

Since a certain day on the dunes of North Carolina many long years ago no one has written a story about the first man to fly. The last story of the first man in space—for so long so rich a subject—was written only yesterday. Equally intriguing as a theme has been the arrival on Earth of the first extra-terrestrials, and the question of Galactic Union. The last of these stories (as of this writing, anyway) has not yet been set down in print. There is always something new which can be said about even an old idea, and Jay Williams says it here—and, lest we should seem to be damning with faint praise (or even praising with faint damns), we hasten to say that he says it excellently well, and that it is well worth saying. And reading.

GIFTS OF THE GODS

by Jay Williams

THE GREAT GOLDEN SHIP HOVERED over the Atlantic with lightning crackling about its fins. People stood on the rooftops of the city staring, pointing, shading their eyes, some with pearl-handled opera glasses, some with cheap telescopes, and a few inveterate bird- or window-watchers with expensive field glasses. The ship settled slowly into the bay and was lost in a cloud of steam.

The steam cleared. It could be seen that the ship floated, and all

about it were hundreds of silvery specks: dead fish bobbing on the dirty water. A dark square appeared in the golden metal and there was a long, simultaneous "ooh" from the city, like the cry that goes up with a skyrocket. A small craft, curiously-shaped and high-sided, launched from the ship and soundlessly shot towards the Battery throwing up a high fan of white water like a wing.

The five people who stepped ashore looked like people. Their

skins were a firm coppery brown, all save one whose color was creamy yellow; aside from this there seemed to be no discernible differences among them. They wore snug, jointed costumes, something like a light armor but of the color of a beetle's carapace, and about their faces were pale blue aureoles barely to be seen in the daylight. They stood calmly looking at the city, at the crowds, and exchanging a few soft words among themselves. One of them bent over, picked up the boat, rapidly folded it into a small packet and thrust it in a pouch that hung at his belt.

Seventeen people died in those few minutes, some being pushed off the crowded rooftops, some trampled in the streets, four or five of heart failure, suffocation, or sheer astonishment. The babblement made the buildings tremble. Slowly, the men from the ship walked up into South Street.

At this point a shrilling of sirens heralded police cars and several large, black limousines. There had been hasty debates over protocol: whether the visitors should be received by the Mayor of New York, or by a representative of the United States government, or by the Secretary-General of the United Nations. In the end all three had come. The Mayor, rowing himself forward with his elbows, held his hat over his chest and tried to

bow. The crowd, oblivious of the police, pressed closer to get a good look at the visitors.

The American delegate to the United Nations, who had come as the embodiment of the United States government, held out his hand with a rather fixed smile. "Allow me to welcome you in the name of—" he began.

The Mayor interrupted. "Gentlemen, it gives this great city great pleasure to extend our hand of friendship—" and then stopped, lost in his own syntax.

One of the visitors stepped a little way ahead of his fellows. In a clear, ringing voice, he said, in perfect English, "We thank you for your sentiments and your welcome. It is our desire to go to your—er—Center." He paused, and conferred for an instant with one of the others. "The United Nations Center," he said. "That is where all the governments and peoples of your planet are represented, are they not?"

The Secretary-General, biting down a smile of innocent triumph, said, "It will give me great pleasure to conduct you there. Will you step into my car, please?"

The five visitors nodded. Their leader said, "I will do so. My companions prefer to—um—I do not know how to translate it . . . They will follow us in their own way."

At this, one of them produced

the packet into which he had folded their boat. He quickly unfolded it, set it on the pavement, and got into it. The three others joined him. A delicate pink glow appeared and the boat rose to the level of the second-floor windows. One of the Visitors looked over the side with a smile, waved his hand, and called something to the leader.

The leader nodded, and said to the Secretary-General, "We are ready. Shall we go?"

The Secretary-General, a trifle dazed, pulled himself together and bowed the Visitor into the open limousine. As they drove off slowly, with the crowd opening before them, he said, "If you'll pardon the question—why didn't you just float to shore, instead of sailing in?"

The Visitor looked curiously at him. His eyes, it could be seen, had no whites but were round and opaline. "When there is water, why should we not sail," he said.

Then he added, "Floating. Is that what you call floating? I had thought that to float meant to rest on the surface of some material, or to glide along with it. But you see, they are—hm—propelling themselves, while nullifying the attraction of gravity." Then, half-turning in the seat and bending the fixed gaze of his large, iridescent eyes upon the S-G, he said, "Do you mean to say that if

you had been in our place, you would have preferred to fly over that lovely water?"

The S-G, utterly confused, was silent.

As they neared Fourteenth Street, the S-G said, "We appreciate your visit. This is a great day for Earth."

"Is it?" said the Visitor politely.

"Well, it's not every day that we have arrivals from another planet," said the S-G with an artificial chuckle, glancing involuntarily back at the Mayor, who sat in his own car, red-faced and annoyed.

"Oh. Yes. I see."

"Yes, another planet . . . Where *do* you come from, by the way?"

"We call it Earth," said the Visitor. "It is quite a long way off. Many parsecs, you would say. It is one of a great many Earths. We are a—well, a United Nations, but of planets." He uttered a quivering, high-pitched sound which the S-G took to be the equivalent of a laugh.

"Yes, this is all very familiar to us," said the S-G. "A Federation of Planets, advanced technology, and so forth. Our science fiction writers have been preparing us for it for years. And now, it is a reality. You have come, I presume, to offer us membership in your Federation?"

The visitor blinked. It was a

slow blink, and it came from below the eye rather than above it, a deliberate, unhurried sliding of a kind of nictating membrane. It conveyed wonderment and polite surprise.

"Oh, dear, no," he replied. "Membership? Not at all. Furnishing one's own transportation is one of the first requirements. Your people cannot yet lift an interplanetary vessel, to say nothing of an intergalactic one."

Just then, they arrived at the United Nations building, and the conversation was cut short by the mob of delegates, officials, stenographers, guides, guards, and tourists, who encircled them in one violent hypercencotic outpouring. With some difficulty a space was cleared. The Visitors in the air descended and packed up their vehicle. The S-G led them all into the main building and thence to the General Assembly hall, which was speedily packed with delegates and other gapers. Newsreel and television cameras were focused on the historic moment, and reporters poised pencils over paper.

The S-G, smoothing back his feathery grey hair, said, "We, the assembled representatives of all the nations of Earth, greet you and welcome you, visitors and representatives of another planet."

The Visitors inclined their heads slightly, but said nothing.

They had been seated on the dais behind the rostrum, where they could face the hall.

The United States delegate, tapping his fingertips together, said, "I would like to ask that the credentials of the Visitors be presented to this body. A pure formality, of course, but I think we should have some assurance that these gentlemen are—er—what they say they are."

Before the S-G could speak, the delegate from the Soviet Union shot to his feet, and cried, "I also have a question to ask of the—ah—captain, or leader of the Visitors."

That one rose and said, "You may address me as Spokesman, rather than leader. Our captain, as a matter of fact, is still in our vessel."

"Ah. Yes. Well, sir, how is it that you address us in English? I wish to ask this body what assurance we have that this is not simply a hoax on the part of certain Powers?"

Spokesman replied, in impeccable Russian, "I can, as a matter of fact, speak almost all the dialects of your planet. But I cannot address you simultaneously in Turkish, Greek, French, Japanese, Gaelic, Syrian, and so forth. I have chosen to speak English because I am assured by our researchers that it is understood by a majority of your members. It is not difficult to learn a human

tongue, of course, provided one knows how. And we have had researchers on your planet for the past twenty years or so, collecting data, accumulating languages, and so on.

"As for our credentials . . ." He paused, surveying the audience solemnly. "Why do you want them?" he said. "We are not 'representatives' to your organization in the sense in which you have used the word. It is of no concern to us whether you believe that we are what we are, or not."

"I'm afraid I don't understand," said the British delegate, recovering first. "Does the gentleman imply that he was not sent by his government to contact us? If so, what does his presence here signify? I was given to understand that his first request was to be taken to the United Nations."

"That is correct," replied Spokesman. "When a planet is sufficiently advanced to have a central governing body, we prefer to act through it for the sake of convenience and efficiency."

The Secretary-General said, rather nervously, "Yes, but, I understood you to say—in the car, you know—that you were not going to offer us membership in your Federation. The question raised by the delegate from the United Kingdom is therefore germane."

"If," began the delegate from Bolivia, knitting his brows, "this

is a declaration of war, let it be understood that we are ready—"

Spokesman raised a hand. "No, no," he said. "War? Certainly not. We do not have wars. I will explain."

"You see, sirs, our Federation, as you would call it, has certain laws. One of these is that when a planet reaches a condition we describe as—well, you would say, Federable—and thus meets certain requirements, its space ships are then contacted by members of our organization and it is offered equal membership."

"There are, however, other cases. We continually investigate other inhabited planets, and when we find that a section, or group, or nation can meet certain other requirements—let us call them, pre-Federable requirements—we are then charged to offer that group all the assistance necessary to enable them to come up to Federable level."

"I see," said the S-G. "Assistance. What form does this assistance take?"

"Chiefly, technological improvements," replied Spokesman. "Things the group cannot get or make for itself. In effect, we say, 'Tell us what you want and need and we will give it to you.' But you must understand, sirs, that our law requires us to make this offer, but that acceptance is voluntary."

"Yes, sir, we understand that

perfectly," said the United States delegate, with a wide smile. "We understand, and we are proud and humble."

The French delegate put in, "May I ask Monsieur Spokesman to tell us what those requirements are he spoke of—the pre-Federable requirements?"

Spokesman held up a small, glittering object between the fingers of his right hand. From it, a metallic voice spoke:

"A group, or unit, of human beings, shall be said to be in a pre-Federable condition when they have successfully reached the following level of sophistication:

"They must have adapted successfully to their environment without drastically changing the ecology of the region so that it becomes unfit for other living beings.

"They must have developed creative arts which reflect their culture and are an integral part of their social organism, the performance of which arts does not rest on economic or political motivation.

"They must not take other life except for direct protection of their species, or the natural requirements of their own survival.

"They must have developed a social order in which no individual goes hungry or shelterless, and in which the physical well-being of one is the responsibility of all."

The voice ceased, and Spokesman put away his device.

The delegate from the United States broke the stillness. "Well, sir, everything you have said is embodied in the principles by which our great democracy, throughout its history, has attempted to . . ."

He fell silent before the grave, penetrating gaze of the Visitor.

Spokesman said, "We are not speaking of principles, but of practise. Our words are precise and admit of no loose interpretation."

"I protest!" said the delegate from the Soviet Union. "Civilized beings must admit of principle."

"We are not civilized," said Spokesman, placidly.

"But it is not a simple matter to put principles into practise when one is surrounded by hostility," cried the delegate from Pakistan.

"I did not say it was simple," Spokesman returned. "Principles are no more than good intentions. The hungry, the wounded, the dead, are not concerned with good intentions."

The French delegate, who had once visited the prisons in Algeria, cleared his throat several times. The British delegate, too proud to ask whether fox-hunting fell into the third category, shifted uncomfortably in his chair. The delegate from the United States, thinking of the increase

in unemployment figures, tapped his teeth with a pencil. The Soviet delegate, considering state edicts on the nature of Art, buttoned and unbuttoned his jacket uneasily. No one spoke.

Then, at last, the Secretary-General said, "If you insist on literal and actual interpretations of your requirements, Mr. Spokesman, I'm afraid you won't find a single nation on earth which can fill your bill."

"Oh, but we have," said Spokesman, brusquely. "That is why we are here. In a place called the Kalahari Desert, in the continent of Africa, dwells a nation of small people whom you call Bushmen. They meet every requirement."

There was a moment of stunned quiet, and then a roar of protest. The S-G, banging furiously with his gavel, finally restored order.

The delegate from Ghana cried, "I protest! These—Bushman—they are nothing but savages."

Spokesman smiled. He half turned and said something to his friends, several of whom made the odd noises that passed among them for laughter.

Then he said, "Savages? But this implies that they are inferiors, and only a little above brute beasts. As soon as men call other men by such names, they have failed in our third and fourth requirements."

The Canadian delegate, in a cold, nasal voice, said, "I confess I cannot understand how people with the high intellectual and technical attainments of our friends from outer space, can fail to take into account the matter of Progress." As he said it, the shining capital letter could be heard. "What have the Bushmen contributed to human history, or to the good of mankind? They have not progressed in five hundred years."

"I am afraid," said Spokesman, "that you confuse 'progress' with 'change'. It is true that you live in a social community which has changed profoundly in the past hundred years. But have you progressed? Are all our citizens happy, fully alive, intellectually mature?"

"I think I can safely say," put in the delegate from the United States, "that under our system of free enterprise, the vast majority of our people are secure. Yes, sir, I think they are satisfied and contented."

Spokesman's eyes flashed as he turned them on the speaker. "You used the word 'secure'. Do you think that security is essential to a mature being? Security is the least of his needs, for he knows that to be alive is to be insecure.

"As for your other words—do your contented citizens never kill themselves? Do they never take violent action against their em-

ployers, or against the state? Are there not Indians in your land whose culture and property has been taken away from them, and who are now living in disease and poverty? Are there not hundreds of thousands of men whose skin color prevents them from earning a proper livelihood, or even from sitting alongside men of another color? Can you tell me that they are satisfied and contented?"

The pale blue halo which surrounded his face had become more pronounced and seemed to give off crisp sparks. One of his companions leaned forward and said something in an earnest tone. Spokesman stood silent for an instant or two while the color faded. Then he went on:

"You equate 'progress' with improved methods for chilling food, with better types of transportation, or with the discovery of cures for disease. Those things are not 'progress'. Progress is what you do with the cured people, and where you go with your improved transportation, and why you go there. Progress is what happens in your heart. Most of you are good people, but you have not progressed an inch in five hundred years, nor even a thousand. Given a chance for personal profit, there is not one of you who would not level the forests, destroy all wild life, kill a thousand other human beings, and turn your backs on the suffering of your fellows."

He seemed to sigh, and his head drooped. Before he could continue, a man in the back of the hall had broken through the police cordon and came running down the side aisle brandishing a pistol.

"Antichrist!" he screamed. "Return to the Devil, your master, ye powers of darkness!"

He was disarmed before he could fire, although there were mutterings of agreement in various parts of the hall.

Spokesman said, "Yes, I had forgotten your religion. I am told that a vast majority of you believe in lovingkindness, forgiveness, charity, and humility. Perhaps we had better not speak of that.

"In any case, we have spoken enough. I call on the representatives of the Bushmen to come forward."

There was a long, awkward pause. Then the S-G, blushing slightly, said, "I am afraid, Mr. Spokesman, that the Bushmen are not represented in this body."

"No? Why not?"

"Well—eh—our principle is that only nations ready for sovereignty may have their delegates seated here. When you come right down to it," he went on, stoutly, "it is very similar to your own laws governing your Federation."

"Similar?" said Spokesman, and again the slow translucent lid rose and fell before his eyes in amazement. "You may consider it simi-

lar if you like. I presume that if you saw three big boys bullying a little boy you would consider that similar to the deliberations and decisions of adults."

"But there is also some doubt," said the S-G, "whether the Bushmen can actually be considered a nation."

Spokesman nodded. "I see. What you mean is that they are neither numerous enough, rich enough, nor strategically enough placed. In that case, will you please give the necessary orders to have representatives from their people sent here to meet with us. I know enough about your technology to ask that this be done within, say, forty-eight hours."

"Forty-eight hours?" The Secretary-General turned pale. "But my dear sir, it will take days simply to find the Bushmen."

"It's an outrage." The British delegate rose. "Speaking for Her Majesty's government, we can no longer lend our presence to this travesty—"

Many other delegates sprang to their feet. Spokesman glanced at his companions. The one with the creamy skin got up slowly and with a casual air pointed his finger at the assembly. There was a loud crackling noise and the air was filled with a pungent, yet rather pleasing odor. At once, all the radio and television instruments ceased functioning, the lights dimmed, and every single person

in the hall and for a radius of fifty miles around it, was deprived of motion. All traffic froze as engines stopped and people were caught in absolute paralysis, and even airplanes were held motionless in the sky above the spot.

Spokesman said, with no trace of passion in his tone, "I regret that we must employ what appears to be coercion. However, we have learned that our standards do not always apply to primitive peoples. No one will be harmed. But I must warn you that if we are forced to the inconvenience of searching for the Bushmen ourselves, if we are denied the cooperation of this organization, we shall have to keep you all in a state of non-motion until we have concluded our business, simply in order to avoid being interfered with. It may prove to be more inconvenient for you than for us."

In the end, of course, they gave in. To tell the truth, many of the delegates were already contemplating methods of getting control of the Bushmen, while others were simply burning with curiosity to find out what the cosmic goodies would be that the fortunate aborigines were to receive.

As soon, therefore, as they were released from their spell and had agreed to help the Visitors, cabals began to form in various parts of the building.

The Soviet delegate, deep in discussion with Yugoslavia and

Hungary, pointed out that it would be necessary to establish the principle of the right of small nations to self-government, and that this would require to be implemented by a strong arm, if necessary, to prevent the encroachment of colonial powers . . .

The American delegate, deep in discussion with Britain and Brazil, made it clear that it would be necessary to establish the principle of the right of small nations to self-government and that this would require to be implemented by a strong arm, if necessary, to prevent the encroachment of colonial powers . . .

The French delegate went about telling everyone that for his part he was only interested in seeing that the right of a small nation to govern itself should be protected, and that France always stood ready to uphold its historic role in preventing the exploitation of the weak and helpless by the powerful and sinister.

The Australian delegate was heard to murmur that a strong case might be made out for the ethnic connection between the Kalahari Bushmen and those of the Australian hinterland. The Egyptian delegate remarked that it was a well known fact that the Bushmen of the Kalahari had originally entered Bechuanaland from the Nile Basin. The Israeli delegate, chuckling, replied that if this were so it ought to be re-

membered that the whereabouts of several of the Lost Tribes had never been satisfactorily established.

Meanwhile, the Visitors relented in their 48-hour ultimatum, extending the time to one week, and an immense team of researchers set out in hundreds of jet planes supplied by every airline. They were delivered in a matter of hours, along with all their equipment, to Bulawayo, Serowe, and Windhoek, from which clouds of jeeps and trucks were swiftly launched. The world followed with bated breath the news from mobile television and radio stations, as a gigantic net was drawn about two-thirds of the Kalahari Desert, within which the puzzled, frightened, and mild little people were scooped. Eventually, over a thousand Bushmen were cornered at Lake Ngami and the Okavango Swamp. With the help of relays of interpreters they were made to understand that they would not be harmed, but that they must choose representatives to go before the men of another world, who would make them rich gifts.

It took nearly eight hours of steady talking for the Bushmen to realize what was wanted. Once they did, however, they gathered, giggling and whispering, into clans and villages, and then pushed forward their best men—expert hunters, fine singers and

musicians, wise old leaders, and gallant young dancers.

These men, drawing together in a crowd and looking shyly at each other out of the corners of their eyes, talked together for a while in their clicking, chirping tongue and then squatted down on the ground. One only, a very old man named Tk'we, remained standing. He had a snub nose, wicked little slanting eyes, and a pot belly, and his skin was the color of ancient, well-weathered ivory.

He said, "Oh Tall Men, we are ready to go."

The Chief of the United Nations Mission, dusted his hands together. "Splendid," he said. "How many of you are there, old boy?"

"All that you see here," replied Tk'we. "Except for a very few old women, who prefer to remain behind."

The Chief's mouth dropped open. He began to count without knowing what he was doing. There were, as a matter of fact, one thousand and thirty-eight Bushmen present. Tearing at his curly blond hair, the Chief replied that this was not democratic, and that they must exercise their right to hold a free election by secret ballot, and that they must choose a smaller committee. He was a very conscientious young man, a graduate of the University of Toronto.

Tk'we, leaning on his bow, said that a man didn't get the chance to see the Gods with his own eyes every day in the year, and that consequently they all wanted to go. He said that they did not understand this democracy, and that they didn't want to make any trouble, but that nobody wanted to hurt anyone else's feelings. He said that if he understood this election business properly, it meant that a man would have to say that someone should go and many other someones should remain behind. If that was the case, who was going to be so rude and unfeeling as to deny his neighbors the right to take a ride in an airplane and see the Gods in person, and get presents?

Furthermore, he added, nobody wanted to leave his women and children behind to look out for themselves. "What is more," he said, in his gentle, humorous, clicking voice, "we have never been out in the world, and a few of us would be very frightened. But if we all go together, we will take courage from each other."

He finished by saying that if this arrangement was not satisfactory, the people would be glad to call the whole thing off and return to their peaceful ways in the desert, good-bye, and thank you very much.

The Chief of the Mission thought about Spokesman's level chilling gaze that was all pupil

and no whites, and about the pointing finger of Spokesman's companion, and wondered what other disagreeable ways the Visitors might have of showing their displeasure. So one thousand, thirty-eight members of the United Nations Mission had to yield up their places in the planes and were left behind at Windhoek, Serowe, and Bulawayo—because a delegation of three or four small Bushmen had been anticipated—and the Bushmen got into the planes and were taken off into the skies, clinging to each other and silent in delighted terror. It was months before some of the abandoned members of the Mission got home again.

"To scenes of unprecedented pandemonium," in the poetic words of the Associated Press reporter, the Bushmen were disembarked and taken by bus to the United Nations building. At the directions of Spokesman, the General Assembly hall was cleared except for the Secretary-General and his interpreter, a brilliant young Bantu student of African languages. The grumbling delegates were moved to other meeting halls from which they could observe the proceedings by television, and the one thousand, thirty-eight Bushmen, looking with alarm at the incomprehensible murals and other decorations, and at the fixtures and the curving rows of seats, huddled in the

aisles and along the walls. Their children, however, wide-eyed and merry, sat or stood on the seats.

Spokesman and his companions faced them from the podium. Piled against the wall were a number of wooden crates and cases which the Visitors had had brought in, that morning. The Secretary-General, repeatedly mopping his forehead with a large handkerchief settled himself in an armchair, and Spokesman rose and addressed the Bushmen in their own language—or rather, languages, for he had to employ three related but slightly dissimilar dialects.

"My friends," he said, and there was a little stir and then utter quiet, for the Bushmen were not accustomed to being addressed in this way by other people. "We have come from the stars to speak with you. We know how hard your lives are, but we know also how you live, simply and merrily, meeting each day as best you can, going softly among the lions and the wild bees, harming no one, but taking what is fitting. Now the time has come for you to tell us what you want above all else, and that which you ask we will give you."

There was a pause, during which many turned their eyes toward Tk'we. At last, the old man moved down to the front of the hall and stood under the rostrum. He leaned on a smooth stick,

with one foot drawn up so that its sole rested against his other thigh, and although he was less than five feet tall he managed somehow to look very dignified.

"Master," he said, "we are content to have flown in the sky, to have seen this great *werf* with its high tower and shining windows and strange people, and to have beheld you and the other gods with our own eyes. Now, all that we want is to go home again."

Spokesman said, "We can make you richer than all other men. We will teach you how to build *scherm*s like this one you stand in, how to wear splendid clothing, how to cure all your ills, how to fly through the air yourselves and speak to other men at a great distance."

Tk'we looked over his shoulder at the others for a long time. He shrugged. "As for me," he said, "I do not want those things. If the Gods will give me some meat, I will not refuse it. Also, some medicines to cure the aches in my bones; that would be very good. But why should I want to fly, or to live in one of these great *scherm*s? What I want is to be left alone."

Behind him, hundreds of soft voices murmured discreetly: "Yes, yes, that is so. Meat and some medicines. Do not forget tobacco. Perhaps a little tea, that would be nice."

"I think those are the gifts we

expect, Master," said Tk'we, grinning. "If you gave us all the other things, then for a little while perhaps we would seem like great men. But then the Bantus and the white men would come and quarrel with us, and there would be war, as there was in the old days, when many Bushmen were killed and we were driven into the desert.

"It is this way with me," he went on. "I was a good hunter, and I loved hunting. Also, I liked to lie with women. You cannot give me those things again. Nor can you give them to the young men, for they already have them. Now, I like to have a full belly. I enjoy seeing the children play about, and I love to see the young people dance. Sometimes, when my heart is heavy or full of longing, I like to sit apart and play on the *guashi* and sing the songs I have invented. You cannot give me these things, for I already have them.

"What other things are there for men? No one needs more. If he says that he does, he is not yet a man but a child, who, no matter what he has always desires more, and looks from the bag of *tsi* nuts that he has to the bag someone else has. But we are not all children. Therefore, give us the promised gifts and let us go."

Spokesman nodded. He motioned to his companions, and they went and opened the cases.

They dragged them down into the audience and began passing out packets of razor blades, pipes, good hunting knives, first-aid kits, small mirrors, boxes of tobacco, soap, tea, lumps of sugar and of salt. They opened other cases and handed round cured hams, fitches of bacon, smoked sausages, and other delicacies. Each Bushman received a small knapsack into which he could stuff his gifts, and even the children were not forgotten. Then, with much hand-waving and smiling and bowing, they filed out of the hall and crowded into the waiting buses.

When they had gone, Spokesman and his companions went out to the plaza before the building and opened their collapsible vehicle. The other four stepped into it, but Spokesman beckoned to the Secretary-General and with an unexpected, kindly gesture put a hand on his shoulder.

"Please give orders," he said, "to clear the area around our ship, for we will be departing for home as soon as we have returned to it. Also, please see to it that the vast numbers of spies from all your member nations are warned

to retire. I regret that they were unable to get through the force field we placed about the ship, but I think they would have learned very little in any case. Farewell, and good luck to you. It may be that one day you will all reach the level of the Bushmen—stranger things have happened. In that case, we will return."

The Secretary-General sighed. "You knew they would take nothing," he said. "You had the cases ready. Or did you change them, somehow, with some juggling I didn't notice?"

"We knew," said Spokesman.

"But—how?"

"It is what makes them—hmm—pre-Federable."

"But *we* would know what to do with your gifts!" cried the Secretary-General. "My God, think of the things we could do—any of us—one of our great nations—"

Spokesman looked at the Secretary-General with compassion, and smiled. When he did so, he looked suddenly and surprisingly like old Tk'we.

"It is a shame, isn't it?" he said.

After all, he was himself no more than human.

