "Anyway, we've got it licked. We have our high-probability individual . . . But I'm glad of one thing. Suppose you'd asked the Calculator to check itself—asked it, for instance, if we knew what we were doing. It would have given us a straight answer, and we would have abandoned the whole project—it would have told us we didn't know at all!"

—END

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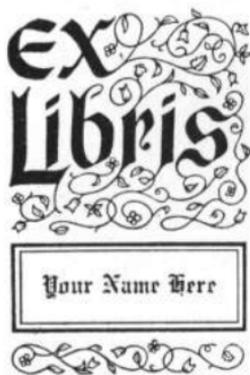
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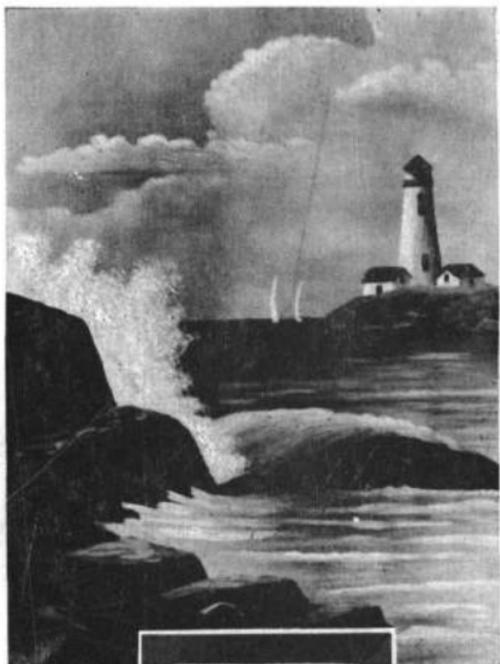
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