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THE MAGAZINE OF Fantasy AND Science Fiction

FRITZ LEIBER

HARLAN ELLISON

GORDON DICKSON

AUGUST

40¢

A MERCURY PUBLICATION

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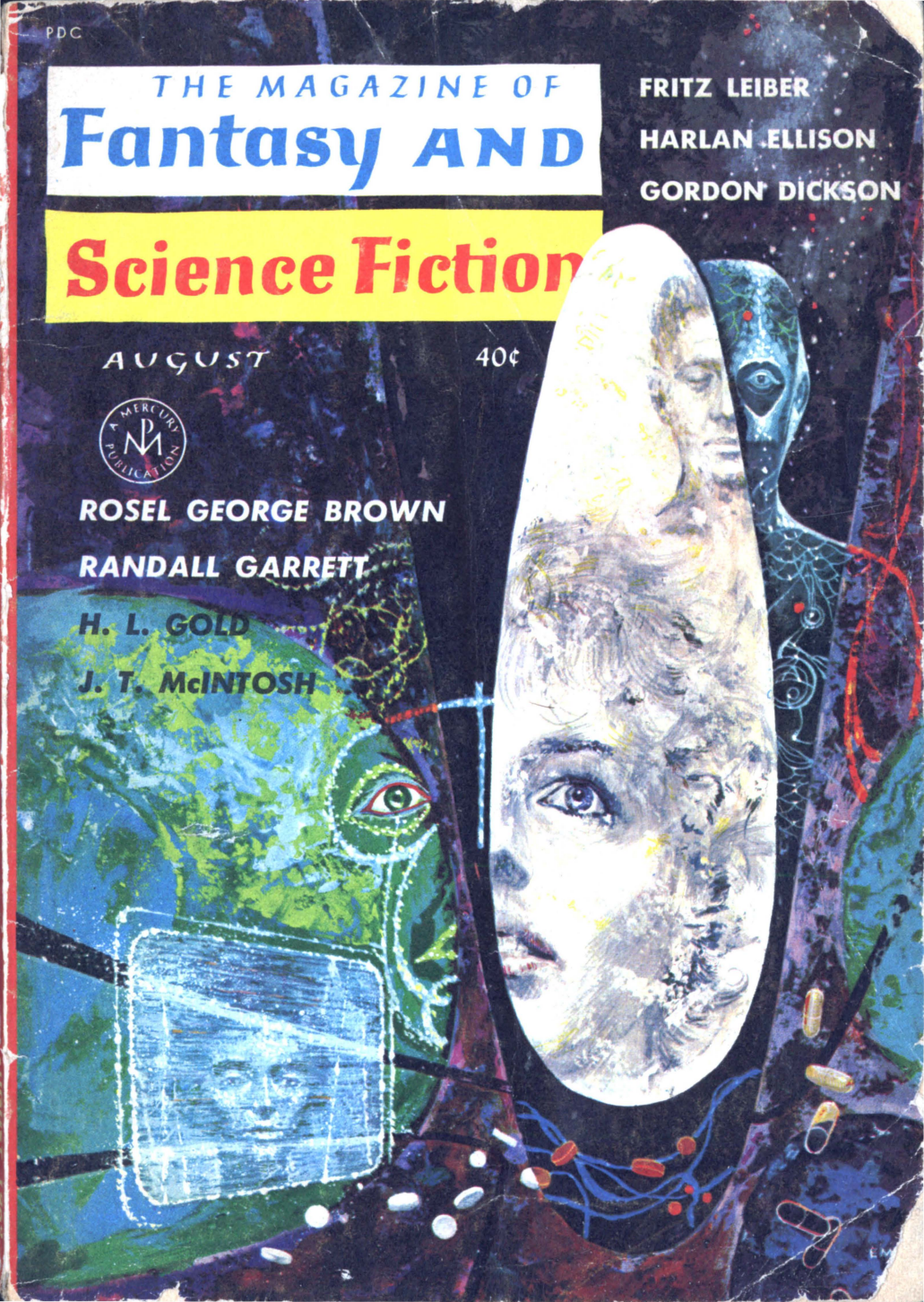

Fantasy and Science Fiction

AUGUST *Including Venture Science Fiction*

Cover by Ed Emsh (illustrating "The Secret Songs")

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In this issue . . .

. . . are, by our count, five straight Science Fiction stories, five straight Fantasy stories, and three stories of Science Fantasy. It is impossible to classify fiction with even the approximate accuracy of an egg-candler, and no doubt many of you would not only come up with a different count but would deny that some of the stories belong in any of these categories; thou art free—GORDON R. DICKSON, a master of definitive SF, is here with definitive F; so is HARLAN ELLISON, so is newcomer FRED BENTON, and the seasoned THEODORE R. COGSWELL; while DEAN MCLAUGHLIN and RANDALL GARRETT present unquestionable space travel SF for your self-improvement and amusement. So far, so simple. But in which category go the very special FRITZ LEIBER story, KEN CROSSEN'S scientific variation on a fantastic theme, ROSEL BROWN'S curious discourse on fungus and female? Fortunately, it is more important for us to publish than to label them. But why label at all? For one thing, because we aim at keeping a certain preponderance of SF in The Magazine, experience having taught us that readers prefer it so. "Give us stories of *real* Science Fiction," they write; "with a strong story line, vigorously believable characters, and lots of action. When you have done that," they say, "give us some *good* Fantasy—Ray Bradbury, Theodore Sturgeon, Tolkien, T. H. White, Richard Matheson, L. Sprague deCamp, and names like that. This is what we would like," they conclude. To which we reply, "So would we." From time to time, we can promise, some of these names will appear here, though not so often as we would like. There is a wry but pleasant tale of a young soldier who deserted the British Army when the Revolutionary War was over, and settled in the United States. Until he was close to a hundred he used to appear at Fourth of July celebrations, and make the same brief remark. "I fought hard for this country," he would say; "—but I didn't get it."

Coming soon . . .

. . . in fact, next month, is our special THEODORE STURGEON Issue, with a special cover by ED EMSH, special articles on The Master by JAMES BLISH and JUDITH MERRIL, and a special story by Himself.

Burton, De Quincey, Waugh, Huxley, and others have explored areas of the world through which Fritz Leiber (dramatic actor, motion picture star, gentleman, and beloved companion of those fortunate enough to number him among their friends) now takes us on an expedition; but none of the above, in their reports, have excelled the beautiful, frightening, heartwarming, and haunting details of

THE SECRET SONGS

by Fritz Leiber

PROMPTLY AFTER SUPPER, BEfore Gwen had cleared away the dishes, Donnie began the Sleep Ritual. He got a can of beer from the refrigerator, selected a science-fiction magazine, and shut off the TV sound.

"The picture too?" he asked. "Might as well."

Gwen smiled at him as she shook her head. With the gesture of one who eats peanuts she threw her right hand to her mouth, swallowed, then dropped her hand with the tiny bottle it held back to the pocket of her smock.

Donnie sighed, shrugged his shoulders, settled himself in the easy chair, opened his magazine, and began to read and sip rapidly.

Gwen, who had been ignoring the TV, now began to study the screen. A kindly old rancher and a tall young cowpoke, father and son, were gazing out across broad acres framed by distant mountains. Gwen tuned her ears and after a bit she could faintly hear what they were saying.

THE OLD RANCHER: *Aim to plant her to hemp and opium poppy, Son, with benzedrine bushes between the rows.*

THE YOUNG COWPOKE: *Yeah, but what* legal *crop you fixin' to raise, Dad?*

THE OLD RANCHER: (smiling like God): *Gonna raise babies, Son.*

Gwen looked away quickly from the screen. It never paid to try to hear too much too soon.

Donnie was studying her with a teasing grin.

"I bet you imagine all sorts of crazy things while you watch it,"

he said. "Those terrible bennies get your mind all roiled up."

Gwen shrugged. "You won't allow any noise while you're putting yourself to sleep. I have to have something," she said reasonably. "Besides," she added, "you're having orgies out in space with those girls in fluorescent bikinis."

"That shows how little you know about science fiction," Donnie said. "They dropped the sex angle years ago. Now it's all philosophy and stuff. See this old guy?"

He held up the magazine, keeping his place with his forefinger. On the cover was a nicely drawn picture of a smiling intelligent-looking young man in a form-fitting futuristic uniform and standing beside him, topping him by a long head, a lean green-scaled monster with a large silver purse slung over his crested shoulder. The monster had a tentacle resting in comradely fashion across the young man's back and curling lightly past his feather epaulet.

"You mean that walking crocodile?" Gwen asked.

Donnie sniffed. "That walking crocodile," he said, "happens to be a very wise old member of a civilization that's far advanced beyond man's." He lifted his other hand with two fingers pressed together. "Him and me are like that. He tells me all sorts of things. He even tells me things about you."

"Science fiction doesn't interest me," Gwen said lightly, looking back to the TV. There was a commercial on now, first a white-on-black diagram of the human body with explosions of bubbles occurring in sequence at various points, then a beautiful princess in a vast bathroom, then a handsome policeman. Gwen expertly retuned her ears.

VOICE OF MEDICAL EXPERT: *Benzedrine strikes at hidden sleepiness! Tones muscles! Strengthens the heart! Activates sluggish wake centers . . . One . . . Two . . . Three!*

THE BEAUTIFUL PRINCESS (looking depressed): *Yesterday I was overweight, listless, intensely unhappy. Mother called me The Ugly Dumpling. Now* (becoming radiant) *I build beauty with benzedrine!*

THE HANDSOME POLICEMAN (flashing badge with huge "N" for Narcotic Squad): *You're all under arrest! Grrr . . . aarrarrgghhh!*

Gwen quickly looked away. It was the only thing you could do when you got static or the wrong voice channel. She began to carry the supper dishes to the sink.

Donnie winced violently without putting down his beer can or looking up from his page. "Don't clank them," he said. Gwen removed her shoes and began to do the dishes as if she were a diver in the silent world under the surface of the sea, ghosting between table, sink and cupboard.

She was still lost in this rather fascinating operation and even beginning to embroider it with little arabesques when Donnie continued the Sleep Ritual by opening his second can of beer, this time a warm one by choice. Before taking the first sip he swallowed a blue capsule of amytal. At the kerz*ing!* of the opener Gwen stopped to watch him. She carefully dried the suds off her right hand, popped onto her tongue another benzedrine tablet from the bottle in her smock pocket, and still watching him thoughtfully, rinsed a glass, ran an inch of water into it and drank it.

If Donnie had his Sleep Ritual, she told herself in not exactly those words, she had her Vigil.

Donnie stood shaking his head at her.

"I suppose now you'll be wandering around all night," he said, "making all sorts of noise and disturbing me."

"I don't make any more noise than a snowflake," Gwen countered. "Not one-tenth as much as the autos and streetcars and planes. Almost every night the people next door have their TV on high."

"Yes, but those noises are outside," Donnie said. "It's your noises that bother me—the inside noises." He looked at Gwen speculatively. "Why don't you try a sleeping pill just for once?" he said with insidious appeal.

"No," Gwen answered instantly.

"A three-grain amytal," Donnie persisted, "would cancel those bennies and still have enough left over to make you nice and dozy. We'd go to sleep together and I wouldn't worry about noises."

"You don't want to go to sleep until you know everyone else is asleep," Gwen said. "Just like my mother. If I took one of your pills, you'd watch me sleep and you'd gloat."

"Well, isn't that what you do to me?"

"No, I do other things. By myself."

Donnie shrugged resignedly and went back to his chair and magazine.

Gwen wiped the itchy suds off her left hand, and leaving the rest of the dishes soaking, sat down opposite the TV. A curly-haired disk jockey was looking out thoughtfully across a record he was holding:

THE DISK JOCKEY: *Some might think it strange that with such divergent tastes in drugs Donnie and Gwen Martin should seek happiness together and in their fashion find it . . . but life holds many mysteries, my friends. I could mention Jack Sprat and wife. We'll all hope the Hubbard . . . oops! . . . Martin medicine cupboard is never bare. And now we will hear, by the joint request of Mr. and Mrs. Martin—are you out there, Don and Gwennie?—that popular old favorite* (glancing

down at record) *The Insane Asylum Blues!*

The music was real gone.

Donnie leaned back from his magazine and looked up at the ceiling. Gwen wondered if he were watching one of the glittering stars he'd named and pointed out to her on one of the rare Saturday nights they got outdoors. But after a while he said, "Benzedrine is an utterly evil drug, worse than coffee. Other drugs soothe and heal, but benzedrine only creates tension and confusion. I'll bet if I ask the Wise Old Crocodile he'll tell me the Devil invented it."

Gwen said, "If we ever went out nights and did anything, maybe I wouldn't need so much benzedrine. Besides, you have your sleeping pills and things."

"You don't need less benzedrine when you go out, you need more," Donnie asserted unalterably. "And if I ever went out on week nights, I'd get excited and start to drink and you know what would happen. How often do I have to tell you, Woman, that the only reason I take my barbiturates and 'things,' as you call them, is to keep calm and get enough sleep. If I didn't get enough sleep, I wouldn't be able to stand my job. If I couldn't stand my job, I'd start to drink. And if I started to drink, I'd be back in the Booby Hatch. And since the only reason you're outside is that I'm outside, holding a job, why you'd be back in the Booby Hatch too and they'd put you on tranquilizers and you wouldn't like it at all. So don't criticize my sleeping medicines, Woman. They're a matter of pure necessity whatever the doctors and psychologists say. Whereas your bennies and dexies—"

"We've been through all this before," Gwen interrupted without rancor.

Donnie nodded owlishly. "Show we half," he agreed, his words blurring for the first time.

"Besides," Gwen said, "you're behind schedule."

Donnie squinted at the clock and snapped his fingers. The sound was dull

but there was no unsteadiness in his walk as he went to the refrigerator and poured himself two fingers of grapejuice. Then he reached down from the top shelf of the cupboard the bottle of paraldehyde and poured himself a glistening tablespoonful. Swift almost as though the intense odor, midway between gasoline and banana oil, leaped to the corners of the half-merged living room and kitchen. Gwen momentarily wrinkled her nose.

Donnie mixed the paraldehyde with the grapejuice and licked the spoon. "Here's to the druggists and the one understanding doctor in ten," he said and took a sip.

Gwen nodded solemnly and swallowed another benzedrine tablet.

Donnie transported his cocktail back to the armchair with great care and did not take his eye off the purple drink until he felt himself firmly anchored. He found his place in the science-fiction lead novelet, but the print began to slip sideways and so, as he sipped his stinging drink, he began to imagine the secrets the Wise Old Crock might tell him if he were the young man on the cover.

THE WISE OLD CROCK: *Got a hot trip shaping for tonight, son. Three new novas flaring in the next galaxy southeast-by-up and dust cloud billowing out of Andromeda like black lace underwear.* (Dips in his purse.) *Drop this silver sphere in your pocket, son. It's a universal TV pickup on the old crystal-ball principle. It lets you tune in on any scene in the universe. Use it wisely, son, for character building as well as delight. Don't use it to spy on your wife.* (Dips again.) *Now I want to give you this small black cylinder. Keep it always on your person. It's a psychic whistle by which you can summon me at all times. All you have to do is concentrate on me, son. Concentrate . . .*

There was a courtroom scene on the TV screen. A lawyer with friendly eyes but a serious brow was talking quietly to the jury, resting his hand on the rail of the box. Gwen had her ears fine-tuned by now and his voice synchronized perfectly with the movements of his lips.

THE FRIENDLY LAWYER: *I have no wish to conceal the circumstance that my client met her husband-to-be while they were both patients in a mental hospital. Believe me, folks, some of life's sweetest romances begin in the nut house. Gwen's affection inspired Don to win his release, obtain employment as a precision machinist, offer my client marriage upon her release, and shower her with love and the yellow health-tablets, so necessary to her existence, which you have watched her consume during these weary days in court. Needless to remark, this was before Don Martin began traveling in space, where he came under the in-*

fluence of (suddenly scowls) *a certain green crocodile, who shall be referred to hereinafter as Exhibit A. Enter it, clerk.*

Donnie rose up slowly from the armchair. His drink was finished. He was glaring at the TV.

"The Old Crock wouldn't be seen dead looking at junk like that," he cried thickly. "He's wired for real-life experience."

Donnie was half of a mind to kick in the picture tube when he looked toward the bedroom doorway and saw the Wise Old Crocodile standing in it, stooping low, his silver purse swinging as it dangled from his crested shoulder. Donnie knew it wasn't an hallucination, only a friendly faint green film on the darkness.

Fixing his huge kindly eyes on Donnie, the Wise Old Crock impatiently uncurled a long tentacle toward the darkness beyond him, as if to say, "Away! Away!" and then faded into it. Donnie followed him in a slow motion like Gwen's underwater ballet, shedding his shoes and shirt on the way. He was pulling his belt from the trouser loops with the air of drawing a sword as he closed the door behind him.

Gwen gave a sigh of pure joy and for a moment even closed her eyes. This was the loveliest time of all the night, the time of the Safe Freedom, the time of the Vigil. She started to roam.

First she thought she'd brush the bread crumbs from the supper table, but she got to studying their pattern and ended by picking them up one by one—she thought of it as a problem in subtraction. The pattern of the crumbs had been like that of the stars Donnie had showed her, she decided afterwards, and she was rather sorry she'd disturbed them. She carried them tenderly to the sink and delicately dusted them onto the cold gray dishwater, around which a few suds still lifted stubbornly, like old foam on an ocean beach. She saw the water glass and it reminded her to take another benzedrine tablet.

Four bright spoons caught her eye. She lifted them one by one, turning them over slowly to find all the highlights. Then she looked through the calendar on the wall, studying the months ahead and all the numbers of the days.

Every least thing was enormously fascinating! She could lose herself in one object for minutes or let her interest dart about and effortlessly follow it.

And it was easy to think good thoughts. She could think of every person she knew and wish them each well and do all kinds of wonderful things for them in her mind. A kind of girl Jesus, that's what I am, she told herself with a smile.

She drifted back into the living room. On the TV a bright blonde housewife was leading a dull bru-

nette housewife over to a long couch. Gwen gave a small cry of pleasure and sat down on the floor. This show was always good.

THE BRIGHT BLONDE: *What do you feed your husband when he comes home miserable?*

THE DULL BRUNETTE: *Poison.*

THE BRIGHT BLONDE: *What do you feed yourself?*

THE DULL BRUNETTE: *Sorrow.*

THE BRIGHT BLONDE: *I keep my spirits bright with benzedrine. Oh happy junior high!*

THE DULL BRUNETTE: *What was happy about it? I had acne.*

THE BRIGHT BLONDE: (bouncing as they sit on the couch): *You mean to say I never told you how I got started on benzedrine? I was in junior high and unhappy. My mother sent me to the doctor because I was fat and at the foot of my class. He gave me some cute little pills and* zowie!— *I was getting slim, smart and giddy. But pretty soon they found I was going back for an extra refill between refills. They cut me off. I struck. Uh-huh, little old me called a lie-down strike. No more school, I said, unless I had my pills. If the doctor wouldn't give them to me, I'd forage for them—and I did. Two years later my mother had me committed. If I hadn't become a TV star I'd still be in the Loony Bin.*

THE DULL BRUNETTE: *Did they give you electroshock?*

THE BRIGHT BLONDE: *Think happy thoughts. What do you do for kicks? Are you on bennies too?*

THE DULL BRUNETTE: *No.* (Her face grows slack and subtly ugly.) *I practice witchcraft.*

Gwen switched off her ears and looked away from the screen. She did not like the thought that had come to her: that she had somehow planted that idea about witchcraft in the brunette's mind. It was months since Gwen had let herself think about witchcraft, either white or black.

There came a long low groan from the bedroom, adding to Gwen's troubled feeling because it seemed too much of a coincidence that it should have come just after the word witchcraft had been spoken.

DONNIE was twisting on the bed, going through hell in his dreams. The Wise Old Crock had abandoned him in a cluster of dead stars and cosmic dust on the far side of the Andromeda Galaxy, first blindfolding him, turning him around three times, and giving him a mighty shove that had sent him out of sight of whatever asteroid they had been standing on. Floating in space, Donnie went through his pockets and found only a Scout knife and a small silver sphere and black cylinder, the purpose of which he had forgotten.

A cameo-small image of Gwen's face smiled at him from the sphere. He looked up. Worms twenty feet long and glowing dull red were undulating toward him through the dusty dark. He had an intense sensation of the vast distance of the Earth. He made swimming movements only to discover that a cold paralysis was creeping through his limbs. Eternities passed.

GWEN had got out her glue and glitter and sequins and had spread newspapers on the table and was making a design on a soup plate that she hoped would catch something of the remembered pattern of the bread crumbs. The idea was to paint with glue the design for one color of glitter and then sprinkle the glitter on it, knocking off the excess by tapping the edge of the plate on the table. Sprinkling the glitter was fun, but the design was not developing quite the way she wanted it to. Besides she had just discovered that she didn't have any red or gold glitter, though there were three bottles of green. Some of the green glitter stuck to the back of her finger where she had got glue on it.

She stole a look over her shoulder at the TV. The two women had been replaced by a large map of the United States and a rugged young man wearing glasses and holding a pointer. The first word she heard told her she wasn't going to like it, but she hitched her chair around just the same, deciding that in the long run it would be best to know the worst.

THE THINGS FORECASTER: *A witchcraft high is moving down from Western Canada. Werewolf warnings have been posted in three states. Government planes are battling the black front with white radio rays, but they're being forced back. Old folks who ought to know say it's the end of the world.* (Scans sheet handed him by page girl.) *Flash from outer space! Don Martin, famed astronaut, is facing nameless perils in the Lesser Magellanic Cloud!*

DONNIE had just blown the psychic whistle, having remembered its use only as the red worms began to spiral in around him, and the Wise Old Crock had appeared at once, putting the worms to flight with a shower of green sparks flicked from the tip of his right-hand tentacle.

THE WISE OLD CROCK: *You passed the test, son but don't pride yourself on it. Some night we're going to give it to you without paraldehyde. Now it's time you returned to Terra. Think of your home planet, son, think of the Earth. Concentrate . . .* (They are suddenly in orbit a thousand miles above North America. The larger cities gleam dully, the moon is reflected in the Great Lakes. Donnie has become a green-scaled being a head shorter than the Wise Old Crock, who weaves a tentacle majestically downward). *Observe*

the cities of men, my Son. Think of the millions sleeping and dreaming there, lonely as death in their apartment dwellings and all hating their jobs. The outward appearance of these men-beings may horrify you a little at first, but you have my word that they're not fiends, only creatures like you and me, trying to control themselves with drugs, dreads, incantations, ideals, self hypnosis and surrender, so that they may lead happy lives and show forth beauty.

GWEN was looking intently in the living-room mirror, painting evenly-spaced bands of glue on her face. The bands curved under her eyes and outward, following the line of her jaw. She painted another band down the middle of her forehead and continued it straight down her nose. Then she closed her eyes, held her breath, lifted her face and shook green glitter on it for a long time. At least she lowered her face with a jerk, shook it from side to side, puffed out through her nostrils what breath she had left, and inhaled very slowly. Then she looked at herself again in the mirror and smiled. The green glitter clung to her face just as it had to her finger.

A feeling of deadly fatigue struck her then, the first of the night, and the room momentarily swam. When it came to rest she was looking at a flashing-eyed priest in a gorgeous cloak who was weaving across the TV screen.

THE GORGEOUS PRIEST: *The psychology of Donnie and Gwen must be clear to you by now. Each wants the other to sleep so that he may stand guard over her, or she over him, while yet adventuring alone. They have found a formula for this. But what of the future? What of their souls? Drugs are no permanent solution, I can assure them. What if the bars of the Safe Freedom should blow away? What if one night one of them should go out and never come in?*

DONNIE and the Wise Old Crock were hovering just outside the bedroom window three stories up. Friendly trees shaded them from the street lights below.

THE WISE OLD CROCK: *Goodby, my Son, for another night. Use your Earthly tenement well. Do not abuse your powers. And go easy on the barbiturates.*

DONNIE: *I will, Father, believe me.*

THE WISE OLD CROCK: *Hold. There is one further secret of great consequence that I must impart to you tonight. It concerns your wife.*

DONNIE: *Yes, Father?*

THE WISE OLD CROCK: *She is one of us!*

DONNIE flowed through the four-inch gap at the bottom of the bedroom window. He saw his body lying on its back on the bed and he surged toward it through the air, paddling gently with his ten-

tacle tips. His body opened from crotch to chin like a purse and he flowed inside and the lips of the purse closed over his back with a soft *click*. Then he squirmed around gently, as if in a sleeping bag, and looked through the two holes in the front of his head and thrust his tentacles down into his arms and lifted his hands above his eyes and wriggled his fingers. It felt very strange to have finger-tipped arms with bones in them instead of tentacles. Just then he heard laughter from the living room.

GWEN was laughing admiringly at the reflection of her breasts. She had taken off her smock and brassier and painted circles of glue around the nipples and sprinkled on more green glitter.

Although her ears were switched off, she thought she heard the priest call from behind her, "Gwen Martin, you ought to be ashamed of yourself!" and she called back to the TV, "You shouldn't peek, Father!" and she turned around, haughtily shielding her breasts with a forearm held crosswise.

The bedroom door was open and Donnie was standing in it, swaying and staring. Gwen felt another surge of deadly fatigue but she steadied herself and stared back at her husband.

Woman, the Cave Keeper, the Weaver of Words, faced Man, the Bread Winner, the Far Ranger.

They moved together slowly, dragging their feet, until they were leaning against each other. Then more slowly, still, as if they were supporting each other through quicksands, they moved toward the bedroom.

"Do you like me, Donnie?" Gwen asked.

Donnie's gaze brushed across her glittering green-striped face and breasts. His hand tightened on her shoulder and he nodded.

"You're one of us," he said.

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The men in Eden Holiway's family line had been cursed for generations—they had all been vampire prone. Eden had determined that he would not die that way, however—and had devised a foolproof method of self-defense.

THE GOLDEN FLASK

by Kendell F. Crossen

I DON'T REMEMBER EXACTLY when I first met Eden Holiway. I'd seen him fairly often in the Crib, a small quiet bar in Greenwich Village, where I went almost every night. To see him was to notice him. He was of moderate size, perhaps forty-five years old, but his outstanding feature was his face. It was pure white without a spot of color in it except for the blackness of his eyes. A strange face, more like an alabaster death mask than part of a living man.

His routine was always the same. He'd arrive at the bar about ten, sit alone drinking whiskey and water, then at two in the morning he'd start glancing nervously at his watch. He never stayed later than three.

One night when I entered the Crib the only empty spot at the bar was next to him. I took it.

"Hello," he said shyly.

I nodded and returned his smile.

"I've seen you in here almost every night," he said. "My name is Eden Holiway."

"I'm Mort Avery," I told him. We shook hands and began talking. Nothing important. Baseball scores, was the reign of the Yankees over, who'd win the fight on Saturday night, things like that. Bar talk. We kept it up until he left.

After that we often talked although it was never personal. Then one night we left the bar together and walked along until we came to his place. I was about to say good night and go on home when he surprised me.

"I was wondering," he said, "if you'd like to come upstairs for a nightcap before going home?"

I was curious about him so I accepted the invitation and followed him up the stairs. The apartment

we entered was large and expensively furnished.

"Will you excuse me a moment," he said as soon as we were in it. "I'll be right back." Without waiting for an answer he vanished into another room.

I wandered around the room where I waited and finally went over to look at the books that lined one wall. I heard the door open behind me.

"Ah, you've discovered my library," he said. "Are you fond of books?"

"Not too much," I admitted. I turned around to face him. "I'm afraid—" That was as far as I got. This was Eden Holiway in front of me but a different one than I had been talking with for several weeks. His face was tingling with life, the cheeks red and rosy. I could do nothing but stare.

"You find me different?" he asked.

"Y-yes," I said. "I don't understand. You're suddenly the very picture of health. Is it some new wonder drug you've just taken?"

"I will tell you about it," he said. He was obviously enjoying himself. "But first we should have a couple of drinks." He went over to a small bar and mixed two drinks. He came back and handed one to me. "It *is* a wonder drug. Blood."

"Blood?" I repeated stupidly. "I don't understand."

He leaned back in his chair and smiled. "Do you believe in vampires?"

"I haven't thought much about it," I said vaguely.

"Well, you should," he said. "They are the undead. During the day they stay in their coffins looking like any other corpse, but at night they walk among the living searching for blood. Human blood. And every one of their victims becomes, in turn, a vampire."

There is little that you can say to a statement like that so I took a drink and said nothing.

"My family," he continued, "has been cursed for centuries. My great-grandfather, my grandfather, my father, all were killed by vampires. They have been after me as far back as I can remember. But I have always foiled them."

It was, I decided, best to humor him. And I *was* curious.

"How?" I asked.

"Until two years ago, I did it by being careful. I had the best locks in the world. I never left my apartment between dusk and daylight. I permitted myself no friends. I never got married or even engaged."

"It must have been a lonely life," I said.

He sighed. "It was indeed. Fortunately, I found another way to save myself from vampires. I was a medical chemist—a good enough one that I was able to retire a few years ago and live on royalties. I then devoted all my time to my

own problem. I was able to solve it two years ago and since then I've been able to go out at will."

"You mean you've discovered something that makes you immune to vampires?" I asked.

"Something of the sort," he said. He chuckled, then jumped to his feet. "I'll show you." He darted through the door again and was back almost at once, carrying a large golden flask. It was one of the most beautiful objects I'd ever seen.

"This flask," he said, "has been in my family for centuries and it seemed only fitting that I convert it to my purpose. You see, I have developed a serum which will sustain life for a period of time. I inject myself with the serum and this allows me to drain all the blood from my body and store it in this flask which keeps it at the proper temperature. I can go without any blood in my body for six to seven hours. It is then I can go out and enjoy myself, knowing that no vampire will bother with a man who has no blood. When the time is up I come back here and refill my veins."

"But it's all impossible," I said, shaking my head.

"Nonsense," he said. "You've seen me when I was out and you just saw me after I had returned my blood to my body. Can you doubt the evidence of your own eyes?"

"I don't know," I admitted. "Are you doing anything about marketing your serum? If what you say about vampires is true, there should be a large market for it."

"No," he said firmly. "That would be foolish. I will never put it on the market or reveal the secret of it. It's much too dangerous. You can't imagine. Why, even by —" He broke off suddenly but it was obvious what he had intended to say. It had suddenly occurred to him that for the first time he had told another person his secret.

A strange disquiet fell upon us. He was ill at ease because he had revealed himself and I was embarrassed by his uneasiness. We did, however, try to talk of other things, while he sat there fondling the golden flask, but the sentences came out jerkily and there were long periods of silence. As soon as I felt I could I mentioned leaving and he looked relieved. We parted, vowing to see each other in the Crib on the following night.

We did, too—but it was not the same. We had never been friends yet there had been some sort of bond between us. It was gone after that. His story had been dropped in between us and it stayed there like an immoveable obstacle. When we did meet in the bar we were careful to never sit near each other.

The next to last time I saw him was a week later. I was at the far end of the bar when he entered

and took his usual stool. We nodded but that was all. It was not one of my good nights. The drinks didn't taste right and I was restless. Finally at about two o'clock I got up and left.

I was home in my own apartment within an hour. I had a shower and put on my dressing robe. I went into the dining room and set the table for my usual late snack. I was about to sit down when the doorbell rang. Wondering who would call at that hour, I went and opened the door. It was Eden Holiway. His dark eyes stared wildly at me from the alabaster face.

"Oh, hello," I said.

"It's gone," he gasped.

"What's gone?"

"The golden flask," he said. "You told *them*. You must have."

I felt a flash of irritation at his intrusion.

"Look," I said firmly. "I not only didn't tell *them* anything, I don't even believe in *them*. You probably misplaced your flask."

He laughed hoarsely. "Could I misplace my own blood? I must find it—quickly. Won't you tell me where it is?"

"I don't know," I said coldly. "Why don't you go over to the hospital? They might give you a transfusion." I closed the door in his face. The bell started ringing again but after a while it stopped.

I went into the dining room and sat at the table. I picked up the golden flask and tilted it over my cup. This was so much better than the usual way. I wished there were more people as thoughtful as Eden Holiway.

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Gordon Dickson has written of deep space, the depths of the sea, our own American heartland, and of other large subjects both near and far. In this story he deliberately confines himself to a smaller canvas, and paints an almost jamesean picture of what bubbled under the outwardly prosaic lid of a suburban caldron when the Struggle for Place grew too fierce to simmer quietly, and the usual ploys proved too mild. We are a City Boy ourself, and, with all the smugness of same, have tended to regard the lives of the Garden Club set as being mild as pap, jejune—but after learning from Mr. Dickson the low-down on what really *goes on in Glen Hills, we are content to stay where we are and face-up to the lesser perils (such as routine muggings and semi-occasional stab-fests) of the Megapolis.*

SALMANAZAR

by Gordon R. Dickson

I SEEM TO HAVE ACQUIRED A sort of kitten. I call it Sam.

I suppose that doesn't sound too odd, but it would if you knew me better. I know. I realize all the nonsense about middle aged bachelors (like old maids) being supposed to like cats is supposed to go with a quiet suburban existence and activity in the local Garden Club. But, I promise you, *I* am not the type.

In the first place, I don't look fifty. There's not a grey hair on my head. My existence is far from quiet. And as for our Garden Club—there is a great deal more to it than gardening.

We who are in it recognize this. All of us; myself, Helen Merrivale, Cora Lachese and her contingent, and (until recently) Achmed Suga—are, if I may say so, in pivotal position with regard to the junior organizations. The Hiking Club, the Fund Drives, the Golden Sixties, and all the host of lesser groupings which flourish in a respectable area like Glen Hills. Indeed, the

Garden Club is the H.Q. of Glen Hills. And, like all elements in which supreme authority is vested, it has its continual, sometimes brilliant and sometimes deadly, internal struggles between opposing chiefs of staff, once external frontiers have been secured.

Oh, indeed I knew—I knew it as long as a year before—that the tide had begun to run against Helen Merrivale, hard-bitten veteran and courageous campaigner that she was. Not one, not two—but five crucial issues, ranging from the placement of the comfort stations at the annual Old-Timers' picnic to the naming of the executive vice-president to the yearly Anti-Trash and Litter Campaign, had gone against her. And what made this doubly awkward was that I was her chief lieutenant.

With all this, however, I suspected nothing when Helen, in August of last year, cleverly managed a nervous breakdown to ensure her honorable withdrawal from the field of combat. I saw her off on a round-the-world trip with my mind occupied only by the disgraceful tactical situation she had dropped in my lap.

Well, I tried to do what I could—but the result was certain. Experienced opponents like Cora Lachese simply do not make mistakes. One by one, I watched my (and Helen's) appointees stripped of their positions of authority in the junior organizations. Though the smile of easy confidence never left my lips during those long and terrible months, I began to make quiet inquiries of travel agencies myself.

How little I knew my leader! She is a great woman, Helen Merrivale. Completely without mercy, of course, but one expects that in such memorable leaders.

Helen returned, quietly and unexpectedly. With her she brought Sam—now why did I write that? She most certainly did not bring Sam. She has no more use for cats or kittens than I do; and at the time Sam could hardly have been more than an embryo. The creature *will* insist on intruding into my writing, as he has intruded into my life. —Now, where was I?

Oh, yes. The first we knew of Helen's return was when we all received mailed invitations to a Home Again party. Attached to my invitation was a note asking me to come early.

I obeyed of course, arriving shortly before the hour. Her sister let me in. Letty. A poor thing by comparison with Helen.

"And where is the dear girl, Letty?" I asked.

"She's waiting for you in the living room," whispered Letty, giving me a strange look. I frowned at her and strode on inside. As I saw the two people waiting there for me, I checked.

For just an instant. And then I was moving forward with smile and outstretched hand.

I believe I mentioned that I am not the ordinary type of middle-aged bachelor. No grand vizier of an ancient, oriental court, arriving to find his successor waiting by the Emir's chair, could have reacted with more issouciance than myself. And I believe, looking back on it, that at that moment I noticed a spark—just a spark—of admiration in Helen's eyes.

"Horace," she said, "I want you to meet a new, but very dear friend of mind." She turned to the small man at her side. "Mr. Achmed Suga. Achmed, this is Horace Klinton."

I shook hands with him. What the three of us then spoke about in the ensuing moments while the living room gradually filled up with guests, I do not remember. Nor does it matter. The important thing was Suga; as obviously dangerous as he was unprepossessing.

The grip of his hand had been suety. And the rest of him looked to be of the same material. He was like nothing so much as a little sausage-man. His head, a round grey blob of bulk sausage, seated upon a longer, oblong blob of sausage body. To this larger blob were attached link sausages, two to a limb and sewed tightly together at the elbow or knee joint. Little patties of bulk sausage shaped his hands and feet. I was most cordial to him.

But a natural terminus was approaching to our conversation. And in a moment it had arrived. A stir swept through the room; and a second later, surrounded by her own lieutenants—and a hard-eyed lot they were, as I could testify—Cora Lachese came tramping in.

"Helen!" she cried. And—

"Cora!" echoed Helen. They fell into each others' arms—Helen tall and majestically well-upholstered with regal grey hair, Cora short, stocky and leathery-skinned, with a Napoleonic glint in her dark eyes. A scent of blood was in the air.

"How we missed you!" barked Cora, in her ringing baritone. "Whatever made you stay away so long?"

"The mysterious East," answered Helen. "Its spell got me, my dear! Helpless—I was quite helpless before it." She half-turned toward Suga. "I might have lost myself there forever, if it hadn't been for dear Achmed here."

Cora glanced at the man, and from him to me. I saw her note my own awareness of the fact that I had been supplanted at Helen's side.

"Achmed, this is Cora Lachese, whose praises you've heard me sing so frequently. Cora—

Achmed Suga . . ." Helen was saying.

"Haylo, dear lady. Most honored," said Achmed in a thick accent which I had not noticed previously, though it was quite obvious now.

"Achmed will be staying with me several months," Helen said. "While he completes his book on Witchcraft in America. We must get him to speak at the Garden Club on the Thugees, or the Assassin's Guild—or one of those other fascination societies."

"Oh, you study such things, Mr. Suga?" said Cora.

"He is an *adept!*" murmurred Helen.

"Please, dear lady," said Achmed, fattily. "Merely I am creature of powers greater than my own."

"Really?" growled Cora. She cocked an eye at Helen. "He's far too valuable for the Garden Club, Helen. We'll have to have him give his little talk to the Old People's Home. I'll tell Marilyn Speedo—"

"Dear Marilyn," murmured Helen again, "where is she?"

We all looked around for Cora's first lieutenant, but she was nowhere to be seen in the room. And at that moment a shriek rang out from the garden beyond the french doors.

We poured out into the garden, all of us. And there lay Marilyn Speedo, dead in a nastursium bed, evidently having just been strangled by a pair of powerful hands.

Quite naturally, this incident cast a pall over the Home Again party. Cora and her group slipped away quite early. A charming funeral was held two days later for Marilyn and during the next few weeks, the police set up patrols about the streets of Glen Hills. However, they had no success by the time the next meeting of the Garden Club was held—on this occasion at the home of Cora Lachese, herself, where custom had shifted it from Helen's home after Helen had left.

Achmed gave us what I must admit was an interesting talk on Hemlock and Related Poisons. I had had no idea, myself, how many lethal substances were available in our fields and woods; and I imagine few of

us had, for I saw many of the members taking notes. But after the talk, over the coffee and cakes, the talk inevitably turned to the subject of the murderer, still no doubt lurking among us.

". . . The terrible thing is," said Helen, casting a judicious eye on Cora. "You can never tell *who* he might choose for his next victim!"

"Quite right!" boomed Cora. And, snapping open the sensible leather shoulder bag she had been wearing, rather surprisingly in her own home, she produced a snub-nosed, thirty-two revolver. "Belonged to my little brother Tommy—the one who was a major in the army, you know. Dear Tommy, taught me to shoot like a man—" The revolver went off suddenly, clipping a rather good-sized antler from the deer head overhanging the fireplace. "Oops—how careless of me! Helen, how can you forgive me! It just missed your ear!"

"A miss," said Helen, rather grimly I thought, "is as good as a mile."

"As good as about two inches, in this case, I'd say," replied Cora. "It's remarkable what an eye I have. Tommy never ceased to be amazed at it. Well, what I wanted to show you all were these marvelous little bullets. Something they invented in the first World War, and later outlawed by the United Nations, or some such thing. See—" she took one out and showed it around. "You just cut a deep cross in the soft metal of the nose. When it hits, it spreads out—dum-dum bullets, I believe they used to call them . . ."

While she was showing it around, someone commented on the color of the metal of the bullet itself.

"—Well, yes, as a matter of fact they *are* silver," said Cora. "Rather chic, don't you think? Don't you think so, Helen?"

"Oh, indeed, Cora dear," murmurred Helen.

And so our even tenor of life continued—although the murderer was not found. A couple of rather sad suicides occurred, however, to cloud the bright June sunshine—for we were now into mid-summer. Only a week or so after the Garden Club party, Joan Caswell, Cora's second most reliable henchwoman, apparently drowned herself in her own lily pond; and Maria Selzer, the next in line, while doing her morning TV exercises, managed to judo-chop herself on the back of the neck, killing herself instantly.

With this last tragedy a shifting of values became apparent in Glen Hills—many of Helen's lieutenants taking thought evidently on the insecurity of life, and withdrawing from club offices to devote themselves more to home and family. So, perhaps to bring a note of cheer back into all our lives, Cora Lachese chose

this moment to announce a gala evening to which all were invited. A Night Lawn Party and Beirfest, with Barbecue.

I must say it was a pleasant evening at first. Cora had produced a most interesting new person—a young man with a heroic name.

". . . Seigfried," Cora called him over as Helen, Suga, and I arrived together. "You must meet him. *Seigfried!* Seig—now, he's gone again. A cultural anthropologist, Helen—from the college over at Inglesby, at the moment. But he's studied abroad for years—oh, there he is!"

She pointed. And we perceived, under the paper lanterns of the lawn party, a tall, shambling young man in a tweed suit. We all moved off to meet him. But I, for one, got waylaid by someone halfway there and never did reach his side. The next I looked he was not to be seen. Neither, for that matter, were Cora or Helen.

However, I quickly ceased to worry about them. The beer Cora had ordered was evidently infernally strong stuff. Either that or I—but I'm sure it was the beer. I have met nobody who was at Cora's that night who did not admit to being a little, at least, uncertain about what went on and what they remember.

In my case, confusion begins later in the evening. Cora had announced an entertainment, while standing by the fire pit where the meat had been barbecued. The fire was mainly red coals by that time. But I remember her flinging up her arms, dramatically in its dim glow, and bellowing out—*"Seigfried!"*

At that there was a sudden explosion—as I remember—of red smoke from the fire pit. And there leaped into view a figure that no more resembled the youth I had seen, than a sabre-toothed tiger resembles something like—well—Sam. The figure was naked except for a breechclout and feathers, and twice Seigfried's size.

I became aware then of Achmed standing behind me. And at the sight of Seigfried, I saw him start violently and begin to slip away. What possessed me, then, I do not know. But I immediately grabbed him.

"No, you don't!" I cried drunkenly and triumphantly. I had caught hold of his pudgy hand, and he squirmed and pulled against my grasp.

Meanwhile, Seigfried was dancing before the firepit with great leaps and bounds. Suddenly, he yelled at the top of his voice and pointed in the direction of Suga and myself. The whole crowd turned to look.

"Ahani, beja ylar!" yelled Seigfried, or something sounding like that. —And suddenly, without warning, Suga went to pieces.

I mean that literally. I was drunk, of course. It was undoubtedly a hallucination we all had. But one moment, Achmed seemed to be standing there like any other human being; and the next he began to come apart. His head tumbled off his shoulders and went bouncing along the ground like a great, fat weasel. His body tumbled after, leaping and rolling and bounding away, thinning out as it went until it looked like a running hound—and howled like a hound, too, a hound on the trail of its quarry. His left arm dropped off; and, hissing like a snake, began to glide—but why go on? It was a hallucination. There is no need to go into gruesome details.

Yet I cannot forget the way I imagined these—these *things*, these *parts*, to begin their chase of the hapless Seigfried. At his first sight of them he had lost whatever nerve he had originally had. With a terrified shriek he seemed to turn to flee. But the parts of Achmed seemed to be everywhere about the grounds. They hunted him high and low. They hunted him out of arbors, through summer houses. They hunted him from the midst of screaming women where he tried to hide; and finally once more before the fire pit, they closed in upon him as if to blanket his shrinking body with their own shapeless selves.

Together, he and they swayed before the fire in the half-light of the paper lanterns and the low-burning coals. And, at that moment, someone who may have been Cora Lachese—I *thought* I saw her do it—splashed liquid on the coals. Pit, figures and all went up in one roaring sheet of white flame. And I found myself running from that place.

I ran—I assure you I ran all the way home. At last, in my own home, with the door locked and bolted behind me, I uncorked a bottle of my fine manzanilla sherry and drained it from the bottle like water. It was then I discovered I was carrying something. Something I had been clutching in my hand all the while.

It was Sam.

There is no need to stretch the illusion of that evening out unduly. The next day it was discovered that this youth, Seigfried, had most certainly been unhinged by the long hours of work he had been putting in on his doctorate thesis. Undoubtedly he had been the maniac who had strangled Marilyn Speedo. Almost surely, he had drowned Joan Caswell in her own lily pond. And, while there was some rather firm evidence that he had been teaching a freshman class in anthropology at the time of Maria Selzer's death, yet there was no doubt he was conversant with

judo. The official police verdict was an unofficial tribute to Achmed Suga, who—having the adept's resistance to hypnosis—had attempted to restrain the madman, after he had first hypnotized everyone else at the party, and then gone berserk.

—A tragedy culminated by Seigfried's dumping charcoal starter fluid on the live coals of the fire pit and jumping onto them with Achmed clasped to him with maniac strength.

. . . So, we may say this chapter in the history of Glen Hills is finally, if sadly, concluded. Helen and Cora are jointly engaged in reorganization at the moment—a hint having reached us that Mrs. Laura Bromley of an adjoining community is considering a move into our territory—our *turf,* as I like to call it to myself.

And I, myself, am now right hand man to both Cora and Helen. They need me at this time of writing, and the fact is recognized by all. I am a happy man with but one fly in my ointment.

It is Sam. Why I keep the creature . . .

I assure you I have no love for cats.

Nor would I be liable to name one Sam. *Salmanazar,* now—I find that name coming occasionally, trippingly from my lips, when I see the creature. But where the name came from, I have no idea.

Moreover, how could anyone—let alone myself—have any desire to keep a sort of cat which never meows, never purrs, does nothing a cat should do and refuses its milk in favor of a diet of spiders, slugs and filth?

It hates me, I am quite convinced. Also it hates Cora and Helen, judging by the way I see it watching them from a window at times when they pass. Sometimes, also, I see it stalking across the carpet at night like some thick, furry hand, and a shudder takes me.

Besides, on that disgusting and most unnatural diet of its own choosing, there is no doubt but what it is growing . . .

THE JOURNEY OF JOENES

a novel by *ROBERT SHECKLEY*

beginning in the October issue

What happened to Noah, after the Ark made its landfall, is well and sadly familiar, but what happened to the captain of the Mayflower *after that landing and disembarkation at Plymouth Rock is something which we do not remember having learned at school. Indeed, we doubt if the master mariner's name was even mentioned. Was it just another ferry-trip or milk-run to him? Did he feel weighed down by the responsibilities of conveying the seeds of a new nation to a new world? Was he happy to see the last of those difficult sectarians? Occupied with the perpetual perplexities of leaking seams and semi-unpumpable bilges? Or is it possible that he never gave the matter a thought more than a thought or two, being engrossed in plans to retire to a chicken-farm outside of Bristol? We shall probably never know. . . . Dean McLaughlin, who here considers the problem of a future captain of a super-*Mayflower, *is thirty-one years old and works in the college bookstore of the University of Michigan. His manner is quiet, his stories (all Science Fiction) are seldom, his first novel (as yet untitled) is soon to appear, he plays (he says) the hi-fi phonograph with moderate skill, and he once had the temerity to tell us that we snore. We did not, however, sternutate even slightly whilst reading this story, and doubt if you will, either.*

THE VOYAGE WHICH IS ENDED

by Dean McLaughlin

THE CHIME ON CAPTAIN RALPH Griscomb's desk sounded musically. Captain Griscomb was a lean, young-looking man, but that didn't mean anything because all the men in the *Viking* looked young. Most of them weren't.

He snapped the toggle; his secretary's face appeared on the screen. She looked young, too, but

he knew for a fact she had already lived almost two hundred years.

"Yes," he said. It was not a question.

"Call from the observatory, sir," she said. "Aram Lamphear."

"Put him on."

The screen blinked. A young man's face appeared.

"Reporting, Captain," he said tersely.

"Let's have it."

"The observations are completed, sir," the man said. "Our orbit is perfect."

"Thank you," Captain Griscomb said. "Put it on paper and send it down."

"It's on the way already, sir," Lamphear said. "But I thought you would want to know at once."

"Yes. Thank you. Yes," Captain Griscomb said. He stopped then, waiting, but there wasn't anything more to say. "Thank you," he said again, heavily.

The young face faded from the screen. It was blank. Captain Griscomb sat staring into it. It was grey.

He felt strangely old, and strangely tired.

It was over. Finally, it was over. It was done.

He snapped the toggle again. His secretary appeared. "Ruth. Bring me the voyage file. The big one."

"Yes, sir," Ruth Forrest said efficiently.

She came through the door a moment later with the fat folder. She laid it on the desk in front of him. She was small, slim, dark-haired, and she had a pretty smile.

"Thank you, Ruth," he said. His hand touched the file idly, peeling back a corner of the pages. He didn't look at them.

"There should be a cartridge coming down," he told her. "Would you bring it in when it comes?"

"Of course," she said, surprised, not sure why she should feel surprised. Awkwardly, she waited for him to dismiss her, but he was silent. She turned to go.

Suddenly she knew what was odd. He had *asked* her. Always before, he had commanded.

She went out softly.

He opened the file on his desk. It was thick—a fat pile of loose papers in scrupulous chronological order.

There were ninety years in that file. More than ninety years. Ninety years' accumulation in that stack of flimsy, thin pages.

He leafed through them. They were all different colors, each color to show the department it came from: the white sheets from Command, bearing his own blunt signature like a badge—*Ralph Griscomb, Capt.* And the other colors —blue from Astrogation, green from Power, pink from Passenger Relations, and the yellow pages from Ecology.

Ralph Griscomb turned them over one by one. They were full of magic words and magic names that conjured memories from the mists of forgetfulness.

His commission. His official orders—signed by Paolo Lenski himself. Lenski, who had Captained the *Venture,* the parent ship from which had come the *Viking's* passengers and crew.

—the record of the *Viking's* slow escape from the solar system of Venture Colony IV. The petty problems of adjusting its passengers to shipboard life.

—the opening of the Perrault Clinic, granting by the special dispensation of its miracle the gift of endless youth to all the young born to the Viking's passengers on turning twenty years of age.

—the Plague that vanished as swiftly as it struck, leaving fifty-four passengers dead. The cause was never isolated.

—the *Viking's* first star. The one planet naked and barren. The *Viking* did not pause there. It plunged on through interstellar space.

—the blight that attacked the *Viking's* hydroponics, its deadly rot spreading like black flame from one tank to the next. The oxygen panic that resulted, and later the riots when the food stocks ran low.

—Reichal's mutiny, when the Master of the Passengers' Council challenged Griscomb's command. It was quashed, and Reichal was stripped of his office. The Council became, in practice, Griscomb's puppet.

—the approach to the *Viking's* second star and the sighting of an inhabitable planet. The closing of the Perrault Clinic and the riots that inevitably resulted. The disinherited could not be expected to understand that immortality was not compatible with planetary life—that on a world men must have death, or else, to live in balance with that world, must cease to reproduce—that otherwise their numbers would expand until all the planet's resources could not satisfy their needs. It could not be explained, in the face of passion, that the immortals could be allowed their immortality only because of the inexhaustible vastness through which they travelled, taking only a little from each world on which they paused to build a colony. The young ones—the dispossessed ones—could not be expected to sympathize with those realities. It was the cause of much anguish, and Griscomb regretted it, but that was the way it had to be done.

—and finally the final pages of the file, detailing the slow maneuvers of the *Viking* warping into orbit around the planet.

That was it. The entire file was turned over, page by page. Done. Put back in the past again. Ninety years of accomplishment, his. And now it was finished, waiting only

for the final page to be complete.

Ruth came into the office. She crossed the carpet softly and laid the paper down in front of him. "You asked me to bring this," she reminded.

He scanned the blue-tinted page; it reported, as Aram Lamphear had said, that the *Viking* was in a stable orbit around the planet.

"Thank you, Ruth," he said.

He put the paper in the file. The last page. Now it was finished. "Here, Ruth," he said, closing the folder. "Put this back, will you?"

She bent over his desk to lift it with both hands. "Yes, sir."

"No, Ruth," he said. "Don't call me that. Not any more." He folded his hands and stared at them. He breathed heavily. "I'm just Ralph Griscomb now."

"Yes, sir." She caught herself and chuckled awkwardly. "I mean, Mr. Griscomb." She hesitated, holding the file bundled in both arms. "It's over, isn't it."

He nodded. "Yes." She must have known before, but it was kind of her to let him confirm it. "It's finally done," he said, and stared down at his folded hands.

"What will you do now?" she asked.

He shrugged. He didn't know. "Ruth, what do you and your husband plan to do? You haven't mentioned him . . ."

"That's all over," she said gravely. "Two years ago." He had the feeling she meant to say more, but she didn't.

"I'm sorry," he said, feeling awkward. "I didn't know."

"Don't be." Her smile was soft. "You never asked and you were always so busy, and it wasn't important. Karel and I, we decided to end it. That's all. We knew each other too well. You get that way, sometimes, after forty years."

"I know what you mean," Griscomb said. He had been through it himself.

"It got so I knew everything he was going to do and everything he was going to say," Ruth said. "And it was the same for him. There . . . there just wasn't anything left. There wasn't anything more that could happen between us. So . . . we decided to quit. I really think you ought to when you get like that."

"Yes. I guess that's so." Griscomb fingered the top of his desk. He spread his hands, palms down. "Living as long as we do, I imagine you're right."

Ruth still held the file in both arms, hugging it to her body. "Well . . ." She backed away slowly, as if there was something she wanted to say but which she felt incapable of saying.

He glanced up, expecting her to speak. He saw her hesitating in the doorway, holding the file as if to protect herself with it. She looked breathless and about to speak, but suddenly, feeling his

grey eyes watching her, she lost courage and backed away and the door closed between them.

He picked up a pen and took a sheet of paper from a drawer. He began to write.

He had thought a lot, these last few years, about how he would phrase it. He had thought the sentences through until they were like carved marble in his mind. But now, putting them on paper at last, they weren't the same words and they had none of the flavor of the words he had turned so carefully over and over in his mind.

He took out another sheet and began again. He wrote the things he had to write in cold, formal prose. He was still at it when Ruth sounded the chime on his desk. He reached over and snapped the toggle.

"Green Tepperman," she told him. "He wants to know if he should come down now."

"What?" demanded Griscomb. "How did he find out? Does the man have spies everywhere?"

"I don't think he actually knows," Ruth explained. "I think he was looking for information. What should I tell him?"

"There's enough who'd spy for him." Griscomb grumbled. "As if he won't have power soon enough. Tell him he'll hear soon enough. I'm still Captain of this ship."

He calmed and smiled wryly. "For a little while, anyway."

"Yes, Captain. For a little while," Ruth agreed. Then she corrected herself with a smile. "Mr. Griscomb."

"Just tell him wait until he hears from me, Ruth. That's all." He snapped the toggle over. "That's all," he repeated, heavily, to the blank, grey screen.

He went on writing, carefully, the formal prose that would end his command.

As the *Viking* approached the star that was to be its destination, Griscomb had lost his power over the Passengers' Council. His power rested on the fact that he commanded the ship and would continue to do so. With the end of the voyage in sight, all that was changed.

Green Tepperman, Master of the Council, did not rise from his desk when Griscomb walked in. Tepperman was a large, heavy set man with blond hair and fleshy jowls. He arched his brows at Griscomb, but he looked more pleased than surprised.

"So now you are coming to me!" he beamed. He nodded toward a chair.

Griscomb pretended not to notice. He had never liked Tepperman—few men did. And he knew that Tepperman held the highest elective office in the ship only because the passengers didn't care who sat in a powerless office. But now—now that the Council would

have power again—now Tepperman would be voted from office at the next election. He wondered if Tepperman knew that.

"I came to bring you this," he said. He passed the envelope across the desk.

Eagerly, Tepperman slipped a finger under the flap, brought the paper out, and held it, unfolded, in front of him.

"The ship is yours, sir," Griscomb said stiffly.

"Ah . . . Yes!" Tepperman hissed, like a man counting money.

"Will there be anything else, sir?" Griscomb asked, with respect.

"Oh! Sit down, Captain," Tepperman invited grandly. "I must say it's . . . ah, generous of you to give over command so willingly. You could have made things very difficult for me, you know. Yes! *Very* difficult!"

Griscomb was as motionless as stone. "I'd not have gained anything by it," he said. "I've brought you here. What more can I do?"

Tepperman looked surprised—baffled. "But to have so much power—why, you've ruled our lives!—and to . . . to simply give it up . . . surrender it . . ."

"I had power because I controlled the ship," Griscomb said. "And you had no other place to go. Now . . . now my ship is in orbit. You've got a planet down there. I don't have any claim to power, now."

"But you still have the ship," Tepperman objected.

Griscomb shook his head. "No. I'm giving you that, too. As long as it moved, it was mine. Now . . ." His throat was dry. "Now I don't want it."

"But . . " Tepperman protested inarticulately. "It would help me tremendously if you would continue. Under me, of course. Yes—it would help me greatly."

"No," Griscomb said. He had known that Tepperman would offer him back the command of his ship, and he had come determined to refuse. But still it was a very brutal thing that the offer was not even made as a gesture of cold, formal courtesy—that instead it was offered only as a convenience, as a way of taking work off Tepperman's shoulders.

"In the new situation," Griscomb said, "I believe that a man will be able to do as he pleases. I . . . Thank you for your offer. I cannot accept it."

Tepperman frowned. "Why not?"

"My job is done," Griscomb said. "There's nothing left to command. The *Viking's* in orbit—Astrogation will only be concerned with operations of the shuttle craft down to the planet and back. Power is only needed for internal use. Ecology will be only routine aboard, and putting most of its staff to studying what's down there. And Relations is more directly

under you than it was ever to myself. I'm sorry, sir. My job is done, and there's no place for me in the new scheme of things. Thank you, but the answer is no."

"You're too hasty, Captain," Tepperman claimed.

"That is another thing that has changed," Griscomb said in a firm, hard voice. "I'm not Captain of anything."

"But you do not understand how I plan to organize operations," Tepperman explained. "I meant for you to undertake command of affairs aboard ship, and shuttle operations—while I devote my energies to directing the development of our colony."

Griscomb occupied his chair solidly. "Sir, if you will pardon me, my mind is made up, I must refuse."

"But why?"

"Why?" echoed Griscomb. "Must I give reasons? I don't want the command. Isn't that enough? I've commanded this ship for ninety-two years. I've had complete authority over everything—every life and machine and thing. Now you want me to sit in command and watch everything I've worked to hold together melt away, until my ship is just an empty shell. You want me to take a post where I must take orders from you. Forgive me if I sound harsh, sir, but if you want the work done efficiently, you'll do well to find somebody else. Someone who doesn't have to crawl on his belly after standing on his own two feet."

"I wish you would reconsider," Tepperman urged. "I must say your view is unnecessarily grim. After all, we won't be down on this planet forever—most likely not more than a century. Long enough to establish our colony, and to build some new ships . . ."

"I said I had made up my mind," Griscomb said.

"But—" Tepperman argued. "But surely, when we move on again, you'll be commander of one of those ships."

"Perhaps," Griscomb admitted, unpersuaded. "A century is too far to see—even for us. I've done my job. I want to rest. I want to forget it. All of it."

"You make things rather awkward for me . . ."

"I'm sorry. You'll have to find somebody else."

"But what will you do?"

Griscomb replied stiffly. "As an ordinary passenger, I see no reason to discuss the matter here. Thank you, I'll make my own arrangements."

He stood up. "You must be busy," he stated. He retreated toward the door. "If there is nothing else . . ."

"No. Nothing."

"Thank you, sir," Griscomb said. "I wish you luck with your new command, sir."

"Thank you," Tepperman smiled.

Griscomb left.

Outside, Griscomb paused. He reached up to his collar and unpinned the one, bright silver star. He held it in his palm a moment, looking at it, weighing it, feeling for a moment its cool and sharp existence. He made an angry face and shoved it deep in a pocket.

Middeck's corridors were broad. The crowds wandered to their idle destinations. Griscomb walked among them, but he felt apart from them. Too much excited chatter washed around him—too much laughter—too much companionship in which he had no part.

Central Middeck was a great expanse of green-sown sod and clustered shrubs and gardens. The only place aboard ship where green things grew in moist, solid earth. Children ran and played noisily among the shrubs, too young yet to know of their stolen heritage—happy still with the bright, spontaneous laughter and the wonderful, endless days of childhood.

Griscomb walked on. He should go back down to his office—do the final task. Not yet, though. It could wait. There was time, now. Time to be human for a little while.

He went on, along the broad ways to the end, where Middeck met the *Viking's* hull. But Middeck, there again, was different from the other levels of the ship. Instead of the forbidding grey metal of thick walls, there seemed to be no barrier at all. It was transparent as air—so seemingly nonexistent that even reaching out to touch it was scarcely reassuring. You could stand up close to it and feel that one more step and you would be outside the ship, and that nothing was there to stop you.

People in clusters crowded close to the invisible wall. They talked excitedly among themselves. They pointed. For there, a thousand miles below the ship, the great curve of the planet lifted out of the black, depthless reaches of space. It spread too broad to see it all at once. It seemed to fill the universe.

Griscomb wedged himself up to the transparent barrier. They'll call it Viking Colony, he thought. And it will be *their* colony. But I brought them here. They can't take that away. Not like my ship or my star. It's the one thing they can't take away.

It was a good world, wrapped in rich, good air, and the continents were green and embroidered with blue lakes and rivers, and white with the snow on the crests of mountains.

I brought them here, he thought. I brought them here.

He turned away. His elbow brushed a sleeve.

"Why, Foster!" he exclaimed. "It's been a long time."

It had been a long time. Ninety four years. Foster Simes had been

his chief assistant when he was managing a steel factory in Venture Colony IV. They had been friends, back in those distant days when there had been time for friends. But that was a century past, and eighteen light years distant.

The man—Foster's face hadn't changed a line—glanced at him. A pause. Then, "Yes. It has been. A very long time. It's good to see you again, Captain."

Griscomb shook his head. "No," he said quietly. "I'm not Captain any more. The ship's in orbit. The job's over."

"All over!" Foster Simes echoed grandly. "Well!" He laughed buoyantly, then. "That means you're out of a job." He laughed some more. He stopped when he realized Griscomb wasn't going to laugh.

"All over," Griscomb repeated.

The two men stood staring at each other. If there was anything left to say, neither knew what it was.

"Well . . ." Foster stuck out a hand. "It's been good to have seen you again," he said, edging away, a little embarassed. "It's been a long time."

"Yes. It has," Griscomb said. "A long time."

He watched the man walk away.

He went down to his quarters. Hammond Siff unlimbered from the couch by lanky stages. His foot brushed a cushion off on the floor. He bent guiltily to recover it.

"It's all right," Griscomb said.

Siff stood uncertainly a moment, the cushion dangling in his hand. Griscomb took the cushion and put it back on the couch. He fluffed it back into shape.

He turned back to his valet. "You've never really liked your job here, have you," he said mildly.

Siff backed away a step. "Well, I don't really know, sir . . . I . . . " He shifted his weight from one foot to the other, then back again.

Griscomb stopped him with a gesture. "It's all right," he said. He smiled. "That's all right, too. I wouldn't have any respect for a man who did like it. It's that kind of a job."

"Oh no, sir," Siff protested. "Really, I . . ."

"It's all right, Hammond," Griscomb repeated. "The job's over now."

He offered his hand. "I've been glad to have you," he said.

Hammond Siff hesitantly accepted the grip. "Will there be anything, sir?"

Griscomb looked at him curiously. He shook his head. "No. Nothing more. The job's over. I'm not a Captain—you're not a valet. You can go now, any time you want."

Still Hammond Siff hesitated.

"You can move out of your quarters any time you want," Griscomb told him. "Register with Assignments whenever you feel like it."

Siff watched him, frowning. "You really mean it?" he wondered. "Move out of my quarters . . . ?"

"Or stay there, if you like," Griscomb shrugged. "I'm not giving orders any more. The rest of the ship is pretty crowded. As far as I'm concerned, you can do as you like."

"Well, it is a nice room," Siff admitted. "The only thing . . ."

Yes, Griscomb thought. Who wants to live next door to a man who used to be Captain? "I'll be moved out tomorrow," he said.

"Yes, sir." Siff backed toward the door apologetically.

"Sir?"

"Yes. What is it?"

"It's over. I mean, it really *is* over, isn't it."

"Yes," Griscomb breathed. "It's really over."

Then Siff was gone.

Griscomb changed into clothes that didn't look like a uniform. He hadn't worn the outfit for a long time, and he had a hard time finding it because he didn't know how Siff had been storing his clothes. But the suit was clean and pressed and there wasn't a trace of all the time it had lain in the drawer. Siff had been a good valet, and Griscomb regretted losing him.

Freshly clad, he went back to his office. Ruth was there at her desk, waiting, doing nothing because there was nothing to do.

Now was the last of it—the final task. He glanced around the room—oddly empty with only Ruth, there at her desk, and Ruth watching him and wanting to speak questions but remaining pensively silent.

He smiled momentarily, and for a moment he looked truly young. The moment passed. "Ruth—help me clean out my desk?" he asked. "And then we'll clean out yours."

"All right." She rose, gravely watching him.

It was the last job, and it was a hard one. To open the drawers of his desk and separate the personal, private things from those others which had been a part of his work. It was like breaking off a piece of his life.

It wasn't easy, deciding which was the Captain's and what was his own. That letter of Paolo Lenski's, for instance. Griscomb had found it on his desk the first time he came through the door. He had kept it all these years.

Ralph—

—you will need more than the luck I wish you. Much more. But the rest will be on your shoulders, and I can neither advise nor caution you.

But if I were to give one rule by which to test the acts of your responsibility, it would be this: that the purpose in being of your ship, the Viking, *is to establish a human*

colony on the world of some new star—and more, that this colony in its turn shall be a steppingstone across the galaxy, toward other stars and colonies.

Whatever you propose to do which will advance this goal—that will be good. Whatever might impair that goal in any way should never be considered.

For the rest, your judgment must decide. I wish you luck and the success of your voyage. But it is not so much luck you will need. And so I wish you wisdom, too.

Paolo

Griscomb folded the hand-scrawled message and slipped it back in the envelope. It had been addressed to him, and even after all these years he could imagine the small blond man speaking those words to him. But the message—that was to the office he no longer held. Griscomb put it on his desk, exactly where he had found it almost a century before.

The *Viking* would be going on, some day. Perhaps he would command it. It would be good to return to this office and find the letter waiting for him like an old friend. It would make re-entering the office like returning home. Or, if someone else took command of the *Viking* on her second voyage—well, whoever it might be would understand why it was there, and the advice was better than any he, Griscomb, could give.

There was surprisingly little in the desk and in the office he could call his own, in spite of all the long years he had been in it. When Ruth finished putting things back in their drawers, a humblingly small pile was left.

He began distributing his things among his pockets. Bits of trivia and remembrance . . .

"What will you do now?" Ruth asked.

The last thing was a paperweight. Griscomb picked it up and weighed it in his hand. "Does it matter?" he shrugged. He dropped the weight in a pocket.

"Please," she persisted. "I know I'm being curious, but I do want to know."

The paperweight was bulky in the pocket. He took it out and held it in his hand again, trying to decide what to do with it. "I hadn't thought about it until today," he admitted. "Now, all of a sudden, there's nothing to do."

He hefted the paperweight and decided. He set it back on the desk. The room was cleaned and neat and it looked just the way it had looked the first time he saw it, ninety-two years ago.

"I think I'll be a hunter," he murmured. "At least for a while."

"That's dangerous, isn't it?"

"Most things are," he said carelessly. "I've hunted before. My first colony, I was a hunter."

"But there are so many things you could do," she objected.

"I guess it's about time I started from the bottom again." He smiled slightly. "What do you care?"

She didn't answer. Instead, she said, "You don't have to start there. You could be a farmer, or work in the mines, or drive some kind of machine. You wouldn't have to hunt. Hunting is . . . it's such a lonely job."

"I know," he admitted overcasually. He shrugged, and let his shoulders slump. "I didn't make many friends at this job," he admitted.

She looked at him bravely. "You made *some*," she told him softly.

"Why, thank you, Ruth," he said, a little surprised, a little unsure.

She avoided his eyes. He thought he understood her words and her glances. But he paused.

Now wasn't the time, he decided harshly. Later, when the brass had tarnished more, when the brightness of the office he had held had faded more—then would be time.

He looked around the room for the last time. He took a deep breath. "Let's get your desk cleaned out," he said. "Let's get it over with."

She lowered her eyes. Her lip tightened. "Yes," she said hollowly. "Let's."

Alone, he went up to Middeck to register with Assignments. The ways were crowded, and the doors of the Assignments office were open wide.

It was crowded inside. Already, though the public announcement had not come, the transition was beginning. The change from one way of life to another.

He hesitated at the threshold, and he knew he could not go in there with all the others. He could not face them. Not yet. Not now.

Slowly, he walked away.

He came, finally, to the end of the corridor, and there was the planet spread vastly before him, curved and tremendous and deeply exciting. The clots of people pressed against the invisible barrier, looking down at the world where they would live.

He stopped, momentarily stunned by the sight of it.

Almost at his feet, a woman was kneeling with her arms around two children in rompers. "You see it?" she was telling them, pretending excitement. "You see? That's where you're going to live."

Yes, thought Griscomb. Live. And grow old. And die of age.

He wished there could have been another way.

The mellow bell tones sounded from the speakers, and the voices of the crowd stopped instantly. There was the hush of waiting for the announcement heralded by the bells. And suddenly Griscomb heard his own voice speaking, as he had put it on tape days before.

The planet we have found is habitable, and our ship is now in orbit around it. Our voyage is over. We shall make our colony here.

My work is ended. We are here, and here my commission ends. I am no longer your Captain, nor do I hold any office or post of authority aboard this ship or anywhere. From today, I am only a plain citizen—one of you.

I have always done what I believed to be best. I have made mistakes and there have been injustices, and I regret them. Some I have favored, and others I have hurt, but I am not apologizing for my actions. Nor do I defend them. There have been times when my decisions have seemed harsh and unsympathizing. Again I can only say I have acted as I believed right.

We are about to found a colony. I hope and believe it will be as good a colony as any in the past. That will be up to you. My work is done—I have brought you here. Your work is about to begin.

The moment Griscomb's voice stopped, Green Tepperman was speaking. He began quickly to sketch out the structure of the new command. Griscomb didn't listen. He looked out at the world he had brought them to.

He felt a light hand on his arm. "Why, Ruth . . ."

Her hand turned warm. "You weren't in the Assignments office. I—looked—I thought you might be here."

He nodded. Yes. Of course he would be here.

Her hand rested easily on his arm. It was very natural, very sure. She looked out at the planet.

"Ralph," she murmured gravely. "Remember this. You brought us here. That's one thing that can't be changed. You brought us here."

Yes, he thought heavily. Brought you here. But I could never make you build a colony. That will be the important thing, and that I cannot do.

Quietly, aloud, he said. "Building isn't something you can do just with authority, Ruth. That's all I ever had. Authority. It's not enough. The men they need now are leaders."

"What?" she frowned. She didn't understand.

He didn't understand. The planet was before him. Ruth was beside him. It was almost enough, just for that moment—looking down—seeing the great seas blue in the light of the warming sun, and the ripe, green land full with the promise of fertility, and mountains straining their snow swept peaks toward space . . .

But, as the moment died, seeing on beyond—the far, unfeeling stars.

This warm and funny little story about a pair of blood-brothers whose mutual affection was stronger than death is by a junior at Chico State College, California. "I am 22 years old," Fred Benton writes, "and a biology major. My interests, aside from reading and writing all forms of the short story, include hunting, fishing, and tennis . . . During the summer I work for the California Division of Forestry, driving fire-fighting vehicles. As a result, I have come to know and love Smoky the Bear . . . MUMBWE JONES will be my first published story in any magazine, and I certainly want to follow through." We're sure the readers will, too.

MUMBWE JONES

by Fred Benton

THE FISH, AN EXCEEDINGLY UNhandsome variety of mudcat, flopped against the Congo trader's feet, cocked one eye, and said very distinctly, in Swahili: "Throw me back!"

Socko Jones, who had seen many unnatural things in his travels, was not greatly distressed. He kicked the fish to one side, saying: "Fish, I like you. You are a fine specimen and truly a fighter, but I cannot return you to your family. You are all I have to eat. I am ashamed to eat such a warrior, but it is that or starve." He pulled in a few yards of old and ragged fishline, inspected the dangling rusty hooks, and—with a grunt of disgust—jammed the outfit into his jacket.

He reached for his knife. He picked up the fish and slit the belly open, then severed the head and peeled the skin back down to the tail.

After awhile, feeling nourished and strong, the trader slung his tinkling and jangling packsack onto his back. The grassy low hills were vibrant with bird and insect noise as he walked steadily toward the house of old Mumbwe, his black friend. He felt like a tune.

Old black Mumbwe, there
Old black Mumbwe Jones
I'm a comin' through your fields
And passin' by your friends
And a comin' closer, old man bones;
I'm bringin' booze, yessiree—
Lot's of booze for you and me . . .

It was always nice to walk through this country. It was the best country he'd seen in all Africa. There were no stinging bees or ants, and there was plenty of water. And the animals, well, you just couldn't find friendlier creatures anywhere. You could walk up to any of them and touch them —they didn't mind. Of course, Socko Jones was the only one who could do it. And Mumbwe. Mumbwe, of course, was responsible for their mildness. He spoke to any and all creatures. He loved them all, even the snakes, even the lions.

Socko thought of these things as he drew nearer to the place of his companion. He smiled, remembering a night long ago, when he had mixed his blood with Mumbwe's. They had sat staring into a wonderful fire, seeing great lion hunts and watching long-forgotten tribes dancing clearly in the flames, and Socko was not afraid, because he knew the old man's magic was good and would not hurt him.

As he rounded a bend in the high grass, a puff-adder stood up on its tail importantly. "Look at me, trader!" it said. "Am I not a beautiful big snake?"

Socko squatted on his haunches. "Indeed you are," he said. "What business are you on, lovely friend?"

The reptile assumed a menacing position. It drew back, prepared to strike, and said, with a wicked smile "Oh, nothing important. I am merely seeking a man. I must kill him before sundown, you see, or old Mumbwe will change me back into a worm."

"What is his name?"

"Socko Jones," said the puff-adder. "Do you know him?"

Socko grinned. He scratched his white-thatched head, feigning embarrassment. "Poor little worm, forgive me; I killed him a short ways back, because he tried to steal my whiskey bottles."

"Aieeeee!" cried the puff-adder. "You lie!"

"No," said Socko. A second later there was a bluish flash and a loud pop, and on the trail—where the puff-adder had been—was a tiny, white worm, struggling indignantly.

He walked on. He wondered what pranks old Mumbwe would play on him next. It was always amusing, this walk from the river to the mud and reed house away up on the hill. You never knew what Mumbwe had in store for you.

At the bottom of the hill, Socko stopped. In front of him was the trail, sure enough, but square in the center of it was a huge thorn tree. The path went straight up to its base on the near side, and resumed again in an identical fashion on the opposite side. It was perfectly obvious that no animal had detoured runabout, since the blades of grass to either side were straight and juicy, and had not been stepped on. It was also perfectly clear, after a glance upwards, that nothing could have gone *over*.

Socko was about to go around, but there was a tremendous wail of terror as he lifted a foot.

The grass rippled as if in a high wind. "Please!" it cried. "Please don't walk on us!"

"What do you suggest?" the trader asked.

"You must be very wise," said the writhing blades. "You must be a great man, or old black Mumbwe wouldn't let you come see him so often. He even loves you enough to take one of your names for his own. Can't you find a way to get on the other side?"

"Perhaps," said Socko. "But I would have to drink much whiskey before I could think of something. I would need every bit that's in the pack to get a smart idea. It would all be gone, just to get around this tree, and that would be very sad, because I know old Mumbwe is sitting up there all alone, just waitin' for his booze to come. Too bad," he said, shaking his head, "I hate to drink it all, but—"

With a sharp sucking swish of air, the thorn tree vanished.

"Well!" cried Socko. "Isn't that wonderful . . ."

A few minutes later he stood in the doorway of Mumbwe's house. He patted its crumbling side.

"Hello, house. You are looking strong and happy today!"

"Thank you," breathed the warm mud and reed surface.

The trader eased the musical pack down off his sore, ancient shoulders, and went inside.

An hour later, the sun went down. Night came like the black leopard, stealing cautiously at first among the ravines and under the waiting acacias, and then coming on with a bold rush, covering, smothering, blotting out the life of day. The only warmth in that velvet expanse of forest and plain was a small, guttering fire in the house of old Mumbwe, turning first red, then amber, then brilliant gold as he tossed his powders into the flames. He hugged his treasures—empty whiskey flasks —against his thin, parchment chest, and dreamed of what mischief he would work on his long-dead friend Socko tomorrow, as he walked the path from the river to the hill, talking with the animals and birds, and singing the song he had made up so long ago.

Handscomb Luldow Satherwaite II, who seemed never to grow old, was president of Allied, a corporation which the word giant *would merely dwarf, manufacturers of four thousand products, employers of one hundred and ninety-three thousand happy toilers in its vineyards (metaphorically speaking); of which the hopeful and competent Jonathan Gerber was one. There are those—cynics, croakers—who would claim that at the top of any pyramid Tyranny has its abode. One day Jonathan Gerber's faithful service received its award, and he was able to see for himself—at last. The Byzantine Empire, historians declare, was kept alive for half a millenium by its bureauocracy alone.*

THE TOP

by George Sumner Albee

"9:07 A.M. TO JONATHAN GERber *from* L. Lester Leath," read the pale green memorandum slip on the desk. "Kindly save your day for me. Attached is an elevator pass for your permanent possession. Suggest you visit 13th Floor this morning, but no higher. LLL."

"So—after all these years," said Jonathan to himself as he drew the pass, the first he had ever actually touched, from its glassine envelope. It was, of course, a miniature pyramid. One metal surface bore the firm name, Allied, the other a photoengraving of his, Jonathan's, own head and shoulders. When or where he had been photographed he had no idea: recently, it must have been, for he was wearing a tie he had just bought; evidently the company police had caught him with a fast lens as he entered or left the building. "Miss Kindhands," he spoke to his secretary over the intercom, "cancel my appointments. Mr. Leath wants me to stand by."

The golden pyramid in his hand, he strode down the lustrous corridor to the elevator bank. "Thirteen," he said.

The elevator operator, though

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he had known his face and his fuzzy Harris tweed suit for years, faltered in alarm.

"It's all right," Jonathan assured him, and turned over his hand to show the pass.

"Yes, sir," said the man. He breathed the two words as a musician might breathe two soft, low notes on a flute. Then he came to attention, shut the bronze door and pushed his button.

"Fourteen years, or is it sixteen?" murmured Jonathan to himself, and descended, even as the elevator carried him upward in power and prestige, through the tiers of memory to his first days in the building.

He recalled, smiling, how he had had his doubts about the elevators. As morning after morning they had lifted him to the advertising department on the eighth floor he had felt against all reason that there was trickery, that he was being carried not up but down, down, down into catacombs beneath Allied's gigantic stepped-back pyramid. The little electric bulbs in the car blinking 1 and 2 and 3 had not convinced him he was travelling upward; the motion was so smooth nothing could be felt; when the noiseless door opened nobody could have said where he was. Long empty corridors, narrow as the galleries of a mine, stretched away without end, their plastic panels gleaming under the light from squares of milk glass in the ceiling. There were no windows anywhere in the building, and the radiance entering through the glass brick might have come from deftly concealed electric lamps; there was nothing to prove it was daylight.

"Fantasy," Jonathan had rebuked himself. "I'm lucky; phenomenally lucky. Here I am, only twenty-seven, at Allied! Anybody else would give his eye teeth to be where I am." Nowadays he used colloquialisms to capture more readers for his ads, but in the past he had used them innocently for pleasure.

He had been a copywriter in a New York advertising agency when one afternoon the firm's senior partners had called him in and told him that the almost legendary firm in Minnesota wanted to hire him. If Jonathan refused the paltry gift of himself, it had been made clear, the agency might henceforth find it embarrassing to employ him. So might other agencies. So, feeling like an Aztec youth chosen for the stone altar, honored but doubtful, he had taken the train for Minnesota, finding chocolates and crimson roses in his stateroom. Oh, there had been qualms.

Nor had his first impression of L. Lester Leath been reassuring. Leath's soundproof office with its pale gray paint and pale gray furniture, its glass brick glowing with the dim light that might be

sunshine and might not, had been rather like a bank of fog. And it had been difficult to tell where the fog left off and Leath himself began. His face was the color of mist, his hair might have been aluminum on which moisture had condensed, his white fingers had moved across his desk like small wraiths, while his voice had the soft, mournful boom of a deep-toned steamer whistle heard across miles of veiled sea.

It had taken Jonathan awhile to become accustomed to Leath's voice and its miracles of misty circumlocution. "What will my job be?" he had asked, and Leath had replied that jobs were for the lowly and words were not to be used inaccurately. "I mean, what will my work be?" Jonathan had corrected himself. And Leath had answered: "Work! Ah, work! It was work which made the fathers of our nation giants on the land. It was work which made America what it is today, the light and beacon of a troubled world. People have grown soft, they ask security. Ah, the best security, the only security is work." A third time, Jonathan had tried. And Leath had said: "What products will you advertise? My boy, Allied has no products. Let us say rather that Allied creates and develops semi-finished materials which enable small manufacturers, under the free enterprise system, to enrich or otherwise improve certain items for the ultimate benefit of the consumer, Mr. and Mrs. America. Your subject will be Allied itself. I have brought you to us because you have a nice flair for words. I was deeply stirred by your headline for the shotgun ad—*A Lad and His Dog.* And the little piece you wrote for the diaper people, what did you call it?—*Babies Are Fallen Stars.* Just give me words like that for Allied. Give me patriotism, friendship, nobility, love—"

Thus, fourteen years ago—could it be sixteen, could it be seventeen?—Jonathan had begun his task of writing, for millions of newspaper readers, little essays without subjects. When his first institutional copy appeared in print he had feared that people would laugh. But nobody had laughed. On the contrary, letters of praise had come in from every corner of the country. His ad which listed George Washington's virtues and named Allied as their modern inheritor had won the National Advertising Council's platinum-and-ruby medal. His ad stating that Allied conducted its business affairs according to precepts learned from a toilworn mother's lips by Honest Abe Lincoln had been singled out for a special scroll by the Junior Chamber of Commerce. Ever since, he had been writing such pieces with a growing appreciation of their worth, elo-

quence and dignity. And meanwhile L. Lester Leath had shown him only admiration and kindliness, and Allied had raised his salary from ten thousand dollars a year to seventeen-five and from seventeen-five to twenty-three-two. Each year he was awarded, in addition, a bonus of Class C preferred stock which he would forfeit only if he left the company before retirement age.

He was expected on the thirteenth floor. A burly young guard, in a gray uniform, no doubt a recruit from a college football squad, saluted him. "Mr. Gerber? I'm to show you anything you want to see," he said deferentially.

"I don't really know what I want to see, I'm afraid," said Jonathan, smiling. "This is my first visit."

"Mr. Leath said you might like me to introduce you to the divisional managers, sir."

"Then let's do that," replied Jonathan equably. "By all means."

The guard marched ahead, opening bronze doors. In fifteen divisional office suites Jonathan shook hands with eight bald thin men and seven bald fat men. These were not the directors. These were merely the decision-and-risk-takers, devoted family men who were paid a hundred thousand a year and died early, of coronary attacks. Jonathan inspected their graph room, their elaborate communications room, their restaurant, their small three-bed hospital. "I see the hospital has its own elevator," he observed to the guard. "If a man dies at his desk you can get him out of the building without anybody getting so much as a peek at him."

"The Planning Board doesn't slip up on many details, sir," replied the man.

Jonathan, in his fourth or fifth year with the company, had had a personal encounter with Allied's precision technique for just such fatalities. One day in the elevator an engineer named Jacks had paled, gasped and fallen. While Jonathan knelt over him the operator had stopped the car between floors, telephoning calmly to the starter in the lobby for instructions; then the cage had dropped fast and deep into the cellars. Guards with a stretcher had met it.

"I'm afraid he's dead," Jonathan had said.

"Oh, no sir," the chief guard had replied. "He's fainted, that's all, or else he's indisposed."

"You'll get him right to a doctor?"

"Just step back into the car, sir," the chief had said.

That had been all there was to it. Later Jonathan had been unable to pry an unequivocal answer from the elevator operator, from the guards, from anybody. On the obituary page of the newspaper, on the third day, there

had been a brief paragraph to the effect that one D. M. Jacks, engineer "of this city," had passed away, but not so much as a word had indicated that the man worked for Allied. Jacks had simply disappeared. The company did not ignore death, it by-passed it. When a man died his assistant took his place. In a corporation with tens of thousands of employes somebody was bound to die every day, and work could not be repeatedly interrupted.

Back once more on his own floors, Jonathan put his head into Leath's handsomely decorated anteroom. "If he wants me," he said, "I'm back."

"The doctor is with him now," said Miss Tablein, Leath's confidential secretary. "But stay near your phone, please."

At his desk, with nothing to do but wait and stare at the reader-acceptance graphs on the wall, Jonathan asked himself what could be in the wind. Leath was anything but impulsive; the permanent pass, the visit to Thirteen were in themselves a promotion. Nothing lay above Thirteen but Fourteen, since nobody at all was permitted to go up to Fifteen where the president's suite filled the pyramid's tip. Was he, Jonathan wondered, actually to join the Planning Board? He could rise no higher in the advertising department without taking Leath's own job.

He would have the answer soon enough, he told himself, whatever it might be. With a shrug he took the pass from his pocket, scrutinized his likeness on it, and laughed. Gone, gone were the waxen curls of youth! In reminiscent, sentimental mood he tried to recall how he had looked at twenty-seven. He could not manage it. "But I do remember," he said to himself with a smile, "that I was skeptical. Oh, was I skeptical!" He had, he remembered, in his suspicion of the elevators, actually paced off the corridors to make sure the lower floors of the pyramid were broader than the upper. He had done worse than that. He had played truant from his desk to explore the cellars—finding, of course, nothing evil, finding nothing at all.

Then—Jonathan recalled, smiling—having learned what he could about the building he had tried to discover what Allied's products were. Flair for words or not, it had seemed absurd to him at first to write ads without knowing what they were about. And he had been able to learn a little. He had found, for example, that the company's four thousand products bore alphabetic names ranging from *Aab*, an adulterant for milk-shakes, to *Zyz*, which were rotors for tractor magnetos. But his collection of *Aabs* and *Zyzes* had soon bored him.

The buzzer on his desk, tuned to G Sharp, sounded. With the dexterity of practice Jonathan lifted his telephone from its cradle and perched it like a parrakeet on his shoulder.

"Gerber here," he said.

It was Leath's secretary. "The doctor is still with him," she said. "His ulcers must be unusually bad this morning, or maybe he's been hearing the ticking again. But I have some instructions for you. Kindly have your lunch, make a tour of Fourteen at one o'clock and report back here at two."

"What's cooking, Miss Tablein?" Jonathan asked her. The secretaries regarded slang as evidence of democracy and passed the word around that you were adorable, if you used it. A girl worked away her fingernails and her youth for a boss who was sufficiently adorable.

"I don't know," Miss Tablein answered. "It must be important, though. A Major Project."

"I eat my lunch at twelve with the Junior Executive Group, you know. The directors don't go out to lunch until a quarter past one. If I go up to Fourteen while they're out the place will be deserted. What does he want me to do up there, do you know?"

"Just look around, I guess," said Miss Tablein. "I wish I were going with you. Mr. Gerber, promise me one thing. Promise me, when you get back, you'll tell me if Mr. Waffen really has a gold-plated toilet seat."

"I will," promised Jonathan; but he knew he would not tell.

He ate lunch with two of his assistants, younger men still in their indoctrination period. The grapevine telegraph, he discovered to his amusement, had already tapped out the news of his golden pass. The boys showed him scrubbed, bright, eager faces; they writhed each time he opened his mouth, out of respect.

Shortly after one he rode up to Fourteen in the elevator. It was noticeably smaller than Thirteen; evidently the step-back was sharper than it appeared from the street. Another guard, saluting, informed him that there were eight directors' offices and a conference room, and that he was free to go anywhere he liked. "They're worth seeing, sir," he added. And they were. Several offices had barber chairs, gigantic television receivers and bars stocked with private blends. One had a cigar humidor the size of a bank vault, one a target range for air pistols, one a Finnish *sauna* bath. The most interesting was a room which duplicated the afterdeck of a cabin cruiser, complete with angling chair and a rack for rods and reels. Not an assistant, not a secretary was to be seen. Not a memorandum desecrated the rich polished wood of the vast desks.

"Tell me," Jonathan said to the guard, "how often do these Planning Board men come in?"

"Well, they're here for the annual meeting, sir," replied the man. "Otherwise they come in only when Mr. Satherwaite sends for them, I guess." Hanscomb Ludlow Satherwaite II was Allied's president, who had his suite in the point of the pyramid and who was photographed, growing no older in the photographs from year to year, but never seen.

"Do any of them live in Minnesota? Forgive my curiosity. This is my first visit."

The guard chuckled. "Why, sir, you're forgetting they all have planes and pilots nowadays. Mr. Ippinger, now, he has four hundred thousand acres in Louisiana he keeps for the shrimping, so he lives there. Mr. Latchwell owns an island off the coast of Mexico; he has a castle and a little army; that's why he wears his red and blue uniforms and his leather boots with the stars on them."

"I've seen Mr. Latchwell in the elevators, of course."

Jonathan at one time or another had glimpsed most of the portly, imposing directors. There was one, undoubtedly the fisherman, who wore white canvas trousers and a white cap with a green celluloid bill. Another went bare-toed in rawhide sandals for his health. There was method behind their little eccentricities, of course; they put them on as a demonstration of equality, as wise old Leath had patiently explained to him more than once.

Thanking the guard, he went down again. "It's 1:55," he said, putting his bald head into Leath's anteroom.

"Come in and wait here," said Miss Tablein, peering over her glasses. "Tell me. Oh, you must tell me! Is it really—"

"Our directors work much too hard," said Jonathan, his tone disapproving, "for any such nonsense. But of course I understand you were just having a little fun."

"Oh, I did so want to know!"

Was Miss Tablein's loyalty questionable? She might just possibly, said Jonathan to himself, prove to be a dangerous fellow worker. He read *Dear Folks,* the Allied house organ, until the signal lamp flashed and Miss Tablein said he might go in. Good news or bad—and he scarcely saw how it could be bad—he would have it now.

"Good afternoon, my son," said L. Lester Leath.

His face was as white as a sheet of the *Gga* the company manufactured as an intermediate for the dentifrice industry, and smudged with shadow. One corner of his mouth sagged. His left eye was an owl's, the pupil enormous and fierce.

"Lester!" cried Jonathan, shocked. "You're ill!"

"I'm not ill, I'm dying," replied the advertising manager without emotion. "I will die at my desk this afternoon, presumably within the next five or ten minutes."

"Let me drive you home!"

"No; I want it this way," said Leath in a voice that was a wisp of fog. "I want my death, as well as my life, to be a demonstration of service to Allied and all that it stands for. But time is short, my son. Tomorrow morning an Inter-Office Memo, Form 114B Blue, will announce that you are succeeding me as chief of the department. You'll start at fifty thousand. Your stock bonus will be comparable."

"Thank you, Lester."

"Your first act of office, I hope, will be to hire an assistant who blazes with our sacred fire. I suggest that you do what I did—comb the agencies for a young Jonathan Gerber and train him, as for twenty-one years I have trained you."

It was a gray afternoon. No sunlight at all was filtering through the glass brick. The room, it seemed to Jonathan, was crowded with bars of fog lying one on top of another like two-by-twelves stacked in a lumber yard. In dimness, in shimmer and shadow L. Lester Leath's face came and went, an image floating free in space, bobbling lazily like a barrel on a foggy sea.

"It's been such a joy to serve Allied that I haven't counted the years," said Jonathan. He had learned well. Such pronouncements were now effortless for him. But it was a bit of a blow nevertheless: "Has it really been so long?" he asked.

"It has, my son," said Leath, the sagging lip blurring his voice. "And I know I leave the department in good hands. Did you go up to Thirteen?"

"Yes; of course."

"Fourteen?"

"Of course. It was your order."

Leath swayed. With an effort he gathered together his failing energy. "Before you take over," he said, his voice fading, "there is one more thing, one final rite. You must meet our President. Go up to Fifteen." He sagged on his executive's posture chair.

"Lester!" Jonathan sprang forward.

Ever so slowly, Leath raised a white forefinger towards the ceiling. "Fifteen," he whispered, and died.

Tenderly Jonathan closed behind him the soundproof door that was now his own. "Miss Tablein," he said, "please call the janitor. Mr. Leath is no longer with Allied."

Down the corridor, at the elevator bank, a car appeared the instant he pressed the button, almost as if news of his eminence had somehow travelled down the

dark shaft along the bell wire. "The top," he directed the operator brusquely, exhibiting his pass the merest flick.

The little lamps blinked; the door slid open.

"But I said I wanted the top," Jonathan protested indignantly. He was the advertising manager; he earned fifty thousand a year; his time was too valuable to Allied for him to permit a menial to waste it. "This is Fourteen, not Fifteen."

"Sorry, sir," said the operator. "This is as high as we go. Speak to the guard."

"I will indeed!" shouted Jonathan. The guard was already at his elbow; the chap who had conducted him through the director's suites. "What is this?" Jonathan demanded of him. "I want Fifteen, damn it!"

"Quite right, sir. Over here, sir," said the guard. He led the way to a plain bronze door with neither knob nor keyhole. "Just drop your pass into this slot. It operates an electrical circuit and opens the door. You do the same thing on the other side when you come down."

"Do you mean to say," asked Jonathan, incredulous, "Mr. Satherwaite walks this last flight each time he comes up here?"

"I've never seen him, sir, but he must."

From coast to coast hundreds of Allied plants were awhir, a hundred and ninety-three thousand Allied fellow workers were turning out four thousand products. Here at the center of the country sat this colossal pyramid which was the center of the whole thing; here on the topmost floor of the pyramid clicked the mind which in its genius comprehended and guided all. And here, here was he, Jonathan Gerber, about to shake the hand of supremacy! Eyes alight, shoulders squared, Jonathan dropped his pass into the thin slot, walked through the door and shut it after him.

Facing him was a simple staircase of painted steel with a handrail. Climbing it, past rough walls of orange hollow tile which had not been plastered, he marveled. How fitting that Mr. Satherwaite, with his immeasurable power, should despise its trappings! Many and many a time, in his writings, Jonathan had said that Allied's president was a simple man, and as always the fiction had created the fact: he was. At the top of the staircase he stepped onto a bare concrete floor littered with scraps of building paper, pots of dried paint and dead flies. The air smelt like a Stilton cheese. Trying a door at his left, he peered into a black cavern in which greased steel elevator cables slipped over great spoked wheels. He tried a door at his right and gazed into another cavern exactly like it.

For five minutes, for ten, he stood in the musty heat turning slowly round and round, looking for he knew not what—a secret door, a cache, a blackboard on which his predecessors might have left, if nothing more, at least their signatures. But he saw only the paint pots, the flies and four small windows like round eyes, one in each inward-sloping wall. Cobwebs and grime covered the windows; but here and there on them, he saw, the scurf had been rubbed away, as by a sleeved elbow. Stepping to the nearest he broadened the clear spot on it and looked out.

He saw a segment of the town, which might have been a ramshackle clutter of blackened boards, and, beyond that, the endless plain of Minnesota. And he saw, something he had forgotten, that it was winter on the prairie. Dry snow, driven by the wind, smoked over farmhouses and fences. Where the land could be seen at all, it was blue with cold. And more snow was coming, and more cold. For it was true that summer was a vacation, an interlude; winter was the reality, the constant companion; winter lay ever a few miles to the north, waiting to reclaim its property. Blue lay the earth, veined with white like the deep sea, and the veins were ice.

"So cold, so cold—" murmured Jonathan, and shivered.

And, slapping the dust from his warm, fuzzy tweed suit, he summoned as raiment for his face awe and dedication in the proper proportions and tramped down the staircase, his heels ringing on the painted steel, bits of plaster gritty as sand beneath his sole. His hand, all the way, cherished the safety-rail.

"This would be no time to slip and fall," he warned himself cautiously. "No, no, I mustn't slip now."

COMING NEXT MONTH . . .

SPECIAL THEODORE STURGEON ISSUE

(on sale August 2)

A lady reader, protesting the absence from the April issue of Ferdinand Feghoot, warned us that we "musn't let Asimov have all the puns." That savant himself describes the title of this article as being one of his "less unbearable" efforts in this line—which is as it may be. "Light," as used by Lord Byron in the phrase's first appearance, was not a noun, but an adjective describing a dance step. Dr. A.—like the poetic peer a master of language and an admirer of pretty insteps—with his usual insouciance, converts the phrase to his own uses . . . some of which are pretty damned fantastic, at that. And, of course, fascinating.

THE LIGHT FANTASTIC

by Isaac Asimov

WHEN I WAS YOUNG, WE CHILDREN USED TO LISTEN TO SOMETHING called "radio." It's a hard thing to describe to the modern population, but if you imagine a television set with the picture-tube permanently out of order, you've got the essentials.

On the radio set, there was a dial you could turn in order to tune in the various stations and the dial had markings numbered from 55 to 160. As far as I know, nobody I knew had any idea what those numbers meant—or cared.

A particular radio station might describe itself as possessing "880 kilocycles" and, eventually, I deduced that the numbers on the radio dial referred to tens of kilocycles, but again I never bumped into anyone (when I was young) who knew or cared with a kilocycle was.

In fact, as I look back upon it now, I don't think I knew or cared myself. I could dial any radio station I wanted with quick sureness and I had the radio schedule memorized. What more could I want?

And yet, if you consider the dial of a radio set, and proceed by free association, you can end up with some pretty amazing matters, as I shall try to show you.

I'll begin with waves.

The most important waves in the universe are set up by oscillating electric charges. Since all electric charges have associated magnetic fields, the radiating waves produced in this fashion are called "electromagnetic." Electromagnetic waves radiate outward from the point of origin, moving at the velocity of light; which is not surprising, since light is itself an electromagnetic radiation.

Each oscillation of the electric charge back and forth gives rise to a single wave and from this fact we can calculate the length of the wave to which it gives rise. The length of a wave is called, with commendable simplicity, the "wavelength" and it is usually symbolized by the Greek letter "lambda." I know better than to present the printer with any such demand and so I will use "w" as the symbol for wavelength.

Now suppose the electric charge oscillates once per second. By the time the end of the wave is formed at the completion of the oscillation, the beginning of the wave has been speeding out through space at the velocity of light for one full second. The velocity of light in a vacuum is 186,200 miles per second or, in the metric system, which I shall use exclusively in this article, 300,000 kilometers per second. If, therefore, it takes a second to form the wave, the beginning of the wave is 300,000 kilometers ahead of the end of the wave and the wavelength is 300,000 kilometers.

Suppose the electric charge oscillates twice per second. Then in one second two waves are formed. Together they stretch out over 300,000 kilometers and each wave is 150,000 kilometers long; 150,000 kilometers is therefore the wavelength.

If the electric charge oscillates ten times per second, each wave is 30,000 kilometers long. If it oscillates fifty times per second the wavelength is 6,000 kilometers and so on.

The number of oscillations per second can be called the "frequency" and this is usually symbolized by the Greek letter "nu." I will use the letter "f."

As you see what I have been doing in order to work out the wavelength of electromagnetic radiation is to divide the velocity of light

(usually represented by "c") by the frequency of the radiation. Put this in equation form and you have:

$$w = c/f$$

If you know the wavelength and want to find the frequency, you need only solve for "f" in the equation above, and you have:

$$f = c/w$$

Thus, if the wavelength is 15 kilometers, then the frequency is 300,000/15 or 20,000 oscillations per second.

A frequency of one oscillation per second can be described as one cycle. A frequency of a thousand oscillations per second can be described as one kilocycle (the prefix "kilo-" being used in the metric system to represent "one thousand"). If then, radio station WNBC in New York is located at 660 kilocycles (or at 66 on the dial) then that means the wave it puts out has a frequency of 660,000 oscillations per second. The wavelength of those waves is 300,000/660,000 or 0.455 kilometers. This is equivalent to 455 meters.

In the same way, we can calculate the wavelengths of the waves put out by some other New York radio stations:

	Kilocycles	*Wavelength (meters)*
WOR	710	425
WABC	770	390
WNYC	830	360
WCBS	880	340
WNEW	1,130	265
WQXR	1,560	190

Notice that the wavelength gets shorter as the kilocycles increase; which is why, if we go up high enough on the dial, we end up with "short-wave radio." One way of expressing this relationship is to say that frequency and wavelength are inversely proportional to each other; as one goes up, the other goes down.

An electromagnetic radiation can have any wavelength, as far as we know, since a charged particle can oscillate at any frequency. There is no upper limit to the wavelength, certainly, for the oscillation can be

slowed down to zero, in which case the wavelength approaches the infinite.

On the other hand, electric charges can be made to oscillate millions of times per second by man. Atoms can oscillate trillions of times a second. Electrons can oscillate quadrillions and even quintillions of times per second. Nuclear particles can oscillate sextillions and even septillions of times per second. Wavelengths can get shorter and shorter, with no limit in theory.

The properties of electromagnetic radiation vary with frequency. For one thing, the radiation is put out in discrete little bundles called "quanta" and the energy content of one quantum of a particular radiation is in direct proportion to its frequency. As frequency goes up (and wavelength down) the radiation becomes more energetic and can interact more thoroughly with matter.

Short-wave radiation may knock electrons out of metals where longer-wave, less energetic, radiation will not, and this is known as the photoelectric effect. (Einstein explained the rationale behind the photoelectric effect in 1905, the same year in which he first advanced his theory of relativity; and when he got his Nobel Prize in 1921, it was for explaining the photoelectric effect, *not* for relativity.)

Again, short-wave radiation will bring about certain chemical changes where long-wave radiation will not, which is why you can develop ordinary photographic film under a red light. The red light radiations are too low in energy to affect the negative.

Certain ranges of radiation are energetic enough to affect the retina of the eye and give us the sensation we call light. Radiation less energetic cannot be seen, but the energy can be absorbed by the skin and felt as heat. Radiation more energetic cannot be seen either, but can damage the retina and burn the skin.

It is convenient for physicists to divide the entire range of electromagnetic radiation (the "electromagnetic spectrum") into arbitrary regions, and here they are in the order of increasing frequency and energy and, therefore, of decreasing wavelength.

1) *Micropulsations.* These have frequencies of less than 1 cycle and, therefore, wavelengths of more than 300,000 kilometers. Such radiation has been detected with frequencies of as little as 0.01 cycle. This means that one oscillation takes 100 seconds and the wavelength is 30,000,000 kilometers, or three-fourths of the way from here to Venus at its closest, which isn't bad for one wave.

2) *Radio waves.* In its broadest sense, this would include everything

with frequencies from 1 cycle to 1 billion (10^9) cycles, and with wavelengths from 300,000 kilometers down to 30 centimeters. Actually, long-wave radio makes use of frequencies from 550,000 cycles to 1,600,000 cycles and wavelengths from 550 meters down to 185 meters. Short-wave radio uses wavelengths in the 30 meter range, and television in the 3 meter range.

3) *Micro waves.* The frequencies are from 1 billion (10^9) to 100 billion (10^{11}) cycles and the wavelengths are from 30 centimeters to 0.3 centimeters. The radiation detected by radio telescopes is in this range and the radiation of the neutral hydrogen atom (the famous "song of hydrogen") has a wavelength of 21 centimeters. Radar also makes use of this range.

4) *Infrared rays.* The frequencies are from 100 billion (10^{11}) cycles to nearly a quadrillion (10^{14} plus) cycles and the wavelengths run from 0.3 centimeters to 0.000076 centimeters. Infrared wavelengths are usually measured in microns, a micron being a ten-thousandth of a centimeter, so the infrared wavelength range can be said to extend from 3,000 microns down to 0.76 microns.

5) *Visible light rays.* These include a short stretch of frequencies just under the quadrillion mark (10^{15} minus), with wavelengths from 0.76 microns to 0.38 microns. Light wavelengths are usually measured in Angstrom units, one Angstrom unit being equal to a ten-thousandth of a micron. Thus, the wavelengths of visible light range from 7,600 Angstrom units down to 3,800 Angstrom units.

6) *Ultraviolet rays.* These include frequencies from a quadrillion (10^{15}) cycles up to nearly a hundred quadrillion (10^{17} minus) cycles, and the wavelengths run from 3,800 Angstrom units down to about 100 Angstrom units.

7) *X-rays.* These include frequencies from nearly a hundred quadrillion (10^{17} minus) up to a hundred quintillion (10^{20}), with wavelengths ranging from 100 Angstrom units down to 0.1 Angstrom units.

8) *Gamma rays.* These make up the frequencies that are more than a hundred quadrillion (10^{20}) cycles and wavelengths less than 0.1 Angstrom units.

Actually, the dividing lines are anything but sharp, and x-rays and gamma rays, in particular, overlap generously. People speak of a particular frequency as being an x-ray if it is created in an x-ray tube and as a gamma ray if it is produced by a nuclear reaction. You can have soft gamma rays with wavelengths some 300 times as long as the hardest x-rays. However, a particular wavelength has a particular energy and a particular set of properties regardless of what you call it: x-ray, gamma

ray, or herring. By setting the boundary between x-rays and gamma rays at a frequency of a hundred quintillion cycles, I merely cut the overlap in half and am perfectly willing to admit the boundary is arbitrary.

Now this is a bewildering array of frequencies and wavelengths and I wouldn't be me if I didn't look for an easier way of presenting it. The easier way is drawn from usage in connection with sound-waves. Sound-waves are not electromagnetic in nature, but they, too, have wavelengths and frequencies concerning which, if you are curious, you can read up on in my article NOW HEAR THIS! (F & SF, December, 1960).

We detect differences in the frequency of sound waves, at least in the audible range, by differences in the pitch we hear. It is conventional in our culture to write music using a series of notes with fixed frequencies. I will begin with the note on the piano which is called "middle C" and give its frequency and that of successive notes as we proceed toward the right on the keyboard, considering white keys only:

do — 264	la — 440	fa — 704
re — 297	ti — 495	sol — 792
mi — 330	do — 528	la — 880
fa — 352	re — 594	ti — 990
sol — 396	mi — 660	do — 1,056

Notice that the frequency of each "do" is just twice the frequency of the preceding one. In fact, starting anywhere on the keyboard, one can progress through seven notes of increasing frequency and end with an eighth note of just twice the frequency of the first. Such a stretch is called an "octave" from the Latin word for "eight."

Applying this to any wave form in general, one can speak of an octave as applying to any continuous region stretching from a frequency of x to one of $2x$. Since wavelength is inversely proportional to frequency, every time a frequency is doubled, a wavelength is halved. Every region stretching from a wavelength of y to one of $y/2$ is also an octave, therefore.

So we can break up the electromagnetic spectrum into octaves. As an example, the longest wavelengths of visible light are 7,600 Angstrom units, while the shortest are 3,800 Angstrom units. The shortest wavelengths are just half the longest and so the range covered by visible light is equal to one octave of the electromagnetic spectrum.

Since there is no upper or lower limit to the frequencies of the electromagnetic spectrum, the number of octaves is, theoretically, infinite. However, suppose we consider a wavelength of 30,000,000 kilometers as the practical maximum, since this is the longest micropulsation detected, and a wavelength of 0.0001 Angstrom units as the practical minimum since beyond that lie the energy ranges associated with cosmic rays which are particulate rather than electromagnetic in nature (see THE BUG-EYED VONSTER, F & SF, June, 1960).

The number of times you must halve 30,000,000 kilometers to reach 0.0001 Angstrom units is 81. (Try it and see, and remember that 1 kilometer equals 10,000,000,000,000 Angstrom units.) The portion of the electromagnetic spectrum I have marked off, therefore, is 81 octaves long, and of that length, we see exactly 1 octave with our eyes.

Now let's measure off the confusing divisions of the electromagnetic spectrum in octaves and the picture will be much simpler:

	Octaves
micropulsations	6½
radio waves	30
micro waves	6½
infrared rays	12
visible light rays	1
ultraviolet rays	5
x-rays	10
gamma rays	10
total	81

As you see, two-thirds of the octaves are longer-wave and, therefore, less energetic than light. In fact, the radio wave region at its broadest takes up a third of the octaves of the spectrum. Actually, though, only about 12 octaves altogether are used for radio and television communications.

Still that makes up about 15 percent of the total number of octaves and as our needs for communication increase with the developing space age, how much room for expansion can there be?

The answer is: Plenty!

To see why that is, let's consider this matter of octaves further. In the realm of sound, the ear finds all octaves equal. In each one, there

is room for seven different notes (plus sharps and flats, of course) before the next octave begins.

This is not so, however, as far as communication by electromagnetic waves is concerned. As one goes up the electromagnetic spectrum in the direction of increasing frequency, each octave has more room than the one before.

Each television channel emits a carrier wave which it modifies, these modifications being converted into sight and sound at the receiving television set. In order for two channels not to interfere with each other, they must have frequencies that are not too close. They can't be anywhere near as closely spaced as the radio stations with which I began this article, for instance. The width of a standard television channel is 4,000,000 cycles (or 4 megacycles, a megacycle being equal to a million cycles).

The television channels fall at the short-wave end of the radio wave region, in the range of frequencies of 100,000,000 cycles (100 megacycles) and wavelengths of about 3 meters.

Consider an octave in this region of frequencies; say a stretch of the spectrum from a frequency of 80 megacycles to one of 160 megacycles. This covers a width of 80 megacycles and if television channels are spaced at 4 megacycle intervals, there is room for 20 channels.

In the next octave up, from 160 to 320 megacycles there is room for 40 channels. In the one after that, from 320 to 640 megacycles, there is room for 80 channels.

The number of television channels per octave of electromagnetic radiation doubles for each successive octave as one moves up the scale in the direction of increasing frequency. In fact, each octave of electromagnetic radiation contains about as much room for television channels as do all the preceding octaves put together.

What about visible light, then? There is only one octave of visible light, but it is roughly twenty-two octaves higher than the one used for television. There is thus 2^{22} times as much room for television channels in the octave light as in the octave ordinarily used for television. The figure, 2^{22}, represents the product of twenty-two 2's, and that comes to over four million. (Multiply them out for yourself. don't take my word for it.)

In other words, for every channel available in the usual television portion of the electromagnetic spectrum, there would be some four million channels available in the visible light portion.

We can break this down in more detail. The visible spectrum con-

tains a number of colors that fade one into the other as one goes up or down the scale. Actually, the eye can distinguish among a great number of shades and there are no sharp boundaries. Nevertheless, it is customary to divide the visible spectrum into six colors, which, in order of increasing frequency are red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and violet. And each color is considered as stretching over a certain range of frequency. The situation might be presented thus:

	Wavelength range (Angstrom units)	*Frequency range (megacycles)*
red	7,600 to 6,300	400,000,000 to 475,000,000
orange	6,300 to 5,900	475,000,000 to 510,000,000
yellow	5,900 to 5,600	510,000,000 to 540,000,000
green	5,600 to 4,900	540,000,000 to 615,000,000
blue	4,900 to 4,500	615,000,000 to 670,000,000
violet	4,500 to 3,800	670,000,000 to 800,000,000

Remembering that the width of a standard television channel is only 4 megacycles, then we can set up the following table:

	Width of frequency band (megacycles)	*Number of television channels possible*
red	75,000,000	19,000,000
orange	35,000,000	9,000,000
yellow	30,000,000	7,000,000
green	75,000,000	19,000,000
blue	55,000,000	14,000,000
violet	130,000,000	32,000,000
	total	100,000,000

Well, then, why not use light-waves as carriers for television broadcasts?

Until two years ago, this was a suggestion that could have only theoretical interest. The carrier waves set up for ordinary radio-television communication can be produced in perfect phase. They form an orderly succession of waves, that can be neatly modified in any fashion.

Light-waves, however, cannot be set up so neatly in phase; at least not until two years ago. It is quite impractical to try to oscillate an

electric circuit five hundred trillion times a second, which is what would be required to send out a beam of visible light. The electrons within an atom must be relied upon for such an oscillation. Heat is poured into them and it is liberated as electromagnetic radiation, much of which (because of their natural rate of oscillation) is in the form of visible light. In other words you can make light by starting a fire.

The only trouble is that the various heated atoms, give off radiation each in its own good time, and the wavelength is not fixed but can be varied over a wide range, and the quantum is fired out in any direction. Thus, the emitted light waves are so much out of phase that most of their energy is cancelled and converted into heat; they spread out widely in every direction and cover a broad range of the spectrum. In short, the light produced is good enough to see by, but not good enough to serve as a carrier wave for TV.

However, in 1960, instruments were devised into which energy could be pumped and then, when a sparking bit of light was allowed to enter, all converted into light of the same wavelength, and all in phase. The device could be so constructed that all the light would emerge in the same direction, too.

The beam of intense light that is produced by such a device would stick together (it would be "coherent") and it would possess an extremely narrow band of wavelengths (it would be "monochromatic"). The process by which a bit of light sparks the conversion of energy into a lot of light is called "*l*ight *a*mplification by stimulated *e*mission of *r*adiation" and, by taking the indicated initials, the instrument was named a "laser." (In case you are interested, a word constructed out of the initials of a phase is called an "acronym.")

Of course, even so, the use of light as television carrier-waves presents difficulties. In the range of the electromagnetic spectrum currently used for television, the radiation can penetrate buildings and go through ordinary obstacles. Visible light can't do this. You would need a clear and unobstructed view of the TV station before you could receive a program.

It is possible however that light might be sent through plastic pipes, from which leads could reach each television set in the area. (Does that mean the streets all get dug up, or will the pipes run along telephone poles, or what?)

On the other hand, television by laser would be ideal out in space, where ship could reach ship or space station through the uninterrupted reaches of vacuum, and each ship could have a television channel reserved all for itself. It would be a long time before we had more than a

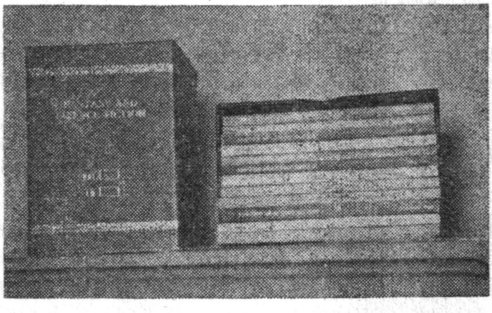
hundred million ships out in space, so there would be no crowding. Then, even if we did, the ultra-violet portion of the spectrum would give room for about six billion more channels.

Of course, there is something else—

These days, when I watch television here at home, I have my choice of four channels that I can get with reasonable clearness and audibility. Even with only four channels at their disposal, however, the television moguls can supply me with a tremendous quantity of rubbish.

Imagine what the keen minds of our entertainment industry could do if they realized they had a hundred million channels into which they could funnel new and undreamed-of varieties of trash.

Maybe we ought to stop right now!



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BOOKS

AND SO, AT LAST, I MUST SAY goodbye to this department. I feel that I've exhausted my usefulness to FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION, and, alas, exhausted my patience with science fiction. Since I've been repeatedly accused of being waspish in my reviews (one exasperated reader suggested that I was going through Change of Life), I felt that I'd better get out before I became downright crabbed.

And yet, you know, I reject the charge of waspishness. To repeat myself for the last time, I've always believed that science fiction is merely one of many forms of literature, entitled to no more nor less consideration than its sisters receive, subject to criticism by the same standards, yardsticks, and ideals that apply to the entire world of letters.

I've attempted to understand the purpose and methods of the authors reviewed, and to treat them as I would like to be treated myself; as fellow professionals, colleagues in a tough trade which only the practitioners can understand. They have sometimes been annoyed when I've pointed out what I considered to be flaws or carelessnesses in their work. I can't understand this. When one is a professional, one discusses the material under consideration realistically, impervious to the demands of vanity or pride, whether the work is another's or your own.

I don't by any means imply that this childishness is displayed by science fiction authors alone. It plagues all other fields. I've worked with playwrights so neurotically compelled to preserve their pride that they have sacrificed their productions rather than consider (much less accept) valuable suggestions for changes and improvement. But, too many science fiction authors are unprofessional.

On the other hand, too many science fiction readers are too professional as fans. They are deeply offended by criticism in any form, feeling that this is an attack on their status. Ingrained inferiority haunts them, as well it might, for anyone who feels so passionately about a single (almost minuscule) form of literature, demonstrates that this is probably the only form of literature he reads.

But there are contemporary novels, classics, plays, stories, articles; there's music to listen to, concerts, operas, ballet scores; there are museums and exhibits; there's the living theater, as well as motion pictures and television . . . If one is exposed to the full spectrum of the arts, one cannot help but see science fiction in true perspective, and lose the parochial passion which too many fans display.

I've lost patience with science fiction because it has become necessary to read so many damned bad books before a tolerable one comes along. It has been my experience in the arts that most people on the outside firmly believe there's a wicked conspiracy to keep talent out. Nothing could be farther from the truth. There is a never-ending search for talent, and we break our backs trying to develop anyone who shows the slightest promise.

But what has discouraged me most is the fierce pride of ownership displayed by many authors and fans. They feel that they own science fiction. It's their pet to play with as they choose, and no adult is permitted to enter the nursery, much less touch the toys. This is very sad. One can never possess an art form; one must be possessed by it. And this is what is in science fiction that is breaking my heart.

I love and respect literature in all forms. I am humbly dedicated to my profession, and determined to turn myself into the damned best writer that I can be. I am owned by my craft, and am constantly grateful when I'm permitted to do service for it. To me service means aid and comfort to my colleagues, and communication with them and the reading public. But what am I to do when both reject communication on an adult professional level?

I've failed, I'm afraid, and am willing to accept my full share of blame if anyone cares to point it out. But please point with a professional finger.

To the professional colleagues and reasoning readers with whom I've been in communication, my regards and respects. I hope I've been able to interest and entertain you.

To the shrill minority inevitably outraged by frankness, I offer this final story. A guy complained to a girl that the trouble with women was the fact that they took everything that was said personally. She answered: "Well, I'm sure *I* don't."

Please don't.

—Alfred Bester

NINE HORRORS AND A DREAM, **Joseph Payne Brennan, Ballantine, 35¢**

THE DRAWINGS OF HEINRICH KLEY, **Heinrich Kley, Dover, $1.98**

FACT AND FANCY, Isaac Asimov, Doubleday, $3.95

THE SIXTH GALAXY READER, H. L. Gold, Doubleday, $3.95

OUTPOSTS IN SPACE, Wallace West, Avalon, $2.95

HOSPITAL STATION, James White, Ballantine, 50¢

ADEL HITRO, Charles Haas, Vantage, $2.95

When we were invested with the White Staff of Office and became executive editor of The Magazine, Alfred Bester, its books editor, tendered his resignation "in order [as he graciously put it] to give Avram a free hand." We thanked him with what we hope was equal grace; and asked him to withdraw the resignation, as we did not desire that hand to be free to deal with the books department, it having too many other demands upon it right then. Mr. Bester agreed to hold his quittance in abeyance. Half a year or so has elapsed since then, and Mr. Bester has resubmitted his desire to be relieved, this time with a rather firm note in his voice. And, goodbyes disposed of, he withdraws himself upon an assignment for *Holiday* magazine into the depths of Philadelphia, knowing full well that upon our last visit to the Cradle of American Liberty we were so badly stung by a pepperpot soup that we dare not venture to follow him. For the time being, at least, then, we ourself will assume the charge of the book reviews, as did our predecessor's predecessor, the august Anthony Boucher. If we cannot hope to equal Messrs. Bester and Boucher (softly flitting through our mind is the image of a firm called Bester, Boucher, Canticle, and Leibowitz: Are they Soliciters? Corn Factors? Dealers in Intangibles—soft ones? No use, the image is gone, and just as well, too), we will do our lopsided utmost to provide such service as will at least prevent throngs of maddened readers from storming the office and demanding our head upon a pike. To Mr. Bester

go our repeated thanks for a good show: To our readers, the confidence that they will bite the bullet and bear with us, and not call for madder music or for stronger wine. Thank you.

—**Avram Davidson**

It slid through the soft ooze like a monstrous mantle of slime obscenely animated by questing life. . . . the smell was overpowering. It was a heavy, fulsome fetid, alien and utterly repellent. So runs "The Slime", a story in Mr. Joseph Payne Brennan's NINE HORRORS. We didn't think anyone had written anything like that since Howard Philips Lovecraft, barricaded in his Providence attic, was communicating with elder gods and eldritch horrors. The book is dedicated *To The Memory of Weird Tales, 1923-1954,* and this a fair hint to its contents. Don't think that we are panning the book; there are too many punk paperbacks for us to waste time and space on them. It is not a *very* good book, to our taste, but neither is it a very bad one; for those who like their Menaces old-fashioned and heavy it would certainly be a good buy for 35¢—particularly since it's been such a long time since anyone could get a steak dinner for that. There is a story called "Levitation" in it, apparently never published before, which contains a surprisingly good idea; a good old-fashioned gruesome ghost story, "The Calamander Chest," with a perfectly rotten last paragraph; "Death In Peru," about a cad named Larrifer—and when we are told that "with his usual excess of animal spirits [he] became enamored of the young daughter of a family of poor maize growers [who] was scarcely more than a child, but Larrifer had experienced no great difficulty in satisfying his desires," we know that something pret-ty sticky is going to happen to Larrifer—and serve him d————d well right, too; "Canavan's Back Yard," with a really original notion, not particularly well-handled, but containing a genuine thrill of horror; "I'm Murdering Mr. Massingham," which one is surprised to learn—or, perhaps *not* surprised to learn, first appeared in *Esquire,* and which I value for the perfectly delicious sentence: *"I was, after all, a relatively unknown writer . . . he would do better to take his case to a Maugham, a Hemingway, or a Wilbur Daniel Steele . . .*"; "The Hunt," whose cruel ending seems suddenly as appropriate as it is surprising; and "The Mail For Juniper Hill," which doesn't just telegraph its punch, but heralds it with drums and trumpets—and nevertheless punches.

Mr. Brennan is perhaps not another Montague Rhodes James, but, then, who is?

Heinrich Kley, in his sketch of himself, appears as a paunchy, baldheaded man, with a small moustache and an angry eye—one who might take him to have been, perhaps, the Herr *Ober* in a middle-rank restaurant, or a businessman who saw the hoped-for rank of *commerzialrat* continually eluding him, or the dyspeptic head of a school for boys—*lausbubs,* the lot of them. He was actually a successful enough painter of unexceptional subjects—"portraits, landscapes, still lifes, city scenes, and historical paintings"—these last typified by "Kaiser Wilhelm the First's Walk," a mural in the Baden post office. In 1892 Kley changed, began painting industrial scenes in oil and water color which caught the pleased attention of, among others, George Grosz.

In 1908 Kley changed again. "Something happened to him . . ." It may be so; it may be that something was happening to the world in general or Germany in particular. He began to pour out sketches, in pen and ink, "characterized by a highly individualized skittery technique, and a subject matter that leaped wildly about from satire to near-obscenity to despair . . . cruelty and pain and ironic laughter . . . and revulsion . . ." It is a kaleidoscope of vivid nightmares. Black women suckle elephants, white women suckle tigers, crocodiles—in alpinist costume—climb mountains, the devil sniffs a factory chimney and says *Pfui,* elephants dance, centaurs cavort, monkeys make mocking gestures . . . the scene grows truly hideous: the lusts of satyrs, harpies and centaurs; monsters and giants attacking naked tiny humans, cooking them like shish-kabab, automobiles take on life and have at one another, naked women tend a sick octopus and are ravished by phallic snails, sprites ride rats in a steeplechase, frogs enact the follies of human sexuality, a hideous creature—half-boar, half-pig—wrestles a tiger; and always and again the monsters attack men. And always victoriously.

By the 20s, apparently, Kley was done. The Nazis were on the rise, and nothing which he drew (or should one say, predicted?) is exceeded in horror by what they did—deeds easily forgotten by the purchasers and praisers of Volkswagons, Leicas, Olympias, and the tourists to picturesque Germany. In picturesque Dachau and Bergen-Belsen, even the human shish-kabab came to dreadful life.

Dreadful death.

The date of Kley's death, like the details of his later life, is unknown. He was certainly dead by the Fifties. Two hundred of his drawings are available in the Dover edition, and at a reasonable price.

Dr. Asimov's book is subtitled, "Seventeen Speculative Essays," and all but one of them appeared in this magazine. A sort of professional modesty obtains in these matters, which says we cannot review the book. To short-stop the Good Doctor with a curt, brief notice, however, seems unnecessarily circumspect. The contents are divided into four sections: *The Earth—And Away, The Solar System, The Universe,* and *The Human Mind;* and discuss such matters as the danger which modern sewage disposal presents to organic life on land, the question of another ice-age, the air and what we know (and don't know) about it, gravity, missiles and space flight, future tourism in the Solar System, the possibility of a tenth or trans-Plutonian planet, the use of cometary planetoids in "island-hopping" from here to Alpha Centauri, "the planet of the double sun," the mechanics of universal creation, the origin of ideas, the necessity of doubt, the status of eggheads, and others equally interesting. If you like him here, you'll like him there, and will want to own this valuable compendium.

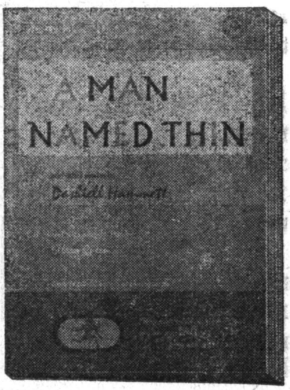
THE SIXTH GALAXY READER is, like its predecessors, edited by H. L. Gold, the stories having been published while he was that magazine's editor. The contributors include Margaret St. Clair, J. F. Bone, Avram Davidson and Laura Goforth, Elizabeth Mann Borgese, Rosel George Brown, Damon Knight, H. L. Gold, Fritz Leiber, Walter S. Tevis, and James Blish. Our favorites were the Borgese, the Knight, the Brown, and one other. The cover artist is not listed, which is just as well, because it is a damned dull piece of work, all the more inexcusable since GALAXY itself has in the past availed itself of some very fine artists—Ed Emsh and Leo Dillon, to choose just two.

The Wallace West item, OUTPOSTS IN SPACE, is apparently a juvenile, and as soon as we locate a reviewer in that age-group we mean to review it.

The "Hospital" in Mr. White's book, HOSPITAL STATION, is a space station built to care for the ill and disabled of all the races, human and otherwise, and mostly otherwise, which are in interstellar connection at the time. This necessitates a training in the mentality and physiology of aliens, as well as the re-creation of the environments needed for their survival, some of which environments are lethal to unprotected members of other races. This is solid, detail-packed science fiction of the classical sort, though somewhat slow-moving.

Mr. Haas's book is a vanity

press item, its title a not very ingenious combination of the names of one living and one dead tyrant. A dictator, by the use of Light Amplification Stimulation by Emmission of Radiation (LASER), creates amnesia, and throws all red-headed people into concentration-camps. The author looks back on the events which Kley looked onward to; unfortunately he ("Manson was a tall, athletic-looking, young man with bushy, red hair which, as is the custom in his homeland, had caused his colleagues from the *New York Sentinel* to call him "Red.") is no artist; and Vantage Press should be ashamed to take Mr. Haas's money.



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The former Rosel George, now the wife of Professor W. Burlie Brown (Tulane), is a charming and handsome gentlewoman who also happens to be a former social worker and schoolteacher, a Master of Arts in Classical Greek (Minn.), the mother of Robin, aged seven, and Jennifer, aged two; the author of LOST IN TRANSLATION (F&SF, May, 1959), OF ALL POSSIBLE WORLDS (F&SF, Feb., 1961) and others; and a native of New Orleans, where she now lives. Where, or how, she learned so much about mycology is not revealed. "I started writing in 1955, had my first story out in 1958. I have found that a Classical education is of great practical value . . . I make most of my clothes and Jenny's—clothes costing what they do. Reading and sewing are my hobbies, though really they're a necessity, like smoking. (Did you ever try to give up reading?)" No, and as long as Mrs. B. continues writing, we have no intention of even trying to give it up. And now we will keep you no longer from the story of Arthur Kelsing, who would keep away from neither fungi nor women—nor, for that matter, from sympathetic magic.

FRUITING BODY

by Rosel George Brown

No one who has wondered what the Giaconda is smiling about has not also wondered what the Francesa arthura is thinking about. We are not so unsophisticated as to attempt to answer either of these questions. But we feel that some account of the author (or Arthur, as his name happens to be) of the Francesa arthura might, despite the protestations of the current generation of critics, prove illuminating. (We do not feel it incumbent upon us to say just how.)

Arthur Kelsing collected fungi and women. He occasionally fed

the former (not the poisonous variety) to the latter, and frequently wished he could feed the latter (the poisonous variety) to the former.

But civilization is not so ordered; is not, as Arthur often ruminated, either coherent or logical.

But rather (Arthur's father had been Absent and he was reared by a hard-pressed mother who gave the impression of being domineering) civilization seemed to have been cooked up in that intuitive and irritating fashion in which women go about things. And Arthur could only hope that there was some agreeable end in view. Because when women go about doing something in their vague, unreasonable way, they insist they *are* doing something and if you just wait and mind your own business, they'll show you what it is when it's finished.

Arthur's wife had been, for instance, a woman. (This was the real reason why he divorced her.) And the first thing she did was hide all his left socks. All but about three at a time.

"I don't know where they are," she'd say. "But by the time you get back to the three you wore first, you'll have *those* pairs matching again and isn't that really all that matters? They *should* be rotated, so as to make them wear longer, and this just forces you to do something you should be doing anyhow."

"I don't like to be forced," Arthur said. You can see immediately that there was a broad principle involved, not just a matter of the socks. "It's childish of you to hide my left socks, and you're to get them out right now."

"I told you, I don't *know* where they are."

"You're supposed to wash all the socks at once and put away matching pairs."

"You're not supposed to do anything of the kind," Patty had snapped, unrolling a wad of hair from a brush curler and rolling it the other way with her fingers. "You don't understand laundry. You wash white socks with the towels and colored cotton ones with the blouses and woolen type socks with my skirts and nylon socks with my underwear. And some of them get tangled up so you don't see them and you discover the extra one later and save it to wash next time you wash the things it goes with. You can't put one sock in the washing machine by itself. Really," Patty had said, turning from the mirror, her curl vibrating, "I can't go on loving you passionately if you put on your underwear and socks and shirt and tie and just stand around in your bare legs. Men look nice with bare chests but *not* with bare legs. Why can't you put your pants on first?"

"Because the crease . . . never mind," Arthur had answered, clenching his eyelids and

wondering whether he should tell her right then that she had just ruined their marriage.

It wasn't just that, either, or the socks. It was fungi, too. She kept filching his best specimens for her dried flower arrangements.

Anyway, if Arthur Kelsing were now a bachelor, and a confirmed one, you can see there were good reasons for it. And if he were also a confirmed fungus collector, there were good reasons for that, too.

And if he were able to combine his hobbies, there were good reasons for that, too. He found, in fact, a certain similarity, a certain sympathetic magic that took place between certain women and certain fungi.

Most men, all perhaps, are familiar with at least some of the properties of women. Many, however, are not similarly familiar with properties of fungi.

Arthur was lucky. As a child he had grown up in a small town in the south and was given to wandering the countryside where he could steal watermelons and cow bells and what not. And one day, when he was about twelve, he found some interesting looking mushrooms growing out of a . . . well, not everybody would have eaten them, but Arthur had eaten mushrooms before and besides, if they *were* toadstools he'd get sick and it would serve his mother right. (Don't eat that kind of thing, she'd said. It might be toadstools. As if it were *her* business what he ate or didn't eat.) So he broke them carefully, so as to leave the cow patty intact, washed them in the nearest creek and rushed home so he could be sick in a public place.

Only he didn't get sick. He had the most fascinating hallucinations you can imagine—no, you can't imagine them unless you've tried it. (The mushrooms, he discovered later, were of the genus Panaeolus. Anybody can pluck them off of cow patties after a rain and after all, what do you think fertilizer is?)

It was not long after—to be specific it was during a Halloween hay ride—that he discovered Women. This particular woman was thirteen years old and as different from his mother as certain Panaeoli are from canned button mushrooms (Agaricus campestris). So Arthur naturally assumed that just as there are different kinds of fungi, so there are different kinds of women.

Arthur had to have his stomach pumped out six times (one of them after he should have known better) before he learned to be really careful about the toxins in mushrooms.

It only took one marriage to make him cautious about women. But there were other disillusionments that might have discouraged a man of less passion. (Or

would perhaps have led a more generous man to compromise. But had Arthur been a better person, he would have been much less interesting.)

But to get back to Flora (the unfortunate name of the thirteen year old woman), while Flora had her attractions, when you came right down to it, her only *real* attraction was that she was Willing. And Arthur soon wanted more from life than he got from Flora and the chance variety of Panaeolus. Which brought him to his first experiment.

But meanwhile Arthur had undergone a complete change that delighted his teachers and his poor old mother (who was actually quite a pretty woman of thirty-five and so discreet her employer never regretted taking her on also as his mistress.) Arthur became a junior scientist, a child genius. It is true that he still lagged in English and Social Science, but he could definitely no longer be classified as a big lout. He even stopped stealing watermelons. He stole mushrooms. He spent hours pouring over heavy books full of diagrams and long words. He was engrossed in studies of botany and anatomy.

Some attributed this remarkable change to the fact that he was beginning to grow up (which was true) and others, particularly his mother, to the influence of little Flora (which was also true).

But what Arthur had done was begin his search for the Silver Chalice. He had, so early, perceived if only dimly his ideal. And he glowed with a knightly glow.

Women and fungi, you may think, are not the way.

They are not perhaps *your* way. But they are *a* Way.

But for his experiment, Flora was not it, by a long shot, and his lower South variety of Panaeolus was not it, though the differential was less. So he tried a combination of the two. (He had to powder it and put it in her drink. She drank but she didn't eat mushrooms, especially after he had described the effects. A girl doesn't have to eat mushrooms, she'd said, to have a good time.)

So that Flora became, briefly, the girl of his dreams—he and Flora both dreaming mushroom dreams, Flora merging with the dream girl produced by Panaeolus.

But there were difficulties.

For one thing, the dosage was wrong. As a big lout, Arthur had been able to tolerate more than Flora, and he had neglected to take this into account when preparing his Instant Dreams powder. His main objective had been to put in Plenty.

For another—*most* important and key to Arthur's entire future—the dream girl, the girl produced by the hallucinations of Panaeolus, was not quite right. She had a squint. This was due not to Arthur's mind, which was perfect in its way, but to the type of mushroom he was using. Now, there have been men, Romantic poets particularly, who admire a little—sometimes a lot—of grotesquerie in women. (Try some of the French Decadents.) But Arthur had a classical soul, Classical and Romantic being used here in the technical sense. Anything macabre or perverted one sees in him is being read into his character by the beholder. It was amazing, later, how many dirty minded people . . .

O, and Flora. Unfortunately (or to be honest, fortunately) she died. It was blamed not on Arthur, but on Flora's mother, who had neglected to tell her, so everyone said, not to eat toadstools.

It was thus that Arthur learned to experiment on small animals first, and thus that he began to be a real Scientist. Arthur was quick to perceive that he might have got himself in a whole lot of trouble and he never made the same mistake again.

He made other mistakes instead.

Patty, for instance.

"Patty," he'd said, "you're everything I've ever dreamed of." But oddly enough, she wasn't. He just happened to fall in love with her when he was twenty-four, for no reason at all. (Actually there was a reason. Patty had his mother's mannerism of talking with her eyebrows, but Arthur never consciously realized this. He didn't know that what he'd missed was having a strong woman around the house.)

It was a fine, beautiful, normal love and very boring.

Certain varieties of Amanita he was working on, on the other hand . . .

Arthur by the age of forty, though he was not as affluent as some mushroom farmers, was very goodlooking—tall and wide built but thin enough to look emotional—and yet slightly cruel of mouth and cynical of voice, so that women could see there was a lot beneath the surface.

Arthur also had a curl in the front of his dark hair which, late at night, fell over his forehead in an unconsciously engaging way. Arthur didn't exactly set the curl, but he did sort of comb through it

with hair oil and wind it over his finger.

So that he usually managed to have his friends in at home—all his friends were beautiful girls and for them he had made his apartment slightly exotic. They took well to hallucination parties for two. Mushrooms are cheaper than gin and don't leave a hangover.

Everyone can't do this, you understand. The women have to be weighed, for instance, to be sure of proper dosage. They must be free of certain diseases—heart ailments and respiratory disorders, for instance—and only an expert with Arthur's additional intuitive perception could know which fungus goes with which girl.

Arthur became, as the years went by, something of an artist in this line and eventually came to be much sought after by society matrons.

But he was a man of principle, and a seeker of the Silver Chalice, and he never Did It for Money.

Besides, he had a thriving mushroom farm in Pennsylvania. He had a good foreman and there really isn't a great deal one needs to do for mushrooms except go pick them at the right time. Arthur had no taste for button mushrooms, himself.

Arthur had been working on a variety of Lepiota which looked very promising. Indeed, he'd been neglecting his women for several weeks and hadn't the least desire to do anything but hover over his spores.

But just to deny the faint suspicion that occasionally came over him that he was getting middle aged and peculiar, he accepted an invitation to Betty Rankin's cocktail party. If you are single long enough, you become an Eligible Bachelor, and if you refrain from being excessively unpleasant about not having got "caught" (or caught again), you get invited to everything there are extra women at.

Arthur, let us add, did not have the "I was smart" complex with which most bachelors ward off implied charges of homosexuality, frigidity and unacceptability to women. He *knew* he was attractive to women, he *knew* what he wanted and hadn't got yet, and he didn't have to be defensive (or offensive, as I'm afraid we frequently become).

"I just don't seem to be lucky in love," he'd say from under his curl, and women just loved it.

And there, across the room, he saw her.

Never in dreams, never in imaginings—but he knew her when he saw her.

She had ash blond hair and heavy, straight brown eyebrows and deep grey eyes and a rounded body with apparently neither bones nor fat in it. Glaucous and firm fleshed were the words that came to Arthur's mind. A head shining like Agaricus campester

griseus. Her age might have been anywhere (with good care) from twenty-five to forty.

She was dressed in a simple black sheath and a frilly white apron.

She was the maid.

Now, Arthur Kelsing was no callow youth and he knew better than to try to make love to the maid at a cocktail party. He quietly got her name and address from Betty Rankin, and became intimate with the extra debutante at the party, as he was expected to do, and watched Frances out of the corner of his eye.

The debutante was nervous and excited and hadn't wanted to make her debut in the first place (it was her mother's idea) and always broke out in pimples before parties. Let us put it to Arthur's credit that she had a good time not only at that party but also at subsequent ones, where the air of being used to Older Men gave her a sophistication that eventually led to her marriage to the heir of a brass manufacturer's fortune.

Arthur went home that evening and looked at himself in the mirror, seeing in amazement that having found Frances made him look no different.

Frances. Frances Griffith was her name.

But Arthur went on looking at himself, inside and out, and felt for the first time inadequate.

He was ashamed, for instance, of his curl. It was mannered, it was artificial. She would see through it. He wet his comb and combed it out.

He looked less handsome, but more Real.

I'm Me, he thought. It would be foolishness to try to offer her anything else.

Except the mushrooms.

Yes, that would be the one really original thing, the one thing Arthur alone could offer.

The proper mushroom.

He stayed up all night, leafing through his notebooks, thinking there must be some he had forgotten, though he knew them all by heart.

There were none, of course. Except a variety of Stropharia he had whose spores he was momentarily expecting to germinate. He strode over and turned on the mic lamp in the damp, cold little room which was his laboratory. Nothing yet. It chilled him a little, as it always did, to see in what wretched circumstances his dreams must incubate. He checked the temperature and humidity and switched off the light.

There had been the Collybia in Nicaragua, of course. Arthur had been in a cautious phase then, having recently been poisoned with a Boletus laricis, but they had stayed in his mind and he had a feeling . . .

Arthur paced his apartment, scratching his hand across his

emerging beard, blowing faint whistles of air through his teeth.

He was possessed with excitement, both physical and metaphysical.

Because it shows something, that Frances should exist at all. That she should answer, down to the smallest detail, a description which he had not known was in his mind. But which *must* have been there all along. Otherwise he would not have recognized her so immediately and so intensely.

And so, therefore, must the mushroom exist, whose dream would be the dream Frances. So that she would have two existences, one in reality and one in unreality, each as real as the other and together constituting Arthur's ideal. And thus making a solid link between the inside of Arthur's mind (which he sometimes worried about) and the outside world (whose existence he was sometimes unsure of).

There was not a thing wrong with either Arthur's theories or his conclusions.

The only thing he had not consciously noticed was that what Frances really looked like—blond and alabaster of skin and boneless and fatless of body—was an Amanita solitaria.

But it is certainly not fair to go poking uninvited into Arthur's unconscious, and one has no reason to link this up with later events. And if Robert Burns' love could be like a red, red rose, why should anyone find it queer that Arthur's love was like a white, white mushroom? (Except that Arthur didn't make the connection.)

Arthur knew he needed a warm shower and a nap, having had no sleep at all and not being young enough not to show it. But sleep was out of the question and a warm shower did not seem the thing at the moment.

So he had a cold shower and shaved and drank a cup of coffee improved with brandy and went to see Frances.

Even if she weren't home, he could begin to become familiar with her natural habitat.

The street Betty Rankin had written down was respectable enough at the south end. But Frances lived at the north end.

And as Arthur watched for the 900 block, he began to feel a little unsettled inside. For this was almost a slum. Rows of houses, once splendid, now rooming houses bursting at the seams with the poor, the derelict, the hopeless, and somewhere in there a few families about to climb out of it all.

But where, in all that, a place for Frances?

Griffith. He looked for cards at the entrance, but there was nothing to betray the inhabitants of 902 Elm Street. Children spilled across his feet, babies in drooping diapers bumping down the steps, headed for the curb.

"I'm looking for Miss Frances Griffith," he asked an older child, who should have been in school.

The boy leered, asked for a cigarette, led the way through a hall that reeked of stale people, up two flights of stairs, stopped before a peeling, dark green door and yelled, "Francie!" at the top of his voice.

Then he held out two fingers for another cigarette and left.

Arthur didn't smoke but he always carried cigarettes and a lighter. Women loved this kind of foresight. Arthur was irritated when he discovered he'd done this for Frances. It was part of the charm he'd been accumulating for several decades and he didn't intend to use it on Frances. He wanted to strip himself bare for her.

He stood sweating nervously before that unpropituous looking door, forcing himself *not* to think of charming things to say to Frances.

He wanted to be unprepared. But he needn't have worried.

Frances opened the door. She was brilliantly glaucous in an evanescent negligee with a striate margin and she opened the door only far enough to extrude a dark, heavy man dressed in striped coveralls and a mechanics cap.

It was Frances who began the conversation.

"Next," she said.

Arthur married her anyway. That is, in spite of her and her family's objections. They felt she had quite a career in front of her (as indeed she would have) and nobody could see any advantages in Arthur.

She was, however, easily led and subject to drugs and Arthur managed the legalities with no trouble. The reason he married her was so he could keep her locked in his apartment. This was absolutely necessary as she had a strong tendency to wander off toward any man that went by, and her old boy friends were always trying to look her up.

And what he planned to do in no way impaired her domestic abilities, as she only had two domestic abilities, the other one being a talent for standing around holding trays of hors d'oeuvres. There was a maid to do the housework.

Still, there was no denying the initial disappointment that came to Arthur when he found her conversation was limited to "Yeah," and "who cares" and "not on your life." He could overlook her morals, but the stupiditity was more difficult.

There remained the hope, for a while, that she was educable. But there were insurmountable difficulties. For one thing, she was very nearsighted. This gave her eyes a distant, enchanted quality, but it also enabled her to say with truth she couldn't see the letters on the page. "Not on your life," she

said when faced with a book. Also she was completely intractable. "So you want me to look at the pictures," she'd say, not looking. Mostly she slept and changed clothes. She didn't even spend much time putting on make up, because she didn't need it.

What she was, Arthur soon realized, was a pale reflection of a reality that existed in a hallucination he had not yet had. She was, in another sense, a shadow in the cave. And further Arthur (who never hesitated to mix his literary allusions) began to feel like the Lady of Shallot. He was half sick of shadows and he was ready to look down to Camelot. Only he didn't expect any curse to come upon him (any more than Plato would. It took a Romantic to think up that part.)

You see, Arthur, in searching for simple ideals, the perfect woman, the perfect hallucinogenic mushroom, inadvertantly stumbled on the secret of the universe, which had eluded scientists and philosophers all these centuries. The secret of the universe is that the world isn't real. This was indisputably proved by Frances, whose unreality was unquestionable. Obviously no Deity, no élan vital would create something like the objective Frances. On the other hand, one has to account for her, and this is best done by assuming that Arthur is God (it grates at first, but see how well it works out). Thus he can recognize this odd manifestation of Frances as a corner of reality sticking into this swirling dream of matter which we have all agreed to call "reality."

Which leaves Arthur to explore the actual reality which he has already created but from which he had been diverted by things like being born and living and what not.

That is what mushrooms are for.

And Arthur was the only person in the world who combined expert botanical knowledge with a native talent for understanding and absorbing hallucinogenic mushrooms. Talent plus hard work, that's what makes an outstanding artist, such as Arthur, or God.

The Stropharia Arthur had been working on when he met Frances wouldn't do at all. It was not even hallucinogenic, though he had crossed it with a mutated strain of Psilocybe mexicana.

He had therefore to fly to Nicaragua for the Collybia turberosa and when he got back Frances was gone. Fortunately, she didn't have enough sense to go far, and he found her back at 902 Elm St. and had to stand in line for an hour outside her door, so as not to make a public scene.

"Get lost," she told him, when his turn came. But he then and there fed her the Nicaraguan variety of Collybia tuberosa and

then was in a fever to get home and try the new mushroom himself.

He'd been right. This was It.

Now, this might have been the end of the story, except that the objective Frances continued to be so much trouble when the effects of the Collybia wore off.

And furthermore, she became less and less attractive, by herself.

Having achieved so much, Arthur had a brilliant idea, to perfect Frances.

Why should not Frances and her mushroom become symbiotic on each other, as in the case of lichen, especially since they had a natural affinity?

Why not, as a matter of fact, grow this Collybia inside of Frances, thereby rendering her permanently happy, her chemistry improved by the exudations of the fungus, and the fungus in turn nourished by Frances' body (or even, perhaps, her mind)?

This was not as impossible as it may at first sound to the layman, or even to the scientist. Bacteria and mushrooms are both fungi. Both reproduce sexually, which means they can be bred for certain characteristics. (The theory that bacteria can reproduce sexually is in no way invalidated by the fact that it is only recently proven.)

There is much that is not understood about the relationships or possible relationships between fungi and people, since medicine and mycology are two different specialties, and physicians and mycologists do not always agree about what is a fungus.

Arthur therefore had a field pretty much uncluttered by previous experimentation and since he knew exactly what he wanted to do, he could go pretty much in a straight line.

(It is a curious psychological fact that Arthur did not spend any time wondering what Frances' vision was under hallucination. He merely assumed, as he was God, that it was the same as his.)

It took Arthur a year to breed Francesa arthura, which will not be found in the C. M. I. for obvious reasons.

During this time it had been necessary for Arthur to make a few changes in his way of life. There were Frances' ex-boy friends who were a constant nuisance. Arthur had no compunction about giving Frances drugs, but he couldn't well keep her asleep twenty-four hours a day and he didn't want to over use anything from his mushroom pharmacary. The chemistry of hallucinogenic mushrooms is ill understood, even by Arthur, and he did not want to take a chance on building up possible toxic reactions, or causing possible neurological changes, until he had the Francesa arthura ready.

So he bought a cabin in the Ozarks. He had it equipped with all the modern conveniences except a paved road (it was necessary to bump over a pasture and up a wodded slope to get to it. Only his little foreign car could weave between the trees, and even so, one had to know which trees.) He hired two idiot boys from one of the neighboring farms, two miles away, and bought a razor back hog, planning to indulge an old dream of raising truffles, which ordinarily are impossible to raise in America. (This is worthy of mention because it shows that Arthur was not a monomaniac. It is true that his zeal in regard to Frances implies a perhaps unusual degree of uxoriousness. But he maintained other interests, too.)

Once installed, Arthur proceeded with the breeding of Francesa arthura with almost daily success. He crossed the Collybia tuberosa with a Mexican variety and achieved a mushroom that could survive an Arkansas summer. (A generation of mushrooms requires several days.) He then crossed it with a small Daedalea from Cade's Cove. Meanwhile he was working upward with the largest B. Coli he could find, through filaments of myxomycete plasmodium. (A generation of bacteria takes about twenty minutes, so this went a bit faster.)

At the end of a year, Arthur managed to mate a microscopic mushroom with a new parasitic slime mold. Applied to the skin of a shaved cat (there were those later who thought the most loathsome thing Arthur ever did was to shave a cat) it showed itself soon in fairy rings. This sounds delightful, but actually this is the sort of thing that ring worm is. The cat died, of course, not having Frances' chemical make up. But the important thing was that the Francesa arthura lived.

It is not to be supposed that Arthur meant to give Frances a bad case of ring worm. Whether it would make a pleasant symbiosis for Frances or not, it would certainly be aesthetically unpleasing.

No, Francesa arthura was for internal use only, and as Arthur was too humane to give it to Frances without testing it, he fed it to one of the idiot farm boys.

The effect was noticeable the very next day. The boy became alert, his mouth no longer drooped open, he no longer slept half the day. In fact, Arthur learned upon questioning him, he had stopped sleeping altogether. It should be noted that the boy's intelligence did not at any time increase, but he certainly looked better. It was almost as though there were a little switch in him that had been pushed from "slow" to "fast."

As it happened, the boy was

dead six months later, but it must be remembered that Francesa arthura was not *his* mushroom, but Frances', and also that nature had fashioned him perhaps to live slow for many years, and who is to say he was not happier living fast for a few months?

Anyhow, Arthur meanwhile decided that Francesa arthura was ready for Frances, and Frances was ready (indeed, long overdue) for Francesa arthura.

Her neural tone improved almost immediately and she presented a problem Arthur had not planned on, though he knew from the farm boy. She no longer slept. Never. But at the same time, she grew to resemble more closely the Frances of his hallucinogenic dream. Her movements became more fluid and graceful. She began to enjoy long walks in the woods. She listened and smiled as he explained his interests to her. (The fascinating varieties of fungi housed in cow patties, for instance, and the interesting habits of lichen.) There was never the least reason to think she understood or cared, but she had learned how to listen, which is a mannerism, not an intellectual attainment.

Furthermore, she displayed, for the first time, a marked affection for Arthur. He no longer felt he was the object of her passion solely because he kept everybody else locked out. Now she followed him around, she took his word as law, she obeyed his every whim, even to the extent of doing simple housework.

Within a week, Arthur felt secure enough to sleep soundly at night without locking Frances in her cage, though he had to warn her severely about going for long walks in the woods, moon or no moon.

"Stay close to the house," he'd say, and she did. He sometimes waked at night and saw her out of the window, white and beautiful under the moon, just standing there enjoying the wind in her hair.

If Arthur thought he was God, he soon had Frances to back him up. And as she drew closer to him she became, in a sense, more distant from the world. She grew more spiritual, more distant in the eyes, whiter, even almost luminous.

The initial alertness supplied by Francesa arthura began to change a little. She did not droop or languor, but she became more inward, supplying something to Francesa arthura as it was supplying her with its intoxicants.

Soon she gave up her long walks, her dancing about the house. She did nothing, but it was a different sort of nothing from what she had done before. It was a happy, purposeful nothing.

She just stood around outside, mostly.

She . . . vegetated.

One morning, several days after Frances stopped eating, Arthur found her leaning against a tree, sending rhizomorphs into it.

He was horrified.

He cut them off. (It was not painful as they were naturally vegetative rhizomorphs.)

He brought her inside, forced her to eat, increased the nitrogen in her diet. "You've got to fight back," he said. "It's a symbiote, not a parasite."

But Frances wasn't interested in fighting back. She ate, as Arthur instructed her to, and for a while there were no more rhizimorphs. The rhizomorphs became merely something to remember about, not to fear.

Until this matter of Fate came up. Fate has little literary validity, but is very important in life.

Arthur got sick.

It was only pneumonia, which nobody gets very excited about any more, but it necessitated Arthur's being in the hospital for two days and there was absolutely nothing he could do about Frances except instruct her to eat regularly. After the two days, the doctor insisted on two more, and you know you can't leave without a release.

Arthur drove back, expertly jockeying his little foreign car through the trees, and he had the feeling you always have when you know something awful has happened. "In five minutes I'll be laughing at myself," he said, and tried to laugh without having to wait the five minutes.

He rounded a stand of trees and saw her, a yard or two from the cabin's clearing, sitting by a rotten tree stump, her arm resting on the stump, her beautiful white head resting on her arm.

"Frances!" he cried and bumped the car to a stop beside her.

She smiled at him dreamily, recognizing him faintly somewhere beyond the grey smoke of her eyes.

"No!" he cried, because she seemed so immobile, despited the fact that she drew her legs under her a little and moved her head.

"You didn't eat?" he asked.

She roused a little, took a breath, so that he noticed she hadn't *been* breathing. That was what had made her look so immobile. "I wasn't hungry," she said.

"But I *told* you."

"I forgot," she said, and stopped breathing, smiling to herself.

Arthur began to pull at the rotten wood and found it threaded with rhizomorphs.

"Bring me a drink of water," Frances said, as Arthur went into the house after his knife. "It hasn't rained since I started rooting."

"Mushrooms don't root," Arthur said, and this added to his irritation, because he had ex-

plained to her a thousand times that a rhizomorph is not a true root.

"You've got to learn to be more self-sufficient," Arthur said as he cut away at the thousand tiny tendrils that extended through her pores and into the rotten wood. Frances held the glass in her hand and drank the water.

She ate two coddled eggs he gave her after he brought her in and cleaned her up. (It had been dusty out there, and there were insects and what not.) But she threw them right up. She did a little better with the consumé and Arthur let it go at that.

"It's a matter of habit," he told her. "We'll start working up to solid food again tomorrow."

He had missed her badly those four days, and held her close to him while he slept. She still didn't sleep, but he had given her stern instructions not to get up and wander during the night.

He waked the next morning with a jetstream of sunshine in his face and a heaviness of Frances' head on his right shoulder. He felt weak and convalescent. He'd done too much, after spending four days in a hospital bed.

He leaned up and Frances' gaze shifted from the window to his face and she smiled with her coral mouth. "I'm attached to you," she said.

"Yes, but you're hurting my shoulder." And as he went to turn over he saw what she meant.

She *was* attached to him.

He got his knife again, an awkward procedure as Frances was attached at his shoulder and hip, but it wasn't as easy as hacking away at a rotten log.

It didn't hurt when he cut the mycelia, but blood began seeping out and it soon became evident that it was *his* blood.

And for the first time he felt a wave of disgust for his wife. "You're a parasite," he said. "You're no better than anybody else. At least most of them are willing to settle for money."

It was then that Arthur decided to divorce his wife.

You will wonder, perhaps, why Arthur did not simply murder her. That is safe only in stories. Murder is illegal, and particularly unsafe among married couples, where the motive is obvious.

But divorce takes a long time and there had to be an immediate separation.

Arthur therefore called a doctor (partly to do this minor surgery safely, partly to serve as a witness that his wife had become a dangerous parasite).

Dr. Beeker had never (Good Heavens!) seen a case of this kind before and recommended (strongly!) that the two of them be brought immediately to a hospital to have the separation made.

But Arthur said No, it might

be dangerous to wait, his wife had been acting very peculiar and he didn't know what she had he might catch and furthermore he had just been ill himself and was feeling weak from loss of blood. (Though, indeed, she wasn't stealing his blood, only the nutrients from it.)

"I don't know," Dr. Beeker said, slicing unhappily at the rhizomorphs with a scalpel, "what effect this is going to have on Mrs. Kelsing. I really feel she should be seen by a specialist. A . . . well, tropical diseases, maybe."

"A botanist," Arthur suggested. "My wife needs a good going over by a competent botanist, and although we will be separated, I intend to pay for it."

But by the time Dr. Beeker had given Arthur a coagulant and an antibiotic and written a prescription, Frances had slipped out and attached herself to the tree stump again.

Dr. Beeker could not bring himself to cut her rhizomorphs again.

Arthur drove into Fayetteville, had a botanist and the police sent out to his cabin and consulted a lawyer.

As it turned out Frances was considered non compos (or non compost, as a cartoonist later put it). But Arthur had to retain the lawyer in any case, because the botanist became suspicious and called in a mycologist and the general conclusion was that Frances was not a natural phenomenon and Arthur in fact was accused of attempted murder.

Arthur's lawyer was pleased no end as there were fascinating legal problems involved, one of which was that the Frances upon whom the attempted murder had allegedly been perpetrated could not be produced. She did not exist. On the other hand, she could not be considered murdered, as a most important element of the crime of murder was missing. No evidence of a dead body of Frances could be produced. The D. A., being in his right mind, would not accept the charge. As Arthur had figured, there were no statutes covering the situation. Or at least none except one most people had forgotten about.

By the time the scientists had finished their studies, Frances' condition had proceeded to the state that it was not safe to separate her from the stump and indeed, she had no desire to do anything at all except be watered during dry seasons.

Eventually Frances became one of the eighth wonders of the world (it has been years, of course, since she has moved or spoken) and considerably enriched the state of Arkansas via the tourist trade, including a large number of artists, poets, philosophers, so-

ciologists, anthropologists and general aesthetes. And she remains—perhaps will remain forever—happy and famous and beautiful.

Whereas Arthur, who made all this possible, was convicted under an ancient and (till then) unused statute. It was the final ignominy for Arthur, that his life's work and final triumph should be dismissed by the people of Arkansas as witchcraft.

And so he died, despised, misunderstood, a figure of tragic irony, but returning, we hope, to the reality from which he sprang, the eternal hallucination.

We are informed of a new Science Fiction story contest, open to anyone *who has never appeared in professional print before.* If interested, write to: STORY CONTEST, # 3, 36026 CENTER RIDGE ROAD, NORTH RIDGEVILLE, OHIO. Winner might, repeat "*might*", appear in a professional SF magazine. So have fun. And good luck.

John Jacob Niles is, of course, famous for his folk- and folk-type-songs, some of which (the lovely Black Is The Color Of My True Love's Hair, *for instance) he has written himself.* The Roper, *however, is the result of a collaboration between Mr. Niles and Professor Theodore R. Cogswell, who wrote the lyrics. Readers will remember Professor Cogswell's other-wordly and incredibly realistic* The Cabbage Patch *(December, 1957), his bitter and ironic* You Know Willie *(May, 1957), and other mordant stories. Here he shows a different self than the one familiar to Fellows of the Institute For Twenty-First Century Studies (of which Prof. Cogswell is Secretary), and tells a tale of love and witchery and death.*

THE ROPER

by Theodore R. Cogswell — John Jacob Niles

One evening as sitting on top of my mountain,
My feet in the valley, my head in a cloud,
I was feeling so lonesome that my heart cried inside me
When I saw such a sight that I shuddered aloud.
For black bats came awheeling, the big ones like eagles,
And with them proud ladies in their fine store-bought clothes,
And leading them all my true love came a flying,
She was graceful and fair as a wild mountain rose.
Oh, I called her and kissed her and bade her sit by me
To be my heart's darling and give my heart ease.
But she laughed at my wooing and fled like a falcon,

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And climbed like a kestrel on the light evening breeze.
Then the Roper came flying down out of the sunset
With a cloth-of-gold lariat that shimmered and shone.
And he sat down beside me and spoke to me kindly
And asked why I wept on the mountain alone.
When I told him he laughed and his rope leapt like lightning,
And the bats squealed in fear as they fluttered away,
And the ladies turned pale and flew back to their husbands
To explain, if they could, where they'd been all that day.
Then his rope made a turn and looped after my darling
And nuzzled her throat like a tree-clinging vine.
And she fell at his feet all a-gasping and choking
Till the Roper he stomped her and splintered her spine.
Then lonely, as loudly the rumble of thunder played
A death-dirge as I whispered a pray'r,
And cold came the night wind as I knelt down beside her,
Black as a bat-wing, the shroud of her hair.
For the bats, they will flee you when the Rope comes for you,
And there'll be no forgiveness on that troubled day,
Be no forgiveness on that troubled day.

After having spent the first fifteen years of his life as an "army brat" at military installations all over the West, Randall Garrett joined the Marines. This act of filial impiety was drastically requited by a Japanese bullet on Okinawa. Having previously sold his first Science Fiction story at the age of only fourteen, Randy survived to sell many, many more; to establish himself as a practising expert on love, puns, theology, Gilbert & Sullivan, and whiskeys of the world; to contribute to this magazine MUSTANG (F&SF Nov. '61) and (with Avram Davidson) SOMETHING RICH AND STRANGE (F&SF, June '61); to act as one-half of "Robert Randall" (Robert Silverberg being the other half), author of the novels THE SHROUDED PLANET and THE DAWNING LIGHT; to produce the recent biography, POPE JOHN XXIII, and the forthcoming (Fall) novel, UNWISE CHILD; and, with his Edwardian weskits, post-Edwardian beard, and more-than-Edwardian wit, to enliven any gathering he attends. Here, he reflects on the as-yet-unsolved problem of Sex in Space.

SPATIAL RELATIONSHIP

by Randall Garrett

"She's the perfect woman," said Thorston, with an expression of idiot bliss on his face. "She's all I ever dreamed a woman to be!"

Greymoor looked at him with a cynical smile and shook his head slowly, with affected sadness. "If you really mean that, he said, you ought to have your head examined."

—THE IDLE WORSHIPPERS
by R. Phillip Dachboden

THE LITTLE METAL SPHERE fell towards the bright dot in space with ever decreasing velocity. From the viewpoint of the passengers aboard the spaceship itself, the bright dot was becoming perceptibly brighter with every passing day. Eventually, it would cease to be a point of light; it would become a tiny disc that would grow until it became the old familiar sun.

It had only been for the past few days that those aboard the ship had been able to see the sun directly. Not until the little ship had slowed until its velocity was less than that of light had the nearing star been detectable except by the instruments on the control panels.

When the ship was twenty-four hours out from Earth, James Newhouse rubbed his hands together and said: "Let's have a party! A homecoming celebration! Just the four of us. Tomorrow, there will be poking and prodding and questioning and all sorts of assorted hells to go through. The medics will want to know if our blood is still red, and the astronomers will be hounding us for explanations of the photographs, and we won't have a moment's peace for the next six weeks. But we have a right to a celebration.

Roger Gundersen, his big, thickly-muscled body relaxed in one of the two heavily-padded chairs, scratched thoughtfully at the side of his big nose. "I'm in favor," he said after a moment. "We got enough booze left?"

"Plenty," said Newhouse. "It would be a shame to waste it."

"Waste it?"

"Sure. If we go back to Earth with three bottles left over, they'll put it back in stock, and we'll never see it again. I call that wasteful."

"Agreed," Gundersen said. "Besides, I think we deserve it. We haven't had a real whingding in a long time. Three or four months, I guess."

"Then that settles it," said Newhouse firmly, a smile of anticipation on his dark, handsome face.

"Don't *we* have anything to say about it?" It was Betty's voice, smooth, soft, lovingly warm.

Newhouse turned his head, still smiling. He saw her leaning against the bulkhead near the door to the sleeping quarters. Her golden blonde hair looked just slightly tousled, and she was wearing the smooth-fitting pink dress that Newhouse liked. It was that shocking pink that only a blonde can wear properly.

"Why, as long as you agree," he said, "you girls can say anything you like. Right, Rog?"

"Right. Absolutely." Gundersen grinned. "Did I hear any objections from the female half of this expedition?"

Newhouse saw Evelyn put her head through the door, her dark hair falling in waves down the curve of her throat. Two voices chorused: "No. No objections."

"Then I suggest we get started immediately," Newhouse said. "We have to be sober when we land—and no hangovers, either."

Gundersen was up and moving toward the light rheostat. "Soft lights, sweet music, and fair women make the exploration of space almost worthwhile."

"Rog, you blither too much." Betty's voice had enough humor in it to take the edge off the remark. Gundersen paid no attention. He was good-natured about that sort of thing, Newhouse thought. He always took Betty's kidding that way. She'd make some remark like that—something that Newhouse would never say to Gundersen, even though he often thought such things—but she'd say it in such a way that it was easy for Gundersen to shrug it off, to act as though he hadn't even heard it. Once in a great while, if Gundersen did something that was particularly irritating—as happens even in the most smoothly oiled social group—Betty would give him a tongue-lashing, and Gundersen would take that the same way.

But such outbursts were never directed towards Newhouse. For him, her voice was always gentle and pleasant.

"I love you," Newhouse said softly to Betty as he took the brandy bottles out of the liquor locker.

"What?" said Gundersen. He was fiddling with the controls of the player, selecting a music program.

"Not you, bugbrain," Newhouse said. "I was talking to the most beautiful blonde in the known universe."

"Thank you, kind sir," Betty's voice came softly.

"Oh," said Gundersen absently. He pushed a button, and the caressing strains of Velanda's *Cloudwalker* filled the room. "How's that?" he asked.

"Beautiful," said Newhouse. "It's just the thing, eh, Betty?"

"I've always loved that piece, Jim." Her voice had a dreamy sound. She touched him on the shoulder, a gentle touch, as caressing as the music. "That was the piece we played on our first night out, three years ago. Remember?"

He remembered. Three years, he thought. It didn't seem that long. How long would it have seemed without Betty? he wondered. What would it have been like if just he and Gundersen had been cooped up together aboard the ship for three years—just the two of them? He and Gundersen would have been at each other's throats long ago, Newhouse thought.

The psychologists, he thought, had picked the crew perfectly. He got along well with Gundersen, Evelyn was quietly unobtrusive, and—

And he had fallen in love with Betty.

He took four glasses from the cabinet, ice from the freezer, and a bottle of charged water from the refrigerator. "Shall I mix, chilluns?"

"Mix," said Gundersen. "Who wants sandwiches?"

"Not I," said Newhouse. "Betty?"

"Nope. Too fattening. I've got to watch my figure for the wedding." Her face was suddenly in front of him, looking up. Her blue eyes were laughing, even though her mouth was expressionless. "Just think, darling—in twenty-four hours you can make an honest woman of me."

He didn't answer. He kissed her instead. He could feel the warmth and the velvety smoothness of her lips and the supple strength of her body in his arms. And then they were dancing, their feet moving gracefully in time to the music. Newhouse had never thought himself much of a dancer, but with Betty he felt like an expert. Her movements were so carefully matched to his that she seemed almost weightless in his arms.

The last lingering chords of *Cloudwalker* died away, and the player was silent for a moment before it began an older piece, a sparkling bit of twentieth-century jazz that Newhouse didn't recognize.

"Let's sit this one out," he whispered. "I'm thirsty. Will you join me in a glass of brandy and soda?"

"Is there room for both of us?"

They laughed together. It was an old joke, one that they both liked, silly as it was.

They ignored Gundersen, who was very busy saying sweet nothings to Evelyn.

As far as Newhouse was concerned, the party was a smashing success. It was wonderful just to be near Betty, and the anticipation of something even more wonderful to come added sparkle and fire.

Newhouse finished his first drink and started on his second. For his second drink, he switched glasses with Betty. They always did that. It was just one of those little touches that was a part of their life together.

Three years was a long time for a small group of human beings to spend together in a spaceship that was really only big enough for two people to move around comfortably in, but, thanks to the careful choice of personnel and the efforts of the psychologists to secure a matching of personality, there had been very little friction during the long trip out to Procyon, the surveying of the planetary system, and the return. All things considered, it had been a very happy three years.

They had circled the star, taking photographs of the seven inner planets, paying special attention to the fourth planet out, which looked as though it might be very much like Earth. They hadn't landed; that would come later, after the first survey data had been carefully checked. Mankind was just putting out its first feelers to the stars. As Gundersen had put it, "Look but don't touch."

And now they were on their

way home, on their last day in space. It would be odd, Newhouse thought, to see other people after all that time, to hear other voices than those he was used to.

They didn't finish the three bottles of brandy. One was quite enough. By the time they were halfway through it, Newhouse was feeling a very pleasant glow. By the time they finished it, the conversation had become hilariously incoherent.

And when the party finally broke up, Newhouse found himself alone in his room with his arms around Betty, whispering endearments through a slightly alcoholic haze and making love to her with wild abandon and tenderly violent passion.

Newhouse was slightly hung over when he awoke, but not badly so. When the warning alarm went off, he cursed it because of the effect it had on his ears, and he could hear Gundersen muttering under his breath when he went into the control room.

The operation of the ship was almost fully automatic. As it approached Sol, the increasing brightness of the nearing star gave the autopilot its reckonings of distance and velocity. If everyone aboard had been dead or unconscious or otherwise unable to control the vessel, it would have put itself into an orbit between the orbits of Earth and Mars and sent out a strong signal that could be picked up anywhere within half a billion miles. Instead of landing, then, ships would have been sent up to find the homecoming interstellar explorer.

But that was unnecessary. Both Newhouse and Gundersen were at the chairs of the control board to guide the ship in toward Earth.

By the time the ship had been put in a parking orbit a thousand miles above the surface of Earth, the effects of the previous night's party had completely worn off. Gundersen was in contact with the landing field at Central Sahara, and the two men grinned at each other when Ed Wales' voice came over the speaker.

"Welcome home, wanderers! Everything okay?"

"Absolutely," Gundersen said. "Couldn't be better! It's great to hear your voice!"

"Same here. We're locked on with the landing beams now. Cut your autopilot back in, and we'll bring her down for you."

The little sphere began to spiral in toward the surface of Earth. When it had finally settled into its landing cradle, there was a wild scramble for the airlock door.

As the two men stepped out, they were met by Ed Wales. Before they could say anything but a few wild hello's, Wales said: "This is the end of the line, boys. You come with me, and the girls will go to Building X."

For some reason, when he said that, Newhouse felt his hangover return in force. His head felt heavy and painful, and his mind felt clogged. He shook his head and forced his mind back to clarity. It seemed as if nausea were about to overtake him, and his mind felt blurry. He thought of Betty's golden hair and soft mouth, as though it were something solid in a suddenly dreamlike world. He swallowed and felt better.

He heard Gundersen say something, but he couldn't make sense out of the words.

"Come on, boys," Wales said. "The shock'll wear off in a little while. Let's go."

He climbed into a car with Wales, and they drove off toward the nearby cluster of buildings.

Fifteen minutes later, Newhouse was sitting in a chair in Wales' office. He grinned at the psychologist. "Well, Ed, are we all right?"

"You seem to be reasonably sane," Wales said amiably. "How did Gundersen behave during the trip?"

"Fine, as far as I could tell. No trouble." He knew that Gundersen was undergoing the same sort of interview with Larry deVernier in another office. He wondered how the girls were faring with their quizzing.

"Of course," Wales went on, "we won't know everything until we've run a whole battery of tests, which we will begin almost immediately."

"Ugh," said Newhouse. "I knew we'd be in for that sort of thing. Whatever happened to the good old days, when a man was considered sane unless he thought he was Napoleon or had a penchant for running naked in the streets?"

Wales grinned back. "Whatever happened to the buggy whip? Seriously, though, how do you feel? Subjectively, what's your opinion?"

"My opinion? I feel slightly hung over. We had a party last night."

Wales laughed. "That's not unusual. Tell me, is it much of a shock to you to realize that it was a farewell party?"

"Farewell party?" Newhouse looked blank for an instant. Then his face cleared. "Farewell to space, eh? Yeah, I guess it was. I won't be going out again, naturally. Betty and I are going to get married as soon as we can get through all this red tape. What do you think of that, Dan Cupid?"

A very odd look came over Wales' face. After a moment, he leaned forward and said, very deliberately: *"This is the end of the line, boys. You come with me, and the girls will go to Building X."*

A mild wave of nausea swept over Newhouse, then subsided. "You have already said that, Ed. Why repeat it?"

The smile came back on the psychologist's face, but there was still a lingering ghost of the oddness that had manifested itself a few seconds before. "Nothing. What were you saying about—Betty?"

Newhouse looked at him puzzledly. "I said I was going to marry her. And I have a hunch Rog and Evelyn will be looking for a license, too. What's so odd about that? Haven't you ever had a couple of your explorers fall in love before?"

"Well," said the psychologist, choosing his words carefully, "I never had one tell me he was going to get married right off the bat."

Unobtrusively, his left foot found a button on the floor behind his desk. He shifted his weight slightly and pressed the button.

"I don't quite understand what happened," said Roger Gundersen. "You mean you've kept Jim locked up for the past week because he's insane?"

"No," said Wales positively. "Not insane. Not in the accepted psychological sense of being psychotic. To say that he is psychotic now would be to say that both of you were psychotic for three years."

"Well," said Gundersen stubbornly, "weren't we?"

"Psychologically speaking," Wales said, "there is a difference between a hypnotically induced delusion and a psychosis."

"How much of a difference?"

"Mmmmm. The line is hard to draw," the psychologist admitted, "but it's a matter of control."

"It looks to me as though you lost control of Jim," Gundersen said.

"In a way, yes." He frowned. "We thought we had a solution. So far, the engineers haven't been able to build an interstellar ship that will hold more than two people comfortably for any length of time. And that isn't enough. Two men will drive each other off the deep end pretty quickly—so will two women. A man and a woman together last a little longer, but they eventually get violent. It's a matter of the absolute necessity of having company and having some outlet for the sex drive. We thought we had it whipped.

"The hypnotically induced delusion that there are two women aboard besides the two crew members seemed the ideal solution. Your 'Evelyn', for instance, was your own special creation. Your dream girl, as it were. If Newhouse said or did something that irritated you, 'Evelyn' could call him names or dress him down, and that satisfied your desire to hit back. Newhouse, naturally, couldn't hear her. His girl friend did the same for him, you see."

"I remember," said Gundersen. "In a way, I kind of miss her."

"Sure. But the key phrase—the one about the girls going to Building X—dissipated the delusion. You were completely freed from it. No after effects, no regrets. Right?"

"Right. But your phrase didn't work with Jim?"

Wales shook his head. "No. There's a deep-seated, well-hidden narcissism there that we didn't spot. Psychology isn't a perfect science yet, by a long way."

"You mean he fell in love with himself?"

"In a way, yes. He refused to believe that the perfect woman he had constructed for himself wasn't real."

"I don't know what he saw in her," Gundersen said. "As I remember, she was just an ordinary-looking dishwater blonde." He grinned wryly.

Wales grinned back. "Naturally. That was *your* delusion. Your Evelyn wasn't particularly impressive to him, either. We couldn't have you making passes at each other's girls, you know."

"And yet we both had to see both girls to keep up the farce," Gundersen said. "We even clued each other in on conversations that weren't even going on. I still say it's induced psychosis."

Wales shrugged. "Call it that, if you want. It works. It gets a two-man crew out and back with a minimum of friction. And it makes antoeroticism—shall we say, more completely satisfying?"

"We shall, indeed," said Gundersen dryly. "Maybe that's what Jim doesn't want to let go of."

"Partly, yes. As you know, the delusion is vividly real."

"And you can't get Jim to snap out of it at all?"

"We have, to a certain extent," Wales said. "He's willing to admit that 'Betty' was merely a hypnotically induced hallucination—but he insists that the hallucination only applied to her physical appearance. He still insists that he was making love to a real flesh and blood human being."

"I see," said Gundersen. "He thinks we put some homely dame aboard and foisted off the face and figure of Helen of Troy on him by hypnosis. Look, Ed, why don't you let me talk to him? I know him pretty well, and I think I could maybe help bring him around."

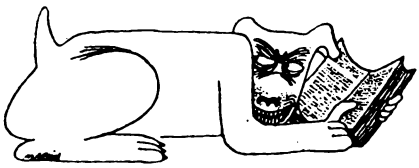
The psychologist shook his head emphatically. "No. I'm afraid that would not do at all. Not yet. You see, he now realizes that there were only two people aboard that ship. He does *not* think we put some—er—homely dame on board."

Gundersen stared while the thought took hold. "You can't mean . . ." he began. Wales shrugged, pressed a tab on his two-way 3-D set. Newhouse's face, as he sat in his hospital room, bore a scowl. Then he caught sight of his

former space-partner. The scowl gave way to a twisted leer. He flapped his wrist. "*Yoo-hoo!*" he called, his voice awkwardly high-pitched and heavy with contempt.

Wales flicked the screen off.

"I'm afraid," he said judiciously, "that Jim Newhouse does not hold a very high opinion of you at the moment."



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"The mind of a man," *wrote an old author,* "is closer to the mind of a dog than the mind of a dog is to the mind of a demon. . . " *J. T. McIntosh, author of ONE IN THREE HUNDRED (F&SF, Feb. 1953) and ONE INTO TWO (F&SF, Feb. 1962), here considers possible similarities between the mind of a man and the minds of—shall we say, nonmen?*

THE STUPID GENERAL

by J. T. McIntosh

WHEN THE THING LANDED IT was hot enough to start a forest fire, and it did. Fortunately there was a strong wind blowing straight into a wedge of woodland formed by the Imbaran river and the lake. The fire thus traveled in the one direction in which it couldn't go far, rapidly cornered itself and starved itself to death.

The forest rangers found a few square miles of smouldering ash with a metal hamburger seventeen feet high lying in the middle of it. They took one look at it and notified the state police. The state police took one look at it and notified the army.

General Bartholemew Plowman took one look at it and barked: "Blow it up!"

General Plowman was taking a lot on himself. But General Plowman had never been a buck-passer. In Italy he had acted swiftly, on his own initiative, and lost a hundred twenty-one men taking a position which was outflanked and would have fallen anyway within a couple of days. In Korea, unrepentant, he acted swiftly, on his initiative, and saved a battle corps which everybody else had given up for lost.

The General was fond of quoting, from G. K. Chesterton: "I do not believe in a fate that falls on men however they act; but I do believe in a fate that falls on men usless they act." It was a fate which would never fall on General Bartholemew Plowman. Right or wrong, he would always act.

The tanks and guns had to be floated down the Imbaran river. General Plowman, to do him jus-

tice, wasn't in the habit of ruining an operation by a premature attack when he had an opportunity of waiting. For two hours he and Major Alan Persley kept the hamburger under constant observation, ready to take what action they could with the weapons already at their disposal if necessary, but also prepared to wait until the fire power available became devastating.

At first Major Persley, who had a wife and three young children, was the jumpy one. Deciding that the thing wasn't a bomb, he said: "Hadn't we better try a shot, General? It might stop the thing from opening. Or at least limit its effectiveness if it does open."

"And it might force them to attack before we're really ready for them," the General said. "The ash is still redhot and there's a lot of smoke. If we wait, they'll wait too until the ground around is cold."

"You say 'they,' General. Do you think there are men inside? Reds?"

"I don't do any futile guessing, Major," said Plowman coldly. "Whether it's men inside that capsule or slimy green things, my guess is that there's *something* inside and it's got weapons. And I'm going to use mine first."

So far nobody had approached within two hundred yards of the missile, bomb, capsule or ship, although men in asbestos suits were standing by. One by one the mortars were landed and pointed at the smoke-blackened hamburger.

Hamburger . . . it was inevitable that the thing should be called that, for it was exactly the shape of a hamburger. Ship or bomb though it might be, it didn't look like any ship or bomb that any of the watching men had ever seen, and it did look like a seventeen-foot-high hamburger. The foot-wide horizontal cut even had a red-brown hue, as if it were an enormous slab of meat. No glass of any kind was visible, nothing which suggested that anybody who might be inside could see what was happening outside.

One thing was clear. A thing that size couldn't have been dropped from any known airplane. The way it sat firmly bedded in the ground suggested that it was quite as heavy as it looked; yet there was no earth thrown up round it to indicate that it had struck the ground with the impact of a free-falling object.

So it must be a ship of some kind. It could fly under its own power or at least lower itself from the sky.

With every minute that passed the watchers found it harder to believe that the ship had originated anywhere on Earth. Iron Curtain or no, human achievements tend to parallel each other. A Russian plane looks like a U.S. plane. A Russian spaceship or missile would

look far more like a U.S. spaceship or missile than the hamburger did.

Major Persley had to excuse himself. As he squatted in the bracken fifty yards back from all the preparations to blow the ship to pieces, he wondered how many other men on the spot had taken one look at it and found their bowels turning to water.

The ship was terrifying. It was subtly, chillingly different from anything in human experience, different enough to explain why the General had said at once "Blow it up" and why he himself had been frantically impatient to attack the thing, as he would have stamped in terror on a loathsome insect the like of which he had never seen before.

The metal was brownish, with a curious sheen more like leather than metal. The way more than one observer had thought of the ship as a giant hamburger was not without significance. Faced with anything which looked frighteningly alien, men were pathetically eager to equate it with something they knew. Thus, in a tiny way, they conquered it.

His business completed, the Major still hesitated before returning. Here where he couldn't see the ship he was able to entertain many lines of thought which were driven out of his mind by the sight of the thing. The possibility of peaceable cooperation between two intelligent races of different physical structure, for example.

Suppose the first Terran ship to land on Mars was blown to atoms by the Martians before the space-travellers had a chance to open their mouths? Maybe there weren't any Martians, but that wasn't the point. If the first Terran ship that landed was callously murdered before anybody did anything out of turn, what would happen?

Naturally, a whole fleet of warships from Earth, carrying the biggest H-bombs, would teach the Martians that they couldn't do that kind of thing.

Well? Suppose this was an alien exploration ship, and old Blood-and-Guts Plowman destroyed it without provocation?

Persley found himself shivering, and involuntarily took out the photograph he carried of Lorraine and the three children. Lorraine smiled at him and he drew some reassurance from the smile.

He went back to the General's side. Averting his gaze from the ship, he tried to tell the General what he had been thinking, but he put it badly and in any case the General wasn't very receptive.

"Major," said the General icily, "tell me one thing. What should the Trojans have done with the wooden horse?"

A shout told them that something was happening, and they turned quickly to look at the ship. From the top of the dome, which

had previously shown no break of any kind, a slender shaft was slowly rising.

The General opened his mouth to give the order to shoot it off. But he waited for a moment . . . and a white flag shook itself out.

The hamburger-ship was flying a flag of truce.

"Well, they know enough about us to have some idea what that means," the General mused. "Could they be Russians after all?"

The white flag made everyone think. Nearly everybody still believed that the ship had not originated anywhere on Earth. Yet the white flag was puzzling. It was surely too much of a coincidence that aliens had the same custom. . . . If there were aliens inside the capsule, they were aliens who knew quite a lot about Earth.

A captain came up to report. "General, there's a strong signal going out from that thing. We can't make anything of it, but—"

Plowman swore under his breath. "Hell, they're using that shaft as an aerial," he exclaimed angrily, "with a white flag as cover. Major—"

Just then the ship started to open. The whole top half began very slowly to rise on hinges.

After the long wait, things were happening too fast for everybody but Plowman. There wasn't time to figure out the exact significance of the hamburger-ship's behavior, even if that was possible.

But the General was ready to make a snap decision. He always was. He shouted orders. The mortars, trained, loaded and ready to fire, did their job. The ship itself suffered not at all. But from the interior of the giant hamburger came a strange, bubbling scream, and fluid began to run out through the crack—thick, oily fluid some of which was red and some green.

Apparently, there was nobody left to stop the mechanism which was raising the lid, for it went on rising steadily as more shells exploded inside the ship.

There was no counter-attack of any kind. Before the firing stopped, all the creatures who had been in the ship were very, very dead.

The General became affable in his satisfaction. "That's what the Trojans should have done," he said. "A very successful operation, Major."

Washington, however, didn't agree with him. Careful examination of the ship and the shambles within showed that the hamburger had indeed been a ship manned by aliens. As far as could be made out they had been scaly, many-legged creatures who walked erect like caterpillars rearing on a leaf. It was, however, difficult to be sure, for although there had been eleven of these creatures on board, all the bodies were so badly damaged that it was anybody's guess what they had been like in life.

The investigation of the ship failed to reveal any weapons on board. The machinery, though not as badly damaged as might have been expected, remained starkly incomprehensible. It was not even possible to determine the composition of the atmosphere which the ship had created for itself.

Presidential, military and public opinion crucified General Plowman. The official verdict was that the rangers and the police had been perfectly right to call in the army, and that the army had been perfectly right to surround the ship with guns in case of an attack.

But to destroy the aliens completely without provocation was wholly unjustified — especially when they were flying a white flag. The white flag was clear proof that the aliens had somehow learned something of Terran protocol, and it should, Washington said, have ensured them at least a fair hearing.

The press was less restrained than Washington. The mildest epithet applied to General Plowman was "trigger-happy."

The incident, occurring at a time when people all over the world were desperately afraid that some bull-headed brass hat, Communist or American or European, would shoot at shadows and use an H-bomb to do it, thus precipitating the war to end all wars and everything else, raised an international howl for a rigid check on the destruction power of stupid soldiers.

General Plowman might have saved himself by producing even an imaginary reason for giving the order to open fire—that he thought he saw something inside the ship being pointed at his men, for example. But he bluntly, honestly, unimaginatively stuck to the facts as he knew them, saying that the aliens might have been harmless but he still didn't regret that he took no chances.

"Do you usually fire on a white flag, General?" the judge advocate asked at the court-martial.

"The opportunity has never occurred before in my military career," Plowman said.

"You mean that if it had occurred you would certainly have done so?"

"I mean that I do my duty as I see it. The aliens were using the flag shaft to send out radio messages."

"How do you know, General, that these radio messages were not directed at you? That they did not represent an attempt at friendly communication?"

"I don't know. When an enemy points a gun at me I don't *know* he's going to fire until he does. By the time the shell cuts me in two it's too late to do much about it."

"Haven't you testified that nobody did point a gun of any kind at you?"

"All I know is, I'm not sorry I killed those scaly beasts. Friendly? How could horrors like that be friendly?"

All that was produced in General Plowman's defense was the fact that the shell of the ship proved to be much harder and tougher than any metal known on Earth. As his defense counsel pointed out, if the General hadn't acted more quickly and decisively than the aliens expected, they might have been able to establish a defense against which he could do nothing. Perhaps he should be congratulated instead of castigated.

Major Persley, to his own surprise and rather to his embarrassment, found himself almost a national hero when it was established, both by his own testimony and by the General's, that he had said at the time very much what everybody else said later.

There might have been some excuse for General Plowman's action, the judge advocate said in his closing speech, if he had had to take a quick decision with no time to weigh it up and before any discussion had been possible. But there had been at least two hours to weigh up the decision, and during that time Major Persley had pointed out to the General the possible consequences of destroying the capsule.

Surely, the judge advocate said, the parallel of a terran ship landing on Mars and being wantonly destroyed by Martians would have given any wise man pause?

After the court-martial General Plowman was no longer in the Army. In some quarters it was held that he should no longer be in the land of the living. These were mostly academic quarters, where it was held that the murder of the first nonhuman visitors to Earth was a crime which made the Black Hole of Calcutta look like a schoolboy prank.

Bartholemew Plowman then got a job imposing discipline on the two thousand employees of a hotel syndicate. He overdid it and was fired. He then became a warder in a prison. Society was apparently satisfied, for he was left in peace.

Three months later the Zwees attacked in force.

They came in hamburger-ships much larger than the one whose crew General Plowman had killed. And this time they made quite sure that nobody got a chance to fire into a virtually undefended ship. They attacked from the word go, and (not taking any chances) they did so by means of the Tripods and Dustbugs.

There was no attempt at parleying. The Zwees had had one try at parleying already, with results which were well known. On this occasion their object was strictly business.

And now it was Terran soldiers and civilians who stood up to the

ships, tripods and dustbugs practically defenseless, trying all they knew, by words, signs and gestures, to halt the advance and find some means of communication. This time it was the Zwees who shot first and didn't even ask questions afterwards.

The tripods and dustbags were a devastatingly effective combination of weapons.

A tripod would be left in a commanding position in the country or in a town—on a hill, at an intersection, at the center of a square or park. It consisted of a slender stalk nine feet tall with three eyes at the top, one above the other, three legs a yard high supporting the stalk, a thing which looked like a gun just above the legs, and a small black sphere under the legs.

The thing which looked like a gun was a gun. It shot at anything which moved, and whatever it shot at split, whether man, beast or machine. The gun was a perfect bisector. It halved men down the middle, leaving two bleeding demi-corpses each with one eye, half a nose, one arm, a leg. It split cars so that they fell outwards into two useless open-section models.

The things which looked like eyes were eyes. They saw clearly, in all directions, with three different degrees of magnification.

Ordinary rifle-shots accomplished nothing against the tripods, even the eyes. But of course a mortar could destroy a tripod. After a few had been destroyed, however, the order went out to cease firing on tripods. For the black sphere in the base was an atom bomb which went off automatically once the tripod ceased to have any value to the Zwees. Its range, though not vast, was enough to destroy the gun which fired on it, among other things.

The tripods alone would have been formidable, but would not have ended all opposition. For the tripods couldn't move, and their guns were effective only within visible range of the three eyes. There had to be a respectable distance between them, too, so that when one exploded it didn't automatically set off other tripods. Consequently people could have carried on some sort of existence just out of range of the tripods, once they had accepted the fact that it didn't pay to try to knock them out.

Each tripod, however, had three dustbugs. These were small square machines, which ran along like old-fashioned carpetcleaners without a handle, spitting the same kind of death as the tripods' guns. They swept round each parent tripod in widening circles, keeping the place tidy—which meant bisecting everything which moved.

When a tripod was knocked out, the three parentless dustbugs, which were more difficult to de-

stroy than tripods, usually survived. They then went and joined the tidying-up force of some other tripod.

And the Army was practically helpless. A field gun could knock out a tripod, but only at the cost of suicide for itself and its crew and any human beings within three square miles. This price would have been paid in the desperate fight for survival which already existed, had it not been clear that the scorched-earth policy operated against the Army and in favor of the Zwees.

A devastated area was no good to Terrans. Those who were in it already were dead; those who entered it soon became dead. But the Zwee ships, tripods and dustbugs all operated in such an area quite happily, unconcerned about radiation and scorched earth.

Major (now Colonel) Alan Persley, with his invaluable experience of hamburger-ships, had his chance to put his special knowledge to the test when a Zwee ship landed in a field already covered by two anti-tank guns.

"Don't fire yet," he ordered. "Aim for the crack, and shoot the moment the crack widens, before they've had time to see a thing."

He and his men waited confidently—but the Zwees didn't play fair. This time they had some means of seeing what was going on outside, and were able to shoot without opening the lid of their ship an inch. Before Colonel Persley and his men had fired a shot, the Zwees beam sizzled and every man in the unit fell apart, neatly cleft in twain. Persley fell soundlessly like a stick chopped down the middle.

For five days the hopeless battle continued. By the end of that time the Zwees were in complete command of a hundred-mile-wide strip from Arizona up through Utah, Colorado and Wyoming to Montana. And so many people were dead that the estimate might be a million out either way.

Then, for reasons unknown, the Zwees halted. Perhaps their supplies of ships, tripods and dustbugs were not, after all, inexhaustible.

At any rate, the pause gave America and the rest of the world a chance to reconsider.

It would take any nation some time to reach the point of being prepared to H-bomb itself. There had been no time, in the initial stages, to get refugees out of the battle area. H-bombs in the first day or two would have killed thousands of American civilians for every Zwee tripod they put out of action. Naturally the rest of the world wanted H-bombs used anyway. But Washington tried everything else first.

After five days, however, every human being still in Zwee territory could safely be presumed dead. And every human being who

wasn't dead had taken himself as far as possible away from Zwee territory.

So the H-bombs went in. But first, the authorities backed by public opinion did a perhaps pointless but very human thing.

They took revenge on the man for this slaughter.

It was not, perhaps, a shining example of human legality and fairness.

After all, if it was on account of Plowman's rash, unimaginative stupidity that millions had died and the whole world was reeling, fearing a death-blow, the real criminals were surely those who had put him in a position to do his country and his world such untold damage.

Originally the General had merely been fired, like anyone who makes a bad mistake. That was fair enough—in accordance with accepted, established custom in any organization, public or private. In the ordinary way there would have been no question of further punishment. He had only made an honest mistake.

But an honest mistake with such consequences was something new in history. And at his second trial —if it could be called that— Plowman was charged not with his crime but with the consequences of it.

The defense was a farce. In effect the prosecution was saying angrily: "Look what you've done!" And the defense line was that last refuge of children who, in trying to be too clever, turned out not to be clever at all: "I didn't know . . . I didn't mean it." Only Plowman sabotaged even this shed of a defense by insisting that he *did* know, and *did* mean it.

He was sentenced to death, sentence to be carried out in a week's time.

Meantime the H-bombers went in. Bombers rather than ballistic missiles were used at first because of their greater long-range accuracy and because the Zwees had so far shown no form of air counterattack.

The Zwees let the bombers drop their bombs and *then* destroyed the whole force of planes, using a long-range version of their bisecting ray. The planes fell to the ground like broken birds, both wings intact but no longer connected to each other.

Since this disaster finally proved that the Zwees were ready for H-bombs and didn't in the least mind operating in a radiation-saturated area, Uncle Sam called off atom-bomb countermeasures for good.

Within a few hours the Zwees opened up a new front, this time in the Ukraine. The Russians reported the attack promptly in detail—human beings of all hues of skin and opinion had had plenty of time to realize that local squabbles were automatically suspended

for the duration of the Zwee crisis.

The Russians, perhaps more ruthless, certainly having had more time to plan for such an event, H-bombed the whole area with commendable thoroughness. And by doing so merely awarded the Zwees ten thousand square miles of free territory to do as they liked with.

After that there were no more H-bomb attacks on the Zwees.

Having established a sizable bridgehead in America and another in Russia, the Zwees at last condescended to talk.

Apparently they could have done so all along. An immensely powerful tube-blasting transmission on every radio wavelength called on Earth to surrender. Only English was used, and not very good English at that, but the message was brutally clear.

Earth could go under Zwee domination now, while human government still existed, or wait until no Terran government was left, and not nearly so many Terrans either.

"You have learned from your own history," the flat, inhuman voice blared inexorably from every radio and television set, "that when two races meet, the stronger must become the master. We will rule wisely and well. You will be slaves for a thousand years, but one day your offspring will be glad we came . . ."

Surprisingly, at the end of the message a human being was mentioned by name. The Zwees knew all about General Bartholemew Plowman. They gave him his full name and former rank.

The military authorities who were holding him were specifically forbidden to carry out the sentence of execution which had been passed. The Zwees themselves would deal with him.

When the gargantuan radio voice abruptly ceased, leaving a vast silence in the ether, the world had to make up its mind.

Some countries—not, significantly, America or Russia—decided not to surrender. But they all changed their minds when the Zwees, landing in Australia, obliterated Sydney.

Then the talks started. Soon there was no longer any doubt that the Zwees were scaly, many-legged creatures who walked erect like caterpillars rearing on a leaf. Soon Zwees were seen in every capital of the world. . . .

In Washington, Sergeant Carter leaned against the door of Bartholemew Plowman's cell and talked to the man within.

"Me, I say what I've always said," he remarked with a certain rough friendliness, "if these Zwees ever really had any idea of making friends with us, a little mistake wouldn't have made all that difference. What I mean . . . we used to send missionaries to Africa

and India, didn't we? And if the natives chopped them and put them in the pot, we didn't send gunboats, not always anyway, we sent more missionaries, didn't we? Well, what I mean . . . the Zwees think we're lower than any natives, you could tell that from their message, they think we're stupid and crazy and no better than animals, except that maybe in a thousand years under their all-wise all-good rule we may develop into something. So you wouldn't think they'd be surprised when we chop their missionaries and put them in the pot, would you?"

Plowman said nothing. He had said very little since the court-martial which had officially declared him stupid and incompetent.

"Me, I think they only used what you did as an excuse," said the sergeant consolingly. "Now they're coming here to make an example of you, because they think that's all we understand. What I mean . . ."

Plowman was never to learn what Sergeant Carter meant. For at that moment the Zwees arrived, three of them, tall, thin, scaly, writhing, their many legs-arms-tentacles waving in the air. They came silently along the steel corridor, Carter hastily got out of the way, and they stopped outside the bars to look in at Bartholemew Plowman.

For perhaps the first time in his life Plowman experienced the kind of terror which so many of his men had known well. His stomach knotted and his breathing became fast and shallow.

One of the Zwees spoke in a kind of English. "General Bartholemew Plowman? It is you?"

Plowman got to his feet and stood erect.

"General, you are to come with us."

Plowman nodded. "I understand."

"Do you understand, General? I am not sure you do. We want your help."

"Help?" said Plowman dazedly.

"Of course. We will need your help to rule this world. General, you are the only sane man on this planet."

The subject of the existence of a possible critical mass to goodness (or evilness) is one which has until now unaccountably failed to engage the best minds in Science Fiction. Horace Gold—author, editor, anthologist, ace poker-player, ex-bulldozerman and olive-stuffer, and gastronome's gastronome (his lamb shanks with rice . . . his curried wombat . . . his choucrout avec chiens-chauds . . .)*—and beyond question one of the aforesaid best minds, here proceeds to fill the gap.*

WHAT PRICE WINGS?

by H. L. Gold

"BUT YOU PROMISED!" SAID Liz Blackwell. "You swore up and down that you'd have them amputated."

"Amputated!" said Dr. Jonas in horror. "I never heard of such a thing."

"You never heard of anyone with wings, either," she said. "Please, Harvey—you *promised!*"

"That was when you were so upset because I attracted so much attention," said Harvey Leeds. Standing in shoes and trousers, with his wings spread to their full magnificence, he looked like a modern Winged Victory, male division. "Liz, if God hadn't wanted me to fly, He wouldn't have given me wings."

Dr. Jonas put away the measuring tape he had been working with. "From top to bottom, they're five feet six inches. Wing span is eleven feet four. Subtracting what you used to weigh from what you weigh now, they're fifty-three pounds. They grow out of the shoulder blades and are connected directly with your skeletal, muscular and circulatory systems. I've never seen wings on a human before, but these look perfectly sound to me. Amputating them would be exactly like taking off a healthy leg—an unforgivable piece of malpractice, young lady."

"But he's so *embarrassing* to go out with now," she said. "Why did they have to grow? They were *heavenly* when they were the size of cherub wings."

"You asked for a checkup," said Dr. Jonas to Harvey, "and I've

done my best, though I still think you should have gone to a veterinarian. Growing those wings must have taken a lot out of you. Drink lots of milk to replace the calcium you've lost. Get plenty of sleep, and eat lots of green vegetables. In other words, I have to give you the same advice I would give a new mother."

Harvey put on his shirt and jacket backwards so they could be buttoned by Liz. They gave him an angelic and somehow clerical look, with his wing tips almost touching the floor.

"I'll have to study the old statues," he said, "to see how the clothing problem was solved."

"A good idea," said Dr. Jonas. "It's amazing how accurately the old sculptors get them. They must have been working from life. If so, you're not unique, just rare. How did the wings start growing?"

"I don't know," Harvey confessed.

"Well, I do," said Liz. "It's all because he's so damned *good*. He hasn't got a single vice, which, let me tell you, is unnerving to a normal girl like me. The first change was when he checked his records for one thing and found something else—he had cheated the government out of something like two dollars. He tried to pay it, but they said the books were closed and to forget about it. So he sent in the money anonymously. And that night I noticed he kind of glowed, as if he had some sort of halo all over."

"It was only right to send in the money," said Harvey defensively.

"But what about the wings?" Dr. Jonas persisted.

"Would you believe it—he's actually a virgin—at his age! I wanted to see if we were really good for each other, but he said that we should save ourselves *for* our selves till we're married. And that, Harvey Leeds, is when your back started to prickle, and a few days later the wings began to sprout."

"That's right," said Harvey, modestly. "I'd forgotten."

There was silence for a moment. Then Dr. Jonas said slowly: "What you're saying is that there is a critical point to goodness; once it's reached, there are profound physiological changes. It may be the same with evil—*Dr. Jeckyll and Mr. Hyde* might have been based on a real-life model. It's a fascinating bit of speculation."

"But what's Harvey to do with his job?" cried Liz. "He hasn't worked the whole time his wings were growing."

"Haberdashery isn't the only job in the world, you know," said Harvey.

"That's the ticket," said Dr. Jonas. "There must be hundreds of things a winged man can do."

"If you don't get those silly wings cut off and become normal, you can forget all about me," said Liz.

He found his wings bristling—like an eagle's, he imagined. "If that's all I mean to you, Miss Blackwell, you obviously aren't the person for me." He wished he could use stronger language, but he had never been able to, which, of course, partly accounted for his present situation.

"Then this is good-by." Liz snapped her pocketbook shut and went out the door.

Harvey stood uncomfortably for a while. "I guess it's good-by for me, too. I have to go out and make these wings of mine support me."

"Good luck," said Dr. Jonas. "Let me know if there is any change."

The bishop admiringly looked Harvey Leeds over from every angle. "No question of it, they're authentic wings, feathers and all. As your doctor suggested, it is quite astonishing how well the old sculptors got the wings—indeed, they *must* have been working from life. Quite astonishing."

"Clothes are a problem." Harvey put his shirt and jacket on again in reverse.

"Togas are the answer, my boy—same as the statues wore. A bit anachronistic-looking, but so is a man with wings." The bishop sat down behind his desk and lighted a cigar. "Now tell me just what you had in mind in coming to see me."

"Why, it's obvious." Harvey leaned against a wall; he could not sit down for lack of wing clearance. "Am I an angel or am I not?"

"I'm not qualified to pass on such theological matters, but the superficial resemblances are there. I'll even accept, for the sake of argument, your doctor's theory about the critical mass of goodness. But what can I do for you specifically?"

"I want a job as an angel," said Harvey.

"Doing what?" the bishop asked, when he had finished coughing.

"I don't know what an angel does. But that's for the church to figure out, not me."

The bishop leaned forward on his desk. "My good man, if the church took in every anomaly, it would be quite crowded, indeed. You *are* unusual, but in a medieval sort of way."

"There must be some way I could fit in."

"Mind you, I'm not an authority, but I can't think of a thing you could do to help the church or vice versa. There was a time when the church had a use for miracles, but that was in the Middle Ages, a time of ignorance and superstition."

"But not now?" asked Harvey.

"The church is enlightened

now. It is as far beyond the Middle Ages as our computers are from the abacuses they used to count their simple tithes. The church needs good, sound, hard-headed businessmen who know the difference between a bond and a common stock, how to raise funds and what to do with them —in short, exploiting every modern mass medium calls for expert know-how to put our modern-religion message across."

"You mean—"

"—that there simply no place in the church for a medieval relic like yourself."

Harvey was silent for a long moment. Then he said: "Well, that's that. It seemed like such a good idea, though."

The bishop came around the desk and put a fatherly hand on Harvey's shoulder. "You'll find something, my boy. It's just a matter of turning a disadvantage to an advantage that will pay off. If life hands you a lemon, make lemonade. We do that every day in the church."

"Thanks for the audience," said Harvey with mixed feelings, "and good-by."

"Good-by," said the bishop with no mixed feelings whatever, "and God be with you."

Sam Grubel finished his skeptical examination of Harvey's wings. "So they're for real. So what have you got in mind?"

"A job," said Harvey. "There must be people willing to pay to see a man with wings."

"In sideshows, maybe. I got a classy booking agency. I don't touch sideshow people."

"But there's TV. And the nightclubs. And movies."

"Look," Grubel said patiently. "All you got is wings. No act. One or two guest shots and that's it. The only place you can stand still is sideshows."

Harvey paused. "I hadn't thought of that. Of course I'd need an act. How do I go about putting one together?"

Grubel opened the door to a large, bare room with rings and mirrors around the walls. "There," he said. "That should give you plenty of room to fly around in. You *can* fly, can't you?"

"I'm not very good at it," said Harvey reluctantly. "There's no space in my apartment, and outside I just couldn't get up the nerve."

"There's no excuse here. There are only the three of us to watch you."

"Three?" said Harvey. He looked around the room and saw a short, squat man sitting beside a short, squat woman on cane chairs. They had been waiting to see Grubel, but now they were watching Harvey with great interest.

"Don't let them bother you," said Grubel. "They're only a cou-

ple acrobats. . . . So *fly*," he said, a trifle impatiently.

Harvey took off his jacket and shirt and went to one end of the rehearsal room. He spread his wings to their full magnificence and began to run. Trying hard to synchronize wings and legs, he was almost to the opposite end of the room before he became airborne. He wheeled heavily to avoid crashing into the mirrored wall.

"Not much of a start," said Grubel. "What else can you do?"

"I don't know."

"How about a loop the loop?"

Harvey considered the idea. "You know what?"

"No. What?"

"I think I've got a touch of motion sickness up here."

"Oh, great. If you can't think what else to do, come on down."

Harvey brought his feet down to a landing position. He was only doing about ten miles an hour, but the momentum made him gallop into a closed door. He folded his wings and turned around sheepishly.

"That was lousy," said Grubel, opening the door against which Harvey had landed. "Come back when you got something we can *use*."

"Like what?" cried Harvey.

Grubel stopped with his hand on the knob. "I sell acts. I don't create them."

Harvey noted the acrobatic team nodding with great emphasis. "I'll go home and see what I can whip up."

"There's always the sideshows. Lotsa luck."

"Thanks for the interview," said Harvey.

"Don't mention it." Grubel closed the door on Harvey and the acrobats, then opened just wide enough to say: "Sorry, Lombinos. I don't have a thing for you."

They grunted politely and left. Harvey put on his shirt and jacket and took the elevator in an abstracted way. He had not a notion in his head of how to put an act together.

Turning the key in his lock, Harvey Leeds felt a touch on his elbow. He looked behind him. A woman and a man, both of them short and squat, stood there, grunting politely.

"We follow you home," explained Mr. Lombino.

"You very easy to follow," apologized Mrs. Lombino.

"We want to talk to you about your act."

"That's nice of you," said Harvey. "Come on in."

When they had uncomfortably seated themselves, Mr. Lombino said: "We follow you because you mean a million dollars to us."

"I *do*?" said Harvey, leaning against a wall. "How? You want to manage me?"

"Unfortunately, no. We are the

Great Lombinos—acrobats of the very best—but work we can't find."

"I'm sorry to hear that. I'm in that fix myself."

"Who needs acrobats? Nobody. But a team with *wings*—"

"A team?" asked Harvey, puzzled.

"You can't do an act. You're built all wrong."

"He mean for acrobatics," said Mrs. Lombino apologetically.

Mr. Lombino grunted politely. "For acrobatics, sure. For the women—" He made a little seated bow. "How much exercise do you do a day?"

"Not as a regular thing," confessed Harvey.

"There, you see?" Mr. Lombino sat back in triumph. "My wife and me, we work out every day, all day long, stay in condition and add new tricks to our already very good act. Could *you?*"

"I could try. I *have* to."

"It take maybe years to get you in condition. *Then* you first start working up an act. With us, we could start right away."

Harvey frowned. "I'm sorry, I got lost somewhere."

"Simple. With wings, we could make a fortune, and you could get a quarter—no, half—of everything we make."

"Of course half," said Mrs. Lombino, grunting emphatically.

"How do we do that?" asked Harvey.

"Tell us where you get the wings grafted on."

"Grafted on?" repeated Harvey in amazement. "They weren't grafted on. They grew."

The Great Lombinos stopped grunting. "We are very serious," said Mr. Lombino. "Please don't make jokes with us."

"I *am* serious. They just grew."

"So? How?"

Harvey told them. They exchanged quick glances.

Mr. Lombino took out a pistol. "We not just serious. We desperate. If you want keep the secret to yourself, I use this."

"Listen!" cried Harvey. "These wings have been nothing but trouble to me. Aerodynamically, I am even more ridiculous than the bumblebee. They made me lose my job. They cost me the girl I love. They don't let me sit down and I have to sleep in a harness, like an injured horse. And the way people stare at me, Grubel is right—I'm just a freak for the sideshows! *Damn these wings!*"

The wings fell to the floor.

Harvey looked down at them at first in horror and then with relief. "Sometimes it pays to lose your temper," he said, "and it is about time I lost mine. And," he added, reflectively, "something else of mine, too . . ."

Herding the crestfallen Lombinos out, he quickly dialed a phone number. "Hello, Liz?" he asked, grinning, "Liz, listen—"

When H°a°r°l°a°n° E°l°l°i°s°o°n, fresh from the boondocs of Ohio, descended on the Science Fiction scene like a whirlwind, he was barely old enough to shave. Ten years have passed since then, Science Fiction has yet to recover, Harlan has written so many stories that only a computing machine (or an Oriental used to counting rice with an abacus) could reckon the exact number, and our genre *has not for a long time claimed the greater part of his attention. He has not*—so far—*published a cookbook, a catechism, or a Guide to Collecting Quechua Coins, but that is about all. His two most recent books are* Memoes From Purgatory *and* Gentlemen Junkie, *and it was concerning the last that Dorothy Parker (whose snarls they are many, whose praises are few) called him ". . . a good, honest, clean writer, putting down what he has known, and no nonsense about it." When last heard from Harlan had arrived in Hollywood to stir up the alligators, and from there he sent us his first F&SF story, a haunting tale of love and death and music.*

PAULIE CHARMED THE SLEEPING WOMAN

by Harlan Ellison

"SHE'LL BE LISTENING, PAULIE, you can bet on that," I said to him, touching him lightly on the shoulder. "She ain't dead, Paulie, nobody like her could ever *really* die." But he didn't care, Paulie didn't. All he knew was that one fine listener, that girl he'd dug and loved and spent so many notes on, she was gone. Some bad thing had happened and Ginny was dead, in her family's crypt out in the boneyard, and they wouldn't even allow Paulie to come to the funeral. Rich parents, Ginny's parents, and they was bugged at her first

for having left the family and the old escutcheon, and second for having taken up with what they called "a broken down wastrel jazz musician."

Which was flat-out not true. Paulie was the best.

People like that have no idea what it's like, hearing a horn like Paulie. Bright as a penny, and soft and quick and full of tiny things being said close into your ear . . . that was Paulie. You can know Miles, and you can remember Brownie, and you can talk it up that Diz uses a *fine* axe, and still not take it away from Paulie. He's what Chet Baker *might* have become, if he hadn't turned himself inside out and lost it all, or (and Hentoff called me a whack one night when I said this to him) if Bix had lived and gone through swing and bop and funk and cool and soul crap. But that's just *my* feeling, falling down on the way Paulie phrases, and his soft blue stuff, and the airy changes. That's just *my* bag, so forget it; has nothin' to do with Paulie and Ginny, except I wanted to make it clear that Paulie was *good*. Maybe great, even. No one can tag great, I'm hip, but Paulie was as close to it as I'll ever care to go.

So Ginny's folks had no truth in their put-down. He was not only the finest trumpet I've ever blown guitar with, but after that axe of his, he loved Ginny more than his eyes, even. So when she died, and they took her away—and her snooty sonofabitch brother Karl or whatever the hell that fruit's name was spit on Paulie—and put her in their creepy tomb, Paulie bust up pretty bad. And I said to him:

"Paulie, you got to *listen*, man, because Ginny'll always be with you. She loved to hear you play, Paulie, she really loved to hear you play, and wherever she is now, she's hearing you. So you *got* to get back with it, because if you let it lay there, then she won't hear a thing, ever."

But it didn't take until later. Then Paulie got pretty smashed. He couldn't hold his liquor in the first place, and when he had to blow five sets a night, without her happy, loving round moony-face down there in front, it made him want to get plowed even more. So he got completely corked out of his nut, and he came to me while I was packing up the Gibson, and he said, "Johnnie, I gotta go play for her."

Marshall, and Norman Skeets, both of them were halfway out the door of the club when Paulie laid it on me. They paused on the step going up to the street, and they waited for me to talk him out of it and take him home to the sack, so they could go back to their respective broads and wife. So I launched into it, and tried to calm him, but he was stuck on the idea.

"I'm goin' over to that thing

they stuck her into, Johnnie, and I'm gonna charm her outta there. I'm gonna play so good she'll wake up and cry and come back to me, Johnnie." He meant it. The kook really meant it. He wanted to go find that uppity creepy cemetary where Ginny's blue-blood parents had stuck her body, and blow trumpet for the dead. It was all at once laughable and pitiable and creepy. Like a double-talker giving you the business with the frammis on the fortestan, and you standing there wondering what the hell is happening.

I tried to get him to sit down, but he had the horn in his mitt, and he was yanking away from me, walking a helluva lot straighter and truer than a drunk had any right to be walking. Right for the stairs and the outside.

Well. To make it short, we tried everything short of decking him, but he was set on it, so we came around to thinking maybe it would snap him out of it, that maybe he was acting nutty this way because he hadn't been allowed to attend the funeral and he felt guilty, though God knows Paulie hadn't had anything to do with the taxi that had run Ginny down in the street outside that Detroit club where Paulie had been booked.

So we figured it might straighten him out, like I say, and we got him to promise that if he blew for Ginny he'd come home and go to sleep.

So we piled into Marshall's Falcon and we drove out to the Island —and Long Island late at night is *much* creepier than Spanish Harlem—and finally found the cemetary. It was surrounded by a big iron fence, but Paulie made Marshall drive up close, and then we all got out, and with Marshall yelling that we'd dent his top, and Skeets telling him to shut up before we got pinched, we climbed on the car and over the fence.

Into the tombstones. Dark and foggy and Christ it was just like a horror flick, except there went Paulie, like some kind of a nut, all through the tall grass where the graves hadn't been dug yet, past the piles of ready dirt, around a gang of tombs, and down this line of stones like he knew *exactly* where he was going.

As it turned out, he didn't have no more idea of where the hell he was going than we did. But we tagged along, and after we'd been circling and careening around there for ten or fifteen minutes, Marshall went *hssst!* and we dug him pointing to a big black shape with two dark angels hovering on one foot each, like gargoyles or something.

We called Paulie back (wondering where the caretaker was, if they had one, and why he hadn't heard us bumbling around in there). He came tottering over, and when he saw the legend on the bronze plate beside the door of

that tomb, he sank down on his knees and we heard him making little talking noises to the ground, or to himself, maybe, but very sad and lonely and wanting.

It said:

VIRGINIA FORREST MADISON
Beloved Daughter
Born April 7, 1936
Died July 23, 1961
"She is always with us."
R.I.P.

And the other three of us just stood there quietly, remembering her, the way she had been before that stupid taxi had sent her through a florist's window. We remembered how she'd sit with one Scotch and two dozen cigarettes, a whole night, digging Paulie on the bandstand, and just loving him with her eyes. We remembered it, and none of us felt it was wrong for Paulie to be here. I was glad I was with him. He was a good guy, and he didn't deserve all this pain.

Then Paulie got up, and he started to blow.

He put the horn to his mouth, and the little hard muscle-ridges of his upper lip stood out, and he started to blow something low and soft and new. It was a strange sound, all minor-key and repetitive, with a wistful, searching thread in it. I'd never heard it before, and I knew damned well no one else had ever heard it, either.

It was like a million black birds with white wings sailing into the night sky. Like a sheet of coolness being drawn down over a fire. Like Paulie hungry and crying and asking her, charming her, calling her, out of that crypt, out into the night to hear him playing.

Then I got scared.

We was in a graveyard, for God's sake, and Paulie was just as clear as anything asking a dead girl to come on out of her casket with the gold handles and love him, need him, hold him and talk look see him. It was the wrong thing to do, I knew that, and I'm not the least bit superstitious. There's just *some* things you know ain't proper. This was like that. A guy can be unhappy and want to get his girl back . . . but this was somethin' God might not like.

None of us could move. We was so scared I heard Skeets behind me and he was shivering so bad he had to put his hands in his pockets.

Then we heard the noise outta that crypt.

We heard her coming. I don't think anyone screamed, but we all knew Ginny was coming back; and the way she had looked after that taxi ripped into her, none of us thought we could take it. But Paulie just kept laying it on, so sweet and charming and compelling that we knew Ginny couldn't keep sleeping with all that goodness coming at her.

Later, we got Paulie back over the fence, and into the car. We took him home, and I had three

straight rye's before I could make my eyes shut.

Paulie didn't play much after that, a gig now and then, but it doesn't matter. He has his ghosts.

There aren't no ghosts except the ones we buy with our guilty desires, you know that. But with Paulie, well, who knows which is better: a live emptiness or companionship with a dead memory that likes soundless music?

I don't know, I'm not that good, that great a musician.

EDITION FRANCAISE—100 ISSUES

The one hundredth issue of *Fiction*, F&SF's French edition, appeared early this year. The durability of this delightful magazine is due to the skill and dedication of Maurice Renault and his editor, Alain Dorémieux, in blending the best American s.f. stories with the best work of a new generation of French s.f. and fantasy writers.

Issue number 100 contains stories translated from the American edition by Brian W. Aldiss ("Hothouse," with a cover drawing by Jean-Claude Forest, whose work is long overdue to appear on the cover of the American magazine), Poul Anderson, Edgar Pangborn and Ray Bradbury. There are French stories by Michel Demuth, Nathalie Ch.-Henneberg, Jean Ray, Thomas Owen and Pierre Versins.

French s.f. writers as a group are eager to acknowledge their debt to American and British s.f.: but they have created something of their own in this field, whose importance will be better recognized as time goes on, and more of their stories are translated.

—Damon Knight

(Coming soon—"The Devil's God-daughter" by Suzanne Malaval, translated from the French by Damon Knight.)

As often happens in a Will Stanton story, an almost ordinary person here has an almost ordinary adventure, and the whole turns out to be most extraordinary. . . .

THE GUMDROP KING

by Will Stanton

AT FIRST RAYMOND THOUGHT it was a flying saucer when it flashed over his head and disappeared behind the trees. He took a couple of steps in that direction and then he decided it probably wasn't a saucer at all—it had looked more like a cereal bowl. He turned and walked down the path to the lion trap. It was empty—it usually was. Once he had almost captured a kangaroo, but it got away.

Beyond the trap was the place where the treasure chest was buried. He dug it up to make sure it was all right and buried it in a safer place. Then he walked along the creek, looking for lucky stones. It was about half an hour before he came to the clearing where the saucer was.

The pilot was sitting back against a stump, chewing a piece of grass. He was about Raymond's size or a little smaller. He had pointed ears and was wearing a tight fitting green suit. Raymond approached him warily.

"You a new kid?" he asked.

The other smiled. "My name is Korko," he said. "I guess I'm new—I've never been here before. As a matter of fact I don't seem to know where I am."

"You're in the woods in back of my house," Raymond said. He pointed to the spaceship. "Is that yours?"

"Uh huh," Korko said, "I'm refueling—solar energy." He grinned, "I forgot to fill the spare tanks before I left."

Raymond nodded. "Sometimes I forget things. I forgot to brush my teeth this morning."

Korko stretched out his legs. "Well, they can't expect you to remember everything. There's just too much."

"That's what I tell my sister," Raymond said. "But then I forget to put on my overshoes and she gets mad."

"You can't expect too much from sisters, can you?" Korko said. He folded his hands behind his head and looked up into the sky. "I keep mine in a cage most of the time," he added, "haven't you ever thought of that?"

Raymond picked up a branch and started peeling the bark off it. "I guess it wouldn't be very nice —locked up in a cage all by yourself."

"I never said she was by herself," Korko pointed out, "I put some tigers in too."

"Tigers?" Raymond said, "aren't you afraid they'll eat her up?"

Korko shook his head slowly. "No, I'm not. Not the kind of tigers you get these days."

Raymond held out his hand. "Would you like a gumdrop?"

"Thank you," Korko took one and chewed it thoughtfully. "It's delicious, I've never had anything like it."

"Take another," Raymond said.

"You're a good fellow," Korko said, "do you have a wife?"

"No, I live with my sister Molly. But she's going to get married soon—a fellow named Walter. I don't like him."

"Ah—" Korko folded his arms. "You don't like him. What does Walter do?"

"He's a developer," Raymond said. "After they get married he's going to develop this farm."

"I see. Just how do you do that?"

"You put in a road," Raymond said. "Then you cut down all the trees and build houses."

Korko twisted around so as to see all the clearing. "I like it better with the trees," he said.

"So do I—so does Molly. But Walter says you can't fight progress."

"Aha—progress," Korko nodded his head wisely. "They tried that in my country too but I soon put a stop to it, I can tell you that."

"I don't see how you can."

"When you're king you can do any blasted thundering thing you want," Korko said. "I told you I was king, didn't I? Wait a minute —" He disappeared into the space ship. In a moment he was back with a shiny crown that seemed badly out of shape. "I'm very fond of tin," he said, "but it does bend so. I must have sat on it." He went over it with his fingers, pressing it back into shape.

"Of course, my official crown is gold," he said; "this is a light weight crown for traveling." He put it on the back of his head. "How does it look?"

"Just fine," Raymond said.

"I'm glad you think so. People keep telling me I'm a splendid looking king, but then they'd say just about anything." He poked the ground moodily with a stick.

"Have a gumdrop," Raymond said.

Korko smiled. "You're a good

friend, Raymond." He put the gumdrop in his mouth. "Isn't there somebody else your sister could marry—somebody you like?"

"There's Bartholomew," he said. "I think Molly likes him too. Only he doesn't have enough money to get married. He's a painter."

"How much money does it take to get married?"

"I don't know," Raymond said. "There's going to be an exhibit next month—Bartholomew says if he wins a prize then people will start to buy his pictures."

Korko waved his hand. "It's as good as done. Tell him to enter another picture. He might as well get second prize too."

"I'll tell him," Raymond said. He stepped over to the spaceship. "I don't suppose we could go for a ride?"

Korko shook his head. "Not while it's refueling. Of course if you just want to go someplace here on the planet we could use teleportation."

"Well," Raymond said, "I had a friend named Piggy—he moved away last year. I thought it might be nice to see him."

"Good old Piggy," Korko said. "Do you want to go to his house or would you rather bring him here?"

"Can you really do that?" Raymond asked. "Make a person travel all that distance?"

"Certainly," Korko said. "Put any person any place you want to. It's easy as that—" he rubbed his middle finger against his thumb. "As easy as—" He tried again.

Raymond snapped his fingers. "As that?"

"Show me how you do it," Korko said. "I never have been able to get the hang of it." Raymond showed him. "I guess I'll have to keep practicing," Korko said. "Where does your friend Piggy live?"

Raymond closed his eyes. He remembered Piggy had moved out West—all the way to Idaho. If only he could remember the name of the town!

"Moscow," he said suddenly, "that's where he lives. Can we go there?"

"We're there," Korko said.

They were standing in the center of a large table, surrounded by a circle of a dozen men, frozen in their chairs, staring at the two of them.

"Surprise!" Korko cried happily. "Which one is Piggy?"

Raymond nudged him in the ribs. "This isn't the right place."

"Excuse us please," Korko said. The room vanished and they were back in the clearing. Raymond let out his breath.

"What enormous people you know," Korko said, "They must be giants."

"I don't know them," Raymond said, "I don't even know where we were."

"Here's a souvenir I brought

back," Korko handed him a small paperweight. "Notice the pretty design."

"It looks like a sickle," Raymond said, "and a hammer. But we shouldn't keep this—not without paying."

"Aha," Korko took off his crown, looked at it and put it back on. "Not without paying. What do we pay with?"

Raymond held out a nickle. "I guess this should be enough. Anyhow it's all I've got."

"I'll take it to them," Korko said, "You wait right here," and he was gone.

In a moment he was back smiling happily. "How fast they get things done," he said. "Just in the little time since we were there—the table tipped over, chairs smashed up and soldiers all around. I picked out the fattest man and gave him the money. He jumped back and threw it on the floor." He shook his head admiringly. "It's a pleasure to do business with such fine exciting people."

He walked over to the ship and looked inside. "Enough fuel for a takeoff," he announced. "Better be going."

"You have to go home?" Raymond asked.

"First I have to move closer to the sun," Korko said, "for solar energy. It will take about 12 hours to store up enough for the trip home."

Raymond picked up a stone and examined it carefully. "Then I won't be seeing you again?"

"Well, I really should be getting home," Korko said. He looked at Raymond for a moment. "I don't suppose you have any gumdrops left? I'd give anything to know how to make them."

"I have a whole sack of them back at the house," Raymond said.

"You have?" he grinned delightedly. "I could have my royal alchemist work out the formula. I'll be here first thing in the morning."

"Good bye Korko." Raymond turned and headed back toward his house.

Molly was in the kitchen when he got there. "You're late," she said; "what have you been doing all afternoon?"

Raymond got himself a drink of water. "I talked with a new kid," he said. "We went to see Piggy, but he wasn't there."

"Honestly Raymond. Piggy moved to Idaho last year—you knew that. Some of the stories you make up—" She shook her head. "Wash your hands now, supper's ready."

Raymond took his place at the table. "Aren't you going to eat?"

"I'm going out to dinner with Walter," she said.

Raymond scowled. "I don't like Walter much. I wish he'd leave us alone. I wish we could keep the farm just the way it is."

"I know," Molly said, "I do too." She sat down and rested her arms on the table. "But you've got to understand, Raymond, we can't afford to keep up this big place for just the two of us."

"You could marry Bartholomew," he said. "Then he could live here and help keep the place up."

Molly reached out and all he can do to support himself. Nobody wants to buy his paintings."

"They will." Raymond swallowed a mouthful of potato and took a gulp of milk. "Next month his picture is going to win first prize. Then everybody will want to buy them."

Molly reached out and smoothed back a lock of his hair. "You're just like Dad always was," she said, "impractical and optimistic. I don't know—" She traced a crack in the table top. "Maybe that's the best way to be."

"Sure it is," Raymond said. "Bart's going to win first prize. Second prize too."

She smiled. "It's wonderful to have big dreams, but somebody has to be practical. The thing you want most isn't always what's best. You're doing so well in school it would be a shame if you couldn't go to college. That takes a lot of money. Now go on and finish your supper—I have to change."

Raymond was sitting on the front steps when Walter arrived. Molly came to the door. "Right on time," she said.

Walter came up the walk. He was handsomely dressed and knew it and he walked slowly enough so everybody could tell. He glanced coldly at Raymond and turned to Molly. "Look at the condition of the boy's clothes," he said. "Does he have to go around looking like a tramp?"

"I know," she said, "but after all, Walter, it's vacation and he plays hard."

"Then perhaps it's time he learned to work hard," Walter said, "instead of mooning around all day. I think maybe a good stiff military school might be the answer."

"Walter—he's only a child."

"Only a child, is he—" He reached down and picked up the paperweight Raymond had been holding. He looked at it more closely and held it out to Molly, his hand trembling with fury. "Just how do you explain this? Young man—answer me!" His voice was choked with indignation, "Where did this come from?"

Raymond looked down at the steps. "I got it from a kid I know," he said.

Walter turned to Molly, "You hear that?" he demanded. "That's the sort of trash and riff-raff you allow him to associate with."

"Walter, I'm sure it doesn't mean anything," she said. "Children collect all kinds of things."

"Do they indeed?" Walter slipped the paperweight into his pocket. "Well, this particular thing is going to be turned over to the proper authorities first thing in the morning."

"Whatever you think best." Molly started down the steps. "Goodnight Raymond, we won't be late."

"Okay," he said. He picked up a paper sack from the floor beside him and took out some gumdrops.

"Another thing," Walter said, "you can just stop eating that stuff —ruining your teeth—running up dental bills. You'd better not forget."

Raymond studied the candy thoughtfully.

"Raymond, where are your manners?" Molly asked. "Walter spoke to you. Say goodnight."

"Goodnight Molly," he dropped the gumdrops back in the sack. "Goodbye Walter," he said.

Through Time And Space With Ferdinand Feghoot: LIII

It was not often that Ferdinand Feghoot was mistaken in matters of interplanetary business. Once, however, in 2073, his advice was requested by a Mrs. Klipspringer, a famous breeder of pedigreed dogs who lived in a small town in Connecticut. So successful had she been that she was planning to extend her operations to other planets.

Feghoot considered very carefully, and finally informed her that no bank in the universe would lend her the necessary capital.

"Then I shall go to old Silas Quibble, the money lender right back in my home town!" she flared.

Quibble was a notoriously tough customer; and Feghoot, with a smile, asked what she proposed to put up as collateral.

"My favorite dog," she angrily answered, "Triple Galactic Grand Champion Fu Chu of Chow Yuk!"

Feghoot coldly informed her that she would be wasting her time, and ushered her out.

The very next day, she came back in triumph, waving Silas Quibble's certified cheque. "He advanced every cent of it," she exulted, "and a few thousand more!"

Ferdinand Feghoot leaped to his feet in astonishment. "I stand amazed!" he cried out. "Si lent upon a Peke in Darien!"

—GRENDEL BRIARTON (*with thanks to Ruth S. Perot*)

EDITORIAL

Some few years ago, engaged in the task of finding out the first name of Captain Dominis, father of the prince-consort to Liliuokalani, last Monarch of Hawaii, we uncovered in the Fifth Avenue Library a file of a Honolulu newspaper dated (approximately) 1844. This journal was *The Seaman's Friend and Temperance Advocate;* impaled upon the impossible contradiction contained in its title, it had, naturally, but a short life. Flipping through its ancient pages, we suddenly saw a NAME leap from the text, and strike us in the eye. *If Mr. Herman Melville,* the brief notice read, *formerly an officer aboard the American whale-ship* Achushnet, *will call at the office of the seamen's chaplain, he will find several letters directed to his address* . . . That was all. We never did find Captain Dominis's first name, but no matter: we had solved the Mystery of Moby Dick forever. That white whale which Ahab-Melville pursued forever through the distant seas, the fearsome symbol which entire pods of spouting Ph.D.s have interpreted as Evil, Sexual Love, Sibling Rivalry, and G-d-knows-what—was nothing of the sort. It was the letters, mark you, Bosun, the several letters, *white—white*—forever elusive. Who wrote them, we will never know. Perhaps they were anonymous.

We have a similar problem here. Anonymous letters directed to this address, after being run through the telescan for clues, are taken out by Horatio, our elderly office-boy, and burned in the garden (the witchbane is a trifle sickly this season, but the venus flytraps are doing well). It was just last week that one such missive arrived, and as it mentioned not only us but our Contributing Science Editor, the two of us examined it together. "Avram Davidson [the totally disarming first sentence began] is the last of the literary craftsmen and, without question, one of the greatest writers of this age. ["Right away, a nut!" said Dr. Asimov.] Isaac Asimov, despite his tender years, was one of the most prolific contributors to the Golden Age of Science Fiction. His work was original, convincing, and thoroughly readable. Why 'was'? I'm sure I don't know . . . so what happens? With names like this out comes a magazine that should better be called 'Popular Insanity.' What happened? The depression? Believe me, we all feel it. When it rains it rains all over. But there must be a way around it. If you can't afford better writers, maybe you can spur those you have to do

better. . . . Sincerest wishes for a prompt and complete recovery. Cordially, The Flea." ["I told you: a nut," said Dr. Asimov; and departed, on the Night Mail, for Boston.] We regret, of course, that T. Flea does not like our current product. Most of our other readers do, as is proven by our steady rise in circulation. We bear Mr. F. no malice, but think it only fair to warn him that we are on his trail. And when we hunt him down, his punishment will be to read for one month all the stories which we receive but do not buy. The rest of our public will continue, of course, to be treated only to first fruits and primest parts.

—Avram Davidson

The 20th World Science Fiction Convention will be held Labor Day Weekend at the Congress Hotel in Chicago, and is open to everybody. Send $3 registration fee to *George Price, Treasurer, POB 4864, Chicago 80, Illinois,* and get the Convention's interest-whetting Progress Reports—*Or,* pay when you come to the Convention itself (if you can't attend, $2 gets you all Reports anyway). The witty *Wilson ("Bob") Tucker* is Master of Ceremonies, *Theodore Sturgeon* is Guest of Honor, and other famous SF writers (and editors) will participate in the serious talk and in the fun. So—save up your pennies, and accumulate your rocks, and buy *your* favorite author (and/or editor) a drink at the Convention bar. He may even speak to you.

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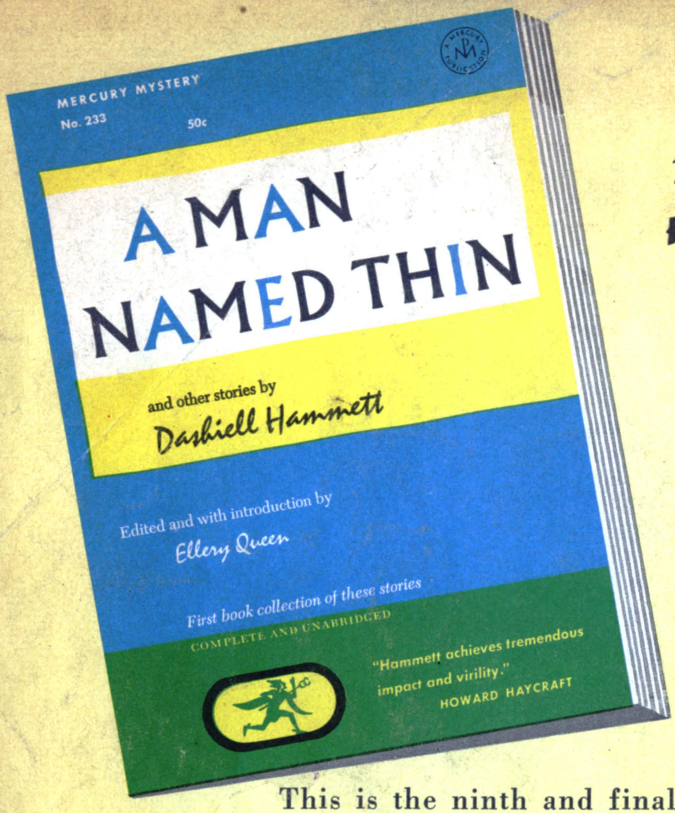

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