

What Emmeline wanted was her husband to show up on time for tepid manhattans; what her husband wanted was to step into a field of entropy. Of such minor differences are many domestic quarrels constituted.

GREEN SUNRISE

by Doris Pitkin Buck

"DARLING." FOR A MOMENT EMMELINE'S voice held the softness of honeymoon days as it drifted to the basement where Al was working. He raised his head, ready to smile; equally ready, though, to go back into his shell if memories of his wife's wrongs came over her again. Evidently they did, for he heard them as in a different tone she called, "Oh, come on, come on. Let's get in step, for once."

Deliberately, Al placed three more transistors in his Time Machine. He would continue working on it until he sensed that Emmeline was really ready to explode. Then he would go upstairs where they would both pretend they were terrifically in step. Or in love. Call it anything you want.

Some day the Time Machine would be complete. Then Emmeline could call, dovesoft or shrewish. But he would be on his way to another lass and probably a very different drink. He would

see the glorious machines of the half-imagined future. And he hoped Emmeline would be missing him terribly.

His mind slid back, in an insidious way it had, to their first explosion in a chain reaction of quarrels:

The Mill was big and beautiful, even before remodelling. It called aloud, every separate stone of it, for an inventor to fill it with his embodied fancies. The woods feathered off softly into saplings. When he wasn't busy with mathematics and mechanics, he planned to paint. He stood looking at his new property—his and Emmeline's of course—so absorbed that at first he did not realize he was listening to something worse than chickens—to the stridency from a peacock's throat.

"What do you think this is—a damned English castle?" He was furious. He suspected he would have to feed that peacock when he

wanted to work. And how could anyone think through all that raucous hysteria?

"But you must love her, darling. She's the first. Later when her eggs hatch . . ."

"Her eggs . . . !" She wasn't even a cock.

They had hatched—and he hated every single peachick, if that was the term. He loathed them, all the more because visitors thought them cute. Invariably.

He was ready to swear that he never meant to gloat openly when they died from an obscure bacillus. But the shattered world had never been the same again. Emmeline had acquired a grievance. And new little grievances hatched out—his and hers—like the chicks.

He adjusted a wire in the Time Machine and became realistic. His adored Machine—he had to face it—wouldn't work. The power of thought was involved as well as the formulae of advanced physics, and somehow the mental part was not yet right. His formulation of the mathematics of utter physical lack of organization—entropy to the scientists—satisfied him. But—

While he settled at his desk, he thought he had better pacify Emmeline, and he stalled for time before they met to sip the cocktails which were gradually no doubt growing tepid. "Coming, angel," he called with apparent blitheness.

He settled comfortably at his desk and began to work out the mathematics of his personal contribution to propulsive force. He could let *psi* stand for the power of his mind. Tentatively he wrote, letting *T* equal Time: The integral of *psi* differential *T* equals the chronodynamic impulse of thought. That about summed it up. He touched the Machine tenderly.

Al waited for the heel-tapping that was almost a stamp. When it came, he went his reluctant way to the living room.

Emmeline, with an untasted cocktail in her hand, shot at him suddenly, "If you want to leave me, why don't you get into your—your Contraption and go?"

Al changed the subject instantly. He snorted, "Contraption! What do you know about transfers of energy between isoenergetic spirals, or for that matter about changing their frames of reference?"

Emmeline gave her husband an alert, receptive look that invited interchange of thoughts. He fell into the trap. He always did. He began to talk on his hobby. Just when he thought he was communicating fully on the subject of induced entropy, and how an entropic field could slither, as it were, through less random sections of a universe whose fourth dimension is time, he noted the faraway look in Emmeline's eye.

For some reason he also noted that the hands of the clock stood at 6:45.

The hour seemed unimportant to him as he spoke with bitterness. "It's nothing to you that the very nature of entropy makes it all but impossible to bound it. Therefore my Machine, which you unjustly call a contraption, cannot—"

"Cannot work," Emmeline finished for him, unable to keep a shade of smugness out of her tone. She added, "Don't you see it needs—"

"Needs what?"

"Call it woman's magic for short. Science always requires magic to complete it."

Al laughed. Any smugness was now on his side.

"Don't! Did I laugh at your theory?" That made him pay attention. "Think of what I do with time. Since my late teens I've turned it backward and forward, mostly forward at first. Now I always turn it back."

Al looked his bewilderment. What Emmeline said almost sounded as if it made sense, though of course it didn't.

She left the room to return with a hatbox. Opening it, she drew out something that looked like a wreath of moonflowers. "See, Al, magic! I put it on like this, and seven years are gone. Vanished. Look, we haven't yet seen the Mill where you—" She added, almost too quickly. "I tip it this way;

more years disappear." Emmeline spun it on her finger. "Funny, I never thought of calling it magic till today. Why, I could put my magic ring of flowers around your—what did you call it?—your induced entropy and let you do anything you want with time. But why leave the present?"

He looked her full in the eyes. "You're really asking?"

She looked steadily back. "You mean, my only love, that we're quite, quite washed up?" She waited—a full minute. Al could have denied it.

Then in a flash her violet eyes became pure flame. "There's one way to find out," she cried. She almost hurled herself from the room.

Alfred followed his violet-eyed wife as she ran down the cellar stairs. He did not know what might be in her mind. But he had an almost maternal protectiveness toward his creation in the basement, and he feared some change for it was in Emmeline's mind.

He reached the foot of the stairs almost when she did. The Machine towered over both of them with an eerie, non-human beauty of its own. What would happen if he put his arm around Emmeline's shoulders and pointed out the racks to hold his transistors? He wondered if she saw the faint suggestion of a fortress in his walls of wire mesh. He could not tell. But he knew one thing: That he

was going to leave his dilemma and leave it now. He wanted no deep involvement with any woman. Give him the calm of great mechanisms which he was sure would dominate coming ages with their serene perfection. He saw them already.

He sprang—he did not step—onto the platform of his Machine, pulled three levers and flicked a switch. It must go, he told himself.

Machinery whirred. Light flashed violet. But his creation stood as solidly, as stolidly in its place as Gibraltar. Emmeline, her eyes widening, moved close.

Al had no idea what she might do. Smash everything? He must go now, he thought with desperation. And thought was the last and greatest part of his elaborate scheme.

Again he pulled levers. His fingers felt for a button, forgotten in his first rattled attempt.

Light rippled out in orange lines. The ripples crested. They rose as waves. Between them space darkened like chaos and primeval night. A great hum vibrated and rose to a roar until the platform shook. A fireball of green streaked from nowhere. Struck.

There was silence. The sea of color vanished. The fireball was a memory. And the Machine had not moved an inch in space. It had not moved a second in time.

Emmeline gave a long, long stare to the man among his tubes

and racks. Her tone sharpened. "I want to find out something as much as you do. This is the way. Go. I'll send you."

Her arm swept out. She threw something at the Machine. Al's arm moved to guard his darling.

Too late. Emmeline's little pale wreath slithered down the curve of a hoop and knocked a switch and two spirals as it did so. Again the Machine quivered. But this time something delicate near the circlet—another spiralled wire—was flicked to a new position. The Machine jarred. Al reached toward the three switches but only had time to pull one. Violet radiance glimmered. Eyes? No. Everything had ceased to have its usual meaning or form. The boundaries of everything flowed into everything else. For a dizzy, disturbing instant long as years, electrons whirligigged round a nucleus before their pattern collapsed. He was no longer himself. Something that might have been Al thought, "This is Entropy."

He was dead. Every physical atom that had made him was annihilated. Eternity opened like a velvet abyss. Tides of weariness and despair swept through the universe, but what felt that lack of hope, nothing could tell.

Light swirled round a weak, sick creature which felt pins and needles pricking its fingers and toes.

"My delight," a voice cried outside this creature, "you came because of my longing. It brings me my desire. You must be a man out of past time. You could not be dressed so madly were you anything else. And this incredible—what shall I call it—" A hand crept toward the tubes and transistors.

"Let my Machine alone!" Al's voice rang out clearly. Toes and fingers, no longer tingling, belonged to him. He was suddenly frightfully happy, frightfully hungry, and quite aware that he was stepping into some wholly different century.

"Who are you?" Al presently asked the girl rubbing herself against his ankle like an immense and lovely cat turned human.

"Zopheeta, my dream-come-true." Evidently she liked men long, rangy, and red-headed. He liked her too, and was glad her speech was understandable though the vowels were less than familiar.

"I'm hungry. Also dreadfully thirsty." Al felt the lack of his barely tasted cocktail in Emmeline's living room.

"Look, lord and love. A new beverage machine. I think—I believe— Perhaps I can work it. What is your pleasure?"

"I'll take . . . what you do."

"Then we drink Formula K. One sip: troubles cease. Two sips:

the past reshapes itself according to the heart's desire. Three sips and the future opens like a perfumed rose."

"Perfect. Especially sip two."

"I hope I recall the ingredients." Zopheeta's forehead wrinkled painfully while she consulted what seemed to be a bartender's manual. She did not read it. She tore out objects like IBM cards and slipped them into her apparently solid cocktail machine. On one card Al recognised a chemical symbol—the benzol ring. Other signs he did not know. Apparently the drinks of the future were concocted from scratch.

Zopheeta told Al, "I am not what any person in your century would call an intellectual. Light of my eyes, I may make a slight mistake here or there. But I think I can produce the green and bubbling liquor, Formula K, which—as it touches your lips—is like all the frosts of autumn for coolness."

Al could almost feel Formula K going pleasantly down his throat. Zopheeta seated herself near Al. Two small tables appeared; on each was a goblet with a pretty froth of jade fountaining upward. Then the drink cleared, bright and full of bubbles.

Al lifted his glass. "Here's mud in your eye."

She looked shocked. "Was that kind? I am sensitive."

For the first time in a somewhat dazed quarter hour, Al looked at

her carefully. He could kick himself for his remark. Her eyes did not exactly match; each was turquoise blue, but one was definitely greener than the other. Zopheeta let her lids fall. Her hands, supple as Spanish fans, rested like dainty paws on Al's knee.

"You will love me, will you not? It was sloppiness for me to choose a second eye that did not match when they were operating. But I was tired. I can always buy new eyes. Then you came, just when I appear my most regrettable." The blue eye and the blue-green eye both misted. "I am not an intellectual. Always I do things like this. The higher masochism, lord. You will not hold it against me; no? I have loved your image for years, constellation of my night."

"Hold it against you? Not for a minute. I was clumsy."

She took her fingers from the stem of her glass which hung for a moment in midair. A small stand shot toward it, stopping when it was not quite underneath. The glass descended, almost toppled off, got chipped; but finally glass and stand reached adjustment. Zopheeta paid no attention. She pouted, "Why do you not embrace me, since I am not displeasing to you?"

Of course that was what he should do, Al supposed. But he just wasn't accustomed to that sort of thing. Even his dreams

weren't quite that direct. He temporized. "After the drink," he said.

Zopheeta looked crestfallen but followed his lead. She reached toward the stand for her glass. Al took the first sip of his. It was slightly warm. Zopheeta sipped hers and made a face.

"I make such mistakes," she confided. "A panel of analysts have told me I am intelligent, enchantment of my existence. But I put, as it were, my fingers in my own eye. I wished to impress you. I blundered."

"What does it matter?" Definitely that first sip, even warm, did have a solvent effect on troubles. He took the second. What had Zopheeta said? The past would be rearranged, wasn't that it?

The Mill was big and beautiful. It had called aloud, every separate stone of it, for an inventor to fill it with his embodied fancies, and now Al stood surveying shapes as delicately curved as shells, yet strangely suggestive of dimensions beyond ours.

"Darling," Emmeline's voice floated out of silence, "aren't you tired, beloved? Shall I bring your brushes and paints?"

She came toward him slowly because she stopped to fondle each machine with love and awe.

Al did not take the third sip. He lingered in the pleasant past. But the effect of the drink was brief. He had a sharp reaction, remem-

bering the peacock. This was a helluva way to time travel, with mental feet still in the twentieth century, still in the fly paper.

"Damn!" he cried out of his frustration. "Damn! Damn!" He turned on Zopheeta. "And you couldn't even serve me a cold Formula K!"

The evening was strained. Zopheeta kept looking past him, aloof as a cat at evening. Al found he had plenty of time to size up his surroundings.

Apparently he was in a house that carried indoor-outdoor integration to its ultimate limit. Forest trees rose a hundred feet or more under a translucent dome. Escalators with involved and lovely lines led to their tops.

Since Zopheeta remained impersonal, Al went up one on his own. It led to a high platform in the blossoming branches, from which a gently rolling flowerscape was visible, the high blooms facing upward into soft light. He noticed other platforms, many holding what he thought were birdcages. He went to the edge and stared through the blooms into depth on depth of green. At once a kind of airy catwalk or bridge shot out connecting the place where he stood with another. Al shrank back. Below, he heard Zopheeta laugh. He peered far down. Her uptilted face was watching him.

Al summoned all his daring

and walked out over blooms swaying a light breeze above a green confusion that was part boughs, part air. He felt dizzy, but he managed to reach the next platform. He looked down. Zopheeta's face still tilted toward him. He pointedly disregarded her.

Instead he looked at the numerous cages which turned out to be full of butterflies. Their wings were sinister with markings like spider webs, like zigzag lightning, or like whirlpools. He poked a twig among them, wondering if anything savage would happen. But the airy creatures were actually peaceable enough. Still and all, ages must have passed for these insects to be so changed. He could not be sure, though. He was no biologist. He wanted to ask Zopheeta what century he was in, but he felt too stubbornly proud to apologize for his outburst over the temperature of Formula K.

He heard Zopheeta laughing silvery scorn beneath the trees and out of bravado he moved to the edge of the second platform. Again a bridge shot out, leading to a kind of Daliesque summerhouse that tipped to and fro as the branches under it moved.

With Zopheeta's laughter bubbling upward, he put his foot on the bridge, which abruptly stood on end, quivering and creaking. Al reeled back onto the platform. The bridge, made of plastic slabs and cables, went to pieces in a big

way, with slabs falling everywhere. Luckily Al was not hit. There was a whirr. Then a voice intoned slowly, pausing between each syllable, "In case of mechano-ruption, consult your servonator. This—" everything slurred a little—"is a recorment." The recorded announcement was repeated six times. Then everything whirred again.

"Clamber down the branches. The descendo-scalators are probably out of order too if the recorment stopped. It should repeat ten times."

Al saw a large squishy fruit growing near the platform and considered dropping in on Zopheeta. But he had the conditioning of a twentieth century gentleman. Instead he grabbed the large tree limb on which the platform rested, and he crept awkwardly along it. The tree was fortunately well supplied with sturdy boughs. He got down, rather scraped, a bit light-headed, but in the main rather proud of himself. By the time he reached ground, several descaltors hung limply from branches.

"Think not of this," Zopheeta spoke with an annoyance which he realized was not directed at him. "My servonator told me at the last time there would be trouble always with this. Pretty but flimsy, no? I have a standin-order— You know what this is? Yes? Well, he comes every twelfth day to get everything going again."

Al digested that. Apparently, he told himself, people here led highly mechanized lives among machines that didn't quite work. He thought with tenderness of further time travel.

With her nose still in the air, Zopheeta took two flasks from a table and poured Al a bed. He had seen something like that in an advertisement once that hinted of the wonders of the future. Here it was actuality. There must be some special skill, though, in mingling the liquids and Al feared the worst. But Zopheeta's higher masochism was in abeyance. The bed solidified properly. She watched it, then with marked disdain poured a second bed for herself.

Before Al fell asleep, his mind was on the night to follow this one. What did morality require? He had left home around 6:45, only a few hours before, by one reckoning. It really did seem like a dirty trick to two-time Emmeline in a century that he had only been able to reach because she had given up her most treasured hat. And yet, and yet—. Emmeline—dust drifting over the continent. Emmeline—a little eddy in some storm over a desert, a few motes in an upper layer of the atmosphere with snow crystallizing upon them. Or upon *her*. Al was uncertain how to put it. Perhaps all vital parts of Emmeline nourished some plant. She could be

leaves filtering summer sun—or a brown seedpod. As lost as any transformed nymph to her demigod. Loneliness flooded over Al as he realized that he, a time traveler of one haphazard voyage, would never be likely to hit again the decade he had left. The century perhaps, but scarcely closer than that.

He sat up in the poured bed, trembling. He had never even thought of return when he set out. He had wanted a carefree temporal romp with all the rules off, and here he was obliged to make his own morality. Tense business. He looked over to Zopheeta. She slept curled up, her whole body an expression of animal innocence. Al felt his moral problems grow more urgent as his guidelines grew fewer. He was startled in what seemed a minute later to find a midday sun streaming down on him.

At midday life for Zopheeta was evidently real, life was earnest. No dawdling. No endearments. Her severely striped black and silvery grey mantle was clearly a street costume. "I go," she informed Al, "to change my eyes. Major surgery. I shall not be back before evening. Do as you will till then. My new eyes will startle you. What a color!"

"And it is—?"

She brushed past him before she turned in the doorway to an-

swer, "Oh, the new color: violet."

That remark called for a cocktail at any hour. Al circled the cocktail machine warily. To his relief he found one wall had easy-to-manipulate buttons under a label, "Archaic." In finer print he found familiar cocktails listed. He jabbed a martini button; out came a manhattan with an olive in it. Al turned away in disgust and ate some fruit that had fallen under the trees. It had a faint flavor of turpentine but was satisfactory enough.

Licking the juice from his lips, Al said aloud, "My true love," and turned toward the Time Machine. Definitely he was leaving. He hoped, however, to find out one or two things first. But when he looked at the racks of transistors, curiosity faded. He hurried over, brows knitted.

Zopheeta must have fooled around with his treasure before he was awake, or else the shock of landing was responsible. Vital parts were scattered. This could, he figured, make for complexities not in his reckoning. He set to work to get everything in perfect shape. To his relief, there was more mess than damage.

Al's absorption must have been great. He had no idea anyone was looking over his shoulder until something tickled his neck. He jumped. An unfamiliar blonde, with as many dangerous curves as

a mountain road, was pretending to stare at the Time Machine. Her fluffy hair brushed his neck.

"A time voyager." Her voice was out of a carillon. "Zopheeta—so lucky whenever she calls across the vasts. That longing for men, what force! And this man—Ummmmmmmmmm."

Al turned the color of a sunset cloud, and grew even pinker when he saw another woman looking over him with eyes as coldly black as a snake's. But the snake girl attracted him, definitely, where the gogetting blonde did not. She was beautiful, too, in her cool ivory way.

"You think him yours until Zopheeta returns. Not so. He has a true understanding of machines, this one. Observe. He all but caresses each part."

The blonde said nothing. But her pout was worth a hundred protests.

"Think!" The brunette's contralto was cool as her skin tones. "They will be welcoming. Technicians are needed by Them."

"Technicians. Always technicians. Men are good for many other things. And there are never enough. One can play with them." With her own hand resting over Al's, she asked, her voice almost a purr, "You would like to be my plaything? No? Yes?"

"Suppose," the brunette was chilly, "I tell Them what you say about their rationing of men."

"Who," asked Alfred, "are They?"

Black eyes and tawny eyes crinkled with amusement. Both women laughed immoderately, joined for a moment in a shared joke. "Who are They? Why They are the Gnostocrats, of course."

"Gnostocrats?"

"The Governing Body which knows everything—or at least knows where the knowledge can be found. All knowledge is recorded somewhere in some machine's memory drum," said the blonde, close to reverence.

The brunette added, and Al could not tell whether or not she was mocking, "Nothing new has been done or invented for about a thousand years. You see, it could only duplicate what is on some memory drum."

Al stamped once like a bad-tempered little boy. A mechanical civilization—just his dish, but with everything going to pieces under its own weight. Then he could not help smiling at the irony. He decided to get away so fast that he would not even ask the brunette about the century.

Al set his foot firmly inside the elaborate wall of the machine. This trip he would do the necessary extra propelling with *psi*, the power of his thought, in spite of the blonde's crazy suggestion that he did not propel but was helplessly pulled. The ideal

Al did not take the second step.

He *was* pulled, vigorously, not through time but through space. The blonde had fastened onto one wrist, her small nails digging into him. The brunette had him by the arm and pulled as hard. With a colossal wrench Al freed himself and made the platform, the blonde almost tumbling into the machine after him. Al punched a button. He pulled three levers madly and twisted a spiral coil. A moment more and those women would make a shambles of his complex tubes, racks, and meshes—or of him.

This takeoff was easy as a bird's gliding. Al tried to set the century dials as the Machine moved. It was too late. The stars in their courses were already hopelessly jumbled. While Aldebaran orbited round the Lyre, darkness came.

He woke again to feel a sea-wind humid on his face. The stars, not yet quite in their right positions, were paling into earliest dawn. He sensed something very wrong.

He remembered no crash but he groped to the Machine. In the dimness his fingers explored the damage as they touched piece after piece scattered on what must be a tablelike rock. The growing light did nothing to reassure him, nothing at all. His platform was a couple of cracked plastic sheets attached to one lever. A button like a sightless eye remained on a

twisted tube. Wires coiled round it in a messy heap. Transistors were reduced to fragments. In this chaos, Emmeline's hat hung at a drunken angle.

The rim of the sun came up over the ocean. For a blinding instant it flashed green. Al put his hand over his eyes and kept it there a long while.

Wasn't there some superstition connected with that rarely seen flash *The man who sees*— Al could not remember any more.

He did recall the physical explanation—the wave lengths at the red end of the spectrum deflected below the horizon by atmospheric conditions; the short wave lengths at the blue-violet end diffused in upper air. That left no color but green. It was a rare phenomenon, especially at sunrise. What *was* the saying, "*The man who sees the green flash at dawn . . . ?*" Oh well, what did it matter?

He looked about him. He was on the level top of a headland above the sea—a place of grass and stones. Rocks set on end formed a rude circle. By comparison Stonehenge looked sophisticated. He must, he reasoned, be back in prehistory. Or else he had gone far forward till he had reached a world decayed into savagery. He had no idea which it was and probably never would know. He recalled the paling stars. 10,000 years ago constella-

tions had not looked as they did to the twentieth century. 10,000 years forward from the evening he had left Emmeline—? Al shrugged.

He sat down on the table of rock among the ruins of his—oh, call it a contraption now, he thought. Stillness and emptiness surrounded him. So much, his ego prompted, for the theory that anybody had pulled him into this particular morning of time.

He wondered idly, as winds lifted his hair, about the ultimate value of time travel if a man carried annoyances from millennium to millennium. Then he heard a song, or at least distant vocalizing. For a long time it was faint.

Presently it grew louder. Singers appeared, shaggy in their clothing of pelts. Shaggy in dress, shaggy of hair, but unmistakably female, every father's daughter of them. Equally unmistakable was an undercurrent of excitement, swelling through the sounds they made until their song became a tumult of welcome.

Al waited, with an odd, anachronistic sense of being the visiting fireman. The women began to dance around him. He got the fact that the dance definitely was put on for his benefit as figures broke from the group to pantomime before him.

Their movements were vocal as language. Al learned the recent history of the tribe; its last war,

its defeat, the massacre of all its warriors, its boys, even its old men; the flight of some of the women—those he saw—from the enemy who would have enslaved them. A tall creature, her robe of skins more elaborate than anything the others wore, stepped toward Al, her braided hair falling to her hips.

Braids yet! He had not been a married man for nothing. He sensed when a woman went in for the newest style. Maybe those braids made the daring woman who sported them a leader. Something flashed on her finger. It was mica, set in dried clay.

She began to dance, as no one else had. Those who watched her, felt with her. Al stared fascinated, hypnotized. Sunlight caught on the mica. His eyes followed the brilliance helplessly while the woman danced the fury of the group. She fell to the earth, face down in supplication to her goddess. Through her, Al sensed this was a holy spot—taboo. They were not pursued here. Her thoughts turned stormily to revenge. She—and all the others—would raise up sons to kill their enemy. Al heard them crying as with one voice for their sons' father to come to them. Dramatically now the woman waved the others forward.

For a moment Al's eyes ranged over the crowd. He saw virgins, still almost children. He saw

women, their faces avid above sagging breasts. To all of them, even the half-terrified youngsters, the expected love-making would be fulfillment. Through it their way of life could go on. Something whispered faintly that for him it would be different. But the light from the mica blazed before his eyes. He hardly knew how he felt.

The priestess—he was sure she was that—went back into the crowd. Al's eyes closed. He waited.

As though he had been commanded, he opened them at last. The woman stood before him. In one hand she held a split gourd full of liquid. Something passed from her mind to his; he knew the liquid was fermented sap and juices; knew too it was cold as a plunge in icy water, as a hidden lake in a priestess' secret cave. She could have said in words, "This is what you have sought."

Then, his head turning mechanically, he saw the girl she led forward. The edge of the girl's long mantle of hair caught the light, turning it into a mist of radiance round her supple body. Her eyes met his. They were blue as chicory, neither afraid nor over-eager. They were lakes waking to spring. With this girl everything might be different. Always.

The cold liquid touched his lips. His mouth was full of the icy drink of the last foreseeable future—and the cold jolted him back to himself. He was suddenly

a man who knew his own mind. He wanted no part of this age, no matter what it supplied, even a drink that at last was properly chilled; even a bachelor's paradise of willing and unlimited women, one of them out of a poet's dream. He wanted— He put it into action not words as he drew in a long, desperate breath.

Let the priestess and her women tear him in pieces if they could. He wasn't going to end tamely. He tilted up the cracked floor pieces of his Machine; they stayed together, apparently from habit. If he could yank out the remaining metal lever, he had a weapon.

He yanked. The coiled wires zinged. They flamed. What was left of the plastic shivered. The button almost fell onto his finger. Emmeline's anachronistic hat took off by itself, possibly for another go at time. And Al passed out cold.

He came to himself in so late a twilight that he could hardly see. He was apparently in a chamber partly sunk in the earth. His back was against some sort of wall, whitish even in the gloom. It should be hair-raising, alone in a subterranean place. But somehow, as in a dream, emotions did not tally with events. Al felt happy.

Somewhere above him, he noticed a crack of light. Wondering if he would be understood, he

looked upward and ventured a feeble "Hello."

"Darling," someone almost sobbed, and he knew the someone was Emmeline. He heard her run to the door at the head of their—why didn't he know instantly that it was familiar?—cellar stair. "Darling. Darling. I might have lost you forever, lost you in entropy."

Weak as he was, Al went up the stairs three at a time. The cellar light was flashed on from above, illuminating a floor on which there was no trace of a time machine. He knew it had taken all any mechanism could. To his amazement, he found he held in his hand a wreath of white and living moonflowers.

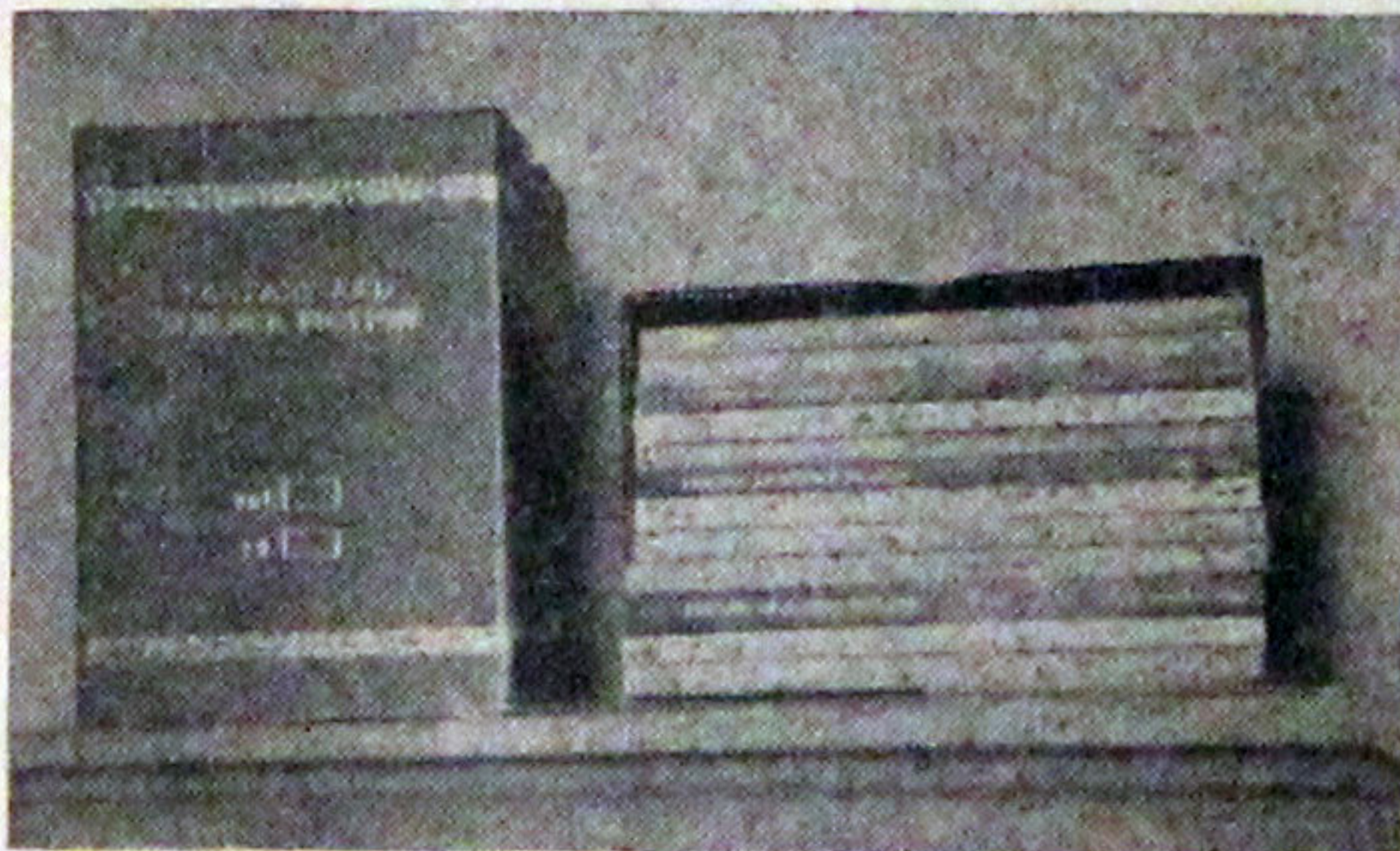
At that instant he remembered: *The man who sees the sun flash*

green at sunrise knows true love from infatuation and hunger—knows it in others and even, amazingly, in himself. The green flash was a rare phenomenon.

"For you, my only," he whispered as he placed the circlet on his wife's hair. She murmured back, "Cocktails are ready. And they're . . . they're cold as cold."

Al did not pay the least attention to the manhattans, as he and Emmeline sat close. Once Emmeline breathed, "I wanted you back so badly I knew you'd have to come." With Emmeline, that idea seemed adorable; and she was perfect. She asked no questions. The clock struck seven.

The ice in the shaker slowly melted, but that was nothing to one whose eyes had been dazzled by a green sunrise.



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