

MAGNANTHROPUS

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SYNOPSIS

IN July of 1997 Jefferson Jarvis was driving along a super highway in his atom car heading toward a rendezvous with a man named Eamus Brock. Brock was known to all because he had developed a forcefield shielding for small atomic engines—used in cars, boats and aircraft. Some-time prior to this day Brock

had written a letter to Jarvis asking that he come and join him in his work. Jarvis had thrown the letter away, but now, for some inexplicable reason he was frantic to find Brock and take his offer.

Jarvis had stopped in a hotel for some sleep. Abruptly he was awakened by a thunder that





shook him from his bed. The walls around him collapsed, leaves, twigs and trees enveloped him. Then all was quiet as the grave. The world had died.

When grey daylight filtered through the sky he climbed one of the massive trees that had sprung up in minutes. Clinging to his perch some thirty feet from the ground, he could still hear an occasional earth tremor and an explosion, detonated on the air.

While wondering if he were the only one left alive, Jarvis reflected on his past. The year in the House of Correction where they had taught him to be a conformist, at least outwardly. In a society of automation work was outmoded for those under 15 & over 45. Jarvis had broken that law at 15. For that he was given the "treatment". They brainwashed him. This effected him even now, for he could not remember Eamus Brock's address, the one on the letter he'd thrown away.

More and more trees continued to spring up from the fissures in the ground. He climbed from one to another. There were dead among the ruins below him. He heard a whimper and found a young boy clad in his pajamas sobbing and wandering along. Toby Carter, the only survivor from a family of 5. Jarvis promised to look after him.

Walking along the highway they found other refugees. Jarvis became aware of how pitiable it all was. These people were truly lost, for they had not been permitted to think for themselves and all of a sudden they were torn from their world.

Among the throng there were ruthless thugs. For greater safety Jarvis and the boy took to the trees rather than follow the highway. The thick branches were so interwoven that it was not difficult to travel quickly on them.

Jarvis told Toby to hide while he went into town for some food. Toby said that he knew how to keep out of sight because Eamus Brock taught him when they used to play. They used to walk in the fields and talk, but that was all Toby could remember of Brock.

In town Jarvis gathered clothing and food for them. In the supermarket he found a young girl, about 25, crouching fearfully in the hope that some armed ransackers would not find her. Her name was Josephine Crane. He offered to take her along with Toby and himself.

THEY traveled westward, in search of Eamus Brock. All familiar landmarks had disappeared, swallowed into the ground which began to rise steadily, and their way led them farther into strangeness and an

unknown land. Jarvis was driven on by the hope that they would find Brock and once they did, all would be made clear.

Shards of rock littered the forest floor and what should have been the farmlands of midwestern America. The humus was thick and spongy underfoot. They began to wonder: Were they no longer on the Earth at all?

That night they camped and Jarvis looked up toward the sky. A moon appeared—something to connect him with the world he'd known. But his reassurance was short-lived, not one moon but two hung above him.

When Jo joined him and voiced her fear of these unearthly occurrences, his own uncertainty dissolved in an effort to reassure her that all would be well as long as they kept moving, westward to Eamus Brock.

They grew accustomed to the nightly storms of the forest. After much trekking the forest vanished and they came into a region of snow-capped peaks. Then they trod into gulfs and canyons. Once out of the forest game appeared, six-legged creatures with triple-jointed limbs—proof enough to Jarvis. Traveling in a land of plenty, they saw no other human being, only game animals, and darting in the blue depths of sky, hordes of huge, glittering butterflies, from whom

there rose a sound as of ethereal singing.

The relationship between Jarvis and Jo remained a simple one. Between them Toby was a bond of devotion. They poured their affection and energy into protecting and providing for him.

One night a travel worn man appeared by their fire. A former Lawyer named John Daniels, he told them that they were headed in the right direction . . . to Eamus Brock. Jarvis tried to get more information but the man fell asleep and in the morning was gone.

This rekindled Jarvis' hope. Shortly after they broke camp Toby found an animal that only faintly resembled a baby elephant. He named it Mr. Murchison and it followed them.

The butterflies continued to fly overhead and Jarvis made a mental note that they were much larger than any of their species on Earth. Awed, he watched as they paired off in a mating dance. One pair broke away from the others. Their song became exultant and they were oblivious to the danger that lay below them. Careening wildly on the gusty currents in the canyon, they were dashed into the ground. Those above them swooped down and began to gorge. Jarvis ran to the aid of the one survivor and was shocked to find it was no butter-

fly but a beautiful winged, naked miniature, female human being not twelve inches tall!

Whatever the origin of this creature, Jarvis felt sure it did not stem from the Tertiary apes. Its origin was unearthly, as was its appearance and very being.

They splintered the broken leg and made a basket in which they could carry the tiny creature. Was it human? Jo suggested that this might be what their descendants would look like a billion years hence. Still no answers.

Jo commented that the butterfly maid seemed to look at Jarvis with adoration. Jarvis shrugged this off as impossible, for the discrepancy in sizes, if for no other reason. They continued westward. Reaching a barren, rocky plain, they discovered that water was becoming scarce. There was no game among the rocks either. Mr. Murchison had disappeared. Later the animal returned all wet. They followed him to a pool and camped.

WHILE Jo was bathing the little butterfly creature, Toby told Jeff that her name was Eluola and that he could communicate with her. She was grateful to Jeff for saving her life from the Eeima. It was she who had made Mr. Murchison find the water for them. She would lead them to safety.

Through Toby, Eluola described what route they should follow. They must curve southwest to avoid the desert below and the sea people who trapped the Eeima with sticky nets in the treetops. To the southwest they would find grassy savannahs, water and game.

Her injuries mended and she flew above them. Toby explained to Jeff how he communicated with her, it was like a voice in his head. He said that Jeff could also understand her because he was a master, but Jo could not because she was a child.

Then Jeff heard her song within him and it voiced promise of delight such as he had never known. It was a song not of her throat, but of her being. There was something new inside him, born of his brief insight into the song of Eluola's soul.

She explained that this was the world of Eloraspon meaning World of Beauty. It was old and not Earth. Sometimes Earth people came there by accident and sometimes they accidentally returned. There were holes in the veil that separated Earth from Eloraspon, and they could sense them, but were forbidden to go through. When lone wanderers came through they tried to help them, but could never speak to them as they could to Toby and Eamus Brock.

Jeff seized the opportunity to

find Brock's whereabouts. But Eluola only knew of him because he was known among the Eeima. She had been told that he was of the Mighty and could come and go between Earth and Eloraspon as he pleased.

It was enough for Jeff to figure out what had happened to them. Earth and Eloraspon somehow occupied similar positions in different "dimensions". The earthquakes—of Elorasponian origin?—had caused the midwestern town in which he had stopped to "fall through" whatever it was that divided the one dimension from the other. Eluola had also told him that the earthquakes had caused the holes to close, so it was impossible now to tell whether Earth still existed on the other side of the nameless veil. There was some hope. If anyone could tell them how to return to Earth, it would be Eamus Brock.

Most of what Eluola told him was so symbolic as to be unclear to his basic understanding. He began to be overcome with her subliminal self. A new passion arose within him and he was sure he loved her.

Eluola continued to travel with them, until one day the Eeima came sweeping over the horizon and she rejoined them.

At first Jeff was heartbroken. Then he remembered that Eluola had said that the Eeima were the People of Love—and he knew

now that in Eluola he had found the very personification of Love. She was complete carnality, pure emotion winged, and her charm had snared him through his vulnerable undeveloped mind.

Then he realized how he had neglected Jo. He knew he was of her kind.

They would head toward the Great Cliffs which Eluola had described to them earlier. As they prepared to break camp Jo suggested that perhaps Jeff would prefer to go on alone. He apologized for his neglect and blurted out his love for her.

His avowal of love brought no material change in their relationship. There was too much to do, too far yet to go.

THE Great Cliffs surpassed their wildest conception. The sheer escarpment of them plunged away at their feet, opening an immense gulf in space that was blue and milky in its great depth. Before them, across the gulf of empty space floored with forest, the land rose again and heaped itself into mountains. Instinctively he knew that was his goal. There he would find the answers to his questions, the solution to the riddle of Eloraspon and Eamus Brock.

The descent to the beach was not easy, but he knew that the unencumbered beach was preferable to the forest.

In the air of Eloraspon they had grown thin and strong. Toby had developed from a 10 year old in a few months to a youth of 16. In Jo, Jeff recognized a symbol of the indomitable spirit of Mankind, the race Mother in person. The memory of Eluola had grown dim in his mind, replaced by his love of this woman.

One night while the others were sleeping, Jeff had wandered away to the beach. Jo joined him. He was grateful for her presence, and their love was fulfilled.

In the morning, at the great river, they built a raft to take them across. When it was ready they launched it and struck out against the strength of the river currents.

Just as they approached the spot Jarvis had selected for a landing the wind died and they were swept into the deadly current. Jeff's gun, his axe and all their packs were swept over.

The raft wouldn't hold through the night, they had to swim for shore. The sea was not so salt as the oceans of Earth and it was less buoyant. They had to stroke harder as they struck out for shore. Jeff strangled on brine and was dashed against rock, knocking him unconscious.

When he comes to, he is on the shore but there is no sign of Toby or Jo. As soon as it is light enough he searches for them among the rocks. He finds no

tracks, no trace, yet refuses to believe the sea claimed them. The air seems to be calling him. He gets the impression of a swelling throughout the breadth and depth of his soul, not a song of passion as that of the Eeima, but a nostalgic dirge of adoration pregnant with awe and holiness, of a people prostrate before their god.

He rushes on through a screen of leaves and finds himself in a natural cathedral. His sweeping glance takes in a cluster of huts and in the midst of the clearing are the singers and the object of their adoration. . . .

CHAPTER 12

IN the middle of the clearing, scarcely visible in the dim light, Jo and Toby huddled upon a five-foot high platform of poles. Around them, writhing and swaying with the unheard, soul-sensate melody of their dirge, weird monsters worshipped—Sea People, creatures of horror that had been beyond the powers of Eluola's description. They were like giant spiders, many-eyed, football sized bodies sheathed in chitinous armor and huddled in the midst of attenuated, hairy limbs, almost thread-like, several-jointed and clawed, twitching with the rhythm of their silent song.

Jarvis' mind struggled with

opposing symbols—the sight of horror conveyed by his eyes to his understanding—the sound of sublimity captured in the mesh of his soul. What manner of creatures were these, whose hideous bodies hid the spirits of god-men, and whose souls paid homage to the kinship of the Mighty?

They knew he was there, and they cleared a path for him to the dais, for such it was, their soul-song rising in a paean of spiritual triumph, and the song became thought in his mind, and the thought was interpreted in words . . .

“Hail the Mighty! . . . of the Mighty of Old! Again the Mighty walk upon Eloraspon and the Song of Power is heard again in the Land . . . of the Mighty in our midst!”

Jarvis took Jo tenderly down from the platform, and Toby hopped down beside him. She quivered in Jarvis’ arms

“There is nothing to fear,” he said quietly. “They are friendly.”

What more could he tell her? What more could she understand?

“Toby said that,” she whispered. “He said they talk . . .” She shuddered.

“Never mind,” he soothed. “We’ll leave here now. They won’t stop us.”

“Child of the Mighty . . . hail!” The salutation was adoration itself, and it made Jarvis feel

uncomfortable. “The Sea People are made glad, for the day of the Mighty is come again! Blessed are we who have seen, blessed are we who have known the touch of the Mighty and of the Child who is of Him who is Mighty, whose soul is filled with the Song of Power . . .”

Quickly, Jarvis led Jo along the path edged with squirming horror. What he had sensed emanating from the Sea People, he knew Toby had sensed also. But Jo had known none of the beauty of their souls, only the horror of their bodies.

“I don’t know why Jo couldn’t hear the song of the Sea People, Toby,” he said later to the boy. “She does not hear these things that you and I do. That does not make us better than her, nor her less than us. We are different, that is all. And because we can hear these things and she can’t, it means she is more of a stranger in this world than we are, and we must both protect her, and not let her worry about such things.”

THEY went on weaponless, marching along the seashore, until progress was stopped by a vast morass into which the sea thrust slimy, moveless fingers that swelled and dwindled with the tide, and stank of mud and nameless crawling things. The forest came down to the edge of

the swamp and marched into it, and the only possible way of crossing was by means of the branches, from tree to tree, if the trees extended far enough.

But before they dared move farther on their journey, away from the sea, Jarvis had to arm himself. Rifle and stone axe now lay at the bottom of the sea, but he still carried his knife at his waist. With it, he fashioned a boomerang from a bent fragment of a limb. A few practice throws before it was quite finished revealed errors in design, which he corrected. Then, in the final test, he cast the weapon strongly from him. It whistled across the flat face of the beach until about to plunge into the surf; then it shot suddenly upward in wheeling flight, hesitated at the apex of its trajectory, and, spinning still, came planing down to land at his feet. He smiled with satisfaction, picked it up and tucked it under his belt. From the level of the animal, he had once again elevated himself to the status of Man.

The Eeima, as Jarvis had known them through Eluola, had been partly familiar through legends of the fairy folk, of Queen Mab and Puck and the horde of "Little People". On the other hand, the Sea People were of an unfamiliar category. Why such beauty of soul had been blended

with such hideous physical trap-pings was a mystery known only to the Divine Mind that caused such things to be. Jarvis only dimly sensed what had happened on the world of Eloraspon, through the inevitable working of natural selection in the specialization of species through evolution.

Tossed on a bed of thorny thought, his mind prickled with questions. He reviewed all that he knew of this alien world, combined it with all that Eluola had managed to convey to him, and still he knew nothing. Of one thing he was certain, evolution on Eloraspon had followed spiritual paths along with the physical. The planet had developed not one, but several races of telepathic beings; and this somehow tied in with the obvious lack of culture of both the Eeima and the Sea People. What culture was possible when each race expressed only a single facet of being?

Eloraspon was either a very young world, or a very old one, he could not be sure which. If the planet were old, from what had the Eeima and the Sea People sprung? And if these two races existed, others must also, each probably reflecting single-facetted existence. And what did it all add up to? The Mighty, undoubtedly . . . and who were they? Every way he turned pre-

sented a question, and in no direction was there an answer.

THEY marched for three days along giant limbs of the forest, and in all that great wood no animal roamed. If there were fish in the black, tarn-like pools over which they flitted, he had no means of catching them. They had water only at night when it rained, and the store of smoked shellfish with which they had started was gone.

When glum daylight filtered into the forest depths on the fourth morning of their progress, Jarvis knew that they were lost.

Climbing the tree seemed more arduous than it had ever been, but he had to catch a glimpse of the sun to orient their direction. Perhaps, from the roof of the forest, he could see some end to their journey, or make up his mind to turn back before they starved in the limitless reaches of limbs and leaves.

The sky was cloudy when he reached the top, and it was only guesswork when he thought he detected the direction of the sun. It was, perhaps, because the sun was hidden that he searched the sky more minutely than he might have, and in the search detected the dancing motes high up. Had the sun been shining, they would have passed unheard and unseen. As it was, his sharpened senses detected a song in the distance

—faint and wavering—the soul-song of the Eeima.

He thought of reaching out with his mind and calling to them, but he had no way of knowing that he could be received so far away, or if the Eeima might not remain indifferent, even if they heard. Even as he watched, the tiny swarm flitted lower and lower and soon was lost behind the fringing tree tops, and he sank back in the crotch that held him, holding his aching head in his hands.

Then, suddenly, clear and strong, the magic of tempestuously passionate song smote again into his soul. He lifted his head and peered among the screens of greenery, calling out gladly in his mind to guide the winged one he knew was there, seeking him. Tendrils of fire embraced his brain with ecstasy, and a blaze of color fluttered into view, and he knew it was Eluola who had found him.

A flash of gold, of turquoise, blue and scarlet blazed against the leaden sky, and she planed down through the interstices among the branches and perched within arm's length of him, slowly fanning the air with her wings.

"Now I have found you again after much searching, Child of the Mighty," her sweet inward voice sang. "From the Mothering Pits northward I sought you,

over the sea of water and over the sea of grass. Upon the Great Cliffs I looked for trace of your passing, and found your cold fires, and the tracks your feet had made in the mud of river banks. In the forest I hunted you and found you not. In the land of the Sea People, among the deadly nets they spread for me, I looked and did not find. Many times my companions would have turned back, but I spoke and they stayed, until now that I have found you, they have gone their way and accompany me no longer. For the song of your soul is the Song of Power, and few among the Eeima can bear it in their souls, though to me it is as the quenching of a thirst to feel my being drenched with it."

The sense of Eluola's angelic song did not come to Jarvis as if it had been an outpouring of speech, but as sharp slivers and darts of thought punctuating the aria that trilled from her soul. She clung to her limb, peering gladly into his face, her elfin head tilted toward one shoulder, her wings glinting with every color, slowly fanning like butterfly wings.

Once, he remembered, Eluola's song had power to intoxicate him, to rend him with passionate desire. Though he heard it now gladly, it was only a song, nothing more, and he knew that his love for Jo, expressed at last, had

built around his heart an armor of love, proof against any dart of alien passion.

HE learned then why Eluola had left them. She had enjoyed her mating flight, from the consequences of which Jarvis had rescued her, and her time had been upon her when the flight of Eeima, migrating southward to the Mothering Pits, had come by, and so she had joined them. They had all been females, returning to the age-old pits to lay their eggs, and she had joined them for the self-same purpose.

What were the Mothering Pits, he wanted to know? In his mind, he caught a sensation of being in a tremendous, luminous cavern beneath the surface of Eloraspon, and he understood that there were many such, interconnected, through which the Eeima flitted, shining in the pale, cadaverous light that came from fungus-like growths covering walls, floor and ceiling.

These were the Pits where the female of the Eeima laid their eggs, then fluttered again to the open air, while the young, grub-like, fat-bodies, that developed from the eggs foraged among the glowing growths and in time became Eeima also, splitting their slug-skins and emerging full grown and winged, flitting forth to join the concourse of their kind in the bright upper air.

All this he gathered from Eluola in short moments; then, recollecting the desperateness of their own plight, he quickly told her of their progress into the swamp from the sea and made known the dire fact that he was entirely lost.

"Have no fear," she said. "Return to your companions below and I shall lead you from up here. The way you have been going is impassable, as you are going deeper and deeper into the swamp, and soon there will be no trees to carry you farther. But if you will turn southward now, you will come soon to the beginning of a grass land, where the ground rises to meet the towering hills in the west, where the city of Eamus Brock is and where you will find companionship among others of the Mighty whom he has gathered there."

Jarvis' mind reeled with this quickly delivered information, but Eluola could not clarify her meaning, even at his insistence. What was Eamus Brock, then—a man or a god? Who were the Mighty around him? What was this city to which she alluded but could not clearly picture in the music of her thought?

"Part of the way to the City of Brock I can lead you," she said. "The rest of the way must be traveled by you three alone, for not even I can bear the majesty and might of the Song of Power

that rolls from that mystic city in its cup in the mountains. No, I should die if I heard it too well; but from where I shall take you, you will find the way easily by yourself."

She sprang lightly into the air, bright-hued wings sweeping, and took up a dodging, flitting movement that carried her upward and out of the forest, into the clear upper air, and Jarvis heard the impassioned song of her soul ringing sweet and clear in his mind.

Slowly, he began the long climb downward to his waiting companions.

CHAPTER 13

DAYS and days and days of travel later, they rested on the flank of a hogback, its great ridge towering over them, in a forest of conifers—of more Earthly proportions. The ground was carpeted with brown needles among rock outcroppings, and a spring bubbled from a fissure where they camped.

"Tomorrow," Eluola promised Jarvis, "I will show you a camping place of the Mighty."

"The City of Brock?" he asked eagerly.

"Not yet, impatient Child of the Mighty! Here the Mighty camped in great numbers before the time of the Eeima, in the days of old, when only the

Mighty walked the face of Eloraspon. It is told among the Eeima that there were none of us winged folk then, no Sea People, and no one of the many others who people our world with us. Then, indeed, were the camping places of the Mighty many in number, and the number of the Mighty was plentiful without end."

"Is it still a city, then, this place you call a camp?"

"The remains of a city it is, Child of the Mighty. In the days and the years of the Mighty, this place was called Amenorha, and it was a place that shone upon the face of Eloraspon. It was a city, as you say, of light, which is the meaning of Amenorha, its name."

"Where are those Mighty now?" he wanted to know. "Is Eamus Brock one of them?"

"Not he, nor any others of the Mighty with him, for the Mighty of old are gone forever, and the new Mighty who walk the forgotten ways today are not the same as those who are gone. But their soul song is the Song of Power, which was the soul-song of the elder Mighty, and so we call them also Mighty who are here few in number today."

"What does Eamus Brock look like, Eluola? Is he a man—or something different from a man, as the Sea People are different from the Eeima?"

"I have never seen him, Jarvis

of the Mighty. None of the Eeima has seen him, for it is only his thought which has reached out and communed with the Eeima, bearing the song of his soul, which is the Song of Power. That being so, Eamus Brock is of the Mighty, and therefore we call him such, even as I call you so, even in your childhood."

"Then he *could* be a man of Earth—like me?"

"He could very well be. It is true that he is of Earth, though whether a man or some other Earth creature, I cannot say."

That settled it, then, Jarvis thought. The Eamus Brock of Eloraspon and the Eamus Brock of Earth, financial wizard, inventor and technician were one and the same. His thoughts raced with excitement. Eamus Brock had been Toby's childhood companion, had somehow exerted a spell over himself that had drawn him across two worlds to a puzzling rendezvous—what did it all mean? Where would it end? In sudden self-abasement, he wondered abjectedly if he had the strength of soul to withstand the knowledge that would have to be his before he could understand at all.

All living things, he thought, emit a soul-song, which characterizes them. Not just *living* things, Eluola corrected him. *All* things. Sticks, stones, water, air—all things had their song. That

he, Jarvis, was still a Child explained why he could not hear all these songs—only certain extra powerful songs of the living were his to hear. "You will learn," she assured him. "You will learn them all. Be content now with your Childhood, though tomorrow you will not hear the song of Amenorha, which rings forth from that ancient city with the melody of power. Many of the old places remain where the Mighty left them, and all sing the Song of Power in Things, which is similar to the soul-song of the Mighty themselves."

AMENORHA, City of Light, far from lived up to its name. About mid-morning, Jarvis led his party out upon the brow of a low bluff. He looked down upon an almost circular valley of shelving perimeter, like a bowl measuring miles across. Through the center of the bowl meandered a stream, tree-banked, reflecting the eye-wrenching blue of the sky. If Eluola had not told him that the remains of a city lay here, he would not have known it. He saw only a valley floor dotted with overgrown hummocks and mounds, among which his eye occasionally caught the glint of some bright shard. And though he listened with all his soul, he could not hear the Song she assured him was there, and which marked all such places as

this, wherein had dwelt the Mighty of old.

So this, Jarvis thought moodily, was Amenorha, built beside the sea in the long ago, before there were Eeima, when a race of preposterous beings called the Mighty populated Eloraspon. As Jarvis set his foot upon the way leading down the face of the bluff, Jo grasped his arm.

"Let Toby go down first and look around," she murmured. "I—I'd rather wait a little while."

Strangely enough, Jarvis understood her feeling, for he somewhat shared it himself—a reluctance to enter this ancient graveyard, manifested by a sensation of primeval fear that lifted the hackles at the back of his neck.

He motioned Toby ahead. "Go on down, Toby. We'll be down in a little bit."

The boy darted ahead, slim, graceful, burned by the sun to the hue and beauty of walnut uttering whoops of delight. Half sliding, half running, he descended in a hail of small stones and dust, Eluola fluttering over his head, and set off at a swift lope to investigate the nearest of the many mounds.

"The thought of the uncounted centuries hovering over this place kind of gets you, doesn't it?" Jarvis remarked.

"It isn't the ruins that scare me, Jeff," she said moodily, placing an arm around his waist. "I

can't put a name to what it is, but the ruins symbolize it. And in just what way eludes me. I *am* scared. Not of here and now, but of tomorrow and the day after. I —I don't know what it is!"

HE sat down and drew her down beside him.

"Once a kind of people lived here," she murmured dreamily, "as once there was an Earth where our kind of people lived. How did we come here, Jeff? What was it that sucked us into this alien world?"

He felt her need to cry, and he let her, holding her close against him for all the comfort he could afford her.

"Don't be afraid," he murmured. "We'll be joining Eamus Brock soon, and then all our worries will be over."

"Oh, God! It's *that* I'm afraid of!" she cried hysterically. "I could not dare to put it into words—but that's what it is—Eamus Brock!"

"Maybe I've misled you with some of my ramblings," he tried to reassure her. "After all, Eamus Brock is just another man—a man of Earth—like ourselves. This stuff about Song of Power and all that—well, I've tried as best I can to get across what Elu-ola has told me, but I guess it just isn't possible. What I think she says may not be what she is saying at all . . ."

Jo straightened, wiping the back of her hand across her eyes. She laughed shakily.

"There, it's all right now, Jeff. I was a fool to break down like that. I won't do it again."

"You had every right to," he said, "but I'm glad you feel better now. Shall we go down . . . into Amenorha?"

Viewing the remains close up, Jarvis supposed that a million years was not too short a time to guess the age of this ancient city. It was probably older. Toby came running up with glittering fragments of crystal that glowed with prismatic colors, and in sudden revulsion, Jarvis dashed them from his hand, knowing them for what they were—the petrified bones of a civilization long dead.

More such fragments were visible frozen into the face of the bluff behind them, taking on seeming outlines of doorways, of pillars, walls and towers, and he wanted to deny that this was a city at all, that the Mighty had ever been, and to assert that Time began and ended now, and who they were and where they were was all that there was to the endless puzzle of existence.

"Let's get out of this place!" he muttered gruffly, and led off at a fast pace, as if to cover in a few strides the half-day's march that lay yet between them and the op-

posite wall of the valley that sheltered Amenorha and its glittering, crystal shards of ancient glory.

CHAPTER 14

HOW old could a planet be? Five billion years? Was that the age of the Universe? Suppose it was five billion years. Eloraspon, then, was no older than Earth, but life must have developed here first . . . and more swiftly. Toby's phenomenal growth in the past few months demonstrated how quickly the organism developed to maturity on Eloraspon. The growth of a child from birth to adulthood could not require more than three or four years—five at the most. The thought was startling.

Had the Mighty been men? Their civilization had developed to its utmost a million years or more before Mankind had emerged on Earth to replace the dinosaurs and the Tertiary apes. But, if the Mighty *had* been men, why was Eloraspon now destitute of their seed, and whence had come today's freakish population—the Eeima, the Sea People and others that Eluola had hinted at? What had proved mightier than the Mighty and had destroyed them, leaving only fragments of their great cities to remind the passerby that others had been here before him?

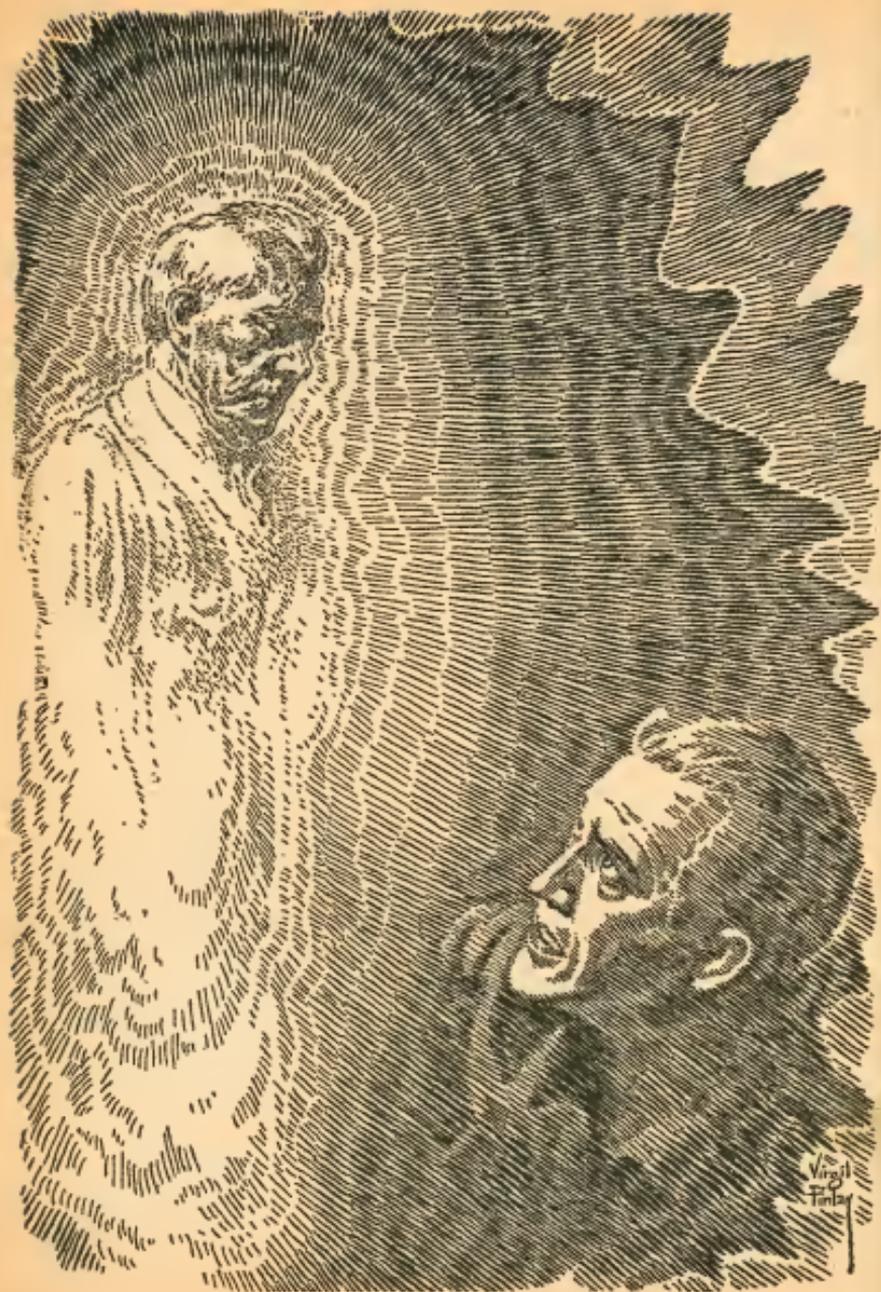
Eamus Brock was not of the Mighty of old, but of a new Mighty, and he had come from Earth. Somehow, Eamus Brock had discovered Eloraspon long before the cataclysm that had dashed Jarvis from one planet to the other, and he was as well known—or as little known, however you looked at it—here as on Earth.

They had marched many more days. Eluola fluttered down as the party paused for rest and perched on Jarvis' shoulder.

"The song of Eamus Brock's camping place is loud in my soul," she complained. "I have come as close as I dare." She fanned her wings with a quick, nervous movement that betokened physical distress. "I leave you now, Jarvis of the Mighty. Your path lies straight ahead, through the pass between those two mountain peaks. Beyond, upon a plain, lies the city you seek, at the foot of a new mountain, which was not there before the earthquakes. May the Song of Power fill your soul with gladness. We shall not meet again."

She rose fluttering, wheeled in a flash of color against the stark blue of the sky, then swiftly dwindled into a dot that vanished in the distance.

Eluola's leaving was to Jarvis like parting with something out of his soul. But her leaving also left him with something—the



problem of finding their way. The pass she had pointed out was no more than a few miles ahead and above them, and he wanted to push on, but the sun was low; and after some deliberation, he decided it would be best to camp where they were for the night.

On either side of them, mountains were piled, terrace on terrace, breathing down upon them a breath chilled by snowfields and glaciers. There was need for the warmth of a campfire following the setting of the sun.

THEY had eaten and the fire had died low. Jo and Toby lay curled on the ground by the glowing embers, sleeping. Jarvis, wakeful and nervous, got up and strolled into the blackness, where the sound of his companions' breathing was lost, and he had only glittering stars for company.

There were no moons tonight, and the gloom was intense, so that he had to feel his way among the rocks. When he could no longer see the glow of their expiring campfire, he sat on the hard stony ground, his mind filled with troubled thoughts.

The wind sighed on its way down the gorge, and the nip of it on his bare skin was exhilarating rather than chilling.

Then, in the dark, he saw a glow begin to form, that was like a phosphorescence. Ancient fears

awakened in his brain; the hair stirred at the back of his neck, and he half rose, supporting himself upon his hands.

The glow clothed a man, clad in a cocoon of light, and the cocoon seemed to drift toward him across the ground, and it was as if the man within the cocoon slept. The man's face appeared lined and old, yet it was strong with a strength Jarvis had never seen in a face before.

"Welcome among the Mighty, Jeff Jarvis," said the man, but his mouth did not open; it was as if the words formed themselves in Jarvis' mind.

Jarvis' heart skipped a beat. What strange denizen of Elorapon was this?

"I am Eamus Brock," said the apparition. "You have reached your goal—or shall have by tomorrow mid-day. This form you see before you is a projection—I am in my tower in the City of Brock, where we shall meet face to face tomorrow."

"You are Eamus Brock?" Jarvis muttered.

The vision smiled. "I am an old man and blind, but I am Eamus Brock, nonetheless. What did you expect—a virile, god-like being of some kind? I know what you have learned from the Eeima about the Mighty, and I can fancy what kind of figure you must have drawn in your mind of us. But we are only people—people of Earth,

saved from the cataclysm that destroyed our world."

"You are blind—yet you found me here in the dark? What kind of instruments do you have that can do that for you?"

"The Mighty need no instruments, Jeff. We see by other means than sight. I was born blind. I have never seen the sun, nor the twinkling of the myriad stars, as you have seen them. But I, in my way, know them as well as you do, for I have other senses that more than take the place of the five senses you know."

"What are you?" Jarvis cried, the words sticking in his throat.

"A man, as I said. What I do, I learned from the Mighty of Elosraspon, from the records they left hidden in their marvelous cities. But now is no time to discuss these things. We shall have time later. I have sent a man named Dave Mitchell to meet you and guide you to the City of Brock. Tonight, he is camped just over the ridge of the pass. You will meet him as soon as you start on your way in the morning. Good night, Jeff . . . until tomorrow."

There was suddenly darkness all around. The apparition had vanished. Jarvis slowly picked his way back to camp, his mind a confused jumble of thoughts.

THEY met Dave Mitchell just after dawn, when they had

climbed almost to the summit of the pass. He was about thirty, the same age as Jarvis, but taller and broader in the shoulders, though sparsely built with sandy hair and ruddy complexion. His clothes were sturdy and practically new, and, though soiled from mountain climbing, gave him an air of natty spruceness compared to the three-quarters naked, dishevelled, sun-browned and dirt-crusted appearance of Jarvis and his companions. However, there was no disapproval in the man's look as he sized them up.

"I heard you walked it from Missouri," he said affably.

Jarvis nodded, noticing that he wore a pistol belted to his waist.

"Handy for bagging small game," Mitch said, noting the direction of Jarvis' glance. "If there were any small game around here to bag."

Jarvis' eyes lighted up. He had spoken so seldom lately, that words came to his lips with difficulty, and his voice was harsh when he spoke.

"Hunting has been bad for many days," he said. He touched the boomerang in his belt. He fell into step beside Mitchell, and the party continued among the rocks.

Mitch said, "I noticed that thing. How in the world do you learn to use it?"

Jarvis showed his teeth in a grin.

"You damn near starve for about a week, then the knack comes to you!"

Mitch shook his head. "Brock told us about the Great Cliffs . . . oh, he kept good tabs on your progress, Brock did. We didn't think you'd ever find a way down."

"Good hunting up there," Jarvis grunted. "Best country you ever saw . . ."

He glanced around him at the barren mountain terrain in disapproval. He darted an inquisitive look at Mitch.

"How'd you get here—on Eloraspon, I mean? Tell me about it."

"Not the hard way—like you folks did. Brock brought me—I hired out as foreman of a construction crew."

"To go to Eloraspon?"

"I should have known I was going to Eloraspon?"

They had been picking their way down a twisting canyon, and suddenly Mitch stopped. "Better stop a minute and pull yourselves together," he said tersely. "As soon as we round this next bend, you'll see it."

"See what?"

Mitch wheeled and started off again down the stony ravine, which showed signs of coming rapidly to an end.

"The City of Brock!" he said over his shoulder.

THE ravine debouched upon a broken plain. At their backs, the twin sentinel peaks guarding the pass through which they had passed were like two teeth in a great, circular bandsaw stretching around the horizon. The plain was the bottom of a cup-like depression, surrounded by jagged, snow-summitted mountains.

At the northern edge of the plain, a bare, conical peak dominated the landscape, silhouetted against distant snow-fields. But it was none of this grandeur of view that affected Jarvis. What stopped the breath in his throat was the City of Brock.

It was not vast in breadth, that city, but the concentration of its towers made its beauty even more striking, for they shone with every color of the rainbow, and others that seemed to flow in a changing, patternless rhythm from blood-red through rose aquamarine, turquoise, blue and violet—living color that crawled and writhed upon the sight, enmeshing the needle-like spires, bridging them with trellis-like, curving walkways that curled from tower to tower in spirals of sensitive design.

"They say it sings," Mitch murmured in Jarvis' ear. "Can you hear it?"

"No," Jarvis muttered. "I can't hear it."

Mitch sighed with what seemed like relief. "Only the Mags can," he said. "You must be one of us Saps."

"Saps?" Jarvis was curious.

"People are Saps—they are Mags—Brock and the rest of them who live in that city. The people have a village outside the gate—log houses. We can't even enter the city."

"Why not?"

Mitch shrugged. "Mag rule. They say it's dangerous. We're not so sure about that. Most of us feel they're working on something in there they don't want us to know about."

"In there—in that city? Who built it? Was it here when you came?"

Mitch shook his head. "Only Mags could build a city like that. We leveled off the ground and fixed it up for them, then they took over—built it in a single night. It took us a long time to get used to it."

They picked their way over the rough, fissured surface of the plain, Jarvis so immersed in the scene and in the bits of information he gleaned from Mitch that he had wholly forgotten Jo and Toby, struggling along after them.

MITCH went on. "I was living in Nebraska when Brock first got in touch with me. I had a pretty good reputation as an en-

gineer, and that's what led him to me. He hand-picked the crew he brought here with him. Anyway, I came to the camp Brock had established—in Colorado, at the foot of Pike's Peak. None of us could learn anything—there were about a thousand of us. Some thought Brock was going to build an underground factory for producing atom-engines, and others thought maybe Brock was just the supervisor for some kind of government project—maybe another try with a moon rocket, or something like that. Anyway, we were wrong, about the moon rocket and all—Brock was right to keep his purpose from us. We wouldn't have believed him if he had explained the whole situation in detail.

"One morning, Brock ordered us to load all the trucks and half-tracks, get aboard and drive up to the top of Pike's Peak. For two days, the trucks shuttled up and down, carrying people, gear and supplies. Then there we were—all crowded on top and hanging onto the sides—and it was cold, even if it was July.

"Well, a lot of us didn't like it." He laughed brittlely. "We went to Brock with our grievance. He was living up there in a great, big modern trailer. We told him what we thought of the situation; then he told us. He told us the world was about to be destroyed and that he had saved us. That he

was going to take us to a new world, where we could start all over again. He talked on and on, and the more he talked, the more disgusted we became. Most of the men had their families along, and it was miserable for them up there, believe me. Here we had come from all over the U. S., lured by the promise of high-paying jobs, only to find we'd hooked up with what we thought was some kind of a crank. A real nut, believe me!

"We'd have walked off the mountain then, except we knew it would take days to get all that stuff down again; so we told Brock that next morning we'd start taking the things back down the mountain, and when we got all his stuff down again, we were quitting—every last one of us.

"I thought at the time he was awful calm about it. He agreed quite readily that we were free to do just that in the morning, and he was sorry he had put us to so much trouble. He was just lulling us, of course. Because, in the morning, there wasn't any Earth for us to go back down to.

"The Disaster struck that night, as you very well can remember. The mountain jumped like all the volcanoes in Hell were erupting. There was a hurricane of wind, and the rain slashed down, and the sky was lit with a

continual flashing of lightning. The mountain rocked and heaved like it was alive. People were screaming, trucks and gear were tumbling down the side of the mountain—then over all that racket, we heard Brock's voice on the P. A. system. He told us to hang on and pray, it would only last a few minutes. Certainly, in a few minutes it was over, and there was only the rain and the lightning and the thunder, that lasted the rest of the night.

"The next morning, we walked down the mountain and found ourselves on Eloraspon."

"You don't mean you walked down Pike's Peak and found yourself here—just like that?" Jarvis put in.

Mitch nodded. "Yes, we did. Just as I said." He speared a lean finger northward. "See that molehill behind the City of Brock?"

Jarvis' glance swung to the bare, low peak he had noticed earlier, at whose foot rose the spires of the City of Brock.

"That's all that's left of Pike's Peak," Mitch said.

CHAPTER 16

MITCH'S calm announcement was a shock to Jarvis. *That insignificant upthrust from the plain was mighty Pike's Peak? It was a mountain that had not been there before the earthquakes,*

Eluola had said. Then, like the midwestern town where Jarvis' adventure had begun, the tip of Pike's Peak had also been thrust into the domain of Eloraspon and left there. And where was the Earth?

He puzzled over these questions with Jo after Mitch had left them in the cabin which had been assigned to them. There were many cabins like this one—rude huts, mostly, built of logs that had been chain-sawed in the distant mountains and trucked here by half-track.

There was a community kitchen with a large dining room where the population ate in shifts, a combination church and community hall, and several warehouse buildings where supplies were stored. This comprised the "village", and Jarvis had ample opportunity to look it over.

He had left Jo and Toby at the cabin, and, returning, he found Jo alone, resting.

He said, "A real luxury to be able to stretch out on a bed, isn't it?"

"I'm really more tired than I ought to be," she confessed.

"Happy?" he asked.

She knew to what he referred. She nodded. "Very happy, Jeff."

"You're not afraid any more?"

Her look clouded momentarily, then cleared; and she smiled.

"No—truthfully, Jeff, I'm not afraid any more!"

"You're awfully sure of yourself," he grinned playfully, "but I'm glad you feel that way."

"It's being tired that makes me feel happy and unafraid."

"I don't quite follow you."

Do I have to draw you a picture?"

He sat on the edge of the bed, leaned over her and kissed her, his thoughts mainly still on the iridescent city of Brock.

"I didn't realize you were an artist, child. Draw away."

"Jeff . . ." She hesitated.

"Hmmm?"

"Jeff, I'm going to have a baby!"

Words came out of him explosively. "The hell you are!"

"Your baby, Jeff!"

"Mine? Good grief!" He ran a shaking hand through his hair, then suddenly grinned and seized her up off the bed into the grip of his wiry arms.

"Are *you* happy about it, Jeff?" Her voice was muffled against his chest.

"Happy?" he caroled. "Delirious, kid! When's it going to be? Think it will be a boy?"

She laughed. "One question at a time, boy! These things take time, you know. But I can't promise it will be a boy. What would you think if it were a girl?"

"I'd think hallelujah," he chorled hugging her. "Of course, if it's a boy, there's an awful lot I could teach him . . ."

"That you couldn't teach a girl?"

He realized abruptly that she was serious, that she was worried whether she would bear him the man-child he wanted. He shook her gently and playfully.

"Just don't you worry about that. So if it's a girl, I'll teach her—think a girl can learn to throw a boomerang?"

Her smile was shy and proud.
"With *you* to teach her!"

MITCH called at the cabin. There was a strange look on his face.

"Do you know John Daniels?" he asked.

"A big colored fellow?"

Mitch nodded. "Lawyer from Joplin, Missouri. He's at the city gate—asked me to fetch you." There was a peculiar look in the engineer's expression.

"We met briefly in the wilderness," Jarvis explained. "But he couldn't be here already. He was on his way north when I saw him, and we came as directly westward as possible. How in the world did he get here so fast?"

Mitch shrugged. "Daniels is one of the Mags. You're supposed to go with him and see Eamus Brock—that means you're a Mag, too."

"I? Oh, no, Mitch! See here. I talked with a projection of Eamus Brock last night, on the other side of the pass, but I don't

know anything about this Mag business."

"You and the boy," Mitch insisted stubbornly. "Brock called the boy in an hour ago. And now he's asking for you. Only a Mag can enter the city and live—that's what they tell us. Come along. I'll take you to Daniels."

Jarvis went with him, after saying goodbye to Jo. Her eyes followed him as he went out of the cabin. So he was a Mag, Jarvis thought. And Toby was a Mag. What was a Mag? What he and Toby were—telepaths! It was convincingly clear just now. And Jo? She was not a Mag. She had not demonstrated the telepathic ability he and Toby had—and Eluola had said she was different from them—had called him Jarvis of the Mighty. So what, then, was so mighty about the Mighty?

He turned on Mitch. "I've got a feeling the Mags aren't very well liked out here, Mitch. What's the story? You're acting differently toward me now than you did this morning."

Mitch shrugged, shamefaced. "Nothing personal, Jeff. Maybe we Saps just owe the Mags a lot and resent it. Or maybe we resent being segregated—into our little ghetto, or colored district, as it were. Though there's nothing racial about the Mags—there's all races among them, as there are among us. But the

Mags *are* different from us, in a way I don't understand—and that makes *you* different from us. Just before the City of Brock was completed, I saw a dog chase a cat, and the cat ran into the city area. I refused to believe what I saw—there was just a puff of light, and the cat vanished utterly. Of course, that brought all the Mags on the run, and we received a solemn warning then and there never to trespass or . . .”

“Or what?”

“Or the same thing would happen to us. Brock told us that as we are safe in our environment, the Mags are safe in theirs. But the Mag environment is not compatible with the Sap physical make-up. Oh, I didn't dig half what he said—but I know enough to keep out of the City of Brock!”

JARVIS felt a thin worm of fear crawl along his sinews. Mitch was so earnestly sincere, he knew that the engineer told the truth. But he, himself, was only human, he reasoned. What were these Mags, then, if not supermen who required a different kind of environment than earthly beings? Then what would happen to *him* when he trespassed on that alien environment?

“It is not an environment alien to you, Jeff, for you are a Mag, and the environment of the City of Brock is compatible with the mind of the Mag.”

The words formed silently in Jarvis' mind, and with them he had a feeling of the presence of John Daniels. He felt warmth and welcome in the intruding thought, but the city was still a quarter of a mile away, and he could not see the Negro.

He said to Mitch, casually, “The Mags are telepathic—that's what makes them different from ordinary people.”

“More than telepathic, Jeff.” Daniels' voice sounded again in his mind. *“Our minds are to us what their arms and legs, their machines and their weapons, are to them.”*

They were approaching the gate. Jarvis said, “Mitch, what is a Sap?”

“If you haven't guessed by now,” Mitch growled, “I won't be the one to tell you—Eamus Brock undoubtedly will.”

“Don't guess, Jeff. Sap is short for homo sapiens. You don't belong to the human race, Jeff. Mitch does. That's why he resents you . . . us. He can't help it. It is a trait of homo sap to fear and distrust anything he does not understand—anything that is different. But we are your people. We understand you, and you will learn to understand us. The gate of our city is open to you.”

Passing through the gate was like stepping from air into vacuum, Jarvis' thought—no, more like passing from Hell into Para-

dise. The feeling was profound, indescribable. It was not the same as it had been. He was here, nowhere, and everywhere at once. Daniels was beside him, in front of him—on all sides, and even inside. There was a oneness to be experienced that he had never knowledged before.

"It's dark," he said confusedly. "No—it's light! It—it's both at once and neither. I—I'm alone . . . yet I feel you, John Daniels, and many, many others . . ."

"You are a newborn infant, Jeff Jarvis," Daniels assured him. "How does a baby feel when it first emerges into the world? The same way you feel right now. You can not separate space and time, because they are one, and you have not yet learned to achieve the psychological distinction of one from the other. But you will grow, Jeff, like a baby grows. You will crawl a while before you walk erect among the Mags, but you *are* a Mag, and don't ever forget it!"

"I can't seem to understand anything," Jarvis commented, dismayed.

"God will bring you understanding, as He brought understanding to Eamus Brock. Nothing is changed, Jeff, except environment. All the other true things, like God, remain true, even here."

"God—here?"

"I thought this place *was* God

when I first entered," Daniels avowed. "Now I know it's just the closest place hereabouts to God, but that's a mighty big comfort."

"And Eamus Brock is—?"

"No more than the rest of us—except he's the leader of the Mags. Don't look for anything supernatural here, Jeff. But I'm just a lawyer—and I'm not good at explaining things like this. You ready to see Eamus Brock?"

JARVIS felt a sensation of peace, drifting peace. The soft, flowing colors of the city soothed him in their bath of iridescence. And the muted melodies of countless human beings—no, not human but *more* than human beings—that the city housed surrounded him and permeated him with a pulse of the ultimate in life. He felt the presence of them en masse and individually, and heard for the first time in his soul the throbbing symphony of the Song of Power, which was the soul-song of the Mighty.

They were the Mags—they were the City. There were all races among them, men, women and children. And they were all kin to him. He recognized that kinship with a deep pang of gladness. He accepted their oneness with him, relinquishing his own individuality, glad to be home at last.

He was alone in one of the tall-

est towers in the city. Without explanation, Daniels had left him. Or had the lawyer been with him at all? Jarvis had no physical sensation of being anywhere. And then he saw that he had company—a man shrouded in a glowing, cocoon-like garment. Jarvis went over toward him and the man turned. The lined face and sightless eyes—Eamus Brock!

Brock smiled. "Sit down, Jeff. I'll be with you in a moment—as soon as I finish recording my thoughts of the day. But let me insulate you first—I'm afraid this must be terribly confusing to you."

Jarvis felt suddenly at ease, well placed, with two feet on the ground. There was a chair by him and he sat, noticing the appointments of the office in which he found himself. Brock sat at a large desk that had a recording machine of some kind on it, to which he was addressing himself. It all seemed quite normal and business-like.

Brock concluded his task at the machine, waved his hand, and the recorder vanished. He bestowed another smile on Jarvis.

"This is a trying period for *Magnanthropus*," he explained, "and generations in the future will be grateful for my daily thought recordings. There is so much being done, and so much to be done."

"I'm grateful for whatever you did to clear away my confusion," Jarvis acknowledged.

"On the contrary, I simply re-confused you," Brock retorted amiably. "For the first time in your life, you were thinking clearly, only you could not realize it. I re-established your ordinary environment of confusion, to which you are accustomed."

"If this is confusion," Jarvis exclaimed, "spare me clarity, please!"

Brock laughed. "You will learn—I cannot tell you how, but you will. Perhaps I can guide you a little—as a parent guides a newborn baby. But you will find your own way of learning, and you will grow up among us yet."

Jarvis ranged his glance around the room. An air-conditioning unit purred in the window. The floor was thick and soft with carpet. Panelled wood walls reflected the overhead lights. It was all quite natural and normal, and Brock was telling him that none of this was real—only a vision conjured in his mind to stave off from his senses what reality was actually like.

"I didn't guide you half-way across North America to make fun of you," Brock said seriously. "Nor have I time, myself, to instruct you in the ways of the Mags. But I think your first contact with the Mag environment

is best made through me. We knew each other years ago, Jeff, when you were a child. I took those memories away from you and they will never come back. When they took you away to the House of Correction, I believed I had made a mistake in you, and I renounced you. I now sincerely apologize. I was wrong in thinking that a true Mag should know enough to conform, but now I realize that you have something else—an indomitable kind of courage that even many Mags do not possess.

"It was only because you were a Mag at all that I gave you the drive to find me. Now I am glad I did."

"You directed me to find Toby and bring him to you," Jarvis said.

The blind man nodded. "You are wondering, if I could do that, why I did not reveal myself to you. I could have, but I chose not to. For one thing, I was curious as to how you would get along by yourself—not merely curious, I was beginning to have plans for you. I had to see how you could prove yourself. And then there was the girl . . ."

"Jo?"

"Yes. You know, of course, she is not a Mag? You made yourself responsible for her, and I quickly had a view of the kind of man you were. You wouldn't have left her behind to come to

me by means faster than you could travel—"

"I'm afraid I don't understand . . ."

"You may have heard it called teleportation. There are other names. But we could not have brought Jo that way, so it had to be as it was. But all this is beside the point. You have many questions to ask, and you won't learn anything if we skip around at random. Listen and I will tell you what you want to know . . ."

Eamus Brock leaned back in his chair and folded his hands across his stomach. He looked like a tired old man, sleeping, but the "voice" that sounded in Jarvis' brain was full of vigor and strong.

IN Jarvis' mind a picture of the Universe grew. He understood things he had not known, or had only guessed, before. Brock led him from the familiar concept that matter is not entity, but only energy in another form, to other concepts upon which Jarvis had never speculated. What was that which was to energy as energy was to matter? It was nothing less than thought. So that from thought was made energy and from energy, matter, and so the Universe was made.

Thought was the primal drive behind the creation of the Universe, the matrix in which both energy and matter found being.

Brock did not profess to know, or even to understand, what primal Mind was. It had had many names in the history of Mankind—the one most familiar to Jarvis was God.

The very concept of mind was infinite, Brock told him. But infinity implied more than endlessness. It also meant numbers without end. If Mind could conceive of such a thing as a Universe without end, it could in the same effort conceive universes without number.

Jarvis tried to visualize an infinite number of simultaneous universes, and failed. For every star in the sky, there was an infinite number of identical, or almost identical stars, in an infinite number of identical universes. He wrestled with the concept, thinking that all universes occupied the same place, but knowing they were not in the same space. His brain whirled dizzily.

Brock simplified. Imagine the Universe of Earth and the Universe of Eloraspon, co-existing in separate spaces, each the same except for a thin differential in concept.

What was the blind man trying to convey? Not universes simultaneous in space. Not universes simultaneous in Time. But universes *simultaneous in concept!*

"I discovered Eloraspon the

year I was fifteen," Brock said. "When *you* were fifteen, you were in the House of Correction . . . for being a fool. But I have forgiven you that, and we shall speak of it no more. I was always blind, you see, and I was a Mag. I had the mind of *Magnanthropus* and, in my dark world, I had little else to do than learn to use it. I first reasoned out the probability of simultaneous universes. Once I had my theory, I attacked the problem both mathematically and conceptually. Where mathematics failed, my brand of conceptual reasoning went straight to the truth—and I literally *thought* my way through the division of concepts that separates Earth's Universe from that of Eloraspon.

"I had a freedom of movement it would be difficult for you, at this stage, to realize. And my capacity for discovery and learning was correspondingly great.

"I was enchanted with Eloraspon. I made contacts—telepathically—with various of its people.

"The planet, I learned, was slightly larger and warmer than Earth. The entire Elorasponian solar system, in fact, was an almost exact counterpart of our own."

"But Eloraspon has *two* moons!" Jarvis objected.

"You mean there are two moons in the sky of Eloraspon,"

Brock corrected. "One is the original satellite of Eloraspon—the other is the moon of Earth! Perhaps now you are getting an inkling of the disaster that overtook the Earth and the entire Solar System. You see—there has always been a certain instability in the Mind matrix involving the conceptual regions of Earth and Eloraspon. What happened was simply this: Eloraspon and its Solar System materialized into the terrestrial Universe—but partially, not completely."

Jarvis understood. Earth and Eloraspon now occupied the same space at the same time, and it was clear to him how this was possible. The thought of it took his breath away, and dread made his heart beat a swift tattoo.

CHAPTER 17

ONCE before in the ages of Earth, this same disaster had occurred, Brock told him. It was at that time that the moons of Earth and Eloraspon had separated from simultaneity. But in the case of the planets, the simultaneity had both times been absolute . . . and Eloraspon, larger than Earth, had encompassed the latter, its atoms materializing within the empty, inter-atomic spaces of the physical structure of Earth.

"The planets are not exactly

congruent," Brock explained. "In a few isolated spots on the surface of Eloraspon, the surface of Earth shows through—such as your midwestern town and this isolated tip of Pike's Peak. There are a few other areas hereabouts, some in Central America, a portion of Tibet, and so on. Before the disaster, I directed men and women of the Mag race to these areas—that was how you found yourself where you did when catastrophe struck. But only a few thousand were saved, and most of these are now here in the City of Brock. Within a few days, the last of them shall have come trickling in."

So there was no hope, Jarvis thought, of ever regaining Earth. That world was dead, buried with all it contained within the body of Eloraspon. What few of Earth's billions that still lived owed their lives to Eamus Brock.

"At the time," Brock said, "that the moons of Earth and Eloraspon were jarred out of simultaneity, everything that lived upon the Earth was destroyed. And everything that lived had been the monstrous lizards, the tree ferns, and the trilobites that had inhabited the Earth in prehistoric times. But the situation was different on Eloraspon; for here a race of remarkable beings had developed. They were humanoid. They were similar in many ways to the race of Man I

call *Magnanthropus*—Man the Mighty.”

Eloraspon, then, was Earth in simultaneity, but it was not Earth. Its destiny had been predicated on different circumstances than Earth's, circumstances that lay on the other side of a thin veil of thought, hence had to differ.

When the first germs of life had begun to swim in the tropic seas of Earth, in remote, ante-Devonian times, Eloraspon was already populated with a race of intelligent beings who called themselves the Mighty. The path of the race had been similar to that of Man—rising through stages of social and technological advance to a high state of civilization, but incredibly faster than Mankind's development.

What was it that distinguished Man, Brock asked, from the beast that fathered him? What was it, more than a reasoning brain, that differentiated Man from the animals? Jarvis suggested that a soul made the difference, but Brock pointed out that the Mighty had proved that even *things* have souls . . . afterlife in the conceptual thought-matrix of the universes.

Man was an unfinished animal. That was his difference. An animal is born into the world complete, ready to cope with its environment—furred, clawed, an elemental machine.

But Man came into the world not equipped with anything with which to fend for himself. His jaw was puny, his teeth useless. He had no talons to rend his prey, the grip of his hands was weak. He was slow on his feet and he had not the stamina of the beast. Man was a frail weakling, equipped with only a mind.

WITH the power of his mind, Mankind had *thought* his way to mastership of the world. The environment into which he had been born was one that would not accept him. So Man made his own environment. He had no claws, so he learned the use of stone and club. He had no fur, so he clothed himself in the skins of the beasts he slew. When animals fled the fire set in the forest by lightning, Man approached it and made use of it.

Man did not adapt to environment. He adapted environment to himself. Therefore he survived. The same series of evolutionary events took place on both Earth and Eloraspon, each in its own time.

In the beginning, Man had been born of beast because of a slight shift in the parent-genes. More recently, a similar shift had occurred—and a new race had been borne of Mankind, the race of *Magnanthropus*, Man the Mighty!

Magnanthropus was not new,

geologically speaking. He had occurred many times. Brock claimed to have discovered sporadic incursions of the Mag race even in early historic times, perhaps even in prehistoric times. To him, every great man in the history of the race was suspect of having been in truth a Mag.

But the rate of emergence of the Mag race had recently been accelerated—possibly by the effects of atomic bomb tests on human genes during the 'fifties and 'sixties of the last century Earth would ever know.

The new race differed from *homo sapiens* only in relative mental ability—the difference was wholly conceptual. Man's brain from the beginning had been capable of reasoning, imagining, and creating. Wholly specialized man of the pushbutton age had no longer needed such a brain. Mankind had at last created an environment wholly and perfectly adapted to himself.

Magnanthropus, on the other hand, was characterized by his inability to fit into the mold created by *homo sapiens*. Jarvis had proved that point to his own sorrow.

The Mag mind, however, was not limited to the environment of its predecessors. It could and would create its own environment, which was typified here in the City of Brock on Eloraspon. Man's swansong had been inex-

orably begun, when disaster had forestalled the event of his dissolution by natural means.

"Under ordinary circumstances," Brock said, "the Mag race might have taken hundreds of thousands of generations to realize its full potentiality. Perhaps, somewhere in the interwoven matrices of thought comprising the numberless universes, there is a spark of Intelligence that guides these destinies to a rightful conclusion. I like to believe that there is, and that God is guiding us right now along the perilous path we must tread."

The concept of peril delivered by Brock startled Jarvis. There was vehemence in the blind man's thought—even dread.

Brock shook himself, as if to disavow the thought.

"But let me not digress. I meant to explain that Mankind measured its expansion upon a horizontal plane, instead of reaching upward. Man dissipated his genius and spread his intellect thin in mere acquisition of things. He left unborn within him the seed of greater things than any he had ever allowed to flourish. Man's self-created environment was not worthy of him. He housed the gem of intellect in a cheap shell of chrome and plastic and developed a recognized 'guilt feeling'—his subliminal recognition of his own shortcomings. He had substituted

technology for culture, possession for civilization, and denied the values of humility and spiritual enlightenment. It was time, indeed, for *Magnanthropus* to dispossess him!

I DISCOVERED the ruined cities of the Mighty on Eloraspon, and in one, in the southern hemisphere, I found the records of those ancients. Those records are still there, engraved in eternal thought upon subterranean walls of what once was the mightiest of all mighty cities.

"I read those records left by supermen, and found that their minds were more than devices for thinking. They were conceptual integrators, able to formulate a concept and create from it. From those records, I learned the things that made me rich on Earth and provided me with the money I required to continue my investigation of Eloraspon. I worked for many years, unraveling the records, but I could encompass only a few in all that time. Of the rest, I have made transcriptions, and these, future generations will have to decipher.

"The concept of simultaneous universes was not a strange one to the Mighty. More, they were cognizant of the danger inherent in the instability of such simultaneity. They knew that the least overbalance of one force upon

another could precipitate an alien world, or its entire system, into this universe. Eloraspon was only one such precariously balanced world.

"They were familiar with Earth as it was then, too. It was a wild, rank, steaming planet, peopled by brainless saurians. And conceptual integration forecast for them an imminent merger of Earth and Eloraspon. They could not *predict* what would happen when the merger took place, but they could reason what probably would happen. They feared a nova, as the dense mass of the Elorasponian sun attempted to merge with the equally dense mass of the terrestrial sun.

"They made plans to leave their world, and they built tremendous ships to carry them. But there were some who refused to leave their homes, preferring certain destruction to the certainty they would face in the void of space. Those who departed never returned. The descendants of those who remained are the Eeima, the Sea People, the Bronze Men of Surandanish, and many others. The spirits of these present inhabitants remember still the god-like qualities of the Mighty, but their minds have long since degenerated and their spirits have developed along narrow paths of individuality.

"But the dreaded nova feared



MAGNANTHROPUS

by the Mighty did not occur. That is why we can be here today. Do you know what a nova is?"

JARVIS knew, but only the effect of one. Brock explained that a nova is caused whenever a sun from simultaneous space merges with a sun of terrestrial space. In the dense heart of a star, he pointed out, there is no such thing as inter-atomic space. The protons, stripped of their electrons, are packed together in a furnace of incalculable heat and pressure.

The universe contains many nova-type stars, Brock said. Terrestrial astronomers learned long ago to classify them spectroscopically. The bright-line spectrum of Earth's own sun, even, was found to be quite similar to that of known nova-type stars. Up to the destruction of Earth, many theories had raged concerning the cause of novae. In some cases, Brock declared, the space strain was periodic in nature, producing a cycle of mergence and drawing apart, and this manifestation of cyclic instability resulted in the waxing and waning of light output of variable stars. Not all stars, however, could be novae. The condition is limited to unstable points in the Universe.

Unfortunately, Jarvis realized, Mankind happened to inhabit one

of those points of instability.

"That is the danger we face now," Brock assured him grimly. "What did not happen in the days of the Mighty is bound to happen now—unless we prevent it. You have noticed how bright is the sun—how warm is the season, which is actually midwinter! At this altitude, we should be buried deep in snow! Very soon, now, the balance will be fully overcome. There will be a mergence of suns . . . and nova!"

Jarvis felt sickness throbbing in his stomach.

"Can't you do something? *You* are Eamus Brock!" he cried.

"Even the Mighty of old fled before the danger," Brock reminded him, "and they were many. We are doing what we can—no adult Mag sleeps. Our brains are twenty-four hours a day on the job. If there is a way to defeat destiny, we shall find it. I have that faith . . . in God and *Magnanthropus!*"

CHAPTER 18

JARVIS lived in the village, with Jo, and went to "school" in the city. Brock had not been willing to grant him that, until he had explained that Jo was pregnant.

"Your child will be a Mag, like you," Brock had told him. "That is a point we must not neglect,

whether we are trapped by the nova or not. Think of it, Jarvis—a child of your own! A newborn infant, born to the destiny of *Magnanthropus!*"

"If the sun turns nova," Jarvis pointed out bleakly, "it won't matter if my child is a throw-back to the Tertiary apes."

"We must continue to rear our children, and teach them," Brock said solemnly, "even if we had absolute proof the sun will nova tomorrow."

It was the unborn child, then, that gave Jarvis extra privilege. Brock insisted that Toby remain in the city.

"I have said," Brock told him kindly, "that I have made plans for you. If those plans should bear fruit, you will profit from living in the village. As for Toby, he is mine. I accept him among my people. He must learn swiftly what it is to be a Mag."

It irked Jarvis, living in the village, among the villagers whom he counted as his own people, to be able to say nothing of the impending nova. Brock had sworn him to silence and secrecy. He must not speak of it, even to Jo. He understood, of course, Brock's concern for secrecy. It would do no good to upset the villagers with that information, and there was nothing *they* could do to avert doom. Only Brock and his *Magnanthropi* had the potential power to turn aside the inten-

tion of Fate . . . if they could exercise it in time!

It did not take Jarvis long to realize that Mitch was his friend, even though the lanky engineer had expressed bitterness at discovering him to be a Mag. It was he who suggested that Jarvis be admitted to the governing board of the village, and so Jarvis became junior member of the village council.

"Mitch, why don't you trust the Mags?" Jarvis asked him.

Mitch scratched his lean jaw. "Not so much the Mags as Eamus Brock, Jeff. Remember—he kept the truth from us—when he brought us here."

"That was to save your life!"

"Even so, it was a lie. I think he would lie again if he thought it was for our own good."

"What could he possibly be lying about now?"

Mitch shrugged. "We hear a lot of silence out of the City of Brock these days. What are they covering up? I've even hinted to you a few times, and you close up like a clam. What kind of a lie is it that's too big to be uttered?"

Jarvis felt flustered. "Look, Mitch. You're wrong! Brock isn't hiding any lies, and he isn't covering up. There's a lot of work to getting started off right in a new world. The Mags have a lot of problems they're working out—"

"I'll bet they have," Mitch agreed morosely.

"However you feel about it, Mitch, the Mags are a race of supermen. They can do a lot for you and the rest of humanity on Eloraspon. Give them time."

"*Homo sapiens* had a million years," Mitch said pointedly, "and what did *he* ever do for the apes?"

"Our case is different—"

"Different? Oh, yes, it's different! And how it is! You've tried time after time to tell me what it's like in there—in the city—and I still haven't the least idea. Different? We live in totally separate worlds, you and I!"

"I live here in the village with you!"

"Because you're married to a Sap!" Mitch interjected heatedly. "Oh, I know, Jeff—I know what you'd like for me to think, and believe me, I wish I could think that way. But I understand the people in the village—they're my kind. I don't understand you and yours. Half the stuff you try to tell me about the Mags sounds like double-talk to me. Promise me one thing, Jeff. Don't try to *help* us, will you? You just sit on the council and keep your intelligent mug shut. Will you do that for me?"

Jarvis grinned, and sealed the agreement with a handshake.

THE first council meeting with Jarvis sitting in was not a success. His chief opposition

was a man named Saylo—Gardner Saylo, formerly mathematician at a small, midwestern college. He was a small man with a thin, sallow face, black moustached, yet obviously middle-aged. Saylo could have been a man who had nourished ambitions, Jarvis thought—to be college president—to be another Einstein, maybe. Now he possessed the highest rank he would ever have—council member for a village of less than a thousand people.

Harper was Saylo's friend—Roy Harper, big, humorless, red-faced. He seconded Saylo's dislike for Jarvis.

Saylo made a motion to reserve governing privileges in the village to the species *homo sapiens*, and Harper seconded it. The other five members, excluding Jarvis, voted it down.

The incident was not noticeably large, but it impressed Jarvis. He felt like a hobo sitting in a council of apes and rejected for his effiteness. Those who had voted him in had done so out of friendship for Mitch.

After the meeting, Mitch said, "You expected that play from somebody, didn't you? I knew something like that would be forthcoming—believe me, I know my *homo sapiens*—hoof, hide, hair, horn and claw, I know him."

"You're being unfair to your own people, Mitch."

"Unfair, am I? Look, Jeff—you're a Mag, and you don't understand. No man of *homo sapiens* has ever fully trusted another. Where do you suppose we got our rituals of hat-tipping and hand-shaking? These are no more than wary signs, saying, 'For the moment, you are safe from me'. Why, men have competed against each other since the Year One, and they always will compete. You Mags have no idea of what competition is—it's completely foreign to your nature. So don't forgive Saylo and Harper for making fools of themselves. They don't deserve it!"

In the weeks that followed, Jarvis interspersed moments of anxiety concerning the approaching doom of nova with nostalgic reminiscences of their trek across the face of Eloraspon, his and Jo's and Toby's. Life in the village, he thought, was only more of what he had tried to run away from on Earth. Only now he was enmeshed too deeply to pull out. There was no place to go from here, and he had Jo and his unborn child to hold him fast.

The villagers had always assumed that he and Jo were legally married. They were married, as far as Jarvis was concerned, and Jo, too. So they never disabused the villagers' minds of the notion.

Meanwhile, he attended classes of "instruction" in Brock's

city. He learned more and more of what it was to be a Mag, yet realizing that his progress was slow, because he could not spend all his time in the city.

Still, he learned a few basic mental techniques. He learned to distinguish the thought-tones of things, the subtle emanations arising from the interstitial vibrations of the thought matrix that underlay form. He learned to "hear" the song of the city in the depths of his soul, to know the melodies of water, wood, stone and other substances. These things were taught him in a precise way, along the lines of a theory in harmonics, by means for which he was required to memorize the frequencies of only a few elements. Then, by interpolation, he could intersperse the others with remarkable accuracy. Then he was taught a method of analysis, by means of which he was enabled to break down complex tones into their elements, thus revealing the nature of compound substances—water, for instance, was a combination of the thought-tones of hydrogen and oxygen. He was on the threshold of being able to "see" without eyes.

What was more important to him, though, was to be able to shut out these subliminal radiations when he wished. After that, he could really enjoy silence in his soul.

ON one of his infrequent visits with Brock, Jarvis brought up the subject weighing on his mind.

"Aren't we going to say *anything* to the villagers about the nova?"

"Not until the time is ripe for it," Brock assured him.

"Do you think of them as apes?" Jarvis asked suddenly.

"I beg your pardon?"

"Apes. I said once to Mitch that the Mags could do a lot for *homo sapiens*. He asked me what *homo sapiens*, in a million years of existence, had ever done for the apes."

"Sometimes they caged them," Brock put in dryly. "Would you like me to do that to your villagers?"

"I don't mean that. But isn't that what you're doing by holding back knowledge of the catastrophe ahead?"

"You worry more than is good for you, Jeff. I think you will fit nicely into my plans. You will have to worry a lot to do what I have in mind for you."

"And what is that?"

Brock waved a negligent hand. "All in good time. Do you feel you are progressing in your studies?"

"Not as fast as I should like."

"But fast enough, nonetheless Brock assured him. "You cannot be hasty."

"But you say there is so little

time left before the sun erupts. How close have you come to finding a way to avert it?"

"I won't inflate your hopes, Jeff. Remember what I said about if we knew the sun must surely nova tomorrow. We must also keep on working toward averting it. Listen to me—it was the Carboniferous Age on Earth when the Mighty migrated from Eloraspon to escape disaster. They built their thousands of spaceships, believing that those ships would permit them to flee before the nova took place."

"It's obvious they figured the nova wrong. It never happened."

"Is it so obvious?"

"The solar system is still here, Eamus! You could be wrong, too, you know. If the Mighty were as mighty as you say, surely they could be even more accurate than you and this handful of Mags? Eloraspon may yet swing back into its own universe without help, and there would be no nova."

Brock looked exasperated. "You possess a few of *homo sapiens*' traits for specious argument that will probably never be weeded out of you," he reprimanded. "The sun *will* nova because it *must*. At the time of the migration of the Mighty, it had also to nova, and it would have except for . . ."

"Except for what?" Jarvis wanted to know.

"Have you noticed the unfin-

ished tower at the eastern edge of the city?" Brock asked irrelevantly.

"I've noticed Mags working on it."

"It will soon be finished. That is our spaceship, exact in every way to one of those ancient spaceships of the Mighty. But it is only one."

"You couldn't be planning to remove everyone from Eloraspon before the nova!"

"Correct. I plan no such thing at all."

A horrible suspicion bred itself in Jarvis's brain.

"Then why are you building a spaceship?"

"This spaceship is not a simple shell of metal into which you might cram a thousand or more human beings, along with supplies for many years' journey. It is a complex thing, Jeff, like no spaceship any man of *homo sapiens* ever imagined. We could not transport one human being in it, let alone many. It will not even hold air."

"Then of what use is it? Why are you building it?"

"For ourselves, Jeff—for *Magnanthropus*. There is no material substance in any part of that tapering hull. What you see is only a matrix, a mould for thought. In a certain sense, it is no more than a sponge that will hold, not water, but the *minds* of *Magnanthropus*. When we leave Eloras-

pon, we must leave our bodies behind . . . with the people in the village."

"Why do you do this thing?" Jarvis demanded bitterly. "Isn't it better to die here, than somewhere in the endless void of space. And even if you live, how can you live with your own conscience?"

Brock smiled, wearily. "I have been over all these arguments before, Jeff, threshing them out in my own soul. But the spaceship *may* be the salvation of *homo sapiens* as well as of *Magnanthropus*. Mind power will drive that ship—the power of the united Mag minds within the matrix of the hull. Applying the drive will set up a strain in the thought-matrix of the Universe—and *may* totter the Elorasponian system back into its own space. I say it may, because I can not be sure that it will. When the Mighty fled Eloraspon long ago, they fled in ships by the thousands. The tremendous, tearing energy of their flight hurled their planet, their sun and its system back into their own normal space. If our one ship will do what the many of the Mighty did long ago, your villagers will live, and a civilization of *homo sapiens* will build itself on Eloraspon."

"And if it doesn't?"

Brock shrugged. "Then we all die—*homo sapiens* and *Magnanthropus*. If the shock does not

avert the nova, it will hasten it. Even in our spaceship, we can not expect to escape the explosion."

"Suppose your scheme works? How about the Mags?" Jarvis was thinking of bodies lying on the plain of Eloraspon, and disembodied minds fleeing forever through space.

"Time will not exist for us, nor space," Brock said. "We shall go where we must, wherever that is. I know the orbit of the Mighty on their flight. We shall follow that orbit, with a few slight corrections to compensate for the intervening time. We shall seek the Mighty, and if we find them, learn from them how to return to our physical forms again."

Jarvis did not pursue the subject. The respect he had had for Eamus Brock and his little handful of supermen was more profound than ever; for who could say whether or not the Mighty had survived their flight, and, having survived that much, had lasted on through the millenia intervening?

CHAPTER 19

THE resentment against Jarvis in the village was not more than mild; still, it was there. But he realized that the feeling was not directed personally against him, but more against the race which he represented. In spite of what Eamus Brock had done for

them, the villagers were afraid of Brock and the Mags, as men have always feared what is different and strange. The Mags and their works were beyond their comprehension; and if they felt inferior, they expressed it in general distrust and disbelief in the intentions of the Mags.

In his heart, Jarvis pitied them. He had come close to sharing their feelings—until he had learned from Eamus Brock the enormity of cataclysm that hung over them all.

Toby came quite unexpectedly to visit them one evening. Jarvis had not seen the boy since the day of their arrival in the village. And he knew that Brock was inflexible in his insistence that Toby have no further association with the people of the old race, and that included Jarvis and Jo.

Jarvis has spent an evening with Mitch, and when he returned home, Toby was with Jo. He sprang lithely up as Jarvis came in, crossed over and seized Jarvis' hand in a grip of steel. It was not immediately that Jarvis recognized him, he had changed so. He was a grown man now, possessed of a remarkable physique and a buoyant strength that matched in power the clear light of intelligence gleaming in his wide-set eyes.

"Toby!" Jarvis exclaimed at last, when it finally came through to him that this handsome man

was eleven-year-old Toby Carter. "What are you doing here?"

Toby tossed his head back and laughed deep, masculine laughter.

"I couldn't stay away forever, Jeff! They've been keeping me pretty busy on the other side, but I had to see you and Jo again."

It was a real reunion. Jarvis quickly adjusted to the physical change in Toby, and in minutes they were laughing together and reminiscing on shared hardships and triumphs of only a few months ago that now seemed like years.

"I've missed you, Toby," Jo told him fervently. "I really have. Jeff is busy, too, you know. He spends his time in the city." Her look clouded. "When is it all going to end, Jeff?" she asked plaintively. "Aren't we going to settle down some day and live ordinary, normal, pleasant lives?"

Jarvis looked at Toby and shook his head slightly. Did Toby know about the nova, too? Undoubtedly he did. The boy seemed to understand—Jarvis steadfastly closed his mind to all telepathic communion. He would not have it around Jo.

He said, easily, "There will come a day yet, Jo—won't it, Toby? It won't be like this forever. Eamus is working the problem out now . . ."

Toby looked uncomfortable.

"I'd better be going back," he

said quietly. "I'm afraid I've overstayed my leave already. I kind of left without letting anybody know I was going."

"You didn't have Eamus' permission?" Jarvis got up and took him by the arm. "Come on. I'll walk you back to the gate."

It was only Jo's awe before the tremendous change that had taken place in Toby that kept the leave-taking from being a tearful one.

OUTSIDE, Jarvis said, hastily, "I hope you didn't mention the nova to her."

"I didn't, as a matter of fact," Toby replied. "I felt that you had probably discussed it with her, and I didn't want—"

"Nobody out here knows," Jarvis said imperatively. "I'm the only Mag Eamus allows out of the city, and he has sworn me to absolute silence."

In the light from the windows, Toby's face looked suddenly drawn.

"I didn't realize that," he said abashedly. "I—I thought everybody knew—"

Jarvis felt a thrill course through him.

"You haven't talked with anybody about it?"

"I was looking for your cabin," Toby explained lamely. "I met a man of the village and asked directions from him. I—I did discuss the nova a little with him."

"What in the world ever made you do that?"

"He brought it up," Toby returned defensively. "He asked how we were getting on with our plans—no, he didn't say plans—our preparations—that was the word he used—against the nova."

"And you said what?"

"That we were working on it, that's all. And that we hoped to have some significant news pretty soon. Honest, Jeff. That's all that was said—but if nobody out here knows about the nova, how did *that* man know?"

"That is what I shall have to find out," Jarvis said grimly.

"Who was the man?"

"He said his name is Sayló."

Jarvis was assailed by mixed feelings. How Sayló had found out about the impending nova, he had no idea. But if Sayló spread word throughout the village that the sun was about to explode—He shook his head and patted Toby on the shoulder.

"I'm glad you told me about this, Toby. Now, you'd better get back to the city."

Toby squeezed his hand. "Good-by, Jeff. No, don't walk me back to the gate. I'll take off from here."

The words still rang empty in Jarvis' ears, and Toby was gone, vanished as if he had never been there. Jarvis stood blinking. The boy was far ahead of him in techniques. He had no idea how

the disappearance had been effected, but he knew beyond doubt that Toby had instantaneously transported himself back to his quarters in the City of Brock.

Jarvis returned into the cabin and Jo put her arms around him.

"You look worried, dear. Don't be. Toby is still more like you than the rest of the Mags. We haven't lost him entirely."

"It wasn't—" Jarvis began, then he smiled and returned her affectionate squeeze. "I wasn't thinking of that at all," he assured her. He had not yet told her that their own child would be born a Mag.

A KNOCK sounded at the door and Jarvis opened up. Gardner Saylo was outside.

"I want to talk to you, Jarvis."

Jarvis looked over his shoulder at Jo. Her face held a strained, anxious look, as if she detected the tension in Jarvis that sight of Saylo had brought on. He nodded reassuringly to her and stepped outside, closing the cabin door behind.

"What's the trouble, Saylo?"

"No trouble. I just have to talk to you, that's all."

The cabin light shone dimly on the man's round face. There was a sheen of sweat on his forehead and his eyes seemed unnaturally large. Jarvis knew that his dislike for the man stemmed only from the opposition Saylo had

expressed against him in council meetings.

He said, mustering kindness into his tone, "Glad to hear you out, Saylo. What's on your mind?"

"I—I talked to that boy of yours tonight—"

"Yes. Toby told me."

Saylo exhaled heavily. "The nova! Look, Jarvis—I've been making observations. Crude ones, to be sure. But I'm as sure as a man can be that the sun will explode—turn into a nova soon. I figured if I could find that out, the Mags would be sure to know all about it. So I mentioned it to your boy—he seemed to think we knew all about it out here."

"Unfortunately," Jarvis observed, "he has been kept pretty close to his studies in the city. Knowing what you know, Saylo, you also realize what kind of panic would occur if the people were told about the nova."

"They would take *that* well enough, Jarvis. I asked your boy how things were going, and he said the *spaceship* is almost finished. Now, what did he mean by that?"

Jarvis started. The spaceship was a familiar story to Toby. He hadn't even realized he had mentioned it in reassuring Saylo. Jarvis bit his lip.

"I can say nothing about that," Jarvis said. "You may be sure the Mags are doing everything

in their power to avert the nova. If this world is saved, we will all have Eamus Brock to thank. I would advise you, Saylo, to forget this conversation, and to say nothing to anybody. There is no use getting the people upset."

Saylo straightened with an air of bravado. "There are some of us who don't trust you Mags," he blustered. "Now that we know about that spaceship, we want to know more about it."

"For instance?"

"I'll speak bluntly, Jarvis. Is Brock planning to take us away from Eloraspon before the explosion? If he is, why is he making such a big secret of it? Isn't it more likely he is building that spaceship *for the Mags alone?*"

"If I told you the truth, you wouldn't believe me—because I'm a Mag," Jarvis pointed out.

Saylo gnawed his underlip and his moustache writhed.

"I think I've learned what I wanted to know, Jarvis. Good night."

He turned and strode quickly away.

CHAPTER 20

IT was barely dawn when Mitch knocked at Jarvis' door. Jarvis was already awake and dressed. He had hardly slept.

"Something serious has come up, Jeff," Mitch said. "Gardner Saylo is—"

Jarvis raised his hand wearily.

"I can guess the whole story. Saylo was here last night."

"Here? What did he want?"

"Confirmation of a suspicion. Mitch, how much do you trust me?"

The lanky engineer was taken aback. "Why—of course I trust you, Jeff! What's this about trusting?"

"You're pretty excited, Mitch. More excited than I've ever seen you. And you've heard the false rumor Saylo is spreading about the Mags."

Mitch seized on his words. "Then it is false! The Mags *aren't* building a spaceship to escape from Eloraspon?"

A muscle twitched in Jarvis's cheek. He made up his mind.

"That much is true, Mitch. Now, I'm going to tell you the rest of the truth. Whether you accept it for truth or not will be up to you."

Slowly, in measured words, Jarvis explained the entire situation. When he had finished, Mitch was silent. Finally, the engineer spoke.

"What you say has the ring of truth in it, Jeff. Maybe I'm just shocked after living so long in a fool's paradise. I thought the disaster was done, finished with. Now I know it has hardly begun. Jeff, Jeff—*will* Brock's plan have any effect on . . . ?"

Jarvis shrugged. "That is a point on which it is best to main-

tain a philosophical attitude. Either we are all saved—or all must perish.”

“You must talk to the people, Jeff! Most of them are scared to death by Saylo’s accusations. They really believe the Mags plan to desert us. It was a mistake for Brock ever to keep this thing secret. Your speaking to them as a Mag may do something to allay their fear.”

“It seems to me you are afraid, too, Mitch—but not of the nova. Of what?”

“Of my own people, Jeff! Being a Mag, you can’t understand the psychology of *homo sapiens*. Only a little more of Saylo’s talk will start a riot. They may rush the city—and I *know* what happens to anybody setting foot inside that gate!”

Jarvis jerked up. “Do you think they would dare?”

“It isn’t a matter of daring! Being crazed by fear will drive them to it.”

JARVIS wanted to tell them the truth, but he felt he should talk to Eamus Brock first. Perhaps the leader of the Mags could think of a way to avert this tragedy.

Before Jarvis could leave his house an angry group of villagers had gathered out in front.

A small delegation of men approached the doorstep. One was Gardner Saylo, another was Roy

Harper. Jarvis knew the other three by sight.

“We’ve come to take you, Jarvis,” Saylo said. “Go quietly with us and nobody will get hurt.”

Jarvis looked at the faces confronting him. He saw fear there, but determination. Jo was looking up at him.

He said, “What’s the idea?”

“You’re a Mag, Jarvis,” Saylo told him. “If Brock insists on leaving us behind, he’ll leave you behind, too.”

“That’s fair enough,” Jarvis agreed reasonably. “Did you think I was planning to go with them?” He put his arm around Jo’s waist and drew her close. “I’m staying with my wife.”

Saylo tossed his head. “Oh, that sounds noble, Jarvis! But you could find room in your ship for *one* extra person all right! But we have other ideas. Everybody goes . . . or everybody stays! Now march!”

They locked him in a store-room and went away, assuring him they would lose no time notifying Eamus Brock of his plight. Alone, Jarvis chewed his lip and thought. Undoubtedly, Brock was already aware of what had transpired. Saylo could not threaten the Mag leader. But what he could do would endanger the lives of everyone in the village. Jarvis waited.

“Don’t feel badly, Jeff. You did the best you could.”

Eamus Brock was there, as Jarvis had known he would be.

"What are we going to do, Eamus?"

The blind man, in a shimmering cocoon of light, stood quietly.

"There is nothing we can do, Jeff. The time is almost here. We have only minutes."

"The spaceship is finished?"

"Finished. Our people are boarding her. Come with me now, Jeff. Into the city. You will go with us . . . help us complete the destiny of *Magnanthropus*."

Jarvis shrugged. "You were watching what was going on. You heard what I told those men. I'm not going with you, Eamus."

Brock smiled. "I know you are not, Jeff. I was only giving you a last chance to refuse. I have told you that I have plans for you, and here they are. These people need you. They don't know it yet, but they will. In the months and years to come, they will need the guidance you can give them in resettling Eloraspon.

"I have desired all along that you remain with them. From you will spring a new and independent line of *Magnanthropus*. You must tell them this: In the southern hemisphere, there is a city of the ancient Mighty, and its name is Surandanish. The land around it is peopled by a race of humanoids called the Bronze Men

of Surandanish. There lie all the secrets of the Mighty. If we on our journey into space do not find those who fled millenia ago, we may be back—and your descendants will be here to greet us, with the secrets we have not had time to unravel from the records of the Mighty." Brock paused, and there was a rattle and thud outside the door. "The lock is broken," he said. "Go. You must give us every instant you can—prevent the people from rushing the spaceship when they discover we are about to take off. The lives of every one of us—Mag and *homo sapiens* alike—depends on it!"

CHAPTER 21

MITCH had heard and had been on his way to release Jarvis from the storeroom. They met outside the door.

Mitch said, "The people are acting ugly. They're scared, and they're following Saylo and Harper blindly. They think they can force the Mags to include them in the space ship. We're going to have to get hold of Eamus Brock and let him know what's going on."

"He already knows," Jarvis said. "Mitch—we've only got minutes!"

"Minutes?"

"The sun is about to explode."

Mitch's face turned gray. "So soon?"

"Mitch! As soon as the people are aware the ship is about to take off, they are apt to riot! We must prevent that at all costs!"

"But you, Jeff! You're going with the Mags!"

"I'm staying with Jo, Mitch! If this thing goes through and the nova is averted, there will be work for me here."

Jarvis left him and went directly to Jo. In these last few minutes, whatever happened, he wanted to be with her. But even those moments were denied them. Mitch followed within a few minutes.

He said, "They're going to storm the launching pad!" he cried. "Can you hear them?"

Jarvis listened. There were shouts and cries throughout the village. He heard the sound of running feet, and a group of men raced past, stirring up the dust in the street. They were armed, clutching rifles, pistols, clubs. The whole village was in confusion, milling to the sound of an agonized shout.

"The Mags are deserting us!"

Mitch said, "We've got to stop this! Come on, Jeff!"

He ran and Jarvis followed. A block from the cabin, he realized that Jo was with them, running. He turned sick inside with concern for her.

"Go back!" he shouted. "Stay in the cabin until this is over!"

Her head was thrown back

proudly, her face gleaming warmly bronze in the intense sunlight.

"I'm staying with you!" she replied shrilly.

"Think, Jo—think of the baby!"

"If you live, I will live. If I live, so will my baby! So don't waste strength yelling at me!"

The air was dust-filled, barred with the shadows of the trampling throng. Dust entered Jarvis' throat, and he coughed as he yelled. His heart swelled with pride in Jo, at the same time the thought of what might happen to her dismayed him.

No one listened to his and Mitch's shouts. These people were afraid—afraid beyond the restraint of reason. Jarvis saw Mitch fall, trampled by the furious crowd. He fought his way to him, stood over him and slugged viciously into the press, until Mitch could stand again.

The swirling of the mob had taken them to the edge of the launching pad. The spaceship was a needle-like spire, towering above the many-colored city of Brock. It was still a half-mile away, and Jarvis could see a throng of Mags milling around the base.

Somewhere among them, he thought, was Toby . . . and Daniels, the Negro lawyer from Joplin. But he could not hope to pick them out. The Mags were a clus-

ter of luminous cocoons around the space ship.

The mob roared with an ugly temper, but moved no closer.

"Something's holding them back!" Mitch shouted in Jarvis' ear.

"A force shield!" Jarvis exclaimed. "Eamus has insulated the Mag environment with a force shield. I heard talk of it in the city."

STONES, hurled at the barrier, flashed in spicules of flame, shattering with miniature thunder. A few firearms crackled, and the bullets exploded on contact with the invisible screen.

"Whoever touches that screen is a dead man," Jarvis said.

His ranging glance caught sight of Saylo and Harper at the barrier. Both were shouting simultaneously, gesturing toward the hurrying Mags. Jarvis charged them as it seemed the crowd was on the verge of surging into the shield. He struck out and Saylo spun half around and went to his knees. Mitch charged past him and struck Harper low, his shoulder into the pit of the red-faced man's stomach.

"Stop!" Jarvis screamed. "Anybody who passes the edge of the launching pad will die! You can do nothing to stop them! Go back to your homes!"

A growl and a roar from the mob followed his words.

MAGNANTHROPUS

"Can you contact Eamus Brock?" Mitch put in excitedly.

"*I am with you, Jeff.*" Brock's voice sounded in Jarvis' mind. "*We need a few more minutes still. The mob can not reach us, but many will die if they rush that screen. I am sending Toby out to you—he will stay behind with you. That may confuse them just enough to give us the time we need.*"

A glowing cocoon raised from those around the spaceship base, hurtled through the invisible barrier and hovered over the crowd. Toby's voice rang out, clear and strong.

"Do you believe the Mags are deserting you? *I am a Mag, and I choose to stay with you!*"

The cocoon settled and Toby materialized at Jarvis' side. Jo grasped him.

"No, Toby! Go back! They are your people! You must go with them where they go!"

"Jeff needs me here as much as Eamus ever could," he said gently. "You and he—you are my people. And Brock wants it this way."

Another cocoon lifted from the crowd of Mags and hurtled swiftly toward them. Daniels grasped Jarvis' arm, palmed Mitch's shoulder in a huge hand.

"I'm staying, too!" he shouted at the crowd, and his voice rolled like thunder on the dust-filled air. "I've got faith—and that's what

you folks need—faith! Eamus Brock is going to save you once again, like before—and I'm staying here with you to prove it!"

During this interval, the crowd had milled confusedly, staying clear of the edge of the pad. Saylo and Harper had helped each other to their feet. For a moment, eternity stood still, then there was a cry from the crowd—a cry that made the hair prickle at the nape of Jarvis' neck.

"The sun! The sun!"

He looked up into the sky, peering through the crack between two fingers to protect his eyes from searing rays of ultraviolet. His sight filled with scalding tears. The sun, like a glowing cave-mouth in the sky, had swollen enormously. It blazed more fiercely than it ever had, and the intensity of light and heat emitted from its billowing surface was almost more than flesh could bear. And it was no longer a disc. The incandescent surface glowed waveringly, as if seen through a rolled fluid, and from its limb giant flames licked out, millions of miles into space.

The sun was erupting—the nova had begun!

JARVIS felt the sunlight beating on his upturned face in a raw downpour of scorching radiation. The plain was drenched in shimmering brilliance. The tem-

perature of the air was mounting swiftly to unbearable intensity.

How long would it take for the first tendrils of furiously flaming gases to span the gulf from sun to Eloraspon? How many minutes had they to live—if Brock and the race of *Magnanthropi* failed?

In minutes only, Jarvis knew, the increasing ferocity of radiation would set plains and mountains afire long before the planet was engulfed in flames. The oceans would boil in their beds, and the surface rocks would melt into bubbling slag. There would be no living thing left to see that phase of destruction . . .

Jarvis felt possessed with a calm, such as comes with the knowledge of inevitability. The time was now. They would die or they would not die, and they were powerless to direct destiny to either hand. Their only hope lay in Eamus Brock.

What point could panic serve now? Panic is an urge to flee to safety. What use is it when there is no safety, nowhere to flee? The crowd stood mute, irresolute, shielding their upturned faces with their hands.

Jarvis' glance ranged the field where, a moment ago, the cocoons of the Mags had flitted. There was no movement there now. Lifeless bodies lay sprawled on the ground—the spaceship was manned!

The scene grew hotter, the daylight brighter. What was Brock waiting for? There had been hurry and desperation in the last few minutes—had the ship been boarded in time?

It seemed to Jarvis, watching with scorching eyes, that the spiring needle of the spaceship quivered. Jo clung to him, her body pressed against his.

He stood with legs braced, shoulders thrown back, his craggy face tense and sorrowful, his eyes fixed on Mankind's final challenge to the threat of destruction. *Would that ship never move?*

The ship began to glow. Colors flowed in phosphorescent streams from stem to base, brighter and brighter, until their lashing brilliance outshone the exploding sun. A mighty humming vibrated on the air. In the depths of his soul, in spite of everything he could do to shut out the torture of it, Jarvis felt the screaming as the very matrix of space writhed under the lash of force unleashed by the united Mag minds.

Perspiration trickled down Jarvis' lean cheeks and dripped from his jawline. The air smelled hot, and it seemed to him he could hear from afar the roar of floods in the mountains as snowfields and glaciers melted and ran in the heat.

THE spaceship lifted! The humming mounted to a shrill resonance of sound that tormented the eardrums, then whispered into silence. In Jarvis' inner being, in his very soul, such a tumultuous storm of thought-turned-to-energy ripped and tore that he could not bear it, and cried out, covering his head with his arms. But he could tear his eyes from that magnificent ship. Dust swirled at its base, mounted in a cloud to its sky-reaching tip.

The spaceship shone with a brilliance that was like a flame in the shroud of dust. The needle-tip pressed against the glowing sky, which seemed afire with pallid flame from horizon to horizon. The ship began to glide upward with swiftly increasing acceleration.

The air clove before it with a whistling shriek, and suddenly the ship was gone, vanished in an instant into outer space, the dwindling mote of it lost forever in the glare of the sky. Jarvis mind rocked with the assault of a deluge of force. The air thundered in a continuous, diminishing peal. And the sky was empty of all but light.

Somebody shouted, and the shout was swallowed up in a babble of confusion. The very air turned dark. The sky churned with an opaque barrier of clouds, sprung up from nowhere, driven on the wings of a furious wind,

dropping scalding rain as they fled. People tumbled to the ground and rolled helplessly in the grip of the hurricane, their cries lost in the noise of earthquake, in the brittle breaking and smashing of the magnificent towers of the City of Brock.

Before the dark wholly closed them in, Jarvis caught a glimpse of John Daniels, his giant frame still standing when all else had been battered to the ground, his arms lifted skyward in a gesture, at once of beseeching prayer and of triumph.

The breath was dashed from Jarvis' lungs as he was flung to to the ground. He gasped for air, and the howling wind snatched it from his mouth and nostrils. He reached for Jo as he tumbled, trying desperately to find her in the abysmal murk and pandemonium.

The ground heaved, uttering thunderclaps of sound as invisible crevices opened and crashed together again. He crawled on hands and knees, crying Jo's name.

Lightning flared and a drenching rain sluiced upon the plain. He felt cold drops hammering him, like hammers of ice, cold and getting colder. He heard Jo's voice, tiny, lost in the enormity of wind and rain, answering his call. They collided in the dark and the hissing rain and clung to each other.

The jarring of the planet was abruptly stilled. The wind shrieked a note on diminishing force. Pallid light wavered through the gloom.

Jarvis felt light, as if he barely touched the ground. The air was filled with wreathing vapors—cold, cold. He sat up, feeling his bruises. Jo was in his arms and he thanked God she still lived.

The downpour from the heavens was like water dripping from ice, congealing on his flesh. He searched the murky plain with his eyes. Formless lumps stirred here and there as stunned people got to their feet. He looked toward the city. It was a heap of tumbled shards.

The wind dropped to nothing, then began to blow from the opposite direction, keen and cold. He felt the sharp pricking of ice crystals pecking at his heated cheek. He grasped unbelievably at the flecks swirling before his eyes, looked at them on his palms, melting into water droplets. *Snow!*

STUNNING realization struck him, and he shouted with sheer joy. Scrambling hastily to his feet, he pulled Jo up beside him.

Brock's plan had *not* failed! The snow was proof—Eloraspon had been hurled back into its own universe! He shouted as loud as he could.

"Get up! It's all over! *There will be no nova today!*"

Jo's face loomed in front of him, her eyes wide and alight, and she was smiling, her hair in wild disarray and flecked with snow. He seized her in his arms and hugged her delightedly.

"It's winter!" he cried. "It's winter and it's snowing! Eloraspon has returned to its own universe!"

The freezing wind bit at their lightly clad bodies. Jarvis danced, holding Jo as a partner, cutting fantastic capers. He felt as buoyant as if he floated in water. For months, he had been accustomed to the combined gravity pull of Earth and Eloraspon on his body. Now Earth

was gone. There was only the gravity of Eloraspon to contend with . . . and the winter. Yes, it would be hard, this winter; but there would come Spring. And after that, he would find a way to lead his people out of the mountains, to the land of the plateau, where game was plentiful, where the grass grew deep, and where a new civilization might take root.

He fell in with the movement of the crowd toward the village, cuddling Jo against him, and looked up at the sullen sky.

What would Eamus Brock and the Mags discover up there? Or, would they some day return to Eloraspon? He clutched Jo more tightly against him and hurried her toward the village.

THE END

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