

*It was a salvage ship, an empty derelict  
—but it fought salvage operations to the  
bitter death.*

# MINOTAUR

WHEN Jake Lundberg finally broke his way through the inner door of the airlock into the *Prosper Prince*, he found himself in pitch darkness.

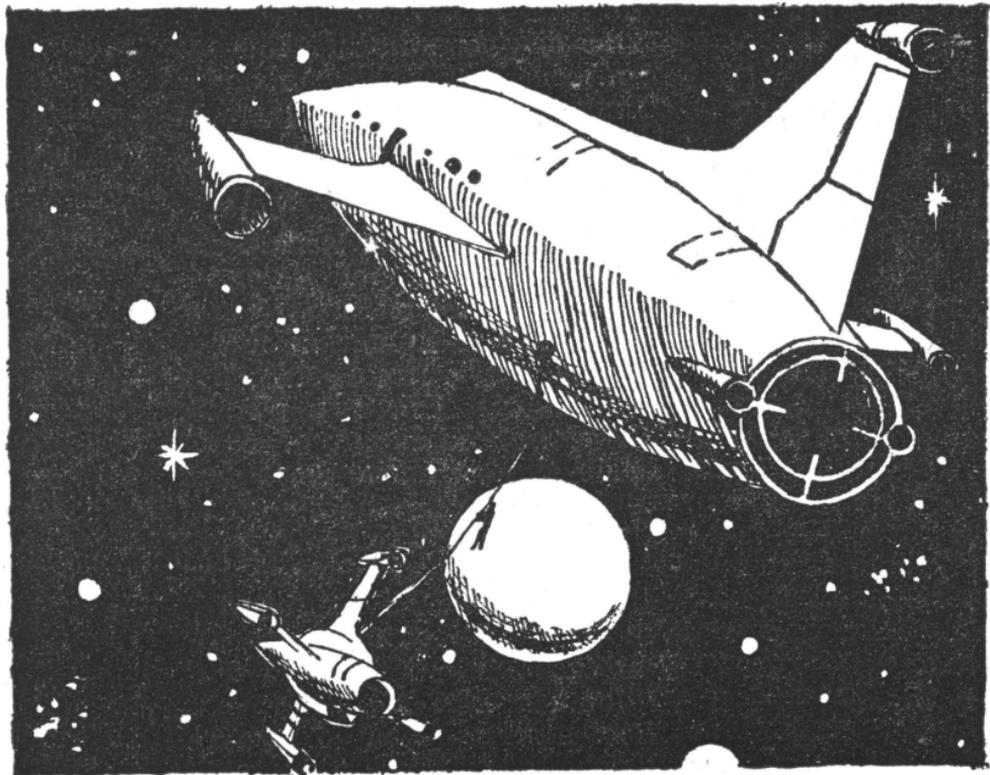
"That's not going to work," he said, and went back along the line of the small magnetic grapple that held the two ships together and into his own *Molly B.*

The *Molly B.*, a range scout, while large enough and comfortable enough by the ordinary standards of a Government trouble-shooter, was at the moment looking rather minnowlike and feeling rather cramped, at the end of the

fragile little line that was all that was required to keep the two vessels together in the absence of gravity. For the *Prosper Prince* had been a full-scale survey ship, with its own labs and shops and a crew of nine.

"What could happen to nine trained men twelve light-years from the nearest star?" said Jake, who was used to talking out loud for the benefit of the little throat microphone that connected him with the recorder on the *Molly B.*, no matter how far he might wander from her. "You tell me."

*Molly B.* made no effort to



tell him. She was agreeable but dumb, in the literal sense of that word.

"Now I'm getting self-powered lights which I'll carry over and string out along the corridor to the control room there as I go," Jake added, for the recorder, as he dug into a supply locker. "Don't get lonely now, Molly."

He went back out and along the line into the *Prosper Prince* once more, moving a little awkwardly, for if the lights he was carrying weighed nothing, in the absence of gravity, they made a pretty full armload.

Through the airlock into the

*Prosper Prince* proper, Jake encountered a small amount of weight. About one-half G. Which meant that although the lights were not functioning, the ship he was in was not completely dead. The air, however, though his helmet counter showed it as good, smelled musty when he flipped the helmet back. Whatever else was operating, the circulating fans were off.

**L**OADED, with his lights on, Jake headed down the main corridor in what he knew must be the route to the control area forward. Every forty feet or so, or at each

bend in the corridor, he stopped to set one of the lights in place against the corridor wall. The magnetic base of each light stuck firmly, and its lens, with a theoretical thousand years of power self-contained behind it, began to flood the corridor with light as soon as it made contact with the wall. The main corridor, Jake noted as he went along, was comparable to the air in the ship. It looked all right, but it gave evidence of having been unused for some time.

A hundred yards down the corridor and up an emergency ladder (the lift tube was, of course, not working) and along the corridor above for another twenty yards brought Jake to the door of the main control center of the ship. He stepped inside, fixed one of his lights to a handy wall and put down the rest of his load while he looked the situation over.

The control center—except for the faintly musty odor of the air and the slight film of dust—might have been abandoned just a moment or so before. All the equipment was in workable-looking shape. The one exception was the coffee and water taps in a little alcove off the plotting board. These had been battered into the wall from which they protruded, as if by a sledge-hammer.

“Now what do you think of

that?” said Jake, and proceeded to detail the situation for the benefit of the recorder back on the *Molly B.* He could imagine one of the think-boys back at Earth Headquarters, six months from now, pausing as this part of the tape was played back, and scratching his head.

“Don’t let it get you down, Pete,” he said. Jake called all the think-boys Pete. Headquarters had sent him several stiff memos about it. He paid no attention. He had to risk his neck as an occasional part of his job. They didn’t. If they didn’t like the way he made his reports, they knew exactly what they could do about it.

Jake moved over to the log desk, passing the main screen as he did so. The screen was dead, its silvery surface reflecting a picture of the control room and himself. He paused to inspect the two V-shaped inroads of scalp into his hairline. Yes, they were definitely going back. There was no use blinking the fact. And that was no good. All right, perhaps, for some skinny intellectual type to have a high forehead, but a broad, square-jawed character like himself—he just looked half-shorn. He’d probably better see about repilation, next trip home to Earth.

“—or else a good hair tonic,” he said out aloud. “Make a note of that, Pete.”

**T**HE logbook was also turned off. But when he flipped the switch, it lit up in proper shape. He ran the tape back to the last entry.

*June 34, 2462: Still on twelfth jump between Runyon's World and Ceta. Biochemist Walter Latham, slight case of hives. Taking infra-red treatments. Acid condition of soil in grass plantation tank of air-freshener room corrected. The coffee continues to have a burned taste. No evidence of spoilage, but suggest Quartermaster look into this on return to Earth. Today was the nineteenth anniversary of the launching of this ship, and the event was duly celebrated by the crew and staff at a dinner at which an original poem written in honor of the occasion by Engineer's Assistant Rory Katchuk was recited and, by unanimous vote of the whole crew, ordered to be written into the ship's log. It is as follows:*

*Oh, Prosper Prince  
You made me wince,  
Right from the start,  
And ever since.*

Some more of the corridor lights have been smashed about the ship. If this is one of the elaborate practical jokes that sometimes crop up on long voyages, it is in bad taste, and the man responsible, when found, will be severely dealt with. This applies also to whoever is re-

sponsible for the sobbing noise.

Jake raised bushy eyebrows upward into the growingly naked scalp he had just been examining. He read off the entry in the log for Pete's benefit.

"Sobbing noise?" he echoed. "Now, that's a new one. Let's look a little farther back."

He spun the tape back at random and stopped it. He read off the entry before him out loud.

*"April 29, 2462: Due to lift from Runyon's World tomorrow. All reports complete and planet looks good. The Prosper Prince may well congratulate herself on having discovered and tested a prime colonizable world. Breathable atmosphere, benign temperature range, flora and fauna. Largest native life-form encountered, the creatures we have named Goopers. These are very similar to the Earthly baboon in appearance, but have marked internal differences, and large, apparently atrophied glands for which no purpose can be discerned, on the underside of their forearms. It is difficult to figure why these creatures do not overrun the planet, since they are entirely herbivorous and seem to have no natural enemies. Perhaps their racial fear of entering the forests or any shadowy or enclosed place acts as a process of natural*

selection. (See Jeffers-Bradley report #297, log inclusion Jan. 3, 2462.)”

**J**AKE spun the log back to January the third of that year and discovered the report inclusion.

*“We found the forest to consist of vegetation similar to our hardwood forests—oak-like trees with many small branches and twigs, but no leaves. The twigs, however, are so numerous and thick that sunlight is cut to a minimum, there is almost no ground-cover or small vegetation between the trees but a sort of moss, and no animal life to be seen, except an occasional firefly kind of insect. Phosphorescence noticeable in darker spots coating tree trunks and even the ground, due to a fungoid life-form which excretes a zinc-sulphate phosphor.”*

Jake spun the log ahead to April 29th and finished reading the entry there.

*“A possible clue may lie in the fact that these creatures avoid the streaks of zinc-sulphate phosphors which make their appearance mysteriously at night even in the open meadows. At any rate, this is a puzzle for later investigation, if the planet is opened for colonization.”*

Jake shut off the log, thoughtfully.

“Well, Pete,” he said, “what do you think of that? They

lifted for home on April 30th. By July they were posted overdue. I was sent out to look for them July 10th and it's only taken me 40 days to find them. They're right where they should be if they'd just quit jumping on the 12th jump. No sign of trouble—except those coffee and water taps over there. But no sign of anybody aboard either. You don't suppose they just all decided to walk right out of the airlock?”

There was no answer to that question, of course, so Jake shook his head, gathered up his armload of lights and went on exploring and distributing illumination about the *Prosper Prince*.

He found the ship in good shape, but empty. The control section was empty, the officer's quarters were empty, the recreation areas were empty, and the men's quarters were empty.

Going down one level, he found himself in the section reserved for the labs and shops—and it was here that he reached the end of his supply of lights. Taking the last one and hand-activating it, he proceeded, carrying it like a searchlamp before him, and began to work back aft toward the greenery, where the grass plantation tank that renewed the oxygen supply in the ship had its existence, with water reservoir, and the drive units.

WHEN he stepped through the door into the greenery, at first sight it looked as a greenery should. It was a large, almost empty-seeming room with the equivalent of two city lots planted in a very tall grass which looked totally undisturbed. But at one end, where the ventilating system was, the fan housing had been completely wrecked and the fan inside it smashed.

"Aha!" said Jake to his mike. "Somebody decided to dispose of the ventilating system, Pete. Suppose we just take a closer look at that." He moved forward toward the fan housing.

But before he could reach it, noise exploded upon his eardrums. It was distant but thunderous noise, coming from the front end of the ship, a racket like a gang of medieval smiths working on armor.

Jake spun about and burst out of the room. He ran back up the corridor. As he neared the noise, it echoed and re-echoed through the metal walls about him.

He scrambled up the ladder to the mid-level of the ship and just as he reached the top, the noise stopped. He stopped, too. In the new and sudden silence, he could hear his own heart pounding.

He stood listening: then he went forward again. He moved down the mid-level corridor, the one he had first en-

tered on coming into the ship. But he saw nothing amiss until he rounded the curve to the point where the airlock pierced the inner and outer skins of the vessel. The massive latch handle, which dogged shut the inner door to the lock, had been battered completely off.

For a long moment, Jake said nothing. Then he cleared his throat, but not noisily.

"Are you still there, Pete?" he half-whispered. There was no answer, of course, but the sound of his own voice shocked a little common sense back into him.

He looked up and down the corridor. The lights still burned, undisturbed.

"Pete," he said fervently, "there's something aboard here and it doesn't love me."

He looked again at the door. Damaged as it was, there was no hope of his opening it—not, at least, without tools. For a second he felt a completely irrational flash of rage. There was the *Molly B.* out there, a few feet from him, with the very tools he needed to break through to get to her. And for lack of the tools, he could not do so.

He suddenly reminded himself there should be tools aboard this ship as well. It was only a matter of finding them. He turned about and headed once more toward the control room. In there, there should be a master chart of

the vessel and a list of the supplies and equipment she would have been carrying.

**B**ACK in the control room, Jake found his normal good spirits recovering. After all, he considered, it was only a matter of taking the time to locate tools on board this ship. Then he could break open the door and slap a tow-line from the *Molly B.* onto this ship and haul her to Earth, where whatever was aboard could be captured by properly armed and protected men. He even whistled a bit as he thought of it.

His whistling ended abruptly a few moments later. He had located the design chart, the equipment list and the arms locker. The arms locker, however, was locked. And Jake had discovered that the combination to it was missing from the papers in his hand.

"Oh-oh," said Jake. "I don't like this, Pete. I don't like it at all."

He reached for the locker door nonetheless,—and abruptly he felt a crawling sensation on the back of his neck. He whirled about. But the control room was empty. The entrance to it was empty. And as far as he could see, down the corridor beyond it, that too was empty.

"Nerves," he told himself and Pete, out loud. "Nerves."

Suddenly, the light halfway down the corridor and out of

sight of the doorway, from where Jake was then standing, went out. And there was a tinkling smash in the darkness.

Jake froze. And then the hair on the back of his neck began to rise. For, eerily, from the darkened corridor, there came to his ears the sound of a sobbing. A sobbing like that of a soul whose last hope had been stolen and lost forever.

Jake backed up against the drive control. His hand, groping instinctively behind him for some sort of weapon, closed about the short metal length of the captain's wireless microphone. He grabbed it up in one hand, an eight-inch club weighing maybe four pounds.

And the sobbing stopped. It stopped as short as if the sobber had had his breath choked off. Still bristling, Jake circled quietly about the room and approached the door, sidling along the wall. As he passed the wall of the control room he detached the lamp he had put against the wall there; and, hand-activating it to keep on burning, he carried it with him. When he reached the doorway, he swung suddenly into it and flashed its beam down the full long corridor.

The corridor was absolutely empty.

Jake stood there in baffled frustration. Then he turned

and went back to the arms locker. He tried to batter it open, using the captain's microphone. He managed to bend the microphone, but he did not manage to open the door.

"Pete," he said softly putting the bent microphone down, "this is a heck of a situation. You heard that banging before, and you heard the sobbing this time. Tell me, Pete, what sort of something would want to make noises like that?"

HE shook his head tensely and went back to the list. On it, he located the section that dealt with tools. The tools he would want, he discovered, were down in the tool shop on the lower level again, back by the greenery. Jake whistled tunelessly through his teeth as he read this little item of information.

"It *would* be out there!" he said. "Well, Pete, here we go down to the bottom level of the ship again. Down to the tool room to get ourselves a cutter torch and pry bar."

He took the lamp from the control room wall and placed it so it would catch part of the corridor as well as the control room. Then, picking up the light he had been carrying as a hand lamp, he headed back for the bottom level. He went off down the corridor, and when he reached the point where the other light had been, he stopped.

The light that had been there was lying on the floor of the corridor. It had been thoroughly smashed.

Jake puzzled over the remains, found no answer, and continued on to the ladder, careful to keep the light ahead of him. A little farther on, however, he moved into the area of another light, which was shining brightly, intact. He hooked his own light onto his belt. Then he went on until he came to the ladder leading both up and down, and climbed down it to the lower level once more.

He went along the lower level corridor to the greenery. He paused warily to glance in, but the room was empty. He continued on to where the corridor ended in a door. Opening this door, he stepped through into the tool shop of the ship. He was in a moderately sized square room, about twice the size of an ordinary earthside kitchen. A number of power tools stood around the wall and magnetic racks were fitted with hand tools.

He selected a portable torch flame cutter and a spring-operated pry bar. Then he came back out of the tool room into the lower level corridor. He started his walk back up the corridor toward the ladder. As he went he found himself wishing that he had been able to bring a second load of lights before he had been

made a prisoner aboard this vessel. The lamp at his belt flung a brilliant glare before him. It was more than adequate to the subjects it illuminated. Nevertheless, darkness followed; and shadows jumped and slid along the walls as he walked. He had just reached the foot of the ladder when a sound reached his ears.

It was the sound of a light somewhere distant in the ship, smashing.

He stopped with his hands on the ladder. He found himself straining his ears to listen. But there was no other sound. He climbed up the ladder, went down the corridor a little way and came to the inner airlock door. He chose a spot along the corridor wall where the light would illuminate the door well, without shadows; and at this spot, some ten feet from him, he clamped the light to the wall and raised the torch to go to work on the door.

Once more, somewhere distant in the ship, a light smashed and tinkled.

**J**AKE shut his jaw a little grimly and turned to the inner door of the airlock. The flame from the cutting torch in his hand splattered against the metal.

It was some moments before Jake realized that it was having little or no effect.

He stopped and checked,

first the torch, then the door. The torch was in perfectly good shape. The door, however, carried in its lower right corner a little legend stamped into the metal. The legend consisted of a small "c" with a circle around it.

Jake straightened up, breathed deeply, and ran his thick fingers slowly through his close-cropped hair.

"Well, Pete," he said, his voice sounding odd in his own ears, "how do you like that? They *would* decide to make their airlock out of collapsed steel instead of something cuttable."

He glanced once more at the torch, hanging useless in his hand, and stuck the tool back into his belt. There was nothing that would get him through the collapsed steel of the airlock he faced now, he knew, but some of the special equipment he had on board the *Molly B.*

"O.K., Pete," he said softly. "Mohammed and the mountain, all over again. If I can't tow this ship home with the *Molly B.*, maybe I can tow the *Molly B.* home with this ship."

He turned away and headed up the corridor toward the control room.

Some time later, with the door to the control room closed and welded shut with the torch at his belt against interruption, Jake was busy overhauling the controls. As far as he could see, they were

in excellent shape. He had nothing to do now but simply start the vessel moving and keep it at it.

However, handling a ship this size was not simple at all. It was not so much the question of driving as it was of figuring where to. The process by which an interstellar ship moved in space was by making large "shifts." These shifts instantly caused the vessel to cease to be at one particular point in time and space and caused it to be at another point in space. There was literally no effort to it.

The calculations required to tell the person running the ship where he was and where he would be once he shifted, though, were very complicated indeed. In this instance, it was further complicated by the fact that Jake had to stop and figure out all over again where he was. That information was on board the *Molly B.* But, since the *Molly B.* was out of reach, Jake theoretically had to go back to Earth and retrace his steps all the way out to this point. Of course he had the great calculators of the ship here to do it with. But still, it was a time-consuming job.

**I**T TOOK two hours to get the ship in working condition. It took three more hours to find out where he was. Nearly six hours had gone by since Jake had entered the

ship; and when he was finally done, he found himself tired, hungry and thirsty. But the shifts were programmed that would take the ship to Earth.

He started the *Prosper Prince* toward its first shift point, and then cautiously he cut open the door to the control room and looked out down the corridor. He saw utter darkness. No lamp, no light was showing anywhere. Through his teeth he whistled two short bars of a tune. Then he took down one of the two lamps that yet remained in the control room, the one he had carried in his belt; and taking this with him, holding it before him, he lit it and walked down the corridor.

He saw nothing as he went, although the sound of his own footfalls were loud in his ear. Halfway down the length of the ship, past the officers' quarters, he came to the ship's galley. Closing this door, he made welds at its four corners and set about preparing himself something to eat and drink.

It was not that he expected his welds would secure the door against whatever had had strength enough to smash the water and coffee taps in the control room, or dismember the blower equipment in the greenery; but he hoped its having to break through the door would give him time to adopt a posture of defense. And the cutting torch in his

Hand would be a weapon of sorts.

He made himself a pretty fair meal out of dehydrated stores, and a pot of coffee. After he had eaten, he sat at the galley table, with one eye on the welded-shut door, drinking the coffee. The ship's log-book hadn't lied; the coffee did have a burned taste. He mentioned this to Pete in passing.

Then his mind switched off onto speculation as to what it might be that roamed the ship and had evidently disposed of its original crew. He had a long talk with Pete about the matter, exploring several likely possibilities, but coming back to the pretty obvious conclusion that it must have been a life-form common to the Runyon's World that had somehow got on board.

"But how," Jake said, "something that large and dangerous could get on a ship like this without being seen or known about, I can't understand."

A sudden thought hit him. He cleaned up the remains of his meal, cut open the door and went back up to the control room. Sealing himself in there, he went to check the ship's records once more.

**T**HIS TIME, in a different record section, he found a small list of livestock taken from the planet. This ranged from sub-microscopic life-forms, strain of the phosphor-

escent bacteria, and on up to one of the Goopers mentioned in the log and in the report he had read earlier. The record also told him where these were to be found—in the ship's organic laboratory on the top level. Jake put the record away thoughtfully.

He checked to see that the ship was properly approaching the point for its first shift through no-space, then took his torch and lamp, and unsealed the control room. He went down the corridor and up to the top level of the ship. A few doorways down the corridor of the top level, he discovered the entrance to the ship's organic laboratory.

The door was ajar. He stepped inside without touching it. The laboratory was a pretty large room, three-quarters of which were given over to chemical equipment and supplies, and one-quarter of which was equipped with cages and containers. Jake saw at a glance that all the cages and containers had been broken open, except the largest of them—a cage which might possibly have contained something the size of an adult chimpanzee.

Almost against his will, Jake felt a slightly sickening shiver run down his spine. It occurred to him that something had been in here with an appetite, and for the first time, he had a mental image of what might have happened



to the original crew of the vessel.

He leaned over to examine the cage from which two bars had been wrenched out, in the light of his lamp which he had set against the wall just inside the door. He put his hands on two of the bars and felt them turn in his grasp. He took his hands away and stared. The bars appeared solid, but they had been twisted loose in their sockets. He twisted one again and it came neatly out in his hand, being loose at the top and broken off at the bottom. He put it back—and suddenly, without warning, there was a smashing sound; and he was plunged into total darkness.

Jake whirled, the torch which was in his hand coming up automatically. There was a sound of movement in the direction of the doorway. A strange and undefinable odor smote his nostrils. He sensed rather than saw a large body leaping at him and triggered the torch.

Its flame lashed out for a fractionary moment; then the torch was knocked from his hand. In that split second of light, he saw something hulking and vaguely manlike, but larger than any man had a right to be. Then he saw no more, because the torch was gone from his hand and automatically shut off. But a hideous howl rang through the room. There was a smash-

ing noise from the direction of the doorway. Then the howl rose again, out in the corridor, and there was a sound of running. For a third time he heard the howl, distant half the ship's length from him, but hideous as ever. Then there was silence.

**D**OWN on hands and knees, with frantically searching fingers, Jake pawed about for the torch. He found it and pressed its trigger. By the lurid gleam of its flame he saw the light he had put against the wall, lying smashed on the floor.

Jake drew in a shaky breath.

"Well, Pete," he whispered with a dry throat. "Here we are in the dark with just a cutting torch. And whatever it is isn't feeling too happy right about this moment." He got to his feet in the darkness. "I'll try to make it back to the control room," he said, "using the torch here to light me."

Cautiously, keeping the torch triggered, Jake moved out into the corridor. The flame it threw was not an effective light. It illuminated poorly and glared in his eyes at the same time. Half-blinded, and half-smothered in darkness, Jake found the ladder and fumbled his way down it to the main level. Still holding the torch, he headed back to the control room.

At that moment the first of the shifts hit him. He was conscious of the peculiar fleeting moment of nausea that marked one of the great jumps in space. It was disturbing, coming when his nerves were wire-tense, but it was also reassuring. The ship, he knew, was headed home.

He had paused when the shift hit him. Now, as he started forward again, the torch in his hand sputtered and went out. For a second, he stood paralyzed in the dark. Then the torch flamed on once more.

Instantly, he realized what was happening. The torch was nearing the end of its charge and it was the only weapon he had—and the tool room from which it had come was clear across the ship away from him.

Hastily, he shut it off. Blackness rushed in around him. Utter blackness. He strained his eyes in both directions up and down the main level corridor, but there was not the faintest glimmer of light. It came to him then that all the lights he had set up must have been found and smashed. He was alone, in the dark, with whatever was prowling the ship.

He reached out to touch the wall with his fingertips for guidance. And as he did so, he became aware for the first time of a faint glow. His eyes were adjusting to a level of

illumination just barely above the level of darkness. He stood still, letting his vision continue to adjust.

Gradually there emerged the eeriness of long streaks of phosphorescence, glowing on the walls of the ship. By their total shape, he was able to make out the directions and the dimensions of the corridor in both directions. His breath caught in his throat in relief.

"How do you like that?" he whispered. "Looks like Runyon's World can be useful, too."

**H**E BEGAN to feel his way down the corridor toward the control room. He was, he estimated, about halfway there when an indescribable uneasiness caused him to hesitate. He halted. He stood stone still in the darkness, his eyes staring ahead.

Then he saw what instinct had warned him of—one of the streaks of phosphorescence down by the entrance to the control room was slowly being occluded by something large and black, thirty feet or so from him.

In sheer reflex his finger tightened on the trigger of the torch. Blue flame sputtered blindingly from the torch's muzzle. And although the distance was far too great for the flame to have done any damage, the animal howl of hate and terror and pain he had hear before rang out.

Jake whirled about and ran stumblingly back the way he had come.

He paused, finally, and leaned against the wall to catch his breath. Looking back along the corridor he saw the streaks of phosphorescence clear and unclipped. The creature, whatever it was, must have fled in the opposite direction.

His mind racing, Jake reached out one finger and touched the streak of phosphorescence close behind him, realizing suddenly that as he had seen the monster obscuring the phosphorescence, so the monster had also seen him. A little of the shining stuff came away on his finger, which glowed ghostlike before him. A wild thought leaped and hammered in his brain.

He turned about once again with his back to the control room and began to work his way toward the clinic. He found the entrance to it and slipped inside. Easing the door closed behind him, he risked the fading power of the torch in one brief sputter of light. Immediately it was dark again, but as blackness washed in, his hand closed around the stem of the infrared lamp that had been used in treating the crewman with hives he had read about in the log. Lamp and torch in hand, he stepped back out into the corridor.

"The phosphorescence is

something that works for it, Pete," he whispered. "Let's see how it likes this!"

He switched on the lamp and began moving down the corridor. At one spot along its length he shut it off and paused to look back. What he saw then made him smile in the darkness with satisfaction.

**T**EN DAYS later, a survey ship and the *Molly B.* were taken in tow just outside Earth's orbit. Aboard was found a very large baboonlike creature, somewhat burned about the upper arms or forelimbs but quite alive, although huddled in the welded-shut greenery, from which the creature had to be drugged before it could be removed. And a very much alive and self-possessed Jake.

"The thing is, Pete," explained Jake cheerfully later to Albin Rhinehart, a fat, hard-faced man who was Director of the Investigatory Bureau, "the vegetarian Goopers the crew got acquainted with on the planet were simply a pre-form, from which emerged an occasional black sheep, possibly mutant variety, which took to carnivorous ways and acted as a natural control by preying on its own species. The mutants grew much larger and normally hid out in the forest areas. The forest areas that were lighted at night by this

fungoid which produced a marked zinc-sulphate phosphorescence."

"But—" began Albin.

"Let me tell it my way, Pete," went on Jake, perching on the corner of the desk and wiping his forehead. His fingers explored his hairline for an absent-minded second. "You don't happen to know any good repilators, do you? . . . No, I didn't think so. Well, to get on with it, these large, carnivorous, mutant Goopers preyed on the vegetarians. Evidently the crew of the ship took aboard one of the vegetarian variety, not knowing he was also a mutant pre-form. The change came about, or perhaps something during the trip triggered it, and the Gooper grew large and escaped. One night it started preying on the crew in the darkness." Pete's face became grim. "I found some of their bones, as well as some of the bones of the lesser laboratory animals. These mutant forms are evidently pretty intelligent."

"What makes you think that?" said Albin.

"Well," answered Jake, "judging from the reports of smashed lights and sobbing noises, this one had been out of his cage and back in again several times before he ran wild. Otherwise there would have been a report in the log to the effect that he had broken out. Remember those two

bars that looked all right but were actually broken loose?"

"Then what did happen, do you think?" Albin asked.

"I THINK," said Jake, "that the Gooper, following his instincts as well as his intelligence, went out first to spread phosphorescent fungus around the ship, then returned to his cage. Or he may have done it in several trips. Then one night, or at some particular time when most of the men were separated or asleep, it smashed all the lights, then hunted them down and killed them one by one. I found where one man had tried to hide in the ventilating blower, down in the greenery, and I suspect another must have been getting himself a cup of coffee when he was attacked."

"Biology reports the creature's eyes are particularly adapted to seeing under the conditions of this phosphorescence," commented Albin.

"It figures," said Jake. "It probably lived off the men it killed for a couple of weeks at least, and after that polished off the laboratory animals. But it was evidently pretty well starving by the time I came aboard, judging by all the loose skin about it."

"That fungoid phosphores-

cence is interesting," said Albin. "Evidently it fostered cultures in the forearm glands, which were active in the carnivorous beast, and which it distributed by rubbing the glands over surfaces it passed."

"A form of symbiosis, maybe," suggested Jake. He yawned and stretched.

"Well," said Albin, staring at him, "you seemed to have come out all right. How come the phosphorescence didn't help it get you?"

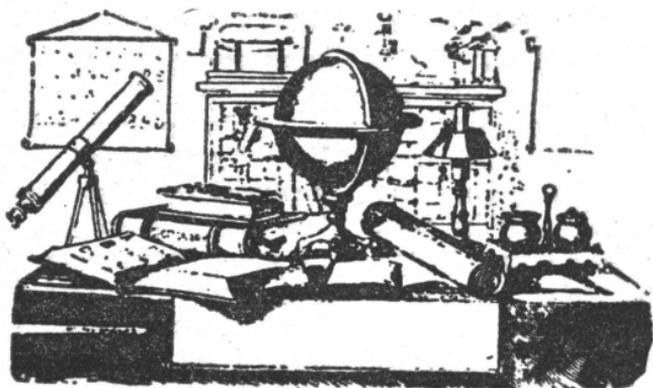
"That infra-red lamp I told you about, remember?" replied Jake, grinning.

Albin did not grin back. "I don't get it."

"Red light quenches phosphorescence. In the dark, the beast, for all its size, was more afraid of me than I was of it. It'd already had a taste of the cutting torch and it couldn't know I was about out of fuel. I herded it into the greenery and sealed it there." Jake cocked an eye at Albin. "But I'm surprised at you, not knowing that little fact about phosphorescence and red light, a man in your position. Maybe you ought to take a few night study courses, Pete."

"The name's not Pete," said Albin stiffly.

END



# science briefs

**M**ENTION a theory of continuous creation and most people will think of Fred Hoyle and astronomy. However, Dr. Sidney W. Fox of Florida State University makes the intriguing suggestion that even now life may be beginning anew. In a sweeping study of the nature of life, ranging from Darwin to current attempts to produce a living cell synthetically, Dr. Fox says that there is "increasing reason to believe that life can, or even must, arise in many places at many times." He suggests that we

may have observed many specimens of newly formed life but failed to recognize them, because they so closely resemble unevolved descendants of forms already here.

It may sound like sheer lunacy, but many stickville stories about the Moon seem to have something in them. It has been believed since farmers plowed with a pointed stick that planting was best at certain phases of the moon, the general idea being that what grows while the moon grows will grow best. Under

the waning moon, grain was cut, sheep sheared, manure spread, and eggs were put under hens. Under the waning moon you'd sow seeds, so they would sprout and grow with the moon. Now Dr. Rudolph Steiner reports that corn planted two days before the full moon was many times more productive than corn planted two days later. And in Canada, farmers report that their corn yield is a third greater when they plant at this time. And orchardists in England believe that apples harvested under the waning moon keep better when bruised than those picked when the moon is waxing. Theories, anyone?

Loran, the remarkable long-range navigation system used by the Navy and operated by the Coast Guard, may emerge in a brand-new suit as the world's best satellite tracker. At sea, loran users compare the time of arrival on shipboard of a radio signal received from three ground stations. To do this usefully, Bureau of Standards scientists at Boulder, Colo., have developed electronic clocks capable of slicing a second into a million parts. For satellite work, one or more transmitting stations would be added to the basic three, to give 3-dimensional positioning, and then two or more such systems may be synchronized to

give positioning within a few feet at ranges approaching two thousand miles. The new system was proposed to the NATO Advisory Group for Aeronautical Research and Development which met recently at Istanbul, Turkey.

**"The shrewd guess, the fertile hypothesis, the courageous leap to a tentative conclusion — these are the most valuable coin of the —"**

The what? The science-fiction story, obviously. Harvard's Prof. J. S. Bruner is, however, not talking about s-f as he goes on: "— the most valuable coin of the thinker at work, whatever his line of work." Prof. Bruner, in a new study called "The Processes of Education," is plugging for more understanding and use of that powerful and elusive element of thinking called intuition. He suggests that students be encouraged to make wild guesses, great leaps in reasoning. Maybe it would train him to acquire, control, and develop the intuitive ability. "Too stringent a penalty on guessing may restrain thinking of any sort," says Bruner. He (rather forcefully) adds, however, that though this kind of thinking may often produce the right answer, it will often — perhaps very often — produce wrong ones. So the development of intuition requires a willingness to make

honest mistakes, and to hold still for examination and analysis of the intuitive solution. Says the professor: "One who is insecure, who lacks confidence in himself, may be unwilling to run such risks."

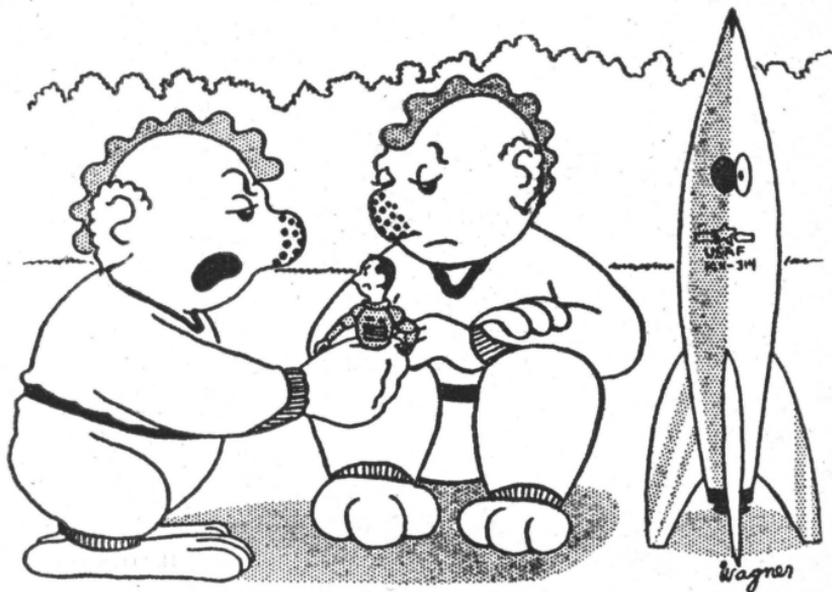
You may be aware that "specimens" of prehistoric men are not usually skeletons at all, but a length of thighbone, a fragment of jaw, or a couple of vertebrae from which careful scientists deduce, extrapolate, reason and construct the particular "man." The discovery of a whole skeleton, then, is an event of major importance. This happened in northern Iraq in 1953, when the skeleton of a prehistoric infant was found. In 1957 in the same place, a cave which has apparently been constantly occupied for the past 100,000 years, three adult skeletons were discovered, and it was concluded that they were Neanderthals. And within five days recently, three more turned up. Examination of these seven ancients has yielded some fascinating evidence. One of the adults was the victim of arthritis; you can tell that to your suffering Aunt Suzy. And another had his right arm cut off with a stone knife in what may have been the earliest of all surgical operations. Columbia's Dr. Ralph Solecki made the most recent find last summer. One of the Neanderthals is now

in Washington, D.C., in the Smithsonian Institution.

Every mechanical, electrical and electronic trouble-shooter has at one time or another wished that a little light would go on down deep in the vitals where he is searching. For Dr. J. M. Olson of Brandeis, the wish came true in his search for more clues in the fundamental mystery of photosynthesis. Inside living bacteria he discovered that the two chemicals that help "drive" photosynthesis, DPN and TPN, really do light up when they are working. The bacteria he used are sensitive to far-red light in the 8500 Angstrom unit area, and when they are receiving none of this red light, the DPN and TPN show a weird blue fluorescence. When the red light is beamed in, the intensity of the fluorescence increases, and gradually, after the light is out, the brightness of the fluorescence fades. Dr. Olson is of the opinion that these changes indicate when CO<sub>2</sub> is being processed into food by the enzymes.

Want to make a fortune and earn the gratitude of every scientist on earth? Find a way to collect, digest, index and distribute scientific reports, of which some 60 million pages were published during 1960. Want to guess what's in them?

END



*"I don't care what it claims, it doesn't look human to me"*

