

**NEW WORLDS**

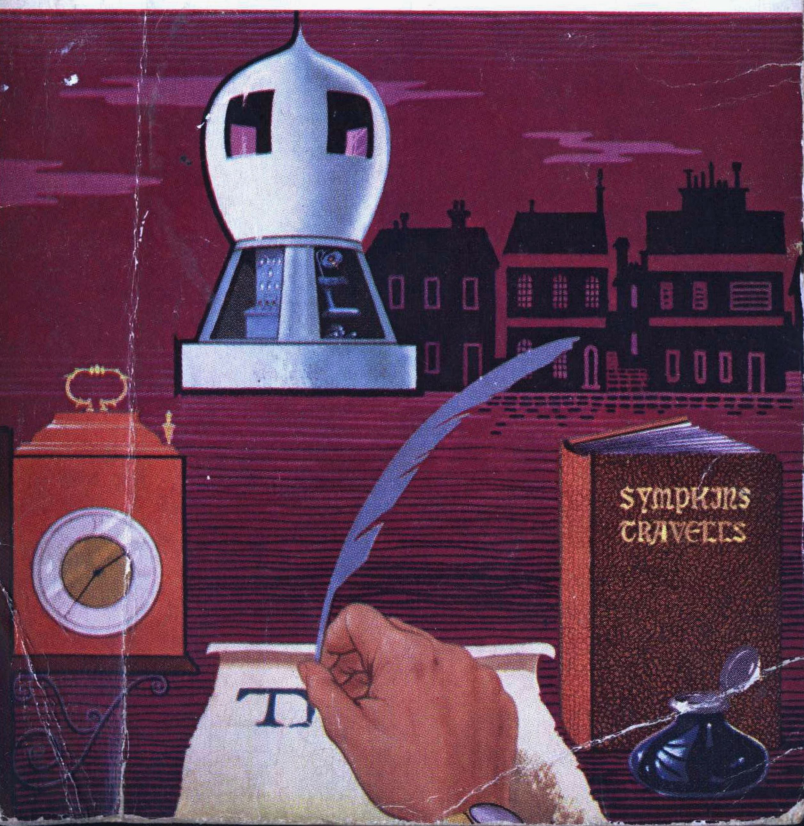
COMPACT  
SF

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DAVID MASSON'S  
brilliantly told new satire

# A TWO-TIMER



# NEW WORLDS



FEBRUARY 1966  
Vol. 49 No.159

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## ONWARD, EVER ONWARD . . .



EVERY SO OFTEN we get a complaint—usually from one of the hard-core ‘fanzine’ fans—that modern sf writers and publishers have betrayed the spirit of The Golden Age in sf (a period that is primarily covered, we gather, by the late forties and early fifties). Sf, they say, is being denuded of its ‘ideas’ and ‘entertainment’ by these treacherous souls. These complaints echo those who moaned, on the publication of *Frankenstein*, that the Gothic novel was becoming needlessly over-sophisticated, or, in this century, that the realistic thrillers of Hammett, Chandler and others were degenerate breaks with the great tradition of Holmes, the country-house-locked-room murder mysteries, Raffles, Bulldog Drummond, *et al.* Such people have always existed. Their motto, whether stated or not, is basically: All Change is Bad. You can imagine their ancestors looking with suspicion on the wheel, the King James Bible or the steam engine, muttering that no good would come of any of it. Perhaps such people are necessary to our civilisation. Standards have to be reached and a balance attained and it is probably as well that the process is comparatively slow.

The vociferous minority in sf, however, has such subjective standards that it is hard to pay much serious attention to it. For instance, its ‘Golden Age’ is not the ‘Golden Age’ of an earlier generation that looked to the twenties and thirties for its standards and clamoured that John W. Campbell’s ‘humanising’ of sf, beginning in the early forties, was going to be the death of the field. Later Horace Gold and Anthony Boucher received similar attacks from some of the people who had

been attracted to Campbell's work but could not accept that there was any need for further change.

Basically these attacks come, it appears, from people who read very little fiction other than science fiction and are unable to form true standards because of this. These are often the same people who make impossible claims for Heinlein, Blish, Asimov, van Vogt and others in the field, saying that they are the only writers to produce 'thought provoking' ideas in modern fiction. To prove their point they make comparisons with Zane Gray, Micky Spillane and Ian Fleming. To disprove their point one need only make comparisons with Kafka, Camus, Sartre, Borges, Wyndham Lewis, Cocteau and many other writers and playwrights who entertain us with true novels and plays of ideas. The half-baked, ill-considered, poorly-informed notions of most of those 'Golden Age' sf writers tell us next to nothing about human character or the human condition and the pulp-derived styles they used often makes the writing itself unreadable.

The lighter stories of writers like Kuttner and Kornbluth are exceptions—they amuse, they entertain. Sometimes they even touch on real ideas, as in the stories of Asimov, Kornbluth and Bester, but the ideas are rarely developed, usually becoming subservient to the action-adventure-mystery plots used as vehicles for them.

One of the things that makes these books novels of notions, rather than of ideas, is that they are rarely written with any great conviction and the author only occasionally has the strength of mind to take his theme to its ultimate conclusion. A typical example was Kornbluth's *The Syndic* which went to pieces half-way through partly because Kornbluth had begun to spot the flaws in the political system he had started by praising and didn't have time, patience or strength of will sufficient to work out the full implications of what he was doing.

We enjoy good escapism and will always publish good escapism alongside more serious fiction, but quite often a good sf thriller is spoiled by pretentiousness, by writers making 'philosophical' points that are, at best, naïve, and whose attempts at characterisation are embarrassingly

clumsy. The appeal of such books can only be to the youngest or most unsophisticated of readers and these books can, in fact, do actual harm to their readers by pretending to inform them.

The irony is that it is these readers who make the most extravagant claims for the so-called 'Golden Age' of sf.

Another complaint sometimes heard is that there isn't enough science in present-day sf. Here the person is usually complaining that there isn't enough concentration on the physical sciences. The emphasis has tended to shift towards the 'soft' sciences like psychology and sociology, partly because the person who has these days managed to master modern physics is too busy to take time out to write fiction. Good speculation along these lines is nowadays virtually impossible for the amateur, whereas this wasn't the case ten or twenty years ago. As was suggested in *NEW WORLDS* a few issues ago, if readers require nothing but this kind of speculation they should look for it in the scientific journals. When we can get a good story that contains 'hard' scientific speculation we publish it.

David I. Masson, in fact, whose third published story takes pride of place in this issue, is one of the few writers producing, as you will see in future issues, science fiction stories which have genuine scientific speculation as their basis. Not content with this alone, Masson manages to work in, as his *leit-motif*, a moral at the same time. Unlike the old-style sf writer, however, he respects his readers' intelligence sufficiently not to hammer his points home. In *Traveller's Rest* (NWSF 154) he wrote about the tyranny of subjective time and the fact that most of our troubles are self-created; neither points were overtly made, but both were intrinsic to the story. In *Mouth of Hell* (NWSF 158) he told the story of a tragic expedition into a vast crater in which every detail was scientifically plausible and which ended on a sardonic note that showed that the things which people died to achieve yesterday become part of today's complacently accepted norm. The story in this issue is a more obvious satire, in which the

1960s are seen through the eyes of a time-traveller from the seventeenth century.

Writers like Masson are capable of hard scientific speculation but are also capable of taking a deeper look at the whole basis of our assumptions about ourselves. And these writers do not have the irritating glibness that mars so many of the sf tales of ten years or so ago—a glibness that often, it seems, passes for profundity in the eyes of some readers.

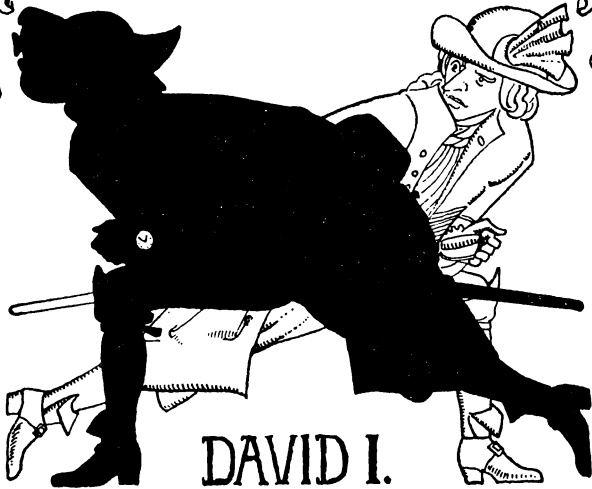
There is still a lot of progress to be made before science fiction as a form fulfils all its promise, both as a vehicle for intelligent escapism and as serious literature, but nostalgia for the past will achieve nothing. Writing standards are being raised, plots become more sophisticated, characters more convincing. There are fewer new real ideas in the world than there are notions—but it is how we dramatise them that is important. To get them across we must reject many of the conventional trappings of the past and writers must look to themselves rather than their predecessors for the ways in which they will present their stories.

This is plainly happening, particularly amongst the younger writers, and we are confident that the great majority of our readers welcome this.

If we sometimes find it necessary to criticise the writers of the past, we also readily admit that, in their day, they were doing their best within their limits and the limits of their markets. They pushed the standards up in the forties and early fifties and many of them are still trying to improve the general level of the field. Few of the best 'Golden Age' writers look back. It seems a shame that the minority who yearn for past glories should deprive themselves of the pleasure of experiencing present ones.

**Michael Moorcock**

# A TWO-TIMER.



DAVID I.  
MASSON

J. GAWTHORN '65

. . . I WAS STANDING, as it chanc'd, within the shade of a low Arch-way, where I could not easily be seen by any who shou'd pass that way, when I saw as it were a kind of Dazzle betwixt my Eyes and a Barn, that stood across the Street. Anon this *Appearance* seem'd as 'twere to Thicken, and there stood a little space before the Barn a kind of a clos'd Chair, but without Poles, and of a Whiteish Colouring, and One that sate within it, peering out upon the World as if he fear'd for his life. Presently this Fellow turns to some thing before him in the Chair and moves his Hands about, then peeps he forth again as tho' he fear'd a Plot was afoot to committ Murther upon his Person, and anon steps gingerly out of one Side, and

creeps away down the Alley, looking much to right and to left. He had on him the most Outlandish Cloathes that ever I saw. Thinks I, 'tis maybe he, that filch'd my Goods last Night, when I had an ill Dream.

I came out of my Arch and onto the Street and follow'd him down the Alley a little way, not looking straight upon him, but making as to cut my self a Stick, that he might have no thought specially of me, if he shou'd turn round, and espy me. Then when I saw he was gone a good Furlong off from his Chair, and look'd not to turn about, I slacken'd my steps, and presently ran back to that Chair. No Body was abroad.

I look'd stedfastly in this Chair and I must tell you. I never saw the like of it before. A Top Peice it had, four Walls, four Windows of thick Glass, two little Doors with Glass to them, and a Floor, and all of a kind of Silver, but never so lustrous as that Metal, nor so Cold. Within was a hard silvery Seat, but cunningly fashion'd to the Buttocks of a Sitter; and before the Seat as 'twere a *Lectern* or Bench, on which I saw many Circles with Figures, like so many Clocks or Marriners Dials, and within them Handles with Pointers. I came softly in by one Door, and look'd narrowly on them. One Circle bore Writing, or rather some kind of Engraving, in a stiff *Roman* Print, with Words, which I cou'd not understand: GEODETIC-COSMIC RENORMALIZER: SEALED IN WORKSHOP. Another had Words across it engrav'd: HEIGHT CONTROL. Another was a great Dial with YEAR (0=1), engrav'd below it, a Pointer and Handle within, and round its Circle, Numbers running from the Top clock-wise round, from Nought to Nine and Ninety. Another Dial like that Dial had engrav'd below it YEAR  $\times 10^2$ , and Numbers from Nought to Nine; and a Third Dial had, YEAR  $\times 10^3$ , and Numbers from near the Bottom of the Circle from 49 to Nought at the Top, clock-wise upon the Left hand, and again to 49 clock-wise down on the Right hand. Another, a small Dial, had, MONTH, engrav'd below it, and twelve Numbers like an Hours Clock. Another Dial had, DAY, and one and thirty Numbers. Another had, HOUR, and four and twenty



Numbers. In the midst of all these was a Knob of Red colour, smooth and a little hollow, as big as my Thumb.

Thinks I, *this is Witchcraft indeed* ; but I fell to studying the Dials for the Years. I had learnt something in the *Mathematicks*, and I understood that  $10^3$  cou'd be the same with One Thousand, while  $10^2$  might by that token be the same with One Hundred. When I had puzzled these Dials and their Pointers out, methought the Pointers stood not at this present year 1683, but at the year One Thousand Nine Hundred and Sixty Four, with the Pointer for the Thousands of years touching the Number, 1, on the Right-hand side. The Day and Hour (and the Month) were the same as that Day's in *April* was in truth. Thinks I to my self, *This Necromancer wou'd find him self Two Hundred and Eighty One years after this Time, when he is tir'd of seeing how 'tis with this Year of 1683.* But you must understand that I was all of a maze, even while I thought these things so coolly.

With that my Foot slips on the strange smooth Silver of the Floor, and I stumbles, and I puts forth my Hands to save my Body from falling, and with this comes down my Left Hand full upon the Red Knob, and in goes that Knob with a sudden push and a small sound. I felt as it might be in a Faint-ness, and the Street went out of my sight, but the Chair stood still. In the place of the Street and the Barn was a new and strange Place, like to a Chamber, and there fell a terrible Clangour about me.

The Chamber was high and smooth. I cou'd not discover, whether it were Built of Wood, or Stone, or Bricks, for all was cover'd with a manner of smooth Plaster and painted over. The Windows were uncommon great and let in much light, and gave upon a great Road, whereon stood great Buildings of Stone. In the Ceiling of this Chamber I saw long Lines or Rods of some Substance, that were Glowing as if they were of Iron heated in a Furnace, for from them came much Light of a Whiteish Hue. I was afear'd they wou'd fall down upon me and burn me. There stood some Tables and Chairs, of a strange kind of design, and some were of Metal.

The Clangour I thought came from without. It chang'd every minute, with a dreadful Thundring and Moaning. I crouch'd me down in my *Sorcerer's Chair* and commended my Soul to *Almighty God*, for I thought, that some fearful Disaster was nigh, War or Earthquake mayhap, and that I shou'd soon perish. Before many minutes had past, the Thundring grew more lowd, and a manner of Chariot or Coach came Rowling down the Road without, with a swiftness that no Coach cou'd ever have (as I thought). No horse drew it, and so swiftly went it by, that I cou'd not perceive, whether any Body were within. As it went it Rumbled and Moan'd, 'till the Soul had like to leave my Body for meer Terror. I was still shaking from the Fear of it, when by there came another such, going the other way, making a like Noise, and Snarling besides. Within it methought I saw a Face, that look'd ever forward, and took no mind of me or of the Buildings round about. It seem'd to me then, that all this Thundring and Moaning that continually assail'd my Ears, must come from a sort of Chariots, that came and went in the neighbourhood, but for the most part out of sight.

*Now (thinks I) the Boot is on the other Foot, for if that Sorcerer was afraid for his Life, so now am I. And am I (I says to my self) to take leave of this Machine wherein I now sit, and suffer it to be spirited away by the first Comer, even as he did? So (after offering up a short Prayer to the Lord God) I fell to examining my Chair more searchingly and narrowly, than I had yet done. And I perceiv'd; low down by my Feet, a Black Rod, that seem'd as it were meant to slide to and fro in a Hole or Slot. It stood out to the Right hand, and by that side was writ (but in Metal), OPERATING. On the other side was writ, LOCKED. In a great Trembling I slid that Rod towards the Left. Then, to make sure that it wou'd indeed return, I slid it back to the Right. I cou'd not well understand the Words, but it seem'd to me, that with the Rod to the Left, the Machine might be safe, so that no Body cou'd do any thing with it, untill he had slid the Rod back again to the Right. Mr *Sorcerer*, for all his fears, was so secure, as to let alone that precaution.*

So, finally, and with another Prayer, I slid the Rod toward the Left again, and stole out of my Machine. The Chamber was warm, and wonderful clean, but there was a mighty strange Odour in the Air, somewhat as of Burning; I suppos'd, it might come from the Hot Bars in the Ceiling, and I perceiv'd that there were great Marks of Soot or Dust upon the Walls and Ceiling, tho' there was no Hearth in the whole place. The Floor was made, or cover'd, with some singular Stuff, which was smooth like Wood or Stone, but resembled more some manner of Linnen-cloth or Carpet to the sight. On a great Bench stood a Row of Books, bound, not in Leather, but in some kind of Cloth (as it seem'd to me), each one in a different colour. Their Paper was more fine and white than I cou'd have thought possible, but thin and frail. The Letters were wonderful black and fine, and they dazzled my Eyes. Tho' the Words were (it's certain) *English*, yet I cou'd scarce comprehend the meaning of any two or three together. They us'd not our tall *s*, but throughout only the little one. Their printing was in *London*, but one, that I took up, seem'd to be printed in some place call'd *Chicago* (which put me in mind of my *Spanish Travells*). Yet was this writ in the same *English* as the rest. As to their theams, as I cou'd not understand the Words, I can tell you little about 'em. Many of 'em seem'd to have much *Mathematicks* in them, but I found I cou'd not understand that either. The Title of one was, *Diamagnetism*, which I suppos'd, shou'd be some kind of *Magnetick Operation*, but it was full of Diagrams and Numbers and I cou'd find no Loadstone or Compass pictur'd therein. Another Book was entitul'd, *Thermistors*, but what those might be, I cou'd not discover, tho' herein there were a sort of Plates, such as I can give you little idea of, beyond saying, that they were smooth beyond belief, so that they resembled less an Engraving, than a real vision of the Eyes, tho' without colour beyond Black, and White. I cou'd not recognize any thing in them, for all was strange, except a Finger and Thumb in one Picture, that appear'd very large, and a Pin in another, that was also very big. Thinks

I, *am I come among Gyants?* But I remember'd the Face in the Chariot, that was of an ordinary middle size; and the Chairs wou'd not have taken a Gyant, nor the Door.

There was a heap of Papers on the Bench, all printed, but of a marvellous smoothness and lustre. I cou'd not imagine, who wou'd desire to see so many Words in print in a lifetime, and all concern'd with such strange matters withall. On the Wall, hanging from a kind of Pin, was a great Table, as if engrav'd upon a kind of Parchment, but lustrous, that prov'd to be a Calendar or Almanack of the days of one month, that Month of *April*. But the days of the week had chang'd, so that they did not fit. I saw that the year was indeed that of 1,964, *Anno Domini*, so that my Machine had brought me, where it was appointed. And I thank'd *Almighty God* for that, and pray'd once more with all my heart, that all shou'd be well.

By this time, I had become in a manner accustom'd to the Clamour without. I was now so Bold, that I thought I cou'd safely go out of this Chamber and out of sight of my Machine. So I softly open'd the Door of the Chamber (and a mighty strange fashion of Door that was), and listen'd (as well as I cou'd for the Chariots) and look'd into the part beyond it. This was a Passage like a huge Hall or Court (but all roof'd), naked and smooth however, and lit by these strange White-hot Bars overhead, that yet seem'd to cast no Heat. No Body was to be seen there, but there were many Doors that open'd out of this Court. I turn'd round to see the Door of the Chamber, that I might know it again, and saw, that it bore the Number, *Thirteen*, high upon it, made of solid Peices of some substance that was Black. Thinks I, *may no ill luck attend this Number*. Then I closes this Door, opens it again, and closes it finally, and steals along the Hall or Passage where day light came round an Angle.

Here was a great Door, that led perhaps to the Road without, for the Noise of the Chariots was now much more lowd. On the Wall hung great Tables, bearing Papers, and Charts, and solid Numbers, and Knobs, and more things, than I cou'd take note of. Then (before I

cou'd vanish) a Door opens, and out comes a Fellow in a mighty strange manner of Cloathing, that I wou'd have burst out laughing at, if I had not been so much in fear. He had long slender Breeches, or Trowzers, of a light-coloured Cloth ; a short Coat of smooth Stuff, that came down to his Waist or little lower, but open at the front, with Linnen within and some thing ty'd at the Neck. The fashion of his Hair was mighty strange. He look'd on me, open'd his Mouth, and spoke, what I took to be some forren Tongue, for I cou'd make nothing of it. And here was all our Discourse.

He: *Lowgh. Naugh dwenthing foyoo?* (With a kind of Questioning voice.)

Myself: *Prithee, Sir, do you converse in English?*

At this he frown'd, and turn'd back thro' his Door, but left it open, for I heard him in speech with another, as follows.

He: *Chappea lux lau ikhtauon crauea. Now enthing bau ootim? Caun honstan zaklay wottee sez.*

The Other: *Nowoulman. Nopmaugh pidgen enwaya. Prapseez thatfla caimea mon thcow. Breezdin breezd-ought. Weo tav moce curetay.*

Now I thought, *I must not stay, for I cannot explain my purpose or my being here, and these do not speak English (I suppose).* I ran back to the Door number'd *Thirteen*, but making as little sound, as I cou'd, open'd it, clos'd it again, got me into my Machine, slid the Rod to right-wards, and, to make the least and safest change I cou'd think of, turn'd the Pointer for the Months to one less (that for *March*, as I suppos'd) and push'd on the Red Knob. After a short Faint-ness, in which the Chamber turn'd Cloudy in the middle parts, and darker, I found my self and the Machine in the same Chamber, slid the Rod to lock it, and came out to look to the Calendar. This indeed show'd the month of *March*, and I stole out of the Door (observing first, that the Papers were not in the same state in which I had seen 'em), and came down the Hall. Before I turn'd the Angle there comes past it another Body, cloath'd something like the first. I was thankful that I wear my own Hair, for neither

of these Fellows had a Wig, and as I found, all Men in this People wear their own Hair. He turns his Head and looks at me. I bow'd to him, came towards the Tables on the Wall, star'd on them, turn'd round, and stept slowly back to the Room from which I was come. At the Door I turn'd me round, but the Fellow was not to be seen. Back in I went and once more into my Machine, slid the Rod back, and debated within my self, where shou'd I go now. At length I resolv'd, to try a Time a few months ahead, and so I set the *Months* Dial to *August*, and shortly found my self there.

Now I still heard the Clamour, but less lowd, and when I got me out of the Chamber I found no Persons without, tho' I waited for the space of above half an hour. When I try'd the great Door to the Road I found it fast, and 'twou'd not by any means be open'd. I concluded, I must have lit upon some Holiday. When I came to look more closely upon one of these Tables of Calendars, I found that the Day of the Machine was a *Sunday* that month of that year. I thought, I had brought my self into some Colledge, tho' the matters discours'd upon in the Books therein, must have puzzled the very *Virtuosi* of our *Royal Society*. I found in some Chambers a number of Books writ in *High-Dutch*, and two in *French*, but never a one in *Latin*, and the tongue of nearly everyone was, *English*. I had a cloudy notion, that the strange speech of the Men that I had met with heretofore, might be a kind of *English*, not-withstanding it's sounding so uncouth, and these Discoverys made me encline the more, to that supposition. But this but made me fear the more, for my chances of coming alive, out of such a Predicament, when I cou'd not even play a false part, such as to be some Traveller, that I might be let alone. If I cou'd but find some of the simpler sort of Books, I might learn some news from 'em, but how was I to Interpret their Outlandish expressions?

'Twas while I ponder'd on these matters, that I came upon a great mass of Broad-sheets, folded together, in one of the Chambers. I fell to perusing them and soon saw, that I had a manner of Courant before me, wherein

was printed all News, that might concern this People. The Print was shut up in many Columns with long Lines between 'em, and huge Words at the head of each Column. But here again, I cou'd make out little, and what I cou'd, 'twas all Robberies and Murthers, with some Warlike Entertainment. There was besides a subtle sort of Engraving, mighty life-like, such as I saw in that Book before, that shew'd Men running hither and thither, and single Faces that look'd sadly upon me, and Wenches half-nak'd. On one Sheet was a Chariot, such as I had seen in the Road, with no Horses, all closed in with glass Windows. I saw News that seem'd to be come from *India*, from *China*, from *Moscovy*, and from the *America's*, with a date but one day before the day of the Sheet (which was that *Saturday*), as't had been in the next Shire. At this I began to Tremble anew, for I wonder'd to think, what *Wizards* I was come among, and what a People, that wou'd know what went about across the World, as well, as what lay at their own Door Steps.

Now I crept back to my Machine like a Dog to it's Kennel, and debated with my self, what I was to do. I desir'd mightily to know more of this World, but I cou'd not see, how I was to get by in it. Now my Eyes fell upon a Peice of the *Lectern* in that Machine, whereon 'twas writ across, HORIZONTAL MOVEMENT. Thinks I, here is the means, that I can Journey by, or that will at least bring me out of this Building, without a Soul troubling me. The whole Peice cou'd be mov'd, 'till it slipp'd down along-side, and underneath there lay a number of little shining Crystalline Plats, like Windows in the Metal, each one mark'd out in Squares, and each with two Buttons along-side to right and left. Below the first Plat was a Subscription, METRES; by the second, DM, HM; by the third, KM  $\times$  1, 10. The Squares of the second and third Plat were each laid across with ten Lines each way, that made finer Squares. Lastly were two small Half-Globes, or *Hemi-Spheres*, with Lines of *Longitude* and *Latitude* clearly mark'd upon 'em, and faint lines, that shew'd the *Continents*. The *Hemi-Sphere* on the left hand had below it the Letter, *N*, the other, the Letter

S, so that I cou'd well see, that they meant the World to north and south of the *Equator*. These Spheres had the same two Buttons each beside 'em. By every place, the Button on the left hand was mark'd with a Bent Arrow to right-ward, and a Letter *N*, whilst the other had a like Arrow and the Letter *E*. I thought, *it must be, that the first Plat is for the smallest movement, and the Globes for the greatest, across the World. The left-hand Buttons, are to move north-wards, if you turn 'em clock-wise, or south, the other way, and the right-hand Buttons, are to move east, and west. Now will I make a Tryal of the first Plat, with this Green Knob* (for there was one, like the Red Knob, but amongst the Plats).

I pray'd once more, then I turn'd the left-hand Button as carefully as I cou'd. I saw a little black Line begin to grow straight up along on the Plat. When it had grown to the extent of half a Square, as I thought, I stopt my Turning, and the Line grew no more. Then I push'd on the Green Knob. And behold, some thing struck my Shoulder, and I found, the Machine was come about two foot to one side, so that the Wall of it on one quarter was vanish'd within the Wall of the Room. Then, too, I saw a kind of Needle within a little Dial amongst the Plats, and one end was mark'd *N*, so I thinks *this must be a Compass, that will tell me, where is North. The Road is to the north-east of where I stand.* The breadth of a *Metres* Square, I now saw, must be three, or four foot, and since there were ten of these Squares each way, it cou'd be, that the smallest Square in the next Plat was the same as ten *Metres*, whatever these might be in truth. Then I mov'd carefully one *Metre* to east-wards, and it was so, and I had the fourth Side of my Machine safe and sound once more, for which I gave hearty thanks. A *Metre*, I concluded, was a Yard or an Ell in this Peoples speech, that is, if 'twas indeed among this People that the Machine was made, but of that I had no certain knowledge. The ways that I had turn'd lay all mark'd out in black upon the first Plat.

Now I consider'd *if this Machine is to move Horizontally, and it come within a Hill, I shall Choak, or if it*



come over a Valley, I shall fall within it to the ground, and be kill'd. So I look'd again at the Circle where 'twas writ of *Height*, and I saw it had two Dials, one within the other, the outer Dial mark'd *COARSE* the inner, *FINE*. Above them was a slender Tube, with a shining Green Glow, or Spark, floating in it, and writ alongside, *METRES, SURFACE INDEX = CAR*; and even Marks all the way up the Tube. I thought long on these things, and in the end I thought that I knew what they must mean. The *Fine* Dial wou'd send me gently up, or down, the *Coarse* one far. If I saw a Blew Spark, I shou'd know it was to shew, where the Machine wou'd be, and how far from the Green, before I push'd on the Red or the Green Knob. So shou'd I be sav'd from Death.

Now, says I to my self, *I see no Body in the Road, and the Chariots have not come on it for these many minutes. I will bring my Machine beyond this Building, but so near, that a Chariot is not like to strike against it. And this I did, moving three Metres east and two north.*

Here the Clangour was twice as terrible, and the Smell of Burning far stronger, mix'd with some thing sweet, that caught my Breath. I saw no Persons about, but I judg'd it prudent, to place my Machine close by a Wall, and this I presently did, with a little Manage. No sooner had I contriv'd this, than a Host of Children came by. One had a Stick, with which he Rattled upon the Wall and on my Machine. Another stopt and cry'd, as I thought, *Luk, his a new found Keost* (or somewhat of this nature) *na Man putting git op na Saun-day*. I was in fear once more, but another Child calls to him, *Horriop, wa lay it!* and they all runs on. Then I saw three Chariots standing idle further down the Road. The Buildings that were near me were vast Edifices of Stone, but where the Chariots stood, was a low sort of Brick-made Houses, standing each in a little Park or Plot, with a few Trees. One Chariot, I saw anon, was standing in a Side-Road in such a little Park, and a Fellow was rubbing it down like one, that wou'd Curry a Horse. He had a Pail on the Ground by him, of a light Blew colour. On each side of the Road, and evenly spac'd from each

other, were tall Masts, like so many Gyants Pikes, but of Stone, and crook'd at the Top, with a little Cage of Glass at the Crook. I found later, that they were publick Lanthorns, as you shall hear. The Borders of the Road were wonderful neat and trim, with Grass, shut in by *Pygmaean* Walls of Stone, and beside these Flaggs, to make a firm Path. The Sky above was dim and smoaky, for all that there was no Clowd in it. Tho' I seem'd to be in the midst of a great Town, there was no Ditch in the Street, but it bent up towards the middle part, and was smooth and black. At the Sides, under the little Walls of the Grass, were Holes with a broad sort of Grate, as if to let the Water down, but no Water ran there.

Now I wax'd very Bold, and wou'd see, what the Fellow was doing with the Chariot. I saw him empty the Pail he had, at a place by the House, and while he was thus busy'd, I mov'd my Machine as many *Metres* as I thought shou'd bring me on t'other side of the Road by him. I found my self in the middle of the Road with the Ground of it over one side of the Floor of my Machine, and a Chariot was Rowling up to me as if the *Devil* rode it. I gave my self up for lost, but the Chariot made as to stop, with a Fearful Sound, and swerv'd round me, with a *Devils* Countenance in deed within it. At that the Fellow that had the Pail look'd round, and saw me, and came out upon the Road Edge, and call'd out, *Wot you doing with that Contrapshen?* I took the Sence, of what he was saying, and open'd one Door, and cry'd softly to him, *If you will go back a Fathom or two, I'll bring it safe to the side.* He seem'd to know, what I meant, for he ran backwards to his Chariot, and stood staring at me, while I mov'd the Machine two *Metres* in his way and (with the *Fine* Dial for the Height) enough upward to bring my Floor clear out. *Hahaughdgea do that?* says he, and 'twas his turn, to be frightned. Then I thought, *this Machine is not known to this People, 'tis either a Mystery of some Virtuosi, or 'tis come from some other Time.* My Fellow had a soft open kind of Countenance, that made me put some trust in him, so I slid the black Rod across, that lock'd the Machine, and came out, and

told him, I was come by strange chance from another Time, where I had found this Machine, that I had learnt to manage, that cou'd send a Man from one Place to another, or from one Time to another. I told him, I cou'd not easily understand his Speech, but that if he spake slowly, I wou'd make shift to follow, what I cou'd. *Can you put that Thing ouva Ther in the Shayid clouce ptha Hauooce?* he says, and points. So I brought my Machine little by little, where he wou'd have it, and lock'd it again. *Comm insaid,* he says, so I went into his House with him.

Every thing in this House was smooth, and for the most part very clean, and almost all the Doors and Walls were painted. There was a savour of Soap and Spice about. He set me down in a great Chair, and star'd on me, then he moves his Hand to a little Button on the Wall, and of a sudden a Light shone out of a Bowl, that hung from the Ceiling. There was no Flame to it, and it was perfectly steady, but I cou'd perceive no cause, why it shou'd begin to shine. *I can see* (he seem'd to say) *that ye're not from this Time. I suppose* (but he said *Tauim* and *suppowze*) *you come from the Seventeenth or Eighteenth Century?* I told him, it was even now the Year 1683. He ask'd me a deal of Questions, but some I cou'd not understand, and others I made not to understand, for I had no mind to give him too much instruction. But I told him, I wish'd to lie here for a time, for I fear'd a Reckoning with the *Sorcerer* that had brought the Machine to my Village, and knew, that if I left it there for long, he shou'd find it again anon, and I shou'd have lost all chance, of further enterprize. Then says he, *You must meet my Wife* (in his odd Speech), and he goes out to call her in, from her Garden. While he was gone, I looks out at my Machine, which was safe by the Wall, and observ'd what I cou'd about the Chamber. He brings in his Wife (a mighty pretty Woman, as I saw when I had got accusom'd to her sawcy fashion of Cloathing) and presently we three set to't to find, how I was to live there. I found, they had no Children. Says she, *Of course you must stay with us,* and, looking on her Countenance,

I found it easie to agree. *But how am I to repay you, and how am I to go unnotic'd in these Cloathes, that are so unlike your's?* says I. *Have you nothing of Value with you,* says he, *then we can buy you some Cloathes and so on? I have nought, that shou'd get me a Suit of Cloathes,* says I. *Have you any Books, or Clocks, or Silver at home?* for they wou'd fetch high enough Prices today, says he (but he says *how, hauy, prowesses*); you see, a thing like that, two or three hundred years old, will be quite costly today. And, as it happens, I know how to place this kind of Antique. 'Tis agreed, said I, I'll go back and bring some Fine Things. But let me wait, 'till tomorrow, for by then it may be, that my Sorcerer will have given over searching for my Machine, or that he will have journey'd far off. To this he agrees, and his Wife said, she wou'd bring in some Tea. While she was gone, he said, he wou'd shew me round the House, but all he did, was to bring me up the Stairs to a Closet or Privy, which he told me, was wash'd by Water, that I shou'd pour on, by pressing on a kind of Handle. Next by it was a Chamber for Washing your Person, that had a Bason, with two Taps, from which Water came. One brought forth Water very hot, that I was like to have Scalded my self, if I had not seen the Steam rising from it. By this Bason was a great Trough with two other Taps, and a Dish full of Holes in the Ceiling above it.

Besides a Dish of Tea, they had some Bread and some Jellie and a deal of little Cakes. After this the Husband goes to a Box, that stood on a Table at the side, and of a sudden a lowd Noise comes from the Box, and it was some kind of wild Musick. Thinks I, *this is a new sort of Toy*, but presently the Musick ceas'd, and the Voice of a Man came forth, that I quak'd for sudden fear. Then another Voice discours'd for some time, and presently ceas'd again, and the wild Musick began once more. They gave me an explanation, it was Musick from many Miles away, but how it came into their Box, they cou'd not make clear. This Box they call, a *Raydeow*. After that the Man remember'd his Chariot, which he call'd, his *Car*, and went out to conclude with his cleaning it.

He shew'd it to me, and said, that it went by Burning within. When he had done with the cleaning it, he lit the Furnace in it's Bowels, by no more then the turn of a little Key, and, seating him self in it, conducted it into it's Stable, which he call'd, a *Garraudge*. He said, my Machine shou'd be more safe, within the House, and after we had measur'd it with a Measure he had of Steel, that bent round, and had measur'd the distance too, I mov'd it once again, within a commodious Porch he had.

Over a good Supper of cold Mutton, wash'd down with some bitter Ale from a glass Bottle, he assures me again, I shou'd be able to get a good Price, for a Book or a Peice of Silver. *Several Pounds*, says he, *enough to buy you a Shirt or two*. My Spirits shot up to the Heavens with the First part of his Sentence, and were blown half way back, with the Second. That a Book, purchas'd for a Shilling, cou'd be so priz'd, as to command several Pounds; and that such a vast Sum, cou'd buy no more, then a Shirt, I cou'd scarce credit. But he made me know, that a Pound was nothing today. I saw, I shou'd have to furnish my self well, upon my Excursion to my own Time. But in the mean while we fell to talking of the state of *England*. They took me for an *Irish Man*, it seems, which put me out of countenance, 'till I saw they meant no harm by it, but were puzzled by my Speech, which indeed they found near as hard, as I theirs. So I told them, I came from a Village, where now stood his Town. And I found, the name of my Village, was now the name of a *Sobbub* of this Town (which is their name, for a part of a Town) and that was the part all around us. I thought his Town must be a very great City, but he says, 'twas of but a middle size, with only fifty thousand Souls in't. You may suppose, I open'd my Eyes at that. But it seems, they do not reckon a City is great, unless it reach above two hundred thousand; and of that reckoning they have a good number, while a few of the greatest have above a Million. How the Land cou'd support so many, I cannot tell, but where we have one Body, they have ten or twelve. Whilst we were speaking,

the Lanthorns in the Road all came alight in one instant, and no Body lit 'em. He said, 'twas by *Electricity*, which they make in great Buildings from turning Wheels by Steam, or (in other places) from an *Esoterick* sort of *Chymistry*, and send many miles along Wires.

I was drowzy long before my Hosts, and they had me a Bed made in a spare Chamber above Stairs. But before I went to Rest, my Host perswaded me, to wash my self over in that Trough they had. The Dish with Holes, that hung from the Ceiling, was for Water to Rain down upon you, but I lik'd it not. They wash them selves in these *Baths* nigh every day, for that the Water is kept so hot with this same *Electricity* (by which they can accomplish well nigh every thing they wou'd), that they may keep them selves sweet-smelling (for they set great store by that), and in order to the cleansing off a kind of Soot or Dirt, that fly's every where in the Air, and from whence comes this odour of Burning, that was about.

I had an un-easie Rest at first by reason of the many lowd Sounds without, but never-the-less I woke at the usual hour with me. My Host and his Wife made no sound, and neither within the House nor without was any Body stirring, which appear'd mighty strange to me. I thought, now 'twill be safe, may hap, to return impuned to my House and Time, to gather what I will and bring all back here. I stole down, and after a while found how to open the Fastnings of the Door out to their Porch. There stood my Machine. I unlock'd it's Rod, and remember'd, that I shou'd return to April, and so mov'd the *Months* Dial, besides the *Years* Dials, which I set back to my own Year. Then I saw the Green Spark rise in the Tube, that shew'd the Height, some three *Metres* on it's Scale, and leave below it a Blew one. So I knew, I shou'd come out from here under the high Meadow at home, or thereabouts. I study'd the Plats for moving your place narrowly, and mov'd their Buttons, untill I brought the Lines on 'em back, to whence I begun, and the Green Spark sank down to swallow up the Blew. Now I try'd the Red Knob, letting alone the Green, and all was well, for I found my self in the Machine in the

Lane at home near to the Barn, whence I had come. But I felt as if I had been in this Moment before, and a great Dizzy-ness and Cloudy-ness in my Head. Then I saw, that it was no dim Morning that I beheld, but a bright After-noon; and a Bird, that I had left perch'd upon a Bough close by, sate there exactly as't had been. At length I knew, that I was back at the very Instant, when I had first mov'd the Machine, and that my *Sorcerer* shou'd be but now gone down the Alley, and might at once return. I had forgot my *Hours* and *Days* Dials. I mov'd 'em straightway back eleven hours, to that day's Sun-rise, before he had come. All my tarrying the night before was to no end, for I cou'd chuse any Time.

When I press'd upon the Red Knob there was I in a grey half-light. No Body was yet about, and step by step I mov'd my Machine down the Street, 'till I came before my House, which (of course) was bolted and barr'd. Then I mov'd it inside in the great Chamber, and in the Gloom search'd about for my Hanger, a tall Jugg of Silver, a Snuff-box, a fine Time-piece that I had, a glass Bowl, two Books of Sermons and three Broad-sheets of Satyricall Verses, and the Volume of Mr *Sympkins* his Travells of a dozen years heretofore. Then I thought, I will need to Shave my self, so I found my best Razour. And I now knew, who 'twas had these Things from my House, that Night, and not the *Sorcerer*. I took up an old Sack, in which to carry my Goods, but the Bowl and the Snuff-Box I wrapp'd in soft Cloth, and plac'd in a little Coffe I had. I plac'd all with some labour within the Machine, and was about to take my leave, when I be-thought me of the time, and how at that hour I had been in Bed asleep. *Am I then there in my Bed, or am I here?* thinks I, and I stole into my Bed-Chamber to see. The Day-Light was coming in now, and there in the Bed was my Body asleep, my Face being turn'd half to the Wall. But there was a kind of Shimmering Motion in it. The Hair lifted on my Head and I turn'd Cold as Ice, my Mouth parch'd and my Heart knocking fit to burst it's House. And I felt my Body (my own that I was in, so to speak) pull'd as it were a Grain of Iron by a Load-

stone, towards the Body that lay on the Bed. That Body stirr'd and turn'd, and cry's out, *Ish* (or some thing such). I flung out of the Chamber, and it was like straining against Ropes, and I crept Quaking into my Machine, mov'd it beyond the House, and in the Light manag'd it to the morning of the next day in *August* of the Year 1964, and before the House of my Hosts. Then I brought it within their Porch, and knock'd a Box over there, but woke no Body by good chance. And I fell on my Knees in my Machine (bruising my Shins and scraping my Elbow in the doing it) and humbly sought Pardon of *Almighty God*, if I had offended against His Laws in the making such an Unnatural Journey, and besought Him to keep me, from the Snares of the *Devil*.

It was the hour, when I had gone from the Porch ; but I had no Stomach to remain alone 'till these Late-risers shou'd awaken, so I mov'd the *Hours Dial* forward two hours. And what shou'd I find, but that they were up, and had miss'd me, and were running hither and thither in Gowns, which they wore at Night, thinking that I had gone for ever. And so, methinks, was I nearly so gone. But *No*, says I, *I have been back to my own Time, to bring back where-withall to trade, but do not ask me to do't again. I wou'd not, for all the Gold in the Indies, untill I depart for good.* Says the Wife, *You look as if you had seen a Ghost.* And I, *Why so I have: I have seen my Self.* I wou'd say no more, but I thought, *If I had been Drawn into my other Body then, who knows the End of't?*

After a time I shav'd my self with my Razour, and the Husband lent me some Cloathes of his, that I might escape Notice, which I got into, and laid aside my own. He wou'd not look into my Sack or my Coffers at the present, for said he, he must to work, where he cou'd tell me more, what might be got for my Merchandize. We three took a great Breakfast. There was some golden Biscuits, but very fine and small and broken, we ate with Milk, which they call'd, *Sere-ills* ; there was a great Pot-full of Coffee, but made too thick, and mix'd with warm Milk from a Flask ; there was Bacon fry'd and Eggs



fry'd, and slic'd peices of Bread lightly brown'd, with Butter, and a Marmalade made from Oranges to spread on 'em.

Then the Husband bade me climb into his Chariot beside him, and fastened me in with a Harness, that I might not be tost about, and him self in too, with my Sack and Coffe in the back part, and he rodè this Chariot with me, to the middle part of the Town. I had new terrors, with the Noise, and all the other Chariots (which were scores, nay hundreds) and a Throng of Folk, and all rushing hither and thither like a People possess'd of Devils. I shou'd have been more frightned, if I had not been full of strange Feelings in my Body, that put me in mind of a Sea-voyage, for I seem'd to be push'd to one side and then to another, and anon back into my Seat ; which made my Stomach very un-easie, the more because of several thick Odours in the Chariot. We were going the slowest of almost all the Chariots, or *Cars*, that I saw, for all hurtled past us. There were great Wagons, like Hulks full of Slaves, two Tiers of them, all painted Red. My Host said (as well as I cou'd hear him, for the Noise), they were publick Coaches, which he call'd, *Busses* (as tho' they were Boats), and that you pay'd to be carry'd so far. From the *Cars* issu'd flashing Lights, to shew, said he, what they meant to do. I saw great Pictures (when we were brought to a stop for several minutes together) as high as a House, in many Colours, by the Road side, but got no chance, to ask him what they meant. He leaves his *Car* in a great Place full of others, and taking me by the Arm, marches me a fair way round past tall Windows where were all manner of Wares shewn for Sale, and at length into his Shop, where he and others sold, for the one part House-Furniture, for the rest Books (but bound in Leather, not like those I had seen in the Colledge) and a great many sorts of Baubles and Silver Ware. He left me for a time, and spoke with another, then brings me into an inner Chamber, and bids me open my Sack and Coffe. First he looks in my Books. The first he took was that Volume of Travells, and his Eye lit up, and he reads it's Title

Page, and looks quickly thro' it, and goes to some cloth-bound Volumes he has in a Corner, and reads in various of 'em, and comes back, muttering to himself, *Not in Wing either* (what ever he meant by that). Then he looks at me, and says, *I'll give you fifty Pound for that*. I was ready to swallow his Offer, but I saw his Tongue licking his Lips, and his Hand shook a little, so I took counsel with my self, and I says, *It grieves me, but I cou'd never part from my old Companion in many Lands, unless for three hundred Pound* (for I knew now, these Pounds here wou'd not go far). He laugh'd at that, scornfully, but we fell to chaffering, and in the end, we agreed upon one hundred and seventy five Pound, against a Bottle of good Wine, which I forgot to tell you, I had snatch'd up and put in the Sack. And, says he, I cou'd yet have the Words of *Sympkins*, for he had in his Shop at the back a wonderful Engine, that wou'd take Pictures of what ever was put before it, that were perfect Likenesses, and that in the twinkling of an Eye each. He calls this Engine, a *Zerocks*. But, said he, *with so many Pages, 'twill take time*. Then I cou'd bring these Likenesses, but on loose Sheets, back with me to my own Time.

For the rest of the Books and Tracts he settled upon some tens of Pounds each, but more for the Silver and Glass, and especially for the Snuff-Box, which surpriz'd me not a little. The Hanger too, which had a good Blade, pleas'd him mightily. In the end I was rich enough for a long Stay, as he assur'd me, as soon as he cou'd draw out his Money, from a House, where he had lent it, and that he wou'd do at the middle of the day. Then he told me, I shou'd do best, to stay quietly in his Inner Room for that morning, while he did much Business in his Shop. But first he takes me to the *Zerocks*, which was like a Vat cover'd with Glass, with nothing in it, but great Coyls, and Peices of Metal, and a Green Light, which came and went. He gives my Book to another, and bids him take much care with it, and begin to copy it therewith. The Light goes to and fro like a Loom, and after a time Sheets of Paper come down at one Side, with (as

I saw) a very perfect Picture, of what was turn'd towards the Light.

My Host gave me a *Dictionarie*, printed very small on thin Paper, a *Duodecimo* Atlas of the World, and the Courant he had had that morning, but had not read. There was much, that I cou'd not understand, but I learnt, that there was now a great Nation in *America*, many Nations in *Africa* and in the *West* and *East Indies*, an *Antipodaeen* Continent call'd *Australia* betwixt *India* and the *Southern Pole*, and a barren Continent about that *Pole*. Ships ply'd betwixt these Continents, and all knew each others business. *Terra Incognita* there was none, for the whole Globe was mapp'd out, or well-nigh so. Men, and Women too, were trying to cross the Seas from *Dover* to *Calais* by Swimming, for the meer Sport of't; if there were no Gyants, they were Gyants in strength.

About Noon, as he knew by a marvellous small Watch, that was held to his left Wrist by a close Chain of metall-ick Peices, my Host carry'd me to an Ordinary, which he call'd, *Launsh*. Men and Women together, and even Children, came up behind each other in a long Line, and waited, to take from a long Bench, what ever Meats wou'd take their fancy, with Knives and Forks, and pay'd at last, when they sought a small Table, whereat to sit and eat. I cou'd understand little yet, but what my Host (or his Wife at home) spoke to me slowly, so I sate like one abroad in a far Countrey. Afterwards he brought me to his *Bank*, the House where he had his Money in loan. He told them, he wou'd draw an extraordinary Fund out of his Moneys, which he was pleas'd to name, the *Antiquitys Account*, and before me he paid into this Fund, all the Moneys he had agreed to pay me for my Goods, but all was done meerly upon Paper, with much writing and signing. He told me privatly, he durst not make me a Customer of this House, for fear, too many Questions shou'd be ask'd, but I stood by and they were to think, I was a Man of his. Then he draws out twenty Pound for smaller Expences, which he gives to me, some of it Coyn, but what they call *Pounds*, are nothing but

Scraps of Paper, with green Pictures on 'em; yet he assures me, they shou'd buy a Pounds worth of Goods, and indeed 'twas so, as I found (except that a Pound goes such a little way with them). He takes me to the Taylors, and buys me a Suit of Cloathes, with all kind of Linnen, and pays for all out of a new Book of Papers, that he calls *Checks*, subscrib'd for this new Account, and shews me, how much it comes to, which was a great number of Pounds, that I was still not us'd to.

When at length we were got back, to his Shop, 'twas half an hour after Three. I spent the next three hours studying, but got little further: He carries me back to his Home in his *Car*. I was standing by it near to the House, when I saw in the Heavens a *Meteor*, like a shining Thread, growing ever at one end. I was astonish'd but he told me, 'twas a *Plentrail*, or a *Plaintrail*, or some such thing, which I did not understand. But anon there came a Rumbling, and in another Part of the Sky a Thing like a huge Bird, but that mov'd not it's Parts. Says he, that was *another Plain*. He gave me to understand, that Men may travell in these *Plains*, which are like Shipps that go in the Air, but driven like his *Car*, by a manner of Burning. In truth, they also call 'em *Air-Craft*.

When we were come in, where his Wife had a Welcome for us, she gives us a Glass full (but very small) of a *Sherry Wine*, but the Tast was strange to me. While she prepares a Meal, he turns to a Box with a Window in't, and there Shines in it's Window a Picture, that mov'd and chang'd continually, and Sounds withall, like as it had been a Comedy play'd within the Box by Dwarfs, but the Colour was but Black, and White, with a Blew Cast to't. Some part was News, but chiefly Folly. This too they have in every House, and from this great Servant Electricity. I fetch'd now my old Cloathes and Shoes and ty'd them in a Bundle, which I left on the Floor of the Machine. My Host took a great Cloth, and cover'd the Machine, that it be not try'd of curious Fingers, or set too many Tongues wagging.

At the Meal and after it (when they were not staring upon this Box with the Window, which they call a

*Tellie*) they talk'd with me, upon the State of the World. I shou'd make too great an Excursion, if I shou'd take upon me to Communicate every Thing that befell me in this *Adventure*. You will wonder especially, what sort of People they were indeed, that I was fallen among; and tho' it took many Weeks in the Learning, yet I shall make bold to take only as many Minutes, in the Telling it. They spoke much then, of the Insolence of Youth, which they thought new, but it seem'd to me, that there was nothing new but Wealth and Idleness, that feed this Insolence. There are no poor unruly Apprentices here, but good Money is to be earn'd easily by a Stripling. If these live too easily, so too in a manner do the Children (for all their Schooling is so hard, as I shall tell you later); which is the Seed of the other Trouble. They are not brought up to Obedience and Godliness, but (as I found) to Rail upon their Parents, when they are scarce five year old, and make Sport with them. But the Spring of this, is in the Wives, for these own no Man's Controul, not even in Law, but manage all things equally with 'em, and take all manner of Work, as bold as Men (for they are as well school'd), and High and Low dress them selves in Finery, and leave their Children to bring them selves up (so that many run wild), and are fix'd upon Folly and Man-catching, as I saw from a *Journal*, made in Colours (and more like a great *Quarto*, then a *Journal*) that is printed for Women alone. They go bare-legg'd or with Legs cover'd in bright Stockings but marvellous fine, and close-fitting; and their Legs shewing immodestly above the Knee. In this *Journal* I saw all manner of sawcy Pictures. (But some *Journals* for Men, are full of Lewdness and Filth, both in Pictures and Writing.) As to Man-catching, Marriages are made every where, not as the Parents shall agree, but as a Young Man and Girl shall fancy each other (tho' it is true at a late age, often beyond Nineteen) and Divided as lightly, by an easie *Divorce*. Religion has little to say to all this, for our Tollerance, is become their Indifference, and tho' there be Churches, few go to 'em, and of *Enthusiasts* there are scarce any. They have for

this cause nought to live for, but to get as much as they can, whether it be Pleasure, or Money.

Yet do they have a sweeter and a quieter Living, than any we see. I saw few Persons diseas'd or distemper'd, or even crippled. The King's Evil, Agues, Plagues and Small Pox, are all but gone. Not one of a Man's Children die before they come of age, if you can believe me; and yet his House is never crowded, for they have found means, that their Women shall not Conceive, but when they will. This seem'd to me an *Atheistical* Invention, and one like to Ruin the People; yet they regard it as nothing, save only the Papists and a few others. Every Man and Woman can read, tho' the use the Generality make of't, is only to Wager by Letter, which they call *Pulls*, and in Assemblys, which they call *Bingow*, and to read the Notices, are every where planted, like Texts, but prophane ones, to tell 'em where they may go, and what Business is in hand. They have great Safety, in the Streets and in the Fields, so that Thefts and Violence to the meanest Person are the cause of News in the Courants; but they slaughter one another with their *Cars* for that they rowl by' so fast, and altho' they are safe from Invasion, by their Neighbour Nations in *Europe*, yet they are ever under the *Sword of Damocles* from a Destruction, out of the other End of the Earth, by these same *Air-Craft*, or from a kind of Artillery, that can shoot many Thousands of Leagues, and lay wast half a Countrey, where it's Shot comes to ground, or so they wou'd have me believe.

They have a sovran Queen, yet is the Power of the Crown so diminish'd, that they have rather a Commonwealth, then a Monarchy. They have a Parliament, with what they call the *Torys*, I know not why, for they are nothing for a Papist Succession, but for Wealth; and against 'em no Excluding *Whiggs*, but a Party, that wou'd have all the business of the Kingdom (or Queendom) in the hands of them that govern. One third of what a Man earns, goes in Taxes, such as *England* never heard the like of in my Time. Every Man however lowly, and, what is worse, every Woman, has a power of Vote for who

they shall have in Parliament, yet the Members do little, but Vote in Parliament again the way their Leaders tell 'em. But Money is King of half *England*, for the great Merchants and Heads of Business Houses can do, pretty much what they will. The King of the other half, is the Labourer, for if he like not his Lot, he engages his Guild to command all the Men to lay down their Tools and depart, it may be 'till months are gone by, untill he has it his own way; his Guild will give 'em Moneys to provide for 'em. In the mean time the Customers suffer, from both Sides: the one sending Prices up; and the other taking labour away, so that nothing is done.

But for all this they live fine enough. They are grown so nice, that they make great outcry, at the least Dirt or Violence. In their Punishments they have no Burnings, no Quarterings, no Whippings, Pilloryings, or Brandings, and they put up no Heads of Ill-doers. Their Hangings are but few, and are perform'd in secret; and there are those in the Government that wou'd bring in a Bill, to put a stop even to that, so that the worst Felon, shou'd escape with nothing worse, then a long Imprisonment. Tho' they are in fear, of what will come of it, and trouble them selves much about Ill-doers in the Land, I never saw a Brawl, or a Rabble, or the least Insult offer'd to any Body, the whole time I was there, nor any Man taken in Drink, beyond a little Exaltation. Altho' my Cloathes were so strange to them, yet I verily believe, I cou'd have walk'd abroad in 'em, without meeting any untoward entertainment in the Streets. They are so many, those who wou'd get a Place, at a Play-house, or in one of their *Busses*, must wait in a Throng; but in stead of Jostling, they stand orderly in a long Line, without the need of enforcement. I saw not one Man begging, and but few that seem'd poor, or wasted by Sickness.

Yet in truth they are a Staid, and Phlegmatick Folk, that will not easily laugh, or weep, or fly in a passion, and whether it be from their being so press'd together, or from the Sooty-ness of the Air, or from their great Hurrying to and from work, their Faces shew much Uncontent and Sownerness, and they regard little their

Neighbours. All their Love, is reserv'd to those at Home, or their Mercy, to those far off ; they receive many Pleas, for Money and Goods, that they may send, for ailing Persons, that they never knew, and for Creatures in *Africa* and the *Indies*, whom they never will see. Every *Saturday* little Children stand in the Streets, to give little Flags an Inch across, made of Paper, in return for Coyns, for such a *Charity*. As for their Hatred, 'tis altogether disarm'd, for none may carry a Sword, or Knife, a Pistol, or a Musquet, under Penalty, tho' indeed there be Ruffians here and there, that do so in secret, but only that they may committ a Robbery impunedly upon a *Bank*, or a great Store of Goods, and so gain thousands of Pounds in a moment. (As for my Hanger, 'twere only an Ornament to them.) So is there no *Point of Honour* with them, but what may be settled by Law and so line the Lawyers pockets, if the matter be grave enough.

That their ways are so soft and peaceable, comes perhaps from the being so well supply'd. They have Light, or Heat to cook with, or to keep their Chambers warm withall, at the meer touch upon a Button ; tho' for these they must pay, when the Reckoning is brought to 'em. In the very Heat of Summer, they keep their Meat sweet, in a Chest, which is ever so cold that Frost and Rime encrust the inside parts of it ; and this comes, as their Light and much of their Heat, from this same Electricity. If they wou'd have interview with a Friend, or wou'd buy or sell any thing, without a Journey, they have an Engine that they call a *Found*, or a *Tellie-found*, in their Houses, where they can both speak, and hear, any other Person that they chuse, by the turning a Dial with Numbers writ upon it. And this too is from Electricity. They may listen to Musick on their *Raydeow* Boxes, or see Plays in their *Tellie* Windows, any week, more then you cou'd meet with in *London* in a season in our Time. They have all manner of Things, both for work, and sport, and Meats too, that I can scarce describe to you. In their Shops I saw a vast number, both of sorts of things, and of different fashions of the same, and of single examples of each fashion. Some of these,



are so Costly, that only the richest can buy 'em ; but many may be purchas'd by any but the poorest. With all this High-living, every Man is thus like a great Prince ; and tho' he have not Servants (for few of 'em will serve another) Electricity is his Servant. Yet are they no more content, then a great Prince might be, or less, for they know no better, then to conceive this soft Life is their Birthright, and that if they live not as well as, or better then their Neighbour, the State is to blame.

For that they buy and sell at such a rate, and keep them selves so mighty well supply'd with all manner of Engines, and Stuffs, the different Houses, that supply 'em, are in great rivalry one with another. From this comes a great Shew that they make every where, with Words and Pictures, with bright Colours, like those of some Painter at Court, but in thousands of Copys for all to see, in their Journals and on huge *Placards*, that stand by the Roads, especially in the Towns. This they call meerly, *Advertisement*, as who shou'd call a Shout, a *Murmur*.

This brings me to their Words. Tho' they have many Words, that I never heard or saw before, I was quite as much in a Quandary at learning their Tongue, by reason of Words that I knew well, but that they us'd otherwise then with us. Many, as I found in the end, had sunk (where *Advertisement* had flown up). So when they say, *Terrible*, they mean Great ; when they say, *Fabulous*, they mean Goodly. *Enthusiasm*, is a meer Zeal, or pleasure in doing. But other Words, are much twisted in their Sence. *Sex*, which with us is the being Male, or Female, with them is the Coupling of Man and Woman. *Romance* is no Fantasticall Tale, but an Affair of the Heart ; and so too with *Romantick*. A *Buss*, which with us (in that meaning) is a kind of Sea-vessel, with them is a Publick Carriage, as I have said. To *Want*, is not to lack, but to have a wish for some thing. One who is *Nice*, do's not turn his Nose up, he is not Delicat, but meerly pleasing to the speaker. One who is *Sensible*, is not keenly perceiving of some thing, but a Man of good sence. They interlace their sentences with absolute *Cant*, that with us is heard from Cut-purses and Ruffians, but

with them is perfectly gentle. On the other hand, they abound in long learned expressions, that their very Children use, and wrap their Notions up in Bundles, as to confound the listener. As for their manner of Uttering, 'tis altogether odd, as I have shewn it, but not without a smack of the low speech of a Cockney from *London*. After a time my Ears grew accustom'd to it, so that I heard, what was meant.

The Nation that dwells in *America*, and they that dwell in *Moscovy*, they say are the Arbiters of the World, for they have that Artillery, that I wrote of before, in the greatest Quantity. Besides this, from these two Nations, come the Inventions, of Machines that they have fired off toward the *Moon*, and the Planets *Mars*, and *Venus*, as if they had been Cannon Shot; which send back News of their Journeys, and (in some manner) Pictures, of what they meet; and so methinks, it is to take nigh on three hundred years, and an Enterprize from abroad, not from *England*, to fulfill these Flattring Verses of Mr *Dryden*,

*Then we upon our Globes last verge shall go  
And view the Ocean leaning on the Sky:  
From thence our rowling Neighbours we shall know,  
And on the Lunar world securely pry.*

And besides, these two Nations, have sent Machines round the Earth, some hundreds of leagues above it, with Men in 'em, and at last fetch'd 'em down in their Machines safe and sound. And yet was my Machine unknown.

As for *Moscow*, they look upon it in their *England*, much as we look upon *Rome*; and as we look upon Papists, and Dissenters, so do they a kind of Levellers, that they call, *Communists*, that wou'd overthrow the State, if they cou'd, and yet are suffer'd to come and go every where without let or hindrance, save only that they may not get employment, where they can learn Secrets of State. For the meer Papists and Dissenters among them, they make no distinction against 'em, and hardly

know, what Religion a Man professes, or what they profess them selves.

They have in the Land another sort of Stranger. For they have many *Indians*, both from *West* and *East*, who are come to make their livelihood in *England*. Their Neighbours are afraid, the great numbers of these shou'd take their Wages from 'em, or bring new Plagues, or that their way of living shou'd be too Nasty, for the Publick Good; and some *English* Men (they say) have rais'd up Brawls against 'em. But the generality of *English* Natives are so mealy-mouth'd, that they dare not speak these Fears aloud, lest they have a foul Name of *Racialist* clapp'd on 'em, of which they are in mortal terror, from the thought of some Massacres perform'd a score of years before in *Germany*, and Oppressions committed thousands of leagues away in *Africa* and *America*.

For this they have some Colour, seeing that they are so much, as they call it, *One World*, that notions travell fast in their Time. But I think it partly but one case of a ready Superstition of Opinion among 'em which comes, as I gness, from their singular prospect, whereby all can read, and vote for Parliament, as if they were equal, while most regard neither the Word of Religion nor fair Argument, but are blown this way and that by the least Gale or Breath of Censure from their fellows. They have a vast Esteem for Sophistries; they are very easie in believing such things as they wou'd have to be so, and are not forward to entertain a solid Reasoning. He that can fasten a Good, or a Bad name, howso ever ill-conceiv'd, upon any thing that is done, or made, or worn, or said, is scarce question'd, but straight his word is taken up. So they are blown hither and thither, by the Writers in the Courants, and the Speakers in the *Tellies*, and the Devizers of the *Advertisements*, the Blind leading the Blind.

Another cause of their being so biddable and so quiet, is perhaps that from the Hurry of the Day, they have little stomach for Trouble, and little room, in which to think for them selves. For tho' they live so well, yet they are also in a continual Coursing, and if their leisure is

long. yet even there the World presses on 'em from all sides. Between their Running after every Notion, and their perpetual Hast, you wou'd say, that Ants had been mated with Munkies, to breed 'em.

All these matters, as I have said, I learnt not at once, but during many weeks. I spent my mornings in the back parts of the Shop. For my Dinner (always at the early hour of Noon) I went to a number of Eating Houses with my Host, or return'd with him to his House. If we came home, I often stay'd there after-wards, and try'd some Husbandry in their Garden, or walk'd abroad untill I knew the Neighbourhood well. The Wife, who also controul'd the Chariot, sometimes kept it by her after Dinner, while the Husband return'd to his Shop in one of their *Busses*. If the day were bright, she wou'd then bring me out in this *Car*, and over the Countrey-side. I suffer'd a Surprize, when I saw our Range of Hills, not much chang'd, tho' with single Houses here and there built over 'em, and Poles of Metal to carry their Electricity over the Land. But every where was a Vapour or Smoak on the brightest of days. A Stream, where I am wont to fish, was become a Sluice between Walls of Stone, and black besides, in the midst of another Town, where is nothing today but a Farm (after which this Town was nam'd, as I found). The great part of the Land about is cover'd with their Houses, and where our Farm-tracks wind, are hard Roads, where-on their Chariots continually rush by and roar. Their Towns are for the most part built of red Bricks, but blacken'd by their Smoaks, of which a great amount comes from *Factorys* as wide as Villages and as populous as Towns, where they make their many Goods.

On fair *Saturdays*, or *Sundays* (for they went to no Church, which much troubled me) my Host and his Wife wou'd bring their *Car* further abroad, and on occasion to the Sea. There I had another Surprize, for there hundreds, yea thousands of Men, Women and Children sate upon the Beaches (and many with lowd *Raydeows* whose Clamour assail'd my Ears); and a few score even walk'd into the shallow Sea; but all cloath'd, tho' in such small

Garments, that hid scarce any thing, of bright Colours. My Hosts wou'd likewise *Bathe* (as they call'd it) in the Sea, and had with them these Garments, and one for me, but I wou'd not, and contented my self with watching. What they thought to enjoy by this stay, I cannot tell, unless it were the sight of so many bare Bodys, for there was nothing but Sand blown in your Face, and Wind too cold, Sun too hot, and a clamorous Multitude of Persons and Dogs.

Their Inns are places, where you may be very well entertain'd, at least for Food; for Drink, 'tis only at certain hours that their Law allows it. Their Ale is thin and has little Smack, and their Wines want strength. They have much liking for a strong Spirit out of *Scotland* and *Ireland*, that I took for *Uskebaugh*, a harsh Drink fit for Bogg-bred Savages. They call'd it *Wiskay*. Two Fruits which I cou'd not well stomach, but of which they eat a vast deal, are a Red Juicy Fruit, but very sower, that they call, *Tomautows* (I suppose the *Tomate* from the *America's*) and which they eat with Flesh, and the *Shaddock*, or *Pomplemoose*, which they call, *Grape-Fruit*, tho' (for the many that know it not) it is like a great yellow sower Orange, and no Grape. But of other Fruits they get a Multitude, Apples, Pears, Bananas, Oranges, Peaches, Straw-berries, Rasp-berries, and many more from the ends of the Earth, in season and out of season, both fresh, and preserv'd, some in sweet Sirop in clos'd Jars of Metal, that they call, *Cans*. 'Tis also so with many other Meats, Fish, Cheeses, Butter, Honey, Preserves and *Marmalades*, that come from the *America's*, from many Lands in *Europe*, from *Africa*, from the *Indies*, and from the *Antipodaeen* Continent.

Besides their Food and Drink, I must tell you, many of the younger sort, and especially the Girls, have a foul custom, of smoaking Tobacco in little Row'd Peices of Paper, which they call, *Sick-Rates*, because in the end they Corrupt the Lungs of many, tho' many years after. These *Sick-Rates* they smoak on the Top Tiers of the *Busses*, in the *Eating-Houses*, when they drink at home with Friends, and when they are at Work. In their *Tellie*

Play-houses (of which more anon) the Air is full of their Smoak.

Altho' the Towns were so crowded, that you cou'd scarce stand for the press, yet they told me, a great part of the People were from home at this time. (And by *October*, the press was ten times worse, altho' I was by then somewhat accustom'd to it.) For every Man that is not a Pauper, takes his whole Family with him nigh once a year, for a week, or even for a fortnight, to rest from their Labours. My Host and his Wife had taken their Excursion in *May*, and that but for a week. These Retreats they call Holidays, for they have but few of our Holidays, only at *Christmas* and *Easter* and by *Whit Sunday*, and for two or three days beside in the year. Some go to the Coasts (whence that great Throng I saw on the Sands), some to wild Countrey and horrid Mountains (to flee the Crowd), but many to other Lands, so that the humblest Merchant makes his *Tour* like the finest Nobleman's Son, and not once in a Life-time, but every year, tho' for a meer two weeks. My Travells, that I thought some thing to be remember'd, were to them a trifling Excursion. But this comes from the great Ease of their Journeys, in *Air-Craft* or in their *Cars*, on Shipp's that are sent thro' the Water by a Furnace of Oyl in their Bellies, and in great Caravans or Trains of Coaches (but each Coach as long as a Barn) that are drawn along Rails of Metal by a Machine, that burns Oyl likewise, or goes by Electricity. The Hostelrys every where are so commodious and clean, that a Traveller wants nothing and may lie easie where ever he may pass in *Europe*, or (indeed) in some parts of *Africa* and *America*.

The young Men and Women of Fifteen years upwards often travell in Partys together to other Countreys. Some of 'em go to *Norway* or to *Swisserland* in the Winter, in order to the enjoying a Sport, that they call *Skeeing*. This is nothing but to climb a great Mountain of Snow (or to be drawn up to the Summit on Wires) and to Slide down it very swiftly upon Boards that are strapp'd to your Feet. So soft is their Life become, that many of the bolder sort are uneasie, without they risk their Limbs and

tire their Bodys this way. They have made for them selves all manner of such Sports. Some take Sticks with flat Peices of Metal at their Ends, that they call (forsooth) *Clubs*, and strike a little Ball from place to place up and down a great Park. Others joyn together in two Crews or Partys that are Enemys one to the other, and strive to kick a Ball as big as your Head between two Masts in their Enemys Ground ; thousands of Men and Boys sit round on Benches to watch the outcome, and this Rabble rages like Enthusiasts out of a Bedlam. In the Summer they strike a Ball of the bigness of a Fist, with a Club of Wood that has a flat Face, while others endeavour to catch the Ball. These (and the others after Summer) send Crews from Land to Land to try which Countrey shall come off best ; and all the world and the Courants, talk continually of their progress. Other Men again strike such a Ball, but more soft, from end to end of a Plot of ground across a Net, and to discomfit one the other, and this they call *Tennis*, but it resembles nothing our Tennis, as I have seen it in *London*. Others rowl heavy Balls along an Alley within doors, to knock down ten Pins, and this Sport is much like our *Nine-Pins*, but hundreds play at it, and thro' the whole Night. Others run on *Skates*, like the *Dutch*, but for Sport, and besides Running, do Dance wonderfully upon 'em, as I saw, in great Halls where the Ice is kept ever cold, even in Summer, tho' how I cou'd not understand. Others swim in Lakes or the Sea, but under the Water, for they have found a way, to carry Air with them, and to breathe it, as far as ten or twenty fathoms down ; and these go also to take Fish with Spears. Others clamber down into Caverns and Holes in the Rocks, and walk (they say) in these many miles under the ground, for the Pleasure (if there be any). Others climb the highest of Mountains and the steepest of Cliffs. Others (but few) ride *Air-Craft* that have no Machine to drive them, and sail but with the Wind and Air. And others (but fewer still) leap from *Air-Craft*, and fall thousands of fathoms, for the meer Feeling of it, but save themselves at last with a great Bag, folded at their Back, that they open out, so that it fills with the Air, and

holds 'em up, and so they come gently to ground. In all those Sports Women strive as well as the Men. In the month of *October* the Nations over all the World sent Crews of both Men and Women, to run, or leap, or to toss Weights, in a friendly Strife or Concurrence, in a place in *Japan*; and this Sport all saw in the Windows of their *Tellies*. (My Host told me, that what I saw came thro' a Ball, that hung hundreds of miles above the Pacific Ocean, but this I scarce credited).

For most take no part in these Strivings, but look on their *Tellies*, to see what the rest do; or to hear a sort of Musick (from little *Raydeows*) that shou'd make you cover your Ears, but which they wou'd surround themselves with all day, if they cou'd; or they wager, as I said before, in great Assemblys, upon the meer Chance of some Numbers shewn upon a Table. Or if they find their Life too becalm'd, they go to a kind of Play-houses, but without a Company, where (for Heroick Plays) they may witness Tortures, Ravishings, Sorcery, and Murther, with in between (for Comedys) some crazy Folly or other, all enacted in a Gigantick sort of *Tellie*, but often with Colours, so that it seem the more real.

Besides their *Cars*, on which they love to drive furiously, they have a kind of metallick Pony, but driven by this same Burning, which they call a *Mowtasoikle*. This makes a worse Roaring even than their *Cars*; it is much favour'd of Striplings. Another such has no Furnace in it, but you must drive it onward by pushing round with your Feet on two Peices, that go round. This they call a *Boique*, and it goes only as fast as a Man may run. Of Horses I scarce saw any, but they use them for Sport.

For that they use so much written Words, to send far, they have perfected a kind of Pencil, that writes with Ink, which it holds within it, and very Black, or Blew, or (indeed) Red or Green. But the Merchants and Houses of Trade (and some Men at Home) have a Machine, that prints Letters upon a Sheet of Paper, when you shall play upon little Keys on it, each mark'd with a different Letter; but it's Musick is a sad Rattling. And what amaz'd me, they give this work, to young Wenches. So you may



read the Word of any Body, without troubling, how hard or easie is his Hand. And I may tell you, their Hand-writing is so strange, I cou'd make near nothing of it, not above one Letter in twenty, altho' their Printing is very like ours. A few Persons write, however, in a kind of *Italick* Hand, very formal, that I cou'd read pretty well. They use little Civility in their Epistles, but affect a strange careless Friendliness, calling all *Dear*, even those they have never met and hope never to meet. But in their Speech as in their Writing, all their Address is abrupt and careless, so that like Children they use their First Names almost upon first acquaintance, Men with Women too, married or single; yet do they seldom salute each other with the least Gesture, unless it be (upon first Presentation) to clasp Hands.

My Host had Friends some times invited to Supper, and I found, that as this People had so little Civility, they cou'd meerly murmur, *And this is Jow* (for so they call'd me), and the Company wou'd seek to know no more, so that I cou'd sit and listen, without venturing a word. As I became more bold, I wou'd go out alone, to their *Tellie* Play-houses as it might be, and pay my Fee at the Door; or make a Sally to a great Shop, where I cou'd chuse all sorts of Wares, and carry 'em about in a Basket made of Metal, to the Door, where a Good-wife fetch'd 'em out and made the Reckoning. So I grew us'd to purchasing my Hostess her Provisions, which mightily pleas'd her. The Sheets of Copyes, by the way, from M<sup>r</sup> *Sympkins* his Travells, by the *Zerocks*, I kept in a Parcel within my Machine.

Some of my Host's Visitors had Children, that they left at home, and I learnt, that the Children here, for all they make so much sport of their Elders, must work hard, for they suffer their Schooling from Five years of age, to Fifteen, or some more, so that they are grown Men. And the Girls are so school'd likewise. If they wou'd have a good place in Life hereafter, they must do well, before Examiners, for whom they write many times long Discourses and Answers to hard Questions. The elder ones learn even some Natural Philosophy, that some of

them may practice to controul those Marvels, by which their World runs. They learn Languages, but little Latin, and many other matters besides.

In *September* my Host had Business in *London*, and carry'd me thither in his *Car*. And here I had another and over-whelming Surprise. For the *London* that we know was all but gone, save a few Monuments, much blacken'd and almost beyond recognizing, smother'd in the Bellie of a Town, that was more like a whole Countrey, compos'd all of Houses and other Buildings. I cannot begin to give you an *Idaea*, of the Extent of it, and you will not believe me, when I say, it is about Fifteen Leagues across, and all Buildings, for the most part begrim'd with Smoak. At Night, however, 'tis much lit up with wonderful Lights of many Colours. (Another cause, they have so little Murthers and Robberies, is, that their Citys are lit near as bright as day.) But when I saw *Paul's* half bury'd in the midst of great Buildings hundreds of feet high, I was glad, to come away.

That *October*, besides the great Sport in *Japan*, there was in *Britain* a great *Election*, when all in England and her Neighbours voted, for a new Government. I thought, there shou'd be Riots, but tho' the Courants had much to say, Folk round me took't very coolly. In the end the *Tory's*, that had been in more then a dozen years, were out, and t'other Party in. They said, there shou'd be some great Changes, tho' their numbers were scarce over those of the *Tory* Members.

It happen'd that one afternoon late in *September*, my Host's Wife and I were looking out at the Rain. The Day was a *Friday* and she said, she wish'd she knew, whether 'twou'd be fair Weather on the *Saturday*, or no, for an Excursion. Then she says to me, *Why not travel to to-morrow in that Contrapshen, and see?* At first I put her off, for I made her see, that if I mov'd to tomorrow, I shou'd meet my self, and that I wou'd by no means do. Then she says, *Try the early morning, and keep out of the way of your Bed-room.* So at last I agrees, to try early on *Saturday* morning, and again early on *Sunday* morning, but to stay below stairs. And to this she says

Yes, but nothing wou'd satisfy her, but that she must come with me, to try this manner of Journey. For a long time I sought to dissuade her, but in the end I submitted. We pull'd off it's Cloth, then in we goes into the Machine (mighty press'd together) and I mov'd the Rod and Dial. Seeing that she took little Notice, of how they went, I was the more secure. Then I press'd the Red Knob and she cries out and clasps me for Fear, but I comforted her. We listen'd for a time, but all was still and dark. So then out we crept and softly into the Chamber, where the *Tellie* was. The Night was something Windy, but we cou'd hear no Rain. At last she and I crept back to the Porch, and gently unlock'd the Door, and so out into their little Park, or *Front Garden*. Under foot the ground was damp, but there was no Rain falling. A few Stars were in the Heavens, and a Half Moon thro' the Clouds. Then we stole hand in hand into the Porch again, and made all fast, and so within the Machine. Here I found all the Numbers and Pointers, and other Letters, glowing in the Dark. So I found it easie, to turn the Machine to the *Sunday* morning. This time 'twas strong Moon-Light, and no Clouds in the Sky, but the Air was very warm, and the Ground dry. So we thought, 'twou'd be a fair Week-end. When we were come within again, she wou'd bring me into their Living-Chamber again, that we might enjoy the sight of the Moon, without danger of Surprize from the Watch without. This we did for some time, and I found her more kind, then I had expected. But at length (and I something uneasie with my self) we return'd to the *Friday* after-noon, and cover'd my Machine again with their great Cloth.

Our *Fore-cast* was a true one and a fine Journey we had of it all three, but said nothing of our *Auguries*, to her Husband. From that time she and I often made Tryal of the next Day's or of the next Week's weather, but always by Night. As we knew, we were lying both above-stairs in two other Bodys, we had a kind of delight-ful Terror at the thought. In the day-time we were at first Discreet, because many Persons came ever to the House, to bring Provisions, or to reckon for the Electricity, or

to sell somewhat at the Door. But at length we grew too secure, and fell to travelling much in the *Car* to places, where she was little known, and at last, began to snatch Hours, above stairs.

One after-noon towards *November*, we were but then back from a *Sortie* into the Night before (for now we were grown so bold, as to do this too, but we took care, not to make three Pair of us that Night) and without covering my Machine again I had follow'd her up to their Bed-Chamber, where we fell a Kissing once more, when her Husband appear'd (who must have come home early, and up the Stairs un-heard). He threw me down the Stairs, which was like to break my Neck. In my Confusion, I stumbled into the Porch, and into the Machine, and mov'd it, without taking breath, two or three furlongs up the Road.

And here I made an Errour, for I found within my Machine the Pole of a Stopping-Place for *Busses*, and an Old Wife, that screech'd for mortal Fear. I push'd her out, and she went down the Road crying *Murther, Help, Murther*, and spilling her Merchandize out of her Basket as she went. Then I took counsel with my self, and looking carefully upon the *Plats*, prepar'd to move within that Colledge, where I first came, but back to my own Time, by the Barn. I set the Dials to the exact Hour, when I first left our Village, for I thought, the earlier Time is perilous, for I shall meet my self, and a later Time is dangerous, for the Villagers will have mark'd my being away, and will press me with Questions; besides if my Machine is seen, I am like to stand Tryal for Witchcraft. I had little Breathing space, for as I turn'd the Dials, I saw a *Buss* coming up the Road.

When I push'd the Red Knob my Faint-ness nearly overcame me, and a fearful Cloudy-ness beset me, worse then before. I had the Wit to remember, that I had been twice in this Place and Moment, and that if I cou'd wait, my other two selves, and their Machine, wou'd both be gone, the one into the Future, the other into that Early Morning, eleven hours before. At last the Cloudy-ness pass'd. I lock'd the Rod (*which at least is some safe-*

*guard*, I thought), hastily cast off my new Cloathes (one of several Suits I now had) and pull'd on my old; and leaving the others within, as well as *Sympkins* his Travells from the *Zerrocks*, I crept forth into the empty Street. Now I sped home as fast as I might, for I had a Plan, to try other Times in the Future, or even in the Past, but first to furnish my self with more Goods (what I had left) to purchase a living there. Unhappily I encounter'd an Old Man that knew me well, who held speech with me, talking I know not what Nonsense, for the better part of ten minutes. At length I escap'd, and took a Wheel-Barrow, and fill'd it with fine Cloathes, and three Pistols, and an Abridgement of *Janssonius* his Atlas, and a quantity of Jewells, and a Mirrour besides. I went back with all to the place, but my Machine was gone. Since 'twas lock'd, I concluded, the *Sorcerer* was come back, and had gone off in't. And so I had nought to do, but to bring my Barrow back, and sadly unload my Gear. I was the poorer by some hundreds of Pounds (1964), the Sheets of *Sympkins* Travells, and several changes of Cloathing, but the richer by some Memories, a *Wrist-Watch*, and the Knowledge of an un-ghe ssable Future.



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JOHN WATNEY

## THE ORBS

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HUMAN NATURE WILL put up with any kind of horror as long as, in the end, its final benefit is greater than its temporary pain. When this happens, society codifies the horror, legalises it and gives it a supernatural covering.

Take the case of the Orbs. Not many people alive today can remember much of the pre-orb period. Even the oldest people were children at the time, and their memories are naturally distorted. Some even claim that the weather was always fine then. Well, we only need to look at the meteorological records to know how false that belief becomes. In pre-orb time, the weather was quite frankly, awful. It was either too hot or too cold. There was too much rain or too little. You only have to read the pre-orb books to know what it was like. Terrible. Far, far worse, despite what the grumblers may say, to the weather we have to-day. So to those who moan that the price we pay is too high, let me just say: "Read the old books and you will see what it's like." I don't think we pay too high a price, and I am a candidate. And you know what that means.

In fact, the reason I am writing this is that tomorrow is the Day, and I want to set down a few of my thoughts before embarking upon the Great Adventure, as the *Daily Recorder* so movingly and rightly calls it.

It is also my sixteenth birthday. As my name is Julia and I have won sixteen Beauty Contests, it is not at all surprising that I have been one of the first to be selected for the 84th Descent, which I am sure will be one of the best we've had. I know that, for my part, I shall give of

my very best. I shall not let you down. You may be sure of that. I am certain too, that the others will acquit themselves equally well.

By an odd coincidence, or perhaps because I was just tidying up the place in anticipation, I came across an old blue ledger book which belonged to my grandfather who lived during the Coming of the Orbs. It was his account book, and it is full of figures in the monetary system they had at that time. I had seen this ledger once or twice before, but after turning a few pages of meaningless figures, had put it back in the old tin trunk from which it had come. To-day however, being perhaps distraught about what is to happen tomorrow, I read a little further. The accounts suddenly ended. Instead there were a number of pages in his neat rather old-fashioned ball-point writing which, I realised with growing amazement, was a day-by-day account of the Coming of the Orbs.

The first one arrived, as every child knows from his history books, on July 3rd, 1972; but what they undoubtedly do not know is that it was a warmish day—for that epoch—and my grandfather was in his garden sitting with his wife, my grandmother, sipping a glass of beer (a rather rudimentary drink favoured by northern countries at that time). He was then about thirty-two and my grandmother twenty-eight. From photographs I have, they both appear to be good-looking people, but then photographers always flatter and personal pride makes one at least hope that one's ancestors were good-looking.

The local Orb appeared at precisely six-thirty p.m. His description of the object is, of course, familiar: an oval metal shape, shining like a huge discus in the sky; but he gets the height very wrong. He puts it at some three or four hundred feet, and not the normal three or four thousand it usually hangs; but this may have been due to miscalculating the size of the object—anything that flew at the time was minute; an aircraft carrying a hundred passengers was considered big! Oddly enough, my grandmother, who both in looks and spirits seemed very much like me, was much nearer the truth, for he records: "Tessa put it at much higher; as much as five

thousand feet, but that would make it so enormous it could not possibly hang motionless in the sky above our heads.”

They did not seem to have been particularly perturbed by its appearance. This was a period when all sorts of strange things appeared in the air, and when that famous old song ‘I’m missing my missile’ was first published. My grandfather does however remark that the night was very balmy, but he does not seem to have connected this fact with the orb hanging above his head.

He did not go to Trafalgar Square like a lot of other people to gape up at it, but he does remark that its green iridescent light was stronger than the light from the moon, and that even the street lights seemed dull beneath its glare. He recalls pulling the curtains of the children’s bedroom very tight so as to keep it from waking them, and then, if you please, calmly going to bed!

He was, it appears, somewhat surprised to find the thing still there in the morning. He had rather imagined that it would have flown away in the night. As if orbs could fly!

There is a hilarious description of an attempt by the members of a helicopter (a sort of primitive air-lifter) to board the orb. I feel I must quote my grandfather’s words in full: “The helicopter hovered immediately above the strange object, and a man came down on a rope ladder, and actually landed on top of it. I saw him with my own eyes walking about and tapping the smooth surface of the metal with an alpenstock. When he returned to earth, he said that there appeared to be no way of getting into the thing and no means of telling how it kept itself suspended in the air.” The audacity of these early flying men! One can’t help but admire them.

There was a good deal of international tension when the orbs first appeared because of their natural habit of concentrating on the more densely populated centres. Tokio, London and New York were the first three cities over which they appeared and luckily the governments concerned kept their heads. It’s difficult for us to understand the passions raised by the Nationalism of those



days now that we are a united world in every sense. Historians believe that it was mainly due to the inequality of the weather which in turn produced famines and gluts so that some people had too much to eat and others not enough, and this in turn led to wars, when those who hadn't enough tried to grab something from those who had too much. It seems to me that if the Orbs have stopped wars, as they have, then the price that we have to pay seems small enough.

Incidentally, the first time the objects were called orbs was on the fourth day of their arrival. My grandfather cut out a headline from the *Daily Recorder* which he folded up in the ledger. It runs THE ORBS ARE HERE TO STAY! Even in those days the *Daily Recorder* was not far wrong in its predictions!

It seems to have been, oddly enough, some time before people connected the fine weather enjoyed during July and August with the Orbs. This may have been due to the fact that most of the larger cities were in the northern hemisphere and that it was then summer (I do not, I hope, have to explain the seasons. Even though we no longer have them everybody learns about them in Ancient History), and warm weather was at least anticipated. It was only when the Orbs began to bring an equitable temperature to the hot places and warmth to the cold Southern Hemisphere that realisation began to come to the people. Until then, there was a persistent belief that they were military weapons of some kind.

As my grandfather says: "There is a growing body of opinion which believes that the orbs are not the product of one nation or the other, but are part of a pattern of the universe of which we are not aware. Well, if this truly beautiful weather we are having is due to the orbs, then God bless them, say I. Incidentally, I met a man at a party last night who had just come from Johannesburg. He said that there had been an orb hanging over the city for a fortnight now, and the weather had been more perfect than he had ever known and he had lived in the city thirty years."

But by about October there was no longer any doubt

that the orbs were in the process of completely altering the world's climate. No one still knew where they came from or why they had come. All that was known was that day by day, week by week, month by month, they were increasing in numbers. Soon all the large cities were covered, then the smaller ones, then the villages.. Presently the whole earth was covered with an interlocking system of orbs pouring down upon earth a constant temperature and, what surprised our grandfathers more than anything else, a moisture content without the necessity of clouds and rain.

My grandfather describes a day in November in a near-by square: "There were beautiful flowers in bloom, roses such as I have never seen and a third crop of strawberries on sale with the ice cream. Men and women were still in their summer clothes or swim suits, lying under the trees after coming out of their offices. I have never seen such healthy specimens. They say that there's hardly a cold or a touch of flu anywhere, and that even the more serious diseases are on the decline. Dr. Robertson told me that the hospitals were half empty, and that he hadn't had a patient for a week. Is this the millennium? A return to the Garden of Eden? Tessa is looking more beautiful every day. She is brown and smiling all the time. And internationally too, everything seems to be brighter. There hasn't been a serious crisis for a fortnight. Can all this be due to these strange orbs, for whom everybody now has a mixture of respect, gratitude, and, if it's not too strong a word, love."

Looking back on this honeymoon period, one cannot help being both envious of their new-found joy and saddened by the childish way they accepted the Orbs as a benefit to humanity without ever thinking that there must be a price paid at some time. Yet all their history before that was a record of meagre rewards won at huge expense. Perhaps it was because the rewards were so huge that they could not conceive of any price severe enough to pay for them. Perhaps they truly believed that God had finally relented, forgiven Man for his Original Sin and was at last leading him back to Paradise.

My grandfather's description of the First Descent has all the poignancy of a child describing an incomprehensible catastrophe. It was just before Christmas. People were still Orb-bathing as it was called, and the Orbs began to sink lower and lower in the way in which we are now so familiar. Just like, as my grandfather records, "arc-lamps being lowered on to a stage." Nobody he continues, paid much attention as the heat did not increase. "The orb above our house," he writes, "came down very close. I was upstairs painting the window of the spare room. I could see my poor darling Tessa lying half asleep on a li-lo in the garden. She was lying on her stomach. She had a towel over her waist. I was thinking 'she is the most beautiful girl in the world' when it suddenly happened. There was a loud whirring scream which I took at first to be the sound of a jet, and then I noticed that the leaves of the almond tree in the corner of the garden were turned inside out, and all pointing upwards. I saw that plants and leaves were being sucked up as if a huge vacuum was settling over the garden. The noise rose in a shrill crescendo. I saw the towel round Tessa plucked off, and Tessa herself turn and look up in alarm. I saw her scrabbling at the ground as if trying to dig herself in. I saw her legs being drawn up. Then the hair on her head. The noise increased. It was like an earthquake. The end of the world. Suddenly she was whirled viciously upwards with a swirl of debris. I saw her mouth opening and shutting. Then she was gone.

"The noise stopped. There was silence. I couldn't understand what had happened. There was a shower of earth and twigs. They fell like hard rain on to the garden. I shielded my eyes and looked up. The Orb was mounting now. On to its underbelly were pinned, as if by suction, a number of feebly gesticulating men and women, most of them naked. One of them was Tessa."

He described the now familiar process of the vents opening and the living humans being sucked in. There is the usual pathetic plattering down of clothes as the victims are unclothed and then the blood and water sluicing

down out of the drain-pipes as the line of suspended bodies have their throats cut.

Included in my grandfather's ledger is an account of one of the survivors, one of those who, like a fish, slip at the last minute out of the net. It was not Tessa, but a woman, who landing naked in a tree, was not killed by her fall. Her account has not, as far as I know, been published before. She fell into the almond tree in my grandfather's garden. His writing is so disconnected at this point that I have had some difficulty in reading it. Here it is: "Got her out of the leaves and into the house. She was wet and shivering. There were hook-marks on her ankles. I lay her on the sofa. She screamed. 'There's no-one there,' she said, 'just cold invisible hands, taking your clothes off, hanging you upside down, and the water swishing at you from all sides. I slipped off the hook. I don't know how. I lay in a sort of gutter. The water was swishing over me all the time. I could hardly breathe. I was being pushed along by the water. The bodies were above. They were being split open like fish by invisible knives. Everything was falling down on top of me. The bodies swung away on the line. I fell down a chute'."

The woman died. But there have always been a few survivors, and their accounts, incoherent though they have been, have always been much the same: the invisible hands and knives, the continuous water, the bodies swinging emptily away into the interior of the Orb. Of course, the accounts come only from the early days when the victims were not anaesthetised, when indeed no-one knew the rhythm of the Orbs and were not able to calculate in advance the exact moment they would descend in search of their prey.

After this first ferocious attack, the Orbs returned to their normal places in the sky and poured down their beneficial rays. At first, no-one would lie underneath them. People would hurry along the streets, hugging the walls, ready to dart into a doorway at the first sign of any movement above them. But, of course, the Orbs, satiated, had no intention of moving again until their needs forced them into action again.

The Descent, as it was universally called, had occurred simultaneously throughout the world, and it was estimated that something like 34,000 people had been sucked up into the machines. Of these, only eight came back, and three died without regaining consciousness. The other five told substantially the same story. No-one knew what happened to the de-gutted bodies after they had swung creaking into the interior.

It was at this time that some of the countries made determined efforts to destroy the Orbs. The most ambitious attempt occurred in China, where the Government sent up a helicopter and attached a large bomb on to the top of the Orb. The bomb was exploded. The Orb rocked slightly, but that was all. On the other hand some fifteen hundred houses on the ground below were knocked flat. After that the various Governments desisted from what was obviously a hopeless waste of time.

Instead they tried to boycott the Orbs. It became an offence, punishable by a term in prison, to loiter under an Orb. At the same time, a form of Civil Defence was organised and a voluntary body called the Orb Defence Corps, or O.D.C., formed. Commercial firms, exploiting the fact that the victims were sucked up, put on the market detachable anchors with which people could fix themselves to walls or other stout projections. It really makes you laugh reading some of these old remedies!

The fine weather continued. The flowers bloomed, and the birds sang. The Orbs remained motionless and beneficial in the sky. The first horror faded away. Some people, despite the stringent action of the police, began Orb-bathing again. Perhaps, thought the optimistic human race, it was an error, a mistake. Perhaps the Orbs only struck once. Who could tell.

The Second Descent took place exactly six months after the first. But this time, both the authorities and the people were ready. As the Orbs sank slowly down, screaming as they came, people got out their little anchors or shut themselves up in their homes. The Orbs began sucking and drawing at the earth. They pulled up lots of trees and plants, but very few human beings, par-

ticularly in the more civilised centres where the anti-orb precautions had been most stringently carried out.

It was for this reason that the Orbs retaliation was greater against the more civilised cities. Where they had been able to suck up their required number of bodies, they merely retreated up into the sky ; but where they had been frustrated, they took fearful vengeance. There is no need for me to describe this. We all know of the freezing cold they poured down that immobilised people as they walked along the street and made it easy for them to be sucked up one by one, like particles before a vacuum cleaner. We know, too, of the searing heat that chased people out of their oven-hot house, the gas which sent people mad, so that they undressed voluntarily in their own homes and went out naked, their arms raised in supplication to the screaming orbs. There were ten times the number of victims this time, much more than the Orbs could need. Indeed it was on this occasion that many of the bodies, after they had been de-gutted and sluiced were dropped indifferently back to earth. It did not take long for people to realise that the Orbs demanded their price for the benefits they bestowed and if people were not prepared to give it voluntarily then the Orbs would take it by force.

This, of course, caused a tremendous amount of consternation and panic in the world. By now it was realised that the Orbs made a regular descent upon the earth and that the next descent would probably be in six months time. That was all the time that was left for the necessary decisions to be made.

It is difficult for us, who have been trained since childhood to look upon self-sacrifice as a glorious destiny and one which will ensure immortality (for it's surely obvious to all that the Orbs need our bodies so that our souls can be fashioned for the hereafter), to understand the reluctance of the early people to give themselves to the Orbs.

My grandfather was one of the first Orb-Volunteers as they were called. He never got over the death of his wife, and was eager to sacrifice himself for the benefit of

his children ; but, of course, it was these very children that prevented him from being accepted. The authorities decided at their first planetary meeting, that married couples were definitely out, and that the best people were the teenagers. There were then, of course, a great deal more of them than there are today after eighty-three descents, and a lot were killing themselves off on motor-cycles and in gang wars anyhow ; so it did not seem a bad idea to offer them up to the Orbs.

Of course, there was a good deal of trouble getting these first youngsters to accept their fate. They had not the training that we have, nor did they appreciate the glory and the assurance of immortality.

In most countries, in fact, the army had to be called out to enforce the sacrifice. There are many terrible stories of victims rendered unconscious, stripped and left in the streets for the Descent. In some of the more uncivilised countries they were tied together naked in bunches of twenty and left in stockades just like cattle waiting for the slaughterhouse.

There were, of course, very painful scenes, particularly when some of the misguided parents tried to save their children—how very much more sensible our parents are to-day!—from the Orbs. My grandfather witnessed such a scene: “A young girl, completely naked, came running down our street pursued by five soldiers in a jeep. She tried to dodge into a shop, but the soldiers got her first. Her mother came up to them and begged them to spare her daughter. She offered herself in her place, and started stripping ; but the soldiers merely pushed her roughly aside and dragged the daughter, screaming, away to the Assembly Area in Eaton Square. It was a very distressing sight, and sometimes, as I look at my own children, I wonder what the future holds for them.”

Well, none of his children were in fact called, and I am his first grandchild to have the honour, but he is dead now. I wonder how he could have taken it. Some of the very old people still believe that there is something evil about the Orbs and their demands in human lives ; but can't these old people see that wars took many more

young lives? That is the thought I always hang on to when the idea of death begins to frighten me ; that, and of course, the pep-up pills the Government very thoughtfully provides free to us.

After the Third Descent they began to get things organised. By then the beneficial effects of the Orbs was really beginning to tell. The health of the people continued to improve. They became taller, better built, brighter both in mind and spirit. All kinds of evils began to disappear. Crime, for the first time in decades, was on the decrease. People just couldn't be bothered to steal or kill. Life was too good. People were happy in the permanent warmth from the Orbs. Violence vanished almost entirely, not only between individuals but also between ethnic groups.

Statesmen began to realise that the Orbs generated not only warmth but benevolence, an influence that had never until then had any political significance. At first, some of the politicians were afraid that the Orbs would turn the world population into over-fed contented cows, and some of the things they said about the Orbs makes curious reading to-day ; but these politicians were in a minority and as they too were subjected to the beneficial rays from the Orbs, they gradually lost their belligerency and accepted the fact that the Orbs were here to stay, and that, taking everything into account, the world was a far better place than it had been.

Most governmental effort was directed therefore to obtaining the maximum benefit from the fantastic crops that ripened month after month, and, where necessary to control over-production, and at the same time to improve matters for the periodical Descents.

It was soon realised that the choice of teenagers as candidates was a good one for the Orbs preferred the young and healthy. Old bodies were merely spat out. The authorities naturally wanted to keep the Orbs happy, for a happy Orb meant a happy People. It was decided internationally that only the first and very best of each country was to be offered to the Orbs. It was to be an honour to be selected. It meant not only that you were



helping your fellow people ; but that you were the Chosen, the Mostest, It. The problem was how to find the best.

It was here that the Beauty Contest became so important. There had apparently been beauty contests in the old days, but they were haphazard things, organised by private individuals, mainly for profit. The winners of the contests were given ridiculous names like Miss Potato-Crisp, or even called after countries, and were then forgotten.

Laws were quickly passed in every country to make it obligatory for every baby to be entered as soon as it was six months old into a beauty contest ; and after that to enter one every year until the child was twenty-one. In that way the authorities had a permanent record of the very best available, and could keep up the numbers required by the Orbs without any difficulty.

As the winner of many contests, I have known, of course, for years that I was destined to this fate ; and I welcome it. I know that some people try to cheat, to pull faces in front of the judges or over-eat so as to lose their figures but I think that this is despicable ; and none of the boys and girls I know would do this.

Of course, the actual ceremony of the Descent has changed a good deal too, over the years. Now we know the exact time of the event, we can plan accordingly, and I must say that the thought of the huge crowds that will turn out to watch us make our way tomorrow to the Platforms thrills me. It is such a tremendous ceremony, such a spectacle, that even if one does feel a little afraid, one is carried away by the fervour of it all. Of course, there are also the injections which are given to you first thing in the morning, which help, and the tranquillisers at eleven o'clock during the Preparation, when you have a bath, are shaved all over and rubbed with scented grease so that you slip more easily into the open vents. The simple white gowns and golden sandals and orb-crowns are then put on, and you go out to the waiting vehicles, decorated with arum lilies and white roses and

driven through the streets of cheering people to the Platforms.

Then comes the great solemn hush while the Official Stripper removes the sandals, right foot first to show that you are moving in the right direction; then the orb-crown, which is sent to your family to be treasured for ever; and finally the white gown itself, which is taken to the Nu-Kleen Laundry to be washed and have your name sewn on it, ready for the next Descent. (My gown, which I have already seen, has twenty-eight names beautifully embroidered round the hem).

Then comes the Lying-Down, when you take your place on the flowered beds with your friends beside you, and you lie there, looking up at the glowing Orb above you while the huge crowd, now on its knees, sings the beautiful Song of Farewell; with its lovely final verse:

“Oh shining orb, above us bright,  
Give us this day our daily light,  
And accept, as thy blessed right,  
These children laid here in thy sight.”

Then comes the final phase when the Comforters move from cover to cover handing out the Sleeping Pills and the great crowd rises to its feet and gently moves away to lock itself safely up in its homes until the Descent is over. The huge square with its flowered platforms falls silent, and as our sight dims and the drowsiness of sleep overcomes us, so the great orbs start their whirring plunge towards us, and we know that in a few minutes our warm bodies will be sucked up into its metal bellies, and our souls liberated by the invisible knives and sluicing water.

No, I am not afraid; for I am sure that the cynics are wrong. I know all the theories. I have made a study of them. I know that the favourite one is that the orbs are part of an interstellar fishing fleet, that operates rather like the fishing boats off the coasts of France and Spain in the Mediterranean; which attract the fish by pouring light into the sea; but I do not believe that our de-gutted bodies hang in alien butcher shops for creatures we cannot visualise to prod and buy, or that we're crammed

like sardines, head to toe, in oil to be sold in grocers' shops in Andromeda and beyond.

I believe that ours is a greater destiny; that by our sacrifice we make this world a finer place in which to live, and assure for ourselves a place for all eternity in the beautiful world of the Orbs. I can see this world now. It is sunny and warm. The sky is blue. There is soft grass under our feet. A gentle sea in front of us. We who have gone through the Orbs wander, happy and singing, through this world for ever and ever.

It is late now. The others are all asleep in their bunks. I can see one of the Comforters moving silently along the ward, a syringe in her hand. Outside the pale orb-light looks like moonlight, and shines on the bars of the wards windows. The doors are self-locking. No-one can get in. No-one can get out. Even if I started to scream, no-one would hear me.

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DAPHNE CASTELL

## ENTRY FROM EARTH

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THE SKIES OVER Pigauron were thick with fliers and ships of all kinds, even with individuals or group bodies reliant upon telekinesis, bent towards one goal—the great halls where the Nine Systems Festival of Sounds was being held.

Some of the visitors had been here for two cycles—last cycle the Festival for Artificial Instruments had been held, and though the musician who did not specialize for preference was rare, since the permit for one festival held good also for the other a connoisseur might as well extend his range of interests.

The galaxy had sent a notable portion of talent, both in performance and in appreciation. Behold the Tenth One of Zokaan, listless on cushions in the extra gravity, but still bright-eyed with enjoyment of the incomparable muscular ripples being given out by a crack band of his countrymen in the utterly silent Hall of Extended Thought. Amafasis and his twin sister, Diaks of the Hoteb Swarm, out yonder in the courtyard are fighting as usual (with blunted weapons), over the debated prowess of the Thias versus the Thoas—they will not abide by the judges' decision that one group produces more vibrations per second than the other. In the great Hall of Unalterable Decision, divine Tendenis of the Outer Planets holds thousands spell-bound with the glorious sounds of her strong diaphanous wings—she ought not to be competing, really, for since she accepted a small estate from her Ruler, she qualifies as a professional. But who will dare tell the divine Tendenis this,

and brave a fit of temperament? There were also, of course, a strong number of entries from races which depended entirely on their vocal chords to produce sounds. They were being listened to by supporters of their own kind, and, for curiosity's sake, by many who had never heard or produced sounds vocally in their lives, since their communication consisted of waves, telepathy, light forms, or other devices. In many cases, these beings had to be assisted to comprehend by the use of transensors. Circumnavigation of the audience. D'aon Auinawo d'Tren discovered, revealed boredom shading through puzzlement through vague interest through wild excitement—and suddenly back to boredom and complete incomprehension.

His Lordship D'aon Auinawo d'Tren was present at the Festival, both in his capacity as Minister of Art and Culture for Tren, and as one of the better-known young musical dilettantes of that planet. He had brought with him his retinue of advisers, courtiers, women, and slaves, and since the entertainment, apart from an astronomical entry fee for visitors, was excellent and free, a good time was being had by all.

D'aon, accompanied by his chief Secretary and Adviser, Earewo d'Tren, sat down by the ringside to listen for a moment. Modifiers were being supplied, since the contest of the moment depended upon the length and volume of one particular note to be produced by each of several dozen groups. The judges, naturally, were not so supplied, since a modifier might lessen their critical faculties. D'aon, listening to the anxious performers, decided abruptly, after the third group had performed, that he was thankful not to be a judge, and got up to leave. He was a tall, thin hominid, lightly crested as yet, for he was still immature. The golden down on his skin had not yet darkened to the normal tan colour of an adult Trennan male. The leathery eyelids slid sideways over the ruby eyes, as he yawned peevishly in his secretary's face.

"I sometimes think, Earewo, that the one redeeming feature of this Galaxy is in its insatiable passion for

music—and at other times I think that if I never had to hear another note of music again, it would be much too soon.”

“It is the length and the ceremonial of the Festival that is annoying your Lordship,” murmured Earewo soothingly. “If your Lordship were at home with his ten-stringed paian, he would feel differently.”

“Possibly,” said D’aon, stalking on discontentedly, “but my Lordship has at the moment no desire to find out. I am going to my quarters to sleep, Earewo. You and Cathiwi will attend the other sessions at which I am supposed to be present, and convey my congratulations to the winners afterwards.”

But when he arrived at the graceful pavilions that had been moulded for his arrival, he discovered that two visitors were waiting and would have to be entertained. Sleep was something that would have to be laid unwillingly by.

Mirilith tak was Assistant Secretary to the Festival, and Slok was the Personal Complainant to the representative of the Panzik Dynasty, whose pavilions lay next to D’aon’s.

“Your presence is an extension of the sweet sounds around us, gentlemen,” said D’aon courteously.

He ordered drinks, salted beans and crystallized leaves from Tren to be set before them. They were a curious pair to be sitting on D’aon’s magnificent silks, the heavy, slow-moving Slok, something like a scaly bulldog, with his wise, sad eyes, and the weasel-slim feathered Mirilith.

Slok had come to lay polite complaint, and Mirilith to pour diplomatic oil on any troubled waters that might begin to surge. “It is your slaves, D’aon,” explained Mirilith, with the freedom of an old friend and co-enthusiast in music. “This, as you know, is the day-area for sounds. The nocturnally-competing races are housed elsewhere. After a hard day’s work producing sounds for judging, your neighbours wish to rest. But as the twilight comes down, and silence sinks on the pavilions, apparently your slaves grow restless, and utter all manner of mournful noises. The neighbours are complaining. Have you not

heard them yourself?—does it not disturb your own rest?”

“I habitually take two or three doi-pastilles when I lie down,” said D’aon indifferently. “I will call Earewo.” But Earewo was attending to his duties as surrogate-listener for his Lordship, and only the secretary’s secretary, a young man named Mietenu, could be found.

“Mietenu d’Tren,” said Mirilith briskly, “we have asked, and his Lordship agrees, that something be done to stop these slaves of his disturbing the peace. His Lordship suggests heavy punishment, but on this planet we are a gentle race—(this was a side-cut at Tren, for few of the races of the Galaxy now practised slavery)—and we would prefer to reason with them.”

“Slaves become arrogant when reasoned with,” remarked D’aon in his drawling tones, reaching for another bean. “Which slaves are these, Mietenu, do you know?”

“His Lordship has not possessed them for long,” said Mietenu quietly. “They were lifted from some unknown little world, far out in an arm of the galaxy where the stars begin to thin. The pirate trader who owned them was making long hops between stars. He halted on their planet for supplies, and brought back a group of them from one of their hot regions, where there was much fruit and water and herds of fine animals. He had the insolence to bargain with his Lordship’s chamberlain in open market, and was executed. His slaves, naturally, were confiscated for his Lordship’s use.” His gentle, rather timid eyes rested apologetically on D’aon’s face, as he continued, “I think they are homesick, your Lordship. Theirs must have been a lovely little world, green and comfortable, with many seas and mountains. Our geographers were much interested in the trader’s descriptions of it, before he died.”

“That may be so,” said D’aon peevishly, “but there is no need for them to make the twilight hideous.”

Slok interposed. “Not hideous, exactly, Lord D’aon. The sounds are not unpleasant in themselves—in fact, they would not disgrace the festival itself. Merely a little disturbing at the wrong time of day.”

As if to underline his words, the thick purple night splashed as abruptly as usual over Pigauron, and the thin glow of lamps, globes, filaments behind hangings, leather, glass, ceramics from many worlds filtered magically to their eyes through the open door. A heavy smell from the fye trees announced that once more the nocturnal gums were beginning to stream down their smooth trunks, and there were rustlings and chirpings as the small night animals ran to catch it open-mouthed. Afterwards, drunk with delight, they would swarm up the trunks and nest in the huge transport blossoms and be absorbed, fertilizing the tree with some product of their dissolved bones.

"Well," said D'aon abruptly, "let us eat and converse, and I will forgo my doi-pastilles. I have a curiosity to listen to these slaves, and they may perform better if they are not ordered to do so. They speak Trennan, of course, Mietenu?"

"By hypnowrite, enough to obey commands, your Lordship. More has never seemed necessary for slaves." He hesitated, and D'aon looked curiously and impatiently at him.

Mietenu cleared his throat. "I—I have taken the liberty of learning a little of their own speech, your Lordship. They—well, they interested me. We have talked a little."

"And they are rebellious and regretful, no doubt, mourning their lot in bitter terms?" D'aon laughed shortly.

"Oh, no, your Lordship." Mietenu seemed a little surprised. "They were quite peaceful, quite resigned. It seems almost as if they expect to be slaves—they say their whole race has often been enslaved."

"To be a slave," said Slok heavily, "that is one thing. But to expect to be a slave—to be a habitually subjugated race to the whims of other people—that is something different." He looked almost accusingly at D'aon, and his Lordship for once remained thoughtfully silent. The colourful lights glowed for them, things shifted and tilted and tinkled in the tent about them, and from a distance came a majestic droning hum, incalculably



vast, as the great cylindrical creature from Resianfith, which had been solely upholding the glory of its planet, gradually relaxed in its oscillations, on its way to rest.

And through the hum, through the light rustle of a little cold wind which was running through the leaves of the fye trees, came another sound, almost as mournful as the wind. It was the sound of many voices singing, and Mirilith, impressionable creature, shivered a little, inexplicably as he listened.

D'aon broke the silence. "I have listened enough. Mietenu, if you speak their language, go and silence them. Say that I order it—if necessary, with whips." Mirilith's brows drew together disapprovingly. "And, Mirilith, I wish to enter these slaves of mine in the Festival. I feel that it will be amusing to hear them competing with other races. Mietenu, you may explain that too, to them, if you can make them understand."

The suave Assistant Secretary to the Festival was for once utterly taken aback.

"But, D'aon—my friend! This is unusual—this is unheard of! We have never had—*never* had slaves competing in this Festival," stammered the bewildered Mirilith tak. "And besides, the fee, the positively enormous fee for a non-competitor, who enters late as a competitor."

D'aon was insulted. This was something very much like ill-manners. Mirilith in his consternation had almost forgotten what was due to a reigning son of the Great House of Tren. He bridled, said silkily, "That, I imagine, is of no concern to me—nor is it to my planet." He turned his back dismissively. Slok and Mirilith looked at one another. Slok sunk his huge head into his folded shoulders and went heavily out into the scented purple night. Mirilith opened his mouth once or twice and followed him.

In the Hall of Convincing Echoes, competitors stirred and huddled in their various tanks, stalls, bubbles, or enclosures. D'aon sat, sunk into his own thoughts, and Mietenu, for once, not Earewo, sat beside him. Earewo,

back in the quarters of his Lordship was fuming venomously, occupied with the tasks usually performed by Mietenu. He would doubtless arrange for Mietenu to be discreetly poisoned, thought D'aon, on the return to Tren. Was it worthwhile arranging for the young man to be safeguarded? He shrugged, feeling that it would be simpler to allow matters to take their course.

He sat up straighter, as his new slaves walked into the arena of performance, their voluminous kilted robes fluidly moving around brown-skinned forms.

The sound that came from their opened throats was, after all, no different from the one he had heard before in the purple evening of Pigauron, but he listened attentively nevertheless. He knew that they would not win any award, or even commendation, their material was too rough, their style was too simple; but it had seemed to him at the time that this entry was something he would like done, and now he owed it at least his attention.

The notes shivered their lonely way into the intent air, some quavering, some sternly held, some swelling like waves until it seemed they must burst, only to die and lose themselves in nothingness. They called herds across the plains, lamented a lost child, asked for some gift that would never be given, spoke threats of burning and bloodshed, and all the time mourned for something that was gone for ever.

Some of the other competitors, when the sound was over, applauded warmly, some thinly disguised distaste. D'aon felt tired and almost elderly. He awaited, with Mietenu, the adjudication, which was more or less as he had foreseen it, with a few polite compliments to Lord D'aon d'Tren on his unusual entry. He spoke afterwards to the judge, a jelly-like creature, with huge eyes and antennae, and the most sensitive nervous organization in the Galaxy. The judge, politely rearranging his cilia in order to produce a buzzing approximation of Trennen speech, remarked that he was sorry not to have been able to award D'aon a win.

D'aon waved a negligent hand, and threw his cloak wide to circulate the heavy air.

"It is unimportant. I knew—was sure—they would not win. The competition is the interesting thing." It was somewhat artificially said; the judge creature blinked its huge wise tired eyes in mockery and knowledge. "What did you think, honoured judge, of my entry—as a person, not as an official?" D'aon raised one horny eyebrow in enquiry.

The judge mused and buzzed in gelatinous thought. Finally it uttered, "The sounds were like no others I have ever heard—but that is true of many contestants in this Festival, and I lack no attributes for their appraisal because of this. But it seemed to me that they expressed far more than many more elegant performances. They seemed to me the songs of a race doomed but chosen. The sadness in them is immortal, but hope is there also. All unhappy forgotten things of every creature's history was in them. Briefly, Lord D'aon, I did not like the songs, thought as a connoisseur I appreciated them. They made me feel unhappy, uncomfortable, and almost uncivilized."

D'aon nodded, expressed courteous thanks and went his way. That was how he too felt. One could understand how such sounds disturbed the rest of those around them. The slaves should be kept quiet, at least until they returned to Tren, where *doi-pastilles* ensured a night's rest for everyone.

The slaves were sitting near their own tent over a small fire, when he returned to his quarters. Mietenu was with them, talking quietly to them in their own language.

"And how did the slaves enjoy their public performance, Mietenu?" enquired D'aon, almost affably for him.

"They were indifferent, Lord D'aon," explained Mietenu. "They performed the will of their master, that is all."

"Excellent slaves!" beamed D'aon. "Of what were you talking to them just now? You may convey to them my approval of their songs, and tell them that from now on they sing no more in the evenings, when others sleep. In this way, they will perform the will of their master even better."

Mietenu spoke quietly to the old man who was the

eldest and most deferred-to among the slaves. He answered apathetically, wagging his long beard, shrugging his broad browned shoulders.

"Do they resent this, Mietenu?" enquired D'aon, frowning.

"Your Lordship, they resent nothing. They say their god is angry with them. He sends them slavery as a reward for their wickedness. They must serve even—" Mietenu hesitated— "even devils and monsters, since he has sent it upon them."

"Devils and monsters!" D'aon, angry for a moment, finally laughed.

"Yes, I suppose we must seem so to them. Theirs was a very backward planet, was it not? They had no contact with other races. Do they speak of it at all? What did they call it?"

"They had no name for it, your Lordship. They knew only their own small place on it, part desert and part flourishing garden ground." Mietenu spoke to the old man again, translating slowly to D'aon, as the thick fluttering syllables of the strange tongue rolled out. "Only a small part of their own race remained where the trader landed. They had gone on before. They were hastening to regain the beautiful part from which they had travelled with hardship many cycles of their sun before." There was longing in the old man's face, and in the gestures of his sturdy knotted hands. "There were ten divisions of their people which were made your slaves, and two which remained on their own world. He says he expects they are slaves again, or outcasts and wanderers, despised and condemned, by now. He says this has always been their lot. For many cycles they were slaves, and then they were freed by a great chief. They had kings and civilizations and wealth and history, but they grew weak and lazy and were enslaved again. Then they were freed again, and when the trader captured them, they were hoping for great things and the restoration of their ancient home."

D'aon shrugged. As convention demanded on Tren, he was an active and evangelizing atheist. "And they lay

all this at the door of a non-existent deity! Poor creatures!" He turned to go. "And tell them there must be no more of that singing now," he added irritably, as the chant rose again mournfully from the slaves gathered round their little fire of dead wood in a strange land.

"By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down,  
Yea, we wept when we remembered Zion.  
For there they that carried us away captive  
Required of us a song."

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PAUL JENTS

## HI, SANCHO!

---

THE EARTH WAS soft but it was sixteen feet from the top of the wall. Tip Peters fell awkwardly. It was dark when he came to—he could have been lying there for hours.

He had to get away from that place of danger. Fast. Tip blinked, spat the taste of sleep from his mouth, and darted off into the undergrowth.

Before he had gone a mile through the pathless scrubland he was gasping, out of condition from his sedentary life. He fought back at the brambles as they tore at his face.

When he fell he gulped the night air in shuddering draughts, listening, listening for the sound of an alarm behind him. But the heaths were silent.

After three miles he came to a road, a red slash across the face of the land.

Red—that meant South. And he needed to go North, over to the blue lanes. The road was deserted.

Cautiously Tip parted the wires of the stand-off fence—but he was still shaking and his touch was clumsy. The giant hand of the d.c. current tossed him back into the scrub.

He forced himself to wait before he tried again. Then the sweat grew cold on his back and his breathing eased. He wriggled through, standing on the glass-smooth surface of the highway.

Halfway across he heard the dynajet coming, the siren of its radar alarm blaring. It was too late to scramble back—he crouched low as the car whipped past. The driver peered out at him, jerked awake. Then only the whirlwind dust of the exhaust trail was left.

When he had stopped choking the jet was out of sight. He hurried across the highway. If the driver had seen him there would be a check-crew along within an hour.

Tip passed carefully through the other fence and broke into a shambling run across another half-mile of scrub. Then he came to the North-bound highway, glowing blue in its own luminescence, silent.

Nearby was a stunted tree. That would do. He began tearing at the dead wood, using a bough as a primitive crow-bar to lever off larger pieces.

He worked desperately, his sweat running hot now and his breath steaming. Soon he had a mass of wood scattered round about him.

Panting he piled the wood onto the roadway, using his crow-bar to batter down the hand-off fence. He knew the tell-tales would be flickering now, down at Control, but soon he would be clear. If he was lucky. If not—but it was better not to think of that.

Three times private cars planed past him, alarms shrieking at the heaped obstruction. Tip shivered as he lay watching in the undergrowth. If a transport didn't show soon it would be too late. Working parties would be coming to clear the road, or—

Then he heard the deeper booming of the transport's horn in the distance.

He darted out onto the highway, straining at the wood, waving the train down.

When it slowed he walked up to the driver's cab.

“Going through to Dison, chum?”

The man looked down at him, unsmiling as he nodded. Tip could feel his suspicion—he dared not ask for a lift outright.

“Borrow your phone, may I?”

The driver passed him the receiver, watching alertly. Tip dialled at random, any number. He moved away from the train a few paces, cupping the ear-piece so that the ‘unobtainable’ tone was stifled. Then he spoke clearly into the mouthpiece:

“Dison Control? 738 here. That highway blockage—yeah. I'm there now—too big for me. Damage to the

surface underneath. Yeah, I guess so. Oh, sure. Clear it myself, eh? What do I do in my spare time—make jets?”

He rolled his eyes, grinning across at the driver. This time the man smiled.

“Yes, but I can’t.” Tip turned back to the phone again. “My mate dropped me off here and went off South. I should come back to the depot? Sure, I’m speaking from a transport. Well—maybe he will. Hang on.”

He covered the mouthpiece.

“Give me a lift to the depot, will you, chum? Dison?” He felt himself trembling. Was it going to—

The man nodded.

“Yes, he says o.k., Control. See you in about half an hour. ‘Bye.”

“Thanks, mate.” The driver clipped back the phone, shifting over in his cabin. “Up you come, then.”

As the train gathered speed, sighing, Tip found himself desperately tired. It was warm in the cabin, for the first time in hours he felt it seep into his bones.

The driver, glad of company, tried to talk, but even the small change of conversation was dangerous. Tip had been out of touch too long.

And anyway he was tired, tired. . . .

“Dison.” Brusquely he was elbowed awake. “This is the centre. I turn off here.”

“This will do me. I can walk the rest.” The dawn air hit his face like a cup of icy water. “Thanks.”

“Think nothing of it.” The driver scowled. “Pleasure to help a great little talker like you!”

The door slammed. The train whispered on its way into the mist.

The long roads out of town to the apartment were mostly deserted but always dangerous. Twice he dived for cover as the patrol cars passed him, screens aglow.

The second car stopped. Peering from behind a tree he saw the scanners swivel to face him. The pointed snouts of the antennae quivered like hounds as they scented after him.

One of the guards climbed out. “Ah, hell, it’s raining.”



He stamped his feet, peered around. "A tramp—oh, be damned. . . ."

Tip crouched lower.

"Be damned. . . ." Shivering the man climbed back into the car. Tip waited long minutes until it had idled out of sight.

Miles later he saw the building towering through the trees. He knew it was dangerous to use the lifts. The fire escapes would be safer, but he couldn't face the climb up to the fortieth floor.

As he scurried across the lit hallway his figure stood out like a blot on the tele-screens. But he was past caring whether anyone was awake enough to look.

The ting of the lift-bell only just roused him as the gates opened.

The anonymous doors were closed eyes as he passed dreamlike down the corridors. Then hers. 3078. The '7' was still crooked. He had always promised her he would fix it. Never had.

The chimes rang. And again, as he thumbed the bell-push.

Oh God, he thought. Let her not be out. Let her answer. Let—

"What the *hell*?" the speaker muttered sleepily at his ear.

"Linda—Linda. Oh, Linda, darling." His throat choked and he tasted salt tears.

"Who is it? For—for goodness. . . ." The voice yawned hugely.

"It's me—Tip Peters. It's Tip, Linda. Oh, for God's sake—open up."

"Tip?" She was still drenched in sleep. Then, quickly, "Tip?" Wakeful.

"Come on, come on! Hurry, can't you?" He was beating at the door when suddenly it opened. He stumbled into the familiar room.

"Tip—they let you out? They—"

There she was, flushed and rosy with sleep in her little girl's night-dress. The same as ever.

Then she was in his arms and he felt the warm glow of her. And nothing had changed.

Afterwards, full-bellied for the first time in days, he sprawled on the couch, words dripping lazily. How could he tell her of his guarded, removed life? Each time he looked up he saw her eyes upon him, fixed in their meaningful regard. He knew that not one word was getting through to her.

Inconsequentially she interrupted him in mid-sentence.

"How long was it, Tip? That you were—in there? Six months, was it?"

"Seven months, eight days, fourteen hours. I could tell you the minutes if you—"

"And in all that time—no women?" Her eyes widened. "Like a—a monk?"

"A monk?" His bitter lips twisted. "Monastic—yes, that's just about the word, Linda."

Feline she crouched at his feet. He caught the sweet smell of her, the softness of her bare arm as she reached for the light.

"Seven months. You poor, poor boy."

"Linda. . . . Linda. . . ."

In the morning he tried again to tell her. Something. What it meant, out there, why it was worth it. He had a desperate need to communicate.

But she sat almost silent amid the scuffed litter of food containers, sipping her caffeine. He remembered those moods of morose introspection. Suddenly she looked up.

"You can't stay here, Tip. I can't—you'll have to go."

"Go?" After her protestations of the night the word seemed meaningless. "But there's nowhere to—"

"It's no good, Tip. I'm in deep enough already. Oh sure, I'd like to, but— Anyway, they'd look for you here. They knew about—about us."

"We could go away together, couldn't we? Like you said. We—"

"It wouldn't work. No. You *must* go—you must." She flamed into futile anger. "Damn you—why do you have to drag me into your mess?"

"All right." Heavily he rose. "If that's the way you feel about it."

"Darling, you must see. I don't want to send you away. But it's too dangerous—for you as well. I love you, though, Tip. Really, really I love you!"

Now she held him back, her lips sticky and cloying. With an abstract repulsion he noted her bitten fingernails.

"No." He pushed her away. "No."

"The last time, Tip—just for the very last time. To show you forgive me. To—"

"I'm getting out of here." He scabbled for his shoes.

"Tip—Tip—don't leave me. Listen—I'll tell you where you can get help. I know someone—somewhere where you could stay. Don't go—don't. Not yet. I want—don't leave me like this. Tip. Don't. . . ."

He left her, washed and clean in the anonymous cheap clothes she had bought for him. Never had he felt so dirty. He fingered the scrap of paper in his pocket, with the address. Even that had been bought and paid for. How low could you get?

Was even his life worth it? Probably not. Liberty? Not his own—just—liberty? Yes. Yes.

Tip Peters felt naked as he walked into the strange daylight. He chose the busiest streets, not daring to risk the monos without a pass.

It was a long trek to the address, the other side of town. An eating house. For those who must be very hungry.

"Pinder," he told the gorilla behind the bar. "I want to see Mr. Pinder."

"Never heard of him." The gaze was blank.

"Tell him Linda sent me. He'll know."

"Pillar?" There was an insolent grin now. "There's no Mr. Pillar here."

Fury seized him. "Pinder. I said Pinder." There was a knife on the counter, freshly ground. It was at the gross neck. "You'll tell him. Please."

The man's eyes wandered from the steady blade to Tip's face. "I'll see. Who wants him, then?"

Tip was silent, the knife still thrusting. The hunk of man disappeared behind a door. Then he returned, motioning with his thumb.

"Downstairs. And leave *that*." He held out his hand for the knife. Then he jerked it away as the blade slashed downwards.

Tip was grinning now. Eyes and knife pointed at the malevolent face as he slowly descended the stairs. It was quite dark.

Halfway down, the bulk of shadow at the head of the stairs began to follow him. As he whirled round to face it, an arm took him round the throat from below. At the same time he felt a numbing blow on his wrist. The knife clattered as it fell.

"I'm Pinder." The voice in his ear was a husky whisper. "And just who might you be?"

"Tip—Tip Peters," he wheezed to the invisible face behind him. "Linda said that—"

"Peters? From Africa? Man, I've heard of you, all right, all right."

The lights came on, the cellar door slammed. As the pressure on his throat relaxed he blinked up at Mr. Pinder.

The man was black and enormous. The blunt face thrust forward, searching his own. Pinder grunted.

"Yeah, you look like Peters, sure. I heard you was picked up, soon as you left. And you got away from them, boy?"

"Yesterday." Tip nodded. Was it really only yesterday?

"Oh, man, I heard what you did out there, with them childer. Great, yes sir, great that was, what you done there. So now you're on the run from them? That so?"

Tip nodded, looking round the cellar. It was filthy, piled with packing-cases, soiled with a litter of used food containers, tins. It stank.

"Why, sit down, then. Make yourself at home, boy. Stay 'long as you want."

The negro hunched his great body on to a box which did duty as a chair.

"Linda—she sent you, you say?"

"I left her this morning."

"She sure is some kid, that Linda. Wow!" Pinder rolled his eyes extravagantly, grinning. "What a girl, eh? That Linda!"

"She's o.k." Tip answered, unsmiling.

"O.k.? That's just what she is!" He guffawed, slapping his thighs. "She—" Suddenly the great mouth set like a trap, snapping the laughter shut. "She don't like *them*. No sir. They've been after her too, man. And me. And you. I bet they done things to you there—where you've been. Eh?"

"They tried." Tip's eyes were cold.

"They'll kill you, boy—you know that? Me too." Pinder grinned, spat. "Less I get them first. And I will!" He laughed enormously again as he walked past to the foot of the stairs.

"Two beers!" he yelled. "You want eat?"

Tip shook his head, but gulped the beer when the gorilla brought it. The negro up-ended his can, tossed it into a corner. Then he looked across again.

"You love them, there, where you come from? You love them, eh, man?"

Tip looked at him steadily.

"You see what they done in Africa, like me? Them childer? And the old folks? You think they should live, after that? Them? You feel about them like me, do you?"

"Sure." Tip shrugged as he looked into the enormous, glowing eyes. "So what? There's nothing we can do. Nothing—"

"Man, you're so wrong!" The great teeth gleamed like gravestones in the night. "Always a man can do something—two men twice as much. Here—I show you something."

Tip followed as Pinder led him to the back of the cellar. He watched as the negro drew forward a small box, raising the lid with extreme care.

"See that then? What you see?"

Tip's throat ran dry as he peered. He knew what *that*

was. He had seen it in Africa, in the early days. When there was money to buy it.

But this stuff was corroded, the wrappers peeling, eaten with age. God knew what chemical changes were taking place in that box.

"Do you know what you've got there?" His flesh crawled. "It could go up any minute, that lot. It could blow the town—"

"Yes, man." The smile was childlike. "And we use it. You and me."

"You can't use that stuff. You're crazy—"

"You not say that." The black body towered over him, a great fist clubbed. "And we use it. We do."

"All right." Slowly Tip backed away. "It's your stuff. Tell me about it, then."

"I tell you—but you not say—" The fist unclenched. "Now—this is what we do. . . ."

Tip listened, appalled. The procession, the crowds, the great man himself. And then the two figures, running towards the platform. Shot down? No matter. The explosion would blot out everything for hundreds of yards.

"You and me, man. Not dopey, upstairs." He thumbed. "We each carry thirty, say forty pound of this stuff. And still run. If we get to the platform—good. If not—good just the same."

"But, we should die. We—"

"Sure. But is this life so worth to live, man?" The black eyes glinted.

"Pinder—there will be children there, in the crowd. People. People who've done nothing—"

"So?" The negro spat. "These people—they kill you, give them the chance? The children—hunt you down, when they grow up. So they not grow up—too bad! Quits for Africa."

Tip looked at him. He was quite serious. And mad. He edged towards the staircase.

"Oh no." The smile came again, amused. "Ain't no way out. Not now."

With almost ludicrous lightness the massive body glided to block his way.

"Listen, Pinder. You know about explosives—do you? Well, I do. I've used them. What you've got—it's no good. Not without the detonators. It won't work without them."

"This stuff's good." The smile faded. "This stuff'll work."

"Not without detonators. I could get them for you, mind. Plenty. Give me an hour—"

"No." The arm barred his path. "I not believe you. This stuff, it go up. But good!"

"You're wrong, Pinder." His thoughts hunted. "I tell you—"

"All right—I call you, man." Slowly he turned back to the box, hand ready to grab. "You say that—you prove it."

Tip looked down at the old and greasy death. There were no detonators, but after all this time—

So what? he thought suddenly. What if it does go off? Is this life so worth to live?

"Sure I'll show you." Almost casually he picked up a stick. Pinder backed away. "There's nothing to be scared of—look."

It was so light in his hand. He willed himself not even to close his eyes as he threw the stick to the floor. To toss it without care, not to sweat, not to—

His brain shouted at the fall of it. It rolled a little. Stayed.

"You see?" He picked it up, bent over the box again and stuffed another half-dozen sticks into his pocket.

"They're all the same—no good without detonators. Now, let me get them."

"No tricks, mind. You be back." Pinder let him by, still keeping his distance.

"Half an hour. Maybe an hour."

Tip forced himself to walk slowly up the stairs, passing the gorilla without a glance. Hours it seemed as he walked down the road, the explosive light in his pocket, heavy on his mind. At last he was out of sight.

He glanced round. No-one. There was dry earth off the roadway, by the advertisement screen. Quickly he scab-

bled a shallow grave, shrouding the sticks with his handkerchief, burying them.

There was a house down the road. He ran to it, hammering on the door. Steps came hurrying.

"Your transmitter," he gabbled to the startled woman. "Quickly. Security. I've got to get the security section. Quickly . . ."

". . . showed a sense of civic responsibility, Peters," the quiet voice of authority continued. "And that deserves a chance."

Tip looked at the security man, across the desk. He was too glossy, too *fat*.

"If you think I did it for the sake of your precious civic responsibility, you're as mad as Pinder," he said.

"Tell me, then—why did you inform on him? You were bound to be picked up yourself. Why not just—walk away. Forget about the explosive?"

"For reasons you wouldn't begin to understand." Always official condescension made him bristle. "The lives of children, for one thing."

"My dear fellow, of course I understand." The smile was smugly paternal. "Our children are the most important—"

"If they come from the right litters. If they belong to the club. Not otherwise."

"I can assure you—"

"Ah, save your breath. What about Africa?"

"Africa." The controller opened a file on his desk. "Now we come to it, don't we? I've seen your case-history. You had an unfortunate experience there."

"Unfortunate, you call it? It made me ashamed to be human!" Tip swallowed—that sounded like a stage speech. Even if it was true.

"Oh, come now." The hint of a smile around the man's lips was infuriating. "It's not as bad as that. The extermination centres—they're a shock, I grant you. When you aren't used to them."

"And you—you're used to them? Oh, sure."

"They're unfortunate necessities, Peters. We don't like



them, any more than you do. But at least they're humane, wherever they are."

"Such as where I was? Have you lived there yourself, then? Like me? Seen the people taken to them? Like me? Or are you just—used to it?"

"Look, if you get confused emotionally, you'll never understand," the controller said patiently. Too damned patiently. "If you look at it logically, it's quite inevitable. Natural, too. Nature practises the survival of the fittest, the selective improvement of the species. What we do is only an extension of that."

Tip closed his ears. Here it came, the reasoned arguments, the killing lies.

"Right. Now, imagine you were faced with the problems of this century, that you're back in the year 2,000. The world is grossly over-populated. No wars to dispose of the surplus population. Diseases of childhood overcome, hence a steadily ageing race. No benign plagues to even things out. And the world population doubling itself every forty years."

"Oh, you've swallowed the book," Tip sneered. "But—"

"If we'd let that continue, do you know how much room you'd have to stand on now, this moment? Three square feet, Peters. Just as much space as everyone else on this world. Not even enough to give you a cosy little grave. And that includes all the deserts and all the mountains."

"Murder is murder, whichever way you look at it. And why should the favoured few—"

"Don't be so damned silly!" For the first time the controller's patience broke. "You know that's only half the problem, anyway. What about the old people, the invalids, the mentally handicapped, the neurotics? They were your favoured few—all carefully preserved by the so-called welfare state. The fit and young had to face such hazards as were going—not the weaklings. What would *you* do, then, Peters? When they began to elbow you for space? When you couldn't feed them? When the favoured few became the great majority?"

"Share and share alike—even though there isn't much.

The old—they've worked, haven't they? They're entitled—"

"It was a straight choice between controlling or starving—you know that as well as I do." The voice was carefully reasonable. Anyway—what about the protected ones, the deviates, the not-quite-normals? Breeding. Passing down the inheritance. And as the genes pass the taints through, so surely the race deteriorates. Solve me that little problem, will you?"

Tip's mouth was working as he looked at the man. The controller was mad—quite mad. They all were. All power corrupts. Absolute power corrupts absolutely.

"And you think—you really think—that gives you the right to play God? The power of life and death?"

There was a long pause. Outside in the gardens a bird was singing. The controller listened to it abstractedly as he thought. An emotional argument must be countered emotionally.

"To play God?" he said at last. "Yes, if God is inept. Power of life and death? That too. So, we put the psychopaths down. Compassionately. We breed selectively, improving the race. We impose our disciplines and obey our own ten commandments. We kill, yes, as a necessity, not as punishment. As a sacrifice, if you like, so that others may live. Your Linda, for instance—"

"Linda?" The name shouted in his brain. "What about Linda?"

"What was she then, Peters? A deviate too. She—"

"No. No."

"Be honest. A nymphomaniac—she could breed. Corrupt. It was necessary."

"Necessary?" Tip looked up into the face of evil.

"Not a punishment. It was kinder than nature. She didn't even know. But Peters—she wasn't fit. Not to reproduce her kind."

"Linda." It was as if a voice had knifed through the tangle in his brain. All was clear—he knew what he had to do. He saw the end.

"Linda." Suddenly he slumped forward over the desk.

"Peters!" The controller shook him, but his body was flaccid. As he hoped the man hurried from the room.

Instantly Tip sprang for the window. He was racing down the path to the jangle of cars in the drive. As with all government offices they were unguarded.

He slid into the seat of the nearest. He flicked the impeller, feeling a giant's hand in his back as the thrust built up.

Sixty-five seconds later he was scrabbling in dry earth, too desperate to be careful. He stowed the wicked little sticks back into his pocket.

Within three minutes he was speeding along the red highway. Back. That was the last place they would look.

After twenty minutes he ditched the car. The road was deserted behind him as he took to the woods. It was a long walk back.

He arrived at the wall just before dawn. It was easy to break in—no-one expected reverse traffic. All he had to do was to swing across to the top of the wall from the bough of a tree.

Tenderly he drew up a white bundle after him—his shirt wrapped round the explosive. With exquisite care he lowered it on the end of its string to the other side.

He half-scrambled, half-dropped over. The night stillness was just aware of the dawn.

Tip tucked himself into the bushes, near the route of the working parties. He waited, shivering and dozing in snatches. Gradually the buildings awoke. The clink of locks, the bars, doors slamming, water flushing—he knew the sounds by heart.

Then came the parties by wards and numbers, rounding the corner. His would be next. Yes, there they were. Einstein, the Smiler, the Sex-King—a few faces missing. Most of them still there. And Don Quixote—especially him.

All chained.

The usual warder behind. The swine. With his bloody buttons still a-gleam.

All Tip's hatred was in the blow. The stone crashed down onto the warder's head. He fell without a scream.

Then the quick rifling of keys. He loosed their chains as they stood around, laughing and restless.

Only Don Quixote knew what was really happening.

"Hi, Sancho!" The smile was cherubic. "Hi, Sancho, kid." He turned to the others. "I told you Sancho would be back." His voice became pompous. "He has freed you by my command. I—"

A siren moaned.

"Take this, Don. You, Einstein, and you." Tip passed out the sticks of explosive. "Don't—don't drop them. Not until the warders come."

The hands jostled.

"We are in our battles set." Don Quixote's voice was stronger now, dominating. "My army shall go forth against the castles of despair. We shall free the slaves. The forces of the oppressor shall be mightily put down." He raised his hand. "God is with me!"

Tip looked round. Their burning eyes were fixed now upon Don Quixote. They would follow him, though he led them to hell.

It would work out as he had seen. It was ordained.

"Throw when the warders come," he said again. "When I give the word. When—"

"No, Sancho, when *I* say. Am I not the leader?" Don Quixote glared at Tip. Abruptly he crumbled. "Let *me* say, Sancho. Sancho, boy. Let it be me."

He pouted, tears standing in his eyes.

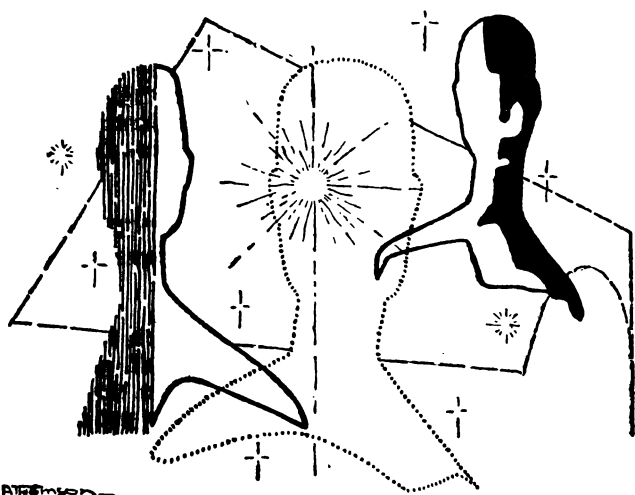
"All right, Don. You give the word. I'll tell you when."

"Thanks, Sancho. You're a good kid, Sancho, boy. Hi, Sancho! Sancho. . . ."

His quick, pointed tongue flickered about his lips.

But Tip, crouched in a corner of the asylum, was not listening any more. His right hand was clenched.

He was waiting for the first of the warders.



PHILIP E. HIGH

## TEMPORARY RESIDENT

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RONALD SAVARAN LOOKED at the car ahead of him wondering what there was about it which made him feel uneasy.

It was a green car—nothing unusual about that—there were millions like it all over the Empire. He knew the price, the luxury extras, the maximum speed—allowing for local gravities—and, because he was an enthusiast, the probable re-sale value in at least a dozen markets. What was there about the particular model in front of him which gave him an uneasy feeling of foreboding?

He frowned. Nothing probably, nothing whatever, the entire feeling was probably due to nerves, the after effects of shock, due to some damned idiot, ignoring every traffic law ever conceived, who had shot out of a side turning and nearly rammed him. God alone knew how

he had avoided a collision, his reflexes must have been incredibly sharp at the time.

Come to think of it, why hadn't Control stopped the car automatically until the road was clear? Speriol might be a Rim world but her traffic control was highly efficient. It had to be, on a world where climatic conditions made flying impracticable, the government paid great attention to road safety.

There were other factors also. Speriol was still in the process of consolidation and the eight lane highways were something more than a means of travel. They were life-lines, arteries of commerce without which the economy would collapse and the population soon perish.

Occupation of the planet rested upon thirty huge cities whose only means of distribution and supply were its broad dead-straight highways.

Savaran clicked his tongue audibly with irritation. The near accident could never have happened unless—and it was an unpleasant thought—the car which had nearly rammed him had been deliberately 'rigged' for precisely that purpose. Worse, at the back of his mind was the uncomfortable suspicion that he knew the driver. He had caught only a brief glimpse but there had been something about the flattish sallow face—*Good God! Maslin!*

No, it couldn't be, could it? Maslin was a strong-arm in the Speriol Intelligence Service.

Why? If his conclusion were correct, what purpose was there in it? He, Savaran, had done nothing, as far as he knew, to offend the Speriol government or its highly aggressive Intelligence Service. He was merely an official attached to the staff of the Terran Embassy and surely not big enough to warrant liquidation. He carried no papers, was engaged in no espionage and had done nothing whatever to be written off in such a politically dangerous manner.

Savaran scowled at the car ahead. Information? Certainly he was in possession of information which the Rim-Alliance would sell their souls to obtain but killing him was hardly the answer. Even if they picked him up and put him through the mill there was no power, no

technique, and they must know it, which could extract relevant information from a psycho-graphed brain. What the hell then, if his observation had been correct, were these Speriol idiots up to?

"Twister warning," said a soft voice from within the car. "Repeat, twister warning—clamp down."

Savaran did nothing, there was no need, the automatics would take care of everything. As he had recently observed, the Speriol traffic system had highly efficient safety devices.

The wheel-less vehicle slowed, stopped and sank down to the surface of the road where the magno-clamps would hold it against almost any pressure.

He heard the soft whine of the repeller unit building a defensive curtain round the car and then darkness dropped like a black curtain to be split almost instantly by a vivid flash of green lightning.

In the subsequent, equally brilliant and almost continuous flashes which followed Savaran saw the twister come spinning over the low hills to his right like a black genie.

Hailstones as big as a man's fist bounced off the surface of the road and then everything was lost in swirling blackness as the twister engulfed everything.

He had a confused impression of rocks, small trees and debris racing madly past the screen and then the twister was gone leaving only rain and the tennis-ball bouncing of gigantic hail.

These, in turn, slowly lessened, light began to creep back, pale and watery.

Savaran watched the highway clear itself, undulating, jerking like the skin of an animal troubled by an annoying insect. The sludge, the rocks, the branches, the shattered trunks of trees were quickly nudged to the side of the highway and tossed to the soil beyond.

"Twister all clear—proceed, proceed."

The car rose to its normal twelve inches above the surface of the road and the repeller field faded and disappeared. As Savaran had observed twice before, the Speriol traffic control was highly efficient.

He touched the 'thrust' button and the car raced forward but was almost instantly slowed.

"Caution," said the voice. "Vehicle ahead on tow."

Savaran pressed 'Pass' and his car pulled out and accelerated.

On tow, eh? He nodded to himself; perhaps that was what had been troubling him. Now that he was drawing closer he could see that it was warped out of shape—must have been involved in an accident. If so the Sperial traffic division must be tearing out its hair; it was the first accident their system had suffered in nineteen years.

He looked at the damaged car again, automatically noting the registration 9/M/4 (C.D.T.). 9—

Savaran felt something cold build up in his stomach and spread slowly through his veins. 9/M/4 (C.D.T.) was the number of *his* car, the car he was driving now. There couldn't be two identical cars with the *same number*. In any case, no local driver would be carrying embassy identity letters, C.D.T.—Corps Diplomatic/Terra.

Numbly, the muscles of his face feeling curiously brittle, Savaran watched as his speeding vehicle brought him level.

The damaged car—his car—was being carried by a small black auto-ambulance which was broadcasting a continuous 'on-tow' warning.

He stared at the wreck feeling slightly sick. The side was stoved in, a window was gone and the driving seat was a twisted wreck. The vehicle looked—God, it looked as if it had been *rammed in the side*.

Savaran felt sweat on his forehead and let it stay there, somehow its presence assured him of reality. He was *alive*, corpses didn't sweat, did they?

Numbly he punched his destination on the road panel and let the automat take over. He was in no fit state for the manual control of a road vehicle.

The wrecked vehicle *was* his car, no doubt about that. It had the Terran star on the roof, the little kangaroo mascot on the dash, even the official disc in the left hand corner of the screen.

Yet *this* car, the car he was driving, had the Terran



star, a little kangaroo mascot—Oh God, what the hell was *happening*?

The car carried him past—past a wrecked vehicle wholly identical to his own and he was conscious of a numb panic. Joke? What point was there in a weird joke like this?

He resisted a temptation to pinch himself but nonetheless blinked his eyes, stretched his legs and defiantly lit a cigarette. No doubt there was an explanation, a logical explanation; the trouble was he couldn't think of one.

He realised he had reached Mesdarin, the capital city and tried to relax as the automat guided the car deftly to the Terran Embassy.

The building looked the same and the doorman touched his cap respectfully as he approached the door.

"Good evening, Mr. Savaran."

"Good evening." He paused. "New, aren't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Yet you knew me."

"Recognition symbols, sir."

Savaran said: "Of course," and scowled at him.

Inside the staff also seemed new but everyone addressed him by name.

Feeling bewildered he asked to see the ambassador. An obvious but unfamiliar attaché appeared instead. The attaché regretted that owing to— The long and involved explanation left Savaran unable to decide if the Ambassador had been called away or was seeing no one. Defeated and dispirited he went slowly to his room.

Everything seemed the same, his personal belongings, books and half finished papers in the familiar places and yet—

Savaran found himself afflicted with an overwhelming weariness; slowly he undressed and almost fell into bed. Things would sort themselves out, things would be better in the morning, much better—

In the morning, however, things were not better.

He awoke to find a tall dark man sitting patiently by the bed as if he had been waiting the entire night.

"Who the devil are you?"

"A doctor—Doctor Kane."

"You're not the Embassy Doctor."

"Did I say I was?"

"Don't evade the issue—where's Doctor Phillips?"

"No longer available."

Savaran sat upright, suddenly angry. "Like the Ambassador, like the staff, what the hell is going on?"

"Don't rush your fences, Savaran, everything can be explained—in time."

"Skip the time and concentrate on the explanation. Oh, and yes, save yourself the delicious line in double-talk favoured by the attaché, I'm short tempered this morning."

Doctor Kane shrugged slightly. "Very well, but I must warn you, you will not believe it—shall we start with the Ambassador? You cannot see the Ambassador because the Ambassador is no longer here. The same applies to the staff who are no longer adjacent to your original cycle of life. In short, you have undergone a transition. This looks like the Terran Embassy and is, in truth, its exact duplicate but it is not the Terran Embassy."

"You're mad!"

"I said you would not believe it." Kane was infuriatingly patient.

Savaran lowered himself slowly back on the pillow, his mind a whirlpool of doubt, aggression and sheer terror. It could be an elaborate and sadistic hoax but it didn't sound like a hoax nor did Kane look as if he were putting over some secret jest. The only way to find out apparently was to ride with it until it made sense.

"Suppose I go along with you—what do you mean by transition?"

"You could call it a change of state if it helps."

Savaran sat bolt upright again. "Are you trying to tell me I'm dead?"

"Do you feel dead?"

"You know damn well I don't."

"Then you have answered the question yourself. On

the other hand you could have passed through the state referred to as death."

"What do you mean 'could have'—don't you *know*?"

"Not yet, I need official confirmation."

Savaran fought down a temptation to spring at him.

"Look, must you be so damned evasive—am I 'dead' in the accepted sense?"

"Frankly, Mr Savaran, I don't know but the facts are these, you were involved in an accident, you arrived *here*. I can only conclude that transition has taken place but until I receive official confirmation I cannot commit myself, you may be a temporary resident."

"Temporary resident!"

"Your accident may have been severe enough to affect a temporary transition although, in your original life cycle, medical science may still be labouring to restore you to normality. As you see, my position is difficult."

Savaran found himself shivering. "Suppose—suppose you receive confirmation, what then?"

"Then I am here to advise you as to your new state of existence."

"It still doesn't make sense—I feel solid."

"You must know, atomically, there are no solids. Transition has merely adapted your atomic structure and with it, your senses, to a new plane of existence."

"But the Embassy, the car—" Savaran's voice trailed away.

"Physical laws are different here; your mental convictions effect the substance about you. *You* are creating the Embassy; when you begin to understand the truth its substance will fade. Quite often, I may add here, new arrivals who were engaged in some important project *continue in that same project for a long period of time.*"

He rose and bowed stiffly. "Experience has taught me that you do not believe me. You are prepared to consider, to reason, to investigate but to believe, no."

Savaran avoided looking at him. "What happens now?"

"Nothing. You continue as before."

"Then you can produce no evidence."

"I do not have to. In a short time, you will compile your own evidence."

"Again—in the meantime?"

"You have a job; continue in it. Your work, the Embassy and the planet Speriol will continue to exist as long as you believe in them."

"And then?"

Kane smiled remotely. "That depends on you or, more aptly, what you are." He turned slowly and left the room.

After a long time Savaran rose, showered and rubbed some of the weekly growth-inhibitor into his chin. Presumably, even here, beards grew, men worked and bellies became hungry—Good God, he was beginning to *believe it*.

As the hours passed, however, he became reassured. It was the Embassy. Certainly the staff were unfamiliar but staffs were always changing. Again, his notes, his correspondence were exactly the same, even his own casual doodlings on the backs of discarded memos—

As the days passed, however, he began to become apprehensive. It was odd that he could find none of his friends and Maraina—what the hell had happened to Maraina? When he had called, her apartment had been occupied by a stranger.

The familiar bars and eating houses were, like the Embassy, staffed by strangers.

On the fifth day, in his favourite bar, someone called his name from the music lounge. He glanced up and made a hasty exit by a side door. Jassine had an embarrassing habit of being both demonstrative and tearful in public. Their brief affair had been over for five years and there was no point in renewing the acquaintance.

It was only when he was a hundred yards down the road that he realised that Jassine had been killed in a twister two years ago.

Must have been a mistake, a likeness, even a slightly guilty conscience; obviously it couldn't have been Jassine. Nonetheless he became depressed and, even to himself, the explanation lacked conviction.

Two days later he saw Lombard in a private car,

Lombard had been an associate of his father and he had stared until the other became conscious of it.

Lombard frowned and then the heavy florid face beamed in recognition. He waved, the missing finger of his left hand a clear pointer to his identity.

Savaran turned and ran before Lombard pulled out of the slowly moving traffic and came over to speak to him. Lombard had 'moved'—Savaran had refused to entertain the word death for some days—over twenty years ago.

In the next two days there were four rather similar incidents and, once his work was done, Savaran sought refuge in crowded public places. True, similar incidents might occur but even these were preferable to his own company and his own thoughts.

He was drinking coffee in the Terran Club two nights later when a voice said: "Well, well, so this is how you waste your time."

Savaran felt a sudden constriction in his stomach and the cup in his hand shook so much that he had some difficulty in returning it to the saucer. He *knew* that voice, deep, cultured and, as always, faintly disdainful. Matheson's voice, a unique voice, unmistakable, only Matheson was—had been—

Savaran forced himself to calmness, laid both hands flat on the polished surface of the table and looked up.

"I see you recognise me—I was beginning to wonder." Matheson sat down without being invited and smiled coldly. "Take it in, I'm in no hurry."

Savaran saw his own knuckles whiten but forced himself to study the other detachedly. The same strong cleft chin, the same clipped greying moustache beneath the thin nose, the grey cold eyes, even the small white scar near the right ear. It was Matheson without doubt, he knew that face almost as well as his own.

Matheson had been Terran ambassador for six years and, during that period, he had gained considerable standing on Speriol. It was rumoured that he had once been something big in the Terran parliament but had offended certain important people. As a result he had

been 'promoted' to Ambassador and promptly posted to a Rim planet.

"I'm afraid I don't understand." Savaran realised that his voice was hoarse and unnatural.

"I disagree with you." The grey eyes looked at him and through him. "I think you understand very well indeed, your difficulty lies in *admitting* it." He made a vague indefinite gesture which somehow embraced the whole room. "How long are you going to inflict *this* on yourself? Can't you understand it's not real, man, you're creating it but it doesn't exist beyond your own fixations. There is no Terran Club, no Speriol, no Terra, not here, not on this plane of existence."

He looked at the other frowning. "I heard you were here, came along to chat about old times but I see I was premature, you're not ready yet. I thought you had a certain amount of courage, Savaran, and intellectually, I have always rated you as above the average but you disappoint me, man, deeply. You can't run away from the truth forever, you know."

He sighed, made as if to rise, then changed his mind. "Sorry, Savaran, not very polite of me but I've come the hell of a way." He leaned back in the chair and shook his head slowly. "If we're honest, we're all guilty in degree. Candidly I made this journey because there was one thing I had to know, been worrying me ever since—ever since I've been here. Tell me, did the Terran Bloc adopt my defence proposals?"

Savaran nodded quickly, deeply thankful for the turn in the conversation. "With some modifications, yes."

Matheson's brows drew together. "Modifications, what kind of modifications?"

"Well, sir, they adopted the general outline but Strike-Force seven has been re-allocated to the Nubrane System and not, as you proposed, the Adlane Cluster."

Matheson's face darkened angrily. "Madness! Such a move trebles the length of our life lines. What about our bases of supply, our repair and maintenance bases?"

"Re-sited on Gamma and Medina, sir. They're in the Nubrane asteroid belt and—"

"I know all about Gamma and Medina, thank you, Savaran." He stared in front of him his eyes bitter. "They're quite mad, I can see that now; a determined thrust could knock those bases out in three days, obliterate them completely. Know what would happen? Strike Force seven would remain a strike force until it ran out of fuel, after which the Rim-Alliance could hit us when and where it wanted."

He rested his arms tiredly on the table. "You're well out of it, Savaran, well out of it. God, a man devotes his entire life to single ideal, for what? You know how I worked on it, pressure, intrigue, manipulation and they've thrown it all away. Couple of years and these Rim louts will be swaggering all over the Empire as if they owned it—which they will."

He rose tiredly. "Don't know if you know it, Savaran, but I fought for this, sacrificed my entire career. As a matter of fact I was thrown out of the house because I stuck to my guns. I suppose it shouldn't matter, not now, particularly now but it does, it matters a lot. Thank your lucky stars you're out of it; you're young, so young you have very little to look back on with regret."

He nodded briefly and walked slowly and tiredly out of the room.

Mechanically Savaran drunk his stone cold coffee and ordered another. Fear had almost become habitual but acceptance— Somehow in some way there had to be a counter measure, an antidote, something which jerked him back to reality and out of this nightmare of impossibility.

He frowned. Wasn't there some ancient phrase about the hair of the dog which bit you? Suppose he placed himself in a position in which, he knew, he would be in greater terror than now. Madness, of course, it was like a man with a bad tooth hitting his thumb with a hammer in order to forget the pain in his jaw. On the other hand, if all this was nerves, might not the shock—oh to hell with it, he had to do *something*.

Ten minutes later he was entering the wide doors of the Speriol Security Building.

A plain clothes guard stopped him in the vestibule. "Your business, sir, please."

"I wish to speak to Mr Detrick."

"Mr Detrick, sir?" For some reason the guard looked strangely confused and disconcerted. "I don't think—" He cleared his throat and appeared to regain his composure. "You've made a mistake, sir. We have no one of that name here."

Savaran smiled unpleasantly, suddenly confident. "You're a damn liar. You know it and I know it; better tell him I want to see him unless he wants to provoke an incident."

"Really, sir, I can assure you—I will fetch a senior officer who—"

Savaran stared at him. Why had he come? Suddenly it didn't seem to matter; nothing mattered. He felt faint, slightly sick, and the walls of the building seemed to be swirling round him like smoke. The guard receded, came closer, slid sideways and seemed to melt into shapeless blobs of colour.

Far away, it seemed, frightened voices shouted at one another—

"For God's sake, what's going on? I can see *through* him."

"Don't be a damn fool, Merrick, it's a—*God!*—"

"Why did he ask for Detrick?"

"The grim question is, what we tell Detrick—?"

Detrick bowed politely; he was a tall exquisitely dressed man with black, glistening hair and an urbane manner.

"Delighted, my dear Minister, delighted. No, no, not at all inconvenient—do sit down—comfortable?—excellent."

Detrick did not address the Minister by name because he was unable to think of it. The face was vaguely familiar but at the moment he was unable to place it. In any case, he told himself quickly, he concentrated on counter-intelligence not Internal Security. No doubt, Willis, his opposite number had a bulky file on the visitor.

In any case, the man had all the necessary clearance



passes and must have the requisite number of Security discs to get through the radar traps but, nonetheless it was a pity he was unable to recall the *name*.

He bowed again. "You have heard, of course?"

"That you were successful?" The visitor crossed his legs carefully. "I heard. It is one of my reasons for coming."

Detrick wondered what the other reasons were but did not ask. "You would like the details, Minister?"

"I would like to hear them from you, yes."

Detrick thought the answer curious but shrugged it off, Ministers specialised in devious answers as a matter of habit.

"I would like to hear," said the visitor. "The theory and application of this technique."

"Certainly, sir. Well, as you are probably aware a psycho-graphed brain cannot be interrogated by any method known to science. It cannot be broken down by shock treatment, hypno-techniques or any form of physical or mental pain. Any information locked in a psycho-graphed brain stays there, no power in existence can get it out. The subject can however speak freely among associates due to the fact that his mind is not triggered by doubt or suspicion. He will also speak freely once he knows there is no need for further secrecy. Thus if a government makes previously classified information available to the public he can then discuss it without reservations."

The Minister nodded. "And you contrived a situation in which both these factors applied?"

Detrick looked at the Minister with respect; this man was quick. "Precisely, sir. We provided apparent associates and a situation in which the need for secrecy no longer applied."

"Ingenious, tell me about it."

"Well, sir—" Detrick hesitated. "Perhaps at this point I should introduce Dr Krenda, Director of The Sperial Institute of Psychology; he can explain better than I."

Krenda stepped forward with a slight widening of his mouth which was the nearest he ever got to a smile. "It's

very simple, Minister. Brutally and bluntly we convinced our subject that he had been 'killed' in an accident and had passed on to a logical hereafter."

The Minister's eyes widened slightly. "You were actually successful in this—er—charade?"

Krenda's heavy face darkened slightly. "It was a great deal more than a charade, sir. Our agents spent ten years compiling background information on the subject. We built the Terran Embassy on this site in exact and complete detail. We even went so far as to forge his own doodles on discarded memos. In point of fact with cleverly contrived sets boosted by projecto and reflection cameras we came very near to creating the entire city of Mesdarin."

He paused and drew a deep breath. "The finest actors in the Rim-Alliance were conscripted to play the parts of our subject's 'dead' associates. No, sir, I take exception to the word charade."

"I'm sorry but you must admit it was a natural conclusion." The Minister leaned forward. "I understand the information was obtained easily."

Detrick smiled. "On a silver platter, sir. Savaran, our subject, believed he was talking to the deceased ambassador, Lloyd Matheson. In the conversation he blithely revealed the position of Strike Force Seven together with its vital supply bases."

The Minister nodded. "Commendable, very commendable. I understand, however, that you had some set-backs in the early stages of this project?"

Detrick shifted uncomfortably. "Well, sir, yes. Maslin, one of our agents who was to 'rig' the accident which was to result in Savaran's 'death' was too convincing. Instead of a near-miss there was a violent collision in which, unfortunately, both men were injured."

"You suffered from sabotage, too, I understand."

Detrick frowned. "It was a little grimmer than that, sir, an entire building was completely destroyed. We had to rebuild in a devil of a hurry and it put our plans back six months."

The Minister nodded indifferently. "I would like to

see progress reports on the project, not in detail, of course, merely the instructional details to the participants."

"That would be C section, sir. Let's see now—ah, yes—here we are." He handed the Minister a thick file. "Rather a lot of reading I'm afraid sir."

"I wish only to glance through it. There are certain aspects of this project with which I wish to familiarise myself—excuse me."

Detrick bowed politely but inwardly he was scowling. The Minister was like all ministers, wholly indifferent to the hazards run by the Services. The whole project together with three quarters of its key personnel had very nearly been blown to pieces by a damn saboteur and all this blasted man had done was nod indifferently.

Strangely Detrick felt no resentment against the saboteur; if he felt anything it was a grudging mental tribute to his ingenuity. These things happened; it was part of the cold war, his own agents were engaged on similar missions. People built highly secret centres for a variety of purposes, training, research into new methods of warfare and so on. Such centres were considered legitimate targets for the saboteur, and some highly ingenious methods were employed either for destroying or holding up their purpose for a long period of time. Everyone knew that war was coming, and crippling these projects might well spell the difference between defeat and victory.

Their own set-back had resulted from a particularly ingenious method. The saboteur, no doubt a Terran, had gained access to the prefabricated building sections *before their delivery to the site* and simply attached micro-bombs to the key support frames.

After that, all he had to do was to lounge innocently in his hotel suite until Terran Intelligence advised him that the project was complete and the buildings occupied. He would then press the radio-trigger in his pocket and—

Detrick shivered slightly. It was incredible that a micro-bomb, invisible to the naked eye, could do so much damage. Four storeys of the building had been blown to fragments and the rest had collapsed like a house of cards.

God alone knew how they had got out of it alive, so many of them, it was a miracle, a miracle—

The Minister made a slight movement which disturbed his train of thought and he saw the man was frowning at Krenda. "This whole project was your idea, Doctor?"

"Well, yes, I was instrumental in—"

"You are perhaps claiming it as an original idea?"

"I wouldn't go so far as to say that, sir."

"I am glad of your assurance; the entire project is based on Anton Darbeg's 'Methods of Countering The Psycho-Graphed Intelligence.' Darbeg's findings are, I understand, still classified as Top Secret."

"That is perfectly true, sir."

"I am particularly glad to hear it as no credit is given to Darbeg. You hope to reap what another has sown—yes?"

"No, sir." Krenda was flushed and angry.

"No matter." The Minister brushed the anger aside contemptuously. "Darbeg is dead." He changed the subject abruptly and turned over a page. "I must confess I am impressed by the authenticity of some of this work. For example, and I am quoting the lines of one of your actors posing as a Dr Kane, '*new arrivals who were engaged on some important project often continue in that same project for a long period of time.*'"

"I don't quite—" began Detrick but the caller interrupted him. "Yes—? He asked for me?" He frowned at Krenda. "Bond says Savaran just walked into the vestibule and asked for me—eh? What was that?—He what? Say that again."

Detrick's face darkened as he listened. "What the hell are you playing at? If you've been drinking on duty—Four witnesses!— I'll be down as soon as I can." He broke contact, his face pale.

"Something wrong?" The Minister had a curiously secret look of anticipation.

Detrick shook his head in a perplexed way. "A mistake of some kind, Savaran has disappeared."

"Disappeared?"

"Four witnesses say he became slowly transparent and

faded away before their eyes. It's ridiculous, of course, absolutely ridiculous."

"Is it?" The Minister was looking at him in a strangely direct way and something in Detrick's mind seemed to fall into place with a click. Good God, the man bore a startling, not to say frightening resemblance to the late Anton Darbeg and, if his memory was not at fault, Darbeg had been made a Minister two years before his death—what—

"Is it?" said the Minister again. "It happens, it happens quite often. Savaran was only a temporary resident you see."

"I don't quite follow." Detrick seemed uncomfortably short of breath as he spoke.

"You don't? Then I must repeat a sentence from your own script. *New arrivals engaged on some important project often continue in that same project for a long period of time.*" He looked from one to the other. "You people are close to setting an all-time record, you know."

He shook his head and turned slowly towards the door.

"He's mad." Krenda's voice quavered effeminately.

"Perhaps," the Minister turned towards them again. "It's a question of perspective really. Think of the building, think of the explosion, do you really believe in miracles?" He sighed and turned away again. "Can't you understand, my friends—*they're still finding bits and pieces of your bodies as they clear away the rubble—*"



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## THE SWORD AGAINST THE STARS

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*Dated the 42nd year of our exile*

THE EARTH THIS year is death and stinking rubble, a pall of broken glass and rusted, empty cans. The earth this year is a thousand blasted cities, bleak and broken skylines, skeletons of buildings connected with crazy paving. There are some parts of our city which still burn with sporadic fires; a water main bursts and somewhere a stray dog howls. The earth this year is scarred and seared to wasteland, a planetary ghetto where all that's left is dying, crawling to its slow, inevitable ending. The earth this year is sick of a million plagues, gaunt famines and a mad child's crying.

We move cautiously through the shadows of daylight, we who once were proud. We hide in the sewers and caves but at dusk we look towards the dead city. We draw the ragged cloaks about our shivering bodies, we who walked upright so long ago. We still ask 'Why?' What have we done that this should befall us?

We creep from house to cave during the night—hoping that **THEY** are not near us at the time. We shudder as radiation sickness destroys yet another of the few who remain but we huddle in panic at the terror which awaits us from the skies. The dying are stripped of their meagre possessions even before they are dead, and we eat unclean flesh. Have the starving any choice? I doubt it.

The lake at the bottom of the hill has been empty of life for so long. The fish died of radiation poisoning or, perhaps, they were boiled alive when the first bombs fell. For forty and two years there has been no life in the lake,

no microbes, no weeds, no fish. Perhaps these will come again, no—they can never come again. The lake this year is dead and ended.

Our clothes have become more and more ragged and useless. Most of the remaining material has been turned into cloaks to hide us in the shadows and shelter us from the cold. We are unwashed and unshaven but this doesn't matter. There is no time to attend to these things.

Sometimes when one of the patrol ships has just passed over the cave, we venture into a village to grub for food amongst the ruins, of the gutted buildings. We search for food, we can never get enough food. Perhaps there will even be cloth or fuel to keep us warm. We hack open the locked doors in the hope of finding something—anything—that will give us some slight advantage in the unending struggle for survival. Once, long ago, creed fought with creed and black man hated white man, white man killed red man—or yellow man—it doesn't much matter now because those days are dead and ended and behind us forever. Any addition to our small community is welcome. Any man or woman who can do active work joins us because it is easier for a group to survive. We do not get many new faces because it is all one can do to stay alive in one place, over the next hill things may be infinitely worse. Travel is an expensive luxury in these days when all we seek is survival.

I remember the year of the great sandstorms and the time when the dust priest came stumbling through the whirling grit. Day after day the sand came flying through the skies and the plants on the ground vanished beneath the creeping horror. Our small community stayed in the improvised shelter and the fine red sand crept everywhere. We stacked our food carefully and sealed off the water as best we could and we waited for the next burst of screaming winds. The skies that year had turned to scarlet and we did not venture outside. The red dust was in my nails and my eyes and my throat and the children no longer cried for water. There was only crimson gloom which deepened with every hour.

And then the door of the shelter was flung open and

a figure came in with the swirling flying dust. He screamed some words which none of us could understand as we struggled to close the doors. But from that moment the sound of the sand began to dim. Eventually the wind dwindled to a sigh and the red particles settled over everything.

We called the newcomer the dust priest because he wore the garb of a monk. He was a huge man and his skin was the colour of the pall of sand. His eyes were sore and in delirium he raged against the cities and the old world which had died. He does not speak much, this dust priest. I remember when I was young, such people would be locked away in hospitals. The earth this year needs fathers for new sons and his life is more important than his sanity right now. We feared the dust priest when he came among us and this fear has not died with the storms of sand. We hate this man but if he dies, the sands will come back and cover his body—and perhaps the rest of us also.

I write this manuscript by flickering torchlight while the dust priest has gone to the caves. One of our number died today. A patrolling spacecraft passed overhead when Johnny was out in the fields looking for small animals. He saw the ship but he didn't try and hide. Instead he raised an angry fist at the intruder, cursing in uncontrollable rage. After that moment he was no more. When the passing craft had fallen over the horizon his son, who was hiding nearby, came out and took the dead man's cloak. He left the body where it fell, one mouth less to feed, one pair of working hands that have gone from us forever. When the evening came the dust priest refused to pray for the dead. He said that Johnny had cursed the gods of heaven and he had therefore been struck down for his sins. Later I saw that the place where Johnny died was covered with fine red sand. Perhaps the dust priest did this thing in the afternoon for he never goes out after the sun has touched the horizon. The stars and the gods are one in his twisted mind.

I heard this tale when I came back this evening. There was a slight fog from the lake, lapping and twining about



the shores of dusk. It is so silent, the crimson dusk. How long before some enemy ship, too high for human eyes to spot, tracks one of our number back to this shelter? How long shall we survive after this cave has been spotted?

I can remember the earth in its springtime, before the years of our exile. I think sadly of the green foliage and blossoms thicker than the spangled stars. There was fresh water that was good to drink and children played by the streams fearlessly. There were animals, pet animals, how long ago is forty years? There was so much laughter among mankind, there were little problems and not a few tears. There was a tall city where I lived where buildings towered into the depths of a friendly night and neon signs flickered and glowed, changing, endlessly changing. There were thousands and thousands of people, coming and going, loving and hating, happy and sorrowful, scornful or humble but human people—all of them human people. They talked and laughed together, I remember that. Today we have nearly forgotten the human language for the children know only the few words centred about survival, warmth and food. I feel sorry for the children though it is probably just the same in any other community. When I was a child we had Mahler and Sorrenson and music to thrill our souls, we had Shakespeare and Dante to assure us of splendour. Dali and Van Gerald showed us in painting and sculpture the way to the gods but the children have no past. The children have only the grim prospect of a slow extinction and the gods of the dust priest.

I am an old man and I cannot resist the temptation to ramble. Perhaps this doesn't matter because someone must write down the facts while writing still exists. Our children may never learn to read but perhaps, somewhere else, conditions are better than they are here. Perhaps the children on the other side of the world will know enough by the time all those who do remember die out. I would like to believe that mine is not the only record of disaster. There will be other diaries, a thousand thousand diaries hidden in caves and sewers that will one day come to light. There will surely be records, tapes and pictures or

pottery to bear witness that we fought against the stars. Perhaps after all the human race will slowly become extinct. If so, one day an alien race will come towards this mote and stand upon this same spot. They will look at the barren ground and the swirling sand dunes that surge towards the broken city. Will they decide to ignore the mute plea for a lost cause? Would any single race decide to indite the stars for genocide?

Will the earth that day be green and welcoming? Will it still show signs of that unfair battle? Will there be life in the lake once again and perhaps a hum of insects in the summer? Could birds ever fly through these skies again? Will the aliens know that mankind once lived here and struggled for a while or will all the evidence have crumbled beyond recognition? I wonder, I really wonder.

It was late autumn when the first starcraft roared skywards from this earth. I can still remember a little about that autumn; a halloween party, the damp air and the smell of smoke. That was the time of year when the fog stood at the end of the street and held a crystal rod of thick gold light in its brooding arms. It was the time of the mist which trailed chiffon and danced through the park and called temptingly from the planks of an old pier. I remember that the fog tiptoed into larder cupboards and drifted playfully about the pages of an antique mildewed book. There was a woman with soft breasts who laughed at me from the firelit shadows. There was a cat that purred and a bowl of bronze chrysanthemums and a garden fire for autumn leaves—the autumn of our days.

The first of our giant metal ships thundered its way through the void between the stars. It did not return and we were told that the ship and its crew were 'Missing, presumed destroyed'. Some time later two other ships followed the first one and then we found with shocked surprise that the stars had come to us. The world government had sent its ships into the void bearing messages of peace and goodwill but the stars had turned their faces from us and their inhabitants showed us death.

Had there been some terrible mistake? Or had they been wise in their generation, those terrible visitors? They

had aeons of civilisation behind them. They judged us by their own standards and found us wanting. We were not a mature race, even in our own eyes. How did we appear to these others? Undoubtedly we constituted some form of danger to them. I would like to think that, had they discovered us some years earlier when we were still confined to one small planet, they would have left us alone. Now, however, we were space travelling man. They could not erase a whole technology so they destroyed mankind instead, **THEY**, the enemy, the dark star races of death. They had weapons undreamed of, weapons against which we had no defence. From the stars we fled back to our solar system but they came after us in their black ships. They followed us when we retreated to our own planet and they had no pity on us. Their clouds of destruction hid the face of the moon, so massive was their fleet. We died in millions, we crawled, we grovelled but some of us survived to hide in the underground places. We took refuge from the angry heavens and we prayed to the gods which had deserted all men, we who once had been proud, we who once were man. Did **THEY** care? Did they have to be so brutal?

The earth that year was scorched with fury ; all the waters boiled and every city and town, every little village fell to the hostile stars. The rain which once had fertilised our fields now brought death to them instead. The earth that year was death and screaming agony, a terrible destruction. The time was the time of a new ecology, toppling mountains and a new geography. The earth that year was a deluge of horror and there were dead animals, birds and insects everywhere. That was the time when we ceased to walk upright and all of us became less than man.

But life did survive. We were not a race of fighters like the enemy, but all races, religions and colours among man had known persecution at some stage in their histories. Race memories came to the surface and people vowed to survive. Years of our own wars had bred this spirit which came into its own against the stars. All of us had to leave the burning cities and took refuge in the fields and forests. Presently these burned and we hid

among the new mountains and the radio-active craters. Finally the destruction died away and the enemy fleet swung out into the void once more. Now only the occasional patrol ship flares overhead. When it passes we hide, we who were homo sapiens so long ago.

Forty and two years have we been exiled from the cities, denied our birthright, exiled from the stars. Darkness and sand have covered the face of the earth and we have eaten the fruits of horror which were not of our making. But now there has been a change and this night is different from any other night. I will write it as it happened and you shall judge. Of course this night is different for tonight we do not hope for a future—we know that the future will be.

We had long proposed to explore through the ruined city. The dust priest has warned us against this for he said that the sickness of the gods still lay on the ruins of the city. People have died before now from venturing through the vast, deserted streets and silent buildings. Now, however, it has become essential for our expanding community to salvage what it can and so we settled on today for our journey. We set off just before first light when there was little danger from passing patrol ships. There were five of us and, as we walked over the red dunes, we could hear the voice of the dust priest cursing our mission. Nevertheless we reached the city an hour after the sun came up and arranged to meet at the same point when the sun touched the horizon.

Two of the women were very lucky. They struck a sealed shelter and found a hoard of food in cans. We have no way of telling whether this food is still edible after all this time but there has never been enough to eat. Survival entails constant risk and this will be one more of them. We will open the cans to eat and live—or maybe die; no one can say with certainty that there will be a tomorrow.

I found myself in the part of the rubble which had been living quarters. The buildings had been destroyed by fire a long long time ago. There were a few bits and pieces of metal lying around the area which I sorted out. One

day we will make a furnace in spite of the dust priest and we will begin to make metal to our own devices again. I took all the iron because it will be useful when that time comes. I sorted the metal carefully because there was too much for us to carry and we can collect the rest of it another time.

I found something else in the city but this must be concealed from everyone, especially the dust priest. I found a sword. It seemed a queer thing to find in the ruins of a gutted block of flats but I recognised the object at once. Now we have a weapon, even if this blade is only two feet long and dull with age. The rest of the examination must wait until I am completely alone in the shelter.

When we met at sunset I was beginning to feel sick, though whether from lack of food or with some unknown disease I am still not certain. The two women had devised a sort of stretcher on which to carry their food. The boys did not fare quite as well. They found no cloth, only metal and a few bits of machinery. The machinery was useless, no one had the slightest idea of what it did, what it had been, or how it worked. We saved the best metal and threw the rest away. If, one day, we need it, we know where it can be found again. Then there was the long journey home and the wild figure of the huge dust priest cursing us at the end of it.

But for the rest of our community there was a celebration when we got home to the shelter. We heard of Johnny's death and the moving sand from his son and then we produced the food and began to eat. There was enough wood for the fire and as the moon came up over the horizon, most of us went to sleep. I remain awake, first to stack the salvage at the back of the shelter and then to have a look at my sword.

The handle of this sword may have been wood of some sort varnished with black paint. The two must have fused some time during the city fire because now the handle is so hard that it will not mark or chip. At the base of the handle there is a thick gold band—how strange to find bright gold upon a sword; the metal gleams softly in the torchlight. The cross piece is decorated; on the

left side is a circle from which come twelve rays of gold. Opposite is a crescent inlaid with silver—the sun and the moon on the cross piece of an old sword! Joining these two are seven red stones in a line and these stones are the real problem.

The seven rubies must represent the stars—but why are the stars red? The sun is made of gold and the moon is silver but the stars glow with an angry light. When I was very young I used to think that the stars were white diamonds scattered on black velvet, I would have made the stars out of diamonds if the sword had been mine. It was only the forger of the sword who knew better, he must have known that the stars were hostile and he set seven red stones in his sword, red for the colour of war. He chose red stones so that those who came after him should remember when they saw his warning—but we who came after, we forgot. How did he know?

The sword must be very old. Careful examination shows that there is writing on the blade but no one knows what the writing means. Perhaps the dust priest would know but I dare not ask him. The characters of the letters are totally different to any script that I have ever seen and I cannot hope to decipher them. Curiously the blade has no rust on it though it must have lain in the open for most of the time of our exile. The sword feels very old. How long ago was it forged and who engraved the writing on the blade? And why are the stars red instead of gold or white? In my hands the sword is a cold, throbbing enigma to which there is no answer.

Outside the mist is getting thick above the lake and the dust priest has not come back to the shelter tonight. He must be hiding in a cave. He does not look out to watch the mist rise and romance with the dead trees or, reaching up, swirl to trap the satin moonlight. But why are the stars red?

I have an idea about this sword. I believe that it is older than we shall ever appreciate. Perhaps, before the time of our exile, it was in the hands of a private art collector who knew the value of such things. But before that this sword would have come from a ruined kingdom,

lost amongst the teeming jungles or carried out from the ruins of a desert shrine. Perhaps this sword is the last relic of a long forgotten civilisation that knew a little of the hostile stars. Maybe, long ago, the stars came to earth on another hostile mission of destruction. Perhaps this was why there were always legends of angry gods who sent thunderbolts from the turbulent heavens to chastise mankind. If so, the stars have left us with a legacy of hatred for every outsider, they left us war and terror with which to remember them. Long ago when this sword was forged, we must have known that the stars were our enemies. Perhaps we were not even the first children or men to be sent into exile by the crimson stars.

But this night is different from any other night because tonight we celebrate our belief in ultimate freedom. Tonight there is food to eat, food for all of us. Tomorrow we shall drive the dust priest out into the sand dunes towards the evening sun, for he is too old to father children and too mad to keep with us now. We shall force him into nightfall and desert and he can see his own gods come for him. He will curse us as he sinks into the sand but we will forget him and only remember the sword. Tonight is different to any other night because the earth and her children are biding their time of action. How many other caves, cellars, sewers are there where others also wait for the tides to turn? The sword tells me that this is not the first time for those spawned of earth; throughout all history we have feared the heavens and the sky gods far more than we ever worshipped them. Why did we fear our own gods? Because they were angry beings with no love for mankind, only destruction?

And long ago—(how long ago?)—some blacksmith or weapon forger made a sword against the stars. How could we have overlooked the warning on the blade, even if we didn't understand the writing? How could we have neglected the legends which told so many stories of the angry gods? Why did we forget that the stars were red? Well, we forgot and again disaster came upon us. But this is not the end, this sword has one purpose, it will hew out a new way to the stars.

In the years to come, life will still be hard and grim. The struggle will go on for a long time but we will win our way out of beasthood and become man once more. There will be food to eat and the land will be cultivated. There will be time to create art and know enjoyment. We will fill the earth with new children and all the mutants may die out in time. But if we forget the stars then we will lose ourselves utterly and be no more man.

If this year we grovel on a wounded planet, I swear that some other year we will wrest back our birthright of the stars. We shall return again as we returned already. The enemy has powers that we shall never master but we have a sword and that shall be sufficient unto its day. This year we are suffering from famine but next year there will be food all the time. This year we have radiation burns but one day we shall return to the city and our people shall walk proudly through the streets of crazy paving.

We shall walk upright again. We shall be proud. We will send out ships into the darkness. We will be heard in the councils of the galaxy and they will heed our words. We shall be a splendid people who dwell on a planet without a scar but we must never forget again that the past and the future are one. This year we are scattered all over the earth but some time in the far-off future, then we shall raise a sword against the stars and conquer them—when we are Man once more.

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“THERE ARE THREE main plots for the human interest story: . . . I had thought for years that there were but two plots—[L. Ron Hubbard] pointed out to me the third type.”

“Much so-called science fiction is not about human beings and their problems, consisting instead of a fictionalized framework, peopled by cardboard figures . . .”

Robert A. Heinlein

“. . . a kangaroo is not especially droll in the Australian bush, but in the Grand Central Station it at once becomes so.”

L. Sprague de Camp

“Some don’t mind green snakes with purple wings and venom dripping fangs, while some do.”

John W. Campbell, Jr.

“When the editor of this symposium suggested that I write an article on complication in the science fiction story, he was saying, in effect, that that is the kind of story I write.”

A. E. van Vogt

“Science fiction is one of the places where a pretty girl can be a damned nuisance.”

John Taine

Did you know that Heinlein learned to play chess before he could read? That he refuses to say when he was a Missourian? That in 1910 Jack Williamson migrated by covered wagon from Pecos, Texas, to the Llano Estacado in New Mexico? That A. E. van Vogt was once a truck driver? That E. E. Smith was once a bricklayer and reported that writing was much harder work? That John W. Campbell Jr. claims to be a nuclear physicist?

The above quotes and all the foregoing facts come from *Of Worlds Beyond* (Dobson, 13/6). This is a twenty-year-old symposium on the craft of sf writing, edited by Lloyd Arthur Esbach, and now re-issued with an introduction by John Carnell.

The symposium begins with an article by Heinlein, entitled *On the Writing of Speculative Fiction*. After a rather surprising opening, in which Heinlein states that he is not interested in the 'gadget' story, and will confine himself to discussing the human interest story, that being the type he himself writes, the article gets under way. It is not a terribly interesting article, suggesting, as it does to me, the kind of thing one would expect to get back from the Ealing Correspondence School for Successful Writing, although I must admit that some of the elementary rules about writing cannot be too often repeated.

A rather illuminating sidelight on Heinlein's attitude to his work—at least twenty years ago—is illustrated by the following quote, which I repeat with no more comment:

"The above five rules . . . are amazingly hard to follow . . . But, if you will follow them, it matters not how you write, you will find some editor somewhere, sometimes, so unwary or so desperate for copy as to buy the worst old dog you, or I, or anybody else, can throw at him."

The next article is by John Taine. This is certainly the best-written and most intelligent one in the book and, in view of the fact that Taine is the only one of the writers who did not later rise to even greater pinnacles of glory,

I guess this is rather significant. Taine writes with authority on the subject of *Writing a Science Novel*, and the article will be valuable still to the aspiring 'hard sf' writer.

*The Logic of Fantasy* is the title of Jack Williamson's contribution, which rambles on pleasantly and interestingly.

A. E. van Vogt gives his—doubtless expert—ideas on *Complication in the Science Fiction Story*, and reveals the surprising fact that all of his work is written in clearly-defined sections of 800 words! It is a pity that a lot of the quotes he makes from his own work are of very doubtful quality.

In his contribution, *Humour in Science Fiction*, L. Sprague de Camp gives his thoughtful views on the subject. However, I feel that some of his conclusions are less than authoritative. De Camp states that humour will not work if it is associated with subjects that people feel particularly strongly about—death, persecution, etc. The black comedy of Nabokov in stories like *Laughter in the Dark* and *Bend Sinister* or of Joseph Heller in *Catch 22*—or even of Harry Harrison in *Bill, the Galactic Hero* is appallingly funny, even though having a tragic basis. This kind of humour is the most effective I know.

E. E. Smith writes with obvious enthusiasm on *The Epic of Space*, and it is interesting to see exactly to what lengths he went to perfect a story.

In his article, *The Science of Science Fiction Writing*, John W. Campbell writes with the embarrassingly jovial manner of an ageing scoutmaster. The constant use of the word 'yarn' instead of 'story' is somewhat irritating, together with the cinema-poster superlatives. However, style and grammar apart, the article would be worth reading for a delicious description, if I were not going to quote it below:

"I've seen L. Ron Hubbard applying all the tricks of the trade, changing rhythm and pace,

while typing on his electric typewriter at a pace of some 3,000 to 4,000 words an hour. When Hubbard has to rewrite a passage, he will start a couple of pages earlier, and gather momentum, so to speak, so that when he hits the revision, he's rolling at his usual high-speed pace."

Apart from this, the article holds little of interest.

The aspiring writer, I think, will benefit little from this book, but the articles make moderately interesting reading if you happen to be stranded with nothing to read and 13/6 in your pocket.

Langdon Jones

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## **STREAKED THROUGH WITH POETRY**

**Captives of the Flame — The Towers of Toron  
City of a Thousand Suns — The Jewels of Aptom  
The Ballad of Beta-2**

ALL OF THE above titles are by Samuel R. Delany and all are published by Ace Books. In the space available it would be impossible to give a detailed exposition of their plots. And, as with Cordwainer Smith, the writer most closely allied in style to Delany, the value of the story is not so much in the plot-elements (several of which have been exploited to great effect by such writers as Van Vogt and Aldiss) as in the manner of the telling. Younger than Smith, Delany displays a command of the language which is comparatively even more impressive and seems less prone to the preciousness which so often mars the older writers' work.

These five books, composing a trilogy telling of a strange future war, and two separate novels concerning the aftermath of a war and the seemingly disastrous meeting of human and alien, are streaked through with poetry and crammed with vivid images. To read the five in rapid succession is to run the risk of suffering mental indigestion,

of being surfeited with colour and richness, and indeed to be irritated by certain faults and repetitions. There is over-writing: “. . . the professor’s eyebrows came crashing down. . . .”, from *The Ballad of Beta-2*. Or the unvisualisable description: “. . . an invisible copper haze . . .” from *The Jewels of Aptom*, a complex account of a quest in a post-catastrophe world and an amazingly accomplished first novel. But these are the minor faults of exuberance, of an over-abundant literary imagination, rather than weaknesses. Read Delany, but read him sparingly, judiciously. The rewards will be considerable.

Also from Ace and in an older, well-worn tradition is *The Wizard of Lemuria*, by Lin Carter. This is rather unfairly blurred as a combination of the qualities of Burroughs and Robert E. Howard. Not surprisingly, Carter falls short of this dizzy peak of achievement. Briefly, he tells the tale of Thongor, barbarian hero of the lost land of Lemuria, and the wizard Sharajsha, as they strive to defeat the elder race of intelligent lizards who seek to dominate Earth. The wholly serious and occasionally naïve narrative compares interestingly with the third Michael Kane novel, *Barbarians of Mars*, written by Edward P. Bradbury and published by Compact S.F. (3/6). Here we have a simplicity which is deliberate; Bradbury is clearly capable of more sophisticated work. *Barbarians* makes a fairly ambitious exploration (for this type of novel) of the nature of fear, carrying the theme on a flow of exotic adventure and vigorous action.

Basically both books are derivative of Burroughs and Howard, the difference being that Bradbury is content to be derivative, while Carter unashamedly duplicates the work of the masters, in effect superimposing Conan upon a Barsoomian background. Yet *Wizard* does not lack pace, and the climax is exciting despite the fact that the build-up—which involves the fate of the Universe, no less!—is lost in a welter of trivial bloodletting. Next time around, perhaps we can have rather more of Lin Carter and rather less of John.

J. Cawthorn

## HEALTHY DOMINATION

*The Best of New Worlds* (Compact Books. 318 pp. 5s.) consists of fifteen stories representing a cross section of both authors who and story-types which have dominated the British science fiction scene during the past eight years. And a very healthy domination it is, too, with tried and trusted names like Aldiss, Harrison, Sellings, Tubb and Brunner skilfully blended with those of Kapp, Baxter and Bayley, and with futuristic tales mingled with stories of time travel, alien invasion, nuclear devastation and the psychological.

Good meaty reading is afforded the reader by Arthur Sellings' new approach to psychiatric analysis in *The Outstretched Hand*, the futuristic rebel society depicted by Brian Aldiss in *The Pit My Parish*, Robert Presslie's story of the healing alien, John Baxter's *The Traps of Time*, John Brunner's *The Last Lonely Man*, Barry Bayley's *All the King's Men*, E. C. Tubb's psychological study, the editor's own *The Time Dweller*, Harry Harrison's picture of crime and punishment in the future and Colin Kapp's *The Railways Up on Cannis*, though this last story is perhaps a suspect choice in view of its similarity with another by the same author recently published elsewhere.

Five stories deserve some special mention: Probably the author most likely to appear in an anthology of stories reprinted from NEW WORLDS is J. G. Ballard and his arid, stylistic trend setter, *The Terminal Beach* is a welcome inclusion, whilst also included is one of the most controversial of modern sf shorts, Langdon Jones' somewhat over-rated *I Remember, Anita*. Hilary Bailey's *The Fall of Frenchy Steiner* opens with a brilliant picture of London under a Hitler conquest but despite being entertaining the story falls off towards an unconvincing and disappointing conclusion. James Colvin's *The Mountain* is merely disappointing. To counteract this feeling there is included, however, James White's *Tableau*, as complete, as mature, as entertaining and as satisfying a story as is anyone's good fortune to read (how has *Tableau* missed becoming an anthology "standard?").

It is unlikely that every story in any anthology will appeal to any one reader; the editor's task is, therefore, a difficult one. Editor Moorcock has here struck a definitely acceptable balance between the old and the new, between pacy stories and stylistic cameos. He has ignored the earlier, oft-reprinted familiarities (is it coincidental that 1958, the year at which he begins this *NEW WORLDS* panorama, saw the inauguration of the British Science Fiction Association?) to produce as exciting a collection as has seen print in this country. Not only is *The Best of New Worlds* an anthology to read and an item worthy of a permanent place on the collector's bookshelf but also it is a collection which opens the door for *The Best of New Worlds* number two.

R. M. Bennett

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(*ACE paperbacks are generally available through specialist dealers such as Fantast (Medway) Ltd.*)

Other paperbacks recommended (some reviewed next issue).

*The Four-Dimensional Nightmare*, J. G. Ballard (Penguin 3s. 6d.).

*The End of Eternity/The Naked Sun/The Stars Like Dust*, by Asimov (Panther, 3s. 6d.).

*Steppenwolf*, by Herman Hesse (author of *Magister Ludi*, Penguin 3s. 6d.).

*Fictions*, J. L. Borges (Jupiter, 6s. 6d.).

Also received:

*Analog Anthology* (Dobson, 30s.).

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All correspondence to:  
The Editor,  
NEW WORLDS SF,  
87a Ladbroke Grove,  
London, W.11,  
England.



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### The Space Merchants

Dear Sir,

I thought James Colvin's review of *The Space Merchants* was rather unfair. First of all, what is 'good' sf? I personally enjoy the *Mission of Gravity* and *Hothouse* type of escapist reading, but for an sf book to be really good it must have some bearing on present-day life, otherwise the critics will curb their slowly-mounting enthusiasm for the genre. *The Space Merchants* has a great deal to do with our present society, and its target may be old and tired today, but when the book was written it was one of the first to take advertising methods to their natural conclusion. Twelve years ago inter-Ad agency wars, 'Coffiest' (presumably an extension of Coca-Cola, now known to be habit forming) and yeast farms may not have been glaringly original, but they were certainly not stock ideas, and their treatment is not far from excellent. Admittedly the style is slick, but that is better than pages of moralising, and several of the points strike home. On the cover of the Penguin edition is the review: 'sf at its most exciting and thought-provoking'—NEW WORLDS; presumably written when the book first appeared. Mr Colvin should give Pohl and Kornbluth their due: this is their best book, and it comes high on my sf list, at least.

C. D. Godwin, Rectory Cottage, White Roding, Dunmow, Essex.



Dear Sir,

I must praise James Colvin's review of *The Space Merchants* which is, thanks to Amis, probably the most over-estimated sf novel ever. I remember being bitterly disappointed when I read it because I had expected so much more. I think the book suffers from the common failing of most of what is called satirical or sociological sf. That is, it takes some fault in society—usually a glaringly obvious one—and magnifies that while leaving the rest of society untouched. In other words it treats the symptoms not the disease. Now advertising is patently absurd but it is an essential part of a free-enterprise capitalist system. Yet the critics of advertising seem to want to keep free enterprise. Criticise the free enterprise economy by all means—it's faulty as hell—but don't just get at advertising by itself. You can't have one without the other. I think the trouble is that there is a certain class of people who must attack advertising because they are afraid they are themselves more susceptible to its appeal than their intellectual pride will allow them to be. As someone who has worked in the 'business' for some time I can tell you that it is wasteful of talent and money and frequently dishonest, but it will never be overset by a disgruntled copy-writer like Pohl trying to write an exposé.

Colin Pilkington, 16 Bridge Street, Ormskirk, Lancs.

Dear Sir,

The following extract, which appeared in J. G. Ballard's science fiction reviews in the *Guardian* of 13.11.65, contains a flattering reference to NEW WORLDS:—

“The present decline of the science fiction magazines, with the single exception of NEW WORLDS—where, under Carnell's editorship, almost all the British writers first appeared—has been due to their rigid and fossilising conventions, their rejection of any attempt to produce a more introspective and cerebral science fiction—one, for example, that can share the vocabulary of ideas in painting and music.”

I was pleased to read this, (a) because it confirms me in

my belief that if, in the course of pursuing one's hobby of reading, criticising and possibly at some future date writing science fiction, one reaches the stage of feeling a need to air one's views on the subject, *NEW WORLDS* is the magazine most likely to appreciate one's efforts and (b) because it echoes the statement contained in your own editorial this month that, "Science fiction, which should be one of the most exciting literary genres of our era, has long since become a victim of its own conventions," with which I agree. I am not so sure, however, that I agree with the following, from a review by James Colvin contained in the same issue:—

"In *New Maps of Hell*, Kingsley Amis saw fit to say that *The Space Merchants* by Pohl and Kornbluth (Penguin, 3s. 6d.) had 'many claims to being the best science fiction novel so far.' Amis's tastes must be limited, for though this book is slickly-written, fast-moving and fairly mature in its outlook, its main target—the advertising world—is an old, tired target and no really original shots are fired at it. . . . Is it 'satire'? Since the fears it expresses and the dangers it warns against have been the subjects of numerous newspaper leaders, Sunday Supplement articles, daily paper features, not to mention articles in the weekly reviews, novels and short stories, I can't call it satire as I think of the term. To me satire should point out what is *not* obvious, and everybody's suspicious of the advertising companies, aren't they? Amis also gave the impression that Kornbluth was the passenger in the team. A reading of stories written independently by the two writers, a glance at Pohl's work since Kornbluth died, should right that impression immediately. . . ."

In fact I disagree with it entirely, on the following grounds:—

1. To have expressed an opinion as to what constitutes "the best" in science fiction does not imply that Mr. Amis's tastes are limited to that alone. Indeed he has

much that is encouraging to say about many aspects of the genre and gives favourable mention to a lot of other works and authors in *New Maps*. And in any case he is a self-confessed "addict" of science fiction, which in itself is sufficient to ensure wide and varied reading and, when it comes to criticism, an approach that is entirely free from condescension. Whilst after all, nobody's approach, including Mr. Colvin's own, presumably, is entirely free from preferences.

2. *The Space Merchants* was first published in 1953, a fact which Mr. Colvin omits to mention, and must therefore have predated most of the articles he has in mind and been considerably more original at the time than it now appears. In fact many subsequent attacks must have sprung from its original impact and if advertising consequently now seems to be "an old, tired target" I for one do not think this constitutes any excuse for laying off it, since the industry itself gives no indication of being old and tired, so far as one can see, in spite of all that has been said and done. If everybody's suspicious of the advertising industry it must in part be thanks to the work of writers like Pohl and Kornbluth and we have a duty to keep it that way, even if it means boring Mr. Colvin from time to time.

3. According to the Oxford Dictionary, one of the definitions of "satire" is "literary composition holding up vice or folly to ridicule" and if *The Space Merchants* does not qualify as this I can think of no other work in science fiction or in any other literary form that does. Mr. Amis describes it as, amongst other things, "clearly . . . an admonitory satire on certain aspects of our own society, mainly economic", and it seems to me to be exactly that. Is the following a satirical version of the typical T.V. commercial, or is it not?

"Have you got a freezer? *It stinks!* If it isn't a Feckle Freezer, *it stinks!* If it's a last year's Feckle Freezer, *it stinks!* Only this year's Feckle Freezer is any good at all! You know who owns an Ajax Freezer? Fairies own Ajax Freezers! You know who owns a Triplecold Freezer?

Combies own Triplecold Freezers! Every freezer but a brand-new Feckle Freezer *stinks!*"

In fact the whole essence of the book, right down to its last detail, is satirical, and I maintain that it is this, if anything, that is obvious.

4. The question of who wrote what is minor importance as is, in the final analysis, the question of "who wrote Shakespeare" (the important thing is that it got written at all). However a glance at Frederik Pohl's *The Midas Plague* will confirm that the consumer-producer nexus which is the basic theme of *The Space Merchants* (the exaggerated importance of advertising is for him only one of the side effects which will result if this nexus is allowed to get out of hand in the West's economy) is his own private subject for nightmare and since the book's entire claim to be read as serious fiction rests upon his treatment of it, I fail to see why Mr. Colvin should apparently so resent the implication that Pohl was indeed "in the driver's seat" in this partnership. It does not, as I say, matter so much.

What does matter, however, is that although it is now twelve years since Pohl and Kornbluth wrote *The Space Merchants* and five years since Kingsley Amis arrived at his perceptive assessment of it, the time when science fiction "will explode into something that will produce many works of lasting importance", to quote this month's editorial, has not yet arrived. And although I feel sure that by this time most serious students of the genre would agree with you when you go on to say, "If this means a rejection on the part of the writers of most of the conventions of sf, then the rejection must be made. We must progress, must adapt or die," there seems to be little concrete indication or guidance these days as to what exactly we ought to be trying to adapt to. There is some talk on your part of "symbolism", "surrealism" and the creation of "mythological figures", and on the part of J. G. Ballard of "a more introspective and cerebral science fiction" that, will "share the vocabulary of ideas in painting and music". But are these (and I take them to be the most up-to-date ideas on the subject) to be regarded as

ends in themselves, or merely as yet further conventions to be adapted or rejected along with all the others, in the interests of at last producing these elusive "works of lasting importance?"

Personally I would recommend a return to the school of Pohl and Kornbluth, as interpreted by Kingsley Amis, which would mean encouraging younger writers to be interested in the future as such and inquire what might result from turns of events that are possible and not invalidated by being unlikely. A moment's thought should be sufficient to convince anyone that there is an infinite amount of material to go at in this direction, social, political, economic and scientific and that there is no reason why all or most of the old-established conventions of science fiction could not be adapted to this end, thus producing many works as significant as or more significant than *The Space Merchants* for our own times and society. Indeed I should have thought it might be easier to produce truly important works by this means than by attempting to go further in the direction symbolism, surrealism and introspection etc., where the danger of mistaking self-importance for the genuine article is a difficult hazard to avoid, especially for the young.

J. D. McMillan, 84 Northumberland Street, Broughton, Salford 7.

James Colvin replies:

I am mainly inclined to agree with Mr Pilkington. Most of the essential targets in the book had already been touched on in novels like *1984*. It might be, also, that I couldn't believe in the book's superficial view of human nature, particularly since we seem to have developed a fair resistance to, and knowledge of, advertising methods, but that's another matter, of course. I agree that it isn't really important who wrote what, but Mr Amis overpraised Pohl and denigrated Kornbluth in his remarks on *The Space Merchants* and this offended my sense of justice since I happen

to know that the major part of the book was written by Kornbluth. I agree that good sf must have some bearing on the present-day, but I would prefer (with Mr Pilkington) a deeper sort of analysis—carried, if necessary on an apparently superficial plot about advertising or what have you—of the causes of society's ills rather than the symptoms. Too much attention to the symptoms, as in *The Space Merchants*, tends to obscure the real issues rather than reveal them.

### Sex and Atheism, Willy Nilly

Dear Sir,

This weekend I bought a copy of NEW WORLDS, the first sf book I have read for about five years. I gave it up because I considered that the standard had greatly deteriorated. I'm sorry, but this NEW WORLDS seems even worse. I ask—'Why are your authors so pre-occupied with the sexual angle?' It is worked into very story, willy-nilly. This sex-mesmerism seems to have permeated all literature. The stories of years ago, gave one a sense of wonder, and of magic. The authors mentally transported one out to the galaxies, or took us through the avenues of Time. These stories were a joy to read. Now the leading character gets bogged down with some voluptuous tart, and nothing happens remotely resembling true Science Fiction. Also, I notice that most of your writers have atheistic leanings, and express it through the mouths of their characters. When I read sf I don't want atheism flung at me, nor religion either, for that matter. The sf writers of the not too distant past were true craftsmen. They could make the impossible seem credible. If the story contained a female character, she was necessary to the story. As far as I am concerned, true sf writing ceased in 1939.

P. Hunt (Mr.), 8 Courthope Villas, Worples Road, Wimbledon, S.W.19.

## Science in SF

Dear Sir,

I see that there are still many of your readers (or non-readers) bemoaning the death of the wondrous days of science fiction, when sf was based on scientific ideas and none of this literature nonsense. Until recently I was able to share these sentiments to some extent, since the pleasing emergence of literate sf has been accompanied by a decline in the story which used science excitingly, knowledgeably and originally. Stories like Blish's *Nor Iron Bars . . .*, for example. We have had no new Asimovs in the past twenty or so years; originality has been confined to progress in presentation and in refining the basics laid down some time ago.

I was prepared to write off the story that used science strongly as, sadly, dead because of exhaustion of ideas, and progress of science to the point where a writer has to have more than a part-time interest to be able to make original and valid imaginative scientific-based projections. But now we have David Masson's exceptionally interesting story *Traveller's Rest* (issue 154) and, in issue 157, *To Possess in Reality* by David Newton. Both these stories could be improved from the point of view of construction and writing, but neither is significantly lacking in this aspect and both exhibit entirely fresh approaches which successfully integrate the science-based idea with the rest of the story.

These stories serve the function of both balancing **NEW WORLDS** and filling a gap in the contemporary sf scene that was left open when writers like Asimov and Clarke failed to adapt to progress in presentation and ideas, and seemed literally to dry up. Since both of the stories I have mentioned are the writers' first appearances in **NEW WORLDS**, it is logical and encouraging to suppose that there should be more and better to come.

Charles Platt, 71 Sinclair Road, London, W.14.

*Both Masson and Newton are due to make further appearances; Masson with Psychosmosis in issue 160.*

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## MEETINGS etc.

Any experiences of the supernatural? If so write Box 130.

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## **DAVID MASSON**

made his *début* in Number 154 with a story, *Traveller's Rest*, which was acclaimed by many as one of the best of the year. (It has already been taken for an American anthology.) He followed this up with *Mouth of Hell*—a blend of real science fiction and moral fable. His third published story, *A Two-Time*, is as good as, and as different from the first two. A 17th century man inadvertently comes to our own time and reports what he sees. The story is funny, beautifully detailed and a sharp satire. It confirms the opinion of readers throughout the world—that Masson is one of the most brilliant new writers in SF.

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