

GALAXY

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MAGAZINE

APRIL 1961 50¢ K

TANDY'S STORY

Theodore Sturgeon

K KREATIVITY FOR KATS

Fritz Leiber

I CAN DO ANYTHING

J. T. McIntosh

AND
OTHER
STORIES

APRIL 1961



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APRIL 1961

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CONTENTS

NOVELETS

PLANETEER	by Fred Saberhagen	8
I CAN DO ANYTHING	by J. T. McIntosh	100
TANDY'S STORY	by Theodore Sturgeon	170

SHORT STORIES

KREATIVITY FOR KATS	by Fritz Leiber	63
SCENT MAKES A DIFFERENCE	by James Stamers	86
HOMIEY ATMOSPHERE	by Daniel F. Galouye	136
ALL THE PEOPLE	by R. A. Lafferty	152

SHORT-SHORT STORIES

THE FEELING	by Roger Dee	163
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SCIENCE DEPARTMENT

FOR YOUR INFORMATION	by Willy Ley	74
The Puzzle Called Gogenschein		

FEATURES

EDITOR'S PAGE	by H. L. Gold	5
GALAXY'S FIVE STAR SHELF	by Floyd C. Gale	131
FORECAST		194

Cover by MEL HUNTER: A DERELICT IN THE VOID

ROBERT M. GUINN, Publisher

JOAN J. De MARIO, Asst. to the Publisher

SAM RUVIDICH, Art Director

H. L. GOLD, Editor

WILLY LEY, Science Editor

CARLA CAMP, Asst. to the Editor

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PUZZLES FOR PLOTTERS

WHAT makes a good science-fiction writer? Well, we can kick that one around all day, but most of us will agree on one thing:

It takes what the late Alfred Korzybski called an ability to think "out of categories"—that is, to take the whole body of human learning, history, education and experience and contemplate it from outside.

Ex-servicemen will remember the battery of tests they were given upon induction—tests to discover knowledge and abilities, but also tests to discover in what areas each new recruit could be expected to do well if he had the training. We recently came across a couple of child's riddles that led us to some distinctly non-childish areas of speculation, and might even have something to do with the "out of categories" sort of mental processes we were talking about. Maybe they might show whether you yourself can be a science-fiction writer!

These are the riddles:

1. The word ax (or axe) can be spelled with either two or three letters. It can, however, always be spelled with two letters, neither of which is "A" or "X" or "E." What are those two letters?

2. Rearrange the letters in the words "new door" to make one word.

Have you figured out the answers yet? It's worthwhile to take a moment to do so before going on. . . .

Present these riddles to someone of at least reasonable intelligence (who has never heard them before, of course) and you learn something about the way he thinks. There are three main lines of attack possible in trying to solve them.

The first is what you might call the "electronic computer" method. It is laborious, mechanical, repetitious, boring . . . and quite infallible, providing all the information is accessible. (And providing that the instructions are programmed correctly—that is, that the question is "fair.")

It would work something like this, on the first riddle: The machine reaches into its memory banks and discovers that there are twenty-six letters in the alphabet. Three of them are excluded by the rules—A, X and E. The machine then systematically pairs each unexcluded letter with every other unexcluded letter:

B — B
B — C
B — D
B — F

and so on. It then scans each pair and compares it with, say, an unabridged dictionary to see if by any chance one of them spells the word "axe." Of course, none of them does. It then lights up its red "reject" panel and waits, humming sulkily, for a "fair" question.

Or it might not get that far. It might merely compare the first statement with the second statement, decide that they are mutually contradictory (which they are!), and refuse to play at all.

(A similar program might be tried on the second riddle. Solving it "like a computer" would mean constructing a table of all the permutations of the seven characters in the words "new door"—an even longer, and just as fruitless, job.)

THIS is a method that can be used to carry *pi* to a million decimals, predict the lunar eclipses of the year 1,001,961 A.D. or chart the behavior of nuclear particles—but it isn't worth beans for solving riddles. And it isn't much good for plotting a science-fiction story either.

A really sophisticated computer—or a fairly bright human being—would not bother with it. Or if

he did try the laborious method and found it didn't work, he would then re-examine the basic premisses. He would conclude the question wasn't "fair." What this assumption then requires is to analyze all the statements for "catches"—for example, a failure to distinguish between the use of "language"—i.e., the use of words to describe *things*—and "meta-language" or the use of words to describe *symbols* for things.

He would then restate the questions to show such distinctions. In written English we use a convention of quotation marks to distinguish words-that-refer-to-words and words-that-refer-to-things, which means that we need only to repunctuate the questions. However, to make them clearer we should also drop out the unnecessary, merely dust-in-the-eye information, which is included only to confuse our thinking.

The revised riddles then come out like this:

1. ... "It" can... be spelled with two letters... What are those two letters?
2. Rearrange the letters in the words "new door" to make "one word."

The answers to *those* two questions are just about instantly apparent to any human being over the age of eight—provided they have not previously seen the same problems in their tricked-up

form. But it's interesting to note that a sizeable fraction of the human race can't answer those questions at all if they've seen the other form first! (If you are one such, the answers are respectively "I-T" and "O-N-E W-O-R-D.") It seems that they learn all too easily. Merely seeing the questions stated in a confusing way sticks in their minds to such a degree that a pattern of confusion persists even after the confusion has been removed.

Now this (as far as we know; maybe Bell or IBM has gone a step farther than they've told us) is a bit beyond the power of the average computer. It is also beyond the power of many humans. What it comes down to is being asked a question by the universe and getting at the truth by *changing the question*. This is a writer's job—any writer. He has to take the facts of the world as they exist and shuffle them around to invent a new "plot" in order to tell us his story, or "answer."

But a *science-fiction* writer goes even a step farther.

WE actually tried the questions out on a couple of science-fiction writers.

One of them barely glanced at the first riddle, then set down two quick scribbles: In his phonetic shorthand, the vowel "A" and the double consonant "X" are each

written with one character. We objected: "We meant letter of the English alphabet." He said: "You didn't say so!"

The other answered the second riddle. He came up with the word "O'Rowned," and defined it as, "The state of having been subjected to a process named after a Mr. O'Rown, as in 'macadamed' (a road), 'Hoovered' (a floor), etc." We were about to object that we didn't mean coined words—but there, too, we hadn't *said* so!

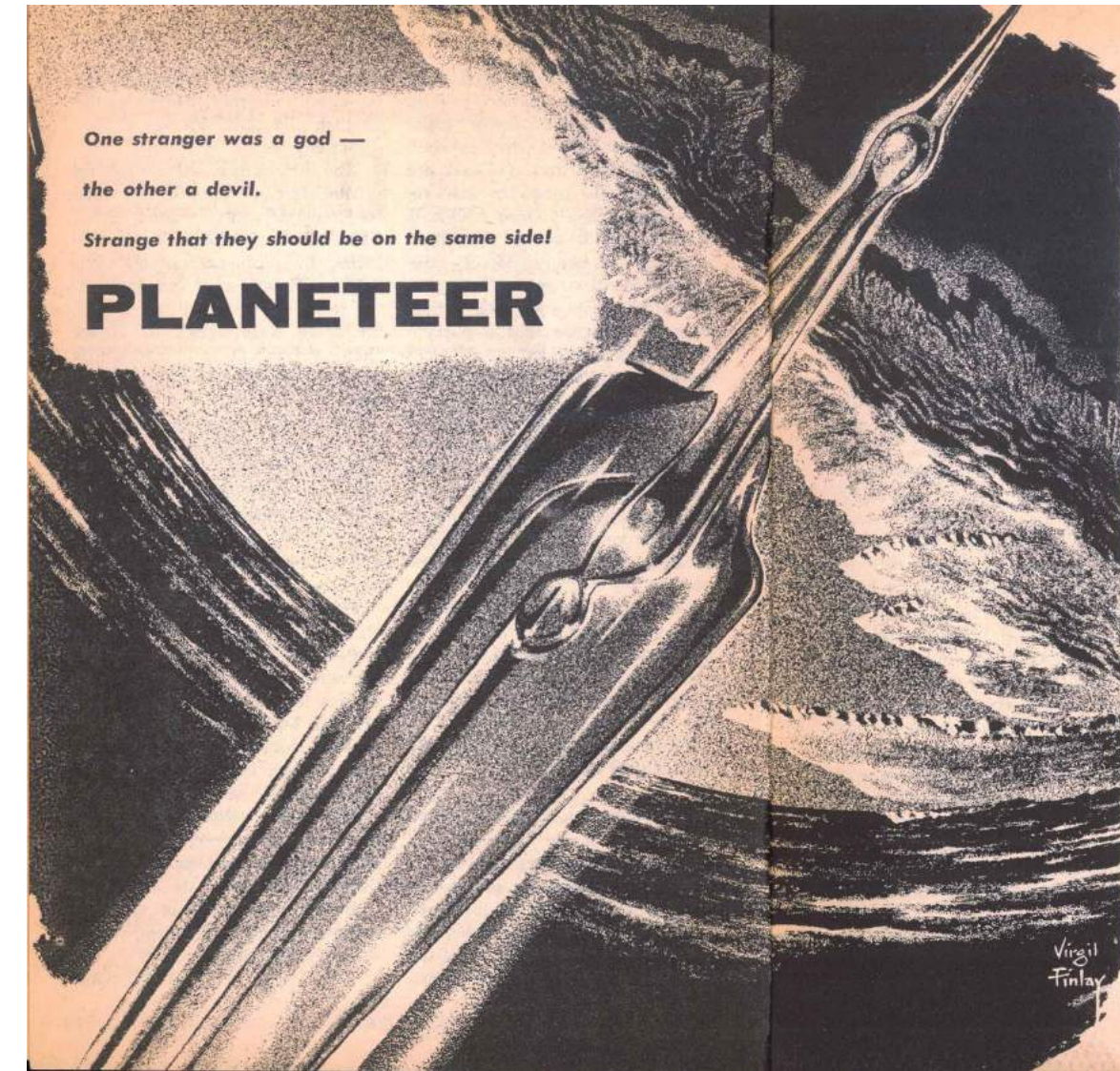
And there is the third method of solution. The first was to operate according to the apparent rules; the second to deduce what the framers of the rules meant . . . and the third is to deduce new rules, or expansions of rules, for yourself.

If the first is that of the machine and the second that of the writer, then the third is that of the *science-fiction* writer. It is up to him to tell us not what things are like but what they *might* be like if different conditions obtained—say, in the future; or in paratime; or on another planet.

He cannot change the questions that are asked of him. But he *can* change the basic postulates that lie behind the questions.

In other words, when the universe asks him a cheating riddle—he cheats back!

—H. L. GOLD



One stranger was a god —

the other a devil.

Strange that they should be on the same side!

PLANETEER

By FRED SABERHAGEN

Illustrated by FINLAY

DURING the weeks that the starship *Yuan Chwang* had hovered in close observation of the new planet Aqua, ship's time had been jockeyed around to agree with the sun-time at the place chosen for first landing.

Boris Brazil saw no evidence of sane thinking behind this procedure; it meant the planeteer's briefing for the big event was set for 0200, and he had to get up in what was effectively the middle of the night—a thing to which he had grown accustomed, but never expected to learn to enjoy. Leaving his tiny cabin in a state of disorder that might have infuriated an inspecting officer—had there been an inspecting officer aboard interested in the neatness of cabins—he set forth in search of chow.

Brazil was tall and bony, resembling a blond young Abe Lincoln. He rubbed sleep from his eyes as his long legs carried him toward the mess hall. A distracting young squab from Computing sailed past him in the opposite direction, smiling.

"Good luck," she said.

"Is the coffee that bad?" It was the best facsimile of a joke he could think of this early.

Virgil
Finlay

But the girl hadn't been talking about coffee. Chief Planeteer Sam Gates had picked Brazil to go along on the first landing attempt, he learned when he met Gates in the chow line. He saw by the small computer clipped to Sam's belt that the other man had been up early on his own, double-checking the crew chief and maintenance robots who were readying their scoutship. Brazil felt vaguely guilty—but not very. He might well have been just another body in the way.

Sam Gates stood in the chow line swinging his arms and snapping his fingers, chewing his dark mustache as he usually did when nervous.

"How's it look?" Brazil asked.

"Oh, free and clear. Guess we'll have ground under our feet in a few hours."

MOST of the *Yuan Chwang's* twenty-four planetes were in the chow line, with a fair number of people from other departments. The day's operation was going to be a big one for everybody.

Trays loaded with synthetic ham, and a scrambled substance not preceded or followed by chickens, Gates and Brazil found a table. Ten scoutships were going down today, though only one would attempt to land; most of

the night shift from all departments seemed to think it time for lunch. The mess was filling up quickly.

"Here comes the alien," said Gates, gesturing with his fork.

Brazil raised his eyes toward the tall turbaned man bearing a tray in their direction.

"Hi, Chan. Pull up a chair."

Chandragupta was no more an alien here than any other Earthman; his job had earned him the nickname.

"Good morning," said the Tribune with a smile, sitting down with Gates and Brazil. "I hope my people treat you well today." He had not yet seen one of "his people" and possibly never would; but from the moment high-altitude reconnaissance had established that intelligent life at an apparently primitive technological level existed on Aqua, his job had taken on substance. He was to represent the natives below in the councils aboard the *Yuan Chwang*, to argue for what he conceived to be their welfare at every turn, letting others worry about the scientific objectives that had brought the exploration ship so far from Earth, until he was satisfied that the natives needed no help or the mission was over.

"No reason to expect any trouble," said Brazil. "This one looks fairly simple."

"Except we know there are some kind of people down there," said Gates. "And people are never as simple as you'd like them to be."

"I wonder if they will need my help," said Chan, "and I wonder if I will be able to help them." The job of Tribune was a new one, really still experimental. Chan shrugged. "But there is no point in my speculating now. In a few hours perhaps I will know."

"We're not trying to conquer them, you know," said Brazil, half amused and a little offended by Chan's eagerness to defend against Earth a people he had never seen.

"Oh, I know. But we must be sure not to conquer them by accident, eh?" Chan attacked his ersatz eggs again.

When Brazil got up to walk without Gates, he could feel the eyes on his back, or thought he could. Here go the heroes, he thought. First landing. Hail, hail.

And deep inside he felt a pride and joy so fierce he was embarrassed to admit it to himself — to be one of the first Earthmen stepping onto this unknown world.

BRIEFING was normal for a mission this size. The twenty planetes who were going down into atmosphere, plus two reserve crews, slouched in their seats and

scribbled notes and smoked and whispered back and forth about business, concentrating so intently on the job at hand that an outsider might have thought them bored and distracted.

Captain Dietrich, boss of the *Yuan Chwang*, mounted the low dais in the front of the briefing room. He was a rather small man, of mild and bookish appearance. After working with him for a while, you tended to treat cautiously all small men of mild and bookish appearance.

Tribune Chandragupta entered the briefing room through the rear door. The Captain eyed him thoughtfully. This was the first voyage on which he had been required to carry a Tribune; the idea had been born as a political move in the committee meetings of Earth Parliament, and had earned certain legislators reputations as defenders of liberty, albeit only the liberty of certain as yet unmet aliens.

Captain Dietrich had no wish to conquer anyone, having of course passed the Space Force psych tests, and he was willing to give the Tribune system a trial. After all, he could always overrule the man, on condition he thought it necessary for the safety of members of the expedition—though he was the only one aboard who could do so. But it seemed to the Captain that this

placing of a civilian official aboard his ship might be only the start of an effort by the groundbound government to encroach upon the domain of the Space Force. Every time he went home he heard complaints that the SF was growing too powerful and cost too much.

"Militarism," they would say, over a drink or anywhere he met civilians. "We've just managed to really get away from all that on Earth, and now you want to start all over, on Mars and Ganymede and this new military base on Aldebaran 2."

"The Martian Colony is hardly a military base," he would remind them patiently. "It now has its own independent civilian government and sends representatives to Earth Parliament. The Space Force has practically pulled out of Mars altogether. Ganymede is a training base. Aldebaran 2 you're right about, mostly; and we do have other military bases."

"Aha! Now how do we know that none of these outlying bases or colonies will ever threaten Earth?"

"Because all spaceships and strategic weapons are controlled by the SF, and the SF is controlled by the psych tests that screen people trying to enter it. Admittedly, no system is perfect, but what are our alternatives?"

"We could destroy all strategic weapons," they might say. Or:

"We could cut down on this space exploration, maybe stop it altogether. It's devilish expensive, and there seems no hope it will ever relieve our crowding on Earth. What do we get out of it anyway that makes it really profitable?"

"Well," Captain Dietrich might say, "since you talk of militarism, I will ignore the valuable knowledge we have gained by exploration, and answer you in military terms. We have the ability to travel hundreds of light-years in a matter of months, and to melt any known planet in minutes, with one ship delivering one weapon. How many other races do you think live in our galaxy with similar capabilities?"

NO Earthman had met any but primitive aliens — yet. But people had begun to comprehend the magnitude of the galaxy, where man's hundred-light-year radius of domination gave him no more than a Jamestown Colony.

"Assume a race with such capabilities," the Captain might continue, "and with motivations we might not be able to understand, spreading out across the galaxy as we are. Would you rather have them discover our military base on Aldebaran this year, or find all humanity crowded on one unprotected Earth, perhaps the year after next?"

Dietrich got a wide range of answers to this question. He himself would much prefer to meet the hypothetical advanced aliens a thousand light-years or more from Earth, with a number of large and effective military bases in between.

But right now it was time for him to start briefing his planet-eers, who probably knew as much about Aqua as he, who had never driven a scoutship into her upper atmosphere.

"Gentlemen, we've found out a little about this planet, the only child of a Sol-type sun, after watching it for six weeks. One point one AU from its sun, gravity point nine five, diameter point nine, eighty-five per cent of surface is water. Oxy-nitrogen atmosphere, about fifteen thousand feet equivalent. We won't try breathing it for some time yet. Full suits until further notice.

"What land there is is probably quite well populated with what we think are humanoids with a technical level probably nowhere higher than that of medieval Europe. Several rather large sailing ships have been spotted in coastal waters. There are only a couple of long paved roads, and none of the cities are electrically lit on nightside. We don't think anyone down there can have spotted us yet."

Most of his audience looked

back at him rather impatiently, as if to say: We know all this. We're the ones who found it out.

But the Captain wanted to make sure they all had the basic facts in proper focus. "The main objective of this mission is to make a first contact with the natives with the purpose of finding a way to establish a temporary scientific base on the surface, to continue our investigation here with seismic studies, biological studies, and so forth—and of course to see what we can learn from and about the intelligent inhabitants."

THE Captain raised his eyes and spoke as much to the Tribune as to his planet-eers. "There seems very little chance of any permanent colony being established here, due to the inadequate air, and the native population on a very limited land area. This same apparently high population would seem to preclude any chance of establishing our temporary base in some remote area, without knowledge of the natives. So we will have to deal with them somehow from the start.

"I've never believed in the god-from-the-sky approach, and you know SF policy is to avoid it if possible. It injects a false note into what may become a permanent relationship, even if we

intend it now to be temporary. And he who takes godhood upon himself is likely to have to spend more time at it than at the business for which he came, and to assume responsibility for far-reaching changes in the native history.

"We've met enough primitive races to know that some change is bound to result from any contact, but SF policy is to keep it at a minimum and to try to make it beneficial."

The Captain paused, then looked at another man who stood waiting to speak, paper in his hand. "Meteorology?"

"Roger, sir."

On a wall appeared a photo-map of the island that had been picked for the first landing attempt, an irregular shape of land about a hundred miles long by ten wide. Air temperature at dawn in the landing area should be about fifty degrees F, the water a little cooler. There might be enough fog to aid the landing scoutship in an unseen descent.

Meteorology also discussed characteristics of the atmosphere that might affect radio and video communication between scouts and mother ship, and predicted the weather in the landing area for the next twenty-four hours. He paused to answer a couple of questions, and introduced Passive Detection.

The PD man discussed Aqua's Van Allen belts, magnetic field, the variety and amount of solar radiation in nearby space and that to be expected on the surface, and what the natives probably burned for heat and light in the nightside cities. He confirmed the apparent absence of any advanced technology below.

Biology was next, with a prediction that the island would show diverse and active life. It was near the tropics in the spring hemisphere, and green with vegetation. Scout photos showed no evidence of very large animals or plants. Some areas appeared to be under cultivation.

Anthropology took the dais to speculate. The people of Aqua were thought to be humanoid, but in the photos anything as small as a man was at the very limit of visibility, and the estimate of the creatures' appearance was based on lucky shots of dawn or dusk shadows striding gigantic across more or less level ground. Inhabitants of such a watery world would be expected to be sailors, and indeed ships had been photographed. There was some massive construction, probably masonry, in the one sizable city on the island. A sea wall and a couple of large structures had been built on a finger of land that protected the city's small harbor.

CAPTAIN Dietrich came back to outline the patterns he wanted the non-landing scouts to fly. "The target island is pretty well isolated from the planet's main land areas, so if we put a base here it should have minimal effect on native culture. Also, if we botch things up here, we may be able to move on and try again without the natives in the new spot having heard of us." He looked around at his men; the idea was strongly conveyed to them that the Captain preferred they not botch things up. "Chan — anything you want to say? No? All right, board your scouts."

Brazil strode beside Gates out the door in the rear of the briefing room, passing under the sign that read:

MAYBE . . . ANYTHING

Maybe they're real telepaths down there. Maybe they're a mighty race now retired from active competition and preferring the simple life. Maybe . . .

Maybe nothing, Brazil told himself, quick-stepping beside Sam Gates along the corridor past the doors of scoutship berths that occupied this part of the hull of the *Yuan Chwang*. The time was for the planeteer's motto: Go Down and Find Out.

The main preflight check had been run yesterday. Gates and

Brazil now faced the final quick Medical & Psych in the corridor. Brazil had long since given up trying to startle the psych doc by giving to the inevitable weird question an even weirder answer.

"I'd swear you were sane if I didn't know you better," the doctor told him this time. "Pass on."

They fitted themselves into the suits of armor, light, space and ground, that had been selected for this job. The suits included among their accessories flotation bubbles that when inflated enabled the wearers to maneuver with supposed ease through several hundred feet of water. The suits now received a quick semi-final test.

Captain Dietrich was waiting in the berth that was almost filled by the fifty-foot-long stubby bulk of scoutship *Alpha*. Gates and Brazil juggled checklists and fish-bowl helmets to offer him each an armored paw to shake. The captain said something about good luck.

The two planetears climbed through the scout's hatch, twisting sideways with practiced movements to meet the ninety-degree shift in artificial gravity between mother ship and scout. Gates climbed on toward the control room while Brazil stayed to seal the hatch. On planet they would of course use an airlock.

Engines started. Ship's power

off and disconnected. All personnel out of berth. Ready for sterilizing.

Lethal gas, swirling around the scout's hull, was mostly pumped away to be saved and reused. Then a blast of ultraviolet, more intense than the raw Sol-type sunshine outside, bathed the inside of the berth. No microorganisms must be carried down into atmosphere.

STRAPPED and clamped into control room chairs, ports sealed, watching the tiny world of the berth by video screen, Gates and Brazil were nearly ready. The berth door slid open on schedule, and what was left of gas inside went out in a faint puff of sudden mist.

The watery world that someone with little imagination had named Aqua, ten thousand miles away, filled the opening. A quarter of it was dayside, blue-black as a fluorescent bruise; nightside was eerie with subtle atmospheric glows.

"Stand by one, *Alpha*," came over the radio. "A little trouble clearing *Delta*."

"Roger," said Sam Gates. "Hey, Boris, I like those video stories at home. The guy just drives his ship up to a new planet and lands. The faithful crew stands around scratching their heads. 'Well, what'll we do now?' says

one. Then they wait for some hero to speak up."

"Let's get out and look around," said Brazil, grinning. "O.K., but let's all be careful. Maybe we better close the door of the ship after us."

Sam gave a rare smile. "Then one shmoe takes his helmet off to eat a coconut. Only it turns out to be a chieftain's daughter." "And they're all in the soup. They never seem to learn."

"Stand by, *Alpha*," said Operations over the radio, unnecessarily.

Gates pointed to the slim volume wedged under an arm of Brazil's chair, secured, like everything else aboard, against some possible overloading or failure of the artificial gravity on the coming flight into the unknown.

"What's the book this time?"

"Thoreau. I thought I might need some philosophy if you get us stuck in the mud for a couple days down there."

"Always meant to read the old nature lover through some day." Gates nodded at the screens showing the waiting planet. "Wonder what he would have thought of all this."

Brazil looked at the Passive Detection screen, where the image of the planet showed the dawnline creeping imperceptibly across upper atmosphere as a rainbow of varying ionization

and light pressure. He smiled at a sudden recollection. "Ha. Maybe he wouldn't've been so surprised as you might think." He quoted: "*Walden Pond* — let's see — 'A field of water betrays the spirit that is in the air. It is continually receiving new life and motion from above . . . I see where the breeze dashes across it by the streaks or flakes of light. It is remarkable that we can look down on its surface. We shall, perhaps, look down thus on the surface of air at length, and mark where a still subtler spirit sweeps over it.'"

"He wrote that in the middle of the nineteenth century?" asked Gates, astonished. "Let me see that book when you're done with it."

"You're clear for takeoff, *Alpha*. Good luck," said the radio.

Scoutship *Alpha* outraced the dawnline by an hour to the island and eased down on schedule, without hurry, into thicker and thicker air, until it entered predawn darkness and fog. Gates used his radar for the first time, to work his way down toward the water a quarter of a mile off the rocky coastline.

Aqua was Brazil's ninth new planet, but I won't forget this one, he thought in some corner of his brain not used for watching and interpreting screens.

And he was right.

THE plan called for an offshore landing unseen by the natives, the concealment of the scoutship in about a hundred feet of water as near land as possible, and the going ashore of Gates and Brazil in protective suits to make contact with the local intelligent life. Tight-beam communication was to be maintained at all times with the *Yuan Chwang*. A small video eye rode above each planeteer's left ear; whatever the eye saw was transmitted to the mother ship.

The versatile and roughly humanoid robot that accompanied every scoutship (following men onto new planets but never leading them) would be left in the submerged scout, and would bring it to the human crew if they summoned it by radio.

The *Yuan Chwang* was not orbiting Aqua, but hovering and trying to keep its quarter-mile-diameter bulk invisible, ten thousand miles above the island. The other scouts were cruising in upper atmosphere in the general area of the target island, observing what they could. The plan might be altered or abandoned at any step at the Chief Planeteer's discretion, or by order from above.

Detection screens picked out what looked to Brazil like the infra-red pattern of smoldering fires and fainter body heats of

a small village where the recon photos had shown a village to be. Gates worked the scout by radar to an offshore point half a mile from the village, which lay on the shore of a small cove. He dipped the scout low enough to put a sonar probe under water and get a picture of the bottom.

"Nothing strange down there," said Gates. "We'll go ahead."

Cutting in automatic stabilizers, he lowered the scout into and through choppy water and made slowly toward shore, while Brazil studied the ocean and bottom, trying to read half a dozen presentations at once.

Near the rocky upthrust of land, Gates let the little ship settle gently down onto sandy bottom. He summoned the robot and told it to use enough drive to prevent sinking into the bottom. The robot got into the pilot's seat as the humans checklisted themselves into helmets, out of the control room, and into the lock. They stood with legs spread and arms raised while gas and UV sterilized their suits and the chamber.

Gates nodded and Brazil opened a valve to let alien sea into the lock; in a few seconds they stepped out of the world of checklists and into dark water. Brazil lingered to feel that the lock door was secured behind them, let gas into his flotation

bubbles, and followed Gates up through the darkness. Once something like a luminous smoking curled greenly past them through the water.

"Can you bliphate the distance phlooh that?" asked a voice from the *Yuan Chwang*, half-strangled by transmission through space, air, and water.

"Hard to say; I'd guess only a few yards," Gates answered, waiting until his head had broken surface and he had taken a look around. Brazil was right behind him; he could barely see Gates' helmet above the water ten feet away. The rough rock face of the coastline was only a vaguely deeper darkness at one side. They paddled toward it; waves sloshed them against it; they gripped it and began to climb.

EARTHMEN emerged onto the land of a new world, looking more like primeval lungfish than conquering demigods.

They climbed rock uncertainly and slowly and halted at the top of a small gentle cliff. The suits were engineered for easy movement and reasonable comfort for twenty-four continuous sealed-in hours in almost any environment. Old planeters sometimes said soberly that they needed a suit on to feel comfortable but they usually preferred to take the suit off before sitting

down to discuss. How comfortably they wore it.

"Wait for a little more light," said Gates' radio voice.

Brazil sat down beside a large rock and tried to see what was on the inland slope away from the cliff.

The sun was not far below the hilly horizon now and a gray pre-dawn light made the scene gradually intelligible. A faint excuse for a road wandered along a few yards away, roughly paralleling the shoreline; it might be a cattle path that led toward the village. Beyond the road were fields with a semi-cultivated look, holding orderly rows of squat bushes above a mat of low-growing vines that seemed to cover most of the ground in sight. Green hills rose beyond the fields.

The dawn brightened slowly. To Brazil, sunrises always brought awe, whether he saw them on an outworld or on crowded Earth, or across the red deserts of the world to which his parents had emigrated and where he had been born. Sitting on this alien rock with sea water dripping from his armor and his hand on a gunbutt, he thought: First Landing; it's like a First Morning. Let there be light.

"Light enough," said Gates. "Let's get started."

They walked on crunching vines to the road, heads swiveling

constantly and air microphones tuned to high sensitivity. Brazil caught himself listening for the ape howling that had accompanied each new morning on his last new planet. It wasn't good to carry such mental baggage when stepping into an unknown environment. He would have to unload it.

They paced along the faint road toward the village. The hard-packed brownish soil of the road showed no trace of whatever traveled here.

"Smoke ahead," said Gates suddenly. It was a barely visible thin vertical tracery in the sky, rising not far away.

The road curved around a craggy little hill; when they had rounded this, the village was before them. Large rowboats were beached on the sand of a small sheltered cove. Forty or fifty yards back from the water stood about twenty huts, built mainly from what looked like mats of the groundvine. A small stream trickled through the village, flowing from the direction of a structure like a low fortress, beyond the huts and much larger than any of them. Its dark walls of mud or clay or stone were surrounded by a considerable space cleared of all vegetation.

Brazil turned his head to one side and saw his first native. His stomach went cold and he said

to Gates: "On the rock up there. Look."

THE native was undoubtedly humanoid and had apparently been dead a long time. He was bound somehow with vines to the crag that almost overhung the road, ten or fifteen feet above the Earthmen, and around his neck hung a placard that looked like cardboard, bearing a short inscription in bold characters resembling Arabic. He had been a tall man in life, by Earthly standards, and long strands of pale hair were still in evidence. "Get this?" asked Gates of the observers in the sky.

"Roger. You're going on?"

"Don't see why not."

"We never mind these 'No Trespassing' signs," said Brazil, with an attempt at flippancy he didn't feel. Dead men were nothing new to him, but this one had a considerable resemblance to himself, and had, so to speak, sneaked up on him.

There were no living people yet in sight, but there were shrill cries in the dawn from the village, and a small flock of hawklike birds with oversized wings sprang up into flight from among the huts. The birds were green and vivid orange against the misty sky and flew circling over the village.

"Let's go," said Gates.

They began down the sloping road toward the huts, trying to look confident but not frightening.

At an open gateway in the wall of the fortified structure a figure appeared, a red-haired man dressed in dark jerkin and leggings and boots, with breastplate of silvery metal that matched the round helmet he carried in one hand. In the other was a spear. He stretched himself and yawned, and appeared to be trying to scratch his ribs with the helmet. He was still a good distance away and gave no sign that he had spotted two aliens in strange suits walking into his town.

The birds were more alert. The cries of the circling flock changed suddenly in tone, and in a moment it had become a living arrow launched at Gates and Brazil.

The two Earthmen stopped, each considering the possibility of mowing down the birds with stun pistols — which should have a disorganizing but not fatal effect on any complex nervous system — before the flock could strike them as it seemed it must, and both rejecting the idea, like twin channels of a single computer. The armored suits were tougher than any bird was likely to be; leave defense to the suits and don't hurt the native pets.

The flock broke off before con-

tact, to circle the intruders in a blurred uproar of wings and claws, but several birds scraped the helmets, which were almost invisible in mild light, and one tore head-on at Brazil's apparently unprotected face, possibly meaning to veer away an inch from his eyes.

The thud of impact was impressive; when Brazil's eyes opened from the reflex blink, the bird was flopping on the ground with something badly broken. He picked it up, intending to impress the natives with his friendliness by treating kindly their pet that had attacked him, and also to suggest to them that it was futile to attack; but it struggled and fought his armored hands so he could do nothing else if he tried to hold it.

HE SET it gently down again as the first natives came blinking and shivering out of their huts to see what all the noise was about, some of them still pulling on scanty rags of clothing. They were all of a type with the body on the rock, blond, tall humanoids with deep chests and slender limbs; in the living people were visible a dozen small distinctions of facial and bodily proportion that added up to an obvious but not at first definable difference from any Earthman.

The red-haired man of the

fortress had ducked inside the gateway, which was still open. A domestic-looking animal with plumes on its head looked out at the strangers with interest.

The blond natives stood together in front of their huts, as if waiting for a group picture to be taken, gaping at their visitors in silence. The watchbird flock still screamed and flew, now in widening circles, having given up assault at least temporarily.

Gates kept moving forward until he stood near the center of the cleared space between beach and huts. Brazil stopped beside him there and they stood almost motionless, smiling, arms spread with hands open, in the approved position for approaching Apparent Primitives who seem timid. The sun stood over the horizon now, dissipating the morning fog.

Brazil became aware that the whole crowd was watching him. Only now and then did one shoot a quick glance at Gates, as if puzzled about something.

Gates spoke via throat mike and radio, without moving his smiling lips. "You look like 'em, boy. I think you better play leader. They may have never seen anyone dark as me before."

Brazil made the practiced throat-muscle movement that switched on his speaker and opened his mouth to begin the greeting of his public with sooth-

ing sounds. He was interrupted by Sam's voice in his ear again. "Coming from the fort."

Six Apparent Primitives who looked anything but timid were marching in sloppy formation down the slope from the walled structure, straight toward the Earthmen, bearing spears and facial expressions that Brazil could not interpret as meaning anything good. They were all red-haired and armored, muscular, well fed, and bulbous-nosed, evidently of a different tribe or race than the blond hut dwellers.

Brazil's barefoot audience watched the warriors' approach nervously and began to fade back into their huts. But one of the older men who had been staring Brazil in the eye with an expression of mounting and intense emotion — the planeteer grew edgy at not being able to decide what emotion — now sprang forward in serious excitement, to grab Brazil, by the arm and harangue him with the first native speech he had heard, looking at him with the gaze of a pleading worshiper.

The six red warriors were very near and didn't look happy at all. They also seemed to be concentrating on Brazil.

WITH a cry of seeming despair, the old man tore himself away from Brazil and fled

toward a hut as if in mortal terror.

One of the approaching warriors threw his spear with a whipping expert motion; it caught the old man in the back and sent him dying on his face in the sand.

"Well, I'll be—" Boris Brazil roared out the first Earth words into the air of Aqua.

The red-haired warriors stood before him, eying him with what he interpreted as incredulous contempt. One of them barked something that he thought he could almost translate: "What are you doing, you blond peasant clod, dressed up in that outlandish armor?" He probably looked more like a blond native in the suit, with his physical proportions somewhat concealed, than he would without it.

The one who had speared the old man started walking toward his victim, maybe to retrieve his weapon. Brazil started that way too, with no clear idea of what he was going to do, but with the feeling that the old man had appealed to him in vain for help.

As Brazil started to move, the five other spears were suddenly leveled at him. A hysterical blond boy ran out of a hut to kneel beside the old man and scream something that sounded nasty at the approaching warrior. Gates was standing motionless a few

yards away. A spear thrust fast and hard against Brazil's chest with plain intent to kill, setting him back on his heels; a lordly voice from the *Yuan Chwang* said in his ear, "This is not our affair." Brazil grabbed the thrusting spear in his left hand, jerked its owner forward off balance, and delivered with his armored right fist what seemed an appropriate greeting to an Apparent Primitive Attempting Murder of Earthman.

The blow knocked the man out from under his helmet and dropped him to the sand. Spears rocked Boris from all sides, clashed and slid around his helmet. He caught a glimpse of the sixth warrior kicking the boy, knocking him over, and pulling a short axe from his belt for a finishing blow.

The arm swinging back the axe suddenly released it; the weapon spun through the air to land yards away and the warrior sat down suddenly and nervelessly. Sam Gates had decided it was time for stun pistols.

Before Brazil had reached the same conclusion, the four remaining spearmen had given up trying to stick him through his suit and were grabbing at his arms to hold him. Gates potted two more of them, in the legs, with silent and invisible force. The remaining two abandoned the fight and backed away to-

ward their stronghold with spears leveled, shouting what was no doubt a call for reinforcements. The red that Brazil had felled got up and tottered dazedly after them.

"Let's get out of here," said Gates.

Brazil's eye swept around. The old man was dead, the spear still in him. The young boy who had been kicked was lying unconscious right in front of a warrior who was going to be considerably annoyed as soon as he felt a little better. Brazil scooped the child up and got him over his shoulders in a fireman's carry and looked at Gates, who gave a sort of facial shrug, as if to say: If we can save a life, there's no need to ponder possible bad consequences, since this whole operation looks like a fizzle now anyway.

THEY strode at a good pace out of the village as the watchbirds screamed a cheerful farewell. A few reds were milling around the gateway of the fort as the Earthmen went over the rise and out of sight, but no organized pursuit was yet visible. Once out of sight of the village they began a steady loping run, the small body bouncing on Brazil's shoulders. Gates called for the robot to bring the scout up to the surface at the shoreline.

"This is the Tribune," said a voice. "What do you intend doing with that child?"

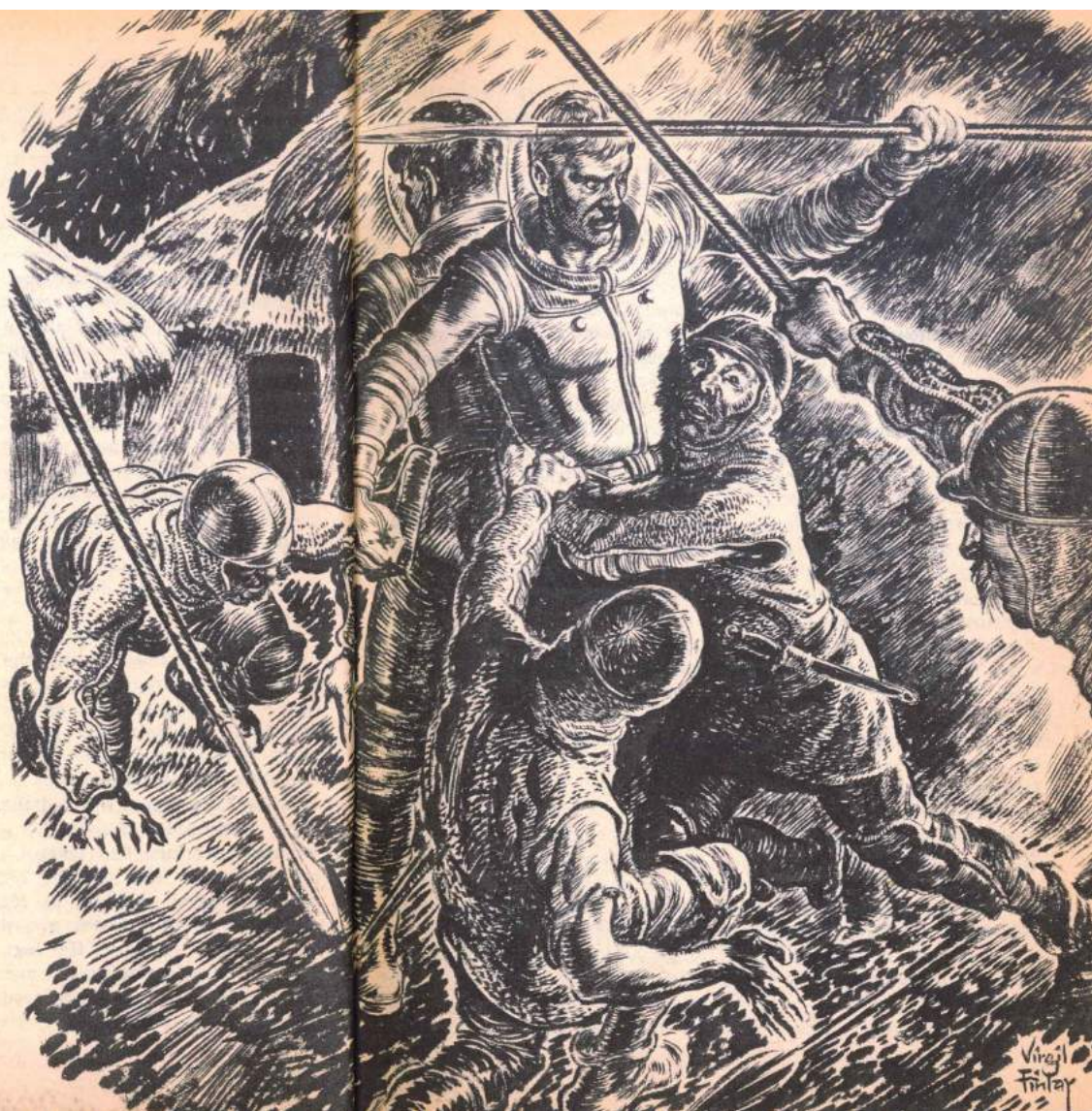
"Saving his neck," said Gates. "Maybe we can learn something from him too."

They ran with stun pistols drawn, spinning around frequently to see if anyone followed them. No one pursued.

Brazil was gasping when he finished the climb down the rocks to the shoreline and set his unconscious burden — no, half-conscious now, with a swelling lump on the forehead — down inside the airlock. The outer door shut behind Gates and the robot had the scout underwater and moving out to sea in a moment.

Entertaining an alien aboard a scoutship was something the Space Force had learned to plan for ahead of time. A door in the back of a suit locker led from the airlock into the tiny Alien Room, into which Gates was now feeding atmosphere from outside, via snorkel and remote control. When the room was ready, Brazil carried the boy into it, sealing the door behind him. Gates could now decontaminate in the airlock, and go to the control room. Brazil would have to wear suit and helmet for a while yet.

Medical was already on the communicator in the Alien Room when Brazil turned to look at the screen, after putting the kid



down on the bed-acceleration couch that took up most of the room, checking the air pressure and setting the temperature up a few degrees.

"Kid doesn't look too bad off," Brazil told the doctor. He smiled reassuringly at the boy, who was now fully conscious and lay watching with wide eyes and a growing yellowish lump on his forehead. He might be ten or eleven years old, judged by Earth standards.

"Keep him quiet. And get us a blood sample as soon as possible. Do you think we'll have to feed him?"

"Yes. If we can keep him for a week or two we should get the language and a good line on the local culture. We've got synthetic proteins and simple sugars on the scout, of course, so I guess he won't starve — but I'll try for your blood sample first. And listen, this may be important — I'm turning off the video screen for now, so it won't alarm him. But when it's on again, keep anyone with red hair off it. Use blond, noble, handsome people like me if possible."

Brazil started to call Sam on the intercom, but through a valve into the Alien Room came sterile blankets and a painless blood sample syringe, before he could ask for them.

Chandragupta's voice came

into his helmet: "This is the Tribune. I have little complaint of your actions so far, except that your striking that man with your fist served no good purpose. But I must forbid you to keep that child any longer than is necessary for his own welfare."

"How long will that be, Chan?" asked Captain Dietrich's voice, getting no immediate answer. "Would the boy be welcomed home, or speared like that old man, or what? I think we'd better learn the language and customs before trying to decide. And as for Brazil's hitting that man—"

A debate went on. Brazil listened with half an ear while he covered his guest with blankets and sat beside him, trying to inspire confidence.

"It's all right, sonny, it's all right." I hope, he thought. He patted the boy gently with his armored hand. That was the only treatment he dared attempt until he knew considerably more about the biology of his guest.

And the guest could be very valuable. Children made good subjects for First Contact as a rule, if they were not too young. Their minds adapted quickly to the alien. They caught on quickly to the game of language teaching. And they were likely to give an honest and direct view of their own culture.

Brazil handed the blood-sample

syringe to the boy after locking the plunger. The kid took it after a brief hesitation, looked it over cautiously, then gave a sudden shy smile and said something that might have been a question. If his head was bothering him he gave no sign of it.

Brazil answered with some kindly nonsense and took the syringe back. He made a show of rubbing it on his own suited arm, turning his head to the other side as he did so. Then he turned the boy's head gently away and got his blood sample without fuss, on the first try. He valved the loaded syringe out into the airlock, where the robot came to load it into a courier tube that would carry it up to the *Yuan Chwang*.

EARTH and Aqua life turned out to be too alien to one another for infectious disease to pose a problem either way. Brazil shed his suit with relief.

The courier tube returned before sunset with containers of vile looking gunk that Supply swore would feed the boy, whose name was approximately Tim. Tim tasted the stuff but looked unhappy, so Gates went out spearfishing. Tim was pleased with some of the assortment and ate it raw, while turning down the rest in disgust. He seemed to be suffering no after effects

from the kick in the head, but Brazil did his best to keep him quiet anyway.

For the next few days the scout stayed well out at sea, mostly submerged.

Brazil spent most of his time in the Alien Room, pretending to learn Tim's language almost as fast as he could hear the words, while the linguistically expert brains, human and mechanical, aboard the *Yuan Chwang*, looked and listened over his shoulder. They forgot nothing, and spoke into his ear, prompting him on what to say next.

Tim became restlessly active after getting over his first awed fascination with video screen, doors, acceleration couch and plumbing. When told he was aboard a ship, he wanted to see it all. Brazil kept the robot, at least, out of Tim's sight, and had to struggle to learn more than he taught. He played games with Tim to give him exercise, and to gather data on his physical strength and dexterity.

The hungry brains aboard the *Yuan Chwang* devoured Tim's language. Within two weeks they had fed it by memory tape to every planeteer. A few days of practice would give them command of it.

It was time for a major conference. The two planeteeers on surface sat in with Captain

Dietrich and the department heads above, via communicator, while Tim was confined discontentedly to the Alien Room.

"Gentlemen, we have a choice between two main courses of action," the Captain began. "We can try again to establish relations with the natives of this island, on some friendly basis, or we can pull out and start over somewhere else, and hope we don't get into a brawl with the local authorities at the start." The Captain was not chewing out his planet-eers for the fight; when he chewed, there was never anything equivocal about his words.

"Those authorities I didn't mind brawling with," said Gates.

The Captain went on. "I think we can agree that our only major problem on this island is likely to be intercultural?"

NO ONE disputed him. There were no horrendous non-intelligent life forms, volcanos or other insuperable acts of nature in evidence on the target island.

"I'd like to say that I hope we can find a way to set up a base on this island," said Biology. "That luminous water-ring was fascinating, even though I'm not sure it's in my field. And that groundvine..."

"We can't complete our gravitic tables for this system without seismic measurements of the

planet," put in Geology. "That island still looks like a good place to me."

"Well, then — does everyone think we should try the island again?" The Captain looked around as if a bit surprised.

"We've got the language here now," said Brazil. "Our tapes show the red tribe's speech is nearly the same as Tim's. And they're already trying to kill us on sight, so what can we lose by another try?"

"We can cause considerable damage to the people of this island if we are not careful, Mr. Brazil," said Chandragupta sharply. "Indeed, we may have caused damage already, by inserting ourselves into a situation of considerable tension between two tribes—though any harm we may have done was accidental and I do not blame you for it. Yet we are not on this world by invitation, and so we must assume a certain responsibility for such accidents."

"You mean that sociological damage has been caused by our visit?" asked the Captain. He had already heard all about it, but he wanted the subject talked over now.

"I think I can explain that," said Sociology, clearing his throat. "The data we have from Tim fit in with what we saw on First Contact. Everything indi-

cates that conditions on the island may be ripe for civil war.

"The picture is this: a local settled tribe, fishermen and part-time farmers—the Blonds, as we have come to call them—invaded and conquered by a warrior tribe of the Viking type, probably fewer in numbers. The invaders seem to have come from the smaller islands farther north. Perhaps they were driven out themselves by someone else. Now they have settled down here as a ruling class. Tim says this invasion was a very long time ago, before he was born, but that his grandfather—the old man who unfortunately was killed during our First Contact—could remember a time when there were no Reds on the island, and his people were free. We make the invasion to have been about fifty years ago. We've seen no evidence of intermarriage, although in fact we've seen none of the Red women or children yet."

"Tim talks of a day when his people will rise up and destroy the Reds," said Brazil. "The dream of his young life seems to be to find a way to slaughter them wholesale. He wants me to lead the revolution. I have the feeling though that he doesn't really hate them, or didn't until grandpa bit the dust. It's mainly just a sort of exciting game in his mind. But I don't doubt he

would wipe them out if given a chance. Someone has talked a lot of revolution to him, that's for sure.

"Tim's grandfather thought I was a tribal folk-hero, come back from the great beyond or somewhere, wearing strange armor, to lead them out of slavery. That's what the old man was talking to me about. I suppose that's why they speared him. It's on the tape, of course, if any of you haven't seen it. Now I can understand what he was saying." Brazil fell moodily silent.

"I suppose the First Contact incident might have touched off a Blond rebellion?" someone asked.

"If conditions had been just right, yes," said Sociology. "Apparently they were not."

CAPTAIN Dietrich spoke up: "During the last five days we've made numerous high speed photo runs with recon robots from as low as five miles on clear days. If there were any riots or open warfare in progress, we'd be pretty sure to spot it."

"How about that body lashed to the rock?" someone asked after a brief pause. "Have we learned anything on that?"

"Tim can't read or write," said Sociology. "So neither can we, yet. So we don't know what the placard hung around the fellow's neck says. Tim says the Reds