

put him up there because they were angry at him. Seems reasonable, if not illuminating."

"Captain, I wish we had made such photo runs as you now mention before First Contact," said the Tribune.

"We weren't sure of their technological level then," said the Captain, a little wearily. "We didn't want them to spot us flying over. It's one of those choices you have to make. We didn't want to shock them by appearing as gods, remember?"

The discussion flowed on for a while. Finally Dietrich brought it back to his original question: "Shall we continue to try for a base on this island, or shall we move on?"

"Let's try again here, since we've got a start," said Gates. "If we can't make it, we can always move on to another island."

Chandragupta: "The question I must insist we try to answer, Mr. Gates, is this: How can we be helpful to the people of this island, where we have already interfered?"

The Captain: "Chan, we didn't come all this way to open a social service bureau."

"I realize that, Captain." Grimly. "Nevertheless, I consider our effect upon the natives more important than seismic measurements. I would like to ask if you plan to conclude an agreement

with the authorities controlling those Red soldiers, for a scientific base on the island?"

"I'm considering it."

"I believe our doing so would in effect recognize their authority to live as they do, holding another tribe in slavery."

Sociology raised his eyebrows. "What do you mean by slavery? It would be unusual if it could not be found in some form at this level."

"Perhaps I should have been more precise. I consider it evil that a member of the ruling class should have it in his power to take at any time the life of one of the lower class, as we have seen here. I think we are now bound to try to correct such a condition. Of course I do not expect that we shall be able, or should attempt, to establish our idea of a perfect society here. But I think we must try to set these people on the road to greater freedom and justice." Chandragupta raised his voice above several protesting ones. "We are already committed to interference here, in my view. We must now see that the changes we produce are for the better."

The Captain smiled faintly. "Are you arguing for the revolution now, Chan?"

"I think you know better." The Tribune was somewhat irritated. "We could hardly expect the total

effect of a general armed uprising to be beneficial."

"Just what do you think we *should* do, then, to start these people on the road to greater freedom and justice, as you put it?"

Chandragupta sighed. "I think we must first investigate them further, to learn how best to help."

There was a little silence.

"Anyone got further comment he thinks important?" asked the Captain. "All right, this is it. We continue work on this island. We try to stabilize native affairs on as just a basis as possible, and then deal for our base. Boris, you say Tim has relatives in an inland village who can hide him out from the Reds if need be?"

"So he tells me."

"All right. Take him to this inland village, tonight or tomorrow night. Talk with some of the adults there. Especially try to find out more about the political situation. Is there a Blond resistance group, how strong, and so on. Since we seem to be committed to some sort of interference here, we'd better get all the data we can, and quickly. Any questions?"

THE following night was dark and foggy. Gates drove the scoutship silently and he hoped invisibly over the island's hills

toward the village of Tim's relatives. They boy acted as pilot, guiding an electronically presented green spot over a contour map of the island, with an air of sophistication. He had, he said, seen maps before, if not flying machines. But he was excited at the prospect of showing off Brazil in armor to people he knew, and telling them of the wonders he had seen. Brazil had given him orders to keep the scoutship's flying powers secret if possible.

Brazil changed the scale of the map to show only the area within a mile of the village. Tim guided Gates to a clear landing spot, out of sight of the village but within easy walking distance.

Gates brought the scout down quickly, probing below with radar and infrared, until the little ship settled with a crackle of crushed vines into a tiny hollow between hills. Gates left the autopilot on to keep the scout balanced on its tail at ground level, and joined Brazil in observing the outside world with instruments.

The chittering and movement of small life alarmed by their landing gradually quieted. There were no signs of human alarm.

Brazil suited up, for protection against other dangers than infection. He led Tim into the airlock, and paused for a final briefing.

"Now, who did we agree you

should look for in the village?"

"First of all I will look for Sunto. He is one of my cousins. He hates the Reds and is not afraid of them. If he is not home I will seek Lorto or Tammamo, who are the junior headmen of the village. Only if I can find none of those will I talk to my female cousins, who do not understand these things. I will try to avoid Tamotim, who I think is still the boss headman here. He likes the Reds and tells them things. If I see no one who is safe to talk to I will come back here and we will talk over what to do next."

"And if someone stops you and asks you questions?"

"I will not hide anything. I will just say there is a strange man out here who wants to speak with someone from the village. I know what to do, you don't have to worry. I won't say you are our Warrior Spirit, or anything like that. Unless there are Reds in the village, who capture me; then I will cry out for Warrior Spirit and you will come and kill them, eh?"

"My name's not Warrior Spirit. And if you see any Reds, just come back." Brazil opened the lock's outer door and they stepped out and down into matted vines. "Remember, just say I brought you over the hills if anyone asks how you come to be here. No

one else need know yet that my ship can fly."

"All right. Over that way is a path," said Tim, becoming oriented. "And that way is the village."

"Get going, then." Brazil sent him off with a gentle shove, and stood quietly, testing the alien night with artificially aided senses.

The sound of Tim's bare feet faded quickly on the path.

"I'll take her up a ways," said Gates on radio.

"Roger. I'll move over."

BRAZIL saw the dark bulk of the scoutship lift in silence that was almost eerie even to him, and drift up out of sight into fog and darkness. No stars to see tonight, he thought. Well, I've seen enough of them. For a while.

He found the path with his infrared lamp and waited just at one side of it. He hoped the kid wouldn't run into any trouble. About five minutes passed before the glass of his helmet, set for infrared translation, showed him some large life moving toward him along the trail from the village. "One — two of them, Sam, coming this way."

"Roger, I have them now."

"Boro?" His native name, called in a soft voice from the darkness.

Brazil switched his air mike on again. "Right here."

Tim approached him. "This is Tammamo with me, Boro. He is a junior headman."

Brazil gave the second vague shape a slight bow, which Tim had told him was the ordinary greeting between equals.

"Sam, keep a sharp eye out. We need to use a little light down here." Planeteers worked their air-mike switches for such asides as quickly and naturally as they used their tongues.

"Rog." Sam outdid himself in brevity.

Brazil turned on what he hoped was a dim and non-startling electric glow from a detachable suit lamp, revealing a Tammamo bug-eyed at being called out of his hut at night to meet what he might think was the Warrior Spirit.

Boris greeted him in a matter-of-fact, business-like way. Maybe the fact that he spoke the common language of the peasants put the junior headman more at ease.

Tammamo had heard a version of the First Contact incident which began with the Red garrison of the coastal village executing an old man for daring to worship the Sea God in a way reserved for rulers. Dying, the elder had called down a curse upon their heads, whereupon the

Warrior Spirit of the Blonds appeared, and slew sixty Reds with a sweep of his arm — or perhaps it had taken several arm-sweeps, the point was uncertain. A Red magician had been called upon by the enemy. He had evoked from somewhere a dark and evil spirit, also clad in armor. The Blond Warrior had departed to do battle with this other elsewhere, not wishing to devastate the entire island in the struggle, but it was expected he would win and return shortly to — and this point was whispered very cautiously — slay all the Red warriors and turn over their women and children to the Blonds as slaves.

Tammamo almost managed to look Brazil hopefully in the eye as he finished the tale.

TIM started to speak with the exasperated eagerness of a youngster to point out errors — or maybe in disappointment at being left out of the story altogether. But Brazil shushed him by putting a hand in front of his face. He spoke carefully to Tammamo.

"Junior headman — look at me carefully. I am only a man, nothing more. I am not a Warrior Spirit, or any kind of god. I am only a man from a far land, who looks like one of your people and wears armor that is strange to

you. Now I wish to speak in private with the leaders of your people — not with the headman who tells everything to the Reds, but to the leaders of your own people, who may not be known to everyone. Do you understand me?"

"If you say you are a man, so be it." Tammamo seemed to be shivering with more than the night chill. "The leaders you speak of — I do not know anything about such matters, except for stories heard by all. I am a junior headman, wishing no one to hate me. There is a man in the village who might know. His name is Sunto. I can tell him what you want when I meet him. Will that please you?"

"It will. And I think there is no need for you to speak of me to anyone else."

"I will not! I will not!"

"Then send Sunto here to meet me at this time tomorrow night. One thing more, junior headman — this boy goes to live now with his relatives in your village. I want you, Tammamo, to see to it that no harm comes to him from the Reds. As I said, I am only a man, yet I can do many things. I would be quite angry if the Reds were to harm this boy. Do you understand?"

Tammamo indicated vehemently that he understood. Obviously he wished himself a hun-

dred miles at sea, or anywhere out of this situation.

"Tim, keep out of trouble. Go, both of you, and send me Sunto here tomorrow night."

Evidently it was not a Blond habit to waste any time in farewells.

Brazil watched them out of sight, realizing suddenly he was going to miss having the kid around. "Okay, Sam, you can bring her down."

Trudging to where the scout was crackling down into vines, Brazil paused and looked up toward the invisible nose with a sudden grin.

"Hey, dark and evil spirit," he called via radio. "How come you let that Red magician evoke you to fight me?"

"Shut up and get in."

SUNTO appeared at the appointed place on the following night, escorted by Tim. This time the scout had not landed; Brazil was lowered the last few hundred feet by cable.

Sunto seemed less timid than Tammamo. He too had heard of the First Contact fight, but was shrewd enough to realize how events could change in the seeing and retelling of them. He professed no doubt that Brazil was only a man, and a friend of the Blonds. Would he arrange a meeting with the Blond leaders?

Certainly. There was going to be a meeting of those leaders in the remote hills, three nights from now. Boro could come to it if he wished, there would be many large fires at the meeting place so it would be easy to find. Was Boro living in the hills now?

Did everyone know about this meeting, Brazil asked him. What if the Reds saw this large fire? Why had Tammamo been so timid about discussing Blond leaders?

Sunto did not quite understand; he used several new words in trying to answer the questions. Eventually the idea came across that this was going to be a religious meeting, and not political at all. He, Sunto, knew no more than that timid Tammamo about political matters. Of course the Reds would not interfere with this religious meeting; the Sea God might become angry with them if they did. True, the Reds controlled the Tower, but that didn't mean others couldn't hold meetings of this type, did it?

"Of course not," agreed Brazil soberly. He got a repeat on the time and place of the meeting, and went home to the scout.

They located the meeting without trouble, as Sunto had predicted. Brazil was lowered by cable again, a quarter mile from the circle of fires in the hills near the center of the island.

Gates held the scout overhead, ready for anything, while Brazil walked to the lighted area.

About fifty Blonds of both sexes were quietly busy with varied rituals within the illuminated circle. There were no detectable lookouts posted around the place, or any attempt at concealment.

Brazil watched for a little while, far enough away to be invisible to those near the fires. Then he walked slowly in on them, arms spread out in a gesture of peace. There seemed to be nothing frantic or very rigid about the ceremonies, so he had no great worry about interrupting.

Gradually they became aware of him, the nearer ones first. They stopped what they were at and turned to watch him with grave eyes. Within a few seconds all of them were standing still, calmly and silently watching him. Then a few of them moved slightly, opening a lane from where Brazil stood to a place near the center of the circle. He could see now a low structure of stone that stood there, a few feet square. It might be an altar.

"Any advice?" he subvocalized to the watchers above.

"Best thing I can think of is to bow in greeting and tell them to proceed with what they're doing," said some anonymous ex-

pert. No one argued with him. The final decision on what to do rested with Brazil, as it usually did with the planeteer — the man on the spot, with the responsibility. He was rarely given orders in any detail.

THIS time he accepted the advice offered from above. It seemed to go over all right. The attention of the Blond group turned from him to the central altar, where a few men and women began to perform some simple rites. The others stood watching with folded arms. Brazil folded his. No one was sitting down, and he resigned himself to what might be a long stand. An hour went by. He wished himself wearing armor, ground, heavy, with powered legs that would let you nap standing if you wished.

Not that he wanted to nap now. There was the ceremony to watch, although it had so far shown him little that was new or especially interesting. It had elements that Brazil had seen in life or on training tapes of a hundred primitive religions on a dozen planets.

But the climax of the ceremony was unique. A pair of muscular — deacons? Brazil could distinguish no one set apart as clergy — came from the darkness outside the waning fire-

light. They bore a large and heavy pottery vessel that wobbled in their grip as they carried it, as if it held a quantity of liquid.

Someone held a torch to illuminate the altar top. A slender tower about two feet high had been built of small flat pebbles, surrounded by a low wall of similar construction.

The men with the jar approached the rear of the altar and raised the vessel toward it, as a woman thrust a trough into position. They tipped the big jar evenly. What looked like clear water sluiced out of it, guided by the trough toward the pebble-tower. For a moment it looked to Brazil as if the little structure might withstand the flood, but some vital part of the base gave way suddenly. The men continued to tilt the vessel smoothly till it was empty. The tower toppled, taking with it part of the surrounding wall. It was washed piecemeal from the sloping altar by the last of the flood.

It hit them hard, Brazil could see, looking from one Blond face to another in the firelight. None of them stirred for a long minute. It was plain that the collapse of the tower had had some evil significance.

Tower? Sunto had mentioned a tower connected with the Sea God, and controlled by the Reds.

The Blonds seemed to shake

off some of their gloom. Again they were turning toward Brazil.

"Ceremony didn't turn out too well, I think," said the voice from the *Yuan Chwang*. "Just hope they don't blame it on you."

Once more everyone was watching Brazil, except for a couple of men who had begun to dismantle the altar.

Might as well get started, he thought. He switched on his air mike. He could not see most of his audience well in this light, and could not pick out anyone as leader.

HE spoke out loudly: "I am a man who has come from a far land, and I would learn what I can about the people here."

The faint stir and whispering among them ceased. All watched him with guarded faces. There was only the fire glow and crackle, and the twittering background of animals or insects.

"This—" Brazil realised he had no certain word for ritual or ceremony. "What you have done at this meeting is strange to me. If I can do so without giving offense, I would learn about it. Will someone here tell me?"

A light clear voice came from somewhere in the background: "Are you he of whom it is said, that he slew sixty Reds with a sweep of his arm?"

"It is said, but it is not true.

I fought with six of them, but I slew none."

"You fought with six of them, yet none of them slew you." The still anonymous voice used a more subtle grammar than Tim had taught, and had a slightly different accent. With his limited experience in listening to the natives, Brazil could not identify it as male or female. But it smelled of authority to him. He answered the implied question. "My armor is strong. And I had help from one who is wrongly called a dark demon, who is only a man like me, my countryman and friend."

"So have I heard it."

The speaker moved forward slowly into brighter firelight—a woman. Not a girl, and not an old woman, or middle-aged. Not the kind that a man will follow with his eyes from the first glance, but the kind he will turn to see again a quarter-minute later, and remember. So Brazil thought of her at first sight, and only remembered with a start the subtle unearthliness of her face and body.

"So have I heard it, from those who were there and saw with open eyes." She came close to Brazil, dressed as simply as the others. She studied him for a moment. "You speak with the tongue of a simple Blond peasant."

"It was one such who taught me."

"You learned well. What is your name?"

"In your tongue it is best said as Boro. And what is yours, if I may ask without giving offense?"

She smiled. "Certainly, there has never been a god so fearful of giving offense. My name is Ariton. Tell these people whether you are god or man. I fear some of them will still not believe what you told Sunto."

Brazil loudly pledged again his membership in humanity.

Ariton waved her hand, and her people turned away. Most of them went to sit in a circle around where the altar had been. They began a low-voiced chant.

SHE walked with Brazil a little away from the group, and tried to answer his questions about the ceremony he had witnessed. Her explanation was unintelligible with new words at first; finally he got her to simplify it enough for him to understand that the tiny tower on the altar had been an analog of a full sized structure in the island's chief city. The big Tower was sacred to the Sea God. Now it was monopolized by the Red priests, and beside it the king of the Reds, Galamand, had built a castle. At mentioning the king's

name, Ariton moved her foot as if grinding something into the dirt beneath her heel. Tim had sometimes done that when speaking of the Reds.

"And what did the water-pouring mean?"

"Maybe something bad." She looked at Brazil thoughtfully and raised a hand to touch his transparent helmet. "I have seen — before," she said, using a new word that he thought meant glass, from the context. "Now I will ask a question. Why could not the Reds slay you, when they attacked you with spears?"

"My armor is stronger than it looks."

"And why did you slay none of them?"

"There was no need."

"Those of my people who watched with open eyes say that you were angry at the slaying of an old man you did not know. Why?"

Brazil pondered. "There was no need for his slaying, either, that I could see."

"You carry no spear or sword or bow, nor did your dark companion. How could you fight six spearmen?"

After a moment Brazil raised a hand to touch his helmet. "My armor is not easily seen, yet it is very strong. So is it with my weapons."

"Strong Red warriors could not

hurt you with their spears," Ariton said thoughtfully. "And when they tried to seize you they were struck down by cramps and sickness, like swimmers who have entered cold water with full bellies. So the Sea God might . . ."

"But it was not the Sea God. Shall we sit down here?"

He gallantly let her have the low boulder that presented itself, and crunched his armored seat down into groundvine. The suit was a load to stand around in, even at .95 gravity.

"Where is your dark companion now? And your ship?"

"He is not far. And our ship is near the island."

Ariton apparently thought it natural that a man alone among strangers should be a bit secretive about the location of his friends.

Some water from the altar flood had run into the nearest fire, and the light grew dimmer yet. There was no word in Brazil's ear from above.

"It might be thought that you and your friend are only castaways upon this island, as none have seen your ship."

HE took the suggestion calmly. "It is not so. Our ship is near, with others of my people aboard."

"Why have you come to this island?"

"My countrymen and I travel to learn things, about new lands none of us has seen before. Some of us would like to live on this island for a little while, perhaps a few years, on some land your people do not use. We do not want to boss your people, or to take anything we do not pay for."

"I have no land to give anyone, while there are Reds on the island." Ariton's voice was sharp.

"Some of my people will talk to the Reds, too, about using land. But we will not trade with a tribe that holds another tribe in slavery."

She was puzzled. "But who does not own slaves, if he can? If we could enslave the Reds, we would. Do you own no slaves at home?"

"It has been very many years since my tribe held slaves. A tribe becomes stronger when it does not depend on them. My people have traveled far and looked at many tribes, and it is always so."

"But if all were free to choose, who would do the mean and dirty work of slaves by choice?" Ariton looked at him searchingly.

Brazil gave a faint sigh. "True, someone must do such work — sometimes someone must be forced to do it. But even such lowly persons should be treated as members of the tribe, and not

killed or beaten as animals would be."

"And if there are two tribes, as on this island?"

"Two tribes can live as one, if their leaders are wise and strong."

"That is a strange thought to me. But then I have never traveled in the far parts of the world." Ariton meditated for a few moments, before she spoke again.

"Will you, Boro, go to speak with the Red king about this matter of land? You still look like a Blond, so maybe the Reds will try again to slay you or imprison you."

Brazil thought it over. "I may go. It is only chance that I look like a Blond. My shipmates are of varied appearance; some of them resemble Reds." He thought to himself: What planeteer looks most like a Red? Foley, but his hair isn't nearly the right shade. A little dye will fix that, if need be.

"I will go with you, when you go to speak to Galamand," Ariton announced.

Brazil was surprised. "Do you enter safely into the Red king's castle at will?"

"The Reds are not likely to do me harm, and I think Galamand will see me if I visit him." Ariton smiled. "I am a high priestess of the Sea God."

ANOTHER conference began as soon as Brazil was hoisted home to his scoutship.

"Religion may give us a way to promote unity here," said Sociology. "We see that Reds and Blonds both worship the same powerful Sea God. However, his sacred Tower seems to be a point of contention between the tribes."

"We think we have that Tower located, by the way," put in Captain Dietrich. "And what's probably the Red king's castle, or at least his summer home. It seems too far from fresh water to withstand a siege. Where's that chart? Here, on this peninsula that protects the harbor at Capital City, a large stone structure. Right next to it, on the side toward the ocean, is the tallest building on the island, a tower about ninety feet high. Then there's a sea wall running the length of the peninsula, for protection against waves and maybe invaders."

"Foley, you and Brazil will be visiting Galamand as soon as we can locate him. Get your hair dyed to match the Reds. Maybe we can at least impress the natives with the idea that it's possible for Red and Blond to co-operate."

"I trust everything possible will be done to avoid another fight." Chandragupta wore a frown.

"We'll have to talk to the Reds

sooner or later, if we're going to get anywhere," the Captain said. "Though it's possible we may have to fight our way out again. Is anyone against sending a delegation to Galamand as soon as possible?"

"Should we take Ariton along, as she suggested?" Gates asked the conference.

"It might make us seem to be committed as her allies against the Reds."

"No doubt that's what she wants."

"But it would bring the two leaders face to face. If there's any possibility of ending the conflict between them, such a meeting might give us a clue to it."

Planeteer Foley, hair reddened, was flown down and transferred to scoutship *Alpha*, which lay out at sea again. Gates intended to hold himself in reserve, in the scout, to rescue the delegation if necessary.

First it was necessary to locate the king, and to arrange to take Ariton to the planned meeting with him. Hoping to do both, Brazil almost literally dropped in, shortly after sunset one evening, on the hill village where she had told him she could usually be found.

No Reds were in evidence. Again a flock of watchbirds assaulted Brazil with futile energy. The Blond natives stared at him

with some awe, but little surprise. They directed him to a building set against a hill.

IT WAS a low structure of groundvine mats and rare wooden poles. Carved or molded masks hung in profusion at the gateway, the first artwork of any kind Brazil had seen on the island, except for the decorated armor of the Reds.

He stood at the gateway in the low fence and called a greeting to the dark and open doorway of the house. In a few moments a Blond man, unusually tall and carrying an oil lamp, emerged from the rambling building. He stood studying Brazil emotionlessly.

"I am looking for Ariton," Brazil repeated. The towering Blond somehow made him feel for a ridiculous moment like an adolescent suitor come to call on his girl and greeted by her older brother.

"Ariton has gone to Capital City," the man said finally. "To meet you or your countrymen there when you go to visit the king of the Redmen." Again the grinding foot-motion at mention of Galamand. This man conveyed a suggestion of insolent freedom and power to Brazil. It was impossible for him to think of this man or Ariton as slaves.

"Is Galamand now in his

castle beside the Tower of the Sea God?" Brazil asked.

"Yes." The Blond man paused, then seemed to reach a sudden decision involving Brazil. "Come with me." He beckoned with his lamp and led the way into the house.

They followed a passage leading back toward the hillside. The open rooms they passed contained things of shapes unknown to Brazil, things carven and feathered and stained. More temple than home, certainly.

"Here." The Blond turned aside suddenly, and stooped to roll up a floor mat. Buried among mats of groundvine that filled a hole evidently of considerable depth, were row upon row of spears, simply made but strong and sharp.

"When your king comes to this island," said the Blond, showing powerful white teeth above his beard, "he will find ready help to topple the Reds from power. Not all my people are willing to live the lives of animals. Long have we planned and waited. The Reds are fewer than we. Each year they stay more within their forts and in their walled city, and each year hurt us more, with killings and beatings. We will be willing to help you."

Brazil took a deep breath. "If you want to help me, you will not rise armed against the Reds.

You will agree to live with them as one tribe, when they also agree."

The man stared at Brazil for a long moment, then gave a short and nasty laugh. "When they say that will be the day when they are helpless."

"But remember what I say, if you wish your own people well," said Brazil, turning to leave. "Let there be no armed rising against the Reds."

"Not yet," said the Blond in a cold voice. "Not yet for a little while."

BRASIL and Foley stood among tall bushes and grass on a hillside with a fair view of the town whose name translated into Capital City, early after sunrise on the next morning. They wore heavy ground armor, in camouflage colors. They studied the city before them, adjusting their heavy glass faceplates for telescopic vision.

Capital City was plainly divided into two sections. The Reds dwelled on a hill at the far side of the harbor from the watching planeteeers, in an area surrounded by a defensive wall. Their buildings were mainly of stone or mud brick, and a number of Blond servants could be seen going about various menial tasks.

In the Blond section, on lower ground and closer to Brazil and

Foley, no Reds were visible except for an occasional squad of patrolling soldiers. They stuck close together, looking grimly over their shoulders. The houses were built mostly of dried groundvine mats, though some mud bricks were used.

Beyond the Blond section were the docks. The water of the harbor was studded with the low shapes of fishing boats and, larger, a few of Galamand's war galleys.

"Well — shall we march?" asked Foley.

"Might as well. I expect Ariton will know we're here before we've gone very far."

Brazil moved his legs. The suit servos drew power from the tiny hydrogen fusion lamp in the backpack; the suit legs churned the massive shape ahead. The wearer had the sensation of moving in light summer clothing, but he could plow through heavy bush and small trees if he chose.

Brazil and Foley had no wish to leave such a monstrous trail, so they picked their way with care to the nearest road and set out at a slow walk toward town.

Ariton met them in a narrow street before they were well inside the town. She stared at Foley hard when Brazil introduced him, but gave him a common greeting-word in a pleasant voice.

"Sunto is waiting with a boat

in the harbor," she told them. "It is the shortest and easiest way to Galamand's building."

The planeteeers followed her through narrow winding streets toward the harbor, ever a center of apathetic, curious, hopeful, or poker-faced stares from the Blond slum-dwellers. None of the Red patrols came within sight. That suited Brazil fine.

Sunto was waiting at a low dock, in a crude and lopsided rowboat fashioned of reeds plastered together with clay.

"Hope the blasted thing can hold us," said Foley on radio, trying to check his suit floats unobtrusively. "It'd be a long swim from the middle of the harbor."

The sun was still bright in the morning sky, promising a warm day. Galamand's castle rose forbidding across the harbor, beyond the fishing boats and the moored biremes of his navy. Above and beyond the castle rose the slender stone Tower of the Sea God.

THE rowboat held up as Sunto propelled it across the calm water of the harbor, straight toward the landing steps at the base of the castle. Reds appeared on the steps, watching. Their number grew as the boat approached.

"Galamand will have heard of you, of course," said Ariton. "I think he will be eager to see you

for himself. Of course he may decide to kill you." She observed them.

"I don't think he will harm us," said Foley. From inside heavy ground armor they could remonstrate gently but confidently with Galamand while he boiled them in oil or his cohorts attempted to bash in their faceplates with axes. It would require a local Archimedes and considerable work for any primitive king to damage them seriously, inside of a days time. But Ariton wore not much of any clothes at all. Foley asked her: "Do you think you will be safe?"

"The priestess of the Sea God is safe even from Galamand," she answered absently. Brazil thought she was worried, but not about herself.

A slight leak developed in the rowboat. Foley bailed rapidly with a leaky gourd, muttering exotic curses.

Brazil scanned the ranks of grimly watching Reds as they neared the landing steps. "Is Galamand among those?"

"I do not see him. No doubt he awaits you in the great hall inside."

The boat wallowed up to the landing. Ariton hopped nimbly out and made it fast with a rope of vine. A couple of Red soldiers made half-hearted motions of leveling spears in her direction,

but no one moved to stop her. Brazil and Foley disembarked and stood quietly, giving the Reds the chance to look them over and make the first move if they felt like it. There were no women or children in sight.

Ariton moved her hand in an intricate gesture, in the air above Sunto's head; then touched his head briefly.

"Now they will not bother him—for a while," she said to Brazil. "Well, let us go on and try to see the king."

A sword-bearing Red who might be an army officer stepped forward. "King Galamand has been told that you are here. Stand and wait." He eyed Foley with unconcealed and unfriendly curiosity.

Some of the Red troops looked Brazil over and commented among themselves with openly truculent contempt. His blondness was plainly visible through the faceplate. He looked back at them, deadpan, unobtrusively inflating his suit's flotation bubbles. Giant red swellings ballooned out around his shoulders and torso. The soldiers stared and fell silent.

"Brazil, what are you doing?" hissed a peremptory voice in his helmet.

"All right, I guess it wasn't funny." He deflated the bubbles and tried to wait patiently.

A FEW minutes passed in silence. Then a more elaborately costumed Red appeared, and imperiously beckoned the delegation to follow him into the castle.

There were only a few Blonds inside the walls. They had the look of prisoners or the lowest of slaves. Now a few Red women and children were in evidence, but they retreated rapidly out of sight of the visitors. The complex of walls and buildings making up the stronghold had been built of heavy stone, with little if any mortar used. But the stones were cut and fitted superbly, especially in the lower levels of the walls.

The great hall was a high chamber about thirty yards by ten, dimly lit by smoking torches and small high windows. It was crowded with Red men of varied appearance. But across one end of the room stood a solid wall of tall soldiers bearing shields and leveled spears.

"The old boy's probably right behind his army," Brazil radioed.

"Stand and wait here," said the distinguished Red who was acting guide, indicating a spot not far from the leveled spears. He disappeared into the crowd at one side.

Brazil and Foley turned casually around as they waited, studying the chamber and the Reds in it. No attempt had been made

to surround the visitors at close quarters. The door by which they had entered still stood open. Ariton stood waiting between the planeteeers, with utter calm.

Another important-looking Red appeared before them; but it was somehow obvious that he was not the king. He held his hands clasped before him and owned a nose remarkable in size even for one of his tribe.

"Do you bear weapons?" he demanded sharply, looking from Foley to Brazil.

"We do," said Foley. "And we are not the only men here who bear them." He tried to give his speech the accent of a Red.

"You must give me your weapons," said the chamberlain. "Then you may advance and prostrate yourselves before the king."

"We will advance to greet the king in all friendliness," said Foley. "But the law of our own nation forbids us to do homage to him or to give up our weapons."

The chamberlain hesitated a moment, then began to screech at the Earthmen threateningly, as if they were slaves. He raved and glared and waved his arms, and jabbered so fast he became almost unintelligible. Yet Brazil got the impression the man was trying to avoid direct personal insult. It was a masterful performance of denouncing their disrespectful behavior but not themselves.

"Better just wait him out," Brazil subvocalized to Foley via radio. "Maybe they just want to see if we bluff. It wouldn't do for the king himself to fail."

THE planeteeers stood silent a full thirty seconds longer, glaring stony-eyed back at the speaker. The harangue gave no sign of slackening.

"Better squelch him," Brazil said. Evidently the torrent of words was going to continue until they reacted to it in some way. Brazil did not now want to give the impression that Earthmen had infinite patience. The squelch might be better accepted coming from the "Red" planeteer.

"Silence!" Foley bellowed, after turning up his airspeaker volume. He got what he called for with magical suddenness. Ariton wore a pleased smile.

"We have come here to talk with a king, not to listen to you," Foley went on. "If King Galamand is not pleased to receive us today, we will return tomorrow. Our business is important."

"Get out of the way," said a firm voice from behind the wall of soldiers. "Let them come here."

The rank of soldiers opened, but stayed within spear-thrusting distance on either side. Brazil, Ariton and Foley advanced toward the man who sat alone upon an ancient carved chair.

The low dais and throne were nothing remarkable. The helmet and breastplate of the king were richer than those of his soldiers. Upon the breastplate was worked in relief an image of the Tower of the Sea God, the torchlight glinting on it.

The man upon the throne was not ordinary. A vast scar sliced across his face, nearly obliterating one of his eyes. He was approaching middle age, not big for a Red, but thick-limbed and strong.

Foley opened his mouth to say something a little nasty about the way the chamberlain had spoken to them. "Greetings, oh king," was what came out. Galamand's bright blue eye seemed to nail you with more effect than if there had been two.

"Greetings, oh, king," said Brazil. Ariton stood between the Earthmen, saying nothing and watching Galamand haughtily.

The king ignored her and spoke to the armored planeteeers, looking from one to the other. "I bid you welcome," he said perfunctorily. "Does your king send greetings to me?"

"He does, indeed," said Foley. "And would send you gifts, as is our custom." He waited momentarily for a reaction which did not come, then added: "But in some lands it is considered an insult to present such gifts im-

mediately. It is, indeed, so considered by us."

The king raised an eyebrow, and his mouth twisted slightly. Some facial expressions seem to be well-nigh universal among humanoids, Brazil thought. He spoke up: "Oh, there are such lands, King Galamand. Not many, but a few."

The blue eye fixed on his. "I thank your king for his greetings. Is he Red or Blond?"

"Neither," said Brazil, truthfully enough. "In our country there are men of many tribes, who live together fairly peacefully. It is only by chance that I look like one of the Blonds of this island. But Foley here was chosen deliberately to come here today, because he looks like a Red, that you might not think we believe Reds to be our enemies."

The king nodded toward Ariton. "You bring this woman with you. Why?"

"I have come with these my friends, to speak for my people," she said, flaring up at him. "And I speak also to the Sea God, as you well know."

GALAMAND seemed faintly amused. "Do you speak against me to the Sea God, woman? Your words are not strong enough. The Tower still stands against the waves. The sea-sound is faint in

my ear, and soothing as I go to sleep at night. Will you arouse the Sea God to destroy me?"

Brazil heard the faintest stir and mutter among the soldiers on either side; evidently the king's words might be thought a provocation to the God. Galamand swept his blue eye around, but said nothing to his men.

He spoke again to the planeteeers: "And you are this woman's friends?"

"We would be friends with Red and Blond alike."

Galamand digested the statement swiftly and without comment, and changed the subject. "Your ship is swift and hard to see; my ships have circled the island every day since you first appeared, and have not found it. Yet at night it draws near, for you to land. And when you leave, your ship is not seen either. Now I admit this puzzles me."

"He may be convinced that you're just castaways," said a rapid whisper from the *Yuan Chwang* in Brazil's ear, bringing him no news.

He answered the king: "As you say, our ship is swift, and hard to see. It is not the wish of our king that our first visits here be seen by many ships upon the sea."

"And why do you come here at all?"

"We seek always the knowledge

of new lands, oh king," said Foley. "Some twenty or thirty of us would like to live on this island for a year or two, on some small area of land that you who live here now do not need. We are willing to pay for this privilege. But we are not willing to deal with a government engaged in civil war, under which two tribes contend against each other; or with a king who holds another tribe in slavery."

"No one contends against me here and lives," Galamand spoke quietly and distinctly. He gave Ariton his twisted grin and asked: "Is it not so?"

It stung her deeply, and her voice rose loud: "Your day is not forever, Redman. One day your children will be our slaves, if you beget any before you die. We will—"

Brazil's voice rose over hers. "That is not what we want! That would yet be war and slavery."

Both native rulers looked at him, for a moment united against the outsider. Then Galamand asked quietly: "How would you have us live?"

"As one tribe."

Galamand narrowed his operational eye and scratched his beard. "You spoke of payment, for the use of land. What do you mean to offer?"

Foley answered: "To a just and peaceful ruler we would offer, to

begin with, a great quantity of cord, stronger and more lasting than your vines, to make excellent fishnets, oh king."

"And weapons?" The king's voice was casual and gentle.

"A quantity of swords and spears might be included—"

"You do not carry swords or spears."

"We carry them for trade." They could be made up.

Galamand's blue eye did not waver from Foley's face, but his right arm shot out toward the nearest guard, and his fingers snapped. The haft of the guard's spear was instantly in his grip.

THE king stood up and thrust the spear, butt first, toward Foley, at the same time holding out this left hand open.

"If you are men who deal in spears, then I will deal with you. I offer in trade this good Red spear, for that weapon you wear at your side."

Foley assumed an expression of deep trouble, and he answered reluctantly: "Oh king, we have no wish to anger you. But we must refuse to trade our weapons. If we did, the anger of our king would fall heavily upon our heads. And against his anger we have no defense."

"And against mine?" Galamand's voice was still gentle. So is a gorilla, when not offended.

"We have our weapons, which we will not trade," said Brazil, with utmost courtesy. The blue eye lanced at him, and he looked right back down the shaft of it, while from the corners of his eyes he watched the spearmen carefully. He wondered if Galamand could really identify the butt of a stun pistol as a weapon.

Galamand grounded the butt of the spear and stood drumming his fingers on the shaft.

"Fishnets," he said meditatively. He looked from one planeteer to the other. "Your great king has then no weapons to spare? I would reward you well if you were to convince him that he has; or if you were to act, shall we say, on your own . . ." He reached into a pouch at his side and brought out a lustrous pearl, bigger than a grape.

Foley shook his head slowly, forgetting that the gesture might mean nothing or anything here. "Oh king, it cannot be so. If you offer us kingdoms greater and richer than this whole island, still we will give or trade to you no weapons, save such as you can make yourselves."

Galamand tossed the spear back to the soldier and seated himself again.

"And your armor, I suppose? I admit I have not seen such glass."

This time Brazil joined in the

headshaking, to preserve unity, since no one had seemed shocked by the gesture.

"Strange men," Galamand mused. "You say you will not trade with a ruler who holds another tribe in slavery. I will not ask you why. I have not asked for any trade with you that would pay me in fishnets, and I want none. While the waves spare the Tower, the Sea God supports me. I am king upon this island. My slaves are my slaves. When you are willing to trade something worth while for the use of my land, you may come again and speak with me."

"Suggestions?" Brazil radioed.

"Leave without argument," said a voice from above. "We can analyze what we've got and try again."

ARITON stood proudly erect while Brazil and Foley bowed deeply to the king, who told them with a straight face that he was providing them with an escort back to their ship, that no harm should come to them on the way.

"They'll see the scout unless we can shake them," Brazil radioed, starting out of the throne room.

"Guess maybe we'll have to give them a minimum marvel to look at," said Gates' voice. "There's a suitable deep cove

just outside the city, about two miles from where you are. Just walk south along the shore; I'll bring the scout up partly out of the water for you to get in, and let them get a good enough look to be sure it's a ship and not a sea monster. Okay?"

"Good idea," said Captain Dietrich. "A submarine will explain to them why they haven't seen our ship. It'll startle them some, but it should further convince them we're not spirits who just materialize."

Ariton walked with the plane-tees out of the castle; they stopped at the landing steps to pick up Sunto, who was much relieved to see them.

Sunto ceased bailing and climbed out of his rowboat when told they were leaving by land. He said to a Red soldier standing guard nearby: "I leave to you as a gift the noble craft which you have praised so highly." And he ground his foot against the stone stair. The Red glowered but said nothing.

The walk out of the city was uneventful. Within an hour the four of them stood on the steep sloping shore within the chosen cove, with Galamand's heavily armed honor guard watching very carefully from a little distance and a Red galley casually standing by off shore.

Foley was telling Ariton that

a ship would soon come to take Brazil and him aboard, but she and Sunto would have to stay on shore. She agreed calmly, and watched the horizon for the ship, with some puzzlement.

Brazil turned to Sunto. "The Tower of the Sea God is very important to your people and the Reds, is it not?"

"Yes." Sunto did not seem especially interested in the subject. "It is our old belief that as long as the Tower is not destroyed by the waves of the sea, the Sea God smiles upon the rulers of the island, whoever they be."

"What if the waves should knock the Tower down?" Brazil asked.

Sunto smiled wryly. "Then I think you would see upon this island the one tribe for which Ariton says you asked the king. For the Tower to be so destroyed would mean the Sea God thinks the rulers of the island evil. The destruction of his own Tower is to be his last warning before he overwhelms with waves the entire island, slaying everyone on it and carrying the evildoers down to be frozen forever in the ice at the bottom of the sea."

"Get more on this, Boris," said an excited radio voice. "Ask Ariton about the Tower, Foley. She should be the real authority. Gates, hold that scout underwater for a minute."

BRASIL asked Sunto: "Do you think the Sea God will ever destroy the Tower?"

Sunto looked out at the ocean soberly; it was dull and placid in the sun.

"May I never see the day — but I am a practical man. Whoever is king will surely see to it that the sea wall of large rocks is kept strong at the base of the Tower, to break the force of the waves. Some day, perhaps, a very great storm . . . but there are great storms every year. The Tower has stood for many years."

"Is the season for great storms coming soon?" Brazil felt the vague beginnings of what might be a valid idea.

"No, it is just past. Now is the time of the steady-but-not-too-strong winds."

"Oh. I see."

"That checks," said Meteorology from above.

Sunto continued: "Also, the Tower stands on a straight shoreline, and the Sea God hurls his waves most strongly against the points of land that jut out into his domain, as if he were jealous."

"That is true in all lands," said Brazil absently. He had just the start of a plan to get these people co-operating, by somehow making the Tower seem threatened by a storm, and scaring them. It might be just possible to in-

duce a violent storm. But what would it do to the rest of the island? The scheme seemed worthless...

"That is true in all lands. As it is true that the waves come in nearly always parallel to the shore, no matter from which point at sea the wind is blowing. And the reason is the same . . ." Brazil fell silent, as if in a sudden dream.

"Why, that is so, but I have never thought about it," said Sunto in surprise. "Truly, the waves are like women, for men watch them long and understand them but little."

" . . . that they travel more slowly as the water beneath them grows more shallow," said Brazil with a far-away look. He gave a sudden laugh at the sight of Sunto's startled face. "Waves, I mean, not women. Sunto, tell me this. If the Tower were destroyed by some means other than the waves, what then?"

"What then?" Sunto gave the Blond equivalent of a shrug. "Why, the Tower would simply have to be rebuilt, and the king would gain merit in the Sea God's eyes by rebuilding." He thought for a moment. "Maybe the Red king would rebuild it on some inland hill, where no wave could ever reach it, and so make his rule safe."

Brazil nodded as if satisfied.

TWENTY minutes later he sat with Foley in scoutship *Alpha*, gratefully peeling off gadgets and chunks of armor. He faced on a segmented screen the debriefing assembly of their peers and bosses, electronically gathered to analyze the visit to Galamand. The astounded natives who had watched the two planetees enter the submarine craft were by now no doubt attending their own conferences on the subject.

"First, just tell me this," Brazil invited, eyes alight with an idea. "Does it seem likely that a massive assault of ocean waves on this Tower might make these people willing to try getting along together, at least for a while, so we could deal with a halfway representative government?"

"I would say yes, based on what Ariton told me," said Foley.

"I would tend to agree," said Sociology, cautiously. "It might well give us a start in the right direction."

"An assault of ocean waves, you say." Captain Dietrich frowned. "Not of forcefields, explosives, chemicals or sonic vibrations."

"Captain, I think there's a chance it can be done with this scoutship, and not by directing any of those modern weapons against the Tower."

"I am afraid I would have to forbid the use of such weapons

against the natives, on principle," said Chandragupta grimly.

"The idea is not to wreck the Tower," said Brazil, "but to make the natives think the Sea God has decided to wreck it."

"That Galamand's no fool," said Gates. "He's probably thinking up antisubmarine devices already. And how are you going to stir up suitable waves with a scoutship?"

"I'm not going to stir them up, exactly. And I don't think Galamand will notice a submarine acting several miles out at sea, away from his Tower."

"Are you drunk?"

"No, on duty. Another reason for trying to get this situation settled. Now I'll need some information before I can tell if this scheme has a chance of working."

Late that afternoon a cute chick who happened to be an expert oceanographer gave Brazil data he had requested. He studied it for a few moments, then favored the girl's screen image with a look like that of an elated predator.

"Baby, I think I could kiss you."

"Your threats don't frighten me at this distance," she answered, unperturbed. "Is there anything else you want — having to do with the job, that is?"

He turned serious. "Now I

need a weather forecast of such massive solidity that we can all lean on it — one that includes a steady ocean breeze here."

TROFAND, Red priest of the Sea God, and chief caretaker of the Tower, was awakened by the sound of the waves, to which he listened with half an ear even while asleep. The sound was now too loud for his liking.

He arose from his pallet and was dressing in the stone-damp darkness of his chamber in the Tower's base when he received a shock. A streaming puddle of cold sea water flowed against his bare foot on the floor. He hastened to light a candle from the smoldering brazier that fought uselessly against the permanent dampness of his bedchamber.

It was true, he saw with distress. Water was entering in thin streams through chinks in the massive masonry of the inner Tower wall. It was something that happened only in the heaviest storms. The booming roar of the waves pounding the heavy sea wall outside brought him to the beginning of real fright. In ten years in the Tower he had never heard it so loud. A mighty storm must be raging, though the season for them was past, and the weather signs had given no indication of any approaching tempest.

Trofand was nearly dressed when an underling came with a torch, pounding on his door and opening it with a minimum of courtesy.

"My lord, the waves, the waves! They are very bad!"

"I have ears, fool. Someone should have called me sooner. What are the signs of the storm's length?"

"My lord, there is no storm."

Trofand started an angry retort to the foolish statement, but something in the pale frightened face before him made him pause. Fastening his belt, he led the way out of the chamber to the stair that climbed to the Tower's top. He could soon see for himself what was happening.

It was true, he realized, emerging into the pre-dawn darkness atop the Tower. The sky was clear. The wind was steady in direction from the sea, but it was not strong. The surf at the Tower's foot should be fairly gentle.

He thought he felt the stones of the Tower quiver underfoot with each leisurely watery smash.

An assistant was at his elbow, speaking with a worried voice. "My lord, what shall we do? The signs are that the wind will rise throughout the day, and remain steady in direction. If the waves become yet higher—"

"If they do, we will deal with

them. The Sea God is not our enemy. Go rouse out the Tower slaves. Conscript more if need be. Have them stand by the fresh slabs of rock, ready at dawn to strengthen the sea wall. Then go you to offer the day's sacrifice to the Sea God. But do not take too long about it."

"I obey." The man was gone in an instant, down the stair. Other junior priests of the Tower huddled about Trofand in the chill night, in the light of a dim torch, looking to him for guidance.

WELL, I was right about that, Trofand said to himself. He was thinking of the extra stones, weighing many tons apiece, that he had long ago ordered to be kept on rollers in the courtyard below. They were constantly ready to be moved to reinforce the sea wall in case a storm of unprecedented violence should threaten the Tower.

But now he had a question to decide immediately. Should he order the king awakened? After all, the Tower seemed in no immediate danger. Galamand might grumble if he were waked up for something unimportant. But he might have the man boiled alive who failed to wake him for a real emergency, priest of the Sea God or not. It was not a hard decision to make.

"You—go rouse the king. Tell

him I say that waves threaten the Tower. Tell no one else."

"I obey."

King Galamand was beside Trofand within a few minutes, looking over the parapet and frowning at the strange intensity of waves that were driven by such a modest wind. He observed the preparations that had been made to reinforce the sea wall at dawn, then turned and struck his fist against the parapet.

"You did well to call me. But these stones have stood throughout my lifetime, and I say that they will stand yet a good while longer." Trofand saw him outlined against the first gray light in the east.

The Blond slaves, whipped on by overseers, now began to roll the mighty rock slabs into position to reinforce the sea wall. It would be dangerous work. But slaves could be replaced, while the Tower—

There was an outcry somewhere inside the Tower. In a minute an exhausted runner appeared, helped up the stairs by others. He leaned against the stones beside the king in near panic.

"My lord, the sea wall—the wall away from the Tower, up and down the peninsula—"

"Is it breached by waves? Where?"

"No, my lord." A gasp for

breath. "I came along the wall, after carrying your message conscripting slaves—"

"Well?"

"Elsewhere, my lord, the waves are small. Only here at the Tower do they rise abnormally, as if in raging anger. As if the Sea God has grown angry and—uh!"

Galamand's vicious backhand blow knocked the man sprawling. "Enough! Do not preach the anger of the gods at me, or I will show you what anger is! I am the king!"

The king turned away to peer, with Trofand and the others, at the waves beating against the sea wall at a distance from the Tower. The fast brightening dawn revealed that the messenger had spoken the truth.

THE NEWS was out, Brazil saw, as he strode along the sea wall road toward the Tower and the fortified complex of Galamand's castle. A puzzled Ariton walked between him and Foley. Reds and Blonds stood in little groups along the wall, commenting on the waves that were assaulting the base of the Tower. Faces turned toward them as they passed, but ever turned back again to the greater wonder of the waves.

Each long swell marched in from the clear horizon of the ocean, foaming up and curling over as the depth of the water

below approaching the height of the wave, to smash itself finally against the rocks piled in the shallow water at the base of the sea wall. But in the sea before the Tower, each incoming rise of water seemed to squeeze itself together along its long axis, rising to at last three times the height of the waves elsewhere, before it piled up in a foaming fury of discriminating violence upon that part of the sea wall.

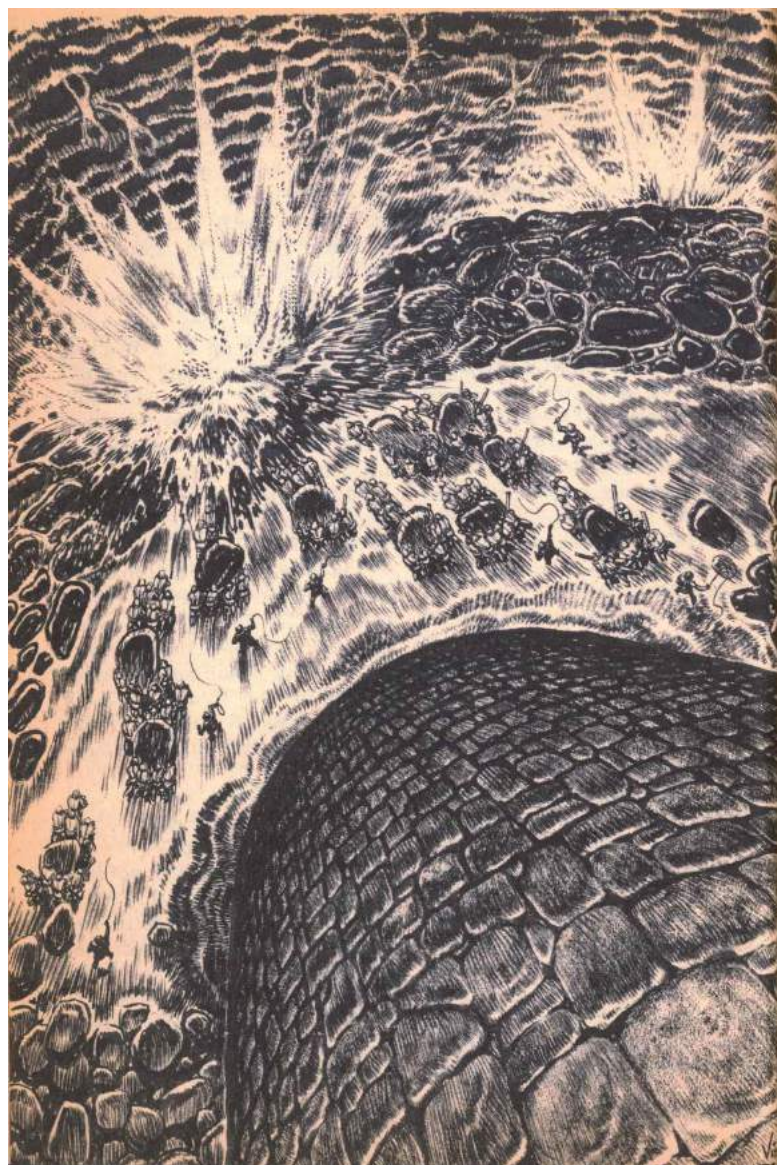
Ariton paused at her first sight of this, whispering something that might have been a prayer.

"You knew of this?" she asked Brazil. "This is why you brought me here?"

"I'm taking you to talk to Galamand," Brazil evaded. "I think if you and he can't come to some peaceful agreement soon, there won't be any Tower left for either of you to use. You have lived near the sea all your life. You know the strength that is in large waves."

"What do you mean?" she stared at him, half afraid. "Do you speak for the Sea God?"

"We are only men," he answered innocently. "But do I not understand your gods correctly? Is it not so that the Sea God may destroy his own Tower when there is great strife in the land and evil rulers, as a final warning to all the people, before he destroys the entire island?"



"It is true the Reds are evil rulers," she said after a long moment, as if thinking aloud. Then she took her eyes from Brazil's face and turned toward the Tower. "Come, whoever you are. It is my place to be there now."

"Is this going to work?" Foley radioed while they walked. "I mean that Tower isn't built out of pebbles, exactly. And it's stood through a lot of storms."

"On Earth," answered Brazil in professorial accents, "wave forces have been measured at well over three tons per square foot. Engineers will not build a shoreline structure on Earth without carefully considering local conditions regarding the effect we are now employing."

"Besides, the idea is to scare Galamand and the little lady here into co-operating, not to actually wreck the Tower. That would probably kill someone, and I hate to think what might happen in the panic."

AT the castle gate, the guards seemed almost to be looking over their shoulders at the Tower as they halted the three visitors and sent word to Galamand of their arrival. Everyone in sight, Red or Blond, was obviously thinking or talking of nothing but the waves.

Within a few minutes, a guide appeared to escort the visitors

to the bare top of the Tower.

Brazil could see by the flags above the castle that the wind had increased slightly and was holding a steady direction, as Meteorology had promised it would. If we were only gods enough to control the winds in an area of a few square miles, thought Brazil. We can come a hundred light years to stick our noses into our neighbors' business, but if the weather doesn't quite suit our schemes when we arrive, we can only wait until it does.

Galamand scoured them with his single eye when they had climbed the stairs to the Tower's top. The king paused in his pacing amid a group of high-ranking Reds.

"Come you to preach the Sea God to me also?" he inquired in an ominously quiet voice.

Ariton looked about her. "Where is Trofand?"

"He has gone to offer sacrifices in the chapel below," said the king, with a tinge of amusement in his voice. He leaned against the parapet with thick arms folded and his back to the sea as if in contempt. "He has rather suddenly remembered to take his religious obligations seriously."

"A human sacrifice?" asked Brazil. He hadn't counted on this.

"He considers it," said Gala-

mand. "But I think the Sea God has lives enough for one day." He moved his head to indicate that they should look over the parapet.

In the cold boiling hell of surf at the Tower's foot a hundred Blond slaves struggled on the slippery rocks, straining on levers and vine ropes to move an enormous block of stone into the surf at a place where the waves had weakened the wall.

With each torrential ebb and surge of water, Brazil saw, a pale object in the surf was drawn out and hurled in near the rocks, buried in foam and tossed up again—a fish-pale thing that had blond hair and no longer any face. And there was another—and another . . .

No Blond slave or Red overseer took any apparent notice of the drowned men, much less attempted to pull them from the sea. Every living man down there was concerned too intently with his own footing on the treacherous rock.

"Take it easy, old man," said a voice inside Brazil's helmet.

OH, THIS Brazil is a wonder, a red-hot planeteer, said a louder voice inside Brazil's mind. Just trust him, and he'll come up with a great scheme to set everyone on the road to happiness without bloodshed. That's

important, no bloodshed. Well, you can't see any blood down there, can you?

Now that's enough. Shut up and get to work, there's a job to finish.

"Why does the surf attack only the place of the Tower, oh king?" he asked, turning, stony-faced.

The blue eye studied him. "Had I a ship so cunningly built as to travel underwater, I might discover why." Galamand turned to his aides. "Send boats and divers out beyond the white water. See if anything strange lies under the surface."

"The old boy's uncomfortably shrewd," said Foley on radio. "Doesn't seem likely they'll search the bottom five miles out and a couple hundred feet deep, though."

Boats and divers soon appeared in the sea a few hundred yards out from the Tower, and made a show of investigating underwater conditions. It was not a really dangerous job for such skillful sailors and swimmers, out there where there were no rocks to be dashed against. But the Red seamen seemed to approach the job with a vast reluctance. Their faces turned often toward the Tower, as if in hope that the king would recall them.

Time passed. By noon the wind was obviously gaining strength again.

"I go to join Trofand in the chapel," said Ariton to the king, as if daring him to stop her. He pulled at his beard and appeared not to hear.

When she had gone he ordered food brought to him. His aides grew continually more gloomy. They looked often at the king, but sought to avoid his eye.

Galamand was amused to see the planetees drink their lunch from tubes inside their helmets. He asked if their suits had sanitary facilities too, and roared with laughter when he was told they had. But the laughter had a forced sound to skillful ears.

The wind grew yet stronger, though it was still far from a gale. Down below, an incoming wave got under a forty-ton slab of rock just right, and skipped it like a flat chip against the base of the Tower itself. Slaves and overseers miraculously scrambled clear. Stones split and flew; one fragment spun almost to the Tower's top.

The next wave poured through the gap in the sea wall, like the paw of a giant beast forced into a hole to grope for prey. The next tore free another huge stone from the edge of the hole. The bones of the Tower quivered.

Slaves and masters at the Tower's foot scrambled desperately to move another massive rock into a defensive position.

Brazil saw it was a futile thing for creatures weak as men to attempt. One roaring curl of water caught a Red, who dropped his whip and grabbed at the slippery rock to save himself. Brazil saw the upturned face, the eyes seemingly looking straight into his own, the mouth opened as if to yell something. The next wave tore the man away and dragged him out of sight.

GALAMAND was roaring orders for more slaves to be brought. "You have strange powers and weapons," he demanded suddenly of Foley. "Can you help me now?"

Brazil pulled himself out of a hideous fascination with what was happening down below.

"And if we can?" asked Foley.

"It might be that the agreement you sought with me could be quickly reached." The wind tore at Galamand's words, and shot spray past his head, here ninety feet above the normal sea. A small wave-tossed rock clattered against the parapet, as if shot from a giant's sling.

"Then order those men from the sea down there," Brazil demanded. "And give your word to make of Red and Blond one tribe."

"Then you can cure this," barked the king. "And it may be you have caused it!"

The other Reds glared at the Earthmen; some weapons were drawn. Then cries came from the stairway, distracting attention.

Ariton and Trofand were suddenly at the top of the stair, in ceremonial robes half sodden with sea water.

"My king, the Sea God pours his wrath into the very chapel. I—" Trofand jumped back, as if he thought the king's sudden lunge was directed at him. But Galamand seized Ariton, had her arm twisted behind her back and his dagger at her throat in a moment.

"Sacrilege! Sacrilege!" howled Trofand. The other Reds looked on, wavering, wide-eyed, undecided.

The king swung Ariton to face the planetees. "Now, aliens," he roared. "Cause the waves to cease, and quickly, or I will butcher this so-called queen with whom you ally yourselves. You seek to put her on a throne, but I alone am king. And so I will remain!"

"My lord." Ariton's low voice stopped the king in surprise. Doubtless it was the first time she had used any title of respect to him. "My death will not save our island. But I will marry you and bear your sons, if that be the only way to save it. And we will live here as one tribe."

For the first time in his experience, Brazil saw Galamand

taken aback. But it was only for a moment.

"No, I'll not have it! I am the king here, I alone. Not you, or the aliens, or the Sea God himself, can order me, do this or that!"

Trofand moaned and covered his face; every other Red was visibly shaken by the king's defiance of the god. He's weakening, Brazil thought, with a sudden turn of sympathy for Galamand, and he's cutting himself off from his followers. Be ready for the moment . . .

The sea-flung stone, the size of a grapefruit, actually missed Galamand's helmeted head by less than a foot, and flew on to bounce off the opposite wall and down the stairway. The jolt from Brazil's quick-drawn stun pistol took the king in the head about one second later, when all eyes were on Galamand. No native doubted that the rock had grazed the king's helmet and caused his sudden collapse. Brazil's pistol was reholstered as quickly as it had been drawn.

The Red priests and soldiers stared at the fallen ruler in awe. Plainly he had been struck down for blasphemy. None of them moved to aid him.

FOLEY went to him, pulling out his first-aid kit and beginning a quick radio conference

with the medics of the *Yuan Chwang*. The stun-jolt should wear off in a matter of minutes; a carefully chosen tranquillizer administered now should ease the situation then considerably.

A Red officer of apparent high rank spoke almost imploringly to Trofand: "We will obey you, my lord. Is there any way to save the island?" The priest looked uncertainly at Ariton.

Brazil asked her: "Will you now marry the king, as you offered, and so unite your people with his?"

She rubbed the arm that Galamand had twisted, and frowned. "There is no need for that now. The Sea God has rejected him. With your help, I will be ruler—"

"Do you want the Tower to stand?" Brazil cut her off brutally. "Remember, too, that the Red soldiers are still strong, and perhaps not eager to serve you."

She nodded, meekly wide-eyed for once.

Brazil turned to Trofand. "Can the marriage be done at once? As soon as the king awakes?"

"If he can be made to agree to it; I see that the Sea God has spared his life, for now his eyelids move."

"I think he can be made to agree," said the high-ranking officer, grimly. "I think it is time we had a certain heir to the

throne, and also an end to this unprofitable fighting in our own land."

Brazil switched off his air speaker, with throat muscles beginning to quiver with the relaxation of tension. "Sam, start cutting down that hump. But better stand by to rebuild, until I give you the word that the honey-moon has started."

Five miles out at the sea and two hundred feet below the surface, scoutships *Alpha* and *Omicron* braced themselves on water-filled space, and thrust noses equipped with jury-rigged bulldozer blades against the mound of mud and sand rising from the bottom, the mound they had carefully constructed in the same manner the day before. It was not much of a mound for size, really, and unimpressive-looking to any but an oceanographer. But it shallowed the water above it, and so it slowed the waves, refracting those from one certain direction, focussing them as a lens treats light, causing them to converge on one small area five miles away . . .

BORIS BRAZIL opened his eyes. He had not been asleep, though he sat slouched in an easy chair in an alcove of the recreation lounge aboard the *Yuan Chwang*. Chandragupta was standing looking down at him.