

There was nothing wrong with him that a Rider could not cure...and the rougher, the better!

THE LAST TRESPASSER

By JIM HARMON

THEY would not believe Malloy was alone in there, in the padded cell. That made it worse.

Malloy was in his month for lying on his stomach to avoid bed sores. He was walking from Peoria, Illinois, to Detroit, Michigan, currently and he had just reached Chicago. It was fine to see State Street again, and the jewelry stores stuck in the alcoves of churches with the handsomely barred windows.

A man in Army-surplus green with an old library book was asking for carfare to a

hiring hall when they began opening the door.

Malloy rolled over on one elbow. It was peculiar. They hadn't done that for three years.

Two of them came inside, thick men with disinterested faces.

"Try no sudden moves," one of them advised him.

"We will anticipate you," the other one added.

Malloy went through the unfamiliar process of standing up. He looked at two men. "I wouldn't try anything against the four of you. I'm not *that* crazy."

"Time for an interrogation,



Malloy," the orderly said. "Come with us."

Malloy fell in between them and left the padded cell, frowning.

"What kind of an interrogation?" he asked them.

"What other kind?" one countered. "A sanity hearing."

He felt his eyebrows jerk. *His sanity?* He thought that had been established long ago. Or his lack of it.

MALLOY remembered the doctor. He hadn't had much else to do for several years.

He was Dr. Heirson, a graying man with starched face and collar. But the younger man sitting with Heirson behind the broad, translucent desk was a stranger to Malloy. He seemed to be a comic strip drawing, all in straight lines.

"Yes, sir."

"Step forward, Michael," Heirson said.

Malloy stepped forward. It had been a long time since he had been allowed to travel so far.

"Now relax, Michael," the doctor continued, leaning forward and grinning hideously. "All you have to do is tell me the truth."

"No, I don't, Doctor. I'm under no compulsion to tell you the truth. I'm perfectly capable of lying if it would do me any good."

"Hush that, Michael. You must not try to make believe

you can lie. I know you tell me only the truth."

"All right," Malloy said, exhaling deeply. "Believe that I speak only the truth if you like. But remember, I just told you that I'm a liar and that must be true."

Heirson blinked in watery confusion. He was obviously senile; only the old man's Rider kept him from coming apart at his mental seams.

The angle-faced man spoke into Heirson's ear. The old doctor continued to blink for a moment, then faced Malloy, the lines of his face drawn into an asterisk.

"What? You mean to tell me that you don't have an inner voice that urges you to tell the truth at all times?"

"No," Malloy explained, "I do not hear voices."

"You don't?"

"Never."

"And there is no inner sense that tells you when somebody is plotting against you?"

"Absolutely not."

"And when you are in trouble or danger, there is nothing that allows you to somehow look into the future or read minds or see through walls?"

"I can't do any of those things," Malloy stated.

Heirson threw up his hands. "Complete withdrawal from reality! Pathological! Why is he here anyway?"

The younger man grasped the withered thin upper arm and whispered audibly but

not understandably. Heirson's face eventually quivered back in line with Malloy's.

"Michael, do you know what year this is?" the doctor asked.

Malloy thought about that one. He wasn't absolutely certain, but he made some rapid calculations.

"1978?"

"1979! And what has been the single most important development in human history in recent times?"

Malloy sighed. He knew what he was expected to say.

"The coming of the Riders."

"And what are Riders?"

"Riders," Malloy recited patiently, "are elements of a symbiotic life-form. They have united with human beings to make one symbiotic creature. They have given much more than they have taken. All prominent religions recognize that they do not interfere with human free will. They have made us healthier, virtually immortal, and near supermen. The human race now is so much zoa, and every man is a zoon. Every man but me. *Damn it, I don't have any Rider!* I'm not a superman and I cannot get away with pretending to be one!"

Heirson oscillated his head. "Michael, Michael, your case isn't unique. There are others who claim that they have no Riders—usually maintaining that they are naturally super-human and need no help from

some funny kind of foreigner. They are tolerated the same way, that B.R., we tolerated people who claimed they possessed psychic auras, or who got up in cathedrals and yelled that they had no souls. But you, Michael, are a troublemaker. You've been rude, vulgar, and reckless with your life and others in your pretense to be Riderless. Your pathological retreat from reality leaves us with no choice but to—"

The other man behind the desk shoved a paper in front of Heirson and tapped it forcefully with an index finger.

HHEIRSON read the paper and his eyebrows went askew. "Yes, yes, we have discovered that there is a basic difference between you and the others who maintain they have no Riders. It would seem it *has* been established that you really *do not* have a Rider. Remarkable! Yes. Well, I have no alternative but to dismiss you from this institution, Michael Malloy, and to extend to you my personal apology for any inconvenience your three-and-a-half-years' detainment may have caused you."

A trick, Malloy thought.

Only what point would there be in tricking him?

The oppressive horror of it crushed down upon him with its full weight.

"Oh, no," he said. "No, sir.

Take me back to my padded cell. I've got my rights. I'm not going out there again. Maybe I could have learned to live with it once, but not now. I can't face up to living with a world of supermen, people who can do everything better than I can. *Take me back.* I think I'm going to get violent any minute now!"

He took a swing at the nearest guard, but naturally the guard's Rider told him what was coming and he dodged deftly, caught Malloy's arm and twisted it into half-nelson to hold him completely, infuriatingly helpless. Malloy had to hold back tears of frustration.

"Fortunately," Dr. Heirson croaked, "you can do no harm even if you do get violent, and I'm sure everyone will want to do everything possible for a poor unfortunate like yourself. We all will make allowances."

"No, no, no!" Malloy announced with the rhythm of his stomping feet. "I won't leave here! I *won't!*"

THE man beside Heirson favored Malloy with a smile; Malloy wasn't sure whether it was friendly or mocking. The stranger nodded his head briefly to the guards.

Malloy was dragged, protesting, down the marble-floored hallway to the entrance of the mental hospital. His anguished cries echoed across

the ornate ceiling of the old building.

He was shoved out the front door with a parcel in brown paper under his arms.

Malloy made one desperate attempt to get back inside but the massive door clanged in his face, and he could hear the reverberations dying away inside and the steady retreat of footsteps.

Malloy turned away in pain from the unaccustomed brilliance and warmth of the sun and banged on the door with his fists and demanded to be readmitted.

He grew hoarser and hoarser and he slid further and further down until he was squatting on the threshold, his cheek rested against the warm varnished surface of the door.

Malloy had never been an overly proud or vain man before the Riders had come. After all, he'd had one of the most menial jobs on Earth; he had been a magazine editor. But now he felt squashed under the thumb of humiliation.

The monstrous indignity of it all!

To be thrown out of an asylum!

After a time, Malloy felt a coolness, a wetness on his head.

He dreamed a little dream to himself that he knew was a dream: they were coming to wrap him in warm sheets again.

But it was only a dream.

This wetness wasn't warm—it was chilly. He finally identified it from his memories. This was rain.

He stirred himself and gathered up the brown bundle that he knew must contain his suit, papers and a little money.

Malloy trudged down the road toward the town that lay below the sanitarium, his collar turned up.

He found he didn't mind the rain so much. It tended to settle the dust, and the walk would be a long one.

GRAYSON AMERY, the iron-haired publisher, greeted Malloy with a firm, warm, dry handshake.

"Michael, it's certainly good to see you again. You are looking well."

"Yes, the bruises left by the straitjacket straps don't show," said Malloy.

"A unique miscarriage of justice," Amery said.

"I certainly hope it's unique. I hope there aren't any more poor devils like me locked away."

Amery offered Malloy a chair with a broad, well-manicured hand. "I'm confident that there aren't. And you are out now, fortunately."

"You can call it fortune if you like," Malloy said uneasily.

"But you *are* glad to be out?"

Malloy hesitated. "I'm resigned to it. The flow of time

washed some of the salt out of the wound. Being born is definitely a traumatic experience."

"How well I remember!" Amery said.

Malloy glanced at him sharply, then eased back in his chair. Of course, like everybody else, thanks to his Rider, Amery had total recall. Malloy couldn't even remember his first birthday party.

"Is there any way I can be of help to you, Michael?" Amery went on.

"Sure. I want my job back."

Amery's forehead squeezed into lines of distress. "Yes, I was made aware of that. But, Michael, there have been a lot of changes in the publishing business since you were with us. For instance, it would be difficult for you to proofread a manuscript today."

"I'm hardly the type who can't spell. I haven't forgotten that."

"I know, Michael, but here—have a look at this."

Amery handed over a sheet of paper.

Malloy glanced at it. It seemed a typical sheet of a writer's manuscript, though a horrible yellowish gray that made the typescript from the tatters of a ribbon almost illegible. It was also smudged with jelly-doughnut fingerprints and there were several holes burned in it by droppings of cigarette ash. Pretty sloppy, but things didn't seem

to have changed much. Not until he read the paper.

—/Cynthia/—/ (walked)
toward —/#((him))#/#—
jauntily (/).

“Hi,” —/she/# called
(out) to ((him)).

“/Hello/”, ‘Sweetstuff’,
he / said /, ((trying)) to
sound # (gay) /

Malloy looked up blankly. “What are all the cockeyed punctuation marks doing in there?” he asked.

Amery exhaled Havana smoke expansively. “That’s the way things are now, Michael. Those punctuation marks indicate whether the protagonist’s thoughts are self-directed or Rider-directed, or a combination of both, and which is dominant at the time, human or Rider. They became absolutely essential with the coming of the Riders.”

Malloy covered his lips with his fingers. “Of course, I don’t understand this punctuation now. But I could learn it quickly enough.”

The publisher shook his massive head. “No, you couldn’t learn it. You don’t have a Rider. You could never understand all the little subtleties.”

“I could fake it.”

“Never. It might get past the average reader, but the author and critics would know right away. All an editor can do is watch for typographical

errors and change them the way the author wanted them if his fingers hadn’t tripped over the wrong keys. As it was, we used to get a good many complaints from writers about you making changes in their work.”

“Grammar,” Malloy explained. “I got kind of a bug about grammar. I used to fix up manuscripts some.”

RUBBING out his fat cigar, Amery leaned across his desk. “This isn’t like the good old days when I started out, Mike. If I had my way today, I’d get the National Guard ordered out and have those miserable slobs grind out stories with a bayonet at their backs!” The red gleam dimmed in Amery’s eyes. “Those were the days, by God! Back then you didn’t edit manuscripts with any dinky little blue pencil—you used a razor blade and a grease stick!”

Amery slumped down in his swivel, his eyes now only embers. “But that day is over, Mike. Writers have their rights, damn them. You get the wrong punctuation in one of their private-eye epics, Mike, and one of them will slap a suit against the company for defacing a Work of Art, and both of us could land in jail.”

“Westerns,” Malloy suggested in desperation. “Historical fiction. They can’t

employ the new punctuation. I could edit them."

The veteran publisher shook his head again. "No. Cowboys in westerns today turn your stomach more than ever with their damned nobility and purity. Heroines in historical novels act just as if deodorants and Living Bras had been in use back then. And these stories are written as if the characters *did* have Riders, with only a few minor concessions."

"Okay." Malloy stood up. "I'll go quietly."

"Maybe you're lucky, Mike," Amery said up at him. "I remember old-fashioned ideals like privacy and free will and free enterprise. They don't exist any more. You can't tell me that my free will hasn't been affected. Why, every business deal I've had since the Coming has been strictly ethical. You know that isn't like me!"

"No," Malloy admitted thoughtfully.

"I'm even so ethical now that I recognize I owe you something. I know money can't repay—"

"Hell it can't," Malloy said quickly.

The publisher stripped off a sheaf of bills with deliberation.

Malloy pocketed them. Enough to keep him eating for a couple of months. After that, there was always the Salvation Army. He didn't

have anything to worry about, really.

"Amery, what would *you* do if you were in my place?" he heard himself ask suddenly.

AMERY steepled his fingers. "I hesitate to suggest a deception to anyone, but since you ask me what I would do if I didn't have a Rider, I will tell you the truth: I would pretend that I did not have a Rider."

"What are you talking about? I *don't* have a Rider. So far as I myself personally know, I'm the only person in the whole damned world that doesn't have one. I'd like to find out why, but I'm no scientist. So I just have to live with it. Or without it."

"There's a very, very fine difference," Amery pointed out with one finger. "Semantics is no longer a living science since the Coming, but I'll try to make myself clear. You must pretend to have to pretend that you don't have a Rider. Join the Jockey Set."

"Jockey Set," Malloy mumbled, massaging the back of his neck. "I've been put away for three and a half years. What's the Jockey Set?"

"Jockeys are characters who pretend that they don't have Riders, that they are self-sufficient human beings. Sometimes they use their Riders' powers and claim to be natural supermen. Some-

times they leave Rider power untapped and pretend to be natural, old-type human beings. But they are all fakes. The Rider in them comes out sooner or later."

"But if they have Riders, will I be able to fool them into thinking I'm only pretending to be without one?"

Amery lifted his shoulders and drew down the corners of his mouth. "Who knows? I will tell you this, though—you must be pretty much of a blank to a Rider. If they won't touch you, it must mean they can't."

Malloy started to ask him how he knew what Riders felt about him, then thought better of it.

"How would I fake trying to hide the fact that I didn't have a Rider? I suppose, maybe, by slipping up and letting myself predict the future or something . . ."

"That's it!" Amery beamed. "You see? It will be easy!"

"Of course," Malloy said dully.

"I mean, that is to say, any time you don't do something and don't do it particularly well, the Jockeys will only admire your splendid act."

Malloy nodded thoughtfully. He turned and shook hands with the publisher. "Well, Amery, thanks for the money—and the advice. You always were the most devious master of deceit I ever knew."

"Thank you," Amery said with great sincerity.

"There's one more thing. This may sound silly, but they found me out pretty quick after it happened. What does a Rider look like? Where do they come from? Where do they fasten onto the brain or body of human beings?"

Amery leaned across the desk and backhanded Malloy in the mouth.

"Get out!" Amery said.

Malloy left the office, holding a handkerchief to his cut lip.

IT WAS a dump. The name had changed a half dozen times over the last half century, but the spots in the tablecloths remained the same. The dump had seen the Lost Generation, the Beat Generation, and now the Ridden Generation.

Only, Malloy supposed, they called themselves the Riderless Generation. Well, maybe they were. Maybe they were like him.

He walked in, hanging onto that thought, his stride long. He cut down his stride. At that rate he would be out in the alley soon.

Self-consciously, Malloy slid into a chair at a vacant table so he wouldn't draw undue attention.

As he began idly tracing the grease spots on the tablecloths that looked like the

wrappers from a line of cereal boxes, all red and white checks, he discovered every shaved head in the room was triangulating him.

He shifted uncomfortably. He was playing it middle-of-the-road. He had a close crew-cut and wore a plaid flannel shirt and purple velvet ballet leotards. Maybe he was too far on the conservative side for here.

"Spell it, saddle," the counterman called to him without coming front.

"Cola," he ordered. "With chickory, pecans and honey."

"One sou'easter on the path," the counterman called out tiredly.

"With you're going to sit there, He?" a liquid female voice flowed into his ear.

"With I'm doing it, She," Malloy said, not turning.

She eased around in front of the table. She was red-haired and built, wearing black leotards and a coat of black enamel.

"Your pupils are going to wear me away," the redhead said.

"I've only got eyes. How else can I read you?"

"That is Truth. Tru-u-th."

The counterman set out Malloy's drink. "It's waiting for you, saddle. Don't tease it or it'll bite."

He went for the cola and brought it to the table.

"You came back?" she said.

He pulled up his chair. "I

always come back. You can risk money on it. Saddle up?"

"Saddle before the post, my touchstone."

THE girl sat down. Her green eyes were moving, always moving, but mostly over Malloy, his chair, the table. "You going to keep possession here long?"

"I don't know any reason why not," said Malloy.

"Of course you don't!" she snapped. "Only—they close at five."

"The billboard gives it two dozen hours a day."

"They trim a little off at five. To sweep the floors and change the tableshrouds."

"Change 'em from one table to another," Malloy jibed.

"You formed it. Clean ones in front, dirty ones in the shadows. Let's try breathing air," she suggested.

"Wait'll we gate up. I've got pecans to drink."

The counterman's hawking laugh filled the room. "Let him wait, Mandy. I might as well wait to later to sweep it in."

Her face caught fire for an instant. "The Board of Health don't go away just because you can read their dirty minds."

"So take him out," the counterman snarled.

Malloy suddenly decided he had played hard to get long enough. This was his first

chance to get in with the Jockeys. From what he had heard, they had some kind of underground set-up to help their own in business and the arts. He needed that help.

"Let's lope," he said, pushing his chair back and leaving silver on the table for the drink and a tip.

He touched the girl's lacquered arm and steered her toward the door.

Behind him, the floor fell in.

Ripping, tearing, rendering, splintering, crashing, crushing, reverberating bedlam!

Of course, it couldn't have been the floor caving in, Malloy thought as he turned to see a great hole where the floor had disappeared.

The hole was where the table and chair he had been using had stood a moment before.

Flapping at the sides of the cave-in were innumerable thicknesses of linoleum, and between each one an incredible accumulation of filth and debris—O. Henry candy bar wrappers, a cover from a *Collier's*, a booklet on the new Packard ("Ask the Man Who Owns One"), a newspaper article on Flo Ziegfeld's girls (stop thinking in slogans), but mostly just dirt—dust, webs, lint, filth. There had been no boards under the table; the ends of the exposed boards weren't freshly broken but old and rotted porously

smooth. Only the linoleum and the dirt had supported the table for years.

Malloy edged closer and saw some broken sticks lying on a jagged pile of coke standing out black in the darkness far below.

The redhead pulled him back from the edge, her fingers digging into his biceps, writhing with a strange passionate intensity, as if she were trying to knead him into a layer for a pie.

"With you're a REAL Jockey, He, a REAL Jockey, a REAL ONE. *Truth!* I'm going to take you to the Commissioner, He, the Commissioner in his saddle."

Somehow, uncertain, yet surely, Malloy was dimly pleased at this.

"DON'T say it," the fat man remarked, glancing up for an instant, then lowering his eyes to the splay of papers on his desk. "No esoteric jargon, please."

"All right," Malloy said readily. "Shall I sit down?"

"By all means, saddle up." A second chin trembled. "Damn it, there I go. Have a chair."

Malloy took the only chair not piled down with books, or maps, or correspondence, or manuscripts, or notes. It had a straight back and a plastic seat, piously uncomfortable.

The big man looked up a second time and folded rows

of pink sausages complacently. "So you want to be a Jockey, eh?"

Malloy thinned his lips and licked the insides of them, making a snap judgment. "Not really. I don't have a Rider, and I want what help the Jockeys can give me. I'm not particularly anxious to acquire introverted slang and a shaved head, but if that goes along with the help..." He spread his hands eloquently.

"So you don't think you have a Rider?"

Malloy didn't know how to answer that. "I don't think I have a Rider," he repeated without inflection.

"I don't think I have a Rider, either—only I know I do," the fat man said.

Malloy stood up elaborately. "You dirty steed."

"Oh, sit down, Malloy, sit down. I'm a Jockey like the rest of you. There's only one difference. I *know* I'm sick. I've got a Rider and all its powers, but I could no more use them than an acrophobe could climb a ladder up the Empire State to get at a naked princess sitting on a bag of gold."

Malloy eased back down onto the chair and shook his head slowly. "That *would* be a hell of a way to be."

The big man slammed down two hams made out of fists. "You are exactly the same way, sonny boy! Only

you don't know any better."

Malloy swallowed. The man known as the Commissioner might be right at that. "Have it your way," Malloy said. "But I sure *think* I don't have a Rider."

The Commissioner smirked. Malloy knew what that meant. He knew men like the fat boy; he understood them. He had had Grayson Amery, Dr. Heirson—he knew the breed.

"What are you holding back on me?" Malloy demanded.

"Malloy, do you even know what a Rider is?"

Malloy paused. Then, "No, I don't."

"I thought not. Shall I tell you?"

"I imagine you were planning to."

The Commissioner braced his fists on the work surface of the desk and lifted his bulk halfway from the chair. "The Riders are a disease. Like rabies."

Malloy cleared his throat. "That's one way to look at them."

"Don't be servilely civil to me. That is an accurate, clinical description of the Riders—they are a cerebral infection."

"You mean their powers of emergency telepathy and precognition, their seeming secondary personality—all that's a hallucination?"

Malloy was fevered as he asked it. It was at last some

confirmation of his own theory. The whole world was sick, except him.

"That is exactly what I *don't* mean," the Commissioner said contemptuously. "The Riders are real entities, capable of real miracles so far as we are concerned. But they aren't mammals, or insects, or pure energy forms—they are viruses."

"Viruses that can think?" Malloy asked, aghast.

"No. No one unit of the strain can think, but *chains* of them can. Together they form different combinations and responses, like analog components or brain synapses. Objectively, they are an infection that can enter the body anywhere but that always spread to the prefrontal lobes—like rabies. Only they don't destroy tissue; the Riders are benign parasites."

"That's one word for them," Malloy admitted. "But if they are a virus, there must be antibodies—is that the word?—for them?"

The fat man snorted unpleasantly. "You can't fight an infection that is smart enough to consciously change its shape and fight back. Natural adaptation and mutation are tough enough. Besides, nobody would stand for being cured of his Rider, any more than you would let me 'cure' you of having eyes."

"Then what was your point in telling me the nature of the

Riders? You weren't merely conducting an adult education class."

"True." The Commissioner burped delicately and settled back in his chair. "As a matter of fact, there is one thing I left out: the Riders aren't suited for Earth. They have difficulty in adapting themselves to live on this planet. Once they get into a human being, they are okay. But before that they are weak and have to get hothouse care. Exactly that—*hothouse care*."

Malloy's tongue stuck to the roof of his mouth. He pulled it loose and said, "And you can break the windows of hothouses!"

The Commissioner smiled. It was unpleasant to watch.

"**N**OTHING personal, Malloy," the Commissioner whispered almost subvocally as they lay together in the green ooze, "but we haven't known you long enough to give you our trust. The first false step will be a long one for you—exactly six feet."

Malloy tried to squint through the foggy darkness, and almost instantly gave it up. "You can't blame me for everything, Commissioner. I told you I wasn't convinced that some of the Riders in there won't precog our plans to save themselves."

"All the ones we are going to destroy are the unhooked-up ones. They can't send any-

thing any more than one unattached telephone could. They aren't really very good with their psi powers. It's strictly an emergency talent, like our sudden spurts of adrenalin."

He gave an unsatisfied grunt and bellied forward.

Up ahead of Malloy, the Commissioner and an unstable stable of Jockeys who had been coming into town for weeks lay the secret hatchery of unhosted Rider viruses. They could only multiply beyond a certain self-maintaining balance inside the human body, and had to be grown in cultures on Earth, outside the healthy climate of a null-gravity, radiated vacuum in space.

It was the Commissioner's plan to destroy all the virus cultures, so that in eighteen years or so there would come along a Rider-free generation to outnumber the minor supermen still infected by the Riders.

Malloy had a lot of doubts about the plan, but he was willing to go along for his own reasons.

During the past few weeks of indoctrination and commando training, Malloy had had time to think. It hadn't taken nearly that long to figure out the Commissioner.

The Commissioner was simply a man who had to have power, and he couldn't stand for a whole human race

to be more powerful than he was, just because of a lack within himself. He was out to pull everybody down to his level, so he could stand out again and take over.

Still, Malloy thought, I may have something to say about that.

The men and a few women crawled through the semi-tropical Florida mud toward the low buildings glimmering in the light from the thin crescent of moon.

Malloy elbowed a foot closer to the hothouse breeding factory, up to here in stinking muck. Any second now, he thought, somebody is going to roll over on a cottonmouth.

"Ready with your cloths," a man next to him relayed, first catching his attention and mostly lip-synching it.

Malloy dug out his Asphixion pad, and readied the tab to pull off the plastic coating. Clamped over the guards' faces, the catalytic agent would rapidly absorb the men's oxygen. With a partial vacuum in the mouth and larynx, no cries could carry and the victim would rapidly black out.

The pad would be removed and the guards would be allowed to catch up on their air intake. They wouldn't be harmed in any way final, so their emergency psi warning system wasn't supposed to cut in.

Malloy shrugged.

The plan would never work.

It was based on equal parts of megalomania and wishful thinking.

Malloy's only problem was when and how to best expose the plot before it was found out without his help.

He couldn't stand up and shout a warning. If he tried that, one of the fanatic Jockeys was sure to clamp an Asphixion pad over his face, and, with him, they might not be considerate enough to remove it.

Only a treacherous, self-seeking rat would even think of exposing these poor misguided people and betraying his own race to some extra-terrestrial viruses.

Malloy's elbows slipped out from under him and he went face first into the mud.

He forced himself to keep from spluttering and lifted his head. *Where had that idea come from?*

FOR one adrenalin-charged moment, he thought he had finally acquired a Rider.

But no. A Rider would hardly urge him to carry out an attack against the citadel of existence to its own kind. It had to be something simpler, more elemental than that.

The voice had been his own conscience crying out against treason.

He followed the probable train of circumstances if he heeded his conscience.

He would most probably be killed in this useless attack. He doubted that this was the *only* breeding chamber for Riders, or, that if it were, the Riders safely in human bodies couldn't transplant part of themselves and start new cultures.

If he wasn't killed, he would probably be returned to his cell, his padded cell, by Rider-ridden people.

If he were somehow let off, he would be left to wander the streets, a public ward.

The trouble with his conscience was that it wasn't logical—and it had a poor memory.

It didn't recall those three and a half years mislaid in an asylum.

Only an unprincipled—

Malloy shut it off and felt a drop of sweat running down the deep crevices between his eyebrows. My only problem, he reminded himself again and again, is how and when to expose this raid before they discover it without my help.

The solution bloomed in his mind.

It was remarkable how well the human mind could operate under stress.

He half-rose from the mud so he would be silhouetted to anybody watching, and fell back.

The guards hadn't spotted him, but he heard the Jockeys scurrying toward him through the mud.

The squishing halted near him.

He waited.

The commandos moved ahead, leaving him behind.

When he felt it was safe, Malloy took the Asphixion pad off his face—a pad without the transparent plastic coat being pulled off.

He made out a buddy team of Jockeys almost on top of the first Rider-ridden manned post. All the others had to be far ahead . . .

Malloy leaped to his feet—or tried to. He managed to slosh to his knees.

“*Raid!*” he screamed. “*Jockeys are raiding the hothouse!*”

The lights flared up, a magnesium, Fourth-of-July night glare. Guards with guns sprang from everywhere. The guns went into action. Clouds of crystalline Asphixion snowed down on the raiders.

From far back, Malloy watched in satisfaction.

The sound came from behind him.

The Commissioner blobbed forward, a distorted ball of slimy mud.

“I will crush you under my foot like a bloated white grub!” the fat man announced with sincerity.

Malloy’s eyes narrowed in the darkness.

“Stay away from me, Commissioner, or I’ll push you down—way, way down!”

The blocky figure retreated a step, quivering impotently.

Malloy nodded to himself.

The Commissioner had spoken too knowingly of a terrible fear of falling.

THE interrogator was the younger man who sat next to Dr. Heirson during Malloy’s release from the hospital.

“I feel you’d like to know my identity, Mr. Malloy. My name is Pearson; I work for the federal government. Now would you tell me just what you hoped to gain by betraying the assault force of Jockeys?”

It was the crux of the matter.

Malloy took a deep breath and said it.

“I want a Rider. I want to be like everybody else. If you people have any sense of gratitude and justice—and you seem to—you’ll set up some kind of scientific project to find out why I haven’t caught a case of Riders and to see that I am properly infected.”

Pearson leaned back in the other straight chair inside the rough-boarded outbuilding.

“Mr. Malloy, we *know* why none of the Riders who drifted in from outer space infected you. You already *had* a Rider—an entirely human, not alien, one. You are schizoid—you have a split personality. You adjusted to it to an incredible degree and submerged it, but it was still there and no alien would touch a man who already had two minds.”

Malloy felt no emotion, only an inescapable acceptance. "My conscience," he said.

Pearson nodded. "Your second personality is becoming steadily less recessive."

"But telepathy—all the tricks of the Riders—I can't do them."

"You will be able to. Two minds *are* better than one. It would seem that schizophrenia is the natural state of supermen, when properly trained and integrated. In fact, you should be able to accomplish more than a Rider-ridden man—you will have two human personalities, and the Riders are little more than viruses conscious of their own existence."

"You mean I'm a *superman*?"

"Yes. But unfortunately you are a threat to the present order because of your non-Rider attitude. You are being returned to your padded cell. There are guards outside. I hope you will walk out quietly to meet them."

Malloy walked out quietly to meet the guards who would take him away. On his way out, he met Grayson Amery coming in.

Pearson shook hands warmly with the publisher.

"Mr. Amery, the government owes you a vote of

thanks for recommending Malloy for this job of infiltrating the Jocks. Turning against one of your own kind is never easy . . ."

Amery laughed lightly. "Malloy was not 'one of my kind.' He was an editor. Even worse than that, I think in his attitude he always remained no more than a writer. I understand he is being returned to confinement?"

Pearson looked troubled. "Yes, sir. Personally, I would feel more comfortable if he were eliminated. I am not at all sure that we can keep Malloy under lock and key once he develops his potential of schizophrenia."

"I know. Unhappily, the primitive ethics of the Riders prevent our taking care of Mike in the most efficient way. That's what I wanted to talk to you about. May I sit down?"

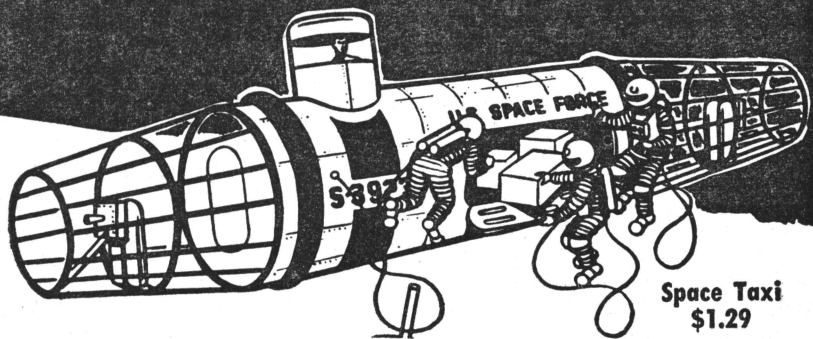
"Please do, sir," said Pearson.

Amery took the vacant chair and leaned forward with boyish enthusiasm.

"Mr. Pearson, I have faith in humanity. I believe we can keep the benefits of any situation, including the Riders, and eliminate the disadvantages and limitations. My boy, all of us must start to work to find a way to override the Riders!"

END

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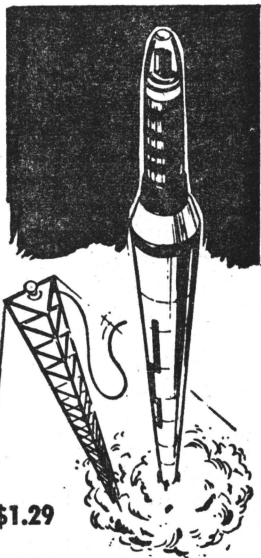
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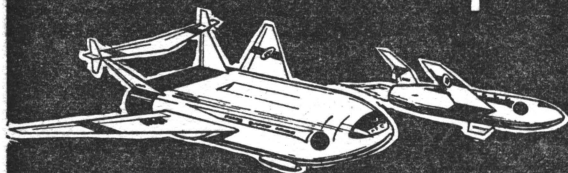
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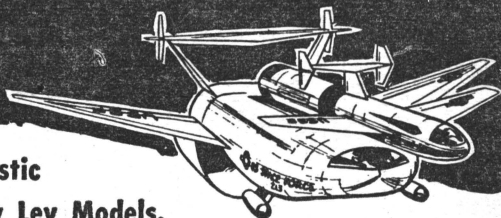
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