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Cover by Mel Hunter (Scene on the moon during an eclipse of the sun by Earth)

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EDITORIAL

"Now that you've been an editor for some time, how do you like it? [writes Mr. Bob Leman, of Bethel Park, Pa.] Do you regret abandoning the gay, mad Bohemian [sic] whirl of the life of a carefree [ha!—Ed.] freelancer for a mundane 9-to-5 stint at a desk? Still, I suppose it must be a good life, being an editor, lounging about in suits of elegant cut and sipping Jasmine [sic] tea while your minions busily remove manuscripts from envelopes, clip rejection slips to them, and fire them back. And don't try and tell me that that's not what happens. I know, because I sent one in once, a crackerjack story with a real snapper at the end, and it was sent back with nothing but a printed rejection slip. If they'd actually read the story they would have paid me an enormous sum for it. It describes the world after the atomic war, and tells about the last man and the last woman. Each thinks himself the last human being. Then, in a moving scene, they find each other. And the snapper is that their names are Atom and Neve! How about that, fans? You can see that I have here conclusive evidence that editors don't read manuscripts. And now that I've told you my plot, if I see this story in F&SF I'll sue your publication for every nickel they've got. And cancel my subscription." Mr. L., who obviously contains some curious ideas (if the ones he can't contain are any indication), inquires if it is true that our "blurbs . . . carry concealed messages directed to the members of a secret society, as rumor has it?" Barely pausing for breath, he goes on to say that he "may even finish and submit to you the MS of my novel, *'Six Against Eternity'*, a rousing but wholesome tale of adventure in outer space, which is now 90,000 words along and almost half-finished. It contains some spectacularly repulsing bug-eyed monsters, and I have devised a number of new and ingenious reasons for their removing the clothing from nubile women, so the opportunities for eye-catching covers are many . . ." and concludes with the final slur that he has "noticed that F&SF has had rather drab covers lately." We are grateful, nonetheless, for the letter if only because it contains a classic picture of what the life of the Executive Editor is not like and how MSS are not treated by our staff. Still, this life has its compensations. The wonder-shock we had recently on coming to the end of a new Brian Aldiss story is one. The satisfaction of "putting together" a good issue is another. And receiving letters like Mr. Leman's is one, too.

Avram Davidson

Perhaps some semblance to the Rocky Mountains of Vance Aandahl's native Colorado appears in the mountains of this story, but the light which shines on them "never shone on land or sea" in any past or present found in geography; nor does the story seem laid in any future easily platted. Yet the story's foundations can be found in Everyland, they have their bases in the lusts and imaginings, the vain and insatiable desirings, of the human heart; and as they are as true to the present as the past, it is likely that they image forth the future, alas, as well. On, then, to Mr. Aandahl's romance of Darfgarth, singer of songs and walker of roads.

DARFGARTH

by Vance Aandahl

THERE ONCE WAS A MAN NAMED Darfgarth. Six feet tall, he was a walker of roads: heavy-chested and sinew hipped. His body was as brown and hardened as the old leather clothes which he wore; but his hands, though strong, were as perfectly formed as a poet's hands. In the hot white dust, he seemed to be a hungry wolf; but perhaps also a laughing child.

Glistening in the sunlight like a brush of soft gold wires, there was a thatch of coppery hair; nestled under sun-bleached eyebrows, there were cornflower eyes—eyes that sparkled with the madness of cracked glass; next, there was a nose like an eagle's; finally, a full, sensuous mouth. These features were framed in a face that was full of the creases and hollows of hardship, yet oddly soft and unmarred.

As he paused for a moment, the sun fell full across Darfgarth's back: strapped there was a mandolin, a small mandolin, delicate and ancient. It was made of ebon wood, black as night when polished, but now salt-and-pepper because of the white dust which coated everything on the road. The hole in the sounding box was as bottomless and fearful as a snake's mouth; but, strangely enough, the strings were as beautiful and warming as

an angel's eyes. In this mandolin, evil and good were bound intimately together; thus bound, they uttered the song of life.

Darfgarth had long walked upon a road which led from a great plain through a cluster of foothills, and into a valley at the base of a mountain. On the pine-furred mountainslope there was a cabin, barely visible itself, but betrayed by a thin finger of rising smoke, which Darfgarth paused to study. In the cabin, there was something strange, which appealed to its strange counterpart in Darfgarth: dignity and nobility, perhaps; or merely, perhaps, gross egotism.

Darfgarth continued his tiresome walk, until he came to a tiny, secluded village at the base of the mountain. He wandered down its single, cobblestone street, at the end of which there was an inn. He stomped into the inn, tossing his hair like a lion's mane.

"Darfgarth! They call me Darfgarth!"

His booming voice was greeted by the quiet eyes of a man, typical of many men, who had been born, was living, and would die, in the same place: a little fat man.

"Rolf Rasmussen."

"Mr. Rasmussen, I want a room for the night!"

"I've got a room, if you've got the money."

"Shelter for a song?"

"I can't do business that way . . ."

"*What* business? I'm your first visitor in six months, I'll wager, and you try to rob me! I'll sing for the whole village! That ought to merit a bed."

"If you chop wood for the fireplace, and if you sing a good song, I'll give you a room for the night."

"Mr. Rasmussen, I'll do that! I'll chop your wood!"

"It's in the back. So's the ax."

After Darfgarth had peeled away his shirt and found the ax, he began splintering the wood with massive strokes. As he did so, he often glanced at the cabin on the mountainside. It was too close to the village to be a trapper's or a hermit's; it was too far away to be a villager's. Because of the steepness of the mountainslope, it certainly did not belong to a farmer. Its location was impossible.

For a single blurred moment, as he brought the ax down on the wood, Darfgarth saw two brown eyes, mantled in a cloud of auburn hair. He looked again, and saw nothing. He stood, rubbing his neck with poet's hands and savoring the warmth of the sun on his belly and chest; and then, for the rest of the afternoon, he walked and talked as though he were in a daze.

"Your name's Darfgarth."

The words shattered Darfgarth's reverie. It was evening, and he was sitting at a shadowed table in Rasmussen's inn. The villagers were

beginning to collect; perhaps they had heard of his coming.

"Yes," he said, fondling the neck of his mandolin.

"Quinn's my name. Lorr Quinn." The villager was thick and powerful; there was a ruddy glow in his cheeks and a wild Irish flame in his eyes.

"Sit down," said Darfgarth, smiling. Quinn pulled a chair to the table, and they sat silently, staring at each other through the flickering candle flame. Presently, Darfgarth began to pluck the strings of his mandolin:

"As I went out to Derby,
All on the market day,
I spied the biggest ram, sir,
That ever did feed on hay.

And he rambled, and he rambled, and he rambled . . .
'Till them butchers cut him down."

Quinn's eyes glittered in the flamelight, and he smiled.

Darfgarth, disinterested in his own music, asked, "Who lives in the cabin on the mountainside?"

Quinn rubbed his chin, meditating. "Old Willow. Old woman, crazy in the head. She's got a boy."

"What's she do?"

"Nothing much. Lives off the land, far as I can tell."

Just then, Rasmussen waddled over to the table. "Play some music. Everybody wants to hear you sing."

"What kind of music?"

"You said you could sing a good song."

Darfgarth pursed his lips; his fingers tentatively touched the mandolin's strings:

"He had four feet to walk, sir,
He had four feet to stand;
And every one of his four feet,
It covered an acre of land.

And he rambled, and he rambled, and he rambled . . .
'Till them butchers cut him down.

This old ram had wool, sir,
That grew up in the sky;
I know the eagles nested there,
'Cause I heard their young ones cry.

And he rambled, and he rambled, and he rambled . . .
'Till them butchers cut him down.

The butcher that cut this ram, sir,
Was drownded in the blood;
The little boy that held the bowl
Was washed away in the flood.

And he rambled, and he rambled, and he rambled . . .
'Till them butchers cut him down."

Darfgarth had held the villagers

in a trance; now, their applause held *him* in a trance. He felt powerful; he felt God-like. During this moment of numbness, he clearly perceived a single image: the image of brown eyes, mantled in a cloud of auburn hair.

"Lorr. Who is that girl?"

"Where?"

"There. In the doorway."

"Oh. On . . . that's Sally. Sally Lentz."

The girl's eyes were as large and brown as a baby chipmunk's. A gentle breeze entered the doorway, and her hair drifted like autumn leaves.

Darfgarth's fingers crept like flame across the strings of his mandolin. The inn grew quiet then, and every ear strained to hear the pulsing melody which danced through the murky air like purple witching fire; every eye but four grew glazed and shut.

Then, while the villagers drowsed in a wondrous sleep, Darfgarth and Sally Lentz gazed as each other.

"Come to me, come to me, little turtle dove;
Sing to me, sing to me, little turtle dove;
Dance for me, dance for me, little turtle dove;
Be my love, be my love, little turtle dove."

The man and the girl trembled, poised at the edge of an abyss. The girl sobbed softly and turned from him. Terrified by the magic of his music, she fled into the darkness, into the night.

Darfgarth watched the doorway for awhile, then yawned and stretched his arms. He surveyed the strange scene of sleep which surrounded him. He felt powerful; he felt God-like. As he arose and strolled into his room, the black wood of the mandolin shone evilly in the candlelight. Behind him, the villagers slept.

The following day, Darfgarth climbed the mountainside to visit Old Willow in her cabin. He found it, a gray shack, nestled in a hollow between two stony ridges.

The sky was white. The two ridges were black, but they were covered with white reeds and chalky boulders, which in turn were dotted with dark green pines. The hollow was black, and the weathered timber of the cabin was so old that it seemed almost white by contrast. The place reminded Darfgarth of drab, black-and-white Oriental paintings.

Except for a thin shard of cloud, which drifted through the sky, nothing moved. Darfgarth himself stood still, somewhat awed: there was an odor of untouched loneliness here.

Presently, he knocked on the cabin door. There was no response, so he sat on a nearby tree stump and made drawings in the dust.

After a few minutes, a boy of about fifteen years came walking somberly out of the forest on the slopes above. He stood silently, watching Darfgarth, who watched back.

The boy's face was the color of the boy's world: coldly white, with black hair and black eyes. It was an empty face, neither sad nor happy. Here, Darfgarth realized, was an unsouled husk, waiting to be filled with good and evil and the "wisdom" of man. Here was the proverbial clay, waiting for somebody's hands, *his* hands, to give it form.

"Do you live here, boy?"

The boy nodded in silent assent.

"You're Old Willow's boy?"

Another nod.

"I'm a stranger here, so I thought I'd pay you people a social visit. But nobody seemed to be home."

The boy stared in wonder at Darfgarth.

"Come here, boy, and I'll play you some music on my mandolin. What's your name?"

After some consideration, the boy walked a few steps forward. He remained silent. Darfgarth strummed his instrument, smiled, and asked, "Don't you *have* a name, boy?"

"She can't hear." The boy spoke each syllable distinctly, clearly.

"What? Who?"

"She can't hear."

"Oh! Your mother? Old Willow?"

Once again, the boy nodded.

"She can't hear? Is she in there?"

Nod.

"Well, boy, take me inside and I'll say hello to your mother."

"She can't hear."

"She's deaf?"

"She can't talk much."

"Well, maybe I can cheer her up with a smile." Darfgarth stood up. As he did so, the boy leaped backwards and retreated to the edge of the forest. Darfgarth shrugged and sat down again. He began to pluck the mandolin's strings:

"Nameless boy, why ain't you
got a name?
Nameless boy, ain't you got no
shame?
Nameless boy, saddest sight to
see . . .
Nameless boy, why don't you
talk with me?"

The boy came closer again, and sat down on the dark earth. He neither smiled nor frowned, but Darfgarth thought there had been a momentary flicker in his eyes. Now, as the mandolin was silenced, his eyes were stones again.

Throughout the afternoon, Darfgarth cajoled the boy, talked to him, sang to him, trying to rekindle that momentary flicker which he had seen. When dusk came, the boy proudly showed him a garden.

"You grew all these vegetables yourself?"

The boy smiled and nodded mutely.

"You and your mother—you live on these?"

Smile and nod.

"Why don't you take me into the cabin? I'll say hello to your mother."

The boy hesitated. Then he led Darfgarth to the door, opened it, and motioned him into the darkness within.

Old Willow was probably the boy's grandmother rather than his mother: even as Darfgarth entered, a thin aroma of antiquity, like the stench of rotting spices, greeted him. When his eyes grew accustomed to the dark, he saw her.

Her skin was marbled brown and white, lined with stiff black veins, and as soft as a fledgling's belly. It clung to her bones and sank between them. Coming closer, Darfgarth saw her face. It was as smooth and deathlike as soap; it centered around two yellow eyes—unseeing eyes which seemed clotted with phlegm.

Darfgarth knew that Old Willow could neither hear nor see him, but that she nonetheless sensed his presence. He looked at his mandolin, and the strings glittered as if by magic. His hand moved, and the movement was answered by the peal of a single lucid note.

Ole Willow stirred. Her lips trembled like paper; she lifted her hands to her head and incredulously touched her ears.

Darfgarth and the boy left the cabin.

"She hear that?"

"I think so," said Darfgarth, smiling. "I think so." He turned to go; evening had almost come. As he strolled down the path, he heard the boy behind him.

"Wait . . ."

Darfgarth turned. In the day's last light, he saw that the boy's eyes were alive with the flames (no longer a mere flicker) of adoration. Darfgarth felt powerful; he felt God-like.

"I'll come back."

When Darfgarth reentered the village, night had come. He was greeted by Lorr Quinn, who had been resting on the porch of Rasmussen's inn.

"Darfgarth! I want to talk with you! Where have you been?"

"Hello, Lorr. I went up the mountain to visit Old Willow."

"You're crazy. That wild boy might have killed you. He dropped a rock on John Pulsipher last summer; some people say it wasn't on purpose, but I have my doubts."

"I found him rather likable. Very simple. Like a baby."

"Like a wolf cub."

"Never mind." Darfgarth smiled. "Why did you want to talk with me?"

"Oh! Oh, yes. Something strange happened last night. We were sitting in the inn, as you remember. The last thing I can recall, you

were playing your mandolin. The next morning, when I woke up, I was still in the inn, *and so were all the rest of the fellows!*" He paused for breath. "Except you. You were gone."

"Why, when I went to bed, you were all drinking. When I got up this morning, I went out the back way—it never occurred to me that you might still be in the front room." Darfgarth hesitated, striving to achieve dramatic effect. "*All* of you? *All* of you woke up?"

"That's right."

"Well. I expected that some of you old beer-bellies might get soused—but never did I dream that *all* of you . . ."

"Hold on, Darfgarth! You sound just like the women! They've teased and scolded and screamed at us, all day long. But I tell you, I *know* we couldn't *all* have been drunk. I wasn't . . ."

"Oh, no! I'm *sure* you weren't, Lorr . . ."

"Hello, there." A gentle voice touched them in the darkness. Darfgarth turned on one foot and caught a glimpse of a momentary image: the image of brown eyes, mantled in a cloud of auburn hair.

"Who was that?" he asked, already knowing the answer.

"Sally Lentz."

"Isn't that the same girl I asked about last night?"

"Oh . . . I don't remember."

Darfgarth paused, certain that Lorr *did* remember.

"I would like to meet her. Where is she going. Do you know?"

"No. I really couldn't say . . ."

Once again, Darfgarth felt that Lorr had lied.

"Well, then, perhaps I'd better wait until tomorrow. I think I shall go to bed, anyway."

"Well . . . goodnight, then."

"Goodnight, Lorr . . . and remember . . ."

"Yes?"

"Don't get drunk again."

Darfgarth went to Rasmussen's inn. The old Norwegian stopped him in the hall and asked him how he expected to pay for another night's lodging.

"With my good looks," said Darfgarth, pinching Rasmussen's nose. The little man waddled indignantly away, but he did not bother his guest again. Darfgarth entered his room, removed his shirt, lay down on the bed, rested the mandolin on his chest, and looked through the window at the moon. The moonlight glowed on the mandolin's wood with the same glow that sunlight sometimes makes on the back of a shark swimming in ten fathoms of clear water—a dark glow, opalescent and bottomless; but the moonlight glowed also on the mandolin's strings—a different kind of glow, warm and comforting, like holy candlelight.

When all the village was asleep, Darfgarth arose, put on his shirt, and jumped through the window.

He did not know where he would find Sally Lentz, but, strange man that he was, he knew that he would find her. He wandered along the curves of the cobblestone street, staying in the shadows. Presently, a few hundred feet from the village proper, he came to a house which appealed to his mystic fancy. After circling it twice, he shrugged his shoulders and left it behind. A few minutes later, he found another house to his liking, located in a copse of trees at a little distance from the road. Having studied it carefully, he chose to remain.

It was, indeed, Sally Lentz's home.

Darfgarth discovered, by intuition, the proper window. Sitting beneath it, he began to play and sing, softly, exquisitely softly—no louder than the breeze in the grass:

"Come to me, come to me little
turtle dove . . ."

When Sally did come to Darfgarth, it was the magic of the music which held her, not any magic of his own; but he was nonetheless satisfied. Presently, they strolled through the verdant fields.

"Darfgarth?"

"Yes, Sally?"

"Will you stay in the village?"

"Perhaps . . ."

Darfgarth was happy. On the mountain, he had made a conquest, and in the village, he had made a conquest. The boy adored him, the girl loved him. In both victories, the mandolin had been his instrument of warfare, but this mattered little to Darfgarth. He felt powerful; he felt God-like.

"Yes. I will stay in the village."

High up on the mountain, there was a towering cliff of gray granite. At the edge of its summit, there grew a pine tree, an ancient pine tree. Its bole was mottled russet and white, scarred deeply, and scaled like a reptilian body; branchless, it rose into the sky, until, one hundred and fifty feet above the rocks, a flower of green foliage burst from its top. Here, high above the world, the eagles nested.

Among the granite boulders, the roots of this great tree coiled like black snakes which, by magic, had been petrified as they twisted away from the trunk. Arising between two of these roots, a sparkling rivulet of mountain water crawled around the boulders, hesitated at the precipice, and then fell three hundred feet to a lake at the base of the cliff. This lake was small, deep, and greenish with rotting plants; an unpleasant odor arose from its waters.

One day, Darfgarth and the boy ascended the mountainside, to sit upon the cliff's edge, at the foot of the tree, where the rivulet

arose. As they climbed through the forest, they encountered all the variously colored autumnal foliage: the golden aspen leaf; the burnt-sienna elm leaf; the yellow willow leaf, fringed with green; and the red-speckled mountain ash leaf. The boy had seen these leaves many times before, but Darfgarth made him pause and look more deeply into their richly-toned colors.

"God is beauty," said Darfgarth, and he thought of himself. Then his hand danced upon the silver strings of the mandolin. Every leaf transformed. Great clouds of diaphanous gold and brown and yellow and red, great clouds of silvery spider web, great clouds floated about their heads. The sun was a circle of brightness behind these filmy clouds, and the trees were spires of brownish jewels. Then Darfgarth tapped the black sounding box of the mandolin, fallen leaves once more.

As they paused to rest on a higher ridge, Darfgarth said, "God is truth," and he thought of himself. And as they rested, gazing down upon the village below, Darfgarth taught the boy how to live among people, taught the boy a simple ethic, and taught the boy the importance of truth.

As they reached the cliff's edge, Darfgarth said, "God is justice," and he thought of himself. He needed to speak no further, for the boy understood.

In the afternoon sunlight, they sat on the warm boulders, lost in dreams. The boy was no longer an unsouled husk—for many days now, he had been growing. He gazed, full of wonder and warmth, at the eagle's nest far above his head. He thought about wonderful things—beauty and truth and justice. Darfgarth, although he had spoken wisely, only looked at the lake below, where the stench of death arose from the green waters. He thought about himself. He felt powerful; he felt God-like.

That evening, Darfgarth stole through the darkness to woo Sally, just as he had every evening. Her beauty held as strong a power over him as his guitar held over her. He lived in a trance, dreaming of the mystic tryst which the coming evening was sure to offer; and his dreams were always fulfilled when evening finally came.

But this night was different. Darfgarth crouched beneath Sally's window, sensing that something was wrong. He was both afraid and angry; he hesitated to touch the mandolin's strings, to call her with his music.

Then he knew. She was not alone.

Darfgarth leaped through the window, his spirit foaming with black poisons.

In the twilight shadows of a single candle, Lorr Quinn and Sally Lentz embraced. They heard

Darfgarth, broke apart, and stood motionless, watching him. At first they were shocked, and then they were afraid, and then, as they saw the dark fire in his eyes, they were entranced and captivated.

Darfgarth knew a song:

"Easy Lorr, see what you have done . . .
Easy Lorr, thought you'd have some fun . . .
Easy Lorr, took the only one . . .
Easy Lorr, took my love away . . .
Easy Lorr, loved her night and day . . .
Easy Lorr, now you better pray . . .

Foolish Lorr, see what *I* have done . . ."

Squirming on the floor, locked in a foul embrace, were two snakes. Darfgarth laughed at them, laughed madly, and then jumped from the window, ran through the grass, and struggled insanely up the mountainslope.

That same evening, the boy had a dream. He dreamed he was standing on the cliff. The sky was purple with the turbulence of a terrible storm, and about his head flew the eagles, screaming in answer to the roaring thunder. By his side, it seemed, there cowered a man. The cliff was suddenly engulfed in a great light. The boy pointed at the cowering man, and there was another great light, and the man fell dead, and mighty words pounded through the boy's ears: "God is justice."

When he awoke, the boy ran down the mountainslope and into the village. He did not know why, but he felt compelled to do so. Rolf Rasmussen stopped him at the inn.

"Boy, boy!" cried the little fat man. "Have you seen Darfgarth? Have you seen Sally Lentz and Lorr Quinn?"

"Yesterday, I saw Darfgarth."

"Yesterday, *I* saw all three. But today they're gone."

"I don't know the others."

"You're no help. But if you see Darfgarth, come and tell me."

All day, the boy wandered in the forests of the mountain. In the late afternoon, he reached the cliff's edge, where he found Darfgarth.

"What has happened?" asked the boy.

"I killed two people. I changed them into snakes." Darfgarth stretched his arms and shrugged. "I'll have to leave."

The boy felt weak and small. All of his new strength seemed to have drained away.

"Why did you do it?"

"It was just," said Darfgarth. "God is justice."

"But you're not God," cried the boy.

"Look at this," said Darfgarth, shaking his mandolin. Suddenly trembling, he began to play:

"And he rambled, and he rambled, and he rambled . . ."

A new strength filled the boy. Without faltering, he moved toward Darfgarth; he knew what he had to do. He felt powerful; he felt God-like.

" 'Till them butchers cut him down."

Still later in the afternoon, the boy awoke Rasmussen from a drowsy nap and dragged him up the mountainside. They reached the cliff in the last moments of dusk. While the boy stood silently, Rasmussen surveyed the wordless story which the mountain told.

In the lake below, the stringless mandolin floated like a mangled water snake. In the tree above, seven shining strings were woven inextricably in the eagle's nest. On the granite edge of the cliff, Darfgarth's body was thrown across a boulder. His face was as cold and pale as rain; about his neck, twisted tightly in a death-knot, was the eighth mandolin string, glittering silver in the dying sun.

Horrified, Rasmussen stared at the boy.

"Why did you do it?"

"It was just," said the boy. "God is justice."

"But you're not God," said Rasmussen, while anger filled his face. Taking a firm hold, he began to lead the boy down the mountain toward the village. The little fat man knew what he had to do. He felt powerful; he felt God-like.

There is a tradition to the effect that nothing gives editors greater pleasure than discovering new talent. As a matter of fact, nothing gives editors greater pleasure than a free meal, with drinks, over which they can pontificate. Next *to this, however, comes discovering new talent. Sasha Gilien's first story arrived like a breath of fresh green air and tickled the daylights out of us. (We have been all dark, inside, ever since, but what the dickens. Eh?) Our first inquiry about him drew the surmise that he was a pseudonym for someone else—identity unknown. But while we were still conjecturing, fresh data arrived. "Brooklyn-born (in the year '25), [says our Mr. Pettifogle], ex-Marine, UCLA (Theater Arts), ex-schoolteacher (Eng. and Lit.), co-founder—co-publisher—Exec. Editor—*L. A. Magazine *(since taken over by* Harpers*), gourmet and dining-out authority, Mr. Gilien now devotes himself to writing full-time." We hope that a lot of that time will henceforth be devoted to writing for F&SF, because for ingenuity and sparkle and all around good writing—as witness this zany-genius tale of reincarnation and dual personality—Mr. G. is hard to beat.*

TWO'S A CROWD

by Sasha Gilien

I STAYED WITH CHARLES KLEINgold for twenty minutes after he lay dead on his living-room sofa. It wasn't that I got sentimental about him; it was just so comfortable in the quiet room that I hated to go back and start the same thing over again with someone else, at least right away. As soon as his brain fluttered to a halt from lack of oxygen, I knew the little red light over his name started to blink on the big board, and they'd be buzzing me to come in and get my new assignment.

"Let them buzz," I thought as I

looked at him lying there with his mouth open. "After thirty-five years with Charlie, a few more minutes won't matter. Poor old Charlie; we really had some laughs."

Eventually, of course, I went back. Nothing had changed. The big board was still blinking away while the boys scurried up and down taking off the old nameplates and putting on new ones. The old plates are turned over to Records where they are filed alphabetically, and as word comes in of new germinations, assignments are made, and a new i.d. plate is put on the board over one of the little lights. Things seemed a bit more hectic, though, since the last time I was there thirty-five years ago, a result, I suppose, of the so-called population explosion. And of course our department never gets the appropriations it needs to keep it properly staffed, so that it creaks along, doing the best it can, but becoming more inefficient each year.

The loudspeaker crackled, and I heard the clerk calling my code designation, "E-Ag477, E-Ag477, Assignments." No time off between jobs anymore, especially for E classifications. Out of the corpse and into the egg before you had a chance to recoup your energies from the last hitch.

"Come in, son," said the Director as I opened the door to his office. "You did a nice job with that Korngold fellow."

"Kleingold."

"Whatever his name was. I don't know why they terminated him when they did, but I don't ask questions; I just hand out assignments. They took away my assistant a few years ago. It's all I can do to keep up." He looked weary, suddenly, and I was glad I didn't have his office job and his worries.

"Here you are," he said, reaching into a drawer and handing me the blue envelope. "Eighty-nine years on this one. Have fun."

Outside the office I opened the envelope and took out the punched card. The name was Arthur Mayhew, 1766 North Glenville Drive, Bel-Air, California. At least I was going to be well off, with that address, and now all I needed was a nice quiet pregnancy so I could get some rest. We always get there the moment the ovum is fertilized, and of course there's not too much activity while it's developing. The real work starts at birth.

The conception went off smoothly, despite the efforts of Mr. and Mrs. Mayhew to block it, and I settled down for nine months of quiet which I certainly needed after Charlie Kleingold's busy life.

"I think a mistake's been made," I heard someone say in a blurry voice.

I turned around to see a pale, soft-looking chap with a startled expression on his long face.

"It looks like it, all right. What are you doing here?"

"This is my assignment." He showed me his card. Sure enough, it was for Arthur Mayhew at the same address, but the code read I-Wi843. Some clerk, or maybe even the Director, had snarled things up so that two of us were given identical assignments. The ridiculous thing about it was our codes. His classification indicated Introvert-Withdrawn, and my E-Ag number puts me in the Extrovert-Aggressive category. Unfortunately, there would be no way of getting back to the office until Arthur Mayhew's little red light blinked on the board.

"Friend," I said, "the office rarely goofs. However, they really managed it this time."

"What's to be done?"

"Not much, I'm afraid—why don't you just keep out of the way and let me handle things?"

"But I've got my job to do," he said in an apologetic voice that grated on me.

"We'll see."

There's no point in arguing with somebody like that. I could see he was one of the types who are like rock when they get stubborn. Damn it, if they had to send someone else, why couldn't they send someone with the same classification as mine? With two of us in him, Arthur Mayhew could push his way to the top of the world.

At first it wasn't much of a problem. In fact, for a while we were united in a common hope that we'd soon be released. About a month after conception, when Mrs. Mayhew found that she was pregnant, there was talk of "taking care of it," which would mean we could forget about the whole thing. But Mr. Mayhew put his foot down on that project, and Mrs. Mayhew resigned herself to an offspring, as much as she hated the idea. After that, we avoided each other as much as we could until the delivery. I took over then; Arthur came out screaming and kicking, and for the first three months things went my way. The Mayhews were convinced they had a rugged little customer on their hands; someone who demanded attention every minute of the day. If yammering didn't get it, he'd toss his stuffed animals across the room, or, using the ultimate weapon, he'd deliberately mess up his diapers. He was in particularly good form when visitors came to view him; giggling and crowing for them, and clapping his little hands, but going into a black rage when they left.

All this time I-Wi843 sat around in his mealymouthed way and sulked. I ignored him while I went about my business with Arthur, who was developing into a beautiful Extrovert-Aggressive. But one night he came to me and pleaded for a chance to do some work, and like the good-hearted fool I am, I agreed to allow him twenty-four hours at the controls. The change in Arthur was imme-

diate. He lay there for hours staring at the ceiling, and when Annie, the nursemaid, came into his room to feed him, he shrank down in the corner of his crib, terrified. Even his toys seemed to frighten him. He didn't cry or anything; just lay there in a cringe, wishing that everybody would leave him alone.

When the twenty-four hours were up, the sneaky bastard absolutely refused to let go. "What are you going to do about it?" he smirked.

I suddenly realized that there wasn't much I could do, once he had the switch. And he knew it, too, because he said with a smile, "For an Extrovert-Aggressive, you're pretty naive."

"My goodness," said Annie, who had raised Mrs. Mayhew when she was a child, "I've never seen a baby change like that. He doesn't run a fever, but I don't think he's well."

"He has changed, hasn't he? It's sort of nice, though, to have him quiet for a change. I might as well take him to Dr. McCleod tomorrow; he's due for a check-up anyway."

Dr. McCleod, who had delivered Arthur, found him in good health, although he, too, was surprised at the baby's quiet melancholy. He prescribed a food supplement and told Mrs. Mayhew not to worry, which she wasn't going to do anyhow.

Mealymouth had complete possession of the controls, and Arthur Mayhew became a shy withdrawn child who never made any friends, happy only when he could be by himself. He rarely spoke. His parents were able to reach him less and less as he drew into his own little world, and his teachers worried about his social development, which seemed to be nil. Of course, I was furious about the whole thing and spent all my time looking for my chance to step in and take over; I wanted to put some life into the boy.

It finally came when he was twelve. Mealymouth must have forgotten that I was around; one night he relaxed a little too much. I wrenched the controls away and hung on.

"All right, friend, you've had it. He's all mine," I said, elbowing him out of the way. He looked at me reprovingly, and just stood there, but I knew he'd always be around, waiting.

I started right off the next morning by having Arthur come to breakfast, slam down his spoon, and bellow, "Boy, am I sick of this lousy oatmeal!"

"What did you say?" asked Mr. Mayhew incredulously. This was the first time he'd gotten more than a mumbled 'morning' in five years.

"I said I'm sick of this lousy oatmeal. What's in the paper, pop?"

"Are you all right, Arthur?"

"Sure I'm all right. I just asked what's in the paper."

"Arthur, there's something—"

"O.K. skip it. I'm late to school, anyway." With that, Arthur picked up his books and went out, leaving Mr. Mayhew gawking over his *Los Angeles Times*.

During the day, when Mrs. Kramer stepped out for a moment, Arthur created a sensation in his class by standing on his desk and doing a creditable imitation of the teacher, followed by a rapid fire tap routine involving hair-raising slides to the edge. His classmates howled, but I think they were a little frightened by the intensity of Arthur's performance. I couldn't help it, though; after all this time of inactivity, I was bursting with energy and new ideas, so Arthur careened on his merry way, completely undisturbed by outside reaction. When Mrs. Kramer hurried in to quell the racket, she was amazed to find that, of all children, it was the Mayhew boy who was responsible. Since she was exceedingly progressive in her educational ideas, Mrs. Kramer was delighted to see the child finally coming out of his shyness and taking part in the social life of his peer group. It wasn't for several days that she began to feel that perhaps the boy was overdoing it a bit. I had him disrupt classes, organize a small gang of boys called "Artie's Avengers" which terrorized teachers and students alike, and become known as the freshest kid ever to have gone to Oakglen School. At home he became unmanageable, doing precisely as he pleased, despite his parents' modest attempts at discipline. He was loud, brash, and insulting, finally causing the faithful Annie to leave the Mayhews and seek employment elsewhere.

"Will you kindly tell me what's happened to our son, Clyde?" said Mrs. Mayhew one evening after a particularly violent episode where Arthur had unqualifiedly bested Mr. Mayhew in a battle of wills. This had led to the necessity of the latter physically picking up his boy and locking him in his room. From upstairs there now issued spasmodic blasts on the alto saxophone Arthur had taken (without permission) from school.

"I honestly don't know, honey, but I'm getting a little sick of that kid. I can't understand it; he was such a timid boy. Remember how we used to worry that he would never assert himself? Maybe it's that damn progressive school he goes to."

The Mayhews held out for another year before they shipped him off to Cleves Military Academy, which specialized in rich boys who needed iron-handed guidance. Colonel Cleves had yet to meet the lad he couldn't quash, charging liberally for his talent. However, Cadet Arthur Mayhew proved to be a formidable opponent, and if the Colonel hadn't been so jealous of his reputation, he'd have sent him

packing at the end of the first quarter. For one thing, Arthur had a good 30 I.Q. point advantage over the Colonel, and since I do some of my best work during the teens, Arthur was usually triumphant. "Artie's Avengers" came back to life, their leader more fearless and arrogant than ever. He organized a raucous little dance band for which he played the sax and sang, and he managed to become the vortex of every rebellious activity, rapidly besmirching the fair name of Cleves, whose motto was, "Obedience Is The Highest Good."

Everything was working out so nicely that I completely forgot about old Mealymouth who lurked about in the background. That's where I made my mistake. He inched up one night and simply took over, just like that. Once he had the switch, there was nothing I could do, and poor Artie's personality went into low gear almost at once.

He woke up crying.

"Hey, Artie, what the hell happened?" Donald Gross, his roommate was looking at him, embarrassed.

"I—I don't like it here. I want to go home."

Donald stared at him blankly.

"Just leave me alone, will you?" He turned his face to the wall and pulled the blanket over his head.

He was still there after breakfast when Colonel Cleves stormed in. "On your feet, Mayhew," he roared "What is this, open mutiny?"

He strode over to the bed and tore back the blankets, revealing Arthur pressing himself against the wall, trying to shut out all the noise. There was nothing the Colonel liked more than seeing a frightened boy.

"Stop snivelling, Mayhew, and get up." He turned to Captain Prosser, his aide. "Captain, see that this cadet is at Morning Formation, and be sure he reports to my office at 1600 hours. That's all."

When the Colonel was gone, old Captain Prosser, who was somewhat dazed by Arthur's behavior, helped him dress and silently accompanied out to the Grinder where the members of his company stood wondering what kind of gag Arthur was pulling now. He quietly took his place in the ranks and dreamily went through the military folderol the Colonel loved so much. At the first break he drifted off behind the bleachers and thought about running away. His gang soon followed him, horsing around, waiting for him to say something.

"What do you want?" he said, his face white.

"I don't think he's fooling. He's sick or something," Donald Gross said.

There was an uncomfortable shuffling among the boys, and then Arthur's faithful lieutenant, Buddy Baust said, "Come on, Artie, what's the gimmick?"

"Please leave me alone," he was almost sobbing.

The whistle blew, and everyone ran back to formation. The rest of the day Arthur tried to avoid the other boys, going so far as to hide in his closet during lunch and through all his afternoon classes. He was flushed out by Captain Prosser, who marched him to the Colonel's office at 4 o'clock. The Colonel was so pleased to see Arthur cowed that he was surprisingly gentle with him, merely reminding him that at Cleves a boy toed the line or would live to regret it forever.

Arthur's old buddies rapidly dropped away. He spoke to no one, including Donald Gross, rarely smiled, except to himself, and spent every free moment lying on his bed, staring at the wall. The Colonel sent home a glowing report on Arthur's behavior, assuring the Mayhews that their son was adjusting nicely, and that they would be hugely pleased at his new attitude. As a matter of fact, when his parents visited him on Parade Day, he had nothing to say to them. He had gradually adopted a hunched-over posture, with his eyes fixed on the ground, and a voice so low it was barely audible. The Mayhews were stunned by the change, but there was something so pathetic about him that they were saddened, rather than pleased.

During the drive home Mrs. Mayhew said, "Clyde, I think that idiotic Colonel Cleves has broken Arthur's spirit. Do you think we should take him out of there?"

"It's just another year, dear. Let's let him finish at the Academy. Maybe it's a phase."

It bothered the hell out of me to see what had become of Artie since Mealymouth had taken over; the kid seemed miserable. On Graduation Day, when all the seniors were putting their arms over each other's shoulders and shaking hands in sentimental goodbyes, Arthur snatched his diploma and rushed off to his parents' car, flopping down in the back seat, waiting for them to drive home. That did it! I lost my head altogether and grabbed Mealymouth's arm, twisting it until he dropped the switch. We both grappled for it, and I found that he was stronger than he looked. All this time, of course, Arthur was having a fit in the back seat, moaning and groaning until Mr. Mayhew pulled over and stopped the car. By the time he and his wife had gotten the boy out in the fresh air, I had complete possession of the switch. Mealymouth lay on his back, panting.

"Arthur, what's wrong?"

Artie grinned. "I'm fine, soaks—I mean folks. Just glad to be shet of ol' Cunnel Cleves, the biggest son-of-a-bitch to evah disgrace the glooorious unifohm of Yew Ess Ahmy. Kin Ah drive, Pappy?"

"My God," said Mrs. Mayhew, "you don't know how you frightened us just now. It looked like a seizure."

"C'mon, Pappy, honey, let li'l ol' Artie drive."

"Will you stop that silly Southern accent, Arthur?" said his father. "No, you can't drive. Now get in."

Arthur ran around the front of the car, jumped into the driver's seat, and started the motor. "All aboard that's going aboard," he shouted, moving the car a few feet. "Artie's driving. Wanna ride?"

Mr. Mayhew gave his wife a look of dismay, and they got in. Artie leaned over the wheel as if he were making a getaway and had the Buick up to ninety-five miles an hour by the time they were back on the highway. He punched the horn excitedly and laughed, "I'm a car drivin' fool just outta school," and sped down the highway like a madman. He drove like that for about fifteen minutes when a highway patrol car edged him over to the side.

It was great to be working again, but I felt uneasy with Mealymouth over there glaring balefully at me.

"You know, you're ruining the boy."

"The hell I am. You're the one that ruined him. If you hadn't shown up, Artie would be doing just fine, like he is now." He had gall, telling me *I* was wrecking the kid.

"Well, I don't care what you say; we can't go on fighting each other this way. Neither of us can relax for a minute."

"So?"

"I had an idea."

"So?"

"Instead of fighting, why don't we take turns or something. Like on a regular basis."

I thought it over for a minute. It wasn't a bad idea, except I couldn't trust that guy.

He knew what I was thinking. "I swear you can trust me this time. I'll trust you. We could change off every week."

"Make it every day, and it's a deal."

We shook on it, and for the first time we had a friendly talk. It turned out that Mealymouth wasn't a bad guy after all, just conscientious. It wasn't his fault they'd made a mistake back at the office. Or maybe it was me they'd made the mistake about. Anyway, it's been a few years now that we've been taking daily shifts, and we get along beautifully, switching over every twenty-four hours like clockwork. Of course it's a little rough on Arthur. They'll never let him out of this place until his little red light blinks on, and that won't be for another sixty-eight years.

Until 1948 pictures of authors on book jacket tended to fall severely into two groups. If male, the author was shown in profile, with pipe, gazing towards a horizon or something. If female, she was standing in a garden, with a floppy hat and two dogs. That was the year of OTHER VOICES, OTHER ROOMS, *whose jacket picture showed the author looking like a mildly startled faun—if fauns are ever photographed lying on a divan in shirt sleeves and wearing a fancy waistcoat. So did Truman Capote stir up the literary scene; he has been stirring it up ever since: winner of an O'Henry prize at nineteen, author of the fine short story collection,* THE TREE OF NIGHT, *the beautiful book of travel sketches,* LOCAL COLOR, THE GRASS HARP *—novel and play—the musical,* HOUSE OF FLOWERS, *his film,* BEAT THE DEVIL, *his canny glance at Russia and Americans-in-Russia,* THE MUSES ARE HEARD, *and his memorable riposte to Norman Mailer—who, in a TV round-table discussion, was vigorously espousing the Don't-get-it-right-get-it-written-theory—"But, my good man," protested Mr. T., in a deadly drawl, "that's not writing—that's* type-writing!" *If he picked up any of his qualities as observer and inditer while "earning his living diversely by writing speeches for a third-rate politician, dancing on a river boat, painting on glass, and working as an office boy for the* NEW YORKER *magazine," or if he was born with all of them and all of them brightly burnished, we do not know. It might have been with* Master Misery—*the story of lonely Sylvia, mysterious Mr. Revercomb, and wildly unhappy Oreilly the ex-clown—in mind that Truman Capote said, "There is . . . somewhere a spiritual territory, uncharted and not too soft, shifting imaginative; it is the country below the surface, and as an anarchist I feel less blind there."*

MASTER MISERY

by Truman Capote

HER HIGH HEELS, CLACKING across the marble foyer, made her think of ice cubes rattling in a glass, and the flowers, those autumn chrysanthemums in the urn at the entrance, if touched they would shatter, splinter, she was sure, into frozen dust; yet the house was warm, even somewhat overheated, but cold, and Sylvia shivered, but cold, like the snowy swollen wastes of the secretary's face: Miss Mozart, who dressed all in white, as though she were a nurse. Perhaps she really was; that, of course, could be the answer. Mr. Revercomb, you are mad, and this is your nurse; she thought about it for a moment: well, no. And now the butler brought her scarf. His beauty touched her: slender, so gentle, a Negro with freckled skin and reddish, unreflecting eyes. As he opened the door, Miss Mozart appeared, her starched uniform rustling dryly in the hall. "We hope you will return," she said, and

handed Sylvia a sealed envelope. "Mrs. Revercomb was most particularly pleased."

Outside, dusk was falling like blue flakes, and Sylvia walked crosstown along the November streets until she reached the lonely upper reaches of Fifth Avenue. It occurred to her then that she might walk home through the park: an act of defiance almost, for Henry and Estelle, always insistent upon their city wisdom, had said over and again, Sylvia, you have no idea how dangerous it is, walking in the park after dark; look what happened to Myrtle Calisher. This isn't Easton, honey. That was the other thing they said. And said. God, she was sick of it. Still, and aside from a few of the other typists at SnugFare, an underwear company for which she worked, who else in New York did she know? Oh, it would be all right if only she did not have to live with them, if she could afford somewhere a small room of her own; but there in that chintz-cramped apartment she sometimes felt she would choke them both. And why did she come to New York? For whatever reason, and it was indeed becoming vague, a principal cause of leaving Easton had been to rid herself of Henry and Estelle; or rather, their counterparts, though in point of fact Estelle was actually from Easton, a town north of Cincinnati. She and Sylvia had grown up together. The real trouble with Henry and Estelle was that they were so excruciatingly married. Nambypamby, bootsy-totsy, and everything had a name: the telephone was Tinkling Tillie, the sofa, Our Nelle, the bed, Big Bear; yes, and what about those His-Her towels, those He-She pillows? Enough to drive you loony. "Loony!" she said aloud, the quiet park erasing her voice. It was lovely now, and she was right to have walked here, with wind moving through the leaves, and globe lamps, freshly aglow, kindling the chalk drawings of children, pink birds, blue arrows, green hearts. But suddenly, like a pair of obscene words, there appeared on the path two boys: pimple-faced, grinning, they loomed in the dusk like menacing flames, and Sylvia, passing them, felt a burning all through her, quite as though she'd brushed fire. They turned and followed her past a deserted playground, one of them bump-bumping a stick along an iron fence, the other whistling: these sounds accumulated around her like the gathering roar of an oncoming engine, and when one of the boys, with a laugh, called, "Hey, whatsa hurry?" her mouth twisted for breath. Don't, she thought, thinking to throw down her purse and run. At that moment, a man walking a dog came up a sidepath, and she followed at his heels to the exit. Wouldn't they feel gratified, Henry and Es-

telle, wouldn't they we-told-you-so if she were to tell them? and, what is more, Estelle would write it home and the next thing you knew it would be all over Easton that she'd been raped in Central Park. She spent the rest of the way home despising New York: anonymity, its virtuous terror; and the squeaking drainpipe, all-night light, ceaseless footfall, subway corridor, numbered door (3C).

"Shh, honey," Estelle said, sidling out of the kitchen, "Bootsy's doing his homework." Sure enough, Henry, a law student at Columbia, was hunched over his books in the living room, and Sylvia, at Estelle's request, took off her shoes before tiptoeing through. Once inside her room, she threw herself on the bed and put her hands over her eyes. Had today really happened? Miss Mozart and Mr. Revercomb, were they really there in the tall house on Seventy-eighth Street?

"So, honey, what happened today?" Estelle had entered without knocking.

Sylvia sat up on her elbow. "Nothing. Except that I typed ninety-seven letters."

"About what, honey?" asked Estelle, using Sylvia's hairbrush.

"Oh, hell, what do you suppose? SnugFare, the shorts that safely support our leaders of Science and Industry."

"Gee, honey, don't sound so cross. I don't know what's wrong with you sometimes. You sound so cross. Ouch! Why don't you get a new brush? This one's just knotted with hair. . . ."

"Mostly yours."

"What did you say?"

"Skip it."

"Oh, I thought you said something. Anyway, like I was saying, I wish you didn't have to go to that office and come home every day feeling cross and out of sorts. Personally, and I said this to Bootsy just last night and he agreed with me one hundred percent, I said, Bootsy, I think Sylvia ought to get married: a girl high-strung like that needs her tensions relaxed. There's no earthly reason why you shoulda't. I mean maybe you're not pretty in the ordinary sense, but you have beautiful eyes, and an intelligent, really sincere look. In fact you're the sort of girl any professional man would be lucky to get. And I should think you would want to. . . . Look what a different person I am since I married Henry. Doesn't it make you lonesome seeing how happy we are? I'm here to tell you, honey, that there is nothing like lying in bed at night with a man's arms around you and . . ."

"Estelle! For Christ's sake!" Sylvia sat bolt upright in bed, anger on her cheeks like rouge. But after a moment she bit her lip and lowered her eyelids. "I'm sorry," she said, "I didn't mean to shout. Only I wish you wouldn't talk like that."

"It's all right," said Estelle, smiling in a dumb, puzzled way. Then she went over and gave Sylvia a kiss. "I understand, honey. It's just that you're plain worn out. And I'll bet you haven't had anything to eat either. Come on in the kitchen and I'll scramble you some eggs."

When Estelle set the eggs before her, Sylvia felt quite ashamed; after all, Estelle was trying to be nice; and so then, as though to make it all up, she said: "Something did happen today."

Estelle sat down across from her with a cup of coffee, and Sylvia went on: "I don't know how to tell about it. It's so odd. But—well, I had lunch at the Automat today, and I had to share the table with these three men. I might as well have been invisible because they talked about the most personal things. One of the men said his girl friend was going to have a baby and he didn't know where he was going to get the money to do anything about it. So one of the other men asked him why didn't he sell something. He said he didn't have anything to sell. Whereupon the third man (he was rather delicate and didn't look as if he belonged with the others) said yes, there was something he could sell: *dreams.* Even I laughed, but the man shook his head and said very seriously: no, it was perfectly true, his wife's aunt, Miss Mozart, worked for a rich man who bought dreams, regular night-time dreams—from anybody. And he wrote down the man's name and address and gave it to his friend; but the man simply left it lying on the table. It was too crazy for him, he said."

"Me, too," Estelle put in a little righteously.

"I don't know," said Sylvia, lighting a cigarette. "But I couldn't get it out of my head. The name written on the paper was A. F. Revercomb and the address was on East Seventy-eighth Street. I only glanced at it for a moment, but it was . . . I don't know, I couldn't seem to forget it. It was beginning to give me a headache. So I left the office early . . ."

Slowly and with emphasis, Estelle put down her coffee cup. "Honey, listen, you don't mean you went to see him, this Revercomb nut?"

"I didn't mean to," she said, immediately embarrassed. To try and tell about it she now realized was a mistake. Estelle had no imagination, she would never understand. So her eyes narrowed, the way they always did when she composed a lie. "And, as a matter of fact, I didn't," she said flatly. "I started to; but then I realized how silly it was, and went for a walk instead."

"That was sensible of you," said Estelle as she began stacking dishes in the kitchen sink. "Imagine what might have happened. Buy-

ing dreams! Whoever heard! Uh uh, honey, this sure isn't Easton."

Before retiring, Sylvia took a seconal, something she seldom did; but she knew otherwise she would never rest, not with her mind so nimble and somersaulting; then, too, she felt a curious sadness, a sense of loss, as though she'd been the victim of some real or even moral theft, as though, in fact, the boys encountered in the park had snatched (abruptly she switched on the light) her purse. The envelope Miss Mozart had handed her: it was in the purse, and until now she had forgotten it. She tore it open. Inside there was a blue note folded around a bill; on the note there was written: *In payment of one dream,* $5. And now she believed it; it was true, and she had sold Mr. Revercomb a dream. Could it be really so simple as that? She laughed a little as she turned off the light again. If she were to sell a dream only twice a week, think of what she could do: a place somewhere all her own, she thought, deepening toward sleep; ease, like firelight, wavered over her, and there came the moment of twilit lantern slides, deeply deeper. His lips, his arms: telescoped, descending; and distastefully she kicked away the blanket. Were these cold manarms the arms Estelle had spoken of? Mr. Revercomb's lips brushed her ear as he leaned far into her sleep. Tell me? he whispered.

It was a week before she saw him again, a Sunday afternoon in early December. She'd left the apartment intending to see a movie, but somehow, and as though it had happened without her knowledge, she found herself on Madison Avenue, two blocks from Mr. Revercomb's. It was a cold, silver-skied day, with winds sharp and catching as hollyhock; in store windows icicles of Christmas tinsel twinkled amid mounds of sequined snow: all to Sylvia's distress, for she hated holidays, those times when one is most alone. In one window she saw a spectacle which made her stop still. It was a life-sized, mechanical Santa Claus; slapping his stomach he rocked back and forth in a frenzy of electrical mirth. You could hear beyond the thick glass his squeaky uproarious laughter. The longer she watched the more evil he seemed, until, finally, with a shudder, she turned and made her way into the street of Mr. Revercomb's house. It was, from the outside, an ordinary town house, perhaps a trifle less polished, less imposing than some others, but relatively grand all the same. Winter-withered ivy writhed about the leaded window-panes and trailed in octopus ropes over the door; at the sides of the door were two small stone lions with blind, chipped eyes. Sylvia took a breath, then rang the bell. Mr. Revercomb's Negro recognized her with a courteous smile.

On the previous visit, the parlor in which she had awaited her audience with Mr. Revercomb had been empty except for herself. This time there were others present, women of several appearances, and an excessively nervous, gnat-eyed young man. Had this group been what it resembled, namely, patients in a doctor's anteroom, he would have seemed either an expectant father or a victim of St. Vitus. Sylvia was seated next to him, and his fidgety eyes unbuttoned her rapidly: whatever he saw apparently intrigued him very little, and Sylvia was grateful when he went back to his twitchy preoccupations. Gradually, though, she became conscious of how interested in her the assemblage seemed; in the dim, doubtful light of the plant-filled room their gazes were more rigid than the chairs upon which they sat; one woman was particularly relentless. Ordinarily, her face would have had a soft commonplace sweetness, but now, watching Sylvia, it was ugly with distrust, jealousy. As though trying to tame some creature which might suddenly spring full-fanged, she sat stroking a flea-bitten neck fur, her stare continuing its assault until the earthquake footstep of Miss Mozart was heard in the hall. Immediately, and like frightened students, the group, separating into their individual identities, came to attention. "You, Mr. Pocker," accused Miss Mozart, "you're next!" and Mr. Pocker, wringing his hands, jittering his eyes, followed after her. In the duskroom the gathering settled again like sun motes.

It began then to rain; melting window reflections quivered on the walls, and Mr. Revercomb's young butler, seeping through the room, stirred a fire in the grate, set tea things upon a table. Sylvia, nearest the fire, felt drowsy with warmth and the noise of rain; her head tilted sideways, she closed her eyes, neither asleep nor really awake. For a long while only the crystal swingings of a clock scratched the polished silence of Mr. Revercomb's house. And then, abruptly, there was an enormous commotion in the hall, capsizing the room into a fury of sound: a bull-deep voice, vulgar as red, roared out: "Stop Oreilly? The ballet butler and who else?" The owner of this voice, a tub-shaped, brick-colored little man, shoved his way to the parlor threshold, where he stood drunkenly seesawing from foot to foot. "Well, well, well," he said, his gin-hoarse voice descending the scale, "and all these ladies before me? But Oreilly is a gentleman, Oreilly waits his turn."

"Not here, he doesn't," said Miss Mozart, stealing up behind him and seizing him sternly by the collar. His face went even redder and his eyes bubbled out: "You're

choking me," he gasped, but Miss Mozart, whose green-pale hands were as strong as oak roots, jerked his tie still tighter, and propelled him toward the door, which presently slammed with shattering effect: a tea cup tinkled, and dry dahlia leaves tumbled from their heights. The lady with the fur slipped an aspirin into her mouth. "Dis*gusting*," she said, and the others, all except Sylvia, laughed delicately, admiringly, as Miss Mozart strode past dusting her hands.

It was raining thick and darkly when Sylvia left Mr. Revercomb's. She looked around the desolate street for a taxi; there was nothing, however, and no one; yes, someone, the drunk man who had caused the disturbance. Like a lonely city child, he was leaning against a parked car and bouncing a rubber ball up and down. "Lookit, kid," he said to Sylvia, "lookit, I just found this ball. Do you suppose that means good luck?" Sylvia smiled at him; for all his bravado, she thought him rather harmless, and there was a quality in his face, some grinning sadness suggesting a clown minus make-up. Juggling his ball, he skipped along after her as she headed toward Madison Avenue. "I'll bet I made a fool of myself in there," he said. "When I do things like that I just want to sit down and cry." Standing so long in the rain seemed to have sobered him considerably. "But she ought not to have choked me that way; damn, she's too rough. I've known some rough women: my sister Berenice could brand the wildest bull; but that other one, she's the roughest of the lot. Mark Oreilly's word, she's going to end up in the electric chair," he said, and smacked his lips. "They've got no cause to treat me like that. It's every bit his fault anyhow. I didn't have an awful lot to begin with, but then he took it every bit, and now I've got *niente*, kid, *niente*."

"That's too bad," said Sylvia, though she did not know what she was being sympathetic about. "Are you a clown, Mr. Oreilly?"

"Was," he said.

By this time they had reached the avenue, but Sylvia did not even look for a taxi; she wanted to walk on in the rain with the man who had been a clown. "When I was a little girl I only liked clown dolls," she told him. "My room at home was like a circus."

"I've been other things besides a clown. I have sold insurance, too."

"Oh?" said Sylvia, disappointed. "And what do you do now?"

Oreilly chuckled and threw his ball especially high; after the catch his head still remained tilted upward. "I watch the sky," he said. "There I am with my suitcase traveling through the blue. It's where you travel when you've got no place else to go. But what do I do on this planet? I have stolen,

begged, and sold my dreams—all for purposes of whiskey. A man cannot travel in the blue without a bottle. Which brings us to a point: how'd you take it, baby, if I asked for the loan of a dollar?"

"I'd take it fine," Sylvia replied, and paused, uncertain of what she'd say next. They wandered along so slowly, the stiff rain enclosing them like an insulating pressure; it was as though she were walking with a childhood doll, one grown miraculous and capable; she reached and held his hand: dear clown traveling in the blue. "But I haven't got a dollar. All I've got is seventy cents."

"No hard feelings," said Oreilly. "But honest, is that the kind of money he's paying nowadays?"

Sylvia knew whom he meant. "No, no—as a matter of fact, I didn't sell him a dream." She made no attempt to explain; she didn't understand it herself. Confronting the graying invisibility of Mr. Revercomb (impeccable, exact as a scale, surrounded in a cologne of clinical odors; flat gray eyes planted like seed in the anonymity of his face and sealed within steel-dull lenses) she could not remember a dream, and so she told of two thieves who had chased her through the park and in and out among the swings of a playground. "Stop, he said for me to stop; there are dreams and dreams, he said, but that is not a real one, that is one you are making up. Now how do you suppose he knew that? So I told him another dream; it was about him, of how he held me in the night with balloons rising and moons falling all around. He said he was not interested in dreams concerning himself." Miss Mozart, who transcribed the dreams in shorthand, was told to call the next person. "I don't think I will go back there again," she said.

"You will," said Oreilly. "Look at me, even I go back, and he has long since finished with me, Master Misery."

"Master Misery? Why do you call him that?

They had reached the corner where the maniacal Santa Claus rocked and bellowed. His laughter echoed in the rainy squeaking street, and a shadow of him swayed in the rainbow lights of the pavement. Oreilly, turning his back upon the Santa Claus, smiled and said: "I call him Master Misery on account of that's who he is. Master Misery. Only maybe you call him something else; anyway, he is the same fellow, and you must've known him. All mothers tell their kids about him: he lives in hollows of trees, he comes down chimneys late at night, he lurks in graveyards and you can hear his step in the attic. The sonofabitch, he is a thief and a threat: he will take everything you have and end by leaving you nothing, not even a dream. Boo!" he shouted. "Now do you know who he is?"

Sylvia nodded. "I know who he is. My family called him something else. But I can't remember what. It was long ago."

"But you remember him?"

"Yes, I remember him."

"Then call him Master Misery," he said, and, bouncing his ball, walked away from her. "Master Misery," his voice trailed to a mere moth of sound, "Mas-ter Mis-er-y . . ."

It was hard to look at Estelle, for she was in front of a window, and the window was filled with windy sun, which hurt Sylvia's eyes, and the glass rattled, which hurt her head. Also, Estelle was lecturing. Her nasal voice sounded as though her throat were a depository of rusty razor blades. "I wish you could see yourself," she was saying. Or was that something she'd said a long while back? Never mind. "I don't know what's happened to you: I'll bet you don't weigh a hundred pounds, I can see every bone and vein, and your hair! You look like a poodle."

Sylvia passed a hand over her forehead. "What time is it, Estelle?"

"It's four," she said, interrupting herself long enough to look at her watch. "Where is your watch?"

"I sold it," said Sylvia, too tired to lie. It did not matter. She had sold so many things, including her beaver coat and gold mesh evening bag.

Estelle shook her head. "I give up, honey, I plain give up. And that was the watch your mother gave you for graduation. It's a shame," she said, and made an old-maid noise with her mouth, "a pity and a shame. I'll never understand why you left us. That is your business, I'm sure; only how could you have left us for this . . . this . . .?"

"Dump," supplied Sylvia, using the word advisedly. It was a furnished room in the East Sixties between Second and Third Avenues. Large enough for a daybed and a splintery old bureau with a mirror like a cataracted eye, it had one window, which looked out on a vast vacant lot (you could hear the tough afternoon voices of desperate running boys) and in the distance, like an exclamation point for the skyline, there was the black smokestack of a factory. This smokestack occurred frequently in her dreams; it never failed to arouse Miss Mozart: "Phallic, phallic," she would mutter, glancing up from her shorthand. The floor of the room was a garbage pail of books begun but never finished, antique newspapers, even orange hulls, fruit cores, underwear, a spilled powder box.

Estelle kicked her way through this trash, and sat down on the daybed. "Honey, you don't know, but I've been worried crazy. I mean I've got pride and all that and if you don't like me, well o.k.;

but you've got no right to stay away like this and not let me hear from you in over a month. So today I said to Bootsy, Bootsy I've got a feeling something terrible has happened to Sylvia. You can imagine how I felt when I called your office and they told me you hadn't worked there for the last four weeks. What happened, were you fired?"

"Yes, I was fired." Sylvia began to sit up. "Please, Estelle—I've got to get ready; I've got an appointment."

"Be still. You're not going anywhere till I know what's wrong. The landlady downstairs told me you were found sleepwalking. . . ."

"What do you mean talking to her? Why are you spying on me?"

Estelle's eyes puckered, as though she were going to cry. She put her hand over Sylvia's and petted it gently. "Tell me, honey, is it because of a man?"

"It's because of a man, yes," said Sylvia, laughter at the edge of her voice.

"You should have come to me before," Estelle sighed. "I know about men. That is nothing for you to be ashamed of. A man can have a way with a woman that kind of makes her forget everything else. If Henry wasn't the fine upstanding potential lawyer that he is, why, I would still love him, and do things for him that before I knew what it was like to be with a man would have seemed shocking and horrible. But honey, this fellow you've mixed up with, he's taking advantage of you."

"It's not that kind of relationship," said Sylvia, getting up and locating a pair of stockings in the furor of her bureau drawers. "It hasn't got anything to do with love. Forget about it. In fact, go home and forget about me altogether."

Estelle looked at her narrowly. "You scare me, Sylvia; you really scare me." Sylvia laughed and went on getting dressed. "Do you remember a long time ago when I said you ought to get married?"

"Uh huh. And now you listen." Sylvia turned around; there was a row of hairpins spaced across her mouth; she extracted them one at a time all the while she talked. "You talk about getting married as though it were the answer absolute; very well, up to a point I agree. Sure, I want to be loved; who the hell doesn't? But even if I was willing to compromise, where is the man I'm going to marry? Believe me, he must've fallen down a manhole. I mean it seriously when I say there are no men in New York—and even if there were, how do you meet them? Every man I ever met here who seemed the slightest bit attractive was either married, too poor to get married, or queer. And anyway, this is no place to fall in love; this is where you ought to come when you want to get over being in love.

Sure, I suppose I could marry somebody; but I do not want that? Do I?"

Estelle shrugged. "Then what do you want?"

"More than is coming to me." She poked the last hairpin into place, and smoothed her eyebrows before the mirror. "I have an appointment, Estelle, and it is time for you to go now."

"I can't leave you like this," said Estelle, her hand waving helplessly around the room. "Sylvia, you were my childhood friend."

"That is just the point: we're not children any more; at least, I'm not. No, I want you to go home, and I don't want you to come here again. I just want you to forget about me."

Estelle fluttered at her eyes with a handkerchief, and by the time she reached the door she was weeping quite loudly. Sylvia could not afford remorse: having been mean, there was nothing to be but meaner. "Go on," she said, following Estelle into the hall, "and write home any damn nonsense about me you want to!" Letting out a wail that brought other roomers to their doors, Estelle fled down the stairs.

After this Sylvia went back into her room and sucked a piece of sugar to take the sour taste out of her mouth: it was her grandmother's remedy for bad tempers. Then she got down on her knees and pulled from under the bed a cigar box she kept hidden there. When you opened the box it played a homemade and somewhat disorganized version of "Oh How I Hate to Get up in the Morning." Her brother had made the music-box and given it to her on her fourteenth birthday. Eating the sugar, she'd thought of her grandmother, and hearing the tune she thought of her brother; the rooms of the house where they had lived rotated before her, all dark and she like a light moving among them: up the stairs, down, out and through, spring sweet and lilac shadows in the air and the creaking of a porch swing. All gone, she thought, calling their names, and now I am absolutely alone. The music stopped. But it went on in her head; she could hear it bugling above the child-cries of the vacant lot. And it interfered with her reading. She was reading a little diary-like book she kept inside the box. In this book she wrote down the essentials of her dreams; they were endless now, and it was so hard to remember. Today she would tell Mr. Revercomb about the three blind children. He would like that. The prices he paid varied, and she was sure this was at least a ten-dollar dream. The cigar-box anthem followed her down the stairs and through the streets and she longed for it to go away.

In the store where Santa Claus had been there was a new and equally unnerving exhibit. Even

when she was late to Mr. Revercomb's, as now, Sylvia was compelled to pause by the window. A plaster girl with intense glass eyes sat astride a bicycle pedaling at the maddest pace; though its wheel spokes spun hypnotically, the bicycle of course never budged: all that effort and the poor girl going nowhere. It was a pitifully human situation, and one that Sylvia could so exactly identify with herself that she always felt a real pang. The music-box rewound in her head: the tune, her brother, the house, a high-school dance, the tune! Couldn't Mr. Revercomb hear it? His penetrating gaze carried such dull suspicion. But he seemed pleased with her dream, and, when she left, Miss Mozart gave her an envelope containing ten dollars.

"I had a ten-dollar dream," she told Oreilly, and Oreilly, rubbing his hands together, said, "Fine! Fine! But that's just my luck, baby—you should've got here sooner 'cause I went and did a terrible thing. I walked into a liquor store up the street, snatched a quart and ran." Sylvia didn't believe him until he produced from his pinned-together overcoat a bottle of bourbon, already half gone. "You're going to get in trouble some day," she said, "and then what would happen to me? I don't know what I would do without you." Oreilly laughed and poured a shot of the whiskey into a water glass. They were sitting in an all-night cafeteria, a great glaring food depot alive with blue mirrors and raw murals. Although to Sylvia it seemed a sordid place, they met there frequently for dinner; but even if she could have afforded it she did not know where else they could go, for together they presented a curious aspect; a young girl and a doddering, drunken man. Even here people often stared at them; if they stared long enough, Oreilly would stiffen with dignity and say: "Hello, hot lips, I remember you from way back. Still working in the men's room?" But usually they were left to themselves, and sometimes they would sit talking until two and three in the morning.

"It's a good thing the rest of Master Misery's crowd don't know he gave you that ten bucks. One of them would say you stole the dream. I had that happen once. Eaten up, all of 'em, never saw such a bunch of sharks, worse than actors or clowns or businessmen. Crazy, if you think about it: you worry whether you're going to go to sleep, if you're going to have a dream, if you're going to remember the dream. Round and round. So you get a couple of bucks, so you rush to the nearest liquor store —or the nearest sleeping-pill machine. And first thing you know, you're roaming your way up outhouse alley. Why, baby, you know what it's like? It's just like life."

"No, Oreilly, that's what it isn't like. It hasn't anything to do with life. It has more to do with being dead. I feel as though everything were being taken from me, as though some thief were stealing me down to the bone. Oreilly, I tell you I haven't an ambition, and there used to be so much. I don't understand it and I don't know what to do."

He grinned. "And you say it isn't like life? Who understands life and who knows what to do?"

"Be serious," she said. "Be serious and put away that whiskey and eat your soup before it gets cold." She lighted a cigarette, and the smoke, smarting her eyes, intensified her frown. "If only I knew what he wanted with those dreams, all typed and filed. What does he do with them? You're right when you say he is Master Misery. . . . He can't be simply some silly quack; it can't be so meaningless as that. But why does he want dreams? Help me, Oreilly, think, think: what does it mean?"

Squinting one eye, Oreilly poured himself another drink; the clownlike twist of his mouth hardened into a line of scholarly straightness. "That is a million-dollar question, kid. Why don't you ask something easy, like how to cure the common cold? Yes, kid, what does it mean? I have thought about it a good deal. I have thought about it in the process of making love to a woman, and I have thought about it in the middle of a poker game." He tossed the drink down his throat and shuddered. "Now a sound can start a dream; the noise of one car passing in the night can drop a hundred sleepers into the deep parts of themselves. It's funny to think of that one car racing through the dark, trailing so many dreams. Sex, a sudden change of light, a pickle, these are little keys that can open up our insides, too. But most dreams begin because there are furies inside of us that blow open all the doors. I don't believe in Jesus Christ, but I do believe in people's souls; and I figure it this way, baby: dreams are the mind of the soul and the secret truth about us. Now Master Misery, maybe he hasn't got a soul, so bit by bit he borrows yours, steals it like he would steal your dolls or the chicken wing off your plate. Hundreds of souls have passed through him and gone into a filing case."

"Oreilly, be serious," she said again, annoyed because she thought he was making more jokes. "And look, your soup is . . ." She stopped abruptly, startled by Oreilly's peculiar expression. He was looking toward the entrance. Three men were there, two policemen and a civilian wearing a clerk's cloth jacket. The clerk was pointing toward their table. Oreilly's eyes circled the room with trapped despair; he sighed then, and leaned back in

his seat, ostentatiously pouring himself another drink. "Good evening, gentlemen," he said, when the official party confronted him, "will you join us for a drink?"

"You can't arrest him," cried Sylvia, "you can't arrest a clown!" She threw her ten-dollar bill at them, but the policemen did not pay any attention, and she began to pound the table. All the customers in the place were staring, and the manager came running up, wringing his hands. The police said for Oreilly to get to his feet. "Certainly," Oreilly said, "though I do think it shocking you have to trouble yourselves with such petty crimes as mine when everywhere there are master thieves afoot. For instance, this pretty child," he stepped between the officers and pointed to Sylvia, "she is the recent victim of a major theft: poor baby, she has had her soul stolen."

For two days following Oreilly's arrest Sylvia did not leave her room: sun on the window, then dark. By the third day she had run out of cigarettes, so she ventured as far as the corner delicatessen. She bought a package of cupcakes, a can of sardines, a newspaper and cigarettes. In all this time she'd not eaten and it was a light, delicious, sharpening sensation; but the climb back up the stairs, the relief of closing the door, these so exhausted her she could not quite make the daybed. She slid down to the floor and did not move until it was day again. She thought afterwards that she'd been there about twenty minutes. Turning on the radio as loud as it would go, she dragged a chair up to the window and opened the newspaper on her lap: *Lana Denies, Russia Rejects, Miners Conciliate*: of all things this was saddest, that life goes on: if one leaves one's lover, life should stop for him, and if one disappears from the world, then the world should stop, too; and it never did. And that was the real reason for most people getting up in the morning: not because it would matter but because it wouldn't. But if Mr. Revercomb succeeded finally in collecting all the dreams out of every head, perhaps —the idea slipped, became entangled with radio and newspaper. *Falling Temperatures.* A snowstorm moving across Colorado, across the West, falling upon all the small towns, yellowing every light, filling every footfall, falling now and here; but how quickly it had come the snowstorm: the roofs, the vacant lot, the distance deep in white and deepening, like sheep. She looked at the paper and she looked at the snow. But it must have been snowing all day. It could not have just started. There was no sound of traffic; in the swirling wastes of the vacant lot children circled a bonfire; a car, buried at the curb, winked its headlights: help, help! silent, like

the heart's distress. She crumbled a cupcake and sprinkled it on the windowsill: northbirds would come to keep her company. And she left the window open for them; snow-wind scattered flakes that dissolved on the floor like April-fool jewels. *Presents Life Can Be Beautiful*: turn down that radio! The witch of the woods was tapping at her door: Yes, Mrs. Halloran, she said, and turned off the radio altogether. Snow-quiet, sleep-silent, only the fun-fire faraway song-singing of children; and the room was blue with cold, colder than the cold of fairytales; lie down my heart among the igloo flowers of snow. Mr. Revercomb, why do you wait upon the threshold? Ah, do come inside, it is so cold out there.

But her moment of waking was warm and held. The window was closed, and a man's arms were around her. He was singing to her, his voice gentle but jaunty: *'cherryberry, moneyberry, happyberry pie, but the best old pie is a loveberry pie . . .*

"Oreilly, is it—is it really you?"

He squeezed her. "Baby's awake now. And how does she feel?"

"I had thought I was dead," she said, and happiness winged around inside her like a bird lamed but still flying. She tried to hug him and she was too weak. "I love you, Oreilly; you are my only friend and I was so frightened. I thought I would never see you again." She paused, remembering. "But why aren't you in jail?"

Oreilly's face got all tickled and pink. "I was never in jail," he said mysteriously. "But first, let's have something to eat. I brought some things up from the delicatessen this morning." She had a sudden feeling of floating. "How long have you been here?"

"Since yesterday," he said, fussing around with bundles and paper plates. "You let me in yourself."

"That's impossible. I don't remember it at all."

"I know," he said, leaving it at that. "Here, drink your milk like a good kid and I'll tell you a real wicked story. Oh, it's wild," he promised, slapping his sides gladly and looking more than ever like a clown. "Well, like I said, I never was in jail and this bit of fortune came to me because there I was being hustled down the street by those bindlestiffs when who should I see come swinging along but the gorilla woman: you guessed it, Miss Mozart. Hi, I says to her, off to the barber shop for a shave? It's about time you were put under arrest, she says, and smiles at one of the cops. Do your duty, officer. Oh, I says to her, I'm not under arrest. Me, I'm just on my way to the station house to give them the low-down on you, you dirty communist. You can imagine what sort of holler she set up then; she grabbed hold of me and the cops grabbed hold of her. Can't say I didn't warn

them: careful, boys, I said, she's got hair on her chest. And she sure did lay about her. So I just sort of walked down the street. Never have believed in standing around watching fist-fights the way people do in this city."

Oreilly stayed with her in the room over the weekend. It was like the most beautiful party Sylvia could remember; she'd never laughed so much, for one thing, and no one, certainly no one in her family, had ever made her feel so loved. Oreilly was a fine cook, and he fixed delicious dishes on the little electric stove; once he scooped snow off the windowsill and made sherbert flavored with strawberry syrup. By Sunday she was strong enough to dance. They turned on the radio and she danced until she fell to her knees, windless and laughing. "I'll never be afraid again," she said. "I hardly know what I was afraid of to begin with."

"The same things you'll be afraid of the next time," Oreilly told her quietly. "That is a quality of Master Misery: no one ever knows what he is—not even children, and they know mostly everything."

Sylvia went to the window; an arctic whiteness lay over the city, but the snow had stopped, and the night sky was as clear as ice: there, riding above the river, she saw the first star of evening. "I see the first star," she said, crossing her fingers.

"And what do you wish when you see the first star?"

"I wish to see another star," she said. "At least that is what I usually wish."

"But tonight?"

She sat down on the floor and leaned her head against his knee. "Tonight I wished that I could have back my dreams."

"Don't we all?" Oreilly said, stroking her hair. "But then what would you do? I mean what would you do if you could have them back?"

Sylvia was silent a moment; when she spoke her eyes were gravely distant. "I would go home," she said slowly. "And that is a terrible decision, for it would mean giving up most of my other dreams. But if Mr. Revercomb would let me have them back, then I would go home tomorrow."

Saying nothing, Oreilly went to the closet and brought back her coat. "But why?" she asked as he helped her on with it. "Never mind," he said, "just do what I tell you. We're going to pay Mr. Revercomb a call, and you're going to ask him to give you back your dreams. It's a chance."

Sylvia balked at the door. "Please, Oreilly, don't make me go. I can't, please, I'm afraid."

"I thought you said you'd never be afraid again."

But once in the street he hurried her so quickly against the wind she did not have time to be fright-

ened. It was Sunday, stores were closed and the traffic lights seemed to wink only for them, for there were no moving cars along the snow-deep avenue. Sylvia even forgot where they were going, and chattered of trivial oddments: right here at this corner is where she'd seen Garbo, and over there, that is where the old woman was run over. Presently, however, she stopped, out of breath and overwhelmed with sudden realization. "I can't, Oreilly," she said, pulling back. "What can I say to him?"

"Make it like a business deal," said Oreilly. "Tell him straight out that you want your dreams, and if he'll give them to you you'll pay back all the money: on the installment plan, naturally. It's simple enough, kid. Why the hell couldn't he give them back? They are all right there in a filing case."

This speech was somehow convincing and, stamping her frozen feet, Sylvia went ahead with a certain courage. "That's the kid," he said. They separated on Third Avenue, Oreilly being of the opinion that Mr. Revercomb's immediate neighborhood was not for the moment precisely safe. He confined himself in a doorway, now and then lighting a match and singing aloud: *but the best old pie is a whiskeyberry pie!* Like a wolf, a long thin dog came padding over the moon-slats under the elevated, and across the street there were the misty shapes of men ganged around a bar: the idea of maybe cadging a drink in there made him groggy.

Just as he had decided on perhaps trying something of the sort, Sylvia appeared. And she was in his arms before he knew that it was really her. "It can't be so bad, sweetheart," he said softly, holding her as best he could. "Don't cry, baby; it's too cold to cry: you'll chap your face." As she strangled for words, her crying evolved into a tremulous, unnatural laugh. The air was filled with the smoke of her laughter. "Do you know what he said?" she gasped. "Do you know what he said when I asked for my dreams?" Her head fell back, and her laughter rose and carried over the street like an abandoned, wildly colored kite. Oreilly had finally to shake her by the shoulders. "He said—I couldn't have them back because—because he'd use them all up."

She was silent then, her face smoothing into an expressionless calm. She put her arm through Oreilly's, and together they moved down the street; but it was as if they were friends pacing a platform, each waiting for the other's train, and when they reached the corner he cleared his throat and said: "I guess I'd better turn off here. It's as likely a spot as any."

Sylvia held on to his sleeve. "But where will you go, Oreilly?"

"Traveling in the blue," he said, trying a smile that didn't work.

She opened her purse. "A man cannot travel in the blue without a bottle," she said, and kissing him on the cheek, slipped five dollars in his pocket.

"Bless you, baby."

It did not matter that it was the last of her money, that now she would have to walk home, and alone. The pilings of snow were like the white waves of a white sea, and she rode upon them, carried by winds and tides of the moon. I do not know what I want, and perhaps I shall never know, but my only wish from every star will always be another star; and truly I am not afraid, she thought. Two boys came out of a bar and stared at her; in some park some long time ago she'd seen two boys and they might be the same. Truly I am not afraid, she thought, hearing their snowy footsteps following her; and anyway, there was nothing left to steal.

Carl Brandon, who takes issue with "the word is not the thing" school of General Semantics here in his first F&SF story, was born in Brooklyn in 1936, and took his degree (in Engineering) at the University of California in 1959. He describes himself as an "avid traditional jazz fan who views all notes blown since 1929 with suspicion and usually distaste. Is presently occupied with constructing a gigantic Tower To The Moon of Empty Beer Cans in a patriotic attempt to supplement our country's race for space. Says he spent years getting plots from his dreams and writing each story exactly as he dreamed it; finally gave up and made up Stanley Toothbrush *out of wholecloth [sic] while wide awake. Can't stand crottled greeps and never orders them." He also has something to say about the personalities of the mornings, the sound and significance of words, and a bohemian suitor to-end-all-bohemian suitors. And says it with wit and sympathy. He now lives in Rockland County, N.Y., where (we hope) he is engaged in writing more stories for us.*

STANLEY TOOTHBRUSH

by Carl Brandon

THE TROUBLE WAS, HERBERT decided as he stared baggily into the mirror, that Joanie just didn't understand about mornings. It was very important in this workaday world to understand mornings: each day of the week had a different character, and you had to bear that in mind. Monday, of course, was just awful—it was hopeless morning, when you had five days of work stretching like parallel lines out to eternity or infinity or Friday when they would at last meet. Tuesday was a foggy morning, when the lines were blurred and you didn't want to think about it. By Wednesday you

were caught up in the office environment and it seemed somehow, unthinkingly, reasonable that you should spend most of your life doing something you didn't want to do, but Thursday was anxious morning, when it began to dawn on you anew that salvation Friday was coming. And Friday morning was the worst; that was the day when you could no longer resist measuring your sentence in hours.

Today was Friday, and to make it worse Joanie had kept him up till two that morning. A movie, a few drinks afterward at her apartment, and then she'd insisted on just walking around for over an hour, talking. Herbert lathered up his face and painfully began to scratch off the night's accumulation of beard.

He was in a quandary. If he put his foot down and told Joanie right out that he had to get more sleep on week-nights she'd just get mad and refuse to see him at all, most likely. But if he continued to take her out every night, missing sleep and stumbling around the office the next day like a badly-engineered windup toy, it wouldn't be long before he was dismissed. Either way, he'd soon be on the shelf . . . shelved by Joanie, or shelved by Mr. Blackburn.

His brain seemed fuzzy, and he found himself thinking irrationally about how silly that expression was. "On the shelf" . . . a ridiculous metaphor. In the first place, the word "shelf" was ridiculous all by itself. He ran the word through his brainclouds several times—shelf, shelf, shelf. It didn't make sense; it was just a random collection of sounds. Did human animals really go around all the time trying to communicate with such pointless sounds? Shelf, shelf.

There was a terrible crashing and banging all through his apartment, and Herbert nearly took off his left nostril with the razor.

He ran out of the bathroom to find out what had happened, heedless of the soapsuds dripping on his livingroom rug. The noise had come mostly from the kitchen, and he went there first. He found his dishes (the ones that had been washed and put away) all over the floor in pieces; cans of soup and chili and jars of instant coffee and salad dressing were scattered at his feet. The cupboard doors stood open, one of them still swinging on its hinges.

There was obviously no one else in the apartment, so it must have been an earthquake or something, he decided. He hadn't felt it, but then in his condition this morning that wasn't surprising. He stood staring at the mess and decided that he had a headache too.

Well, there was nothing to do but clear it up. He stooped and began loading cans in his arms, thinking about how much it would cost him to replace the broken dishes, and when he went to put

the cans back in the cupboard he found that there were no shelves left.

They weren't anywhere on the floor either; they had disappeared. No shelves? But that was silly. He opened the refrigerator and a head of lettuce rolled out onto the floor and a can of beer fell on his foot. The shelves in the refrigerator had vanished too.

Herbert didn't like this at all. He put the cans of soup down, kicked some dishes into a corner, and checked the closets. The shelves were gone there too. The bookcase by the door had collapsed, emptying onto the floor two dozen mysteries, short story collections by Damon Runyon and Ring Lardner, and numerous books on sex in history, secret societies and the like. When he went back into the bathroom he found that the shelves in the medicine cabinet had gone too, and half his supply of hair tonic was dripping into the sink.

He stood and pondered for a minute. Now let's see . . . he had been shaving, and thinking about Joanie, and then he had decided that the word "shelf" was . . . unbelievable. And all the shelves had disappeared, just like that. It was a perfectly clear chain of circumstances.

He decided this was a hell of a way to start a Friday morning.

There wasn't much he could do right now; he was already late at the office. He hurriedly finished shaving, left his razor in the sink, put on a tie, and went to work.

When he entered the office Marcia frowned at him from behind the switchboard, so he knew Mr. Blackburn was mad. He hung up his coat (noticing that the shelves hadn't disappeared from the closets here) and hurried to his desk.

In a moment the phone rang. "Mr. Blackburn would like you to step into his office," Marcia said.

Herbert went in, carrying with him the list of Los Angeles newspapers he had contacted for the Paperap ads. He didn't suppose he could change the subject, but he might as well try.

"Here's the list you wanted," he said briskly. "I'm not sure about the advisability of this Pasadena thing, but—"

"I wanted that list yesterday," Mr. Blackburn said calmly. "Put it down there. Why were you late this morning?"

"I'm sorry, sir; I had a little trouble at home."

"What kind of trouble?"

All my shelves blinked out of existence, Herbert said in his mind, trying it on for size. No, that wouldn't do at all.

"I cut myself shaving. Couldn't stop the bleeding for almost an hour—must have hit a vein or something. A wonder I didn't bleed to death, sir, ha ha, then I would have been *really* late getting in."

Mr. Blackburn stared coldly at him. "See that it doesn't happen

again," he said. "We don't want our employees cutting their throats every morning. Now go away."

Herbert went away. He sat at his desk for ten minutes thinking that he would really have to be sure to come in on time for the next several days. No more nonsense like this morning. And then he sat back in his chair and wondered how one went about seeing that his shelves didn't disappear.

Well, it had happened because he'd decided that "shelf" was a nonsensical word. Presumably it could happen again, if he got to thinking about some other words. That newspaper list he'd given to Mr. Blackburn, for instance—what if that had disappeared? After all—*noos-pay-per-lisst* was pretty silly too. But he'd better not think about that.

His phone rang. "Mr. Blackburn would like you to step into his office," Marcia said.

"Yes, I know," said Herbert, knowing. He went in.

"Where's that list you just gave me?" said Mr. Blackburn.

"I'll look for it again," he said, and walked slowly back to his desk. He sorted through various sheets of paper on his desktop and in his drawers and within half an hour was able to make up a duplicate, which he gave to Mr. Blackburn.

Then he sat at his desk and frowned. He didn't like this one bit. He'd read a little about wild talents, of course—people who could tell what cards were before they were turned over, people who could control the roll of dice, who could read minds or see into the future. They were usually erratic, undependable, and often useless—like the lady in Sinking Springs, Pennsylvania who could tell where every frog within ten miles was at any given time, or the man out in Idaho who could hear the radiation from stars. It was undoubtedly something to do with the unused 4/5 of the brain—at least, that was as close as Herbert could come to a rational explanation of it. Something probably caused it.

And now he could make things disappear, snuffed out of existence, just because he didn't believe in certain words. That seemed to him even more unscientific, even more silly—a random wild talent for performing nonsensicalities. He couldn't suppress the feeling that a person with a talent should be able to use it for something useful.

He stared at the blank wall across from him and repeated over and over again in his mind, Mr. Blackburn, Mr. Blackburn, Mr. Blackburn, Mr. Blackburn . . .

Then he picked up the phone. "Marcia, is Mr. Blackburn still in his office?"

"Yes, he's on another line," she said.

"Oh." Herbert put the phone back down. Maybe it wouldn't work with just last names. Knowing a person's True Name had

been quite important in magic circles for centuries—if you knew someone's True Name, it had been believed, you had immense power over him.

Perhaps because you could, at will, make him disappear?

He picked up the phone again. "Marcia, what's Mr. Blackburn's full name? His first and middle names, I mean."

"His first name is Chester. Wait a minute, I have his middle name here somewhere . . ." There was a rustling. "Yes, his middle name is Hartwick, H-a-r-t-w-i-c-k."

"Thank you," Herbert said, and hung up. Now that was all very fine—Chester Hartwick Blackburn would be an easy name not to believe in. In fact, Herbert wondered for a moment how Mr. Blackburn had got this far through life without having been snuffed out that way. But perhaps no one else had Herbert's talent.

Chester Hartwick Blackburn, Chester Hartwick Blackburn, Chester Hartwick Blackburn, said Herbert in his mind. What a silly combination of syllables. Of course they were thoroughly meaningless.

He picked up the phone. "Is Mr. Blackburn still on that other line, Marcia?"

"Yes, he is."

"Are you sure? Can you just plug in for a second and see if he's still talking?"

"Just a minute . . ." There were a few clicks. "Yes, he's still talking. Do you want me to connect you with him when he's off again?"

"God, no," Herbert muttered. and hung up.

Well, all right then—he couldn't will people out of existence simply by disbelieving in their names. All that business about True Names had been about some mythical abstraction, anyway, not just the name someone's parents might give them. Who could know what Mr. Blackburn's True Name was?

He stared at the clutter of papers on his desk, focussing about two inches beyond them and seeing them only as a white blur, while he continued to toy with the whole idea. A lot of the formulas devised by medieval magicians for conjuring the devil and various demons had involved using their True Names. And those strange chants they used in their preparations could have simply been the names of various things, maybe forces, which prevented the otherworld beings from getting in—sort of like deciding that doors didn't exist instead of getting up to open one when there was a knock. Maybe those old magicians had sat there muttering "Abracadabra" over and over because an acabracadabra was some sort of closed door between this world and another, and if they disbelieved in the word the door would cease to bar the way.

Herbert sat up at his desk and frowned. But of course all this speculation was not only silly, but useless as well. Just the sort of thing a person could get to thinking about on a Friday morning. He hunched over his desk and got busy at his day's work.

That evening when he got home he carefully cleared up the kitchen and the medcine cabinet and closets and bookcases, stacking cans and bottles and galoshes and such on the floor or on ledges. ("Ledges" was a good, sensible word, Herbert decided, and carefully refrained from thinking about it any more.) Then he called Joanie.

"I was thinking of going dancing tonight," he said. "Shall I pick you up around eight?"

There was a short silence on her end. "Oh, Herbie honey, I think you'd better rest tonight—you were up awfully late last night, and you know how you complain. I've invited someone over to watch TV."

Herbert frowned. "But it's Friday night—I don't have to go to work tomorrow."

"Well, just the same I think you should get some sleep," she said. "You've been looking so tired."

"Joanie, what's come over you?"

She laughed, a soft laugh that he always found delightful. "Well, actually, I've got a new beau, Herbie, and he's taking me out tonight. His name is Stanley."

"Stanley what?" Herbert said in a low voice.

She giggled. "Oh, Herbie! Stanley Toothbrush, then, because he always carries a toothbrush with him in case he ever wants to go somewhere suddenly. He used to live in Chicago, but one time he went to the store to buy some Kleenex and decided to come to New York instead, and he did. He's like that, so I call him Stanley Toothbrush. It fits him so much better than his real name."

"Yes, it seems to," Herbert growled. "Well, I hope the two of you will be very happy."

"What?" she said. "Herbie? You didn't believe me, did you? I was only joking, honey, you know that."

"Were you," he said.

"Well *of course.* Oh, Herbie, don't be silly. Edna is coming over tonight and we're going to watch television and shellac our nails. Honestly!"

"But I wanted to go dancing," he said.

"Well, not tonight, because Edna's on her way here already. Anyway, you ought to be proud of me, because you've been saying for a long time that you need more rest nights, and now I've finally—"

"I guess so," he said, and they said goodbye.

He set about fixing dinner for himself, heating beans and franks. He turned on the burner and slammed the pan down on it and

then stood with his hands on his hips, irritably waiting for the water to boil. He usually wasn't so impatient about cooking, but tonight he was in a bad mood. Not enough sleep recently, for one thing.

But Joanie's imaginary boyfriend was worrying him too. Maybe he wasn't so imaginary at that. And come to think of it, who was Edna? Joanie had never mentioned her before. This was all very suspicious.

Of course, he really needn't worry too much, he thought as he dropped the cold franks into the water. This Stanley Toothbrush didn't sound like much competition — a fellow with so little stability that he'd take off and move a thousand miles to another city overnight couldn't have much to offer a girl. No security, no future . . . He probably didn't shave, either.

But still, his bipartisan mind told him, Stanley Toothbrush might be a fascinating person . . . just the sort of wild, funloving, carefree Casanova that a girl could ruin herself over. And, since he was so lax about responsibilities, he probably didn't have a regular job and was therefore free to take Joanie out every night. He could probably sweep her off her feet while Herbert was struggling to keep his job.

It was all very unfair. Herbert certainly hoped that Stanley Toothbrush really didn't exist, as Joanie had assured him. And in fact, maybe it would be a good idea to do something about that himself. If ever he'd heard a person's True Name, it was Stanley Toothbrush.

Stanley Toothbrush must go. It was a quite senseless name in the first place, easy to disbelieve. Stanley Toothbrush, Stanley Toothbrush, Stanley Toothbrush . . .

At the end of an hour Herbert had to stop repeating Stanley's name in his head. He had said it so often that it had almost begun to sound real.

The next afternoon Herbert went to Joanie's apartment in person. He rang the bell and the little peephole opened, and he saw Joanie's blue left eye, trimmed with long dark lashes, looking at him.

"It's me," he said.

"Oh! Herbie!" Joanie sounded upset. "Herbie, you'll have to go away . . . I mean, come back later. I'm not decent."

"At three o'clock in the afternoon?" he said.

"Well, I was going to . . . take a shower. I'm completely *nude,* without a *stitch.*"

"That's fine," he said.

"Herbert!"

"All right, I'll come back in half an hour." He went out and killed time looking at the magazines in a drug store. He saw an ad for some toothpaste, and that reminded him of Stanley Toothbrush, whom he didn't want to think about be-

cause he didn't exist anyway, if he had ever existed. If he had, Herbert had done away with him, he hoped.

When he went back to Joanie's apartment and rang she opened the peephole at him again. "Oh, Herbie, can you—"

"Let me in, Joanie," he said decisively.

"But I'm still not—"

"Your eye is quite thoroughly made up," he said, "and I know that you never do your eyes until you're dressed. Now open the door."

Joanie made a small sound and her left eyebrow came down to show part of what must have been a much bigger frown. "Well, all right."

She opened the door and Herbert walked in. Standing by the door to the kitchen was a young man who could have been no one but Stanley Toothbrush.

"I didn't want you to— I was trying to get rid of him," Joanie whispered quickly to him, and then said aloud, "Herbert, this is Stanley . . . Stanley Toothbrush, I don't know his real last name."

"How do you do," said Herbert evenly.

Stanley Toothbrush waved casually at him, leaning against the wall and displaying even white teeth in a full, friendly smile. He had dark sandy hair and rugged features, and he stood at least six feet tall, much more impressive than Herbert's own five feet nine. His face had a day's stubble.

"We were just going off for a boat ride around Manhattan," said Stanley. "You can come too, we wouldn't mind."

"No!" said Joanie, and then when Herbert turned to look at her she said, "I mean yes of course you can come, but I was trying to—"

"Fine! Let's all go!" said Stanley, and picked up his weathered brown jacket from where it had been lying over the back of a chair.

Joanie was standing in the middle of the room, looking from one to the other of them helplessly. "I wasn't going to go in the first place," she said.

"But it's all settled," Stanley said reasonably, and led the two of them out the door. Herbert followed seethingly, not saying a word.

They caught a cab and arrived at the dock where the excursion boat was tied up just in time for the next trip. Several times Joanie tried to say something to Herbert, but he sat in such stony silence and Stanley continued to chatter so unconcernedly that each time she gave up with a shrug and a little frustrated sound.

"Now don't do anything unnecessary like paying," said Stanley when they approached the ramp. "Leave it to me, I have connections."

"I thought you would," Herbert muttered.

Stanley walked up to the ticket-taker and slapped him on the shoulder. Herbert couldn't hear what he was saying, but Stanley was smiling and laughing and occasionally nodding over at him and Joanie. The ticket man grinned back at him and waved them all on.

As they took their seats by the boat's railing Stanley leaned over and said confidentially to Herbert, "Took a little finagling, but don't worry about it. Had to tell him that Joanie was with you and I was showing the two of you the sights. I gave him a lot of stuff about young lovebirds—it probably would've made you sick to hear it, but he liked it." Then Stanley turned back to Joanie, who had been maneuvered into sitting on his other side, and started telling her about how he had worked for a few days on the building of the very boat they were on.

Herbert didn't listen. He stared blackly into the water which lapped against the boatside, repeating in his head, Stanley Toothbrush, Stanley Toothbrush. The name was frighteningly believable.

He looked up when a woman in her fifties sat down next to him, fussing with her bag and struggling to get out of her heavy coat. Herbert helped her with that and she laid the coat across her ample lap, and then he began to stare into the water again. But she wouldn't let him.

She tapped him on the shoulder. "Do you see the terribly handsome man standing on the quay?" she said softly. "The one with the dog? Well, that's my husband."

"Who, the dog?" said Herbert, coming up out of the water. "Oh, no, I'm sorry. Yes, he's very handsome."

"We were just married last week," she said, "and we've come to the big city for our honeymoon. But he has to stay and wait for me because O'Shaughnessy has heart trouble. He's almost twenty years old."

"Good heavens!" said Herbert, staring at her husband.

"He's an Irish wolfhound, and he won't drink his water," she said.

"Oh, yes, of course," Herbert said, and just then the boat started backing out from the pier.

He turned back to Stanley and Joanie. Stanley was pointing up the Hudson and saying, "There's a fine little park up there, looks out on the river and is all terraced in the center and wild around the edges. Squirrels and all. We ought to go up there tomorrow."

"Well, I don't—" said Joanie helplessly.

"It's just a quick ride on the subway," Stanley said. "You've still got all those tokens you bought last night, haven't you?"

"Well, yes."

"Then fine, and it won't cost a thing," said Stanley.

"I think I have to powder my

nose," she said, and got up and went off to the concessions area of the boat. She looked at Herbert as she passed, and made some kind of a pleading face. Herbert got up and followed her.

She stopped just inside the door to the concessions-room. "Herbie honey, I've been trying to get a word in edgeways. Honestly, he just showed up last night, and I'd never seen him before. I can't get rid of him."

"You had a date with me last night," Herbert said. "You could have told him that."

"But I *didn't.* I mean, I'd already told you I was going to stay home, and then Edna said she couldn't come—"

"Well, why was he hanging around anyway, if you didn't encourage him? And what do you mean, he came after you'd told me you were staying home? You'd already made a date with him when I called."

"But I *hadn't,* that's what I'm trying to tell you! I'd never seen him before, and I just made him up to tease you, Herbie. And then there he was, at my door, and what could I do?"

Herbert stared at her. "You really made him up when you were talking to me?"

"Yes, honestly, Herbie."

"And then he showed up, and his name is Stanley Toothbrush?"

"Yes, and he has a toothbrush in his right pants pocket." She waved her hands. "I couldn't get rid of him all night—he insisted and he insisted, and I didn't want to hurt him. He's very sensitive, Herbie, you'd be surprised."

"All night?" said Herbert.

"Well, he slept right outside my apartment, right there in the hall, and I couldn't just send him away."

Herbert shook his head. "This has ceased to be ridiculous," he muttered.

"What?"

"Joanie, this is crazy, but you remember what I told you about the powers of the mind? That book I was reading? Well, *I've got it now!*"

Two passengers who had been standing next to him edged away.

"I mean I've got some crazy kind of wild talent," Herbert said more softly. "Listen, yesterday morning I was shaving, and I started thinking, I don't know why, about what a ridiculous word 'shelf' is. You know, if you say a word over and over often enough it loses all its meaning. So I did that with 'shelf,' and all of a sudden all the shelves in my apartment disappeared!"

"Herbert!"

"No, Joanie, I'm serious. I can show you the apartment—they're all gone, and things are all over the floor. So anyway, last night when you told me about Stanley, I tried to make him disappear too—but I said his name over and over so much that it began to make *sense.* And that must have been what

happened, that's where he came from."

Joanie frowned and pursed her lips. "Herbie, if you're joking—"

"Now why would I joke about Stanley Toothbrush?" Herbert said. "He's no laughing matter!"

"Then show me," she said.

"What? Show you?"

"Make something disappear." She tapped her foot.

"Well . . . I mean, it's a wild talent, and it may not work just like turning it on and off."

"Herbert."

"All right, I'll try." He looked around the concession area, and spotted a man with a red moustache and a derby. He looked ridiculous, but Herbert couldn't decide whether it was the fault of the hat or the moustache. Well, either one would do.

"What do you think of that man over there?" he said to Joanie, and in his mind he said moustache, moustache.

"That man?" she said.

"Yes." Mus-*tash,* he thought. *Muss*-tash.

"Oh!" Joanie put her fingers to her mouth in surprise.

The man muttered to his wife, "Demmed dreft in here." She stared at him and shuddered, and pointed, and he wrinkled his mouth and frowned and gasped and ran to the men's room.

Herbert smiled. "You see? And that's where Stanley Toothbrush came from."

"But what are we going to do?" she said.

"I don't know." Herbert's grin vanished. "Every time I try to make him disappear he just gets more real."

"Well, we've got to do something," Joanie said.

Stanley Toothbrush walked up behind them just then and said heartily, "How about something to eat? They have hot dogs here, and hamburgers, anything you want."

"I'm not hungry," Herbert said shortly, and went back to his seat by the rail. Stanley steered Joanie to the concessions stand and she bought two hotdogs.

The woman whose Irish wolfhound had heart trouble said to Herbert, "Have you noticed how wonderfully wet the river is today? The water just goes down and down, fathom after fathom or whatever they are."

"I'm afraid so," Herbert said abstractedly. "I hope your dog gets well soon."

"Oh, he won't," the woman said lightly. "He'll die in a week or so —married life is so hard on him. I'm afraid Arnold and I shock him with our behavior."

"Well, it's terrible when a dog's nerves start acting up," said Herbert, and then he grimaced and wondered why he let himself be drawn into such conversations. He leaned over the rail and stared into the water again.

"It's very wet, very wet," said the woman, "and I suppose there are fish in it."

"It's conceivable," said Herbert, and had a vision of a huge beast of a shark arcing out of the water and snapping Stanley Toothbrush from the boat, glom just like that.

"Oh dear!" said the woman suddenly, and Herbert looked up to see her pointing frantically down at the river. "I dropped my bag! Oh, my heavens! It's in the water! Back there!"

"Back where?" said Herbert. "It's probably sunk already."

He heard running footsteps, and suddenly Stanley was beside them, taking off his shoes. "You lost your purse, lady?"

"Yes, it's back there!"

"Hold my hotdog," Stanley said, and thrust it into the woman's hand and dived overboard. It wasn't a very good dive; he went end-over-end and hit the water feet-first, but he came up sputtering and swam strongly back to the area where the purse had been dropped. A crowd was gathering around Herbert and the woman.

"It's probably sunk to the bottom," Herbert said.

"Well, it was one of those new materials, plastic or something," said the woman, beaming happily at all the attention. "I think it was watertight. It may float."

"Did Stanley go in the water?" Joanie asked, coming up behind them.

"Yes, he's a good swimmer," Herbert said. "I always knew he would be."

The boat blew a whistle and swung around to pick up Stanley, while the loudspeaker told everyone to remain calm and stay in their seats. Stanley had almost reached the purse.

"How gallant of him!" said Joanie. "Herbie, you must admit that was a sweet thing for him to do."

Herbert looked slightly disgusted and shrugged. "It's a Stanley Toothbrush thing to do," he said. "If you're so impressed with him, just remember that I made him up."

"Well, you needn't be short with me," Joanie said. "And anyway, I'll bet Stanley is just some sort of wish-fulfillment of yours—he acts the way you secretly wish you could." She wrinkled her nose at him. "There, you see I read a book or two every now and then myself."

"I don't want to talk about it," said Herbert.

By the time the boat had retracked to where Stanley was, he had come up with the purse dripping in his hand. The ship's crew lowered a ladder over the side and gave him a hand up, and Stanley immediately squished in wet stockingfeet over to the Irish wolfhound woman and delivered her purse with a sloshy bow. Then he took his hotdog back from her.

"It was just wonderful of you to swim after it," the woman said to him. "You went over the side like a real-life Sir Walter Raleigh!"

Stanley gave a crooked grin and shrugged. "It wasn't much of a dive," he said around the hotdog.

"Wasn't he wonderful, my dear?" said the woman, to Joanie.

"Yes, I thought it was very gallant, that's the word I can think of," she said.

"If only Arnold could have seen you!" said the woman.

"Arnold is her husband," Herbert explained, and added under his breath, "Fortunately, he doesn't have heart trouble, like some dogs I know."

The woman was still beaming delightedly at Stanley, holding her dripping purse. Joanie was fluttering around him, trying to get his shirt off so it would dry, and Herbert felt quite disgusted. He shook his head and walked off around to the other side of the boat.

The rest of the excursion was thoroughly ruined for him. He sat apart from Stanley and Joanie, and when at one point she came over to him he was irritable and they had words. By the time the boat docked back at its point of departure over an hour later he was in a vile mood.

Stanley's clothes had dried a bit by then, and he had squeezed back into his shoes. "Well, what shall we do now?" he said lightly as they stepped off the boat.

"I think we should go to Herbert's apartment," said Joanie. "You could hang your clothes over the radiator, and we could all have a few drinks."

"While he sits there without any clothes on?" cried Herbert.

"Oh don't be silly, you can lend him some dry clothes to wear," she said, and took his arm to lead him off toward a waiting cab.

They did go to Herbert's apartment, and when they came in the door Herbert remembered that he had meant to buy some new shelves today. Books and cans and such were still sitting on the floor, and it looked pretty bad.

Stanley looked around the place and said lightly, "Well, bachelor's apartment, eh? You should get a woman to take care of you, Herbie." Herbert glared at him.

Joanie glanced around briefly and then went to the kitchen, where Herbert always kept a bottle on the drainboard. "I'll mix some drinks," she said, "while you go in the bedroom and get out of those clothes, Stanley."

Stanley grinned and followed Herbert while he found some clean underwear, pants and shirt for him. He picked the oldest and most faded clothes he had. "Hang the clothes in the shower," he said, and went into the kitchen.

Joanie was cross. "You needn't be a bad sport about it," she said. "He does have some good qualities, as you can see."

"His ribs stick out," Herbert said.

"Oh, honestly, Herbie! Your whole attitude toward him is incredible. First you try to tell me that you . . . made him up, or *created* him or something, then you—"

"But I did!" said Herbert. "Or at least you did, and then I brought him into existence by accident. He doesn't even belong here."

"Well, if you brought him into existence or whatever, then it's your own fault and it serves you right," she said. "Anyway, I don't believe that story about you and your whatever-it-is."

"It's a wild talent," said Herbert. "I told you."

"Well, you and your wild talons can just—"

"Wild talent, wild talent!" he said.

"What?"

"*Wild talent!* Good God, can't you—"

"Wild talent, wild talent," she said. "That's a silly name for it, don't you think? Herbie, why don't you go in the bedroom and see if Stanley is still there?"

"Of course he's still there, unless he suddenly went to Chicago," said Herbert.

"I doubt it," Joanie said, grinning. "For one thing, your shelves are back." She waved a hand at the cupboard.

"Well I'll be damned," Herbert said.

"Not necessarily. But do go see if Stanley is gone, please."

Herbert went. The bedroom was empty, the clothes he had given Stanley were lying on the floor, and though the showerstall showed where his wet clothes had dripped Stanley Toothbrush wasn't there either.

Herbert went into the kitchen and kissed the back of Joanie's neck. "You're a genius," he said.

"Yes, and what's more I only mixed two drinks," she said. "Now tell me what we're going to do tonight."

Monday morning Herbert stared blearily into the mirror and decided that "morning" was the most ridiculous and idiotic word he had ever heard. But of course it did him no good.

Confirmed, semi-confirmed, and occasional shunpikes (as well as shunpikes manqué*) will be pleased to learn that Zenna Henderson once drove clear across country without ever paying a single toll. All the above, as well as non-drivers, will remember her stories of The People—*Ararat, Jordan, *and the others—in this magazine. Here, at some date in the future, never delineated, because unimportant, Miss Henderson confronts us with the problems of invaders who wanted something less than conquest; of defenders who felt forced to wage war unless they could learn what that something was; of Splinter, who didn't want even a fish to die; and of Doovie, who could close his nose and fold down his ears.*

SUBCOMMITTEE

by Zenna Henderson

FIRST CAME THE SLEEK BLACK ships, falling out of the sky in patterned disorder, sowing fear as they settled like seeds on the broad landing field. After them, like bright butterflies, came the vividly-colored slow ships that hovered and hesitated and came to rest scattered among the deadly dark ones.

"Beautiful!" sighed Serena, turning from the conference room window. "There should have been music to go with it."

"A funeral dirge," said Thorn, "Or a requiem. Or flutes before failure. Frankly, I'm frightened, Rena. If these conferences fail, all hell will break loose again. Imagine living another year like this past one."

"But the conference won't fail!" Serena protested. "If they're willing to consent to the conference, surely they'll be willing to work with us for peace."

"Their peace or ours?" asked Thorn, staring morosely out the window. "I'm afraid we're being entirely too naive about this whole affair. It's been a long time since we finally were able to say, 'Ain't

gonna study war no more', and made it stick. We've lost a lot of the cunning that used to be necessary in dealing with other people. We can't, even now, be sure this isn't a trick to get all our high command together in one place for a grand massacre."

"Oh, no!" Serena pressed close to him and his arm went around her. "They couldn't possibly violate—"

"Couldn't they?" Thorn pressed his cheek to the top of her head. "We don't know, Rena. We just don't know. We have so little information about them. We know practically nothing about their customs—even less about their values or from what frame of reference they look upon our suggestion of suspending hostilities."

"But surely they must be sincere. They brought their families along with them. You did say those bright ships are family craft, didn't you?"

"Yes, they suggested we bring our families and they brought their families along with them, but it's nothing to give us comfort. They take them everywhere—even into battle."

"Into battle!"

"Yes. They mass the home craft off out of range during battles, but everytime we disable or blast one of their fighters, one or more of the home craft spin away out of control or flare into nothingness. Apparently they're just glorified trailers, dependent on the fighters for motive power and everything else." The unhappy lines deepened in Thorn's face. "They don't know it, but even apart from their superior weapons, they practically forced us into this truce. How could we go on wiping out their war fleet when, with every black ship, those confounded posy-colored home craft fell too, like pulling petals off a flower. And each petal heavy with the lives of women and children."

Serena shivered and pressed closer to Thorn. "The conference must work. We just can't have war any more. You've got to get through to them. Surely, if we want peace and so do they—"

"We don't know what they want," said Thorn heavily. "Invaders, aggressors, strangers from hostile worlds—so completely alien to us—How can we ever hope to get together?"

They left the conference room in silence, snapping the button on the door knob before they closed it.

"Hey, lookit, Mommie! Here's a wall!" Splinter's five-year-old hands flattened themselves like grubby starfish against the greenish ripple of the ten foot vitricrete fence that wound through the trees and slid down the gentle curve of the hill. "Where did it come from? What's it for? How come we can't go play in the go'fish pond anymore?"

Serena leaned her hand against the wall. "The people who came in the pretty ships wanted a place to walk and play, too. So the Construction Corp put the fence up for them."

"Why won't they let me play in the go'fish pond?" Splinter's brows bent ominously.

"They don't know you want to," said Serena.

"I'll tell them, then," said Splinter. He threw his head back. "Hey!" Over there!" He yelled, his fists doubling and his whole body stiffening with the intensity of the shout. "Hey! I wanta play in the go'fish pond!"

Serena laughed. "Hush, Splinter. Even if they could hear you, they wouldn't understand. They're from far, far away. They don't talk the way we do."

"But maybe we could play," said Splinter wistfully.

"Yes," sighed Serena, "Maybe you could play. If the fence weren't there. But you see, Splinter, we don't know what kind of—people—they are. Whether they would want to play. Whether they would be—nice."

"Well, how can we find out with that old wall there?"

"We can't, Splinter," said Serena. "Not with the fence there."

They walked on down the hill, Splinter's hand trailing along the wall.

"Maybe they're mean," he said finally. "Maybe they're so bad that the 'struction Corp had to build a cage for them—a big, big cage!" He stretched his arm as high as he could reach, up the wall. "Do you suppose they got tails?"

"Tails?" laughed Serena. "Whatever gave you that idea?"

"I dunno. They came from a long ways away. I'd like a tail—a long, curly one with fur on!" He swished his miniature behind energetically.

"Whatever for?" asked Serena.

"It'd come in handy," said Splinter solemnly. "For climbing and—and keeping my neck warm!"

"Why aren't there any other kids here?" he asked as they reached the bottom of the slope. "I'd like *somebody* to play with."

"Well, Splinter, it's kind of hard to explain," started Serena, sinking down on the narrow ledge shelving on the tiny dry water course at her feet.

"Don't esplain then," said Splinter. "Just tell me."

"Well, some Linjeni generals came in the big black ships to talk with General Worsham and some more of our generals. They brought their families with them in the fat, pretty ships. So our generals brought their families, too, but your daddy is the only one of our generals who has a little child. All the others are grown up. That's why there's no one for you to play with." I wish it were as simple as it sounds, thought Serena, suddenly weary again with the weeks of ne-

gotiation and waiting that had passed.

"Oh," said Splinter, thoughtfully. "Then there *are* kids on the other side of the wall, aren't there?"

"Yes, there must be young Linjeni," said Serena. "I guess you could call them children."

Splinter slid down to the bottom of the little water course and flopped down on his stomach. He pressed his cheek to the sand and peered through a tiny gap left under the fence where it crossed the stream bed. "I can't see anybody," he said, disappointed.

They started back up the hill toward their quarters, walking silently, Splinter's hand whispering along the wall.

"Mommie?" Splinter said as they neared the patio.

"Yes, Splinter?"

"That fence is to keep them in, isn't it?"

"Yes," said Serena.

"It doesn't feel like that to me," said Splinter. "It feels like it's to shut me out."

Serena suffered through the next days with Thorn. She lay wide-eyed beside him in the darkness of their bedroom, praying as he slept restlessly, struggling even in his sleep—groping for a way.

Tight-lipped, she cleared away untouched meals and brewed more coffee. Her thoughts went hopefully with him every time he started out with new hope and resolution, and her spirits flagged and fell as he brought back dead-end, stalemate and growing despair. And in between times, she tried to keep Splinter on as even a keel as possible, giving him the freedom of the Quarters Area during the long, sun-lit days and playing with him as much as possible in the evenings.

One evening Serena was pinning up her hair and keeping half an eye on Splinter as he splashed in his bath. He was gathering up handsful of foaming soap bubbles and pressing them to his chin and cheeks.

"Now I hafta shave like Daddy," he hummed to himself. "Shave, shave, shave!" He flicked the suds off with his forefinger. Then he scooped up a big double handful of bubbles and pressed them all over his face. "Now I'm Doovie. I'm all over fuzzy like Doovie. Lookit, Momie, I'm all over—" He opened his eyes and peered through the suds to see if she was watching. Consequently, Serena spent a busy next few minutes helping him get the soap out of his eyes. When the tears had finally washed away the trouble, Serena sat toweling Splinter's relaxed little body.

"I bet Doovie'd cry too, if he got soap in his eyes," he said with a sniff. "Wouldn't he, Mommie?"

"Doovie?" said Serena, "Probably. Almost any one would. Who's Doovie?"

She felt Splinter stiffen on her

lap. His eyes wandered away from hers. "Mommie, do you think Daddy will play with me a-morrow?"

"Perhaps." She captured one of his wet feet. "Who's Doovie?"

"Can we have pink cake for dessert tonight? I think I like pink—"

"Who's Doovie?" Serena's voice was firm. Splinter examined his thumbnail critically, then peered up at Serena out of the corner of his eye.

"Doovie," he began. "Doovie's a little boy."

"Oh?" said Serena. "A playlike little boy?"

"No," Splinter whispered, hanging his head. "A real little boy. A Linjeni little boy." Serena drew an astonished breath and Splinter hurried on, his eyes intent on hers. "He's nice people, Mommie, honest! He doesn't say bad words or tell lies or talk sassy to his mother. He can run as fast as I can—faster, if I stumble. He—he—," his eyes dropped again. "I like him—" His mouth quivered.

"Where did—how could—I mean, the fence—" Serena was horrified and completely at a loss for words.

"I dug a hole," confessed Splinter. "Under the fence where the sand is. You didn't say not to! Doovie came to play. His Mommie came, too. She's pretty. Her fur is pink, but Doovie's is nice and green. All over!" Splinter got excited. "All over, even where his clothes are! All but his nose and eyes and ears and the front of his hands!"

"But Splinter, how could you! You might have got hurt! They might have—" Serena hugged him tight to hide her face from him.

Splinter squirmed out of her arms. "Doovie wouldn't hurt anyone. You know what, Mommie! He can shut his nose! Yes, he can! He can shut his nose and fold up his ears! I wish I could. It'd come in handy. But I'm bigger'n he is and I can sing and he can't. But he can whistle with his nose and when I try, I just blow mine. Doovie's nice!"

Serena's mind was churning as she helped Splinter get into his night clothes. She felt the chill of fear along her forearms and the back of her neck. What to do now? Forbid Splinter's crawling under the fence? Keep him from possible danger that might just be biding its time? What would Thorn say? Should she tell him? This might precipitate an incident that—

"Splinter, how many times have you played with Doovie?"

"How many?" Splinter's chest swelled under his clean pajamas. "Let me count," he said importantly and murmured and mumbled over his fingers for a minute. "Four times!" he proclaimed triumphantly. "One, two, three, four whole times!"

"Weren't you scared?"

"Naw!" he said, adding hastily, "Well, maybe a little bit the first

time. I thought maybe they might have tails that liked to curl around people's necks. But they haven't," disappointed, "Only clothes on like us with fur on under."

"Did you say you saw Doovie's mother, too?"

"Sure," said Splinter. "She was there the first day. She was the one that sent all the others away when they all crowded around me. All grown-ups. Not any kids excepting Doovie. They kinda pushed and wanted to touch me, but she told them to go away, and they all did 'cepting her and Doovie."

"Oh Splinter!" cried Serena, overcome by the vision of his small self surrounded by pushing, crowding Linjeni grown-ups who wanted to 'touch him'.

"What's the matter, Mommie?" asked Splinter.

"Nothing, dear." She wet her lips. "May I go along with you the next time you go to see Doovie? I'd like to meet his mother."

"Sure, sure!" cried Splinter. "Let's go now. Let's go now!"

"Not now," said Serena, feeling the reaction of her fear in her knees and ankles. "It's too late. Tomorrow we'll go see them. And Splinter, let's not tell Daddy yet. Let's keep it a surprise for a while."

"Okay, Mommie," said Splinter. "It's a good surprise, isn't it? You were awful surprised, weren't you?"

"Yes, I was," said Serena. "Awful surprised."

Next day Splinter squatted down and inspected the hole under the fence. "It's kinda little," he said. "Maybe you'll get stuck."

Serena, her heart pounding in her throat, laughed. "That wouldn't be very dignified would it?" she asked. "To go calling and get stuck in the door."

Splinter laughed. "It'd be funny," he said. "Maybe we better go find a really door for you."

"Oh, no," said Serena hastily. "We can make this one bigger."

"Sure," said Splinter. "I'll go get Doovie and he can help dig."

"Fine," said Serena, her throat tightening. *Afraid of a child,* she mocked herself. *Afraid of a Linjeni —aggressor—invader,* she defended.

Splinter flattened on the sand and slid under the fence. "You start digging," he called. "I'll be back!"

Serena knelt to the job, the loose sand coming away readily to her scooping hands, so readily that she circled her arms and dredged with them.

Then she heard Splinter scream.

For a brief second, she was paralyzed. Then he screamed again, closer, and Serena dragged the sand away in a frantic frenzy. She felt the sand scoop down the neck of her blouse and the skin scrape off her spine as she forced herself under the fence.

Then there was Splinter, catapulting out of the shrubbery, sobbing and screaming, "Doovie! Doo-

vie's drownding! He's in the go'fish pond! All under the water! I can't get him out! Mommie, Mommie!"

Serena grabbed his hand as she shot past and towed him along, stumbling and dragging, as she ran for the gold fish pond. She leaned across the low wall and caught a glimpse, under the churning thrash of the water, of green mossy fur and staring eyes. With hardly a pause except to shove Splinter backward and start a deep breath, she plunged over into the pond. She felt the burning bite of water up her nostrils and grappled in the murky darkness for Doovie—feeling again and again the thrash of small limbs that slipped away before she could grasp them.

Then she was choking and sputtering on the edge of the pond, pushing the still struggling Doovie up and over. Splinter grabbed him and pulled as Serena heaved herself over the edge of the pond and fell sprawling across Doovie.

Then she heard another higher, shriller scream and was shoved off Doovie viciously and Doovie was snatched up into rose pink arms. Serena pushed her lank, dripping hair out of her eyes and met the hostile glare of the rose pink eyes of Doovie's mother.

Serena edged over to Splinter and held him close, her eyes intent on the Linjeni. The pink mother felt the green child all over anxiously and Serena noticed with an odd detachment that Splinter hadn't mentioned that Doovie's eyes matched his fur and that he had webbed feet.

Webbed feet! She began to laugh, almost hysterically. Oh, Lordy! No wonder Doovie's mother was so alarmed.

"Can you talk to Doovie?" asked Serena of the sobbing Splinter.

"No!" wailed Splinter. "You don't have to talk to play."

"Stop crying, Splinter," said Serena. "Help me think. Doovie's mother thinks we were trying to hurt Doovie. He wouldn't drown in the water. Remember, he can close his nose and fold up his ears. How are we going to tell his mother we weren't trying to hurt him?"

"Well," Splinter scrubbed his cheeks with the back of his hand. "We could hug him—"

"That wouldn't do, Splinter," said Serena, noticing with near panic that other brightly colored figures were moving among the shrubs, drawing closer—"I'm afraid she won't let us touch him."

Briefly she toyed with the idea of turning and trying to get back to the fence, then she took a deep breath and tried to calm down.

"Let's play-like, Splinter," she said. "Let's show Doovie's mother that we thought he was drowning. You go fall in the pond and I'll pull you out. You play-like drowned and I'll—I'll cry."

"Gee, Mommie, you're crying already!" said Splinter, his face puckering.

"I'm just practicing," she said, steadying her voice. "Go on."

Splinter hesitated on the edge of the pond, shrinking away from the water that had fascinated him so many times before. Serena screamed suddenly, and Splinter, startled, lost his balance and fell in. Serena had hold of him almost before he went under water and pulled him out, cramming all of the fear and apprehension into her voice and actions as she could. "Be dead," she whispered fiercely. "Be dead all over!" And Splinter melted so completely in her arms that her moans and cries of sorrow were only partly make-believe. She bent over his still form and rocked to and fro in her grief.

A hand touched her arm and she looked up into the bright eyes of the Linjeni. The look held for a long moment and then the Linjeni smiled, showing even white teeth, and a pink, furry hand patted Splinter on the shoulder. His eyes flew open and he sat up. Doovie peered around from behind his mother and then he and Splinter were rolling and tumbling together, wrestling happily between the two hesitant mothers. Serena found a shaky laugh somewhere in among her alarms and Doovie's mother whistled softly with her nose.

That night, Thorn cried out in his sleep and woke Serena. She lay in the darkness, her constant prayer moving like a candle flame in her mind. She crept out of bed and checked Splinter in his shadowy room. Then she knelt and opened the bottom drawer of Splinter's chest-robe. She ran her hand over the gleaming folds of the length of Linjeni material that lay there—the material the Linjeni had found to wrap her in while her clothes dried. She had given them her lacy slip in exchange. Her fingers read the raised pattern in the dark, remembering how beautiful it was in the afternoon sun. Then the sun was gone and she saw a black ship destroyed, a home craft plunging to incandescent death and the pink and green and yellow and all the other bright furs charring and crisping and the patterned materials curling before the last flare of flame. She leaned her head on her hand and shuddered.

But then she saw the glitter of a silver ship, blackening and fusing, dripping monstrously against the emptiness of space. And heard the wail of a fatherless Splinter so vividly that she shoved the drawer in hastily and went back to look at his quiet sleeping face and to tuck him unnecessarily in.

When she came back to bed, Thorn was awake, lying on his back, his elbows winging out.

"Awake?" she asked as she sat down on the edge of the bed.

"Yes." His voice was tense as the twang of a wire. "We're getting no-

where," he said. "Both sides keep holding up neat little hoops of ideas, but no one is jumping through, either way. We want peace, but we can't seem to convey anything to them. They want something, but they haven't said what, as though to tell us would betray them irrevocably into our hands, but they won't make peace unless they can get it. Where do we go from here?"

"If they'd just go away—" Rena swung her feet up onto the bed and clasped her slender ankles with both hands.

"That's one thing we've established." Thorn's voice was bitter, "They *won't* go. They're here to stay—like it or not."

"Thorn—" Rena spoke impulsively into the shadowy silence, "Why don't we just make them welcome? Why can't we just say, 'Come on in!' They're travelers from afar. Can't we be hospitable —"

"You talk as though the afar was just the next county—or state!" Thorn tossed impatiently on the pillow.

"Don't tell me we're back to that old equation—Stranger equals Enemy," said Rena, her voice sharp with strain. "Can't we assume they're friendly? Go visit with them—talk with them casually—"

"Friendly!" Thorn shot upright from the tangled bedclothes. "Go visit! Talk!" His voice choked off. Then dangerously calmly he went on. "Would you care to visit with the widows of our men who went to visit the friendly Linjeni? Whose ships dripped out of the sky without warning—"

"Theirs did, too." Rena's voice was small but stubborn. "With no more warning than we had. Who shot first? You must admit no one knows for sure."

There was a tense silence then Thorn lay down slowly, turned his back to Serena and spoke no more.

"Now I can't ever tell," mourned Serena into her crumpled pillow. "He'd die if he knew about the hole under the fence."

In the days that followed, Serena went every afternoon with Splinter and the hole under the fence got larger and larger.

Doovie's mother, whom Splinter called Mrs. Pink, was teaching Serena to embroider the rich materials like the length they had given her. In exchange, Serena was teaching Mrs. Pink how to knit. At least, she started to teach her. She got as far as purl and knit, decrease and increase, when Mrs. Pink took the work from her, and Serena sat wide-mouthed at the incredible speed and accuracy of Mrs. Pink's furry fingers. She felt a little silly for having assumed that the Linjeni didn't know about knitting. And yet, the other Linjeni crowded around and felt of the knitting and exclaimed over it in their soft, fluty voices as though

they'd never seen any before. The little ball of wool Serena had brought was soon used up, but Mrs. Pink brought out hanks of heavy thread such as were split and used in their embroidery, and, after a glance through Serena's pattern book, settled down to knitting the shining brilliance of Linjeni thread.

Before long, smiles and gestures, laughter and whistling, were not enough. Serena sought out the available tapes—a scant handful—on Linjeni speech and learned them. They didn't help much since the vocabulary wasn't easily applied to the matters she wanted to discuss with Mrs. Pink and the others. But the day she voiced and whistled her first Linjeni sentence to Mrs. Pink, Mrs. Pink stumbled through her first English sentence. They laughed and whistled together and settled down to pointing and naming and guessing across areas of incommunication.

Serena felt guilty by the end of the week. She and Splinter were having so much fun and Thorn was wearier and wearier at each session's end.

"They're impossible," he said bitterly, one night, crouched forward tensely on the front edge of his easy chair. "We can't pin them down to anything."

"What do they want?" asked Serena. "Haven't they said yet?"

"I shouldn't talk—" Thorn sank back in his chair. "Oh what does it matter?" he asked wearily. "It'll all come to nothing anyway!"

"Oh, no, Thorn!" cried Serena. "They're reasonable human—" she broke off at Thorn's surprised look. "Aren't they?" she stammered, "Aren't they?"

"Human? They're uncommunicative, hostile aliens," he said. "We talk ourselves blue in the face and they whistle at one another and say yes or no. Just that, flatly."

"Do they understand—" began Serena.

"We have interpreters, such as they are. None too good, but all we have."

"Well, what are they asking?" asked Serena.

Thorn laughed shortly. "So far as we've been able to ascertain, they just want all our oceans and the land contiguous thereto."

"Oh, Thorn, they couldn't be that unreasonable!"

"Well I'll admit we aren't even sure that's what they mean, but they keep coming back to the subject of the oceans, except they whistle rejection when we ask them point-blank if it's the oceans they want. There's just no communication." Thorn sighed heavily. "You don't know them like we do, Rena."

"No," said Serena miserably. "Not like you do."

She took her disquiet, Splinter, and a picnic basket down the hill to the hole next day. Mrs. Pink had

shared her lunch with them the day before, and now it was Serena's turn. They sat on the grass together, Serena crowding back her unhappiness to laugh at Mrs. Pink and her first olive with the same friendly amusement Mrs. Pink had shown when Serena had bit down on her first *pirwit* and had been afraid to swallow it and ashamed to spit it out.

Splinter and Doovie were agreeing over a thick meringued lemon pie that was supposed to be desert.

"Leave the pie alone, Splinter," said Serena. "It's to top-off on."

"We're only tasting the fluffy stuff," said Splinter, a blob of meringue on his upper lip bobbing as he spoke.

"Well, save your testing for later. Why don't you get out the eggs. I'll bet Doovie isn't familiar with them either."

Splinter rummaged in the basket and Serena took out the huge camp salt shaker.

"Here they are, Mommie!" cried Splinter. "Lookit, Doovie, first you have to crack the shell—"

Serena began initiating Mrs. Pink into the mysteries of hard-boiled eggs and it was all very casual and matter of fact until she sprinkled the peeled egg with salt. Mrs. Pink held out her cupped hand and Serena sprinkled a little salt into it. Mrs. Pink tasted it.

She gave a low whistle of astonishment and tasted again. Then she reached tentatively for the shaker. Serena gave it to her, amused. Mrs. Pink shook more into her hand and peered through the holes in the cap of the shaker. Serena unscrewed the top and showed Mrs. Pink the salt inside it.

For a long minute Mrs. Pink stared at the white granules and then she whistled urgently, piercingly. Serena shrank back, bewildered, as every bush seemed to erupt Linjeni. They crowded around Mrs. Pink, staring into the shaker, jostling one another, whistling softly. One scurried away and brought back a tall jug of water. Mrs. Pink slowly and carefully emptied the salt from her hand into the water and then up-ended the shaker. She stirred the water with a branch someone snatched from a bush. After the salt was dissolved, all the Linjeni around them lined up with cupped hands. Each received—as though it were a sacrament—a handful of salt water. And they all, quickly, not to lose a drop, lifted the handful of water to their faces and inhaled, breathing deeply, deeply of the salty solution.

Mrs. Pink was last, and, as she raised her wet face from her cupped hands, the gratitude in her eyes almost made Serena cry. And the dozens of Linjeni crowded around, each eager to press a soft forefinger to Serena's cheek, a thank-you gesture Splinter was picking up already.

When the crowd melted into the shadows again, Mrs. Pink sat down, fondling the salt shaker.

"Salt," said Serena, indicating the shaker.

"*Shreeprill,*" said Mrs. Pink.

"*Shreeprill?*" said Serena, her stumbling tongue robbing the word of its liquidness. Mrs. Pink nodded.

"*Shreeprill* good?" asked Serena, groping for an explanation for the just finished scene.

"*Shreeprill* good," said Mrs. Pink. "No *shreeprill,* no Linjeni baby. Doovie—Doovie—" she hesitated, groping. "One Doovie—no baby." She shook her head, unable to bridge the gap.

Serena groped after an idea she had almost caught from Mrs. Pink. She pulled up a handful of grass. "Grass," she said. She pulled another handful. "More grass. More. More." She added to the pile.

Mrs. Pink looked from the grass to Serena.

"No *more* Linjeni baby. Doovie —" She separated the grass into piles. "Baby, baby, baby—" she counted down to the last one, lingering tenderly over it. "Doovie."

"Oh," said Serena, "Doovie is the last Linjeni baby? No more?"

Mrs. Pink studied the words and then she nodded. "Yes, yes! No more. No *shreeprill,* no baby."

Serena felt a flutter of wonder. Maybe—maybe this is what the war was over. Maybe they just wanted salt. A world to them. Maybe—

"Salt, *shreeprill,*" she said. "More, more, more *shreeprill,* Linjeni go home?"

"More more more *shreeprill,* yes," said Mrs. Pink. "Go home, no. No home. Home no good. No water, no *shreeprill.*"

"Oh," said Serena. Then thoughtfully, "More Linjeni? More more, more?"

Mrs. Pink looked at Serena and in the sudden silence the realization that they were, after all, members of enemy camps flared between them. Serena tried to smile. Mrs. Pink looked over at Splinter and Doovie who were happily sampling everything in the picnic basket. Mrs. Pink relaxed, and then she said,

"No more Linjeni." She gestured toward the crowded landing field. "Linjeni." She pressed her hands, palm to palm, her shoulders sagging. "No more Linjeni."

Serena sat dazed, thinking what this would mean to Earth's High Command. No more Linjeni of the terrible, devastating weapons. No more than those that had landed—no waiting alien world ready to send reinforcements when these ships were gone. When these were gone—no more Linjeni. All that Earth had to do now was wipe out these ships, taking the heavy losses that would be inevitable, and they would win the war—and wipe out a race.

The Linjeni must have come seeking asylum—or demanding it.

Neighbors who were afraid to ask —or hadn't been given time to ask. How had the war started? Who fired upon whom? Did anyone know?

Serena took uncertainty home with her, along with the empty picnic basket. *Tell, tell, tell,* whispered her feet through the grass up the hill. *Tell and the war will end.* But how? she cried out to herself. By wiping them out or giving them a home? Which? Which?

Kill, kill, kill grated her feet across the graveled patio edge. *Kill the aliens—no common ground—not human—all our hallowed dead.*

But what about *their* hallowed dead? All falling, the flaming ships—the home-seekers—the dispossessed—the childless?

Serena settled Splinter with a new puzzle and a picture book and went into the bedroom. She sat on the bed and stared at herself in the mirror.

But give them salt water and they'll increase—all our oceans, even if they said they were no good. Increase and increase and take the world—push us out—trespass—oppress—

But their men—our men. They've been meeting for over a week and can't agree. Of course they can't! They're afraid of betraying themselves to each other. Neither knows anything about the other, really. They aren't trying to find out anything really important. I'll bet not one of our men know the Linjeni can close their noses and fold their ears. And not one of the Linjeni knows we sprinkle their life on our food.

Serena had no idea how long she sat there, but Splinter finally found her and insisted on supper and then Serena insisted on bed for him.

She was narly mad with indecision when Thorn finally got home.

"Well," he said, dropping wearily into his chair. "It's almost over."

"Over!" cried Serena, hope flaring, "Then you've reached—"

"Stalemate, impasse," said Thorn heavily. "Our meeting tomorrow is the last. One final 'no' from each side and it's over. Back to blood-letting."

"Oh, Thorn, no!" Serena pressed her clenched fist to her mouth. "We can't kill any more of them! It's inhuman—it's—"

"It's self-defense," Thorn's voice was sharp with exasperated displeasure. "Please, not tonight, Rena. Spare me your idealistic ideas. Heaven knows we're inexperienced enough in war-like negotiations without having to cope with suggestions that we make cute pets out of our enemies. We're in a war and we've got it to win. Let the Linjeni get a wedge in and they'll swarm the Earth like flies!"

"No, no!" whispered Serena, her own secret fears sending the

tears flooding down her face. "They wouldn't! They wouldn't! Would they?"

Long after Thorn's sleeping breath whispered in the darkness beside her, she lay awake, staring at the invisible ceiling. Carefully she put the words up before her on the slate of the darkness.

Tell—the war will end.

Either we will help the Linjeni —or wipe them out.

Don't tell. The conference will break up. The war will go on.

We will have heavy losses—and wipe the Linjeni out.

Mrs. Pink trusted me.

Splinter loves Doovie. Doovie loves him.

Then the little candle-flame of prayer that had so nearly burned out in her torment, flared brightly again and she slept.

Next morning she sent Splinter to play with Doovie. "Play by the gold-fish pond," she said. "I'll be along soon."

"Okay, Mommie," said Splinter. "Will you bring some cake?" slyly, "Doovie isn't a-miliar with cake."

Serena laughed. "A certain little Splinter is a-miliar with cake, though! You run along, greedy!" And she boosted him out of the door with a slap on the rear.

"'Bye, Mommie," he called back.

"'Bye, dear. Be good."

"I will."

Serena watched until he disappeared down the slope of the hill, then she smoothed her hair and ran her tongue over her lips. She started for the bedroom, but turned suddenly and went to the front door. If she had to face even her own eyes, her resolution would waver and dissolve. She stood, hand on knob, watching the clock inch around until an interminable fifteen minutes had passed—Splinter safely gone—then she snatched the door open and left.

Her smile took her out of the Quarters' Area to the Administration Building. Her brisk assumption of authority and destination took her to the conference wing and there her courage failed her. She lurked out of sight of the guards, almost wringing her hands in indecision. Then she straightened the set of her skirt, smoothed her hair, dredged a smile up from some hidden source of strength and tiptoed out into the hall.

She felt like a butterfly pinned to the wall by the instant unwinking attention of the guards. She gestured silence with a finger to her lips and tiptoed up to them.

"Hello, Turner. Hi, Franiveri," she whispered.

The two exchanged looks and Turner said hoarsely, "You aren't supposed to be here, Ma'am. Better go."

"I know I'm not," she said, looking guilty—with no effort at all. "But, Turner, I—I just want to see

a Linjeni." She hurried on before Turner's open mouth could form a word. "Oh, I've seen pictures of them, but I'd like awfully to see a real one. Can't I have even one little peak?" She slipped closer to the door. "Look!" she cried softly, "It's even ajar a little already!"

"Supposed to be," rasped Turner. "Orders. But Ma'am, we can't —"

"Just one peek?" she pleaded, putting her thumb in the crack of the door. "I won't make a sound."

She coaxed the door open a little farther, her hand creeping inside, fumbling for the knob, the little button.

"But, Ma'am, you couldn't see 'em from here anyway."

Quicker than thought, Serena jerked the door open and darted in, pushing the little button and slamming the door to with what seemed to her a thunder that vibrated through the whole building. Breathlessly, afraid to think, she sped through the ante room and into the conference room. She came to a scared skidding stop, her hands tight on the back of a chair, every eye in the room on her. Thorn, almost unrecognizable in his armor of authority and severity, stood up abruptly.

"Serena!" he said, his voice cracking with incredulity. Then he sat down again, hastily.

Serena circled the table, refusing to meet the eyes that bored into her—blue yes, brown yes, black eyes, yellow eyes, green eyes, lavender eyes. She turned at the foot of the table and looked fearfully up the shining expanse.

"Gentlemen," her voice was almost inaudible. She cleared her throat. "Gentlemen." She saw General Worsham getting ready to speak—his face harshly unfamiliar with the weight of his position. She pressed her hands to the polished table and leaned forward hastily.

"You're going to quit, aren't you? You're giving up!" The translators bent to their mikes and their lips moved to hers. "What have you been talking about all this time? Guns? Battles? Casualty lists? We'll-do-this-to-you-if-you-do that-to-us? I don't know!" she cried, shaking her head tightly, almost shuddering. "I don't know what goes on at high level conference tables. All I know is that I've been teaching Mrs. Pink to knit, and how to cut a lemon pie—" She could see the bewildered interpreters thumbing their manuals. "And already I know why they're here and what they want!" Pursing her lips, she half-whistled, half-trilled in her halting Linjeni, "Doovie baby. No more Linjeni babies!"

One of the Linjeni started at Doovie's name and stood up slowly, his lavender bulk towering over the table. Serena saw the interpreters thumbing frantically again. She knew they were looking for a

translation of the Linjeni 'baby'. Babies had no place in a military conference.

The Linjeni spoke slowly, but Serena shook her head. "I don't know enough Linjeni."

There was a whisper at her shoulder. "What do you know of Doovie?" And a pair of earphones were pushed into her hands. She adjusted them with trembling fingers. Why were they letting her talk? Why was General Worsham sitting there letting her break into the conference like this?

"I know Doovie," she said breathlessly. "I know Doovie's mother, too. Doovie plays with Splinter, my son—my little son." She twisted her fingers, dropping her head at the murmur that arose around the table. The Linjeni spoke again and the earphones murmured metalicly. "What is the color of Doovie's mother?"

"Pink," said Serena.

Again the scurry for a word—pink—pink. Finally Serena turned up the hem of her skirt and displayed the hem of her slip—rose-pink. The Linjeni sat down again, nodding.

"Serena," General Worsham spoke as quietly as though it were just another lounging evening in the patio. "What do you want?"

Serena's eyes wavered and then her chin lifted.

"Thorn said today would be the last day. That it was to be 'no' on both sides. That we and the Linjeni have no common meeting ground, no basis for agreement on anything."

"And you think we have?" General Worsham's voice cut gently through the stir at the naked statement of thoughts and attitudes so carefully concealed.

"I know we do. Our alikenesses out-weigh our differences so far that it's just foolish to sit here all this time, shaking our differences at each other and not finding out a thing about our likenesses. We are fundamentally the same—the same —" she faltered. "Under God we are all the same." And she knew with certainty that the translators wouldn't find God's name in their books. "I think we ought to let them eat our salt and bread and make them welcome!" She half smiled and said, "The word for salt is *shreeprill.*"

There was a smothered rush of whistling from the Linjeni, and the lavender Linjeni half arose from his chair and subsided.

General Worsham glanced at the Linjeni speculatively and pursed his lips, "But there are ramifications—" he began.

"Ramifications!" spat Serena. "There are no ramifications that can't resolve themselves if two peoples really know each other!"

She glanced around the table, noting with sharp relief that Thorn's face had softened.

"Come with me!" she urged. "Come and see Doovie and Splin-

ter together—Linjeni young and ours, who haven't learned suspicion and fear and hate and prejudice yet. Declare a—a—recess or a truce or whatever is necessary and come with me. After you see the children and see Mrs. Pink knitting and we talk this matter over like members of a family—Well, if you still think you have to fight after that, then—" she spread her hands.

Her knees shook so as they started downhill that Thorn had to help her walk.

"Oh, Thorn," she whispered, almost sobbing. "I didn't think they would. I thought they'd shoot me or lock me up or—"

"We don't want war. I told you that," he murmured. "We're ready to grab at straws, even in the guise of snippy females who barge in on solemn councils and display their slips!" Then his lips tightened. "How long has this been going on?"

"For Splinter, a couple of weeks. For me, a little more than a week."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"I tried—twice. You wouldn't listen. I was too scared to insist. Besides, you know what your reaction would have been."

Thorn had no words until they neared the foot of the hill, then he said, "How come you know so much? What makes you think you can solve—"

Serena choked back a hysterical laugh. "I took eggs to a picnic!"

And then they were standing, looking down at the hole under the fence.

"Splinter found the way," Serena defended. "I made it bigger, but you'll have to get down—flat."

She dropped to the sand and wiggled under. She crouched on the other side, her knees against her chest, her clasped hands pressed against her mouth, and waited. There was a long minute of silence and then a creak and a grunt and Serena bit her lips as General Worsham inched under the fence, flat on the sand, catching and jerking free half way through. But her amusement changed to admiration as she realized that even covered with dust, scrambling awkwardly to his feet and beating his rumpled clothing, he possessed dignity and strength that made her deeply thankful that he was the voice of Earth in this time of crisis.

One by one the others crawled under, the Linjeni sandwiched between the other men and Thorn bringing up the rear. Motioning silence, she led them to the thicket of bushes that screened one side of the goldfish pond.

Doovie and Splinter were leaning over the edge of the pond.

"There it is!" cried Splinter, leaning perilously and pointing. "Way down there on the bottom and it's my best marble. Would your Mommie care if you got it for me?"

Doovie peered down. "Marble go in water."

"That's what I said," cried Splinter impatiently. "And you can shut your nose—" he put his finger to the black, glistening button, "And fold your ears," he flicked them with his forefinger and watched them fold. "Gee!" he said admiringly. "I wish I could do that."

"Doovie go in water?" asked Doovie.

"Yea," nodded Splinter. "It's my good taw and you won't even have to put on swimming trunks—you got fur."

Doovie shucked out of his brief clothing and slid down into the pond. He bobbed back up, his hand clenched.

"Gee, thanks." Splinter held out his hand and Doovie carefully turned his hand over and Splinter closed his. Then he shrieked and flung his hand out. "You mean old thing!" yelled Splinter. "Give me my marble! That was a slippy old fish!" He leaned over, scuffling, trying to reach Doovie's other hand. There was a slither and a splash and Splinter and Doovie disappeared under the water.

Serena caught her breath and had started forward when Doovie's anxious face bobbed to the surface again. He yanked and tugged at the sputtering, coughing Splinter and tumbled him out onto the grass. Doovie squatted by Splinter, patting his back and alternately whistling dolefully through his nose and talking apologetic sounding Linjeni.

Splinter coughed and dug his fists into his eyes.

"Golly, golly!" he said, spatting his hands against his wet jersey. "Mommie'll sure be mad. My clean clothes all wet. Where's my marble, Doovie?"

Doovie scrambled to his feet and went back to the pond. Splinter started to follow, then he cried. "Oh, Doovie, where did that poor little fish go? It'll die if it's out of the water. My guppy did."

"Fish?" asked Doovie.

"Yes," said Splinter, holding out his hand as he searched the grass with intent eyes. "The slippy little fish that wasn't my marble."

The two youngsters scrambled around in the grass until Doovie whistled and cried out triumphantly, "Fish!" and scooped it up in his hands and rushed it back to the pond.

"There," said Splinter, "Now it won't die. Looky, it's swimming away!"

Doovie slid into the pond again and retrieved the lost marble.

"Now," said Splinter, "Watch me and I'll show you how to shoot."

The bushes beyond the two absorbed boys parted and Mrs. Pink stepped out. She smiled at the children and then she saw the silent group on the other side of the clearing. Her eyes widened and she gave an astonished whistle.

The two boys looked up and followed the direction of her eyes.

"Daddy!" yelled Splinter. "Did you come to play?" And he sped, arms outstretched, to Thorn, arriving only a couple of steps ahead of Doovie who was whistling excitedly and rushing to greet the tall lavender Linjeni.

Serena felt a sudden choke of laughter at how alike Thorn and the Linjeni looked, trying to greet their offspring adequately and still retain their dignity.

Mrs. Pink came hesitantly to the group to stand in the circle of Serena's arm. Splinter had swarmed up Thorn, hugged him with thorougness and slid down again. "Hi, General Worsham!" he said, extending a muddy hand in a belated remembrance of his manners. "Hey, Daddy, I'm showing Doovie how to play marbles, but you can shoot better'n I can. You come show him how."

"Well—" said Thorn, glancing uncomfortably at General Worsham.

General Worsham was watching the Linjeni as Doovie whistled and fluted over a handful of bright colored glassie marbles. He quirked an eyebrow at Thorn and then at the rest of the group.

"I suggest a recess," he said. "In order that we may examine new matters that have been brought to our attention."

Serena felt herself getting all hollow inside, and she turned her face away so Mrs. Pink wouldn't see her cry. But Mrs. Pink was too interested in the colorful marbles to see Serena's gathering, hopeful tears.

Old Arthur knew all about young men, that was certain. But who knew much about old Arthur? Not young Robert, brown Robert, for one. Arthur was in contact with reality, all right—but what kinds *of reality? Terry Carr's first story for F&SF (*Who Sups With The Devil, *May, 1962) was an urbane variation on a classical theme of fantasy fiction. Here he shows us a fascinating, many-faceted view of human nature, and makes a bran-new contribution to a classical science fiction theme. And makes us want to cry,* "Look out!" *to someone who can never hear us.*

BROWN ROBERT

by Terry Carr

ARTHUR LEACOCK SHUFFLED quickly down the wooden hall of the small Midwestern university where he had worked for thirty-two years and eight months, give or take maybe a week. His sleep-rumpled, peppery hair stuck out from under the old leather cap which he had worn for fully seventeen of those years, and his oft-resoled shoes were almost silent in the hallway, though its echoing properties were so good that Arthur had often fancied he could hear his own breathing whispered back to him from the walls.

He turned right at the large waiting-room in the middle of the building and went up the stairs to the second floor two at a time, grasping the handrail with large-knuckled hands to pull himself along. He did not look where he was going, but instead rested his eyes unseeingly on the stairs passing beneath him, his mouth drawn back into the heavy wrinkles of his cheeks.

Robert Ernsohn, full-voiced Robert with brown soul, would already be in his office, of course. Wavy Robert, whose brow was noble as a mannikin's, always arrived half an hour before the time he set for Arthur. When Arthur arrived, he knew, Robert would be rechecking the figures he had pored carefully over till midnight

—not because Robert did not trust his own abilities, but because it was his policy always to double-check his figures. Robert, naturally, would never give in to the danger of overconfidence, which might be called conceit; he always made sure that he had made no mistake. And then he always smiled.

At the top of the stairs Arthur pushed through the door to the second-floor hall and crossed to Robert's office. The door creaked twice behind him and then rested shut.

Robert Ernsohn looked up from his pretentiously small desk in the corner by the window and pushed the papers aside. The red-orange sun, slipping silently from behind the roof of the building across the courtyard, cast lines of light through the venetian blinds across the desk. Brown-eyed, brown Robert smiled with innocent satyriasis and dropped his pencil in the pencil-glass.

"I've checked it all four times," he said. "Short of going upstate to a computer that's all I can do. I hope it's right."

Arthur watched his mouth as he spoke and then stepped into the cloakroom to hang up his overcoat. He found a cleaning rag and took it with him when he came out and went on across the office, five steps, into the laboratory. A small laboratory, cluttered and dirty. The floor was dirty, at any rate; the equipment was polished. But Arthur set to polishing it again, because this morning it would be used.

There was a reclining couch in the midst of a cacophony of mechanical and electrical complexity. Arthur brushed off the couch, touching the leather softly with his fingertips, and then began carefully rubbing down the metal of the machine. He tested a few levers by hand and oiled one of them, humming to himself. But he noticed himself humming and stopped.

The machine, the time machine, was ready for operation. It was clean and had been checked over for a week; all the parts which were doubtful had been replaced, and on a trial run yesterday it had performed perfectly. Robert's sweater—Robert's, of course, not Arthur's—had been sent two days into the future and had come back. It had been sent six months and then five years into the future, and it had still come back. But of course Arthur had never doubted that it would.

Robert appeared in the doorway and watched him as he threw the switch and warmed the machine. A few dials moved, and Robert stepped forward with his intelligent eyes to read them and glance down at the figures in his hand and nod. Arthur ignored him. He switched the machine off and stepped to the window to look at his watch; it was 7:43 a.m. He unstrapped the

watch and handed it to Robert and went into the other room.

In the office he sat in Robert's chair by the window and looked out onto the courtyard. The girl, eighteen and brunette, had a class across the way at eight o'clock, and she always arrived early. Arthur always watched for her and when he saw her he diverted brown Robert's attention, so that he always missed seeing her. He had been doing that ever since he had seen Robert talking with her two months before.

Presently he saw her, walking quickly through the cold and up the steps to the courtyard. It was cold weather and she wore a heavy coat which concealed her figure, which was a good thing. Arthur knew how young men like cheekbone Robert liked the summer months on campus.

"What time you want to go?" he called out, and when Robert came into the room he did not look out the window.

"At eight," said Robert.

"You're sure?"

"Of course. I told you definitely yesterday, and I seldom change my mind."

"Well, you never know," said Arthur. "Something might have come up, might have changed your plans."

Robert smiled as though he were flexing his face muscles. "Nothing is likely to at this point. Except perhaps an act of God."

An act of God, Arthur repeated in his mind, wanting to look out the window to see if the girl was safely out of sight yet.

"There's someone at the door," he said.

Robert went to the door, but there was no one there and he went outside to look down the stairs. Arthur turned and looked for the girl. She had sat down on a bench by the door to her building and was paging through a book, her hair falling softly like water-mist across her forehead. Even from this distance Arthur could see that it was clean, free hair, virgin's hair. He knew the way absent Robert would like to run his fingers through it, caressing the girl's neck, tightly, holding her . . .

Robert was dangerous. No one else realized that, but Arthur had watched young men on that campus for thirty-two years, and he recognized the look he so often saw in Robert's eyes. So many of them, students and young professors, had that look, veiled, covert, waxing and waning behind the eyes, steadily building up to an explosion like an— But Arthur did not want to think about that.

He had tried, once, to warn others about Robert, whose mind was a labyrinth of foggy, dark halls. He had told them, down in the main office, one day after hours. That had been the day he had seen dark Robert with the girl, seen them together. He had told Mr.

Lewis' assistant, and tried to warn her—fog Robert must be dismissed and sent away. But the woman had hardly listened to him, and as he had stood in the outer room on the way out, looking calmly at a chip in the baseboard, he had heard her speaking to Mr. Lewis, the president of the university. "We have to remember that Arthur is getting on in years," she had said. "He's probably having a little trouble with his memory, playing tricks on him. People who are getting on in years sometimes aren't very much in contact with reality." Mr. Lewis' assistant was a dull, grey woman.

"Robert Ernsohn is one of our most valued young men," Mr. Lewis had said. "We're backing his research as fully as possible, and we have every confidence in him." Arthur had heard some papers rustled and then silence, so he had stopped looking at the baseboard and gone out.

Not in contact with reality? Arthur had been watching the realities of young men and their eyes through all his years at the campus, first as a janitor, then later as an assistant in the chemistry labs and up in the small observatory on the top floor. He had seen them looking at the girls, light and rounded, long hair and tapered ankles and tight, swaying skirts. He knew about realities.

He had read about them, in books from the library's locked shelves. Case histories of sadists and murderers and twisted minds of all sorts. Men who cut girls straight up the belly, dissected their breasts, removed the organs of their abdomens and laid them out neatly on the floor, and then carefully washed what remained of their bodies and put their clothes back on them and went away. Arthur had read all those books carefully, and he knew what reality was. It was all around him and he was certainly in contact with it.

The door behind him opened and frowning, covert Robert came back into the room.

"There was no one," he said, and glanced at the watch and went into the laboratory where the machine was.

"It must be time," Arthur said, and followed him.

"Yes, it is," Robert said, sitting on the couch. Arthur pulled the scanner forward to where it rested directly above Robert's body, and set the calibrations exactly correctly. He activated the machine and waited while it warmed.

Ambitious Robert was going into the future. Not far, just one hour . . . but it would make history; he would be the first. No one else seemed to have the slightest inkling of the method, but narrow-eyed Robert had run across it and had built his machine, telling the administration it was something else, keeping it secret, keeping men from the bigger universi-

ties and corporations from coming in and taking over his work. "I have to believe in my own abilities," Robert had said.

Arthur watched him as he lay back on the couch under the apparatus of the machine. Robert's eyes, long-lashed, closed softly and he drew a deep, even breath. "I'm ready."

So brown Robert goes into the future, Arthur thought. And when he comes back he intends to bring witnesses to see him an hour from now, two of him, and to explain it all with his full, rich, curdled voice, and write a paper and go to a larger university and be famous where there are more and more young, rounded girls. Because Robert knows reality almost as well as I do.

Arthur checked the dials and meters of the machine carefully, seeing that they were exactly as Robert had ordered them. Arthur was a good, careful worker, and that was why even when Mr. Lewis' assistant had scoffed at him he had not been afraid of being dismissed. Everybody knew that he always did exactly as he was told.

"Goodbye," he said. He flicked the switch and Robert disappeared.

He stepped over to the empty couch and placed his hand on the soft, worn leather cushion, feeling its warmth from the body which had just left it. Robert was in the future.

But he had to bring him back. He reset the machine and threw another switch and Robert reappeared on the couch. Arthur went and stood over him and looked for a long time at the blood flowing from his mouth and nostrils and eyes and ears. There was a small hole torn through his right leg, and that was beginning to bleed too. He was dead.

The gash in his leg must have been from a small meteor, Arthur decided. He had heard about them when he was working in the observatory. It had been one afternoon when he had been working there that he had realized what would happen to Robert when he went into the future. Because of course he could travel forward in time and reappear an hour later, but the Earth would not be there, because the Earth moved around the sun at about eighteen and a half miles a second and for that matter the whole solar system seemed to be moving at about twelve miles a second toward a point in the constellation Hercules. That was what someone in the Astronomy department had told him, anyway, and he had memorized it.

So Robert had landed an hour in the future, but somewhere out in space, and he had died, the pressure of oxygen in his body hemoraging his bloodvessels and bursting his lungs before he could even suffocate. But of course it hadn't been Arthur's fault.

Humming softly to himself,

Arthur closed down the machine and washed as much blood as he could from Robert's head. Some of it was drying already, leaving a brownish crust on the cold skin. He rearranged Robert's clothes, and went downstairs to report what happened.

He went directly, stopping only once to watch a young girl with a soft, full red sweater as she struggled out of her heavy coat.

Six Haiku

1

The white vapor trail
Scrawls slowly on the sky
Without any squeak.

2

Gilt and painted clouds
Float back through the shining air,
What, are there stars, too?

3

In the heavy world's
Shadow, I watch the sputnik
Coasting in sunlight.

4

Those crisp cucumbers
Not yet planted in Syrtis—
How I desire one!

5

In the fantastic
Seas of Venus, who would dare
To imagine gulls?

6

When Proxima sets
What constellation do they
Dream around our sun?

—KAREN ANDERSON

Joanna Russ sees in her story's theme (battered and squeezed by legions of hack-writers) no mere exercise in gothick terrors or eldritch horrors, but the "promise of endless love and endless time." What is no less remarkable is that she makes us see it, too. True in atmosphere as well as detail in respect to period (the 1880s) and place (San Francisco), this story of the killing sunlight and the living night, of Emily and Charlotte and Martin and William, Japanese lanterns and wolfsbane, and of passion burning cold as ice, is beautifully written: we predict it will become a classic of its kind.

MY DEAR EMILY

by Joanna Russ

San Francisco, 188-

I am so looking forward to seeing my dear Emily at last, now she is grown, a woman, although I'm sure I will hardly recognize her. She must not be proud (as if she could be!) but will remember her friends, I know, and have patience with her dear Will who cannot help but remember the girl she was, and the sweet influence she had in her old home. I talk to your father about you every day, dear, and he longs to see you as I do. Think! a learned lady in our circle! But I know you have not changed . . .

EMILY CAME HOME FROM school in April with her bosom friend Charlotte. They had loved each other in school, but they didn't speak much on the train. While Emily read Mr. Emerson's poems, Charlotte examined the scenery through opera-glasses. She expressed her wish to see "savages."

"That's foolish," says Emily promptly.

"If we were carried off," says Charlotte, "I don't think you would notice it in time to disapprove."

"That's very foolish," says Emily, touching her round lace collar with one hand. She looks up from Mr. Emerson to stare Char-

lotte out of countenance, properly, morally, and matter-of-course young lady. It has always been her style.

"The New England look," Charlotte snaps resentfully. She makes her opera-glasses slap shut.

"I should like to be carried off," she proposes; "but then I don't have an engagement to look forward to. A delicate affair."

"You mustn't make fun," says Emily. Mr. Emerson drops into her lap. She stares unseeing at Charlotte's opera-glasses.

"Why do they close?" she asks helplessly.

"I beg your pardon?" blankly, from Charlotte.

"Nothing. You're much nicer than I am," says Emily.

"Look," urges Charlotte kindly, pressing the toy into her friend's hand.

"For savages?"

Charlotte nods, Emily pushes the spring that will open the little machine, and a moment later drops them into her lap where they fall on Mr. Emerson. There is a cut across one of her fingers and a blue pinch darkening the other.

"They hurt me," she says without expression, and as Charlotte takes the glasses up quickly, Emily looks with curious sad passivity at the blood from her little wound, which has bled an incongruous passionate drop on Mr. Emerson's clothbound poems. To her friend's surprise (and her own, too) she begins to cry, heavily, silently, and totally without reason.

He wakes up slowly, mistily, dizzily, with a vague memory of having fallen asleep on plush. He is intensely miserable, bound down to his bed with hoops of steel, and the memory adds nausea to his misery, solidifying ticklishly around his bare hands and the back of his neck as he drifts towards wakefulness. His stomach turns over with the dry brushy filthiness of it. With the caution of the chronically ill, he opens his eyelids, careful not to move, careful even to keep from focusing his gaze until—he thinks to himself—his bed stops holding him with the force of Hell and this intense miserable sickness goes down, settles . . . Darkness. No breath. A glimmer of light, a stone wall. He thinks: *I'm dead and buried, dead and buried, dead and*— With infinite care he attempts to breathe, sure that this time it will be easy; he'll be patient, discreet, sensible, he won't do it all at once—

He gags. Spasmodically, he gulps, cries out, and gags again, springing convulsively to his knees and throwing himself over the low wall by his bed, laboring as if he were breathing sand. He starts to sweat. His heartbeat comes back, then pulse, then seeing, hearing, swallowing . . . High in the wall

a window glimmers, a star is out, the sky is pale evening blue. Trembling with nausea, he rises to his feet, sways a little in the gloom, then puts out one arm and steadies himself against the stone wall. He sees the window, sees the door ahead of him. In his tearing eyes the star suddenly blazes and lengthens like a knife; his head is whirling, his heart painful as a man's; he throws his hands over his face, longing for life and strength to come back, the overwhelming flow of force that will crest at sunrise, leaving him raging at the world and ready to kill anyone, utterly proud and contemptuous, driven to sleep as the last resort of a balked assassin. But it's difficult to stand, difficult to breathe: *I wish I were dead and buried, dead and buried, dead and buried—But there!* he whispers to himself like a charm, *There, it's going, it's going away.* He smiles slyly round at his companionable, merciful stone walls. With an involuntarily silent, gliding gait he moves towards the door, opens the iron gate, and goes outside. Life is coming back. The trees are black against the sky, which yet holds some light; far away in the West lie the radiant memories of a vanished sun. An always vanished sun.

"Alive!" he cries, in triumph. It is—as usual—his first word of the day.

Dear Emily, sweet Emily, met Martin Guevara three days after she arrived home. She had been shown the plants in the garden and the house plants in stands and had praised them; she had been shown the sun-pictures and had praised *them*; she had fingered antimacassars, promised to knit, exclaimed at gaslights, and passed two evenings at home, doing nothing. Then in the hall that led to the pantry sweet Will had taken her hand and she had dropped her eyes because you were supposed to and that was her style. Charlotte (who slept in the same room as her friend) embraced her at bedtime, wept over the hand-taking, and then Emily said to her dear, dear friend (without thinking):

"Sweet William."

Charlotte laughed.

"It's not a joke!"

"It's so funny."

"I love Will dearly." She wondered if God would strike her dead for a hypocrite. Charlotte was looking at her oddly, and smiling.

"You mustn't be full of levity," said Emily, peeved. It was then that sweet William came in and told them of tomorrow's garden-party, which was to be composed of her father's congregation. They were lucky, he said, to have acquaintances of such position and character. Charlotte slipped out on purpose and Will, seeing they were alone, attempted to take Emily's hand again.

"Leave me alone!" Emily said angrily. He stared.

"I said leave me alone!"

And she gave him such a look of angry pride that, in fact, he did.

Emily sees Guevara across the parlor by the abominable cherry-red sofa, talking animatedly and carelessly. In repose he is slight, undistinguished, and plain, but no one will ever see him in repose; Emily realizes this. His strategy is never to rest, to bewilder, he would (she thinks) slap you if only to confuse you, and when he can't he's always out of the way and attacking, making one look ridiculous. She knows nobody and is bored; she starts for the door to the garden.

At the door his hand closes over her wrist; he has somehow gotten there ahead of her.

"The lady of the house," he says.

"I'm back from school."

"And you've learned—?"

"Let me go, please."

"Never." He drops her hand and stands in the doorway. She says:

"I want to go outside."

"Never."

"I'll call my father."

"Do." She tries and can't talk; I wouldn't *bother*, she thinks to herself, loftily. She goes out into the garden with him. Under the trees his plainness vanishes like smoke.

"You want lemonade," he says.

"I'm not going to talk to you," she responds. "I'll talk to Will. Yes! I'll make him—"

"In trouble," says Mr. Guevara, returning silently with lemonade in a glass cup.

"No thank you."

"She wants to get away," says Martin Guevara. "I know."

"If I had your trick of walking like a cat," she says, "I could get out of anything."

"I *can* get out of anything," says the gentleman, handing Emily her punch, "Out of an engagement, a difficulty. I can even get *you* out of anything."

"I loathe you," whispers Emily suddenly. "You walk like a cat. You're ugly."

"Not out here," he remarks.

"Who has to be afraid of lights?" cries Emily energetically. He stands away from the paper lanterns strung between the trees, handsome, comfortable and collected, watching Emily's cut-glass cup shake in her hand.

"I can't move," she says miserably.

"Try." She takes a step towards him. "See; you can."

"But I wanted to go *away!*" With sudden hysteria she flings the lemonade (cup and all) into his face, but he is no longer there.

"What are you doing at a church supper, you hypocrite!" she shouts tearfully at the vacancy.

Sweet William has to lead her in to bed.

"You thought better of it," remarks Martin, head framed in an evening window, sounds of footsteps outside, ladies' heels clicking in the streets.

"I don't know you," she says miserably, "I just don't." He takes her light shawl, a pattern in India cashmere.

"That will come," he says, smiling. He sits again, takes her hand, and squeezes the skin on the wrist.

"Let me go, please?" she says like a child.

"I don't know."

"You talk like the smart young gentlemen at Andover; they were all fools."

"Perhaps you overawed them." He leans forward and puts his hand around the back of her neck for a moment. "Come on, dear."

"What are you talking about!" Emily cries.

"San Francisco is a lovely city. I had ancestors here three hundred years ago."

"Don't think that because I came here—"

"She doesn't," he whispers, grasping her shoulder, "She doesn't know a thing."

"God damn you!"

He blinks and sits back. Emily is weeping. The confusion of the room—an over-stuffed, over-draped hotel room—has gotten on her nerves. She snatches for her shawl, which is still in his grasp, but he holds it out of her reach, darting his handsome, unnaturally young face from side to side as she tries to reach round him. She falls across his lap and lies there, breathless with terror.

"You're cold," she whispers horrified, "you're cold as a corpse." The shawl descends lightly over her head and shoulders. His frozen hands help her to her feet. He is delighted; he bares his teeth in a smile.

"I think," he says, tasting it, "that I'm going to visit your family."

"But you don't—" she stumbles —"you don't want to . . . sleep with me. I know it."

"I can be a suitor like anyone else," he says.

That night Emily tells it all to Charlotte, who, afraid of the roué, stays up and reads a French novel as the light drains from the windows and the true black dark takes its place. It is towards dawn and Charlotte has been dozing, when Emily shakes her friend awake, kneeling by the bed with innocent blue eyes reflecting the dying night.

"I had a terrible dream," she complains.

"Hmmmm?"

"I dreamed," says Emily tiredly. "I had a nightmare. I dreamed I was walking by the beach and I decided to go swimming and then a . . . a thing, I don't know . . . it took me by the neck."

"Is that all?" says Charlotte peevishly.

"I'm sick," says Emily with childish satisfaction. She pushes Charlotte over in the bed and climbs in with her. "I won't have to see that man again if I'm sick."

"Pooh, why not?" mumbles Charlotte.

"Because I'll have to stay home."

"He'll visit you."

"William won't let him."

"Sick?" says Charlotte then, suddenly waking up. She moves away from her friend, for she has read more bad fiction than Emily and less moral poetry.

"Yes, I feel awful," says Emily simply, resting her head on her knees. She pulls away in tired irritation when her friend reaches for the collar of her nightdress. Charlotte looks and jumps out of bed.

"Oh," says Charlotte. "Oh—goodness—oh—" holding out her hands.

"What on earth's the matter with you?"

"He's—" whispers Charlotte in horror, "He's—"

In the dim light her hands are black with blood.

"You've come," he says. He is lying on his hotel sofa, reading a newspaper, his feet over one arm and a hand trailing on the rug.

"Yes," she answers, trembling with resolution.

"I never thought this place would have such a good use. But I never know when I'll manage to pick up money—"

With a blow of her hand, she makes a fountain of the newspaper; he lies on the sofa, mildly amused.

"Nobody knows I came," she says rapidly. "But I'm going to finish you off. I know how." She hunts feverishly in her bag.

"I wouldn't," he remarks quietly.

"Ah!" Hauling out her baby cross (silver), she confronts him with it like Joan of Arc. He is still amused, still mildly surprised.

"In your hands?" he says delicately. Her fingers are loosening, her face pitiful.

"My dear, the significance is in the feeling, the faith, not the symbol. You use that the way you would use a hypodermic needle. Now in your father's hands—"

"I dropped it," she says in a little voice. He picks it up and hands it to her.

"You can touch—" she says, her face screwing up for tears.

"I can."

"Oh my God!" she cries in despair.

"My dear." He puts one arm around her, holding her against him, a very strong man for she pushes frantically to free herself. "How many times have *I* said that! But you'll learn. Do I sound like the silly boys at Andover?" Emily's eyes are fixed and her

throat contracts; he forces her head between her knees. "The way you go on, you'd think I was bad luck."

"I—I—"

"And you without the plentiful lack of brains that characterizes your friend. She'll be somebody's short work and I think I know whose."

Emily turns white again.

"I'll send her around to you afterwards. Good God! What do you think will happen to her?"

"She'll die," says Emily clearly. He grasps her by the shoulders.

"Ah!" he says with immense satisfaction. "And after that? Who lives forever after that? Did you know that?"

"Yes, people like you don't die," whispers Emily. "But you're not people—"

"No," he says intently, "No. We're not." He stands Emily on her feet. "We're a passion!" Smiling triumphantly, he puts his hands on each side of her head, flattening the pretty curls, digging his fingers into the hair, in a grip Emily can no more break than she could break a vise.

"We're passion," he whispers, amused. "Life is passion. Desire makes life."

"Ah, let me go," says Emily.

He smiles ecstatically at the sick girl.

"Desire," he says dreamily, "lives; *that* lives when nothing else does, and we're desire made purely, desire walking the Earth. Can a dead man walk? Ah! If you want, want, want . . ."

He throws his arms around her, pressing her head to his chest and nearly suffocating her, ruining her elaborate coiffure and crushing the lace at her throat. Emily breathes in the deadness about him, the queer absence of odor, or heat, or presence; her mouth is pressed against the cloth of his fashionable suit, expensive stuff, a good dollar a yard, gotten by—what? But his hands are strong enough to get anything.

"You see," he says gently, "I enjoy someone with intelligence, even with morals; it adds a certain— And besides—" here he releases her and holds her face up to his— "we like souls that come to us; these visits to the bedrooms of unconscious citizens are rather like frequenting a public brothel."

"I abhor you," manages Emily. He laughs. He's delighted.

"Yes, yes, dear," he says, "But don't imagine we're callous parasites. Followers of the Marquis de Sade, perhaps—you see Frisco has evening hours for its bookstores! —but sensitive souls, really, and apt to long for a little conscious partnership." Emily shuts her eyes. "I said," he goes on, with a touch of hardness, "that I am a genuine seducer. I flatter myself that I'm not an animal."

"You're a monster," says Emily, with utter conviction. Keeping

one hand on her shoulder, he steps back a pace.

"Go." She stands, unable to believe her luck, then makes what seems to her a rush for the door; it carries her into his arms.

"You see?" He's pleased; he's proved a point.

"I can't," she says, with wide eyes and wrinkled forehead...

"You will." He reaches for her and she faints.

Down in the dark where love and some other things make their hidingplace, Emily drifts aimlessly, quite alone, quite cold, like a dead woman without a passion in her soul to make her come back to life.

She opens her eyes and finds herself looking at his face in the dark, as if the man carried his own light with him.

"I'll die," she says softly.

"Not for a while," he drawls, sleek and content.

"You've killed me."

"I've loved."

"Love!"

"Say 'taken' then, if you insist."

"I do! I do!" she cried bitterly.

"You decided to faint."

"Oh the hell with you!" she shouts.

"Good girl!" And as she collapses, weeping hysterically, "Now, now, come here, dear . . ." nuzzling her abused little neck. He kisses it in the tenderest fashion with an exaggerated, mocking sigh; she twists away, but is pulled closer and as his lips open over the teeth of inhuman, dead desire, his victim finds—to her surprise—that there is no pain. She braces herself and then, unexpectedly, shivers from head to foot.

"Stop it!" she whispers, horrified. "Stop it! Stop it!"

But a vampire who has found a soul-mate (even a temporary one) will be immoderate. There's no stopping them.

Charlotte's books have not prepared her for *this*.

"You're to stay in the house, my dear, because you're ill."

"I'm not," Emily says, pulling the sheet up to her chin.

"Of course you are." The Reverend beams at her, under the portrait of Emily's dead mother which hangs in Emily's bedroom. "You've had a severe chill."

"But I have to get out!" says Emily, sitting up. "Because I have an appointment, you see."

"Not now," says the Reverend.

"But I *can't* have a severe chill in the *summer!*"

"You look so like your mother," says the Reverend, musing. After he has gone away, Charlotte comes in.

"I have to stay in the damned bed," says Emily forcefully, wiggling her toes under the sheet. Charlotte, who has been carrying

a tray with tea and a posy on it, drops it on the washstand.

"Why, Emily!"

"I have to stay in the damned bed the whole damned day," Emily adds.

"Dear, why do you use those words?"

"Because the whole world's damned!"

After the duties of his employment were completed at six o'clock on a Wednesday, William came to the house with a doctor and introdueed him to the Reverend and Emily's bosom friend. The street lamps would not be lit for an hour but the sun was just down and the little party congregated in the garden under remains of Japanese paper lanterns. No one ever worried that these might set themselves on fire. Lucy brought tea—they were one of the few civilized circles in Frisco—and over the tea, in the darkening garden, to the accompaniment of sugar-tongs and plopping cream (very musical) they talked.

"Do you think," says the Reverend, very worried, "that it might be consumption?"

"Perhaps the lungs are affected," says the doctor.

"She's always been such a robust girl." This is William, putting down the teapot which has a knitted tube about the handle, for insulation. Charlotte is stirring her tea with a spoon.

"It's very strange," says the doctor serenely, and he repeats "it's very strange" as shadows advance in the garden. "But young ladies, you know—especially at twenty—young ladies often take strange ideas into their heads; they do, they often do; they droop; they worry." His eyes are mild, his back sags, he hears the pleasant gurgle of more tea. A quiet consultation, good people, good solid people, a little illness, nothing serious—

"No," says Charlotte. Nobody hears her.

"I knew a young lady once—" ventures the doctor mildly.

"No," says Charlotte, more loudly. Everyone turns to her, and Lucy, taking the opportunity, insinuates a plate of small-sized muffins in front of Charlotte.

"I can tell you all about it," mutters Charlotte, glancing up from under her eyebrows. "But you'll *laugh*."

"Now, dear—" says the Reverend.

"Now, miss—" says the doctor.

"As a friend—" says William.

Charlotte begins to sob.

"Oh," she says, "I'll—I'll tell you about it."

Emily meets Mr. Guevara at the Mansion House at seven, having recovered an appearance of health (through self-denial) and a good solid record of spending the evenings at home (through

self-control). She stands at the hotel's wrought-iron gateway, her back rigid as a stick, drawing on white gloves. Martin materializes out of the blue evening shadows and takes her arm.

"I shall like living forever," says Emily, thoughtfully.

"God deliver me from Puritans," says Mr. Guevara.

"What?"

"You're a lady. You'll swallow me up."

"I'll do anything I please," remarks Emily severely, with a glint of teeth.

"Ah."

"I will." They walk through the gateway. "You don't care two pins for me."

"Unfortunately," says he, bowing.

"It's not unfortunate as long as *I* care for me," says Emily, smiling with great energy. "Damn them all."

"You proper girls would overturn the world." Along they walk in the evening, in a quiet, respectable rustle of clothes. Halfway to the restaurant she stops and says breathlessly:

"Let's go—somewhere else!"

"My dear, you'll ruin your health!"

"You know better. Three weeks ago I was sick as a dog and much you cared; I haven't slept for days and I'm fine."

"You look fine."

"Ah! You mean I'm beginning to look dead, like you." She tightens her hold on his arm, to bring him closer.

"Dead?" says he, slipping his arm around her.

"Fixed. Bright-eyed. Always at the same heat and not a moment's rest."

"It agrees with you."

"I adore you," she says.

When Emily gets home, there's a reckoning. The Reverend stands in the doorway and sad William, too, but not Charlotte, for she is on the parlor sofa, having had hysterics.

"Dear Emily," says the Reverend. "We don't know how to tell you this—"

"Why, Daddy, *what?*" exclaims Emily, making wide-eyes at him.

"Your little friend told us—"

"Has something happened to Charlotte?" cries Emily. "Oh tell me, tell me, what happened to Charlotte?" And before they can stop her she has flown into the parlor and is kneeling beside her friend, wondering if she dares pinch her under cover of her shawl. William, quick as a flash, kneels on one side of her and Daddy on the other.

"Dear Emily!" cries William with fervor.

"Oh sweetheart!" says Charlotte, reaching down and putting her arms around her friend.

"You're well!" shouts Emily, sobbing over Charlotte's hand and

thinking perhaps to bite her. But the Reverend's arms lift her up.

"My dear," says he, "you came home unaccompanied. You were not at the Society."

"But," says Emily, smiling dazzlingly, "two of the girls took all my hospital sewing to their house because we must finish it right away and I have not—"

"You have been lying to us," the Reverend says. *Now,* thinks Emily, *sweet William will cover his face.* Charlotte sobs.

"She can't help it," says Charlotte brokenly. "It's the spell."

"Why, I think everyone's gone out of their minds," says Emily, frowning. Sweet William takes her from Daddy, leading her away from Charlotte.

"Weren't you with a gentleman tonight?" says Sweet Will firmly. Emily backs away.

"For shame!"

"She doesn't remember it," explains Charlotte; "it's part of his spell."

"I think you ought to get a doctor for *her,*" observes Emily.

"You were with a gentleman named Guevara," says Will, showing less tenderness than Emily expects. "Weren't you? Well—weren't you?"

"Bad cess to you if I was!" snaps Emily, surprised at herself. The other three gasp. "I won't be questioned," she goes on, "and I won't be spied upon. And I think you'd better take some of Charlotte's books away from her; she's getting downright silly."

"You have too much color," says Will, catching her hands. "You're ill but you don't sleep. You stay awake all night. You don't eat. But look at you!"

"I don't understand you. Do you want me to be ugly?" says Emily, trying to be pitiful. Will softens; she sees him do it.

"My dear Emily," he says. "My dear girl—we're afraid for you."

"Me?" says Emily, enjoying herself.

"We'd better put you to bed," says the Reverend kindly.

"You're so kind," whispers Emily, blinking as if she held back tears.

"That's a good girl," says Will, approving. "We know you don't understand. But we'll take care of you, Em."

"*Will* you?"

"Yes, dear. You've been near very grave danger, but luckily we found out in time, and we found out what to do; we'll make you well, we'll keep you safe, we'll —"

"Not with *that* you won't," says Emily suddenly, rooting herself to the spot, for what William takes out of his vest pocket (where he usually keeps his watch) is a broad-leaved, prickle-faced dock called wolfsbane; it must distress any vampire of sense to be so enslaved to pure superstition. But enslaved they are, nonetheless.

"Oh, no!" says Emily swiftly. "That's silly, perfectly silly!"

"Common sense must give way in such a crisis," remarks the Reverend gravely.

"You bastard!" shouts Emily, turning red, attempting to tear the charm out of her fiance's hand and jump up and down on it. But the Reverend holds one arm and Charlotte the other and between them they pry her fingers apart and William puts his property gently in his vest-pocket again.

"She's far gone," says the Reverend fearfully, at his angry daughter. Emily is scowling, Charlotte stroking her hair.

"Ssssh" says Will with great seriousness. "We must get her to bed," and between them they half-carry Emily up the stairs and put her, dressed as she is, in the big double bed with the plush headboard that she has shared so far with Charlotte. Daddy and fiance confer in the room across the long, low rambling hall, and Charlotte sits by her rebellious friend's bed and attempts to hold her hand.

"I won't permit it; you're a damned fool!" says Emily.

"Oh, Emmy!"

"Bosh."

"It's true!"

"Is it?" With extraordinary swiftness, Emily turns round in the bed and rises to her knees. "Do you know anything about it?"

"I know it's horrid, I—"

"Silly!" Playfully Emily puts her hands on Charlotte's shoulders. Her eyes are narrowed, her nostrils widened to breathe; she parts her lips a little and looks archly at her friend. "You don't know anything about it," she says insinuatingly.

"I'll call your father," says Charlotte quickly.

Emily throws an arm around her friend's neck.

"Not yet! Dear Charlotte!"

"We'll save you," says Charlotte doubtfully.

"Sweet Charrie; you're my friend, aren't you?"

Charlotte begins to sob again.

"Give me those awful things, those leaves."

"Why, Emily, I *couldn't!*"

"But he'll come for me and I have to protect myself, don't I?"

"I'll call your father," says Charlotte firmly.

"No, I'm *afraid.*" And Emily wrinkles her forehead sadly.

"Well—"

"Sometimes I—I—" falters Emily. "I can't move or run away and everything looks so—so strange and *horrible*—"

"Oh, here!" Covering her face with one hand, Charlotte holds out her precious dock leaves in the other.

"Dear, dear! Oh, sweet! Oh thank you! Don't be afraid. He isn't after you."

"I hope not," says the bosom friend.

"Oh no, he told me. It's me he's after."

"How awful," says Charlotte, sincerely.

"Yes," says Emily. "Look." And she pulls down the collar of her dress to show the ugly marks, white dots unnaturally healed up, like the pockmarks of a drug addict.

"Don't!" chokes Charlotte.

Emily smiles mournfully. "We really ought to put the lights out," she says.

"Out!"

"Yes, you can see him better that way. If the lights are on, he could sneak in without being seen; he doesn't mind lights, you know."

"I don't know, dear—"

"I do." (Emily is dropping the dock leaves into the washstand, under cover of her skirt.) "I'm afraid. Please."

"Well—"

"Oh, you must!" And leaping to her feet, she turns down the gas to a dim glow; Charlotte's face fades into the obscurity of the deepening shadows.

"So. The lights are out," says Emily quietly.

"I'll ask Will—" Charlotte begins . . .

"No, dear."

"But, Emily—"

"He's coming, dear."

"You mean Will is coming."

"No, not Will."

"Emily, you're a—"

"I'm a sneak," says Emily, chuckling. "Sssssh!" And, while her friend sits paralyzed, one of the windows swings open in the night breeze, a lead-paned window that opens on a hinge, for the Reverend is fond of culture and old architecture. Charlotte lets out a little noise in her throat; and then—with the smash of a pistol shot—the gaslight shatters and the flame goes out. Gas hisses into the air, quietly, insinuatingly, as if explaining the same thing over and over. Charlotte screams with her whole heart. In the dark a hand clamps like a vise on Emily's wrist. A moment passes.

"Charlotte?" she whispers.

"Dead," says Guevara.

Emily has spent most of the day asleep in the rubble, with his coat rolled under her head where he threw it the moment before sunrise, the moment before he staggered to his place and plunged into sleep. She has watched the dawn come up behind the rusty barred gate, and then drifted into sleep herself with his face before her closed eyes—his face burning with a rigid, constricted, unwasting vitality. Now she wakes aching and bruised, with the sun of late afternoon in her face. Sitting against the stone wall, she sneezes twice and tries, ineffectually, to shake the dust from her silk skirt.

Oh, how—she thinks vaguely

—how messy. She gets to her feet. *There's something I have to do.* The iron gate swings open at a touch. *Trees and gravestones tilted every which way. What did he say? Nothing would disturb it but a Historical Society.*

Having tidied herself as best she can, with his coat over her arm and the address of his tailor in her pocket, she trudges among the erupted stones, which tilt crazily to all sides as if in an earthquake. Blood (Charlotte's, whom she does not think about) has spread thinly on to her hair and the hem of her dress, but her hair is done up with fine feeling, despite the absence of a mirror, and her dress is dark gray; the spot looks like a spot of dust. She folds the coat into a neat package and uses it to wipe the dust off her shoes, then lightens her step past the cemetery entrance, trying to look healthy and respectable. She aches all over from sleeping on the ground.

Once in town and having ascertained from a shop window that she will pass muster in a crowd, Emily trudges up hills and down hills to the tailor, the evidence over her arm. She stops at other windows, to look or to admire herself; thinks smugly of her improved coloring; shifts the parcel on her arm to show off her waist. In one window there is a display of religious objects—beads and crosses, books with fringed gilt bookmarks, a colored chromo of Madonna and Child. In this window Emily admires herself.

"It's Emily, dear!"

A Mrs. L———— appears in the window beside her, with Constantia, Mrs. L————'s twelve-year-old offspring.

"Why, dear, whatever happened to you?" says Mrs. L————, noticing no hat, no gloves, and no veil.

"Nothing; whatever happened to you?" says Emily cockily. Constantia's eyes grow wide with astonishment at the fine, free audacity of it.

"Why, you look as if you'd been—"

"Picknicking," says Emily, promptly. "One of the gentlemen spilled beer on his coat." And she's in the shop now and hanging over the counter, flushed, counting the coral and amber beads strung around a crucifix.

Mrs. L———— knocks doubtfully on the window-glass.

Emily waves and smiles.

Your father—form Mrs. L————'s lips in the glass.

Emily nods and waves cheerfully.

They do go away, finally.

"A fine gentleman," says the tailor earnestly, "a very fine man." He lisps a little.

"Oh very fine," agrees Emily, sitting on a stool and kicking the rungs with her feet. "Monstrous fine."

"But very careless," says the tailor fretfully, pulling Martin's coat nearer the window so he can see it, for the shop is a hole-in-the-wall and dark. "He shouldn't send a lady to this part of the town."

"I was a lady once," says Emily.

"Mmmmm."

"It's fruit stains—something awful, don't you think?"

"I cannot have this ready by tonight," looking up.

"Well, you must, that's all," says Emily calmly. "You always have and he has a lot of confidence in you, you know. He'd be awfully angry if he found out."

"Found out?" sharply.

"That you can't have it ready by tonight."

The tailor ponders.

"I'll positively stay in the shop while you work," says Emily flatteringly.

"Why, Reverend, I saw her on King Street as dirty as a gypsy, with her hair loose and the wildest eyes and I *tried* to talk to her, but she dashed into a shop—"

The sun goes down in a broad belt of gold, goes down over the ocean, over the hills and the beaches, makes shadows lengthen in the street near the quays where a lisping tailor smooths and alters, working against the sun (and very uncomfortable he is, too), watched by a pair of unwinking eyes that glitter a little in the dusk inside the stuffy shop. (*I think I've changed,* meditates Emily.)

He finishes, finally, with relief, and sits with an *ouf!* handing her the coat, the new and beautiful coat that will be worn as soon as the eccentric gentleman comes out to take the evening air. The eccentric gentleman, says Emily incautiously, will do so in an hour by the Mansion House when the last traces of light have faded from the sky.

"Then, my dear Miss," says the tailor unctuously, "I think a little matter of pay—"

"You don't think," says Emily softly, "or you wouldn't have gotten yourself into such a mess as to be this eccentric gentleman's tailor." And out she goes.

Now nobody can see the stains on Emily's skirt or in her hair; street lamps are being lit, there are no more carriages, and the number of people in the streets grows —San Francisco making the most of the short summer nights. It is perhaps fifteen minutes back to the fashionable part of the town where Emily's hatless, shawlless state will be looked on with disdain; here nobody notices. Emily dawdles through the streets, fingering her throat, yawning, looking at the sky, thinking: I love, I love, I love—

She has fasted for the day but she feels fine; she feels busy, busy

inside as if the life inside her is flowering and bestirring itself, populated as the streets. She remembers—

I love you. I hate you. You enchantment, you degrading necessity, you foul and filthy life, you promise of endless love and endless time . . .

What words to say with Charlotte sleeping in the same room, no, the same bed, with her hands folded under her face! Innocent sweetheart, whose state must now be rather different.

Up the hills she goes, where the view becomes wider and wider, and the lights spread out like sparkles on a cake, out of the section which is too dangerous, too low, and too furtive to bother with a lady (or is it something in her eyes?), into the broader by-streets where shore-leave sailors try to make her acquaintance by falling into step and seizing her elbow; she snakes away with unbounded strength, darts into shadows, laughs in their faces: "I've got what I want!"

"Not like me!"

"Better!"

This is the Barbary Coast, only beginning to become a tourist attraction; there are barkers outside the restaurants advertising pretty waiter girls, dance halls, spangled posters twice the height of a man, crowds upon crowds of people, one or two guides with tickets in their hats, and Emily—who keeps to the shadows. She nearly chokes with laughter: *What a field of ripe wheat!* One of the barkers hoists her by the waist onto his platform.

"Do you see this little lady? Do you see this—"

"Let me go, God damn you!" she cries indignantly.

"This angry little lady—" pushing her chin with one sunburned hand to make her face the crowd. "This—" But here Emily hurts him, slashing his palm with her teeth, quite pleased with herself, but surprised, too, for the man was holding his hand cupped and the whole thing seemed to happen of itself. She escapes instantly into the crowd and continues up through the Coast, through the old Tenderloin, drunk with self-confidence, slipping like a shadow through the now genteel streets and arriving at the Mansion House gate having seen no family spies and convinced that none has seen her.

But nobody is there.

Ten by the clock, and no one is there, either; eleven by the clock and still no one. *Why didn't I leave this life when I had the chance!* Only one thing consoles Emily, that by some alchemy or nearness to the state she longs for, no one bothers or questions her and even the policemen pass her by as if in her little corner of the gate there is nothing but a shad-

ow. Midnight and no one, half-past and she dozes; perhaps three hours later, perhaps four, she is startled awake by the sound of footsteps. She wakes: nothing. She sleeps again and in her dream hears them for the second time, then she wakes to find herself looking into the face of a lady who wears a veil.

"What!" Emily's startled whisper.

The lady gestures vaguely, as if trying to speak.

"What is it?"

"Don't—" and the lady speaks with feeling but, it seems, with difficulty also— "don't go home."

"Home?" echoes Emily, stupefied, and the stranger nods, saying:

"In danger."

"Who?" Emily is horrified.

"He's in danger." Behind her veil her face seems almost to emit a faint light of its own.

"You're one of them," says Emily. "Aren't you?" and when the woman nods, adds desperately, "Then you must save him!"

The lady smiles pitifully; that much of her face can be seen as the light breeze plays with her net veil.

"But you must!" exclaims Emily, "You know how; I don't; you've got to!"

"I don't dare," very softly. Then the veiled woman turns to go, but Emily—quite hysterical now—seizes her hand, saying:

"Who are you? Who are you?"

The lady gestures vaguely and shakes her head.

"Who are you!" repeats Emily with more energy. "You tell me, do you hear?"

Sombrely the lady raises her veil and stares at her friend with a tragic, dignified, pitiful gaze. In the darkness her face burns with unnatural and beautiful color.

It is Charlotte.

Dawn comes with a pellucid quickening, glassy and ghostly. Slowly, shapes emerge from darkness and the blue pours back into the world—twilight turned backwards and the natural order reversed. Destruction, which is simple, logical, and easy, finds a kind of mocking parody in the morning's creation. Light has no business coming back, but light does.

Emily reaches the cemetery just as the caldron in the east overflows, just as the birds (idiots! she thinks) begin a tentative cheeping and chirping. She sits at the gate for a minute to regain her strength, for the night's walking and worry have tried her severely. In front of her the stones lie on graves, almost completely hard and real, waiting for the rising of the sun to finish them off and make complete masterpieces of them. Emily rises and trudges up the hill, slower and slower as the ground rises to its topmost swell, where three hundred years of

peaceful Guevaras fertilize the grass and do their best to discredit the one wild shoot that lives on, the only disrespectful member of the family. Weeping a little to herself, Emily lags up the hill, raising her skirts to keep them off the weeds, and murderously hating in her heart the increasing light and the happier celebrating of the birds. She rounds the last hillock of ground and raises her eyes to the Guevaras' eternal mansion, expecting to see nobody again. There is the corner of the building, the low iron gate—

In front of it stands Martin Guevara between her father and sweet sweet Will, captived by both arms, his face pale and beautiful between two gold crosses that are just beginning to sparkle in the light of day.

"We are caught," says Guevara, seeing her, directing at her his fixed, white smile.

"You let him go," says Emily—very reasonably.

"You're safe, my Emily!" cries sweet Will.

"Let him go!" She runs to them, stops, look at them, perplexed to the bottom of her soul.

"Let him go," she says. "Let him go, let him go!"

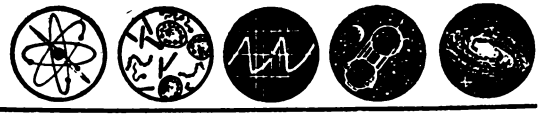
Between the two bits of jewelry, Emily's life and hope and only pleasure smiles painfully at her, the color drained out of his face, desperate eyes fixed on the east.

"You don't understand," says Emily, inventing. "He isn't dangerous now. If you let him go, he'll run inside and then you can come back any time during the day and finish him off. I'm sick. You—"

The words die in her throat. All around them, from every tree and hedge, from boughs that have sheltered the graveyard for a hundred years, the birds begin their morning noise. A great hallelujah rises; after all, the birds have nothing to worry about. Numb, with legs like sticks, Emily sees sunlight touch the top of the stone mausoleum, sunlight slide down its face, sunlight reach the level of a standing man—

"I adore you," says Martin to her. With the slow bending over of a drowning man, he doubles up, like a man stuck with a knife in a dream; he doubles up, falls—

And Emily screams; What a scream! as if her soul were being haled out through her throat; and she is running down the other side of the little hill to regions as yet untouched by the sun, crying inwardly: I need help! help! help!—She knows where she can get it. Three hundred feet down the hill in a valley, a wooded protected valley sunk below the touch of the rising sun, there she runs through the trees, past the fence that separates the old graveyard from the new, expensive, polished granite —Charlotte is her friend, she loves her: Charlotte in her new home will make room for her.



Of course, we knew all along that Dr. A. was pretty hot stuff himself, and any lighthearted remarks which we may have passed to the (seeming) contrary, such as, "Ike, you are just not with it," we now recant: we never meant them, and probably never said them, anyway. One thing we do not wish to do, we do not wish to cross swords with A Man Who Has Influenced The Course Of Science.

HOT STUFF

by Isaac Asimov

IT IS THE LIFE'S AMBITION OF EVERY DECENT, RIGHT-THINKING scientist or near-scientist (I use the latter noun as an excuse to include myself) to influence the course of science. —For the better, of course.

Most of us, alas, have to give up that ambition and I did so long ago. Never (so my heart told me) would there be an "Asimov's law" to brighten the pages of a physics textbook, or an "Asimov reaction" to do the same for those of a chemistry textbook. Slowly, the possibility of an "Asimov theory" and even an "Asimov conjecture" slipped through my fingers, and I was left with nothing.

With nothing, that is, but my electric typewriter and my big mouth, and the hidden hope that some idle speculation of my own might spark better minds than mine into some worthwhile accomplishment.

Well, it's happened.

And here's how it happened.

An article of mine, entitled THE HEIGHT OF UP, appeared in

the October, 1959, issue of F & SF. In it, among other things, I speculated as to whether there were any maximum possible temperature and, if so, what it might be.

I tackled this problem by means of elementary algebra, because I have a fixed conviction that *all* problems can be solved by elementary algebra. (I suspect that this conviction arises from the fact that I go into a mental collapse when faced with mathematics beyond elementary algebra, but this is no time for changing the subject.) As a result, and after dealing with temperatures in the trillions of degrees, I concluded that there was no maximum possible temperature; at least in theory.

Some weeks after the article appeared, I received a letter from a post-doctoral research worker at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton; a gentleman by the name of Hong Yee Chiu.

He gave me his own thoughts on the maximum possible temperature, pointing out that my own results arose out of the assumption that the Universe was infinite. If the Universe were finite, then it had a finite mass. If that finite mass (but for one particle) were converted completely into energy and that energy were concentrated in the one remaining particle, and if we pretend that "temperature" has meaning in systems consisting of but one particle, then we would end with the maximum conceivable temperature for the actual Universe. He calculated what that temperature would be. It came out to a tremendously high, but, of course, not infinite, temperature.

However, the problem of the maximum possible temperature, under the actual conditions of the Universe, continued to occupy his thinking, even after he left Princeton and took a position with the Institute of Space Studies in New York. According to a letter I received from him, dated November 14, 1961—

"I switched from the field of elementary particle physics to astrophysics then, right after I got my degree. Your article initiated my interest in the field of super nova. As one knows, the interior of a star is hotter than anything one can think of. Will there be an upper limit for temperature there?"

The result of his thinking appeared in papers in "Physical Reviews" and in "Annals of Physics" outlining a new theory of super-nova formation.

I would like, out of sheer proprietary interest, to give you some notion of this new theory but, please note, I hereby absolve Dr. Chiu of any responsibility for what I say. In his papers, you see, he uses double integrals and hyperbolic functions and all sorts of mathematical devices that are slightly beyond the range of elementary algebra and that rather

leave me at loose ends. Consequently, I may be misunderstanding some of the things he says.

However, I have done what I can and, as I always do, I will begin at the beginning.

The beginning is the neutrino, a subatomic particle with a fascinating history that goes back to Einstein. In 1905, in his Special Theory of Relativity, Einstein pointed out that mass was a form of energy; and that its energy value could be calculated by a simple formula. (Yes; I'm referring to $e = mc^2$, and you will find some comments by me on that formula in C FOR CELERITAS, F & SF, November, 1959.)

This formula was applied to alpha particle production, for instance. The uranium atom lost an alpha particle and became a thorium atom. The alpha particle and the thorium atom together had a mass just slightly less than that of the original uranium atom. This mass had not disappeared; it had been converted into the kinetic energy of the speeding alpha particle. Consequently, all the alpha particles produced by a given type of atom had the same energy content. (Or, rather, one of a small number of different energy contents, for a given type of atom can exist at several different energy levels; and, at a higher energy level, it will give off a somewhat more energetic alpha particle.)

All this was very satisfactory, of course. Mass was converted into energy and the ledgers balanced and physicists rubbed their hands gleefully. The next step was to show that the energy ledgers balanced in the case of beta particle production, too. To be sure a beta particle (an electron) was only 1/7350 as massive as an alpha particle (a helium nucleus) but that shouldn't affect anything. The principle was the same.

And yet isotopes that emitted beta particles did *not* emit them all at the same energies, or at a small number of specific different energies.

What actually turned out to be the case was that beta particles were given off at *any* energy up to a certain maximum. The maximum energy was that which just accounted for the loss of mass, but only a vanishingly small number of electrons attained this. Virtually all the particles came off at smaller energies and some came off at very small energies indeed.

The net result was that there was some energy missing, and the ledgers did not balance.

This created, you might well imagine, a certain amount of lip-biting and brow-furrowing among physicists; at least as much as it would have among bank-examiners. After all, if energy were really disappearing, then the law of conservation of energy was broken, and no physicist in

his right mind wanted to allow that to happen until every other conceivable alternative had been explored.

In 1931, the Austrian-born physicist, Wolfgang Pauli, came up with a suggestion. If the electron were not carrying off all the energy that was available through mass-loss, then another particle must be. This other particle, however, went undetected, so it must lack detectable properties. Of these detectable properties, electric charge was foremost, consequently Pauli postulated a neutral particle.

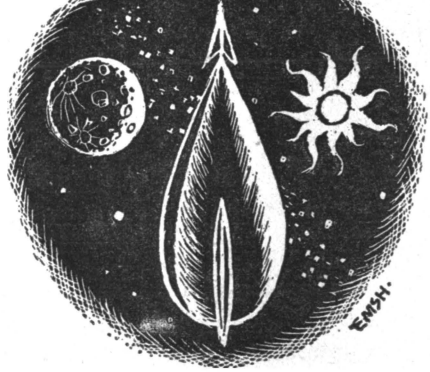
Furthermore, the amount of kinetic energy left over in beta-particle production was not enough to make a very large particle if it were reconverted to mass, especially since much of the energy had to be energy of motion. The particle was certain to have only a fraction the mass of even an electron and it was quite likely that it had no mass at all.

Pauli's suggested particle was the nearest thing to nothing one could imagine. No charge; no mass; just a speeding ghost of a particle which carried off the energy that would otherwise be left unaccounted for.

In 1932, a heavy neutral particle (as heavy as the proton) was detected and named "neutron." Consequently, the Italian physicist, Enrico Fermi, suggested that Pauli's particle, neutral but much smaller than the neutron, be called "neutrino" (Italian for "little neutral one").

The neutrino turned out to be remarkably useful. Not only did it save the law of conservation of energy, but also the law of conservation of particle spin and of particle-antiparticle production.

But was it any more than a Finagle's Constant designed to make a wrong answer right? Did the neutrino really exist or was it just an *ad hoc* device, invented by the agile minds of physicists to keep their rickety structure of supposed reality standing?



The situation could be resolved if the neutrino were only detected; actually detected. Yet to be detected, it had to interact with other particles and, unfortunately, neutrinos did not interact with other particles, or at least interacted so rarely that it seemed scarcely worth talking about.

It was calculated that a neutrino could travel through one hundred light-years of water before there was as much as a

fifty-fifty chance of interaction and, as you can well imagine, it is hard to set up a tub of water a hundred light-years long.

However there is a 25 percent chance that it will interact after passing through only fifty light-years of water and a 12½ percent chance that it will interact after passing through a mere twenty-five light-years of water and so on. In fact, there is a terribly small, *but finite,* chance that it will interact after passing through, say, six feet of water.

The chance is so small, however, that to wait for one neutrino to do so is foolish. But why work with just one neutrino? A nuclear reactor is constantly liberating vast quantities of neutrinos (if they exist). Place tanks of water near those and set up detection devices that will detect gamma radiation of just the wave length to be expected if a neutrino interacts with a proton. The chances that one out of a vast number of neutrinos will interact within a few feet, becomes rather decent.

And, as a matter of fact, in 1953, this was accomplished at Los Alamos and the existence of the neutrino was proven. It wasn't a Finagle's Constant at all, but a real live particle. It had no mass and no charge and was still the nearest thing to nothing you could imagine, but *it was there,* and that's what counts.

Now when is a neutrino produced? The best-known neutrino producing reactions are those involving neutron-proton interchanges. When a neutron is converted into a proton and an electron, a neutrino is produced. When a proton is converted into a neutron and a positron, an antineutrino is produced. (The neutrino and antineutrino are distinct particles, differing in spin, but both are mass-less and charge-less, and for purpose of this article I shall lump them both together as neutrinos.)

By far the largest producer of neutrinos are the stars.

Consider the sun, for instance. Its power is derived from the conversion of hydrogen to helium. The hydrogen nucleus is a single proton while the helium nucleus consists of two protons and two neutrons. In converting four hydrogen nuclei to one helium nucleus, therefore, two of the four protons of the hydrogen nuclei must be converted to neutrons, with the production of two neutrinos (and other things, too, like positions and photons). For every two hydrogen atoms consumed, then, one neutrino is formed.

Now in order to maintain its energy output, the Sun must convert 4,200,000 tons of mass energy every second. In converting hydrogen to helium 0.75 percent of the mass is lost, so that in order to lose 4,200,000 tons, 560,000,000 tons of hydrogen must be processed.

Losing over half a billion tons of hydrogen every second sounds like a fearsome loss, but don't worry. Some three-fifths of the mass of the Sun is hydrogen so that there is well over an octillion tons of hydrogen available in the Sun. If hydrogen continued to be consumed at the present rate, and no other nuclear processes were involved, the hydrogen content of the Sun would last for some 60,000,000,000 years.—And you and I would very likely be dead by then.

Anyway, the conversion of 560,000,000 tons of hydrogen per second means that 2.8×10^{38} hydrogen atoms must be fed into the relentless maw of the Sun's nuclear engine every second and, therefore, 1.4×10^{38} neutrinos are produced each second.

The neutrinos, produced in the Sun's interior, radiate outward in all directions. Naturally, almost all of them miss the tiny target presented by the Earth, nearly 93,000,000 miles from the Sun. However, it has been estimated (according to some work quoted in one of Dr. Chiu's papers) that even on earth, nearly 10,000,000,000 neutrinos from the Sun are passing through every square centimeter of cross-section.

That means they pass through the atmosphere, through the oceans, through the crust, through the central core,—*through you*. They pass through you constantly, whether the sky is cloudy or clear and whether it is day or night. If it is night, the neutrinos pass through the body of the earth and get you anyway. And since they travel at the speed of light, the delay in their getting you, over the added distance of the earth's diameter, is only about 1/23 of a second.

Again, fear not. Let us say that you are constantly presenting the maximum surface to neutrino bombardment and that this represents 10,000 square centimeters (which is generous). One hundred trillion (100,000,000,000,000) neutrinos would then be passing through you every second.

You are mostly water and one neutrino must pass through a hundred light-years of water for a fifty-fifty chance of reaction. However, when you expose maximum surface to the neutrinos, you are only about a foot thick. All hundred trillion neutrinos pass through a total of a hundred trillion feet of water, or roughly 1/300 of a light-year. This means that on the average one neutrino will react with a particle within your body every 30,000 seconds (a fifty-fifty chance of it anyway), or just about every eight hours, while several quintillion neutrinos pass through you, in lofty indifference.

And one neutrino interaction every eight hours?

Why, in a single minute, 1,200,000 atoms of potassium-40 and 180,000 atoms of carbon-14 (both naturally present within the body

and both naturally radioactive) break down, spraying the body with beta particles and radiation.

So forget the neutrinos.

Now the interior of the Sun is at a temperature of about 10,000,000 degrees. (Throughout this article I shall mean Centigrade when I talk of degrees.) It has to be that high to produce enough expansive force, through radiation pressure and through the kinetic energy of particles, to counteract the enormous pressures produced by gravitation which tend to contract the Sun.

All stars exhibit this same tug of war. Mass (and consequent gravitational force) tends to contract it; temperature (and consequent radiational force) tends to expand it. As long as the two are in reasonable balance, all is well.

As hydrogen is converted to helium, however, the four protons of hydrogen, comparatively loosely packed to begin with, are converted into the compact two proton/two neutron arrangement of the helium nucleus. The density of the star's center increases and, as more and more helium is formed, the concentration of mass and, consequently, the intensity of the gravitational field increases. To counteract this and to retain equilibrium, the temperature of the star's center rises.

At some point, eventually, the temperature rises high enough to ignite the helium nuclei, forcing them into fusion reactions that form still more complex nuclei. This process continues, with temperature steadily increasing, so that successively more complex atoms are produced. Finally, iron atoms are produced.

The iron atoms are about the most complicated that can be formed by ordinary stellar reactions. No further increases in nuclear complexity will produce energy. Atoms more complicated than iron require an *input* of energy. Iron, therefore, represents the dead end of ordinary stellar life.

At this dead end, the star has the aspect of an onion, consisting of layers of different chemical composition. At the very center is the iron core, surrounded by a silicon layer, surrounded by a magnesium layer surrounded by a neon layer, surrounded by a carbon layer, surrounded be a helium layer, surrounded by a hydrogen layer that forms the surface of the star.

Each layer constantly undergoes fusion reactions producing heavier nuclei that are added to the layer beneath, with the iron core the net gainer and the hydrogen surface the net loser. The gravitational field continues to increase but now there is no additional energy formation possible at the center to balance it.

As the center continues to heat up, some crucial line is passed and the star suddenly collapses. In so collapsing, the sudden increase in pressure on the outer layers, where fusable fuel still exists, hastens the fusion reactions, producing a vast outflux of energy that succeeds in blowing the star to kingdom come.

The result is a huge supernova (see THE SIGHT OF HOME, F & SF February, 1960) out of the energy of which even iron atoms are fused to produce still more complicated atoms; all the way up to uranium at least, and very likely up to californium. The explosion spreads these heavy elements out into space and new stars and stellar systems that are formed (like our own) will possess small quantities to begin with.

Does this mean that every star is fated to become a supernova at some latter stage of its life? Apparently not.

The more massive a star, the more intense its gravitational field and therefore the higher its internal temperature and the greater its luminosity at a given stage of its nuclear-reaction cycle. (This is the "mass-luminosity law" announced by the English astronomer, Arthur S. Eddington, in 1924. He was the first to calculate the enormous central temperatures of stars.) Apparently, in order for a star to reach the point where a supernova explosion is set off, it must start with at least 1.5 times the mass of our Sun. This is called "Chandrasekhar's limit" after the astronomer who first worked it out. So whatever will happen to our Sun, it will never go supernova. It can't ever get hot enough.

But what is the exact nuclear process that leads to this spectacular collapse and explosion? And, in particular, what about the actual temperatures at the center of a star about to go supernova? That certainly is the highest temperature actually reached in the Universe and *that* is what Dr. Chiu is after.

Well, stars get rid of energy in two ways. They produce electromagnetic radiation and they produce neutrinos. The behavior of the two is different. Electromagnetic radiation interacts strongly with matter so that the gamma rays produced a the center of the Sun are forever striking protons and neutrons and alpha particles and being absorbed and re-emitted and so on. It is a long and tedious process for radiation to make its way out from the center of the Sun to its surface.

The best indication of this is that the Sun's surface is a mere 6,000 degrees. You may consider this hot, and, by Earthly standards, it *is* hot. Still, remember that the Sun's surface is only 400,000 miles away from a large body of matter that is at a temperature of 10,000,000 degrees.

If there were nothing between the Sun's core and a point 400,000 miles away, any matter at that point would itself be at a temperature of millions of degrees. For matter at that point to be a a mere 6,000 degrees indicates what a superlatively excellent insulator the substance of the Sun is and how difficult it is for radiation to get through that substance and to escape into space.

The energy carried off by the neutrinos, however, behaves differently. Neutrinos simply streak out of the Sun's center, where they are produced, at the speed of light. They completely disregard the ordinary matter of the Sun and are beyond its substance in less than three seconds.

In the case of the Sun, however, the fraction of the total energy that escapes as neutrinos is rather small. The energy loss by neutrino escape results in some slight cooling of the Solar interior, of course, but that is made up for by a slight contraction (slight enough to be indetectable) of the Sun.

And in the stages beyond helium, neutrino production becomes even more unimportant if proton-neutron interchanges alone are taken into account.

Thus, suppose we begin with 56 hydrogen nuclei. These are converted into 19 helium nuclei, which, in the later stages of stellar life, are in turn finally converted into a single iron nucleus.

The 56 hydrogen nuclei consist of 56 protons.

The 19 helium nuclei consist of 28 protons and 28 neutrons, segregated in two proton/two neutron groups.

The 1 iron atom consists of 26 protons and 30 neutrons, all crowded into a single nucleus.

In going from the hydrogen to helium, then, 28 protons must be converted to 28 neutrons with the production of 28 neutrinos.

In going from helium to iron, only 2 more protons need be converted to neutrons, with the production of only 2 neutrinos.

It would seem then that, except in the initial hydrogen-to-helium stage, neutrino production could be ignored; and since it plays little role in the functioning of the Sun where hydrogen-to-helium is the big thing, it should most certainly play little role in the function of stars advanced into helium-burning and beyond.

This is where Dr. Chiu's new theories come in. Dr. Chiu suggests two new manners in which neutrinos can be formed. He suggests that electromagnetic radiation itself may interact to form neutrinos. In addition an electron and a positron may interact to form them.

These reactions happen so rarely at low temperatures, such as the

miserable 10,000,000 degrees of the Sun's interior, that neutrino formation by the Chiu reactions can be ignored. As the temperature rises, however, this formation becomes increasingly important.

By the time a temperature of one or two billion degrees (the temperature required for the formation of iron nuclei) is reached, neutrino formation by the Chiu reactions is considerably more rapid than neutrino formation from proton-neutron interchanges. This means that a sizable portion of the star's radiation, which, as radiation, can only escape from the star with excessive slowness, is, instead, converted to neutrinos which go zip!! and are gone. Neverthless, the star can still, albeit with difficulty, replace the lost energy by non-catastrophic contraction.

By the time a temperature of 6,000,000,000 degrees is reached, however, neutrinos are formed at such a rate that the heat of the vast stellar interior is carried off in a matter of fifteen or twenty minutes and the star collapses! Whoosh! There's your supernova. This means that 6,000,000,000 degrees is the practical upper limit of temperature that can be built up in this universe. The true hot stuff of the Universe is the material at the center of the stars and this can never reach 6,000,000,000 degrees without initiating an explosion that cools it off. The question I posed in THE HEIGHT OF UP is thus answered.

Dr. Chiu goes on to suggest that if this theory is correct, it ought to be possible to detect stars that are about to go supernova by the quantity of neutrinos they put out. As super-novahood is approached, the rate, according to Dr. Chiu, reaches 10^{53} per second. This is a quadrillion times as many as the Sun is producing. Even at a distance of 100 light years, the number of neutrinos reaching an observer from the direction of the potential supernova is at least a thousand times greater than that which reaches us from the Sun.

"Therefore," says Dr. Chiu, in one of his papers, "the establishment of a neutrino monitor station in terrestrial or spatial laboratories may help us predict forthcoming supernovae."

So there you are! Now, I may be prejudiced, but I think this theory makes so much sense that it will be adopted and praised by all astronomers. And when Dr. Chiu achieves the world-wide fame that I can see now should be his by right, I can hug myself with the pleasant knowledge that an article of mine started it all.

Of course, no one will know this except Dr. Chiu and myself—and the Gentle Readers of this article—and strangers I intend to buttonhole in the street—and people who listen to the television spot-announcements I intend to purchase—and——

BOOKS

ONCE AGAIN WE'RE FORCED TO apologise to the authors, who are, after all, the star-attractions of this department, for our failure to list their books and names at the head of the column. There are far too many. We are attempting a little spring-cleaning to close out the titles which were omitted from past columns for various reasons.

FROM THE OCEAN, FROM THE STARS, by Arthur C. Clarke, Harcourt, Brace & World, $4.50, is an omnibus of two full-length novels, "The City and the Stars," anl "The Deep Range;" and twenty-four short stories originally collected as "The Other Side of the Sky." This is the fattest, juiciest, single-author collection (515 pps.) we have ever seen, and, in view of Mr. Clarke's lofty position as one of the all-time greats of science fiction, is the best buy going.

GRAY LENSMAN, by Edward E. Smith, Ph.D., The Gnome Press, $3.50, recounts the further adventures of the immortal Kim Kinnison v. The Bestial Boskonians, aided (the Gray Lensman, that is) by the saintly Arisians, and full of "stilettoes of irresistilly penetrant energy which not even a Q-type helix could withstand." We don't care who knows it, we love Dr. Smith's space-operas the same way we love baby parades, beauty contests, Academy award ceremonies, and all other forms of dedicated American corn.

THE GREAT FLYING SAUCER HOAX, by Coral E. Lorenzen, The William-Frederick Press, $4.45, is not, as the title would lead you to expect, an exposure of the calculated frauds and very human self-deceits that have gone into the creation of this legend. On the contrary, Mrs. Lorenzen believes and marshals her data and photographs quite cogently. We still don't believe, but we recommend this excellent text to believers and doubters alike.

LOCH NESS MONSTER, by Tim Dinsdale, Chilton Co., $4.50, is another splendid documentation, in this case of one of the most traditional legends in existence. Mr. Dinsdale has assembled photographs, drawings, eye-witness accounts, expert analysis, etc. We must say he has compiled impressive support for his belief in the monster, and again we recommend this book to believers and doubters alike. Alas, we still belong to the latter.

CATSEYE, by Andre Norton,

Harcourt, Brace & World, $3.25. Miss Norton was somewhat annoyed with our comments on her historical novel, SHADOW HAWK, last year, so we'll confine ourself to a summary of the plot. Troy Horan is deported from his own planet, relocated on the planet Korwar, gets a job in a pet shop, and discovers that he can communicate with some of the rare, imported creatures. Then his boss is murdered, Horan is suspect, escapes, and engages in plot and counterplot to free himself and his dumb friends from—what? Read it and find out.

PROJECT 12, by Thomas Grouling, Vantage Press, $2.75, is a first novel. Mr. Grouling writes a simple story of the attempt to put a man into space at Cape Canaveral, led by fearless leader Commander Blaise Thomas, and doomed to disaster by internecine jealousies and hostilities. Mr. Grouling pleads that ". . . Competition should not create feuds among colleagues but rather stimulate them to pit their efforts against the challenging mysteries of the unknown." Mr. Grouling is a dreamer. On the day The Bomb drops on New York City, Macy's will still not tell Gimbels.

THE ALLEY GOD, by Philip Jose Farmer, Ballantine Books, 50¢, is a collection of three short novels: "The Alley Man," which originally appeared in this magazine, a story of a man who claims to be the immortal last of the Neanderthals; "The Captain's Daughter," one of Mr. Farmer's excursions into the realm of the sexually micabre, this time an alien world of parasitism which turns humans frightfully randy; and "The God Business," a sort of all-egorical farce. As always, Mr. Farmer's name guarantees brilliant science fiction.

THE UNSLEEP, by Diana and Meir Gillon, Ballantine Books, 50¢, is a novel about the social persecution of Peter Gregory, a visionary who holds out for a little quiet and sleep in a future world of demented cacophony. You and your girl aren't supposed to sleep even after you-know-what.

THE WALL AROUND THE WORLD, by Theodore R. Cogswell, Pyramid Books, 40¢, is a collection of ten stories ranging from science fiction to fantasy, including such celebrated items as "The Specter General," "Thimgs," and the title story. To our mind, Mr. Cogswell's terrifying "The Burning," is the most magnificent, and worth the price of the book alone.

21ST CENTURY SUB, by Frank Herbert, Avon, 50¢, was originally published as "The Dragon in the Sea." It is the story of an atomic-powered submarine of the next century, crackling with technical jargon and slang, but a little limp in the plot.

THE LANI PEOPLE, by J. F. Bone, Bantam Books, 40¢, is all about Dr. Jac Kennon who takes a job on the planet Kardon as veterinarian to tend the livestock, which are the Lanis, beautiful humanoid women who are just like Terran women except that they have tails. Social and sexual problems arise. We beg science fiction authors to drop this nonsense. There are the same odds on the people of an alien world having sexual characteristics matching ours as there are on Maxwell's Demon going into action.

TOMORROW AND TOMORROW, by Hunt Collins, Pyramid, 35¢, extrapolates current pornocratic aspects of our culture into a future in which a girl who wants to know how to become a writer is advised: "First shorten your skirt by about three feet. Throw away your blouse and bare your breasts. Get some tints and cosmetics and find a drug habit." Naturally there's a social war between these "Vikes" (Vicarious) and the "Rees" (Realists). Breasts get a lot of attention.

We've feuded with Pyramid Books in the past, so it gives us tremendous pleasure to praise and recommend their wonderful new science series, called "The Worlds of Science," which has just appeared, is very nicely printed and bound, and a bargain at 75¢ ea. Included in the series are:

THE HUMAN BRAIN, by John Pfeiffer, physiology, ranging from the anatomy and evolution of the brain to modern experiment in the treatment of psychotic disorders through chemistry.

LIVING EARTH, by Peter Farb, biology, a fascinating account of the underground ecology of Forests, Grasslands, and Deserts; readable even for this department which suffers badly from entomophobia.

CHEMISTRY CREATES A NEW LIFE, by Bernard Jaffe; not a conventional text, but a discussion of the astonishing influence chemistry has had on modern life through synthetics, wonder drugs, trans-Plutonian elements, etc.

THE ROAD TO MAN, by Herbert Wendt, a charming gallimaufry of assorted facts, anecdotes, superstitions, experiments, and odd behaviour in the world of Natural History. Mr. Wendt writes with vivacity, and after some other books of this month we particularly appreciated his chapter on Frog Pandemonium. It seems that each spring the frogs come out of their muddy hibernation madly randy to reproduce. They do, too, but there isn't a breast in the chapter. —**Alfred Bester**

Mrs. Joseph Wilhelm III of Louisville, (Ky.) is the mother of Douglas and Richard, and very sweet. What is more to the point, she can write, too. In her second appearance in these pages she writes of space travel, but not of voyages through space alone. "You must take what you want in life, but you must pay for it," says an old proverb. Kate Wilhelm tells of two men who took what they wanted—and of the price each paid—and went on paying.

THE MAN WITHOUT A PLANET

by Kate Wilhelm

IT WAS INEVITABLE THAT THEY should meet one day. From the Iowa farm to the university, to the practical field work in Arabia, Canada, and Tibet, and now to the new fields of Mars, each step had led unalterably to this second. Rod accepted it fatalistically as if for years he had been preparing for that one moment when he stepped through the curved hatchway and his eyes by-passed all else and stopped on the man in seat Thirteen. The eyes that returned his stare were slaty, blank, hopeless, not appealing, not apologizing, not anything; merely eyes that saw or didn't see—but didn't flinch. Rod let his gaze drop and mumbled an indistinguishable something to the man who nudged his legs from behind.

During the day chairs were demagnetized and moved and fastened once more in new patterns like atoms encircling a nucleus, now around a card table, now around the community dining table, now before the quartz port that let them gasp at the first sight of Earth fully illuminated. Chair Thirteen alone was permanently fastened.

When the atomic clocks indicated enough hours for the day to have ended, the chairs became beds back in their original places and opaque screens turned each chair-bed into a tiny private room. It was first class traveling, dumbbell style.

Before Rod succumbed to the mandatory sedation a faint, almost invisible, glow that the psychologists insisted upon played tricks on his eyes and he saw again

his first glimpse of the dumb-bell hanging motionless against the black of space. The patterned black and white squares of the balls on either side of the connecting rod rearranged themselves, and became a pair of slate grey eyes that stared without expression.

"Hydroponics," a thick, shapeless man said, "section one-aught-nine-seven. What's your line?"

Rod answered automatically, "Geology, mine exploration." It was the third day and he was feeling depressed and unfriendly; the very solidity of the hydroponics man was an irritant to his nerves. He became aware of the changing pattern of the circular room as the three women on the passenger list detached themselves from one another and regrouped. One of them smiled brightly at him and eased her chair beside his.

"Geology!" she exclaimed. "That's always fascinated me!"

As she rushed headlong into conversation, Rod felt his dislike for her threaten to break out on his face, his whole body demanding a smoke. And he wasn't even an habitual smoker. Her eyes were the color of peeled, over-ripe grapes. They stopped and narrowed and he knew she was watching the man from seat Thirteen as he was released for his mid-day pacing. A silence fell throughout the room, only to be thrust back with sustained effort, and now the throb of voices had a new, higher pitch as the owners purposefully pretended ignorance of the fact that the prisoner was receiving the amount of exercise doctors had agreed was essential for physical well being.

The moist purple eyes of the woman veiled whatever she was thinking. "Filth!" she mouthed looking past Rod.

With a dry bitter taste on his tongue Rod adjusted his chair and leaned back closing his eyes, fighting something he couldn't visualize much less verbalize.

Sometimes the curtain around Thirteen was drawn for hours at a time, until one of the ship's crew opened it. Only so many hours of privacy were allowed him. Other times he singled out an individual and his eyes followed that one until he drew his own curtain. Mostly he sat, or reclined, and looked at nothing. He could have been any age from thirty to sixty-five, but they knew he was forty-nine. His hair was white, his skin tanned by the ship's lamps, his eyes clear. A perfect specimen of man, never sick, never needing more than the annual check-up that was his by law. A man who could expect to live another forty years, barring an accident to the dumb-bell itself.

Fifth day. Rod and one other passenger, Williard Benton, had a vague, surface friendship that helped relieve the monotony. They

talked intermittently throughout the days, but the greatest pleasure of the trip was to be had in the precious, rationed time in the "bath room". Rod watched the hand of the timer in its inexorable sweep and when it clicked into the final moment, he felt cheated. It was more than the familiar feeling of cleanliness, he reflected, as the moist warm air filled his pores; it was the feeling of space, of being alone with all that room. In there one could move his arms about; he could sing and hear an echo reverberate ever so slightly; he could see farther than the width of his shoulders or the length of his legs and still be completely alone. It was space, private space, that made the bath room the most treasured luxury of the trip to Mars. It was a bit of the familiar Earth he had left; a bit of the life he would rejoin; in there he could forget he was thousands of miles out in a cold, empty nothingness where he was the alien. It took so little to recapture what was of Earth, of home.

Back in his chair-bed with the drawn curtain and a film ready to view, he felt a quick stab of remorse that he felt so exhilarated and yet peaceful after his short breathing spell when that other poor devil. . . . Somehow his finger was on the button marked Thirteen and without being consciously aware of it, he pushed. Immediately he regretted his own stupidity and he hit the cancel button, but not, he was certain, before a call registered on a similar panel of the chair arm of Thirteen. He lay rigidly alert, waiting for a sign, for a return call, for any indication that his action had been noted. There was nothing, and gradually he relaxed again.

Sixth day, seventh, eighth. All were alike, all like the first. There was nothing but the routine of staying alive until the ship put in on Deimos. Yet for Rod each day became an interminable endurance contest. Add a million to infinity, he thought, and infinity's all the same for that. Add one day to a lifetime, and the lifetime could still be infinity. He cut off the confused thoughts and found his eyes burning from the intensity of his stare at the man in seat Thirteen.

It wasn't possible for a human to maintain that calm quiescence, that exterior of absolute acceptance. The others, also, seemed to have a growing awareness of him, awareness tinged with resentment against him, as if his stoicism were an affront to them personally. Conversations were more sporadic, less good natured, arguments more heated and bitter. This despite the tranquilizers that were part of their diets. Rod and Will Benton lingered over it during one of their frequent talks.

"What would we be after six months of this?" Benton mused

doing knee bends effortlessly.

"Dead," Rod snapped. Even Benton's amiable, but determined, exercising grated on him. The other fellow never really exercised; he only walked, back and forth, back and forth.

Abruptly he asked, "Will, what do you think about him?"

There was no surprise on the short man's face as he reached high over his head and held the pose to a silent count of his own making. "Must be hell," was all he said.

—"I mean, about what he did. I suppose there never was any doubt . . ."

"None. He was quite matter of fact about the whole thing." His voice was coolly impersonal as if talking about a figure who had lived and died during the Renaissance.

"Yeah," Rod grunted, chewing his lip, thinking abstractedly that he'd become a chain smoker when he could get them again. He had known. He had been over and over the testimony, had memorized every word ever printed concerning it. The man never bothered to deny anything, admitted that he had foreseen the possible consequences, and then had gone ahead. Rod sighed and regarded his index finger as if it were a thing apart from him, as if it were responsible for the way it lingered over the button, and even—three times—pushed it.

Benton dropped into his chair and studied Rod with a quizzical expression. "It's got you, hasn't it? Him, I mean."

Rod merely grunted again, and he continued. "Don't let it. It'll tear you apart. It's all decided, has been for twenty-three years, and nothing you could do would change any of it. The UN has refused to take it up at all for seven years in a row now. And it's just."

"I know, but that poor devil . . ."

"That poor devil," Benton drawled, but the tone of his words did little to mask the murderous hatred that lurked beneath, "killed seventeen men in his crew. None of them needed to die. He killed to get into space. He killed to stay there, out front where the glory money was. By murdering UN space personnel from six countries he almost got the United States blown off the earth. And believe me, together they could have done just that. I know; it was my business to know."

Rod frowned and with an effort erased it and attempted a grin. "Ok, friend," he said, "the cure took. Punishment to fit the crime, and all that. Ok."

Benton leaned forward and patted his arm lightly.

Rod lay behind his curtain after lunch and thought about it.

Twenty-five years ago it had been. The fourth ship to aim for

Mars, and it was failing, as had every expedition before it. There were mutterings that this one was it. One more false start and the whole economic structure of the UN Space Development Agency would collapse, it was rumored. Eighteen men looked failure in the face and of them one saw the way to success. One, but only one, could ride the ship to Mars and return it to the space station. For one there would be enough air in the meteor-ruined storage tanks. Eighteen of them could return to Earth as failures, but one could make the entire trip. One did. And he returned to Earth, the UN flag firmly planted on the rocky surface of Mars, his only mission in life accomplished.

Because of him the United States had been forced to turn the other cheek. Would it have been so if he had been French, or Polish, or English even? But he had been an American. All the long dormant fears of nuclear war were fanned once more. All the rivalry among the big powers stirred, and zombi-like left the flimsy tombs of treaties and agreements to stalk again among nations. Russian and Chinese rockets quivered, grew erect, and waited for the push of a button. American rockets slid from deep graves, proud but defeated as nation after nation hurled rocks of insult at the mighty now humbled. And the Americans turned their bewildered wrath upon the one who had brought shame to two hundred million. The planet's number one criminal was handed over to the UN.

It was the Chinese delegate, flat eyed and expressionless, who summoned the wisdom of Confucius and the cruelty of Khan to propose the sentence. He was to be sent back to the space he had fouled, to live the rest of his years between worlds.

Twenty days. Twenty-five. The ship moved without a murmur, drawing closer to the rust-colored planet where radars stared at its progress with open mouthed, blank looks. The plunge toward the surface was checked and the retro-rockets changed the course for the landing. They would be there before dinner. Curiously Rod, a non-drinker, desired a stiff drink above all else. Earlier he could have had it, but now, alone, sealed off and strapped into his bed, the thirst for a drink overwhelmed him.

What impossible demands did *his* body make? Rod's finger found Thirteen with no help from his eyes and this time he held it until there was an answering light.

"Are you all right?"

There was a prolonged silence, but it was the silence of a man breathing in hurried gasps as if each might be the last.

"Can you hear me?" Rod spoke slowly as if to a foreigner unfamiliar with his dialect.

"Y . . yes. Who. . . ?"

"Never mind. Would you do it again?" His voice was quick and husky to his own ears as if everything depended on that one answer, as if his entire life had been arranged so that he might have this instant in which to ask it. He was unaware that he was holding his breath.

There was another silence, and then a faint, "Yes."

"You really think they would have called it all off?" he demanded harshly. "You actually think you saved space for the world?"

"The UN was falling apart . . . Three ships had been wiped out . . . There was no more money appropriated . . . What I think now, what I knew then . . . I don't know any more. Maybe they would have sent the fifth, and the sixth, and however many it would have taken. I don't know now. But I knew then! We all knew! Don't you remember. . . ? Who are you? Do I know you?"

"No! They brought you back to Earth once and you got away. I saw you and told them. Do you remember?"

He did fully, the scene undimmed by the intervention of twenty years. The man ran and fell and his arms were outstretched, fingers clawing at the ground, coming away with hands full of the rich loam where corn would stand in two months. The seven year old boy saw him with a feeling of revulsion and disgust and hatred so strong that he was sick in his hiding place among the trees at the edge of the field. The man didn't protest or struggle when they came and took him, but his hands tightened over the two balls of compressed earth.

Rod passed his hand over his eyes and the re-run faded until it was gone. He thought in the interval the man had turned off, but the voice came once more.

"I'm sorry," he said. "Sorry it was you, that it was anyone." He didn't say goodby, but Rod knew that he was gone, that he wouldn't answer again.

The landing was smooth and a slight gravity became real instead of the effect of the slow adagio the ship danced to the applause of no one. Rod didn't look in the direction of seat Thirteen as the passengers milled about the curved door being sealed against the airlock of Deimos-port. As he approached the door he turned and snapped his fingers in annoyance.

"Forgot my samples," he muttered and walked back to his chair. Two plastic encased packets of Earth-type dirt that were to be aged under the pitiless atmospheric conditions of Mars lay on his chair seat. Carelessly he picked them up and slipped them into his pocket. Benton turned to wave as he stepped through the airlock.

Rod passed close by seat Thirteen and as he did, he let fall on it

one of the small packets of Iowa's loam. At the door he turned and for a moment the slate grey eyes seemed to glitter a bit, perhaps in recognition, or even forgiveness, and then the hand moved and the curtain was around the chair-bed.

Rod stepped out and looked up through the transparent top of the airlock at the world waiting for him. He didn't look back at the dumb-bell again. Anyone watching him would have thought he was murmuring to himself about the great, desolate world hanging over his head, but his thoughts were, "He understands. A man, even a man in a boy's body, has to do what he must, and be able to live with it afterwards."

The bleakness left his eyes, grey like his father's, as he strode quickly and confidently through the airlock.

Max Kearny, the amateur occult investigator, says here of himself, "You know . . . I'm just an art director in an ad agency. All this ghost stuff is only a hobby." Ron Goulart (reports our ace agent Mr. Pettifogle) is also *an art director in an ad agency. When questioned about his own hobbies, he grew very vague, changed the subject, and offered to treat Pettifogle to a ride on the cable-cars and a steam beer. . . . One cannot help but wonder what Goulart* does *with his spare time in Frisco, San Francisco—that is, when he is not charming girls, eating up the high hills in his red Mercury, and extolling in picture and text the glories of a certain brand of Philippine cigars ("All hand-rolled").*

UNCLE ARLY

by Ron Goulart

TIM BARNUM SHOVED THE RABBIT ears all the way down into the portable TV set and pulled the plug out of its socket. It had no effect on the reception. "See," he said to Max Kearny. Tim lifted the still playing set off its low black table and carried it across his apartment. Dropping it down at Max' feet he said, "Does it look like something in your line?"

Lighting a fresh cigarette Max looked down at the bright screen. "It sure isn't something for a repairman."

"But is it occult, Max?" Tim reached out and found his glass.

"Unless NBC has been holding back." Max pushed the set carefully away from him and watched the picture.

On the screen a heavy set middle aged man was sitting on a stool playing a guitar. He was, and had been for several minutes, singing a song.

"Hurray for Jeannie,
So sweet and fair.
No one like her anywhere.
Don't wait and don't search.
Just take Jeannie to the church."

"Same as last week," said Tim, finishing his drink. "And the week before."

"Not much of a show." Max stood up.

From the set came the man's voice, talking now. "Married bliss, there's nothing like it. You'll find it really has bachelorhood beat. So don't be left out. Marry Jeanne Horning soon."

"The supply is limited," said Tim, pouring himself another glass of bourbon.

"Who's Jeanne Horning?" asked Max. Fog was coming in under the Golden Gate Bridge.

"A girl I used to know. She had sort of a thing going about me. Finally I dropped the whole business. I wasn't ready to settle down."

Max turned from the window and pointed at the fat man on the set, who was singing again. "And who's this guy?"

"I don't know." Tim set his glass down and grabbed up the TV set. He carried it to a corner and left it with its picture to the wall. The singing went on. "Can you stop it, Max?"

Max lit a new cigarette from the old one. "You know, Tim, I'm just an art director in an ad agency. All this ghost stuff is only a hobby."

"There's no other girl like Jeanne Horning," said the set. "See for yourself. There's no girl nicer than little Jeannie." The singing started up again.

"How long does it last?" Max asked.

"A half hour, every Tuesday."

"Where's Jeanne work?"

"In the rental library at Wollter's Department Store."

"Probably not much in the way of occult reference books there. You think she's behind this."

"Her father."

"Oh. What's he do?"

"He's a spirit medium."

Max frowned. "Huh?"

"Chester M. Horning. He used to be a trick rider in the circus but he developed an allergy to dander. That's how he got into this racket."

"You think he's a fake?"

"They all are."

"Not all," said Max, nodding at the set. There was a click and the set went quiet. It was eight thirty.

Tim inhaled sharply and picked up his drink. "That's that until next week."

"What else does this ghost—we'll call it one for now—do?"

"Well," said Tim, "there's the show every Tuesday. Then there are the radio commercials. They come on every day. In the morning before I go to the bank. And when I get home. Minute versions of what you heard."

"Somebody wants you to marry Jeanne Horning I guess." Max brushed his crew cut down and reached for his cigarettes.

"You did see it, though," said Tim. "At least I'm not cracking."

"Sure. It's pretty certainly a ghost. What other media does it use?"

"Just radio and TV. And sometimes I find a slogan on my bedroom wall. 'Marry Horning in the morning!' and things like that."

Max walked over to the TV set and tapped it with his foot. "What sort of seances does her father hold?"

"I don't know. She was always after me to go to one. But I didn't want to. That's another reason for our breaking up. How about hypnosis?"

"For her?"

"No, I mean could all this be some kind of mass hallucination?"

"Pretty small audience for that." Max leaned against the wall. "You still hear from Jeanne?"

"I haven't seen her in nearly a month, a few days before this stuff started. But she calls now and then still."

"Can you get us invited to a seance? I'd like to see Horning operate."

"What for?"

Max crumpled his empty cigarette pack. "It might help me get some line on this ghost and see if Horning is behind it."

"Suppose he isn't. Then on top of the ghost I'll be involved with Jeanne again."

"Just one seance."

"Just one firing squad." Tim looked from Max to the silent set. "Okay. I'll call her and say a friend of mine is interested in her father's work. That should do it."

Max nodded and turned the set around. He plugged it in and arranged the antenna. Checking his watch he said, "Mind if I watch part of a show. One of the commercials I did a storyboard for is on."

Tim shrugged. "No, go ahead."

Max turned on the set.

Jeanne Horning was a slim girl with shoulder length auburn hair. She was able to open the door and escort Tim and Max down a long hall and into a curtained living room without speaking or making any facial sign.

"How's Ralph?" asked Tim, sitting in the straight back chair she moved back from the table for him. "Ralph's Jeanne's pet cat."

"We had him fixed." Jeane moved another chair away from the round mahogany table.

Max sat down. "Thank you." The gold fringe from the table cloth hung down in his lap.

"I don't want any foolishness, Tim." Jeanne left them.

EMSH-

"She's got herself under control," Max said, getting out his cigarettes.

"Looks like. Could be an act, but Jeanne's not usually like that."

The lit match flipped out of Max' hand and was snuffed out in mid air with a small popping sound.

"Smoke is a disturbing influence," said the small, deeply tanned old man who parted the beaded curtains and stepped into the room. He had a full head of fine white hair and great tangled white eyebrows. "I am Chester Horning."

"Hello, Mr. Horning," said Tim. "This is my friend, Max Kearny."

"I know." Horning adjusted a padded wing chair at the head of the table. He placed a silver pocket watch and a secretary's note book next to the empty water glass that was already there on the table. Seating himself he said, "You believe in the supernatural, Mr. Kearny?"

"In many cases."

"Tim never credited the little things I showed him while he was dating my daughter. Although, for instance, I was able to provide some excellent examples of levitation."

"A coffee table came down on my foot," said Tim.

Horning waved his small sunburned hands in the air. "Enough of negative thinking for tonight. The others are coming."

Jeanne was smiling now, holding the arm of a tall wide shouldered young man of about thirty. With them was a thin grey-haired woman in a fur trimmed black suit.

"Mrs. Yewell," said Horning, rising. "And your son has decided to attend also. I'm glad to have you aboard for a seance, Preston."

Preston Yewell smiled vaguely, moving away from Jeanne. He took the chair next to his mother. "I'm still a bit sceptical, sir."

Jeanne touched his shoulder. "You'll see, Pres. I know you're not going to be as negative as some people."

"Watch your feet when the table goes up," Tim said.

Yewell grinned. "My name's Pres Yewell and I'm a Junior Account Exec with Lumbard-Joseph and Associates. What do you guys do?"

They told him.

Yewell looked at Max, his eyes narrowing. "Your name. Somebody told me something about some hobby of yours."

"Quiet please," said Horning, shifting in his chair, working his back against the upholstery buttons. "Someone is here now."

Jeanne turned out the overhead lights. After lighting a hurricane lamp on the mantle she walked softly to the table and sat next to Yewell.

"Remember now," said Horning, "no smoking. My contact is here." His eyes closed and his eyebrows

drooped. "Well, folks," he said in a new voice, "perhaps you wonder why I called you here." The voice laughed. "Hi, Jeannie. How you doing?"

"Fine, Uncle Arly."

"I sure hope so. How are things with the boy friend?"

"Fine at the moment."

"You aren't sitting next to him."

"I am, Uncle Arly."

"Oh, there's a new one. Sometimes my view from up in spirit land gets a little fuzzy. Well, let's get down to cases." Horning, eyes tight shut, sat up and turned his head toward Mrs. Yewell. "You have a problem, honey."

"Most certainly I do, Uncle Arly. Here's the situation. The woman who used to do our cleaning was run down by a diaper laundry truck and I'm certain that she—"

As Mrs. Yewell outlined her problem Tim whispered to Max, "It just occurs to me."

"The voice sounds familiar."

"Sure, and Jeanne told me a little about Uncle Arly. He died about four years ago. Guess what business he was in?"

"Advertising."

"Yeah. He's the one on my Tuesday night show."

"Looks like he's an honest-to-gosh real ghost, too."

"No tricks, huh?"

"I don't think so," said Max. The whole business felt real.

A heavy gold and red trimmed tambourine appeared in the air over Uncle Arly. It floated slowly down the table and whacked Max over the head.

"Ole!" said Uncle Arly's voice. "So much for you ghost gumshoes. I'll send you a slate memo on your problem, Mrs. Yewell. I don't like that boy's vibrations."

Horning shook his head and rubbed his eyes. "Jeanne?"

His daughter frowned at Tim and Max and then turned the room lights on. "What a wet blanket you turned out to be, Tim."

"That's it," said Yewell. "I just thought of it. Kearny, you're an amateur ghost breaker."

"I should have sensed it," said Horning. "I had twinges but I thought it was just my rose fever acting up."

"You'd both best go," said Jeanne, spreading the curtains and pointing into the hall.

Outside in the street it was starting to rain. "Well," said Tim, "Jeanne seems to be getting over me."

"We've got to convince Uncle Arly of that," said Max, stepping into an apartment doorway to light a cigarette. "Or get rid of him. I'll try to have something worked out by next Tuesday, in case he shows up." Smoking thoughtfully he followed Tim to his car.

Max always went to W. R. Pedway's second hand book store for occult advice. It was Pedway who

had first introduced Max to the field. After work the next day Max went there to tell Pedway about Tim Barnum's ghost.

Pedway was on a ladder in the back of the store. "Look at that. I reduced this set of the complete works of George Makepeace Towle to two dollars and it still hasn't moved."

Max leaned against the 25¢ table and frowned up at the small wrinkled man. "Friend of mine's being haunted."

Lighting his corncob pipe Pedway came halfway down the ladder. "Having a sale on the novels of Alice Montgomery Baldy. You interested in them? I bid on them at an auction."

"Why?"

"They were inside a steamer trunk I wanted. Kick the cat off that chair and tell me about the ghost."

Max nudged Pedway's large orange cat onto the floor and took the wicker chair. "This ghost appears every Tuesday night at eight o'clock."

"That's pretty early in the evening for a ghost."

"It's prime TV time. The ghost materializes inside my friend's TV set." Max lit a fresh cigarette and told Pedway more about Uncle Arly.

"What the hell," said Pedway, scratching his straight standing grey hair. "Don't you read any of the occult books I loan you."

"Sure," said Max, "but since I joined the Book-of-the-Month-Club I have to skim some of them."

"Holy Moley," said Pedway. "It's so simple. Look, you've got the ghost in the set. All you do is bottle it up."

"Beg pardon?"

"Wait a second," said Pedway. He dropped down behind the counter. He brought up a dull-green book and searched through it. "The good thing about this book is that it has colored pictures. Of course, the spells never come out as good as they look in the photos. Yes, here it is."

Max tore a piece of brown wrapping paper from the roll on the counter and copied down the magic formula Pedway was pointing to. "What does it do exactly?"

"Well, look at the picture."

"That's just a retouched photo of an imp in a bottle."

"The spell works as a cork. Once you have the imp or spirit inside the container, this keeps him there."

"Will the TV set still work?"

"No, you have to throw it in the river."

"A $200 TV set? Don't you have a cheaper spell?"

"This is the one that works, Max."

"I'll tell Tim." Max stood up. "Does it have to be a river?"

"The bay will do."

Max watched the cat slide down a stack of Britannicas. "This spell

keeps the ghost in there permanently?"

"The spell's only guaranteed for two years, but that should be enough time."

"I'll let you know on Wednesday how it worked."

"I know how it will work," said Pedway, starting back up the ladder.

Wednesday noon Max met Tim in a hofbrau near his agency.

"You think I'm safe then?" Tim asked.

Max sipped his dark beer. "I don't know. I was all set to try the spell out last night. Then Uncle Arly doesn't appear."

"Maybe he's off for the summer," said Tim, giving his plate half a turn. "He must have been some ad man, to keep at it four years after he died."

Max took a cigarette. "I think we'll just have to wait. The radio spots have stopped, too?"

"Everything. They stopped a few days ago."

A handful of silverware dropped down on the table. Then Preston Yewell, carrying a tray of food, sat in the empty chair. "May I join you?"

"Sure."

Yewell put both hands around his coffee mug. "You're an expert on the occult, Kearny."

"Somewhat."

"Ever come across," said Yewell, leaning in, "a haunted billboard?"

Max nodded. "Heard of a few."

"The billboard across from my bus stop is haunted. It used to tell you to eat Kellogg's Rice Krispies. But this morning while I was standing there alone, waiting for the 45 bus, it blurred over. It showed a picture—pardon me, Barnum—of Jeanne Horning. The slogan read: 'Don't be a fool, Yewell. Do it now!' "

"Have you been hearing any radio spots like that?"

Yewell exhaled sharply. "Every seven and a half minutes. Singing commercials."

"That's real saturation," said Max.

"And I don't even have a radio," said Yewell, jerking up his cup. "Just a TV."

"Is Uncle Arly on that?"

Yewell blinked. "By God, it is him. Now that you mention it I thought I knew that voice."

Max unfolded a piece of brown wrapping paper. "You planning to go ahead and marry Jeanne right away?"

Yewell straightened up. "My mother would explode."

"How often does Uncle Arly broadcast on TV?"

"Two or three times a night."

"Maybe we can help you," said Max.

Preston Yewell pushed open the door of his apartment. "The commercials are always louder than the rest of the show," he said.

Uncle Arly was singing and playing. Max lit a cigarette and moved into the room. Standing across from the TV set Max took out his piece of wrapping paper.

"Hey," said Tim Barnum, taking a chair, you get him in color."

"It's a color set," said Yewell, closing the door. "Well, Kearny?"

Max didn't answer.

"If you like girls, you'll really like Jeanne," said Uncle Arly from inside the set.

Max took a piece of chalk from his coat pocket and drew a few symbols on the wall over the screen.

"My landlady hasn't forgiven me for my last party," said Yewell, kneading his eyebrows. "And now we're defacing the walls."

Max frowned over his shoulder. Then he put his cigarette lighter on top of the set. From an inside pocket he brought out a business envelope. The cellophane window showed bright yellow powder. Tossing a handful of the stuff at the lighter flame Max jumped back and read the spell.

"If it doesn't work," said Yewell, dropping into a high-backed rattan chair, "I know *I'm* not going to clean up the mess."

Uncle Arly had an accordion now and was yodeling.

Max knelt, grabbing his lighter back as he did, and pulled the plug on the set.

Inside Uncle Arly was dancing a polka.

"Tim," said Max, "open the door and then give me a hand carrying this thing out."

"The set absolutely has to go?" asked Yewell, not moving.

"It's part of the spell," said Max, gripping one side of the big cabinet. He and Tim carried it out.

"You've been a great help," Yewell called.

Tim closed the door and they worked the set downstairs.

Uncle Arly was silent now.

On the street he said," Hey, what are you two boys up to? Some kind of school boy prank?"

"We're going to keep you locked away for awhile," said Max.

"You can't interfere with free speech."

They got the set into the back seat of Tim's car. "You'll be at the bottom of the lake at the Palace of Fine Arts," said Max. "You can talk to anybody you want."

"You know," said Tim, taking the wheel, "it's sort of cruel."

"He's been haunting you, then Yewell."

"Yewell deserves it."

"Maybe so. But a detective just does his job."

"You'd think Jeanne could do better than that," said Tim, putting the key in the ignition.

"You'd think anybody could."

"Tell you what," said Tim. "Suppose I keep Uncle Arly in a closet with a blanket over him. Could you let him out in a month or two?"

"Sure," said Max, shaking out a cigarette, "there's a spell for that, too."

"It might be a good idea to drop in on Jeanne without Uncle Arly being around. And without him, see, her dad's not going to be so confident about his medium business."

"Sounds fine," Max said.

Tim agreed and started the car.

In the back seat, trapped in the television set, the ghost of Uncle Arly got out his guitar and began singing a love song that had been popular in the late 1920's.

Through Time And Space With Ferdinand Feghoot: LII

The humans of Onderdonck III were decidedly decadent. The felines, on the contrary, had mutated and progressed very rapidly. When Ferdinand Feghoot arrived there, in 3708, cats had almost all the good jobs, especially in Government service, and relations between the two species were definitely strained.

At this juncture, a young chap named Thomas Meow-wrreow was arrested for causing the death of a human called Petrus V. Parsnipp, a pioneer balloonist. Another human, Abercorn Sludge, had allegedly paid him to loosen the cords holding the ballast to Parsnipp's balloon, thereby causing it "to soar rapidly, to become covered with ice, and to crash with fatal results to the aeronaut."

Defense attorneys on Onderdonck III had to share the punishment of the accused if convicted, so poor Thomas could find no one to aid him. Only extreme verbal brilliance, the lawyers all knew, could dazzle a jury enough to procure an acquittal, and they despaired of their talents.

But Feghoot came forward. In court, he laughed at the seemingly overwhelming evidence marshalled by the Prosecutor. Then he spoke the great sentence which won the case instantly.

"It is well known," declared Ferdinand Feghoot, "that Tom untied weight for no man."

—GRENDEL BRIARTON (with thanks to R. S. Coplan)

See Feghoot advertisement in "Marketplace," page 128.

MISCELLANEOUS

TV and Radio Tubes. Government surplus and pretested used. Guaranteed. Any tube $.60. Sales and Service, 2444 Woodstock Ave., Pittsburgh 18, Pa.

Bargain Catalog of household, automobile, sporting goods, hardware, accessories, 25 cents. Harley, P.O. Box 764, Hanford, Calif.

LEG IRONS, $7.95. Handcuffs, $7.95. Leather Restraints; Fetters; Collector's specialties. Catalog 50¢. Thomas Ferrick, Box 12K, Newburyport, Mass.

INDEPENDENT THINKERS—investigate Humanism! Free literature. American Humanist Association, Dept. F1, Yellow Springs, Ohio.

WASHINGTON SCIENCE FICTION ASSOCIATION meets odd Friday evenings at Miss Cullen's, 7966 West Beach Drive, NW, Washington, D.C.

BIRTH CONTROL. 34 methods explained. Illustrated, $2.98. Eaco, Box 1242-B, Santa Rosa, California.

Investigators, write for free brochure on latest subminiature electronic listening devices. Dept. 2F, 11500 NW 7th Ave., Miami 50, Fla.

HANDWRITING ANALYZED Special Analysis $1.00. Eva, Box 202-A, Eagle, Idaho.

Fortune Telling by Reading Palms. 120 Page illustrated guide. $3.00. Baston, 515 Carr Street, Augusta, Georgia.

MYSTERIES, housecleaning Mercury, Bestseller, and Jonathan mystery books—7 different titles for $1. (our selection). Dept. CN, Mercury Press, P.O. Box 271, Rockville Centre, N. Y.

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Advertising Dept., Fantasy & Science Fiction
347 East 53 St., New York 22, N. Y.

In this issue . . .

. . . is a long story by Vance Aandahl, about whom by now we need say no more, seeing that he is the very same Vance Aandahl whose *When Lilacs Last In The Dooryard Bloomed* was cover story to our May issue. His writings have attracted wide attention and well-deserved acclaim, and it has even been conjectured that he is actually a collaboration between Jack Vance and Raoul Dahl. He is actually not. Also back is the talented Terry Carr, with a unique story which deftly and richly manages to combine time travel, space travel, and abnormal psychology—and to say something new about all three. Throwing a different (and delightfully whacky) light on this last subject is gifted Sasha Gilien. Joanna Russ (of whom we hope to hear much, much more) gives a darkly-glowing and beautiful picture of vampirism, Kate Wilhelm investigates crime and punishment and remorse in a future where interplanetary space is no barrier, and Zenna Henderson turns a while from her chronicles of The People and considers a problem of communication on which the fate of a race—but which one?—or more than one—may depend. Ron Goulart, who can move with the times as well as the next man, tells of a haunted television set. Truman Capote and Carl Brandon make their first appearances here (Brandon, his first professional appearance anywhere), the former with a story—as chill and lonely as the city streets it moves through—of a woman who sold the only thing she had which anyone would buy; the latter has fun and games with a funny (but not gamey) account of a work-bound lover and his care-free rival. And Our Doctor Asimov and Our Mr. Bester are their usual loveable and rewarding selves. Aren't you glad you bought this issue?

Coming soon . . .

. . . G. C. (for Gary Cotton—there! We told!) Edmondson, who knows Mexico infinitely better than most of us Gringos know the United States of Northamerica, with a story about Mexico called *The World Must Never Know.* The object of the verb here is neither country, but a most curious matter of identity and iceboxes—and other things. There is an Otis Kidwell Burger *conte,* this one—though quite original in tone and conception—reminiscent of the classical *The Circus of Dr. Lao.* And, from the bayou-all country, hung with legends and Spanish moss, Rosel George Brown puts in a welcome appearance with a curious mushroom omelette.

BASIL DAVENPORT, writer and editor, judge of the Book-of-the-Month Club, writes: *"I have been a fan of science fiction all my life, and of The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction for all its life. F&SF gives us some of the best writing in the field, and the field is one of great importance."*

LOUIS ARMSTRONG writes: *"I believe The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction appeals to me because in it one finds refuge and release from everyday life. We are all little children at heart and find comfort in a dream world, and these episodes in the magazine encourage our building castles in space."*

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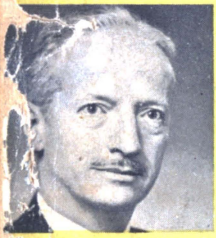

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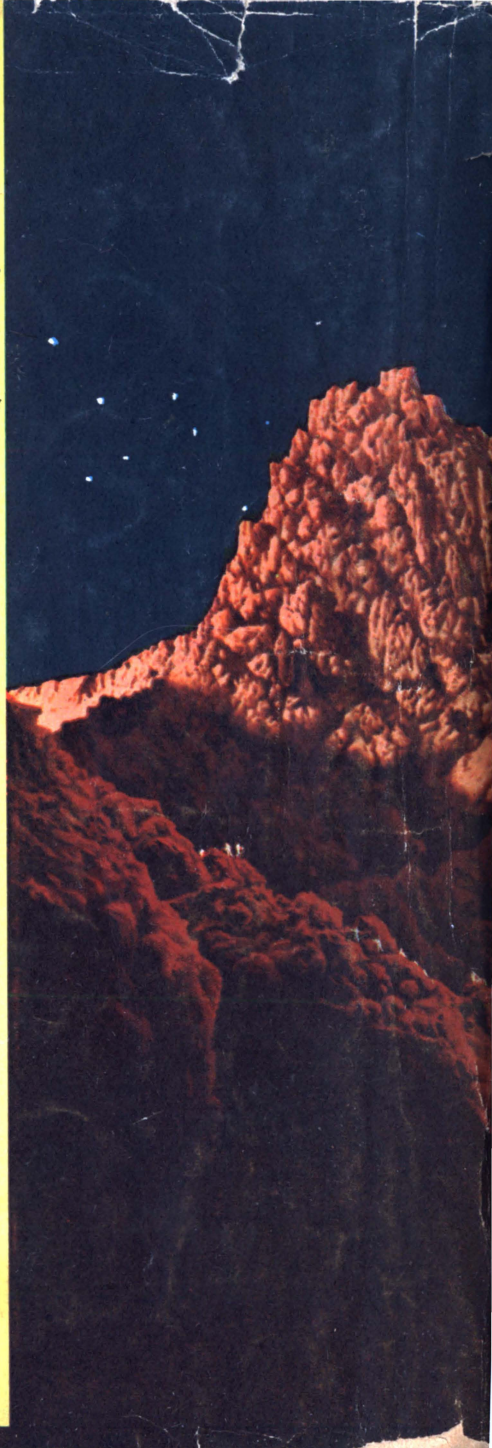

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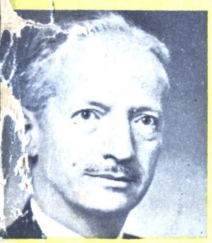

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