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TO WALK WITH THUNDER
DEAN McLAUGHLIN

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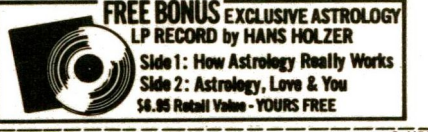

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ALL STORIES NEW AND COMPLETE

AUGUST. 1973 *Vol. 47. No. 2*

TO WALK WITH THUNDER. DEAN MCLAUGHLIN'S complete new short novel . . . . . **S**

new short stories

new features

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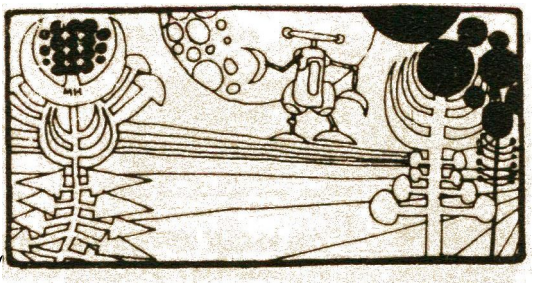
EDITORIAL



THE WORLD SF CONVENTION: I've devoted five editorials in the last year to the subject of the World SF Convention, its past, present and future. The first of these appeared in the June, **1972,** issue of our companion magazine, FANTASTIC STORIES. Subsequent editorials appeared in the July and September, **1972,** issues of this magazine, the October, 1972, issue of FANTASTIC, and the March, 1973, issue of AMAZING. Throughout the course of these editorials I have tried to be both informative and fair, to point out those areas in which the Worldcon was in trouble (or potential trouble) and to present space here for the opinions of responsible spokesmen for the Worldcons.

My purpose was not to force a change in the Worldcon, nor to impose my own views on Worldcon committees, but to bring forth a series of challenging ideas for debate in the sf community as a whole, out of which a resolution to current problems might be wrought. Naturally, not everyone has viewed these editorials in this light. In Milton F. Stevens' fanzine, ***The Passing Parade,*** for instance, Stevens, a member of the committee which put on the 1972 Worldcon in Los Angeles, states, "Ted White's editorials had annoyed me and I wasn't too appreciative of all the keen egoboo of being typified as either a thief or an associate of thieves." And, later in the same publication, still commenting on my editorials here, Stevens says, "For this I get represented as a cheap, thieving bastard by Ted White. I don't like Ted White very much at the moment. That shouldn't really be too surprising. I don't think much of his ideas on running a convention either. Of course, I do not regard cheapness as the primary virtue of a convention. Since fandom is relatively democratic, anyone who really likes White's ideas can always form a bidding committee and try to get a worldcon themselves. I suspect that they would lose, but they always have the right to try. If they won the bid, they would most likely lose their shirts. Probably the most conclusive argument against Ted White is that nobody seems willing to risk their money on his ideas. If there was any merit in what he has been saying, certainly someone would step forward to take the risk."

It should not be necessary to point out to those of you who have actually ***read*** my editorials that I never referred to Milton or his associates as "thieves," "associates of thieves," or as "a cheap, thieving bastard." This interpretation is Stevens' own, and about all I can say to it is that if the shoe fits, Milton, wear it in good health. (For a more sensible response to my editorials from the LACon Committee, see Co-Chairman Charles Crayne's comments in the editorial in the October, 1972, FANTASTIC.)

More to the point, however, someone ***has*** "stepped forward to take the risk" of putting on a Worldcon based loosely on the philosophy I advocated here: at the LACon the Washington, D.C., bid for the 1974 Worldcon was unanimously accepted.

Jay and Alice Haldeman are the Co-Chairman of the DISCON II, and I asked Jay (better known to readers of this

(Continued on page 121)

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TO WALK WITH THUNDER

DEAN MCLAUGHLIN

Although Dean McLaughlin has been writing superior science fiction for the past two decades, this short novel marks his debut in this magazine, and one which we welcome heartily. On the surface this is a story about a man confronted with a difficult problem—Tom Brandt, environmental adviser to the President of the United States, must mount a campaign against a new device that promises to genuinely purify the air . . . precisely because *the device does what it promises to do! Under the surface lurks yet greater problems, however, . .*

He who walks with thunder at his back must take the risk of being struck by lightning.

—from the Greek:

οστιφ γαρ αυ την βροντην αποτετραμμενοφ βασιξη, μινουνευει μερανωθηναι.

—H.D.C., transl.

THE CHOPPER caught up with him in the afternoon of the third day of his walk. Its shadow flashed across him—an instant of darkness on the red earth. The sudden whapping of its rotors was as sharp as gunshots; for an instant he knew the sensations of the rabbit when a hawk struck. Then, as the dragonfly machine settled to the caprock above the trail he'd been following, he found himself abruptly back in the twentieth century. Around him the timeless landscape sprawled, all its eons exposed.

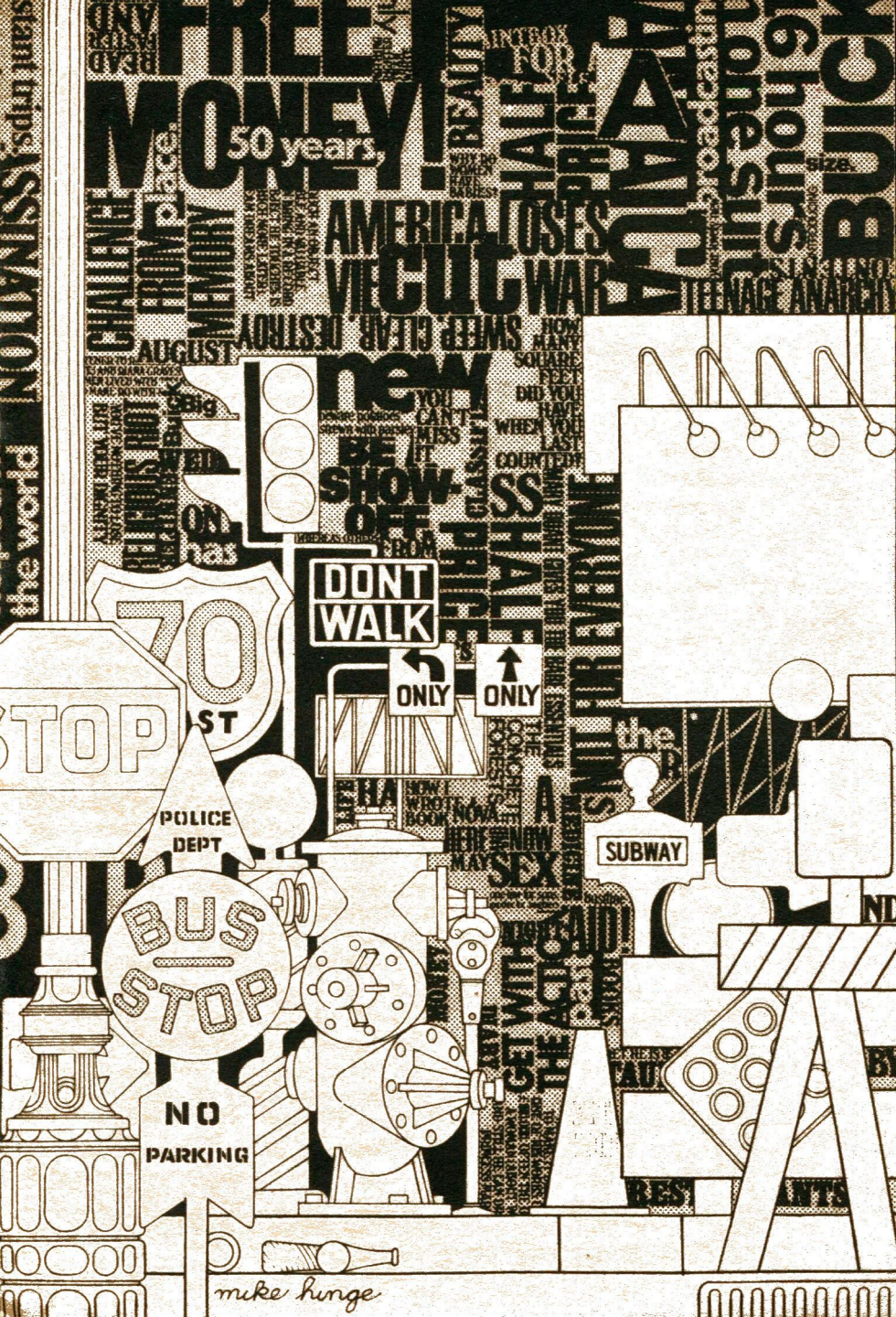
The chopper's cockpit bubble opened. Its pilot climbed out, lank and tall. He picked his way down the slope. His heels dislodged cascades of rock and earth that rattled down ahead of him. His face was shadowed by the wide brim of his stetson. Behind him the sky was blue and clean. There was a Park Service patch on the shoulder of his grey, short-sleeved shirt, and he wore a rectangular black badge with his name on it. His pants were Levi's. He stopped on the ledge above the trail. It was a six foot drop.

"Tom Brandt?"

Brandt stayed where he was, leaning some of his weight on the bamboo staff. He nodded but kept his mouth shut. One problem, on these treks; when you'd been to yourself for a few days, you got a compulsion to talk the ears off anyone who'd listen. It had to be guarded against.

The ranger found a cleft in the ledge. Carefully, he lowered himself half the

Illustrated by MIKE HINGE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mike hunge

remaining distance, then came the rest of the way in a slide that buried his boots to the ankles. Tom Brandt advanced toward him. He was less than an average man's height, Brandt was, and bent, now, by the weight on his back. A robust, stocky frame, but small except for his head, which seemed disproportionately large. Grey eyebrows. Deep-set eyes.

"They sent me out to get you " the ranger said.

They were face to face now. Tom Brandt looked up at him. The weight of his pack was a solid force behind his shoulders. "Who's they?"

The ranger fiddled with his hat brim. "Don't know that they said, exactly," he admitted. "Just said to tell you you're wanted in Washington. Guess they figured that'd be enough."

It was enough, but Brandt didn't say so. The Freshaire report was the only thing he'd left behind that was important enough not to just get left on his desk. And, knowing he had to, he still didn't want to go back. Not with his walking less than half done.

"They tell you what to do when I say I'm not coming?" he asked.

The ranger made a grimace that could have passed for amusement. "Not exactly. But they said, if you wanted to argue with anybody, there's a radio in my machine." He nodded back up the slope. The chopper crouched there, outlined against the blue sky. There was a small thunderhead in the distance. "They can put you through to anybody you want."

"Grant Hastings?"

Maybe he blinked, back there behind those mirror-bright sunglasses, but there wasn't any other reaction. "Well, I don't know about him. They said . .."

Brandt unbuckled his backpack's harness and swung the load down beside his feet. "One way to find out."

He scrambled up the slope—got to the first ledge and kept on climbing. The land here was all ledges of red rock with slopes of red earth and scree layered between them. The earth was soft; it sagged under his feet, but the ledges were close enough to each other that he could make it from one to the next without sliding back too far.

The ranger took a different route. His legs were longer, and his greater height enabled him to reach further to grasp the twisted shrubs that clawed their roots into the arroyo's walls. He passed Brandt and continued upward.

The radio was rasping and spitting by the time Brandt reached the caprock. He hunched himself into the passenger seat, one foot dangling outside. He wrinkled his nose at the kerosene stink of the chopper's fuel. The ranger handed him the mike, climbed out, and wandered off across the level benchland in the direction of the white-capped butte that towered in the middle distance.

It wasn't any problem getting through to Hastings once he got plugged into the federal net. The problem was to convince the man at the other end of the radio to plug him in and push button One. "I'll take the responsibility," Brandt told him. "I'd push it myself, but my arm's not long enough."

Fifteen seconds later, Grant Hastings' muscular voice burst through the static.

"Well, Tom!" Brandt could almost feel the handshake that came with that greeting. "How's the walk going?"

"Fine," Brand said, then corrected himself. "Was."

"Something wrong, Tom?"

He always made you bring the subject up, even when there couldn't be a shred of doubt what the subject was. "What do you want me back in the District for?" Brandt asked. "You've got my report on that Fabricorp gadget. What more do you need?"

"Well, it's not quite that simple. Tom."

It never is, Brandt thought. The radio made noises - static, mostly: now and then the ghost of some other voice talking somewhere far away—an incoherent word or two—then fading out again.

"The thing is," Hastings went on, "what you're suggesting might be hard for a lot of people to understand. And the Fabricorp people won't accept it without a fight. They've spent too much cash on the Freshaire to let anything as minor as a Dodgeson-Bell injunction stop them. I..."

Far off, straight south. Mount Ellen lifted her dark bulk against the sky, like a cluster of pyramids crowded together. Patches of snow lay against her slopes above the timberline. Somewhere beyond, a high-flying jet traced a white streak across the blue. To the east, San Rafael Reef lifted pale yellow battlements against a sky faintly wisped with cloud.

"Seems to me," Brandt said slowly, "some things got said back in '76 . . . that's *nineteen* seventy six I'm talking about—you said some things about making the right decision whether it's popular or not."

The radio rasped and chattered, but Hastings' voice was smooth. "I didn't win, that time, Tom. And 1 didn't have another chance until '84."

Well, it hadn't been exactly fair to bring that point up. Hastings went on. "That's why I need you, Tom. You're the man I picked to give me advice about environmental stability, and ..."

He was learning. He could say "environmental stability" without stopping to get his tongue unwound for it. Grant Hastings had come a long way. Someday he might even grasp the myriad of interrelated things those words spoke of.

"Me and four others," Brandt said.

". . . and you've given excellent advice every time I've asked for it, and more than a few times when I didn't have the sense to ask. I think your ideas about the Freshaire make sense, Tom. Good sense. But the country's got to be made ready for them. I'll need help on that."

The chill breeze fluttered a tuft of sagebrush beside Brandt's foot. Strange, how it could grow in that place, with nothing but the bare scatter of broken stone for a hundred yards around.

"You don't need me for that," Brandt said. "You're the chief. When you talk, people prick up their ears. You get listened to. When I talk, I'm just one of the Navajos."

"You haven't learned how to make people listen, Tom," Hastings said. "Now, to start with, I'm going to have your report released—not your recommendations; do that, and the balloon

would go all the way up. Just the report. The Printing Office says they'll have copies ready day after tomorrow. I need you here because it's got to be your press conference that calls attention to it, and because it's your report. After that. . . well, you can talk with our public education specialists when you get here. They've got a lot of ideas."

Hastings always called them public education specialists. Actually, they were public relations men—the best money and commitment to his administration's policies could buy. It was probably their idea to snatch him back out of this country.

"I've still got five days walking to do," Brandt said. "When I've done it, I'll come back. We can have the press conference then." His gaze went out over the land. Everywhere it was rust colored, with green life showing in the deep clefts of the watercourses. To the north, the land spread almost perfectly level all the way to the horizon, its flatness interrupted only by a pair of low, white topped butes. Odd, when you considered how many gullies and washes carved that surface. He needed this country, he thought—needed the feeling of eternity and peace it gave him.

"I'm afraid we've got a time limit on this," Grant Hastings said through the radio's crash and rustle. "Fabricorp filed notice of intent to begin production tooling. If I don't send Jones to court for a Dodgeson-Bell in the next sixty days—that's fifty nine, now—they can put it into production. We'll have no way to-stop them. But with the public attitude what it is, now, if I told Jones to go to court . . . can you understand this, Tom? If I start the machinery now, without the public being prepared for it, it would seem an arbitrary and unreasonable use of executive power. That's something everyone's afraid of, these days. It's going to take all the public education we can muster to make a stop order seem like a reasonable action—especially with the Fabricorp people doing their bloodiest to sell their side of it. If you stay out there five more days, those won't be days we can get back."

Tom Brandt held the microphone in his hand and said nothing. He didn't want to go back. Not yet. He'd left Hanksville only three days ago, following the road to where it bridged Muddy Creek, then striking off toward Goblin Valley. He camped there the first night among the hoodoo sculptures of ancient stone. He'd promised himself a week in this country, and breaking that promise came hard.

It had to come, though. "You say the report's to go out day after tomorrow?"

"Wednesday afternoon," Hastings confirmed.

"Suppose I come back tomorrow," Brandt said. "I'll stay out here tonight and come back tomorrow."

Now there was a silence from the White House. U lasted only a moment, but it was a silence. "It'll mean cutting things a bit fine, Tom," Hastings said. "There's a lot of groundwork that needs going over. But . . . where's the nearest airfield from where you are?"

"Lots of postage stamps and moose pastures," Brandt said. "Not much else."

"For what I have in mind, a small

one should do fine."

Brandt considered a moment. "Hanksville's as close as any. I'd guess."

"Hanksville," Hastings repeated, as if writing it down. "Tom—how'd you like to ride in a Bushmaster?"

The Bushmaster was the latest plaything of the Air Force—a multiple-role Fighter-bomber that could fly from a barnyard-sized Field, crack the barrier at Five hundred feet, and slice mach 3 at thirty thousand. It could also stand still in the air.

"Don't mind, if it's got room for my backpack," Brandt said. "I don't fancy holding it on my lap all the way east."

"How much does a thing like that weigh?" Hastings was just being curious, now; as far as Brandt could Figure, the man had never walked farther than the nearest mailbox, and never lugged anything heavier than a wallet.

"Fifty—sixty pounds," Brandt said.

Again that silence, while the atmosphere filled the radio with rustlings and spatter. And while—presumably—Grant Hastings contemplated a man who would willingly carry such a burden on his back in an age when machines could do almost anything a man might want done.

"They'll find a place for it," Hastings said. "Look . . . I'll get you switched to Millie Charles. Work out the details with her. I've got papers here that need shuffling."

"Better idea," Brandt said. "Have Millie talk to the park people—the ones you sent out looking for me. It's them that'll have to get me to Hanksville. And one other thing—the boy you'll have flying that Bushmaster. Tell him I'd better not hear about him breaking any windows."

Hastings laughed.

"It's not a joke," Brandt said. "One of those airplane drivers flew over yesterday, and he made a shock wave that was like a stick of dynamite. Knocked a rock ledge down in front of me as big as your desk."

The President's voice became teetotal sober. "I'll make sure it's part of his orders," Hastings said. "And when you get to the District, come see me. I'll expect you." It wasn't an invitation; it was orders.

"Likely we'll have some things to talk about," Brandt said. "Better have somebody call my wife, though—let her know I'll get back sooner than I said."

Hastings voice came back slowly, the way a man would talk while making notes. "Her name is .. ?"

"Marta. We're in the Leesburg exchange. Number 777-2287. But she's probably not there. She was going up to her brother's. That's on Staten Island. Maarten Boersma. I don't remember the phone number, but it's the only name like it in the phone book. They're twins." As if that explained something.

He had to spell Maarten's name, letter by letter, first name and last name both, and he felt more than slightly foolish at troubling the President with silly details like that. Served him right, though, dragging a man back from his walk that way, when it wasn't even half done.

"Make sure she understands one thing," he said then. "I'm not saying she has to come back if she doesn't want. She's not a servant. But she gets

upset if I change my plans and she doesn't get the word."

He did not mention—it was none of the President's business—the exchange of words that had come as they prepared to go their seperate ways; he to his place of desolation, and she to that anthill of humanity, the metropolis.

"All right, Tom," Hastings said. "I'll make sure she gets the message." You'd think he had all the time in the world, the relaxed way he spoke. Then he signed off and—Brandt supposed—went back to shuffling the papers on his desk.

BRANDT went across the benchland to where the ranger had hunched down to examine a creosote bush. "We've settled it," he said. "You can come back and get me in the morning. If you've got a map, I'll show you where I'm camping tonight."

He had a map of his own, but he wasn't handing it over to the first chopper jockey that happened along. The ranger straightened up and they went back to the machine. They spread the USGS contour map on the seat. Its corners fluttered in the breeze; they had to hold it down. Brandt picked out the platform they were standing on, traced the course he planned to follow. "I'll camp somewhere along about there," he said, stabbing a finger at a section of the trail. "And I'll stick in camp till you come."

The ranger marked the map and stowed it carefully. He started to climb in, but paused with one foot still on the ground. "Uh . . . just in case it's somebody else they send tomorrow—they might—uh . . ." He seemed to run out of words, and got back out of the chopper to stand with one hand against the frame.

"I just want to say, if I don't get another chance, Mr. Brandt, it's a privilege to meet you. Over at the park, we hear something of the things you're trying to get done, and we sort of feel you're on our side. And we're on yours."

Boyish, awkward, he offered a hand. Brandt gripped it. "Sometimes, I get the feeling I'm all by myself," he admitted, but he knew it wasn't so. Ever since he'd scuttled a scheme to build a high rise hotel in Yosemite—a deed he accomplished mainly with an almost accidental remark about money changers in the temple—he'd had more than a few friends in the Park Service. All the same, it wasn't smart to take that support for granted. He pushed his hat brim up. "See you in the morning."

Turning, he climbed back down to where he'd left his pack. As he bent to heave it to his back again, the chopper lifted with a clatter and flew away like a gawky insect. Brandt watched it become a speck and disappear. The pale yellow crests of the reef to eastward were like the walls of a fortress. He buckled the pack's waistbelt and started walking. The silence was touched now only by the fitful breath of the wind, and the occasional rattle of stone scattering downslope from his feet. The weight on his back was like a steady hand.

Grant Hastings hadn't fooled him with his smooth talk. Anybody who'd worked long with Hastings knew the oil treatment when they heard it. Hastings didn't talk like that any other time.

(Continued on page 52)

Dr. Joseph Murphy, Minister of the Church of Divine Science, Shows You -

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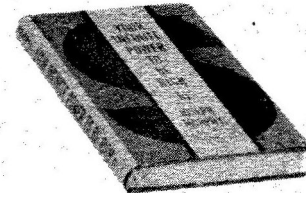

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(1) how numerous people make use of a certain formula for paying bills with marvelous results (p. 37)

(2) how a poverty-stricken couple received $10,000 "out of the blue" in response to their request (p. 25)

(3) how a man was able to triple his income in three months with a certain 28-word prayer that takes only ten seconds to repeat (p. 98)

(4) how L.T. used a one sentence prayer to rise from a job as an office boy to the owner of a 50 million dollar company (p. 178)

. . or explain any one of the scores of wonderful things that happened to people who used Dr. Murphy's prayer techniques!

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• On page 98. you'll discover how a working man TRIPLED his income in just three months, through the power of a certain prayer. This prayer contains 28 words. It takes Only ten seconds to repeat. **You will** find **this prayer given word for word in the book.**

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(The Story Behind the Cover)

THE ONCE AND ALWAYS WAR

GERARD F. CONWAY

Gerry Conway returns—as promised in our November, 1972, issue—with a new story written around Mike Hinge's cover painting. Of this story he says. "All I can say about it is this—the opinions expressed by the characters are not necessarily those of the management..."

THE PROXIMITY ALARM chimed a soft note in the stillness of the cabin. Kevin swiveled his chair around and back, glancing up at the screen overhead and its view of the galactic spiral clustered tightly to the "west". Nothing. Whatever had set off the alarm was still too distant for visual contact. Forcing himself to move automatically, not allowing the first stirring of hope to affect his reactions, Kevin made the necessary adjustments to the ship's trajectory, altering the course, directing the vessel to intercept the still-distant object. He felt the slight *push* against his shoulders and allowed himself a smile. It was there, ahead of him: he knew it was there. With trembling hands, he locked in the new coordinates, matching the printout on the primary ship's screen, and when the two graphs slipped together, one on top of the other, he sighed and pushed himself away from the starship's controls. And he waited. The moment was near. So near.

Seven years out from Base—and this was the first time he'd contacted another ship. Not just *any* ship, according to the main computer's diagnostic printout: this one was broadcasting on one of the old Terran frequencies, a full-band Alpha-Omega distress call. He remembered the briefings he'd received during his stay at Base; he knew what the distress call meant. An earth ship. A rebel ship. The first in twenty years.

And Kevin could claim the prize.

LIKE A SPECK of silver on a bed of velvet, the rebel ship glinted against the cold backdrop of intragalactic space. From his vantage point in the main airlock, Kevin could discern the general shape and design of the approaching coldship, but little more. It was roughly spherical, with a series of knobs jutting away from what Kevin had designated the southern hemisphere; other than that, the rebel ship was featureless. No—as he watched, Kevin saw a golden port swing into view, slide across the face of the globe and vanish around the other side. The ship was spinning. The thought shocked Kevin, until he remembered what his instructor had told him about the old Terran coldships—sometimes the ships were given a slight spin, to create a form of artificial gravity. It seemed remarkably inefficient, even considering the state of the art when the rebel ships had first left Terra, six hundred years before. Kevin shook his head in wonder. He felt a grudging admiration for the rebels, trusting themselves to such a flimsy means of escape. He doubted he would have done the same.

Now. His ship was slowing, braking in accordance with the instructions he'd programmed into the ship's computer. Swelling into prominence ahead, the rebel ship seemed suddenly to spring out of the darkness, jolting to a stop only a few hundred yards from his airlock door. Kevin released his grip on the balancing lever, pressed the switch set into the plastisteel port, and felt himself shoved forward by the rush of erupting air.

One moment, two, and he was out.

Another, and he'd crossed the distance to the surface of the rebel ship.

A fourth—and he was in, passing through the golden airlock door.

IN HER SLEEP, she shivered. Unused muscles jumped along her outer thigh, quivering in a knot on the inside of her elbow. She became aware of a spreading warmth along the small of her back, and shivered again, her shoulders bunching spasmodically as she awakened. There was a light somewhere above her, bright without heat, and this struck her as odd, ancient instincts warning her that this was wrong, that what was bright must also burn. *No,* she thought, in her waking daze, *No. that's wrong. I'm on the ship. I'm on the coldship.* Her eyes snapped open, closed, opened again more slowly. There was a blur of colors, and a loud ringing in her ears, piercing into the delicate material of her brain. Her facial muscles twitched. Her mouth was dry, sour. Something soft touched her lips, penetrated—*the Life-Support System, that's all*—and a cool, cleaning liquid entered her mouth, trickled down her throat—

—and she jerked up, coughing and sputtering, catching the LS System watdo and shoving it away as she slid off the bunk, her bare feet pulling back from the cold flooring of the coldsleep chamber—

"Hello," he said, quietly.

There was a man seated on the edge of the bunk, watching her. His features were soft, cold blue eyes set in a smooth, nut-brown face, unwrinkled skin like a boy's, as though he'd never smiled, never frowned—never used his face to express an emotion of any kind. She felt a chill as she looked at him, meeting his gaze—or was that only part of the revival reaction? A final shiver. She realized that she was nude, and felt a flush of—what, embarassment? No. That couldn't be. She looked at the man watching her. His eyes were incurious, without interest. She'd never seen a man with eyes like that before.

"Who—" She started to speak, and then stopped. What had she been about to say? Her mind was a swirl of confusion; memories floated up, slipped away. Everything was different, yet nothing had changed. Except—

The man.

"You were sleeping," he said. "Just as they said you'd be."

"Who are you?"

"I'm called Kevin. I've been searching for you."

"You have?" She studied him. He was wearing a survival suit of some sort, the multicolored identification bands standing out against the muted tan of the coldsleep chamber. He didn't seem to be carrying a weapon, but still— "For us?"

"For one of the ships. You're the first one we've found in twenty years. The last ones—" he waved a hand vaguely—"we found them on the Rim, heading out. Like yours. I've been looking seven years. Yours is the first since I was born."

"Other ships? You found others?" Her mind was clearing. She'd begun to understand: the rebellion had failed, that much was obvious; that some of the other rebel ships had been captured was apparent: but what did that mean for her? And for her crew? There were over a hundred rebels aboard the ship, all of them her responsiblity: she had to find out what sort of world they'd be awakening to—a world transformed, or a world intent on revenge.

Only then did it hit her. *Good god, how long have we been alseep?*

"Six others," the man was saying. "Only six. A hundred in each ship. Not many, but we were lucky to find even them." He seemed eager to tell her, as though seeking her approval; even so, there was something reserved about his manner. She tried to pinpoint the oddity in his approach and couldn't. There were other things on her mind.

Six ships—but hundreds had been sent out, in those last days of the rebellion. Hers hadn't been the last, she was sure of it: there'd been plans to dispatch all the rebels to the Rim, where they'd be safe from reprisals, safe to establish a new society, one of their own design. Only six ships recaptured: did that mean the others'd escaped? Or had they been lost, destroyed, looted? She wished she knew.

Finally, she returned her attention to the man sitting on the edge of her coldsleep bunk. "What do you want

with us?"

At last he smiled—if the slash of red opening in the brown could be called a smile. His eyes—*dammit, yes!*—his eyes sparkled as he said, "That's simple.

"I want to take you home."

HER NAME WAS Illania, he learned, and she'd been born during the third decade of the War, on one of the southern continents of the planet they called Earth. He listened to her, fascinated, as she told him about her youth on the plains of the southern continent; of her adolescence, working with the other rebels to build the star ships, rising through the ranks until she'd been given command of her own legion, and her own ship. She called herself a Centurion, after an old Earth custom: apparently she controlled the lives of a hundred rebels—a "century" in one of the ancient tongues. He didn't understand that part, and made no pretense of interest. The concept of courtesy was alien to him; even if it had once been part of his cultural background, his years alone would have wiped it from his behavior pattern. Yet once, he did wonder why she was telling him these things: he hadn't asked. He already knew all he wanted to know about her. The rest was merely . . . interesting. He stared at her while she spoke: her skin was a deep color, darker than his own; her hair was close cropped, black; her eyebrows were black and thick; her lips full; her teeth, white. The teeth did not surprise him; he'd been told to expect them, and had been shown numerous photographs of teeth during his time at Base. Still, they were the most interesting thing about her, and he concentrated on watching her mouth, to see if the teeth moved as a whole, or separately.

He jerked his head up. She was asking him a question.

"—long have we been out here? How long?" Her eyes, he saw, were brown.

"Not more than thirty minutes."

"No. 1 mean the ship. My ship."

"Oh. It's hard to say. Centuries, I suppose. Some believe it's been six hundred years. I really don't know."

Does anyone live on Earth? Anyone at all?"

"Terra? Oh, no. It's a dead planet. There wasn't much left there, after the War. Everyone followed the rebels out to the Rim. We had to."

She was looking at him oddly. "Yes—I imagine you did."

He said nothing more, since she didn't seem to require anything further of him. Instead he clambered back to his feet and wandered across the width of the low-ceilinged chamber. On all sides, the walls were filled with rectangular bunks, and in each bunk, behind a plastisteel screen, there rested a sleeping rebel. He'd have to discover how to open the bunks without waking the occupants; each of the ships was different, in that respect. It shouldn't be a difficult matter. The bunks worked automatically—why else would the commander's bunk have opened without his touching it, as soon as he'd entered the ship?—which meant they could be shorted manually. He was staring at one of the women lying in a bunk under the glassine airlock hatchway when he heard footsteps behind him. He half-turned, and saw that it was the rebel,

Mania, walking toward him on her almost-silent bare feet, holding something long and metallic in her right hand.

"Now—" he started, but didn't finish, for already he was sinking toward the deck, his thoughts splintering, his skull ringing, his eyes shutting on a last bright image: Mania carrying through on her swing, lowering the length of plastisteel tubing stolen from the LS System waldo in an arc toward the floor near her balanced, naked feet.

HE WOKE TO a sensation of drifting, and for a moment wondered if he was still asleep, still dreaming of a monstrous Terran ocean, and his body bobbing in it helplessly, a bit of nameless flotsam, lost on the raging sea. He was awake, yet still in his dream, still floating. He moved his arms, expecting the resistance of seawater: instead he began spinning, head over heel, and realized that he was in space, not in water, and that in a very few seconds, he'd be dead.

He began to scream.

How long he screamed, he didn't know, but eventually he gained control of himself long enough to work the injector switch with his chin, tilting his head back in his helmet in time to feel the cool touch of the sprayer against the carotid artery in his neck. His mind became clearer instantly, and he took several quick, deep breaths to bring himself fully under control. Then he opened his eyes and looked around.

He was in space, little over a mile from his ship. The rebel vessel was gone. He was alone. *Completely* alone.

It was something he'd never encountered before, and it frightened him— but no longer enough to make him lose control once more. That was past. He'd need all of his faculties to return to his ship, if that was even possible. He glanced at the gauge set into the plastisteel of his helmet parallel with his eyes: two hours of oxygen/helium left. He'd been unconscious for seven hours. Too long. It was going to be close, very close, but it *could* be done.

Would be done, he reminded himself, and smiled, tightly.

THREE MINUTES to unstrap his double pack and unhook the helium cannister. A trial burst, too much; another burst to slow the frantic spinning. His nose felt raw, cold, and the back of his throat had gone dry—the pure oxygen, he supposed, but there was little he could do about it. He tried to judge the angle he'd need to attain in order to intersect the ship's plane. It hadn't been covered at Base—he realized that many things hadn't been covered, among them the rebel's eyes, her voice, and yes, the things she'd said. But it was too late. He was outside; he had to get in. Hands tightening inside the plastimesh gloves, he made a final adjustment on the spray nozzle jutting from the top of the helium cannister, went over the procedure once more in his mind, and fired.

The cannister slipped in his hands, slamming back into his stomach. He gripped it and held it, sensing rather than feeling his backward motion. *How long? How long?* Enough. He released the pressure valve and the vibration in

his hands ceased. Gingerly, he looked over his shoulder.

The ship was there, not twenty yards away.

Just a little further.

He remembered the years at Base, training with the other Rim scouts. All the endless lectures—what had they amounted to? Nothing. Worse than nothing. He could see that, clearly, and it frightened him. Six hundred years since the War, and what had they learned about the rebels? Of course, most scouts didn't encounter the problems he'd encountered. Or did they?

He just didn't know.

One more burst, and he'd be back.77ia/ was the important thing. He could concern himself about the rebels when he was safe; not now. There would be time, later. When he was safe.

His hand tightened on the cannister. There would be no slipping this time. His thumb found the valve, eased down.

He rode backward on the wind.

THERE WAS a tense moment by the airlock door. His hands were crusted with a layer of frozen helium, and kept slipping when he tried to work the lock mechanism. At last, he managed to chip away the helium on the fingers of his gloved right hand, using the nozzle attachment on the cannister as a pick. Once this was done, he was able to enter the scout ship with no futher difficulty.

The main screen in the control room showed a small green blip in the right hand corner, moving at a thirty-two degree angle to the trajectory of his own vessel. Kevin swung into the control console, punched in the new coordinates and plotted the velocity of the rebel ship. He added this to the data he'd already given the scout's computer and programed the ship to intercept the rebel. According to the screen, the smaller ship was headed back into the galactic spiral.

Kevin was determined to follow.

What am I doing? What's happened to me? He felt a flush rising through his neck, a wave of warmth originating somewhere under his shoulder blades. Quite suddenly, he was shocked: he didn't understand the intensity of his reaction; it was like nothing he'd ever experienced in his twenty-seven years. There was something unclean about the sensation trembling in his thighs, in the small of his back, yes, even in his loins, yet it wasn't an *unpleasant* sensation. Merely a discomforting one. *I want her,* he thought. *This is what they mean by* hunger. *More than anything else, I* want *her.*

My god—what am I going to do?

SHE'D WAKENED three of the rebels, and had a fourth in stasis, when her lietenant beckoned to her from the control cubicle under the entry hatch.

"Commander, come here. I think it's the other ship—"

Illania hurried to her lieutenant's side. The other woman, a rebel eight years older than Illania whose manner still made her seem younger, sat with her back to the large coldsleep chamber, her head thrust forward into the screening hood of the controls. Illania eased in beside the bulkier woman, wishing that expediency had been foregone during the designing of

the ship's control systems. These cubicles were so *cramped;* it was impossible to get a proper view.

"There, Commander: do you see it?"

Illania nodded. She moved carefully out of the narrow compartment, turning to face the two others who composed her entire active crew. They were both younger girls, not yet fully into their adolescence, and they stared at their commander with eyes that were both trusting and somehow terribly knowing and old. Rebel's eyes; the War had aged them all, and quickly. Illania was herself only a young woman. Most of the very old had been killed; some of them had never begun to fight. She wondered what had happened to those: had they been killed, too, or were they taken as hostage against some forseen future confrontation? She'd never know. It didn't matter.

Motioning the girls toward her, she brought them to the coldsleep manual panel and told them what they'd need to do.

THE WAR. Like many of the other scouts training at Base, Kevin had wondered about the War, and the wondering had led to questioning, and the questioning had led to Crimmins. Crimmins was the oldest of the men at Base, a dark haired man with bright eyes and a tight, stern mouth, the sort of man who gathers about him a clique of intelligent young men; Kevin had never been part of that group, but knew several scouts who were or had been. They introduced him to Crimmins, who studied him for what seemed an unbearably long time, finally nodding and patting his shoulder, leading him through the low doorway into the darkly-lit suite of rooms which were his by seniority. Two six-by-eights and a private bath. That first night, Crimmins had talked to him alone, the two of them sharing wine and whispering, trying not to disturb those sleeping elsewhere in the suite. Crimmins' voice was naturally low, a deep baritone that lowered to a rumble after the old man took a sip of wine.

"It'd been building for centuries, Kevin. Little things, at first, small dissatisfactions with the quality and quantity of life. Oh, there were justifications for what they did; there always are. The terrible things is, son, that things don't change because we want them to. Things change because they *must,* of themselves. That's what made that time so painful to live in—there was the desire to change, but not the means. That came later. But by that time, the desire had become something else—something sick, something cancerous. Isn't that always the way? Means follow need, but always too late, too late.

"So there was the War. They wanted to be free of us, you see, and when the means came for that freedom, they saw only the freedom itself—not the fact that the process of change had already begun. At the very moment when they could, and *did,* attain the freedom they wanted, their desire for that freedom twisted, became *corrupted*—almost destroying them, as well as us.

"That's why they left. The War decimated Earth, Kevin; it destroyed everything that was still left of that poor, tired planet. And when they'd finished with the rape of our home-

world, and thought they'd finished with us, they left for newer pastures—where I suppose they intended to build a society along their own philosophical lines. Some of them may have well succeeded. We'll be meeting them someday." And here the old man had sighed. "I pray the meeting's a pleasant one."

He'd gone on, then, to explain why those left on earth had been forced to follow the rebels out to the Rim: the gene pool needed the rebel gamete, and so the scouts had to seek the coldships among the thinning stars, and bring the rebels home. They had to, to survive.

To survive. The phrase had never truly *meant* anything to Kevin, until he'd met the rebel, seen her eyes, heard her speak. Something had stirred inside him; something had twisted, come alive. He didn't understand the new-feeling, nor did he need to; it existed, and it drove him, and that in itself was sufficient.

He flicked the main screen on once more. The green blip was larger now, swelling to fill the lower quadrant. He keyed in the visual projection, swiveled his chair around and back, and stared at the spherical ship riding in against the backdrop of crystal stars.

Now: it would begin now. His life, his body, his full emotions: all were concentrated into this moment, all were a part of the pulse surrounding him. Now. Now, it would begin.

WHY DID I *let him live? Why didn't I just kill him? Would that have been so hard? Would it?*

She didn't have an answer, though she knew one existed. It lay buried within her,too deeply to be discovered now: there were too many things happening for self-probes—she could afford only a black bitterness that worked its way up from her gut, sour bile rising into her throat. *Fool, fool. He looked too innocent; not like one of them at all.* And that made her pause- How much of her attitude was her own, how much the brutal indoctrination? No. It didn't matter. She had to move. She had to save the ship.

Minutes after the. first jolt, the ship was rocked by the second. Illania stumbled back a step, colliding with one of the two girls she'd set working on reviving the rest of her crew. There wouldn't be room in the small vessel for all one hundred of her command, but thirteen would be more than adequate to handle the various defensive controls. Three more women were awake, groggily following her lieutenant's hurried directions, taking their places at the cubicles spotted about the coldsleep chamber. A third shock. One of the girls cried out, skidding sideways into the other, the two of them collapsing in a heap against the bulkhead. *Too young!* Mania's mind screamed. *Why are they all too young?*

A fourth shock rammed into the ship, and then a fifth, and Mania slammed forward into darkness.

HE'D TALKED ABOUT IT with his bunkmate when he'd returned from Crimmins' room.

"I just can't understand why we need them so badly. Don't we have the equipment to just *generate* babies? Wasn't that what the War was all about?"

His bunkmate had answered slowly, his voice tinged with the sarcasm Kevin had come to expect from the younger man. "It's one thing to cause a gamete to divide, dear Kevin, and quite another to turn it into a functional human being. That was the mistake, you see; what once would have been called a Tragic Error. When the rebels learned of old whatisname's success with certain of his less ambitious germ plasma experiments—well, to be kind, they became hysterical. I suppose it was to be expected, after all."

I don't understand."

"You never do."

CREAM ON VELVET: the final salvo burst against the "western" hemisphere of the rebel ship, shocking brilliance flooding the main screen, swelling outward to fill the remainder of Kevin's control room with a stark white glow.

He closed his eyes, the heels of his hands tight against the lids, and then, after a moment had passed and the pain had faded, he opened them again, and stared at the darkened screen.

Sixteen miles distant, the rebel ship had stopped spinning. It drifted against the pattern of stars, tilted on its axis, the forward half of the sphere dusted black by the force of the last blast from his scout's weapons. Kevin watched it, unbelieving. He checked the printout that ran along the bottom of the screen. The ship before him was disabled, down to one eighteenth the normal electrical activity level for a vessel its size. Which meant that everything—everything—had been knocked out, with only the emergency generators supplying the power necessary for the rebel's LS System. He would have to hurry. There was so much to do.

SHE FOUND HERSELF caught against a plastisteel overhang. For a moment she thought she'd fallen and had landed on one of the bunks; then she realized that she'd been thrown across the chamber, that something had happened to the gyros, and that the overhang was, indeed, an overhang—the canopy over the primary control bank—and that it was yes, *over* her.

"Let me help you down," he said, from below.

She took the proffered hand and allowed it to draw her down to one of the bunks. He helped her fasten the belt about her waist— the touch of his gloved hands on the bare flesh of her stomach was unsettling—and watched as she looked quickly around the room. She hadn't the slightest idea how much time had passed since the climactic attack, but it must have been several minutes. All of the other folded-out bunks were occupied. She must have been the last he'd helped.

He'd helped her. In the name of god —*Why?*

What does he want from me? She wondered. *Is he attracted to me? Is that it?* No, that wasn't possible. Something in his eyes ... a softness. Was that it? He was staring at her oddly, like a child.

"Why did you try to kill me?"

The question startled her. She floundered for an answer, but found none. She could only stare back, slowly shaking her head. He didn't see. He didn't understand.

(Continued on page 44)

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THE WIND SHE DOES FLY WILD

ALPAJPURI

Illustrated by JEFF JONES

No ONE CAN SEE through the darkness in me. Not even the tiny creature poised halfway up his tree, clutching weathered corrugations with sharp claws. His nostrils flutter for my scent, his eyes pierce like pins, but I crouch behind dense leaves and do not move.

It's cool in the shade. My shoulder blades climb to a shiver with the breeze, dry leaves crackle underfoot. The furry one starts and stares across the clearing into my eyes. I burst from the bushes:

I scream!

He is vanished.

Quick as a sphinx I race down the winding path to the mansion looming from flowers and trees, layered with windows and balconies from which peer my hidden captors.

Their citadel is massive and well defended. Gnarled rosebushes gnaw the feet of trellises, climbing with claws and delicate blossoms. I slow to a walk, keeping to the far side of the path, out of reach and out of temptation.

And approach the clean white steps leading up to my cell.

A shadow!

My breath leaves me clutching the bannisters, but it's only Donovan. He's harmless and insane. Strands of yellow silk fall lightly over pale wild eyes, his mouth trembles like a broken moth for flight.

I release a captive breath and start up the steps. When Donovan first arrived here I had my suspicions... until I saw him carried back from tripling, his eyes intensely focused on utter nothingness. I've seen that look before; I've *worn* it many times. Like mine his face still flickers with the shadow of that ecstatic agony. Like mine his wrists still bear the purple stain. How I love the hated tripling. It's the energy around which my universe spins; I rest even now on its formless solidity.

No one who has touched the intangible, seen the invisible on tripling could ever work for them. If Donovan

was once their confederate, as he claims, he could not be now.

I know my friends by their lavender hands.

Donovan is one.

/ love you.

He shudders violently at my words. He's just been released from a week of solitary meditation for attacking a powdercoated Staff who called him a ***damned synihy.*** peculiar invective. Donovan screamed as he clawed at pink flesh, ***I'm alive, I'm real, can't you see?*** 1 saw it, I stood right there in the dining hall that morning with sunlight streaming in when Donovan's hands ran red. A scattering of white bodies flew onto their struggles like filings to a magnet, wrenched them apart, dragging Donovan down the corridor still kicking.

Now he eats in his room, alone.

He cowers back from me at the head of the stairs, cringing against the wall. His Hps feverishly conceive words but abort them before they're born. I complete my ascent, smile softly and pass on down the open corridor overlooking the courtyard gardens. Over my shoulder 1 catch him disappearing in a patter to the grounds.

His fear of me has lessened lately; I'm pleased. I rather like the man in spite—or because?—of his emotional instability. Perhaps I can help him. Perhaps we will become good friends. After all, I shall require a confidant to assist in my escape.

The day bounces at me brightly, the vivid illusion of reality.

A FAMILIAR young Staff awaits me in my room. His is Jeffrey, a soft name.

He revealed it to me to gain my confidence—the fool. He asks me to reciprocate as a gesture of trust, but I only smile secretively and shake my head.

As if I knew my name, after tripling.

Even Jeffrey can't see through the darkness in me.

He asks me how I am today.

Yes. I reply and sit and look away.

He coughs into his hand and says he understands I have a new friend.

I stiffen.

Jeffrey says come now, I needn't be embarrassed. Relationships with the opposite sex are natural and should be encouraged. They bring great peace and happiness into a life.

Like tripling?

Annoyed, he says he's talking about Peter.

I relax. He doesn't suspect Donovan yet. Peter is one of the newer prisoners, he took me to the holies last night. He was a bore and the holie was a re-run but I had to find out if he was one of us or not. You can't tell from the name alone. Some of the prisoners give themselves names after tripling like Donovan did. So I held Peter's hand in the darkened theatre and when the lights bloomed I glanced down at his pale wrist.

Fishbelly pale.

And I ran.

Oh yes, Peter and I are getting along fine. He is so stable and strong / tell him all my problems.

Jeffrey looks smug and wishes me luck.

I can only laugh.

Then he asks about my dreams and we settle into our roles effortlessly. I fantasize aloud, Jeffrey scribbles it all down and frowns as he tries to puzzle together the shards of my shattered reality.

Jeffrey is ludicrous but so painfully earnest 1 couldn't bear to pop his happy bubble. And it's an enjoyable game we play; it gives me a chance to talk freely. Because I speak of nothing real to Jeffrey's world I find 1 have nothing to hide.

A buzzing dot flicks against the windowpane, frantic for escape. I watch its helplessness with cold reserve: it's everyone for herself in this prison.

Jeffrey stares at me with the eyes of that fly.

He does not appear to comprehend the psychoanalytic implications of everything 1 have said today and studies the notebook cradled in his lap. He thinks that if he can understand me, if he can learn my name, he can manipulate me into his own delusions. But he's unsure of himself like all the others and seeks security in the notes he's written in his thin white pad. I smile on his boyish features; I've been here much longer than he, I'm his superior at this game. He'll never see through the darkness in me.

Hours later I track down the fly and crush its brittle body between my fingers.

Hail, O Liberator!

HUNDREDS OF GNASHING TEETH hungrily devour the sacrificial lamb in the dining hall and I fly into the night, slipping into wells of cool shadow without a sound. The light is bright behind Donovan's curtains. With one eye out for spying Staff I step to his door and let myself in quietly. There he lies on his

bed, tray of emptied dishes before him, face a mask of white fear. I put a finger to my lips and draw a chair close.

Be quiet, no one must know I'm here.

His mouth works like a salted slug. Get out, he hisses!

I'm here to help you. Together we can escape.

Disbelief mingles with the terror in his eyes. He says no, this isn't true, this can't be real. He aims a shaking finger at my face and tells me I'm a machine.

I stand abruptly. Such is Donovan's delusion game. He may play it with the Staff but if he tries it with me I shall leave.

He says I'm a machine, a synthetic of plastic and metal. His voice begins to rise; I glance worriedly behind me.

Listen! You can be free! I know a way.

He shakes his golden hair but falls silent. Again I sit and he presses a stud—violins drift into the room on an orchestral breeze and beneath their twining vines I whisper my plan. Donovan listens warily, his eyes twin skies from which shine twin suns, the ceiling light behind me.

When I finish he picks at the bedspread and tells me in a quiet voice that I'm very clever, yes, that would work because of the complete turnover, but... he glances up... he hopes I realize I'll never be free.

What do you mean?

He says I can never leave because I'm a machine and I run off an energy source here on the grounds, and if I try to escape I'll deactivate.

I shake my head in sorrow. Poor Donovan has come to believe the Staffs charade that this prison is a hospital, their subtle tortures treatments for the mentally disturbed. But thinking himself sane he cannot relate to the rest of us and sets us apart with the delusion that he is human, like the Staff, and we are mere computerambulators. I've learned enough of how the mind works from Jeffrey and the others to see through his forest of fears, and I tell him.

His fist comes down on the bed with a *whump!* The violence in his eyes frightens me. He says through tight teeth never to tell him he's crazy -he's sane and I'm a psychotic machine and he can prove it. His pale face writhes with passion like a tongue's secret movements behind a cheek.

Think yourself different if you must. I refuse to argue. Our escape from this prison is more important than our separate ideologies.

I seem to recall that Chinese is an ideological language. Once I read a book about Chinese crickets in cages by the Yangtze. The crickets outside create an odd counterpoint for David Oistrakh. Oh yes, I recognize the music. Oistrakh weeps sweetly of spring wine... I remember wine though I haven't had any in years... Those vague memories of my life before I came here are made of mist, intangible. This must be because tripling has made everything here so vivid and clear that all previous experiences pale. Dear, sweet tripling, I would love to smash the supply and then weep into the night of my life.

The darkness tightens its grip on the room, the hour is late. I get up to leave and Donovan, intensly distant across the sahara of his bed, calls softly after

me that tomorrow he will prove that 1 am not a human being.

He is so twisted, so beautiful.

1 smile back gently and break out into dark, chirping night.

THE NEW DAY kisses with wet jewels in the shrubbery and the gentle play of sunlight on my skin, skirmishing with cool morning breeze for occupation of my senses.

1 wear a skirt, forsaking the usual shorts or slacks, I feel a woman, I feel happiness, I do not know why. Young birds call to me from the branchtips and I lift my face to answer.

Though I know Donovan never eats in the dining hall 1 sigh with disappointment when I see he's not there. I consume hot chicken pre-embryos and gulp the cold blood of oranges in silence, eating quickly so I can leave before any of the others, chewing and swallowing in their light brown rows like animals at the trough. Perhaps I can take my meals in my room like Donovan; perhaps if we become friends we can eat alone together...

Across the hall Jeffrey smiles and waves but I pretend not to notice. He's so young, such a bore. I'm glad he's Staff and not one of us; it's easier to think of him as an alien then a friend. But he'll be leaving soon, his term must almost be up. He'll leave me unvanquished as I've been left so many times before: no one can see through the darkness in me.

A wave of indefinable depression washes over me and sweeps me out the door.

I cross the gravel scar running through thick daffodils, brightly yellow in their insolence. Donovan waits upon his bed with fear and gladness, and together we drift through tunnels of green shag to the far end of the grounds. In the virginal silence between us we exchange cautious smiles—I think his fear of me is ebbing.

We reach the high mossy wall that encircles the grounds. In one swift movement Donovan mounts the saddle of a stocky tree and leaps to the top of the wall. I follow with less agility and from the tree reach out a hand.

Donovan stares for a frozen moment—I'm afraid he'll bat my hand away, but then he puts out trembling fingers that flinch when they touch mine but assume a grip to pull me to the summit. We clutch each other till we're steady, standing staring into one another.

He turns and points across the grounds to the white bulk of our prison. He tells me tensely to look at the roof of the Staff wing. I peer through breezeblown branches, locate the west wing and focus on a tower of spiderweb steel. I've never noticed it before—how beautiful and ominous and strange.

Is that the holovision antenna?

Donovan utters a private laugh and shakes his golden hair. Scuffing his sole on the top of the wall, he runs his toe along a thick dark line extending far in either direction. He says that this is a sheet of lead and for any inmate to cross it would mean instant deactivation... he pauses, then adds that after we escape he'll get me a portapac to keep me running.

I laugh. *I don't think that will be necessary.*

He sounds hurt: haven't I been con-

vinced by his proof?

Proof? Listen, dear Donovan, why would they go to so much trouble just to maintain an asylum of computerambulators?

He sits with a thump and dangles his feet and says I still think he's crazy.

No I don't, I'm really interested. I sit beside him.

This is a school, he tells me, for psychiatric interns. The inmates are the most highly perfected human analogs—it wouldn't do to practice on real people... his eyes glance off mine... though at times he wonders if this is any more humane.

I gaze at him curiously, intrigued by the way he has shaped his delusions around configurations of reality. But I say nothing, and rummage my eyes through the world beyond the wall. As it appears from my prison window it is merely more trees bursting from the undergrowth and slopped with Spanish moss. The eternal explosion of the sun beats down our heads.

Donovan asks, don't 1 feel the fleeting temptation to leap from the wall and run like the wind to freedom?

I only smile, knowing, and shake my head. *If you're human and not a machine, why don't you jump the wall yourself?*

He tugs at his brown shirt and shrugs, his shoulders straining like a caged bird for open sky. He would need civies, he says, and besides, it's hundreds of miles to the nearest city.

Feathered lizards perch in shimmering masses of green, modulating shrilly with rippling throats and darting from branch to branch. Free?

What did you do to be sent to this prison?

He sighs, says he was in a class of interns who came here months ago. He didn't know anyone in the new group and the Staff whose term of training was just over were eagerly departing. Everything was confusion so he went for a walk alone to explore the asylum grounds. When he reached this wall he climbed on top and scraped away moss and dead leaves to expose the lead lining, but slipped and fell and struck his head—

On the other side?

He nods. One day later, an intern found him lying there and mistook him for an escaping inmate. He took him back to the asylum where he was laid on a pale yellow bed in a pale blue room and dressed in pale brown clothes. Stark white bandages lathered his head. When he awoke he was lost in a nightmare of insanity. Interns would not listen to him; they had come prepared for a variety of mental pretzels on which to practice their psychiatric craft, and his words were carefully jotted down in slim white books and left there to die.

Donovan falls silent. I want to hold him close, but—

Your story is a good one, I'm honestly impressed. Your reality is complete.

But it's true, he insists!

I'm not saying you're deluded. If you are you won't accept my words; if you're not they won't apply. I can say nothing. Except help me escape, and together we'll achieve that other, outer shell of reality. We mustn't accept our roles here and yield to the twisted manipulations of the Staff

I hold out to him my amethystine wrists.

I cannot succumb; I will not. Call me a machine if you wish. Call me a programmed automaton. But there are feelings within me I cannot deny with even the subtlest logic of rational delusion. I must be free.

Donovan whispers that I'm just a machine and begins to cry. Tears grace his cheeks and cool blue light wells from his eyes. Again I want to hold him, but—

He says with choking words that I am a very, very beautiful machine. My body may be warm, I may pulse with blood and digest human food but my body is soft plastic, my brain grown in a tank, and my soul a cold metal box buried deep in my breast that takes power from the Staffs high antenna.

I will never be free, so Donovan says. I will think like a human and feel like a human and bleed and dream and ache like a human, but I am only an analog and I will never, ever share the total free existence of a norman human being.

He says I was programmed for insanity and I will always be insane until some young intern enters my life with a gift for his art, takes my mental hand and leads me to reality.

And he cries.

I gaze at Donovan in quiet thought.

AS WE RETURN to our prison we are brought up short by a swarming of white coats on the terrace. Fresh new faces mill about, peering into their surroundings and chatting animatedly in groups.

I did not expect the end to come so soon.

Donovan's hand finds mine and presses, warmly strong.

Jeffrey strolls over, travelbag in hand, and beneath his oddly sincere farewell I sense a secret relief. Donovan tells Jeffrey to bring his girlfriend from the Staff and meet us in his room to sip a parting toast of smuggled wine. Jeffrey grins slyly, clasps his shoulder and hurries away.

AND NOW I WAIT alone in silence. Donovan's been gone so long... Jeffrey lies unmoving on the carpet, suddenly strange in his new brown clothes. The girl lies beside him, her soft face pooled in hair.

With a swing the door reveals Donovan in Staff white, wielding a long needle dripping sunlight and dreams. I am hypnotized by its flickering; distant, detached. Now that it is finally happening-

Donovan bends down and stabs Jeffrey, then the girl, with a massive dose of tripling. Even as we watch wide-eyed, amazed at our new roles, their wrists turn with spears of purple through pale skin.

We run.

Hallways long and oblong, pale and green and clean. A wandering prisoner here and there, directionless and confused. Young Staff in starched white, gathered in bunches to discuss methods and drugs they plan to test on their new victims. Smiles, nods, waves of acknowledgement as we pass in our coats of white. Then the marble lobby that echoes, hollowly, our rapid patter.

Donovan!

He glances back, caught wavering in

(Continued on page 44)

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UP AGAINST THE WALL

ROBERT THURSTON

Illustrated by JOE STATON

Robert Thurston has appeared in F&SF *and several anthologies of new sf, and for his first appearance here he tells the story of a confrontation between a militant student and a canny dean, whose wisdom is aided by a most uncanny form of foresight.. .*

WHATEVER HAPPENED *to Culligan? You remember, the student leader of a few years back? He was the man of the hour, always had a microphone pointed at him. It seemed as if he'd be around for years, as spokesman for his cause on* TV *and all that. You know, chatting with Carson and Cavett and Walter Cronkite. It's hard to believe he could just disappear from public view so easily, he must be up to something somewhere.*

"UP AGAINST THE WALL!" Culligan shouted from the doorway of the dean's office.

"Which wall?" the dean asked.

Attempting a firm step forward, Culligan stumbled and fell sideways against a bookcase. As he tried to regain his balance, his foot slipped on the freshly-polished floor, and he fell forward. His face sank into a high-pile rug. With the quickness of a trained revolutionary, he rose to a kneeling position, ready to fend off attackers. But the dean, staring down at his captor, remained impassive.

Behind Culligan, Lester Martin made no effort to hide his laughter. For months Lester, the official recorder of Culligan's campus movement, had been angling for top position. Lately he'd been even more open about it, whispering sarcastic comments to some of the other followeres. This stumbling incident would be used to advantage in Lester's retelling of the day's adventures. "Fearless leader initiated attack by kissing the floor in front of the dean."

There was plenty of time to show that fink a thing or two. Wait until the cameras arrived. In front of a camera Culligan was Lester's superior, which was why Culligan held his leadership so easily. In the country of the zoom lens, charisma was king.

Culligan stood up and walked toward the dean's desk carefully, as if he expected to find bear traps in the rug. The dean smiled as if he watched the ap-

proach of an old friend.

"You can stay seated, dean," Culligan said. "You stay with me, Lester. Everybody else form a line of defense in the hallway."

Culligan put a cigarette in his mouth His strong fingers wrinkled the paper, bending the cigarette in his mouth. An expression of grim defiance fitted the situation, so Culligan narrowed his eyes and tightened the line of his lip. His cigarette bobbed upwards like an uncoiled spring.

Arrogantly he picked up the dean's Hong Kong desk lighter, a grinning cat made of China (the flame came dragon-like out of the smiling mouth). Sliding out of his hand before it reached the cigarette, it hit the desktop at an angle and bounced twice before shattering into several pieces. Lighter fluid spilled over the desk blotter and onto the monthly budget sheets. A glimmer of sadness broke through the dean's passive mask as he stared at a fragment of Cheshire smile.

"Okay, dean," Culligan said, searching his pockets futilely for matches, "how soon before the fuzz arrive?"

"I couldn't say."

"We've got a long list of demands and I want to know how much time we can allot to discussion. So let's not play put-on games, dean."

"I am not trying to trick you. I don't know when the police will arrive because I have asked them to stay away until their presence is absolutely necessary, and they have complied with my request. As have also the local press, and the radio and TV stations."

The still-unlit cigarette fell out of

Culligan's mouth.

"No cameras?" he asked. Wistfully.

"There will be no recording, film or tape, of these proceedings. In a moment you will be glad of that."

"Is that some kind of threat?"

"No. A compassionate truth."

Culligan waved his arms in frustration. His left hand tipped over a fluorescent desk lamp, which in turn sent a gold-embossed pen and pencil set careening against a telephone.

Lester, who roamed about the office as if planning the arrangement of its destruction, seemed amused by Culligan's helplessness. They exchanged distrustful looks.

"Dean," Culligan said, "we can not establish a meaningful dialogue if you try to cloud the basic issues with semantic expertise."

"Mr. Culligan, we both know that your incessant pleas for communication are fraudulent. You employ the camouflage of dialectic for self-aggrandizement. For you meaningful dialogue would be a disaster."

Culligan frowned. The dean's insights were always a surprise to him. Originally he had not figured the old man to be so sharp. In fact, until recently the dean had always seemed rather vague. The age-old rumor, as told by generations of alumni, was that the old man spent only the minimum time required on college matters, just enough to dispatch them efficiently, because he preferred to tinker with trivial inventions. The decor of his office was often marred by pieces of rusty tubing or metal constructions. Right now Lester was busily examining the latest monstrosity, a thin boxlike structure which looked like a wardrobe with buttons and dials on the side and a shower nozzle coming out of the top. In the shade of the college's nuclear reactor the dean struggled to create the safety pin. No wonder, Culligan thought, that there were rumors that the Board of Trustees planned another attempt at removing the eccentric old man from office. If Culligan's plots were successful, the Board would have no trouble this time.

Gazing at the dean now, seeing the age in his wrinkled face, Culligan realized that the gap between them was not simply a generation gap. It was an abyss of centuries. The dean was a nineteenth century man who could not cope with the future.

"So I think," the dean continued, "you could have the courtesy not to bore me with your rhetorical overkill. As they say, time is precious, too precious to listen to that endless litany of demands. Without dialogue of any sort, I accede to *all* your demands."

"And, Lester," he added as a footnote, "please don't lean against the time machine."

Culligan wheeled around, his arm flooring a picture of the dean's wife and children from the corner of the desk. He saw Lester backing away from the dean's latest conglomeration of metal.

"Dean, I do believe you're spaced. You hear that, Lester? Keep away from the time machine, baby."

"How does it work, dean?" Lester, who was Phi Bete, said.

"Ah, come on, Lester, don't groove with him." Culligan feared some new ploy on Lester's part.

"The yellow button activates the

mechanism," the dean said. "Press it and whatever is under the transporter, that nozzle above, will be sent into the future. The machine is presently set for an unpolluted Spring day eleven years from now."

Lester pushed the yellow button and disappeared.

"He pushed the button and disappeared!" Culligan, expert at stating the obvious, screamed.

"Yes, I knew he would," said the dean.

"Knew?"

"Yes. For me it's already happened."

"What? What's already happened that I don't know about?"

"When Mr. Martin pressed that button, he was transported eleven years forward in time. Turning away from the time machine, he found himself still in my office with me at my desk, but you no longer in evidence. At first he didn't believe he had traveled through time, but I gave him several proofs. Then we had a pleasant discussion and he returned to the past, or will return here in about fifteen minutes."

"I can't dig it, dean. How, if the meeting between you and Lester takes place in the future, or is taking place *now* for him, how come you remember it in the *past ?"*

"It did occur already in *my* past. On my way back from a trek to a farther future, 1 absentmindedly set the year gauge incorrectly and, instead of returning to this year, materialized at a point eleven years from now, that bright Spring day I mentioned. 1 suppose it was a sort of Freudian time-slip, since I had already learned it was the year of my death."

"Your death? You know when you're going to die?"

"Yes."

"And it doesn't bother you?"

"It did at first. But it's eleven years away. I doubt that anyone, knowing the date of his death, would feel very much anxiety about it until the last year or so, when he's added up all the things he didn't do."

"God, I'd hate to know when / was going to die."

"I'll keep that in mind."

"You know?"

"I didn't say that."

Culligan began to pace. Pacing was useful to him in a crisis. The rhythm of his footfalls, to which he listened intently, provided a beat that helped to organize his thoughts or to avoid the obstacles of logic.

"I became quite nostalgic when I realized I stood in my office on one of the last days before it would be changed by my successor. It occurred to me that all of these relics left behind would, in one way or another, be disposed of. Stupidly I moved to the desk as if it were a longlost relative. It was at that moment that Lester Martin appeared."

Culligan could hear the crowd in the anteroom and hallway. They were restless, eager for something to happen. They had wanted to tear up the dean's office, but Culligan eschewed such tactics, however desirable they might seem, as out-of-date.

Why was the outcome of his dreams always so tedious? he thought. He'd imagine himself scoring a big victory—all signs pointing to a smashing coup—but each time he was thwarted, or only half-successful. Several months ago it

had seemed simple to garner a mob and sweep through the Establishment maze armed with a multiplicity of causes. Instead, the route turned out to be laborious. Surely, he'd slowly (too slowly) built up a reputation with his shrewd publicity sense and timing. Students all around the country were beginning to look to him as a leader they could gather around, a sort of Super Mark Rudd or Abbie Hoffman.

But what had he done? With his timing, popularity, and quotability, what actually had he accomplished? Each time he had challenged authority, as represented by this screwy inventor-dean, the old man had deftly countered in a mood of easy accedence and a show of gentleness. What Culligan wanted most in the world was a dramatic conflict, a real fistslamming screaming confrontation through which he could slide to power with worldwide coverage. Instead, all he received were conciliatory blows from the dean's powderpuff artillery. Nothing he could use to any effect.

And now—how could he tell his impatient followers that not only was the dean refusing to oppose them, but that he'd stalled the entire maneuver with a time machine! Other leaders went up against formidable administrative talents, Culligan had to deal with the mild irrelevancies of a glaze-eyed eccentric.

"If you are willing to listen, Mr. Culligan, I have a few things to say to you. Sit down, it will only take a few minutes and it will be our last talk, I hope."

Culligan, unusually submissive, nodded and walked to the nearest chair. As he sat down, his foot brushed against an authentic Old West spittoon. It spun around a few times. Dazed, he listened to the dean.

"I spotted you as a potential troublemaker from the first day you set foot on this campus. When you began your little exercise in radicalism, I was pleased rather than filled with tyrannical anger, as you stated to the press. The spirited grail-quester for knowledge must often protest. It's a healthy reaction to outmoded practices. So I was not too unhappy when you began stirring up a little action around here. Gave some spirit to the place."

"Until you first confronted me, then refused to *listen* to my views, I did not fear you in the least. I saw then that your words did not match the expression in your eyes, that your gestures were egocentric rather than idealistic. In short, I glimpsed your future in your actions and I recoiled in terror."

The uncharacteristic harshness in the dean's voice surprised Culligan, who only understood emotional voice shadings as tools for communication. The dean continued in a softer voice:

"They say that important inventions come at a time when they are most needed even though the capability for their creation has been in existence for a long time. While the idea of the invention germinates, there is limited possibility for fruition until the inventor is spurred on by a dire need, personal, social, or otherwise. That view would no doubt seem poppycock to your generation; in these days of financed group research and discovery by committee, the accidental insight of the in-

dividual working alone seems remote. Yes, the romantic old notion of the Edison-like genius toying with spare parts in his spare time seems like a fading illustration from an ancient magazine—if you handle it too roughly, it'll crumble.

"You see, I'd been tinkering with a time machine idea for some months. Like all my other projects, this one also seemed doomed to failure. But looking into your future that day gave me the incentive I needed. Somehow the principle blended with the material and I devised the workable model. The day of its completion was the day of our second confrontation. You'll remember that well, I expect."

Culligan nodded, a vacant look in his eyes. He remembered disappointment, frustration, a sense that his every move was anticipated. At the time he'd suspected an Establishment spy within his ranks, so he had stopped divulging his future plans to others. Nevertheless, the dean had continued to counter his moves effectively.

"As an initial test of the machine, I went a couple of years into the future. Immediately I noticed a few perceptible changes in the decor of this office. A couple of new pictures, the trophy cabinet was moved to the opposite wall, that sort of thing. Hesitantly I took a little trip around campus, causing no little confusion, since I—the future me—was away on a trip. People who saw me that day were frightfully upset."

"But these are inessential details. I'm sure *you're* not interested in the little comedies of time travel. I assume you'd rather get down to the nitty-gritty. What's important to the two of us is the newspaper I bought, the newspaper that revealed that William Culligan, nationally-know student leader, etc., had successfully gained control of a coalition of national student groups and vowed revenge against the repressive elements of Establishment society. At that time, evidently, the radical stars were in eclipse. The old pendulum swinging, I expect."

"I read further and found out that you had been launched on your road to national leadership by a takeover of this college begun when I'd fought you tooth and nail on the day of our second confrontation."

Culligan looked up. His eyes spoke all the words stuck in his throat.

"Yes, of course I did not fight you that day. I acted toothless and nailless. But that's jumping ahead of my story and, when you range all through time, it's difficult enough to keep the chronology of a story straight. You see, although I recoiled at the thought of you as a national figure, I was not especially disturbed by it. Then I made more jumps into the future, watched time pass like a TV special, at the same time tracing your rise in your own ranks, your entrance into state politics .. ."

"That's a lie," Culligan exploded. "I'm against all forms of organized politics, all structuralized institutions. I'd never become a politician, an Establishment fink!"

"You neglect the force of your ambition for power. Such ambition propels one into the most fantastic compromises."

"Compromise is an obscenity. My

movement rejects such obscenities."

"Maybe so. Now. But later, when the golden apple dangles on the limb, ready to fall, you'd risk anything, even compromise. But let's skip present polemics which are, as you will see, irrelevant now. As I said, I watched your rise. It was something like extracting the substance from one of those multi-scened lightning fast movies that are all the rage now (they'll be oldhat within the decade, by the way). At each time-stop I found you somewhere else on the ladder of success. In many ways you were a most mercurial politician, in action and statement. As many people sense the times and structure their actions according to what they deduce as the prevailing trends, you similarly had good insight into what the trends would be, *but* you acted in *opposition* to them. Continually stirring up trouble and initiating violent action for which you took no blame, you in a sense became the Great Radical, a William Jennings Bryan of revolution, always in opposition to whatever measures were taken politically and socially."

"Your actions made a perverted kind of sense. You knew that, with the population exploding in all directions, there'd always be a majority of youth, ready to rebel, ready to follow a leader who offered whatever was necessary to nurture their natural desire for rebellion against previous generations. However the Establishment changed, you remained permanently anti-Establishment. The biggest irony in your rise to power was that your fiercest opponents were largely from the generation which are now your followers. They'd grown older—more conservative, if you will—and suddenly had found themselves to be the Establishment."

Culligan listened to the crowd growling outside and tried to imagine them turning against him. They seemed so idealistic, so dedicated. How in hell did idealism turn to pot bellies and wagging fingers in the space of a generation? Ridiculous. How could he take this oddball so seriously?

"Finally I reached what I suppose was the inevitable point: your election as U.S. President with a big electoral push from the youth of that day. Taking the bull by the horns, I chanced a trip to the White House to see what you'd become. When you saw me, your face went white and you dropped a boxful of official signature pens. You were to age well, a violent shock of white hair crowning a face unravaged by the years. I hadn't know that radicalism contained preservative ingredients. After you got over your shock, we had a long talk. You were mad, I could see that. Already your programs were terrorizing new minorities. You were considering a brand new brushfire war. You had no feeling for your people who were merely lines on the patterned circuit of your success. All the time we talked, you were planning my assassination, which would have succeeded if I hadn't slipped through your police lines."

"Police lines? You gotta be out of your tree. I hate pigs!"

"When they're tuned in to your squeal, you'll like them well enough."

Irritated by the dean's inference, Culligan sprang out of the chair which.

in recoil, skidded two feet and into the trophy cabinet, starting a small crack in its glass front.

"The White House, eh?" he said, after pacing awhile. "Wow! And I thought maybe I could just be kingpin of my own political group. But *President*—Man, I don't know why you're telling me all this, but it's a good trip."

"But you're not going to *be* president now."

"What? How can you stop me, little fish?"

"I already have. Let me remind you again of our second confrontation. You stormed in here expecting rigid opposition, a continuation of our first encounter. However, I co-operated, thus blocking your takeover of the college, thus cancelling the action which gave you the impetus that led years later to the presidency."

"How the hell do you know I still won't make it? I'm gaining a national rep. I can use it as a springboard."

"No, the timing's not quite right anymore. After the second confrontation I returned to the future and someone else was president. Since I had skipped the intervening years, it took a while to find out what did happen to you."

Culligan, frustrated, kicked at a corner of the dean's desk, the metal toe of his boot leaving a permanent scar on the mahogany.

"What happened? I become a conformist school administrator like you, due no doubt to your example and inspiration?"

"No, I'm afraid not. If that had been the case, there'd be no necessity for this conversation. I could have forgotten you and returned to running this school quietly. What I found instead was that, shortly after another incident, our board of trustees had forced me to expel you from school, using for an excuse the fact that you'd stolen thousands of dollars of sound equipment from our communications center."

"You know about that? Well, I'm no thief. I just borrowed the equipment to help accelerate certain phases of the movement. I'm no thief."

"Maybe, but the board is especially sensitive to violation of public property. Public announcement of the theft brought enough discredit on you that many of your followers turned against you, and you quickly lost power."

"I'd think that's what you'd've wanted, a hatchet job that'd put me in the background."

"Normally, yes. But you didn't stay in the background very long. Embittered, you drifted around the country, making random connections with other aging radicals. Evidently their formulaic slogan-spouting tired you, for you rejected your revolutionary background and drifted into the Patriots, a newly-formed right wing group."

"Now come *on!*"

"Sorry if it pains you. You might be comforted to know that your revived abilities brought you instant power, and the love and respect of your followers. However, one political failure after another made you completely callous. Gradually the Patriots, which were to the right of the Birchers, became under your leadership a corporation of assassins. A sort of political Murder, Inc. My source, which may have been biased, blamed you for the murder of

two U.S. Presidents, among other world figures, and calculated that many significant social movements had been set back years by the Patriots. So I came back, got to the boardof trustees in time to block their actions, and demanded that you be kept in school."

"I'm touched. I suppose this effectively stifled my future?"

"Not exactly. Some people slip into grooves and affect few people by their lives; others have such volatile energy inside them that, however their circumstances are restructured, they find their way to the top. You're obviously one of the latter type, Mr. Culligan. My trips to the future have repeatedly shown you to emerge from my little alterations of the present with new plans, new objectives, and new routes to a tainted success."

"Trips? How many times have you mucked up my future?"

"This is the fifth. In the third, in a fit of dejection caused by my action, you met Linda Tymon by the quadrangle water fountain, and the two of you struck up a friendship."

"Linda Tymon? The beauty queen? But she's insulted every pass I've made at her. And she's against the movement."

"Precisely. That's how she diverts your interest away from it. Together you join forces and, under her influence, settle the problems here through peaceful and orderly means."

"Saved by the love of a good woman, eh? I'd think you'd like that."

"I did, or would have, and I said some very laudatory things about you to the press. But, you see, you weren't sincere. Linda Tymon was another pawn in a different sort of power game. Using connections made during your college years, you took Linda to Hollywood where, through clever manipulation of the media, you made a star out of her and a famous personality of yourself. Again your effect on society was evil. The two of you became the vanguard of an anti-morality movement which made today's sexual revolution seem puritanical. And basically it was a political move. You didn't care about morality, you just needed to wield power. The subsequent decadence set this country up for a nearly-fascistic reaction which rocked foundations and, more importantly, ruined uncountable lives. There were tragic suicides and a rash of terrible mass murders."

"All because of li'l old me? No way, dean. No single man can be held responsible for the aberrational actions of members of society. Nor can the, as you say, decadence of a society be caused by one man's actions."

"Perhaps. All I know is that you were so forceful you came to symbolize the decadence. In the midst of the reaction you went completely insane and poor Linda Tymon, a spiritual and physical wreck by that time, committed a particularly horrible suicide. Note also that the wave of decadence does not occur in any of your other futures."

"Well, hell, I didn't like that future anyway. What next in your ever-changing crystal ball?"

"The ministry, oddly enough. You became a religious fanatic, using doctrines that appeal to the dispossessed. Mainly you convince your followers that, whatever insight they find within

themselves is right not only for themselves but for others as well. Your church is what people have always wanted churches to be, a chaotic madhouse where the congregation not only flail themselves but each other. Your religious revival sweeps the continent and, again through an adroit use of television, you get more power than you had in your first future as president. Each of your congregtions insidiously gains control in their respective communities, forming a network of power across the country. Heretics are burned at the stake."

"It seems that, while I can change the events of your life, 1 cannot alter the pattern. Your lust for power is so keen, it emerges no matter what obstacles are placed before you. But no matter, it is a fascinating study, and I think I may have found the solution."

"Study? Solution? You hypocrite, this is just an experiment for you, isn't it? But this time, instead of a pile of metal, you've got a human life to tinker with, to *destroy.* Click click, set up a cycle of events; results negative; cancel. You're killing me before I've got a chance to live, altering the chain of events until you find the circumstances that make me kneel down to authority. It isn't fair!"

"In principle I agree with you. It is not fair. However, in each of your lives your fanaticism destroys too many others. I'm afraid most people would sacrifice one life to save others. At least, that's what they always say."

"You . .. you fascist!"

Culligan made a threatening gesture but succeeded only in knocking over a lamp.

"We haven't much time," the dean said. "The last trip I came back discouraged, upset at the way things seemed to be getting worse each time. Perhaps because I was preoccupied, 1 made the mistake I mentioned earlier and encountered Lester Martin on a byway of time. The solution came to me at once. I had always left you free to pursue your power quests, and your resiliency helped you to find new outlets for it. But, I realized, a competitor would, at the least, make the going rougher."

"Competitor? Lester? He couldn't compete in a paper airplane race."

"I'll admit that Mr. Martin seems more qualified for shadow that substance. But he *is* ambitious. Until now he's been waiting for an opportunity to develop. That's his weakness, patience. He hasn't the flair for capitalizing on circumstances which you've shown in all your futures. You may have noticed, however, that lately he's become bolder. Also, it seems, a direct result of my tampering, since it comes from the fact that he's been getting more and more impatient with your leadership."

"He can't do anything. He hasn't enough guts."

"He may surprise you. You see, when he returns he comes with the knowledge of your various futures. I told him everything. As the voice for moderation within your group, the information is tactfully useful to him. Further, he knows that if you, as he put it, 'blow this one', those friends of yours out in the hall can be swayed away from you. In their eyes this is a showdown play. And you are about to

lose. Lester will take control."

"We'll see about that." Culligan paced along a border of the rug. "And what if he does? What about my famous resiliency? I'll find a way to destroy you and Lester Martin and the whole system. You've found no 'solution', dean, you've just forced one puny minor setback. Not only that—knowing what I know, *what you've told me,* I'm more unbeatable than ever."

"Perhaps, but I doubt it. You see, Lester will have an advantage you've never had. He'll know his enemy. He's vowed to keep tabs on you, and do everything in his power to keep you from establishing a power base in any organizations, fanatic groups, even PTA'S. You may still find some route to power, but we'll cross that bridge when we come to it—or, rather, we'll stand on the bridge and forbid you passage."

Culligan stopped pacing. The dean stood up.

"That's about it, Mr. Culligan. Mr. Martin will be back in a few seconds. Then we'll see . .."

Culligan started several sentences, but words would not logically fall together for him. The crowd rumble outside had increase in volume, as if to taunt him. The dean toyed with fragments of his smashed lighter. The time machine made a couple of small noises and Lester was back, a foolish grin on his face.

"Hi-ho, fearless leader," he said.

"No, man, no, I won't—You think you've beat—But no, no, I'll—I can—You know what this is—what this is—You think, both of you, that you can each have a piece of me until—until there's nothing left until—But you can't, you—It's against all the laws of—it's against—Lester, man—man—you can't—"

"Yes," Lester said quietly, "I sure can. And I sure will."

Unable to regain coherence, Culligan backed away from the dean and Lester. Turning, he ran out of the room, tripped on a tangle of feet, and fell like a child into the arms of his followers.

Both the dean and Lester quickly walked to the doorway in order to watch.

"You were right," Lester said, as they watched Culligan look up from the floor, apparently studying several of the faces around him.

"Right? Right about what?"

"When you told me there was a streak of madness in what we were doing, and I might feel some regret."

"When did I say that? Oh, *then.* I forgot—it was just now for you, but so long ago for me. Days, anyway."

Members of the crowd tried to help Culligan to his feet. He rolled away from their reaching hands, to a cleared area in the middle. His followers looked down at him, and muttered among themselves. Their mutterings seemed distinctly hostile to their leader.

"You think you've really beaten him this time?" Lester said.

"I suspect so. The pattern's there."

"Pattern?"

"Yes, well, in our first confrontations his sureness extended to perfect control of his body. He moved almost gracefully, and his gestures showed a leader's confidence. But, as you saw today, he was as clumsy as an ox, a mark of the deterioration caused by my successive alterings of his future. I think that's a

sign. He can't seem to cope any more, just as he is now flailing on the floor in the midst of his own people. If that's not a definite sign, it is at least an interesting development."

Lester felt an involuntary shudder, together with a desire to move physically away from the dean. He glanced at the old man, who smiled in return, then turned away from the doorway and went back to his desk. Lester continued to observe the hallway events.

"Culligan's getting up now. He's talking to the people around him. He looks okay." Lester turned around and faced the dean. "Is *that* a sign?"

No emotion registered on the old man's face.

"Might be. No reason to worry anyway. I'll check things out on my next time-trip."

A cheer, half-hearted but definitely on the positive side of things, came from the hallway.

"You may be surprised, sir. Listen to that." Lester took a couple of steps towards the dean. "And, when you get there, when you get to your future checkpoint, I suppose it is quite possible that you'll be checking me out. That is, making sure my future satisfies your Olympian judgements on our behavior."

For the first time, as he stared into Lester's eyes, the dean looked troubled. Worried, maybe.

"Could be that I'll do that," the old man said. "Could be."

Another cheer, louder than the first, went up in the hallway. The dean moved away from the desk, toward the time machine.

"But I don't think we have to worry about you, Mr. Martin. Patience, as they say, is a virtue, a virtue you seem to have in abundance."

Lester watched the old man walk slowly to the machine which now looked more than ever like a mere conglomeration of junk. He felt frightened for the first time since the dean had bestowed confidence on him, in this same room, several years from today. What would Culligan do now, he thought. Zonk the old bastard a good one on the skull probably. Lester looked around for a wieldable weapon. Everything looked either too light or too heavy. Anyway, the risk was too great, everybody knew he was alone with the dean. Definitely too risky,a real invitation to a jail cell. Maybe he should demolish the time machine instead, he thought. But immediately he knew that he was just as afraid to do that. He had too much respect for science which, after all, had earned him his Phi Beta Kappa key, his honors degree, and an assured job with the top company in his field if he chose to take it. No, this was not the time for smashing the old man or his invention. This was the time to wait and see what the old bastard came back with, to stay here until he materialized and then examine his eyes closely.

The dean turned and waved goodbye before pressing the button. Lester walked around the desk and sat on the administrator's comfortable padded leather chair. The dean faded out. Lester, responding to the soft comfort of the chair, put his feet on the desk. He felt perfectly relaxed and knew he could put up with the long period of staring at the time machine.

(Continued on page 110)

The Once And Always War
(Continued from page 22)

"1 only wanted to bring you home," he said. His eyes were Aiming over, moisture gathering in the corners. "You really didn't need to do what you did."

My god, he is *attracted to me.* He wasn't a danger to her; he never had been. Six hundred years—and nothing had changed; the balance had remained the same, exactly the same. She didn't know what to do. Tentatively, she reached out her hand and touched his cheek. When he didn't react, she drew herself to him, and gently pressed her lips against his own.

Now—take him now! And in the same instant: *Why does it have to be this way?*

She felt his hand fumbling against her, and she pressed herself closer—and fell back as he shoved her away.

"Crimmins was right—you're just a rebel. Just a rebel like all the others!" His eyes were red, his mouth working as he turned away, shoulders hunching, something heaving inside him. "Just a *rebel."* His voice was almost inaudible, the words choked off by a spasm of vomiting.

She was still gaping in shock when he turned back and struck her, knocking her back aginst the LS System machinery, cracking her head on something sharp, and sending her off into darkness.

HE MADE THE PREPARATIONS quickly, not wishing to waste any more time. His mouth still tasted foul, and he wanted to return to his ship for a spell in the 'fresher. Even so, he handled the rebel's unconscious form with care. As far as he could tell, she was dying, which would make the operation difficult enough without the added complications created by haste.

She *was* beautiful, though the marks which the teeth had made on her upper and lower lips still disturbed him. Thinking about her teeth made him remember the touch of her mouth, and he began to gag involuntarily. It took him a minute to regain control. There were more important things to consider: the bonus that would be his, the prestige among the other men at Base. Though his ship was small—all the scouts were small, designed for economy to carry only one passenger—there was more than enough room for each rebel's contribution. More germ plasma. More children. Healthy children, he reminded himself; a mixing of genetic patterns. That was good.

He paused a moment to review the entire procedure in his mind, and then leaned forward over the body of the dying rebel, bringing his suit scapel down for the first incision across the rebel's abdomen.

Under him, the rebel moaned.

—GERARD F. CONWAY

The Wind She Does Fly (Continued from page 30)

mid step out the double doors, framed against rows of bright automobiles around a circular drive.

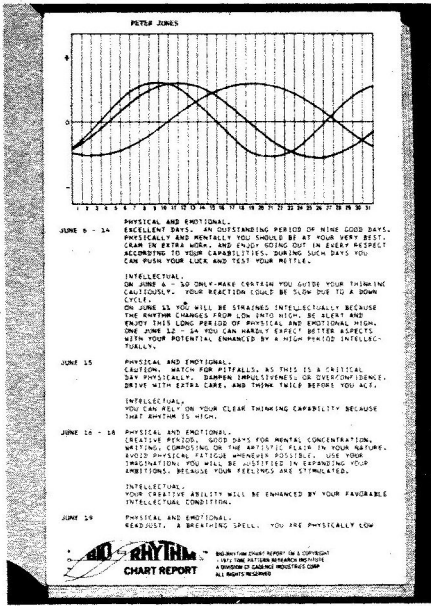
Come quick, he whispers urgently, let's escape while we can! We'll break out into the world and be free!

Sadly I smile into his innocent blue eyes.

Dear Donovan: no. Go again into imprisonment if you choose. You haven't really escaped; perhaps you never will.

And I turn and walk away, arranging my mind for my new daily schedule. I've got patients of my own, now, and all the patience in the world.

—ALPAJPURI



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EVERYBODY HAS UPS AND DOWNS

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Today's Health News in February of *1972 said, "Scientists have found evidence that our biological clocks^ can be*

The official Tactical Air Command Magazine "ATTACK" in the March 1972 issue reported in an analysis of accidents that 67% of the pilots involved had two or more Bio-Rhythm t* cycles in the minus portion.*

A major chemical company testing the Bio-Rhythm?« cyclical theory in a pilot project covering 2 million man hours resulted in a 40% reduction of accidents in their plants.

Human errors can be reduced Flight Safety Foundation reported in their September /October newsletter concerning this human factor side of accident investigation and causation. A transport company in Japan which operates a fleet of same 700 busses, taxis and a primary railroad has been applying the Bio-Rhythm™ Theory to their operation. The results? As quoted in the Flight Safety Foundation newsletter, "In the first year of application the accident rate decreased by one-third as against a steeply increasing trend in the country as a whole"

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In this brief story Clark Cox (a Clarion alumnus) draws a convincing picture of a man whose problem is that whomever he meets—

THEY ROAR

CLARK COX

I AM EXPERIMENT, Dr Burney tell me. The way he say it, I should spell it in big letters, so: E X P E R I M E N T

I spell good now. Before, I no can spell. I no can do any thing. But now I remember better. I starting to read better, remember words. I look up words I not know, in big book called dictionary they give me at hospital.

But now I hear the roaring, and it make me sad. The roaring, it pain me. Before, I just dumb. Now, I think I go crazy.

You not dumb, say Dr Burney, you just have trouble remembering. But I think he just being kind. Dr Burney a kind man, big, bearded, thick glasses like a frame around his big eyes that look at me. But he strange. He think I important because 1 hear the roaring. But they no say anything to me, I tell him. It not important.

They just roar, and roar, and roar.

1 not think about it, that way. I am experiment, I important to Dr Burney and he good to me. I write down what I think about the roaring, like he ask me to do.

But I no like being experiment. They push me down in hard chairs, take off my clothes so I ashamed, poke things in my ears and eyes. Yesterday they shave part of my head and put metal against it, with wires going to big machine that lights up. Machine makes screaming noise, hurts my ears. I say, Turn off, turn off, you electrocute me.

Little young man laugh and say, You not be hurt. We just testing your something something, big words. Dr Burney give him hard look and say, You no laugh at Luther. Luther important man now, deserve respect. No laugh again.

Little man no laugh again.

But they roar at me. Dr Burney and little man, called technician (I look up spelling) in medical school lab. They good to me, but they roar and it hurts. And they bring me other people to listen to, and animals, and they all roar and I afraid I going crazy.

I remember better now, though. I remember falling and when I wake up in hospital next to medical school. I no remember like this before.

I work for roofing company before I fall. We put up roofs and repair them, we put on storm doors and storm windows and screen doors for people. It good job. I make seventy dollars a week, my wife Annie make maybe forty a week as maid for rich people, we live good. Plenty food, nice little house we rent, TV set. I like Laugh In, Mr Bunker, cowboy shows.

But one day I on stepladder putting

up storm window. It no want to go in place. I hit side of storm window with palm of hand, ladder start to tip over and I reach for side of house to catch myself but I no can reach. Ladder falls, I go over backwards and I think my head hit something hard. They say I walk around after, but I no remember. We not know you hurt for a while, my boss Sam say when he come to visit me in hospital. You not making good sense for a while but then you never did make very good sense ha ha.

Anyhow, next thing I remember I in hospital and it two, three days later. I wake up and my head hurts, bad. My right eye is swelled shut. I no can move left arm like 1 want to. It flop around like fish. Once I hit myself in face with left arm.

Dr Burney come when I wake up. My head hurts and my arm don't do right, I tell him. He say, you be all right, you get hard lick on head and your brain swell up, what we call CONCUSSION. Brain push against skull from inside, make head hurt and arm go bad. But swelling go down soon and you go home. We give you something to take away headache, make you sleep some more.

Dr Burney tell truth. He good man. It three weeks later now, and swelling gone down and I use left arm just like before.

But that night after he come and talk to me, I hear the roaring first time.

1 wake up. Head still hurts, but not so bad. Ward is dark, I know it must be late. Man in bed next to me, only other man in ward, is roaring.

Dr Burney tell me if I want anything, I push button on wall next to bed and nurse come. 1 push button, several times. In a minute, nurse comes in. She dressed all in white, with little white cap. Pretty.

Don't move around any more than you have to, Mr Oliver, she tell me. You pull tube loose in your arm and you no get fed. I not notice tube in arm, piece of tape holding it there, til she tell me.

1 sorry, I tell her. I sorry to bother you, but I no can sleep. Man in next bed roaring, make noise. He wake me up.

I no hear anything, she say. Mr Jenkins (he man in next bed, I think) asleep, he just snoring a little.

I listen. Room is quiet, no light except little lamp next to bed that nurse turns on. She smells like flowers. Mr Jenkins snores. There no other noise in room.

But Mr Jenkins roars.

He roaring, I say. He not making noise, but he roar in head and it hurt my head. He roar inside head because he hurt.

He in pain, a little, she say. He have a case of shingles.

I look around, under Mr Jenkins bed, on floor. We use shingles in roofing jobs, I say. I no see shingles.

Nurse laughs and says she bring something to help me sleep again. Mr Jenkins still roaring. When she come back with needle, I notice she roar too, but not as loud.

You roaring inside head too, I say. You have case of shingles, make you hurt?

I no hear answer. I sleep, wake up in daylight and roaring is gone. Mr Jenkins in next bed, reading magazine

with bright colors on cover.

Same day, later, Dr Burney came back. With him, many young men and one young girl with long black hair, all dressed in white. They medical students, he tell me. They come to learn about you.

1 not have anything for them to learn, I say. I just fall off ladder and hurt my head.

Some of young men laugh, young girl looks sad. I like her, but I hurt because young men laugh at me. Then I think, maybe it pretty funny how I so clumsy I fall off stepladder and have to come to hospital. I laugh too, and they laugh. It funny.

Dr Burney reads chart hanging on foot of bed and tell them about my concussion. They talk, then go to next bed, he reads chart, they talk some more, then they leave.

My boss Sam comes the next day, brings roses. I no like roses, make me sneeze. But it good of Sam to think of me. You not worry about a thing, he say. Company has insurance, called workmans compensation, pays your hospital bill.

I want to get well, I tell Sam, so I can come back to work.

Sams face turns red. Luther, he say, I dont like to have to tell you this, but you can no come back to work for us. Big boss, in central office, he say you ACCIDENT-PRONE, means I too likely to get hurt, make insurance rates go up. We like you Luther, Sam tell me, but big boss wont let you come back to work. I sorry. Sam leaves.

I cry for a while then, turning head away so Mr Jenkins wont see and be sad. Roofing company job was best job I ever have. Now I think I have to go back to sweeping out parking lots at drive in eating places, or be janitor at big office building again. It lonesome work, nobody to talk to.

When Annie come to visit me I tell her. She cries too, then she leaves. I eat, sleep, wake up, eat, Dr Burney comes back with young medical students.

You can leave in five days I think, he say. We keep you for awhile, see you getting along good, then you go home. Look. He get little calendar from table beside bed. See, he say, you here. This today. He points to black number 3 on calendar. Here, you go home. He points to 8. We mark off one number every day til you go home. He takes ball point pen and puts mark through 3.

Four hundred and ninety six, I say.

Dr Burney ask, What?

Four hundred and ninety six, I tell him. Number, on calendar.

Dr Burney looks at calendar, scratches his head. I no see that number on calendar, he say.

I mean big number, I tell him. Lots of little numbers on calendar. Add them all up and get one big number. Four hundred and ninety six.

Dr Burney takes pen from pocket and little white card, writes. Four hundred and ninety six, he say. Luther, how long you been able to do this.?

Always, I say, and I remember something I not remember before for long time. When I was little boy, I say, we live next to railroad tracks. Big noisy boxcars go by, all with big numbers on side. They go by, I add up big numbers and get bigger number. But I no can say big numbers, they too long and I

not know the words.

One of medical students whistles through teeth, says. Idiot savant (I ask Dr Burney for spelling). I know I dumb, but I no think he try to hurt my feelings. Call me anything you like, I say, but dont call me late for supper ha ha. We laugh.

After that Dr Burney spend more time with me.

But the roaring come back, day before I to leave hospital. Everybody roar, Dr Burney worst of all. I tell Dr Burney, and he frown and Write some thing on chart and the next morning they put me on cart and take me to X Ray Room and take pictures, Dr Burney say, of the inside of my head. I not know how they do this.

Every body roar, but some roar louder.

After that I stay in hospital longer, but Annie come to see me every day and it not bad. They give me lot of tests and Dr Burney ask me lot of questions about my life, but I can no remember many answers. The roaring keep up, but I get used to it, like room full of machines.

Dr Burney tell me the roaring just like that. It background noise, he say. You hearing background noise from inside peoples heads, what he call T E L E P A T H Y, means reading minds. This never happen before in medical history, he tell me, and it very important. He say it connected somehow to how I can remember better now. He say something happened inside my brain when I fall, something makes me remember better and hear the roaring.

It not important, I say. I no can hear what they saying, I just hear the roar.

Still, he say, it a breakthrough. We must study you. Then he offer me the job.

You go home, he say, live at home. But you come back to hospital for few hours each evening and we do tests on you. We write up your case. Pretty soon, maybe TV people come to take pictures of you, people write books, you famous, make a lot of money. We pay you eighty dollars a week to start.

That more money than I ever make before, 1 think, but I not know if I should take it. After all, I not doing anything to earn it. But when Annie come and I tell her, she say I should take the job so we dont have to live on Welfare.

We should live on Welfare, maybe, I tell her. Welfare owe us a living. When we have the baby, the Welfare people come and say we no able to take care of her, have to give her up. They take her away, put her in home, we no see her. Now they should pay us something, 1 say.

But Annies lip starts to quiver and I know I shouldnt talk of the baby. I tell her III take the job, and she leaves.

I remember the Welfare lady good, now. She should pay us some thing. She come around, dressed fit to kill with big grin and dark red lipstick and back straight, acting constipated. She say we not mentally capable of taking care of baby, and she arrange to have Annie brought to hospital, fixed so we can no have more babies.

My daddy tell me (I remember now) I no should hate people, I should say I despise their ways. But I no can help it. I hate that Welfare lady.

I go home, go back to hospital nights.

They send car for me after supper, I stay three hours, they send me home in car. It good job, easy. I see lots of good Tv programs in daytime I never get to see before. But I can no stand the roaring.

They bring me people, and the people roar. I can no stand too many people at one time, too much roaring. Then they bring me white mice in cages, white rats, big spotted guinea pigs, ask do they roar? I tell them yes, but not as loud as people. They squeak, like mice. Their brains too little.

Then they bring me dead mice, dead rats, and I almost cry, but they ask do they roar? and I say you be stupid people, only thing still alive roar.

They roar inside head, with brains. When they die, brains stop, they no roar.

Dr. Burney gets all excited. Do you know what this means? he says to lab technician in white coat, Another test for death.

Lab techician says, and I try hard to remember exactly because I think it important, We cant do that, they too much need for transplants. We set up another test for clinical death, bodies be so long dead by time we can operate, organs be no good. I no understand what he mean, but he excited and I know it important.

We can no hold back medical information, say Dr Burney. Who knows what we about to learn? We got to go ahead with experiment.

Next night, we do no tests. Instead, Dr Burney talk to me a long time about what he want me to do. He tell me lot of things about medicine, and I listen good and I think I remember it all, so I know why he want me to do the new work.

It hard to say, he tell me, exactly when people die. But it very important to learn how to know exactly when some body die. He tell me there many tests they give: take pulse, see if breathing stopped, heart stopped beating, blood pressure, measurements on brain with machine called EEG.

Now, he say, just lately we been doing another test on brain to see if person dead. We give person NITROUS OXIDE gas, see if gas go through blood stream to brain, so we know if brain getting air it need to live. If not, person is dead, probably.

But he say, now you can tell us for sure. You listen to person, if no hear roaring he dead. Big experiment, very important.

I no want persons to be buried alive, think maybe I can help, so I say yes.

Now when some body at the hospital dies, they put me in room with him, alone, til I stop hearing roar. It terrible. Dying men and women hooked up to big machines that make high whining noises. Once it a little baby I in room with, and I cry a long time after they take me home that night.

They roar.

Not like other people. When they die they roar louder, like the man with a case of shingles only worse. They roar, and roar, and roar, and

I can no write any more about it. I no can see what good Im doing by doing this work. All the people die, they can no be saved. They too far gone by time I listen to roaring. And I think I go crazy.

I wish I have my old job back with

(Continued on page 110)

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To Walk With Thunder (Continued from page 12)

He—Tom Brandt—was going to have this hot potato all to himself. Grant Hastings was too smart, too shrewd to risk his political fortunes on a decision that would call down all the thunder and lightning a multiple megabuck corporation could command. Before Grant Hastings would dare start the Dodgeson-Bell machinery working, somebody else would have to play the part of the lightning rod. Somebody named Tom Brandt.

Well, that was all right. Tom Brandt wasn't up for re-election next year, and it was his idea, besides. It was only fair he should stand up for it, if Grant Hastings didn't have the nerve. Grant Hastings, after all, was the head man. Tom Brandt was just one of the Navajos.

HE'D HAVE LIKED for the Bushmaster's pilot to set the craft down on the south lawn of the White House, but air traffic regulations wouldn't allow it. An electric limousine was waiting for him at National Airport. He plunked his backpack on the seat and climbed in. His bamboo walking staff stuck out a window.

The driver swung around to look at him. "Where to?" He had a fleshy face and bloodshot eyes. Most likely, he'd drawn duty with shieks, Sikhs, and tattooed Maoris. It would be hard to startle such a man.

"Sixteen hundred Pennsylvania Avenue," Brandt said. He leaned back. After the Bushmaster's rear cockpit, the limousine's upholstery was soft as fluff. If the Bushmaster hadn't had an empty weapons bay, he'd never have gotten his bamboo staff aboard.

"Right," the driver said, and started up. Absolutely unshockable.

It was early afternoon here in the District. Looking out, Brandt could see the sky was a dirty white haze—neither cloud wisp nor overcast, but smog. The sun was not so much a disc of light as an amorphous zone of brightness; muted, dull, and casting no shadows. When the Washington Monument hove into view, it stood like a white apparition before a background with which it blended and which surrounded it, blurring its outlines.

The driver turned to approach the west entrance to the White House grounds. Brandt leaned forward and rapped hard on the panel separating them. "No," he said. "The front way."

The driver didn't ask questions. It wasn't his job. He circled around and turned into the drive that curved up to the pillared front entrance. Brandt climbed out, retreived his backpack and staff, and mounted the steps.

Inside, his arrival created a low-keyed, well-controlled pandemonium. Receptionists and sides and guards—one after another—tried to fend off this obviously strange little man with four days' growth of beard, loose-fitting tropical shorts, and gauze-thin shirt. They were polite, but there had to be some mistake; the President was conferring with the Senate Minority leader, the Secretary of Commerce, and/or the Ambassador to the Falkland Islands. There was no appointment on the books for anybody with bare knees and elbows and a fifty pound pack on his back. Not to mention that six foot bamboo walking staff. Besides, visitors on official

business never came in the front way. That was only used on ceremonial occasions. Brandt took off his hat and sunglasses, but no one recognized the face behind his four day stubble. Nor had he brought credentials. Where he'd been, he hadn't expected to meet anybody but rattlesnakes.

"Check the boss," Brandt said. "Ask him if he wants to see Tom Brandt." Nobody did. They didn't think it was necessary.

Finally, he walked into the press room. There were perhaps a dozen newsmen lounging around, waiting for something to happen. Three huddled in a corner, where one was recounting his comic adventures while the other pair laughed and knuckled each other. Two more were sharing the pages of a voluminous press release that—to judge from their wooden expressions—had all the intrinsic news value of Chester A. Arthur's bi-weekly laundry list. Brandt borrowed a quarter from a reporter who left off studying the cobwebs on the ceiling to dig in his pocket. The two with the press release abandoned their study. The three in the corner stopped talking, and the one who had been dozing on a couch sat up to watch.

Brandt stuck the quarter in a phone and dialled Mitch Krogdahl's private number. The Interior Secretary answered before it could ring a second time.

"Mitch? Tom Brandt here." He explained the problem, pretending not to notice how every eye in the room studiously avoided watching him. There were a lot of ears turned his way.

"Don't be hard on them, Tom," Krogdahl said when Brandt finished. "The Palace Guard's only doing their job. You look like a nut to them. Don't fret. I'll get you through."

"Oh, I'm not mad," Brandt said. "I know what I look like."

"Just stay where you're at, Tom. I'll do the rest," Krogdahl said, and signed off.

Brandt stepped out of the booth and sat down. He dragged his pack over in front of him. "Got any wastebaskets in this part of the world?"

One of the reporters nodded. There was a big one beside a table. Brandt got up and brought it back to his chair. Opening a pocket on the side of his pack, he pulled out a handful of flattened tin cans and wrappers off dehydrated food. He always liked to leave a camp as clean as when he got there, and trash barrels weren't very frequent in the country where he'd been. He was scrounging the last scraps out of the pocket when Millie Charles stuck her head around the doorpost.

"Tom! There you are! The boss sent me looking for you." When Millie spoke of the boss, everyone around the White House knew who she meant. There was only one.

Brandt got to his feet. "I'm not all that hard to find, am I?" He slipped an arm through one of the packframe's loops.

"Well, when you hide behind all that underbrush . .."

She was about fifty, scrawny as a starved hen, and she wore her black (dyed) hair in a severe pageboy that would have been more in style during the Hoover administration. "He's waiting for you now."

Brandt started to follow her. The reporter who'd loaned the telephone money tried to intercept him. "Excuse me. I didn't get the name."

Brandt swung his pack idly by its loop. "Tom Brandt," he said. "Much obliged for the loan. I'll remember to bring some loose coin to the press conference. You'll be there, I'm supposing."

Without waiting for a response, he stepped past the man. Millie led off down the hall. The reporter's plaintive voice came after him. *"What* press conference?" Brandt didn't pause or reply. Maybe he wouldn't know what to make of it, but if he was any good as a newshound, he'd find out.

Millie's office was one of the several in the Executive cluster that had direct access to the Presence. She paused to touch a button on her desk, then went over to the i/iner door. She stopped with her hand on the knob. "Maybe you'd better leave that here."

She meant his pack. He'd have liked to take it inside, just to annoy the Boss, but it had served its purpose with the newsmen. No sense to overdoing a thing. He swung it down and leaned it against the wall. He laid his staff on the floor beside it. "Keep an eye on it, huh?"

She nodded and smiled and opened the President's door. He wasn't really worried. He'd heard it said that, while there might be thieves in the White House, they were never petty thieves.

HE STEPPED into the Presence. Grant Hastings was coming across the carpet to meet him. A tall, broad-shouldered man, he looked as if he could have just stepped off an Ivy League football field, except that his hair was pure white and his features patrician.

They shook hands. "Sorry to call you back like this, Tom, but I think you agree it's important." They went back to the desk side by side. "How was the trip?"

"The walking? Fine." Brandt said. As they separated—Hastings moving around behind the desk—he drifted toward the chair on the left. Hastings paused.

"No, Tom." He nodded to the chair on Brandt's right. "That one. Where I can see you."

"Sorry," Brandt mumbled, angry with himself, and changed direction. He'd forgotten the President's right eye was blind. An easy mistake to fall into; the one that was glass was a perfect imitation, and though it wasn't exactly kept secret, it was not often mentioned.

Hastings sat down. A hearty smile warmed his face. It was the Old Ironsides desk, resurrected from storage again when Hastings came to the White House. (Or was it the Mayflower whose timbers had been used in building it? Some noble ship, anyway.)

"And the flight back?" he asked, as if the moment's awkwardness had never happened. "How do you like the Bushmaster?" His voice contained the delight of a small boy whose playthings gave him pleasure.

Brandt made a face. "Fast," he said grudgingly. "But that thing's got an engine that's as dirty as downstream from a feed lot. And every time I looked down . . . it's like trying to look through dishwater. The air's full of junk, down here."

Hastings' nod was solemn. "I know. Everybody knows." He shrugged the thought away. "I'm told you had trouble getting past the palace guard. I'm sorry about that. But you'll have to admit . . ." His glance settled on Brandt's bare knees. "That's not exactly the usual costume. And if you'd come in the west gate ..."

"You think it was accident I wound up in the press room?"

The President cocked his head in abrupt surmise. A smile slowly shaped his mouth. "Tom, I may have to review my estimate of how much you know about public education techniques."

It had seemed an almost juvenile stunt to Brandt. He'd known it would work, but he wasn't proud of it; he didn't even think it was especially clever. "You don't lecture a class of five hundred college freshmen without learning a few things," he shrugged. "When you've got their attention, then you can get down to business."

"I never thought of it quite that way," Hastings said, nodding. "I'll have to admit, I pulled a few tricks of my own, once upon a time."

"Seems to me, I remember hearing about some," Brandt said. "But that's not what I'm here to talk about."

"No, it's not," Hastings agreed. "I've asked three of my top public education specialists to work with you. I think you know Tad Vroman."

Brandt nodded. He knew Vroman, true enough. He wasn't much impressed.

"He'll have John Schaparelli and a new boy named Ralph Dudman to help," Hastings went on.

That was better. John Schaparelli was one of the team that had engineered Hastings' election victory three years ago. A canny, shrewd man.

"I thought they might drive out to your place this evening, and you can talk things over. How does seven thirty sound?"

"No objection," Brandt said. If he was going to be the prime attraction at a press conference, it might be a good idea to prep for it. He'd done more than a little thinking, but he didn't fool himself that he knew all the answers.

He'd made camp the night before on a ledge above a dry watercourse. He climbed down and dug a hole in the red sand. When it filled with water—mindful of the white salt crusts on the streambed's banks—he cautiously tasted it before filling his canteens. Then he climbed back up.

The twilight was deepening, although the western sky was still bright. He got the bluet stove going. Cooking supper was a job quickly done. Nevertheless, by the time he'd cleaned the pan, the last of daylight was gone. The quarter moon spread its thin glow across a landscape of low buttes and terraced platforms. The air chilled rapidly. He arranged his sleeping bag, but didn't slide into it yet. His bare legs began to feel the cold. A bird's raucous call carried far in the breeze-touched silence. He sat on a stone ledge and let the night fill him with its calm. He thought about how he could do the things that had to be done. Over him, the great sprawl of stars gleamed sharp and clean and myarid in a way that no one who lived in cities ever saw them.

"For the most part," Grant Hastings said, "I'll leave the details of our public

education campaign to your discretion. But I consider one point vitally important." His voice was precise, now, and his posture autocratic. Brandt said nothing to prompt him; he'd say what he wanted to say.

"We're issuing your report," he said. "But the version we're releasing won't include your recommendations. Most of your arguments are still there, but they're identified only as discussion and analysis. Of course, your opinion of the Freshaire will be obvious to anyone who studies the report, and I don't really object to anything you say about it publicly. But I want you to make it very clear that you are giving only a personal opinion, and that your opinion does not necessarily represent either the collective judgment of the Council, nor your objective recommendations to me. In fact, officially, we'll maintain that you haven't yet formulated your recommendations. That you're still trying to decide."

"Any particular reason?" Brandt asked. Hastings always had reasons, of course, but he didn't always explain what they were. Nor, when he did explain, did he always tell the truth. It had been claimed—not unjustly—that he kept Macchiavelli and the Bible on his nightstand, and that Macchiavelli was always on top.

"I don't want questions coming up to me about whether I'll follow your recommendations," Hastings said. "I'll be under some heavy pressures to let them market the Freshaire. Fabricorp is a powerful company, so ..."

—and a big contributor to various political campaign chests, Brandt thought—

"... I don't believe I'll be able to take a position publically until you've done your public education job," Hastings said.

Brandt smiled grimly. What Hastings was saying was: if he—Tom Brandt—could convince the public mind that the Freshaire's introduction would be against the public good, Hastings would endorse his accomplishment. Otherwise, Brandt could expect no support—no acknowledgement, even, that he spoke with the President's blessing.

"Fair enough," Brandt said. It wasn't fair, really, but he couldn't say that. He'd been given sixty days to do the job. Fifty eight. It wasn't time enough. A year wouldn't be time enough. But those were the rules of the game.

"Another thing, Tom," Hastings said. "I think it would be very unwise to tell anyone the basic reason you don't like the Freshaire. I think your reasoning is excellent, but making it public would not have a desirable effect. People don't like to think they're being manipulated."

"I had that figured out a while ago," Brandt said. The trouble with the Freshaire was that it could perform a service badly needed. Fabricorp's Chemodyne Division product development staff had surveyed the potential market carefully, and hadn't allowed their engineers to consider the job done until all the specifications had been met. It had meant an investment of several million dollars. The result was a piece of equipment that, once installed, could supply a closed space—an apartment, house, or the passenger

cab of a vehicle—with a continuous flow of perfect-filtered air. Its selective membrane filtration system permitted only natural air constituents to pass, not by snatching everything else from the air as it went through, but by accepting from the air only molecules of oxygen and nitrogen in their proper proportions, and just enough carbon dioxide to satisfy the people who worried that perhaps the total absence of CO_2 in the air might be harmful to the human organism. Everything else—even the noble gasses—the membranes rejected.

Nobody really wanted to breathe the vaporous garbage that was a city's air, any more than they cared to drink out of sewers. Fabricorp could expect to sell at least one unit to every metropolitan family with the money to pay, and the basic unit's mass production cost would be low enough that fully eighty percent of them could meet the price. Smaller units would be available for installation in cars. Eventually, there would be larger units for stores, office buildings, theatres and schools. They would become as commonplace as air conditioners. In only a few years, it would be possible for most of a city's population to go for weeks without breathing a single lungful of the city's air as it really was. Only a minority would still breathe that air—only the desperately poor, and those few who didn't believe in such artificial barriers between themselves and the real world.

Twenty years ago, the Freshaire wouldn't have been needed. It would have been as superfluous as wheels on a space capsule. Back then, a standard model air conditioner with a dust-catcher filter was enough for the most situations. That wasn't true any more. In spite of the tireless, wrenching efforts of government at all levels (and the efforts of industry fearful of even more stringent regulations) the parts-per-million index of pollutants in the air surrounding every metropolitan zone in the nation had crept steadily upward. Brandt thought of it as being like the predicament of men in a canoe on the brink of a waterfall—the men paddling desperately but, trapped in the river's powerful flow, being borne steadily, slowly, backward toward the edge. Public health statistics showed an equal rise in the occurrence of irritant-caused respiratory disease. Air conditioners alone could no longer do the job; they could still chill the air, but they couldn't make it significantly better to breathe.

An uncritical mind would have accepted the Freshaire as the problem's perfect answer, but Tom Brandt's responsibility—to the President and therefore, ultimately, to the people—was to see beyond the surface of things. As chairman of the President's Council of Advisors on Environmental Quality, he had to forsee the unanticipated consequences of seemly harmless developments. He had to perceive the damage concealed within the apparently beneficial. Sometimes it was a tall order. It called for the perscpiacity to anticipate mid-air airliner collisions on the basis of the experiments at Kitty Hawk.

And then to decide if the benefits outweighed the harm.

At the conclusion of his report, Brandt had recommended that Hastings invoke the "possibility of

hazard" provision of the Dodgeson-Bell Act against the Freshaire. The Dodgeson-Bell Act had been a hastily written piece of legislation, enacted at the height of a furor resulting from the discovery that a low-priced peanut butter *ersatz* caused a gradual degeneration of bone marrow and a leukemia-like illness in children less than nine years old. Like most hysteria-stimulated legislation, it was not a good law, but it did give the President some useful discretionary powers. Judiciously implimented, some good could be done with it.

The "possibility of hazard" provision authorized the President—acting through the office of the Attorney General—to obtain a federal court injunction against the production, importation, or sale of any industrial product whose manufacture or use resulted in conditions dangerous to public health or the environment. For products already in general use, it was necessary to prove that measurable permanent damage had been caused—something not always easy to prove. Even then, products "vital to the nation's economy or social institutions" were exempt; the liquor, tobacco, petroleum, and automotive lobbies had combined to make sure that stipulation was written into the law.

New products were more vulnerable. Anyone who planned to manufacture or import such an item was required to file a declaration of intent. Within sixty days of that notice, the President could direct the Attorney General to request an injunction against the product, which would be issued by the Federal District Court with jurisdiction if it was persuaded that general use of the product could reasonably be expected to cause harm.

The party faced with the injunction could, of course, begin legal proceedings to have the injunction lifted, a long and cumbersome business. It wasn't a power to be carelessly used: in the two administrations since the law was passed, that provision had been invoked only three times'. But the power was there when—and if—the President felt it was needed.

And the Freshaire had to be sidetracked. In his heart, Brandt knew there was no other sane choice, for the polluted air of the modern American metropolis was the principal stimulant to public support of pollution control. Unlike polluted water—tap water might stink of chlorine, but it didn't poison or infect—or the even more subtle pollution of plant/animal food chains, polluted air could not be ignored. It was something a citizen encountered every day of his life, every time he breathed, every time he wiped his smarting eyes, every time he looked up at the sky. It was a far more persuasive argument than dry statistics.

Freshaire equipment would insulate people—the ones who voted, and who thought about Vital Issues—from the filth that scraped against their apartment windows and left grime on the pavement beneath the wheels of their tight-sealed cars.

They wouldn't feel that pollution had to be fought. The air they breathed would be clean, and the water they drank would be purified at a cost they did not know. Their food would be government inspected. They would go

on living in their glass and plastic containers until the last fish turned belly up, the last tree withered and turned to dry wood, and the last sparrow fell from the sky.

We can't allow them a chance to shut themselves off from the dirty air, he'd written for Hastings' eyes. *If we let them shut out the dirt, they'll forget what it's like outside. They won't care. And if they don't care, it'll get worse, until it can't be breathed at all.*

But that wasn't an argument you could explain to people. Not when they were the same people you wanted to stay interested in keeping clean the nest in which they lived.

"I KNOW YOU'LL WANT to see a copy of the version we're printing," Hastings said. "The Printing Office had orders to deliver a set of galleys up to your farm. As for the news people, they'll get bound copies tomorrow morning at nine. We scheduled your press conference for ten thirty in the Old State auditorium. How does that sound?"

"I'll be there," Brandt said, without enthusiasm. He stood up. He had a lot of hard work ahead of him, and it was time to get out. Hastings came around the desk and went with him to the door.

"One thing I have trouble understanding," Hastings said. "You take these walks by yourself, and your wife goes up to New York. I suppose it only seems odd, but. . . well... it does seem odd."

Brandt paused in the open doorway, half turned, and shrugged. Marta had gone on a few walks with him, early in their marriage. That was years ago. She hadn't enjoyed walking, and hadn't enjoyed going to places where there weren't any people. If she'd continued to go with him, their marriage wouldn't have lasted.

"She grew up in Boston," he said. "City girl." As if that explained it all.

The limousine had waited, and the driver knew the way to Brandt's farm. Brandt slouched beside his backpack and watched the country flip past like pages of a book. It seemed a long time before the smooth unreeling of pavement changed to the clatter of gravel and the big black car stopped in front of his home.

Brandt climbed out, got his backpack and his walking staff, and slapped a fender. The Cadillac's electric motors snarled vigorously. It swung wide to turn in the yard and surged back down the drive. Brandt lifted his pack by the straps and trudged toward the house.

It wasn't much of a farm. A few acres of pasture rescued from a suburban developer's schemes. The fields were as smoothly green as a golf course. Some old, twisted willows stood in ragged lines where hedgerows had grown. Survivors. He'd never had the heart to chop them down.

He left the flagstone walk and cut across the grass. The low, aerodynamic bulk of Marta's freeway cruiser crouched in the carport beside the perky steamer that was his own machine. Standing high on its narrow wheels, the steamer looked as impractical as a wind-up toy beside the burnished copper sleekness of the gasbuggy. Brandt went over and held his hand in front of the gasbuggy's

radiator; he could feel the warmth. The chemical reek of hot engine vapors invaded his nose. She hadn't been home long.

He turned back toward the house and mounted the steps. It had been a coachouse before the Civil War. The manor had burned some time around the turn of the century and hadn't been rebuilt. It was a farmed-to-death piece of land, this farm, only slowly coming back under Brandt's gentle prodding. Maybe. in another generation, someone could do something with it.

The headlong, hard driven rhythm of an old Beatles tape—one he'd always loathed, but endured for her sake—came from the south room. He dumped his pack in a corner behind the door and leaned his staff beside it. In the south room's doorway, he paused.

Martha, in a gold shell-tunic, emerald sleeves and slacks, slouched in the look-at-the-ceiling chair. A martini glass stood empty on the stand near her right hand. She didn't look his way.

He backed out. He went back and opened the outside door. He waited until the tape came to a moment of silence, then shut the door with more force than was needed. He lifted his pack and let it drop a few inches. It made a satisfying thud, like a lead weight wrapped in burlap.

This time, when he paused in the south room's doorway, Marta was at the other side of the room doing something with the tape machine's knobs. She turned and flashed him a smile and came toward him. She moved smoothly. She offered her cheek.

"You came back," she said.

It was an unfair thing to say. "I've always come back," he said. The words came from deep in his throat—almost a growl. "To every home we've had."

She seemed to back away, although her feet didn't move. "I mean . . . you were going away for a week. But you're here, Tom. Now. You . . ." —she said it with a shrug— "... came back."

He leaned his spine against the hard edge of the doorway's corner. "He called me back," he said with a feeling like defeat. "When he waggles the leash ..."

"He owns you."

Brandt shook his head. "No. The job does. It's a thing that needs doing, and nobody else to do it. He ... it's like I've told you . . . how many times? . . . the boss doesn't have the nerve to do anything he thinks people won't like. So now he wants me to convince two hundred and fifty million people it's the right thing."

She balanced from one foot to the other. "If he doesn't have the nerve to do it," she said, "maybe it's because he doesn't want to."

He wondered if she knew how close she was to the truth. Looking down at his hand, he realized he'd made it into a fist. He forced the fingers to open—become a hand again. "It's a thing that matters," he said.

She cocked her head—that narrow, skeptical look in her eyes—and he prepared himself for one of her scornful gibes. But instead—maybe she saw him put up his guard, though he'd have sworn it didn't show on his face—she changed the subject.

"I was up to Maarten's. You knew that?"

"I figured it," he said. He slid away

from the doorway—crossed to the divan and sank down. "There'll be some men coming up this evening. Business talk."

She was still near the doorway, but she'd turned so she still faced him. The information seemed to go through her without touching. "He called me, up there," she said. "At Maarten's. Himself. The President."

"Oh?" He hoped she hadn't been too drunk when she took the call.

"He said you were coming back," she said. "Grace answered the phone. When he said it was Grant Hastings, she didn't believe it, and she said something awful. And all the time he was talking to me he was . . . well, he sounded like it amused him. And Grace . . . well, you can imagine how she felt. She . . . why do you hate him, Tom? Every time I talk to him, he sounds like such a nice man."

"He budgets twenty three minutes a day for personal touches like that," Brandt said.

She shook her head in a prim, stiff way that said she wanted no nonsense—the same way she'd done so often when Nan and Bruce had been little, and she was scolding them. "Maybe he does," she said. "What difference does it make?"

"None, Marta," he said, feeling of defeat growing in him again. It was no use to explain to her the intricacies of political image-building. "How was Maarten?"

"Fix me a drink," she said, and sat down on the edge of a chair near the window. Brandt retrieved her glass—it was wet in the bottom—and went over to the cabinet. There was an almost full vodka bottle in front. He tried to remember if it was the same one that had been there when he went away, but it was hard to keep track. There was another one—full—behind it. 100 proof, both of them. He tried to remember how long it had been since he'd done the buying. He always bought 85.

Useless to do anything about it. With a sad feeling, he got out the martini shaker. Marta went on talking.

"Maarten's excited, as usual," she said, disdain thick on her tongue. "He thinks he's discovered a cyclic pattern in the convertible debentures of some company I never heard of before. If he's right, he says, it could be worth a hundred thousand dollars."

Brandt twisted a smile. He could share the scorn she felt for her twin brother, even though their reasons weren't the same. Maarten Boersma lived in the completely artificial world of high finance. He watched the play of the markets, analyzed and hunched and guessed, and his employers thought highly of his grasp of investment dynamics. If his arcane criteria disclosed an attractive situation in the shares of Amalgamated Buggywhip or General Oxcart, the managers of Rothman, Otis, & Sons would carefully study his presentation and—more often than not—sell, buy, or take a position according to the circumstances. If Maarten ever saw anything as natural as a blade of grass, or heard a bird sing, he probably wondered what it was.

Not very deeply, though.

The shaker was cold in his hands. He opened it carefully, so none of the gibson would slop out. He poured Marta's glass and took it to her, then

went back and started mixing one for himself, not as strong.

"It's worth a hundred thousand whether he's right or wrong," Brandt said. "The question is, do they make it or lose it?"

Marta sipped from her glass. "He's right more times than he isn't," she said. "But he mixes the worst drinks from here to New Haven." She made a face. "I think he's getting an ulcer."

"Wouldn't doubt it for a minute," Brandt said.

IN THE NIGHT, while he waited for sleep, plans for the public relations campaign drifting ghostlike and random through his thoughts, he heard Marta open the door of her room. He heard the flop and scuff of her slippers down the hall to the bath. He heard the hinge on the medicine cabinet, and the faucet, and the sound of her footsteps returning.

It was her second trip. He listened to the rhythm of her steps, and it was not right.

He waited until her door closed, and until the springs of her bed creaked under her weight.

Throwing his covers back, he got out of bed. Barefoot, he stepped out into the hall, making as little sound as he could.

The bottle of red capsules in the medicine chest was half full. He dumped them into his hand—guessed their number. He started to pour them back, but turned instead and chucked them in the toilet.

He went downstairs. The liquor cabinet's door stood half open. He checked the assemblage of bottles.

Back upstairs, fast. "Go away," Marta said as he entered her room. He looked under the bed. The bottle lay on its side, empty.

He made her sit up. She tried to fend him away. Her eyes were open, but they stayed vague.

"How many did you take?" he demanded.

She made a sound. Maybe it was supposed to be a word, but he preferred to believe she didn't know words like that.

"How many?" he said again.

No answer. He dragged her out of bed. He made her stand. She swayed—would have fallen if it wasn't for his hand. He steered her along the hall to the bath, supporting her directionless, lurching weight.

There, he let her slump on the tiles while he shredded a half-used bar of soap into a glass. He cut a finger on the bare razor blade, but paid no attention to the blood. He two-thirds filled the glass from the hot water tap. He shook it. hand over the top, until the soap dissolved.

Kneeling, he propped Marta up and held the glass to her mouth. Her head lolled against his arm. He shook her. She groaned.

The glass was warm in his hand. A trickle of blood ran down his wrist and dripped from his elbow. He forced the glass against her teeth, hard enough to cause pain. He got a little inside. She choked, strangled, coughed. He set the glass down and slapped her once, hard. Her eyes opened wide.

"Drink," he said. He lifted the glass again. "All of it."

She tried to push his hand away, but it was a feeble effort. "Damn you,

Marta! Drink!"

He got it into her, then. A gulp and then a breath, and then another gulp. She didn't try to fight. He tossed the empty glass in the sink, out of the way. Maybe it broke, maybe not.

He moved her to the toilet, forced her mouth open, got his finger deep into her throat. He held her steady while her stomach emptied itself.

After a while, it stopped coming. Her body was bonelessly flaccid now. He left her lying on the bathmat, and covered her with towels. He went downstairs. He punched a number into the phone. When someone answered, he said one word.

"Emergency."

Clicks, as the connection was made. Another voice came on the line.

"I'm bringing my wife down," Brandt said. "She's had three or four redbirds and about three quarters of a pint of vodka. I've washed out her belly with soap and water, but she's not what I'd call in the pink of condition. You'll be ready?"

"Bring the pill bottle," the man at the other end said. "Name?"

"Brandt," Brandt said, and hung up. He got Marta's coat from the hall closet and went back upstairs. He wrapped her in it and carried her down and outside. She groaned when he sat her on the back seat of the steamer. He wedged her in a corner to keep her upright. Her head lolled. It was a warm night, quiet except for the twitter of crickets. He rolled all the steamer's windows down. He climbed in, unlocked the steering wheel, and opened the valves. Gravel crunched under the wheels.

He swung out on the road. The steam turbine sang. The wind whiffled his hair. There was almost no traffic, and he made good time.

ONLY MUCH LATER, when they told him he'd done the right thing and done it soon enough, did he realize he hadn't even stopped to put on his shoes. He felt ridiculous, standing there in his bare-knees-and-elbows pajamas. The linoleum tiles were cold under his feet, and the harsh smell of hospital was all around him.

He shrugged. "I knew something like this was going to happen," he said. "So I had things pretty well worked out." Things were always easier when you didn't have to stop and think what to do next.

He went back out to the steamer. He drove home through what was left of the night, back to bed. It seemed a long wait before sleep finally came, and morning came too soon.

FROM THE TRANSCRIPT of a press conference held by Thomas K. Brandt, Chairman of the President's Council of Advisors on Environmental Quality, on the occasion of the release of the Council's report, *Impact and Long Term Consequences of the Fabricorp, Inc. Research & Development Prototype K-307: "Freshaire"*

Brandt: The Freshaire is a lot of effort spent in the wrong direction. What we need—what the country needs—isn't something that maintains terrariums for people, places where they can go when they want to breathe. That's just a bigger and better gas mask. Nuts. What we need to develop

is ways to keep our air from getting dirtied in the first place.

Reporter (Mike Woolson, RPS]: Would you say, then, that the Freshaire isn't effective?

(It was one of those simple yes-or-no questions that put words in your mouth, just as sure as bait puts a hook in the mouth of a fish. Brandt paused, feeling the heat from the bright lights above him—lights that were there for the benefit of the TV cameramen, who might want to actually use fifteen seconds of this press conference on the six o'clock news. They had to tape the whole thing because they didn't yet know which fifteen seconds. You don't catch me that easy, buster.)

Brandt: Depends what you mean, effective. It does what the Fabricorp people designed it to do. Does that just fine. But it doesn't do what needs to be done. Like I told you, it doesn't keep the air from getting dirty in the first place. And another thing. I'm not sure I like the idea of a big industrial corporation having a vested interest in keeping our air full of filth.

(That got their attention. He'd known it would. There was a rustle of movement in the room, and many faces looking up at him. He was careful not to smile. He waited for the next question.)

Reporter (Ralph Quist. Louisville *Courier):* I understand you cut short a vacation to come back for this conference...

Brandt: That's a question?

Reporter: I was wondering. It suggests you didn't expect your report to be released like this—not so soon, anyway—and that suggests somebody thinks it's more than routinely important. Would you care to comment?

(That was another trap—an invitation to speak a "no comment" out of which much speculation could be made. Brandt had learned to avoid the phrase.)

Brandt: If you've had much to do with bureaucracies—and in your business I think you've all had it—maybe you've found this out. There's a lot of people down in the sub-basement that run around and make up the schedules, and then, when everything's ready and the machine's wound up, all of a sudden somebody asks, "Where's the boss?" and then they start arguing about "I thought *you* were supposed to tell him." And bodies start to get found in the corridors, and knives start getting found in the bodies. Meantime, somebody had the sense to find out where I'd gone, and they got word to me. So I came back. After all, with so many people counting on me . ..

(It wasn't the precise truth, but it satisfied them because it sounded true. It was the sort of explanation that, if not true, should have been. Quist wasn't done, though.)

Reporter: I understand you had a conversation with the President yesterday.

Brandt: I talk to him now and then.

Reporter: Did you discuss the subject of this press conference?

(He wasn't going to be evaded.)"

Brandt: Some. Let's get this understood. I'm the man that tells him what he needs to know about this ecosystem we've got here. Me and four other people. He doesn't tell me what to say. Sometimes he thinks there's some

things I ought to emphasize more than others, but that's all. Advising him's only half my job. The rest of it's to try educating the people; that's where you boys come in. That's why I'm up here talking at you.

Reporter (Gilbert Krafft, Bulletin Printout Service): From your report and from the things you've said here, we gather you don't think much of this innovation.

Brandt: You gather right.

Reporter: But I notice your report doesn't include a section of recommendations. Should we interpret that as meaning the President won't oppose its manufacture?

Brandt: That's something we haven't made up our minds yet. We've got a free enterprise system here, and that means—among other things—industry can do just about what it pleases except lose money or throw trash on the lawn. The question we've got in front of us right now—we don't say the Freshaire's going to throw trash on the lawn. Not directly. But we're wondering if it might make a situation that *causes* trash to get tossed on the lawn. We haven't settled that in our own minds yet. We'll have to get a stack of more information before we can think it through all the way. You'll know when we make up our minds.

Reporter (Hugh Boynton, Boston *Globe):* I think our readers would like to know more about...

AS SOON AS HE COULD get away, he phoned the hospital. Marta was fine, they said; no residual after-effects. He could take her home.

He arrived in mid afternoon with clothes from home for her to wear. Still in the bed, she held up the silver jumpsuit he'd grabbed from her closet. "Is this the only thing you brought?"

"One's all you need," he said. "It's just to go home in."

"Well, you might have asked . .."

He went out to wait in the hall while she got dressed.

AS THEY SAT in his steamer at the parking lot's exit, waiting for a break in the traffic, he said, "One thing, Marta. Pills and booze—together, they'll kill you."

"I'm careful, Tom. You know I am."

He didn't know any such thing, but he didn't tell her that. "You got them from Grace," he said. Her name had been on the prescription bottle.

"What if I did?"

"I talked to her on the phone. You won't get any more from her."

Her cry was like the voice of something small, in pain. "Tom, you don't understand. Sometimes I just can't sleep. You don't know what it's like, not being able to sleep."

She really did sound desperate. Brandt said nothing. A break came in the traffic, and he turned the steamer onto the boulevard. He had to swing wide around a blocked-off section where workmen were cutting down a dead tree. There were a lot of dead trees.

For a while, now, she'd be good. For now, under the brass and pride, she was chastised. She felt guilt.

It wouldn't last, though. A month-six weeks, maybe—and she'd start on the vodka again. He'd have to watch her, then.

And that wouldn't be easy. In the next two months, he'd have to do even more travelling than usual. He couldn't watch her all the time.

"I can take care of myself," Marta said. She sat stiffly on the seat, chin up. She looked straight ahead.

He suppressed the need to tell her she was wrong. It was hard to know, sometimes, how much could be said—how harsh one could speak when the purpose of the words was rooted in love, or—anyway—what still was left of love.

THE SIX PM TELENEWS used the part about industrial giants with a vested interest in pollution. He'd hoped they would. The printout services carried a few lines, and the next morning there was something in the New York *Times,and* even a paragraph in the *Wall Street Journal.* It was a good start. He was getting the message into places where it would attract attention.

A spokesman for Fabricorp was quoted as having said, "Naturally, we're stunned." On the New York Stock Exchange that day, Fabricorp shares dropped 614 points.

"TOM, WHAT ARE YOU trying to do?"

Frank Gaddis on the phone. Gaddis was Grant Hastings's most recent appointment to the Council. He'd been on it seven months, but Brandt still didn't know much about how the man thought.

Before coming to the Council, he'd been New Jersey's Commissioner of Public Works—one of that peculiar breed of politician who didn't himself stand for election, but who served in the entourage of one who did. As that man graduated to more powerful offices, his underling's fortunes also improved. Gaddis had been blessed with either good luck or shrewed judgement. His patron had ascended to the Governorship of their state.

During his tenure as Public Works Commissioner, Gaddis' department had displayed uncommon finesse at balancing the wildly divergent wants of twelve million people of assorted classes, income levels, and subcultures. It had also shown skill at the difficult task of supplying those people with the things they absolutely had to have-things so fundamentally vital that the thought of them as unquestioned rights; as if drinkable water bubbled everywhere from the depths of the earth; as if the transport arteries grew as naturally as trees, yet without which a city would starve within days and its factories would close for want of the means to deliver their products; as if the excretions of man and beast disappeared into a void.

Systems that only the reflective few even realized they had—until they broke down.

To keep those things functional in the face of public indifference, reluctance to pay sufficient taxes and users' fees, and agitation for more (and less dangerous) freeways (but not in my backyard!) was no small accomplishment.

Brandt didn't know if Gaddis was the man who deserved credit for his department's effectiveness. More probably some nameless member of the ranks—or a squad of them—had done that job. Nevertheless, when Gaddis' patron suffered a misfortune at the

polls and accepted the ambassadorship to Sweden, Gaddis had come to the Council like a horse with a good track record being rewarded with a green, broad pasture in which to rest through his declining years.

The Council, though, was not a reward for faithful service. It was a job, and it needed doing. Brandt still wasn't sure Gaddis knew that.

"I think,"Brandt said, " it's plain enoughwhat I'm doing. I'm trying to jawbone Fabricorp into junking that gadget."

"They won't love you for it," Gaddis said.

"Love I can do without," Brandt said. From the wires between their offices, he could hear the crackle and surf crash of phone equipment straining at capacity."You gave concurrence on the report. What's your objection now?"

Gaddis' voice was meticulous, the words carefully seperate and precise. "I agreed that the Freshaire would have an undesireable effect on public psychology. I am less certain that we—or the President—have either the right or the power to suppess it. I concurred to your recommendations because I felt it was a question we should let the courts decide. Must I remind you?— it is not as if the device itself would seriously affect the ecosystem."

Well, he'd never expected the rest of the Council to back him up. Tobin Grabowski and Nick McMasters had thought the Freshaire would be a good thing, and had said as much in their minority report. It would give the country a breathing spell, they claimed. And Miles Salter had coldly declined to join the crusade when Brandt approached him. "Our job's to make recommendations to the President," he said."Trying to sell unpopular ideas to the public will only damage our effectiveness."

"We've got the power," Brandt told Gaddis. "if we use it right. We can rig things so that what we say gets heard. Maybe my name isn't Samson, but one thing I've learned is how to use a jawbone."

"There'll be opposition, don't forget," Gaddis warned. "I can assure you. Fabricrop won't abandon their project without a fight. It could become quite bitter." "Sure," Brandt said. "And if you go out in a storm, you take a chance of getting hit by lightning. All right. Sometimes a man's got to stand on his hind legs. If they want a fight, they get one."

"Well, I've warned you,"Gaddis said.

"Thanks," Brandt said, and put the phone back in its cradle. On a clear day, he could see the Capitol dome from his office window, but this wasn't a clear day. Hardly any of them were, anymore. He wished he really was a sure of himself as he'd made himself sound. He hoped Gaddis hadn't guessed the doubt behind his bold words.

"HE WATCHED THE PHONE for perhaps a minute, but it stayed quiet. He picked it up and punched out a number. After the usual obstacle course of staff people, the Surgeon General came on. Raymond Wilchek.

"Tom—what's up?"

"You know this Freshaire thing I'm mixed up with?" Brandt asked.

"Slightly," Wilchek admitted. "1 don't know what's the fuss about, though. From what I've heard, I'd have to say I'm for it. Even if it doesn't do everything the company says it will—and they're always overselling things like that—it still can't help but do some good as far as public health is concerned. What's the objection?"

Wilchek had emerged to his present eminence through the bureaucratic ranks; he stayed out of controversies. If asked to decide between good and evil, he'd begin by explaining there was something to be said for both sides. To ask for his support was as hopeless as expecting him to revive a corpse.

Nevertheless, properly handled, he could be useful.

"Sometime when I'm not so busy, I'll explain," Brandt said. "What I've got in mind—what I'm calling about—I've got a hunch. This Freshaire . . . gadget . . . the real inside of it—the essential part—it's a plastic membrane that only lets natural air get through it. Nitrogen and oxygen and so forth. A real educated plastic. Well, I'm sitting here with a suspicion in my head: any plastic that special isn't going to be one hundred percent stable. Do you see what I'm thinking?"

"I'm not sure, Tom."

Give the man credit: he knew how to straddle a fence while keeping both feet on the ground. Someday, he'd get himself cut in half. Brandt pressed on. "I think you've noticed—the report's somewhere here on my desk—there's some ferocious corrosives floating around in the air, these days. That's what your office tells me, anyhow."

"Our monthly atmosphere monitoring bulletin, yes," Wilchek admitted.

"What I'd like you to do," Brandt said, "I'd like some of your lab people to get some samples of this plastic—Fabricorp isn't in any position to say you can't have any—and I want them to expose it to some of the stuff it'd get exposed to if the Freshaire goes into general use. And I want them to find out what kind of compounds get formed when the plastic starts coming apart. And then I want them to tell me what kind of damage it can do to people—and how much, how probable it'll be to have that sort of thing coming out of the woodwork when nobody's looking. Any reason why they can't?"

Maybe that last question—that extra twist of the arm—wasn't necessary. On the other hand, with a man like Wilchek, maybe it was.

"Well, I don't know, Tom I..."

"Presidential Order number HEW 438V7:B, subsection three," Brandt said. . . cooperate and supply and/or obtain requested data to assist..."

"Send me a memo, Tom," Wilchek said. Like any good bureaucrat, he knew when to retreat in the face of superior forces. "I can't promise, you understand, but I'll look into the question and see what we're able to do. I don't know. I. .."

"Thanks Ray," Brandt said quickly. "I'll have the memo on your desk in half an hour." He hung up before the man had a chance to wriggle loose.

THREE DAYS LATER, a massive fishkill in Lake Havasu piled windrows of dead fish along its shores. It was the sort of opportunity Brandt had been waiting

for. While his staff sent telegrams and phoned newsmedia editors, he was making connections for a flight to Needles.

It wasn't necessary for him to make an on-site inspection. Nothing he might do would restore life or undo the waste. But the occasion offered him a stage set—an excuse for talking where people could hear.

He walked along a stretch of shoreline on the California side with a man from the Bureau of Wildlife & Fisheries, and the Regional Director of the Bureau of Reclamation. A representative of the Sierra Club had shown up, and so had a man from California's Department of Water Resources. They followed Brandt, with a gaggle of newsmen trailing behind. The stink of dead fish was thick in the moistureless air. Brandt kicked a stiff carcass back into the lapping water. The ripples lifted it and stranded it again on the sand.

The lake was at low ebb. The spring runoff from the mountains hadn't yet been allowed to come this far downstream; most of it was still in Lake Powell. The shore was a naked slope of gravel and sand slanting downward into the water. Many high water marks traced along its contours like bathtub rings.

It wasn't hard to understand what had caused the fishkill. A combination of things had done it; the low level of the lake, the continuing evaporation to the blaze of the sun slowly raising its salinity, and the influx of irrigation water returned to the stream full of leached salts, dissolved fertilizers, pesticides, and casual wastes—all those things combined had been too much for the fish. Brandt was surprised they'd survived as long as they had.

He nodded up the slope to the block-square buildings that squatted on a promontory. Its long siphons plunged out and down into the water. Its smokestacks and cooling towers lifted in tall silhouette toward the sky. A growl and a hum mumbled from it, like an animal digesting its food. A combination of a steam-electric generating plant and a water—desalting plant that supplied domestic water to the parched country on both sides of the lake.

"The trouble with things like that," Brandt said, "they make it easy to forget the water's no good. We've been doing it for years—making it fit to drink—and we never thought about it. Now, maybe, we'll have to start doing it with air—make it safe to breathe, and never mind if the birds start dropping dead out of the sky."

He kicked another dead fish back into the lake. Calmly, the water lifted it and deposited it at his feet. There was the breathing of the wind, and the sound of wavelets licking the shore. Behind him, the newsmen were quietly talking into their recorders. Slowly, one wave at a time, Lake Havasu brought more dead fish ashore, placing blame where it belonged. As if, mindless but wise, it sought to make itself clean again.

EVEN BEFORE his truncated vacation, Brandt had been scheduled to talk to a Monday noon meeting of the Economic Club of Detroit. Being an organization of that city's industrial and financial monarchs, it was a good pool to drop

pebbles in. The ripples would spread.

"Don't think," he told them as they sat, plump with lunch, their half empty coffee cups in front of them, "don't think we can keep this country fit to live in without paying the price. I mean the full price. Half measures and another coat of paint won't do.

"Here—I'll tell you what's on my mind. Fabricorp's been building a thing they call the Freshaire. It's a good name for a chunk of merchandise—tells you what it does. If it goes on the market, it'll help a lot of people breathe easier.

"But I want to warn you people." His hand swept the whole room-—including every man there. "Don't think it's going to make the air outside any cleaner. It won't. And don't think it's going to be an excuse to go on pouring junk up the smokestack. We can't make this country's air fit to breathe one lungful at a time. We've got to do it by not making it dirty to begin with."

They didn't like what he told them, but they clenched their teeth and did not growl. Before the New York Stock Exchange closed that day, Fabricorp dropped another Vh points.

THAT SAME AFTERNOON in Detroit, three boys from the old Corktown section of the city took unscheduled leave of their seventh grade classes and wheeled their bicycles down to a bridge that crossed the Rouge River. They amused themselves by setting newspapers on fire and dropping them over the rail. It took only two or three before the river *whoomped* and started burning.

Brandt never had a chance to see the stream aflame. By the time his taxi reached the scene, the fire department had smothered the fire with foam. Brandt stood on the grimy shore, hands in his coat pockets, and watched the icebergs of froth float grandly past. The smells of burnt oil and hot metal coiled around him.

A words and pictures man from Time, Inc. had been dogging him all day. *(Time's* New York office had learned—never mind how—it might be worth the effort to have a man following not too far behind him.) The *Detroit News* had sent a photographer to get some shots of the fire, and there was a man from WWJ-TV trudging around under the weight of a shoulder-mounted TV camera.

When they lost interest in the melting mountains of soapsuds, their attention turned to Brandt. The *Time* man maneuvered around to photograph him with factory smokestacks in the background, then maneuvered again to include the sooty earth he stood on. Did Brandt have anything to say?

"I'd heard this river was a fire hazard," Brandt said, and grimaced for the TV man. "It's sort of a sign, how bad things have got, when our rivers—that's water, you guys!—when they get so bad they can catch fire."

He turned and tramped along the bank, but not so fast the TV man couldn't keep up. "This here's the river Henry Ford went skinny dipping in when he was a kid." He didn't know if it was true, but if it wasn't, it ought to have been. "I wonder—if he'd known it'd end up like this, maybe he'd of done things somehow different."

He bent to pick up a rock. It was a

lump of soft coal. "Can't even skip a stone across it, any more," he said, and crumbled it in his hand.

LATE THAT AFTERNOON, he was getting ready to check out of his room at the Ponchartrain—wadding the sweat-damped white shirt he'd worn at the luncheon into a Laundree/Rap baggie (which would dissolve in hot water and become three interacting, biodegradable detergents)—when the phone tingled. It was the switchboard downstairs. "We have a call from Riverside, California," the girl said. "Your screening instructions don't seem to cover it. Do you want to talk to them, or shall I tell them you already checked out?"

Brandt hesitated only long enough for a breath. Riverside was where Fabricorp's Chemodyne Division had its headquarters—the place where they'd done most of the work on the Freshaire. If they wanted to talk to him in Detroit instead of Washington, maybe it was only an accident of timing; on the other hand, it was possible they wanted to say something they'd prefer not to say to him if he was in his office, where the call would be logged, probably monitored, and perhaps even committed to tape. Although never officially admitted, those things were done. And it was known they were done.

"Put 'em though," Brandt said.

There was a moment, then, while the switchboard's hold-release signal retraced the circuit to Riverside, to bring the call across the continent again. Brandt sat on the bed—hotel phones were always within reach of the bed; never convenient to a chair—and heard two thousand miles of wire and microwave beam click and whisper and improvise tunes upon a scale no musician had ever essayed. Then Harmon Creeth came on the line.

Creeth was manager of the Chemodyne Division. Brandt had met the man—briefly—when the Freshaire's demonstration model was brought to Washington for the Council's evaluation. "Tom," he said, "we're a little disturbed, out here."

He waited, then. Brandt guessed he wanted some expression of interest—a question that would permit him to broach the subject on his mind. Well, he wouldn't get it. They hadn't been on a first name basis in Washington, and they weren't on one now.

"You've been saying things to the press, Tom, that indicate you've got a very poor understanding of our product planning," Creeth said. "We ..."

"If you mean, I don't think much of your gadget, you're right, " Brandt said. "I don't."

"You've no reason to think that way, Tom. No reason at all." He made it sound as if his best friend had betrayed him.

Sitting on the bed, Brandt had tucked his feet up under him, Indian style. Through the window, he could see a stretch of the Detroit River. He watched a ship move slowly upstream. Its bow shaved a curl of white in the water and its stack trailed a careless black plume. An ore boat, it rode high in the water; an empty headed north for another load. Another ship came downriver. They met and silently slid past each other. The mines up north didn't

have much left in them, but every last granule was being scraped from the pits. The sky out there was grey, with a few hints of blue to the northeast.

"I think I've got lots of reason," Brandt said. He felt awkward, though; he couldn't give a full explanation of his motives. He couldn't tell the whole truth.

"I'm sure it must be some sort of misunderstanding," Creeth said. "That's why I'm calling you like this. I'm sure, if we could meet face to face and discuss our differences, we could..."

Another of those long, suggestive pauses. Brandt let it stretch out. Then he said, "I'm not so sure."

"That's something we could test pragmatically, Tom," Creeth said. "I'd like to have you visit us out here. You could talk to our people, and inspect our laboratories, and see what we're trying to do, and . . . Would you consider coming out here?"

"I've no objection to come out and look you in the eye, if that's what you mean." The ships had both gone out of sight. There was only the river's grey water and a dark smudge in the air; and—on the far shore—Windsor, like another continent, with an ocean between.

"How soon can we expect you?" Creeth asked.

He sounded much too eager, but that wasn't hard to understand. A man couldn't be out stumping the land and giving Fabricorp a dirty name while he was being dined, wined, and wooed (tax deductable) in Riverside. That was what Creeth was thinking. Well, let him think.

Brandt made some mental calculations. There were things on his desk in Washington, and it wouldn't hurt to have another huddle with those public education boys. Then . . . yes, it should be an interesting jaunt.

"Suppose I turn up Thursday morning," he said.

"We'll expect you, Tom. Nine o'clock?"

Brandt chuckled to himself. "Eight fifteen. You're talking to one of those characters that likes to get up and watch the early birds catch worms that should've stood in bed."

"Eight fifteen," Creeth repeated, not sounding so eager any more.

It took only minutes to finish packing for the flight back to Washington. He had only one bag, so he didn't bother with calling a bellboy, but took it down to the lobby himself. He still felt good when he boarded the chopper for the hop to Detroit Metro; he had the Fabricorp people nervous, which was a good start—even if it meant they'd make rough trouble later on. The bouyant spirit stayed with him until the chopper skirted the sprawling wasteland of factories that lay between the city and its westward suburbs. The tall smokestacks streamed dark masses of exhaust so thick that they seemed solid. The expanding clouds trailed downwind with the majesty of a baron's pennons. The executive offices, he noticed, were set amid parkland, safely upwind.

His mood turned raw, then. It stayed that way all the way back to Washington.

HE HAD HIS FLIGHT schedule rigged to give him several hours' layover in

Chicago. His jet put down on the landfill field in the lake—Sandburg International—and he caught the port-to-shore hydrofoil just before it cast off. The city lifted above its narrow strand like a chaotic fortress. Haze blurred its outlines. Dark clouds loomed over it.

Nan's apartment was a third floor walkup two blocks west of Lincoln Park. The buildings architecture was undistinguished—a slab-faced structure that had never been attract!/e to the eye, and now stained by time—but the inner door of the vestibule had a lock that worked, and there was a TV eye as well as an intercom. He didn't have to say a word.

"Dad! Come on up."

It was the uppermost floor. He made the climb without even breathing hard. Her door was the second along the hall. It was open, and she was waiting outside.

"How are you, Dad?" It was a commonplace greeting, quietly spoken, but honestly meant.

"I'll do," he said. "You?"

"I'm fine, Dad." The way she said it made him wonder. She'd taken on more than her share of problems, this last year.

A child's excited shriek startled both of them. "Grandad!" Karol, the four-year-old, threw herself at him and hugged her arms around his leg. His hand touched a head of yellow curls. She looked up at him and laughed. In the place she'd launched herself from stood another, smaller version of herself; Suzi watched him with the wondering, unfrightened innocence that only a two year old can show.

He lifted Karol to his shoulder and, steadying her with a hand, held out his other hand to Suzi. The child accepted it gravely. They went into the parlour. There were coloring books and crayons on the floor. He had to be careful where he stepped.

Somehow, he got untangled from the children long enough to produce the gigantic lollipops whose purchase had almost made him miss the hydrofoil.

"Dad!"

Suzi had climbed up on his lap. Methodically, she gnawed the lollipop's edge.

"Too near suppertime?" he asked.

"No. It's not that," Nan said. "But it's too big. She'll be a week on it."

"So? I can't bring her one every day," Brandt said. "Have to do it in big chunks." He smoothed a few strands of hair from Suzi's forehead. Suzi continued to gnaw.

Nan laughed. She had the same beauty that had been Marta's when Marta was young. He found himself hoping she wouldn't change as Marta had changed, so slowly he hadn't noticed she was changing until the metamorphosis was complete.

"How's Ma?" Nan asked, as if she'd seen the thoughts behind his eyes.

"Not much different," he said. Whatever troubles there were, they weren't ones to bother Nan with. Nan had enough of her own.

"She's still drinking." Nan wasn't asking. She knew.

"Some," he admitted.

"Too much," Nan said. "Take care of her, Dad."

"I'm doing what I can," he said. "It's not easy. She doesn't like Washington, and she doesn't like political things—

can't say I blame her, there."

"That's not the reason," Nan said. "She was drinking in East Lansing, before I married Erik."

He nodded. "But I thought, when 1 took this job ... I thought the change might help. I'd have taken the job anyway—that wasn't why—but . . . well, it didn't help." He looked down at the quiet child in his lap and did the only thing he could do to break the mood: he changed the subject. "How's your job?"

"No problem," she said with a shrug. It wasn't, obviously, something vital to her life. "It's not hard. We've got twenty monitor stations in the city and another thirty in the metropolitan area. All I have to do is take their daily reports and code them into the machine, and the machine prints out the parts per million tables and the visibility index, and it draws the area pollution density map without me lifting a finger. Usually, it's ready to send to the news bureaus by two or three in the afternoon, and after that I'm free to pick up the—" She nodded at Karol, who was carefully applying purple crayon to the tiger in her coloring book. "—the varmints from Mrs. Avsharian's Tot School—I know, it's an awful name, but the varmints like it there, and her people do take good care; every one of them's a registered nurse, did you know that?—and I bring them home and ..." A slight twist of the body, a turn of the head. ". . . that's about all the day 1 have."

It didn't sound like much of a life. He'd watched this woman growing up, had witnessed her discovery of the world, and seen the intelligence in her grow and blossom. She could have gone to medical school. Now there was only this. Karol stopped her work on the coloring book long enough to cough, then resumed as if nothing had happened.

"Something, maybe, you can do for me," Brandt said.

"Sure, Dad. If I can."

"The figures you work up—they include something about what's making the pollution. Right?"

She thought a moment. "Depends what you mean, Dad," she said finally. "We have a general index figure, and then we break it down into particles, aerosols, and vapors. And the aerosols and vapors we break down again—into acids, hydrocarbons, and esters. Oh, and we give a pollen count, too. For some people, pollen is worse than sulphuric acid. But individual chemicals—no, we don't identify them. There's too many."

He nodded. It was about what every big city health department did. "What I'd like," he said, "I'd like you to put out figures on how much of it comes from industry, and how much from cars, and how much from homes—incinerators, and heating in the winter, and cooking. All those things. Think you could put something on those in your daily reports?"

"It might be possible," she said, still thinking. "A lot of the things can be attributed ... not a hundred percent, maybe. But we could come up with approximate figures. Would that do?"

"Be fine."

"Can I ask why? I mean, why do you want it?"

"Mainly, I want people to know where pollution's coming from. Puts things in a different perspective, when they know it isn't coming out of nowhere—that it's something they're making themselves, or the people they work for are making it, or . . . that sort of thing."

He hesitated. Maybe it was enough explanation, maybe not. "I'm trying to tell the boss something," he said. "And he says the way to make him listen is to make the public listen. I guess he figures, then, maybe the public will tell him. Sounds like the long way around, but he's the politician, not me."

"I'm not so sure about that," Nan said. Karol coughed again. Brandt looked at Nan with the beginning of alarm.

She made a deprecating gesture. "It's all right. She's just got a cough, that's all."

"How long's she had it?"

Nan considered. "Oh, a month or two."

Brandt glanced out the window. It was middle-late afternoon. The eastward sky had a yellowish tint. Here and there among the buildings he could see a few bare tree limbs. "Better get a doctor to look at her," he said.

"I did," Nan said. "He said it's all right. It's normal." But she didn't sound sure, and she said it too quickly.

"No cough's normal," Brandt said.

LATER, THEY WENT for a walk in the park. The trees had a sparse-leaved look and the grass was scraggly. There were patches of bare ground. Bits of paper and broken plastic carry-out cups lay scattered. The girls climbed a low hill and then came running back down, gaily screeching with all the strength of their lungs. Suzi stumbled on her own feet, rolled over, and came up laughing.

"Do you ever hear from him?" Brandt asked.

"Erik?" Nan guessed. "At first I did. He'd get drunk and try to phone me. After a while, I guess he gave up. He's left me alone for . . . oh, it's been months."

"If he tries to bother you again ..."

"Dad, listen. I don't hate him. I never did. We had some good times, before things turned bad. And I've got . . ." Her voice trailed off, but her eyes were turned toward the two small girls who chased a butterfly across the green lawn; Karol in the lead and Suzi trying to keep up on legs which—yet—she hadn't learned perfectly how to control.

"What about them?" Brandt asked. The shabby buildings that fronted on the park stood like ranks of soldiers in a forgotten war. "They'll be ready for school, pretty soon."

"I'll do something," Nan said calmly. "Dad—I'm working for the city. That means I can't move outside. It's one of the rules."

Brandt said nothing.

"There's private schools," Nan said, defensive. "They cost a lot, but.. ."

"And dirty streets," Brandt said. "And bad air. And ..." He nodded at a straggle of shabby men along the path. "And drinking water that's gone through so much treatment it tastes like insecticide.

"I'll think of something," Nan said.

"If you need help ..."

"I can manage, Dad. I'm all right."

Suzi wandered back across the grass.

Quiet, trusting, she reached up and took Brandt's hand. Looking up at him, elfin, she smiled. He tried hard not to think about the world they were growing up into. He couldn't promise a thing, but what he could do to make it good for them, he'd do.

A FILM OF SMOG extended from the shoreline to the San Bernadino Mountains when Brandt's flight arrived over Los Angeles. The airliner had to stooge for almost an hour in a stack far out over the Pacific before it got clearance for a GCA landing.

He'd made sure the wire services were tipped off, and a cluster of men with cameras and recorders were waiting. Before leaving the plane, Brandt fished an asthmatic's mask from his briefcase and slipped it over his face. He met the newsmen with mouth and nose covered. It wasn't possible to talk intelligibly while wearing the thing, but he shook his head at the suggestion he remove it. He didn't take it off until they had filed into a private lounge in the airport hotel.

There he pulled the mask down and let it hang around his neck. Naturally, they asked him about it.

"Nothing wrong with my health," he said, "and 1 plan to keep it that way. Have you ever tried to breathe that stuff out there?"

In the silence that followed—a silence like tombstones and the land where forest fires have turned the earth black and nothing stands—one of the newsmen found his voice at last.

"I think we have a general idea why you've come out here, Mr. Brandt, but we'd like to hear it in your own words. Could you do that for us?"

"Don't mind at all," Brandt said. He looked the TV camera in the eye. "I'm going to talk to the people at Fabricorp about the Freshaire. I've got to know a lot more before I'll know what to tell the boss."

Would Mr. Brandt care to elaborate a little? What sort of information was he looking for?

Brandt loosened his necktie. "Well, a lot of things. I want their market survey reports—and they'd better not say they haven't done any. Not with them telling you guys how much cash they've spent on the gadget. I want to see those because I'm wondering . . . they must expect to sell a lot of Freshaires in the next few years, and I want to know how much of a demand load that's going to put on the electric power utilities. Somebody's got to generate that juice. Pacific Gas & Electric doesn't have a giant wall socket somewhere for them to plug into. I want to know if the growth rate for electric generating capacity is going to be fast enough to keep up with the demands the Freshaire would put on it. And—if it *can* keep up—I want to know if it *should.* Every time you put up another power plant—it doesn't matter what kind; nuclear, steam, hydro; makes no difference—you make disruptions in the surroundings ecosystem. I'm not sure the Freshaire's worth that price."

He was just getting warmed up. "Here's another thing I'm thinking about. Something else that hangs on how many Fabricorp's going to sell, and how fast. It's a filtration system. It's got some tricky membranes on the

inside, and all they let through is basic air. No particulate matter, no gasses, and no fluids. I've looked at the test results, and they're beautiful. All right. But the stuff those membranes screen out—you know what happens to it?"

They didn't, of course. Woodenly, they watched him. Maybe they thought about the question, maybe they didn't. It didn't matter.

"The engineers had three choices," Brandt told them. "They could let the junk collect in some sort of hopper—which is fine until it gets full, but then what? You don't sell the car when the ashtrays get full. At least. I don't. Or they could have the machinery dump it back outside, which doesn't sound too bad—you don't help the outside air that way, but you're not putting anything out that wasn't there already—only somewhere in the process all kinds of gunk and grit are getting mixed together in sort of thick concentrations, and some of the chemical compounds that come out aren't the kind I'd care to have in my neighborhood. So what the engineers decided, they'd flush it down the sanitary sewers. That solves all the problems, right?"

He waited for them to look up. He paced to the end of the room—turned around. "Like nuts it does. You think once the gunk's gone down the drain, that's the end of it? Think again. Everything that goes into the sewers comes out at the sewage treatment plant, and . . . here, I'll tell you a story. Once upon a time, in a metropolis that shall be nameless, a soap company delivered free samples of their latest goo, a gloriously sudsy stuff called Joy. One thimbleful fluffed up enough foam to make a swimming pool look like it was full of beer. And the stuff didn't break down. Stir the water up, and you had a fresh crop of soapsuds all over again. Well, I'll leave it for you gentlemen to imagine how much joy they had down at the metropolitan sewage treatment plant the next day."

He found an open space on the carpet and sat down, guru style. He looked up at them. They sat with their Sony casette models and their cameras, and he had their full attention.

"What I'm getting at is this: the stuff the Freshaire units take out of the air is going to wind up at sewage plants. And if a lot of units go in service fast, it's going to mean a lot of stuff arriving at the treatment plants that they weren't built to handle. And even if the buildup's slow enough to get ready for, the getting ready's going to be expensive. There'll have to be tax money spent, or else higher water bills, or something, because the new equipment's got to be paid for. And if I'm any judge of people, most of 'em aren't going to like more taxes or bigger water bills. All the same, if the Freshaire goes on the market, they'll have to pay. There's no way around it."

One of the newsmen stirred. Was the possibility of a special tax on Freshaire units being considered?

"We've thought about it some," Brandt said. He shook his head. "Not likely. Near as we can figure, it'd have to be a tax just about as big as the FOB factory price. And building sewage plants is a local government thing, so that's who'd have to put the tax on. That's unless we want to set up a federal assistance program—and I'm

not much eager for inventing another bureaucracy. As for the home ground side of it, I'll just suggest you guys think for yourselves how eager local government people are going to be for putting in a tax that big, with the home folks sharpening their election pencils and watching everything they do. And Fabricorp not exactly sitting on the sidelines keeping quiet. No—it'll have to be general tax money, or higher, utility bills, or else revenue bonds—and that means the same thing sooner or later. All of those are things people won't like."

He let them think about it for a while, then thumped the carpet hard enough to make a sound. "The trouble is, when people think about what a thing costs, all they're really thinking about is the price it sells for. That's only part, and some things you can't measure in dollars and cents. What you see out there—" He gestured to a window that looked out across the metropolitan sprawl. Its panes were misted and blurred by the pervasive smog. "That's part of the cost of every automobile in town—that, and daughters that get pregnant at sixteen, and hundred-car crunch-ups on the freeways. That part of the price, people don't think about in the dealer's showroom."

He gazed out into the smog and rubbed his jaw. "The last time most people around here saw the moon, it was on television."

THE FABRICORP PEOPLE had offered transportation. There'd be a company car and driver waiting for him outside the hotel, they said, ready whenever he was. Brandt told them he didn't want any, and arrived at the Riverside installation in a cab at ten past eight. The cabman was still making entries in the chargeplate record when a tall man in beige blazer and scarlet carff emerged from the building. The concrete walk curved, and as he followed the arc he had to dodge the slash of lawn sprinklers. "Mr. Brandt?" he called as he came near.

Brandt held the cabman's clipboard on his knee and signed the chit. Reaching around, the cabman took it back and tore out the carbon for Brandt stuffed it in a pocket and climbed out.

"Mr. Brandt?" the young man called again.

The cabman vroomed his engine and pulled away. A faint grey cloud hung in the air. Brandt sniffed the vapors and wrinkled his nose. It was a good bet the cab's exhaust had been re-rigged to bypass the antipollution devices. Better gas mileage, that way, and one less subsystem to eat up the profits with maintenance outlays.

"Mr. Brandt?" The tall man's shadow slanted across the pavement beside his own. Brandt tipped his hat back. An earnest-looking young man: blond hair, medium long and combed on a slant across the forehead. A narrow face, broad mouth. Beyond, the dirty sky contained a hint of its original blue.

"I guess that's me," Brandt said.

"I'm Mark Fischler, Mr. Brandt. I'm Mr. Creeth's deputy assistant for public relations and liason." He had a puppy-dog's well-meant clumsiness. He offered a long-fingered hand. "I don't

think we've met."

"Hardly matters," Brandt said. Pretending not to have noticed the hand, he set off in the direction Fischler had come from. Fischler, in spite of his longer legs, had to scramble to catch up. "They sent me to show you the way."

"Thanks," Brandt said. "But I've found my way across stranger country than this." As he trod the flagstones across the lawn, the sprinklers splattered his pant legs. He walked phlegmatically on. By the time he reached the tintglass doors, the cloth was dry again.

Inside, the linoleum tile of the lobby squeaked under Brandt's shoes, but it was only a few yards and a half-flight of stairs to the carpeted grandeur of executive country. Now Fischler was finally able to dodge past him, and in moments he was conducted into a boardroom whose redwood panel walls were hung with industrial design artwork. Opposite the door, a picture window ran the full length of the wall. Outside, in the center of a terraced patio, fountain gushed geyserlike spurts high in the air. In front of each chair around the coffin-shaped table was an ashtray, a book of matches, a scratch pad, and three needle sharp pencils. The table itself was fine-grained mahogany, burnished to mirror slickness.

A parade of men trooped into the room through another door. They carried slim, zippered portfolios that looked to be made of some soft, leatherlike material. They found places along the sides of the table and sat down—all but the man who had led the procession. He approached Brandt. He was broad of body, but none of his weight was belly bulge. His hair was black, and he wore it low and shaggy in front of his ears. Harmon Creeth.

"Pleased to see you again, Tom. Glad you could come. I believe we have a few things to talk about."

"It's possible," Brandt said, keeping his thumbs hooked into belt loops. "I see you brought an audience." The men with portfolios lined two sides of the table, all of them looking in his direction. Some already had cigarettes going. Only the chairs at opposite ends of the table were empty.

It wasn't hard to figure what Creeth had in mind—all those assembled brains brought together for the purpose of grinding him down. Well, maybe they would, and maybe they wouldn't.

Creeth nodded to the nearest chair. "Shall we proceed?"

Brandt dropped his hat on the table, covering one of the ashtrays. He planted his rump beside it, his feet on the chair. His eyes were just about level with Creeth's. "Ready any time you are."

Creeth's mouth made several expostulary but voiceless dilations, like a mine pretending to blow bubble gum. Controlling himself, he compressed his lips into a line. "When I suggested you sit down ..."

He broke off. "All right." He took hold of the chair's back. "We asked you here because we hoped to persuade you you're wrong about the Freshaire," he said. "But to judge from what I saw in the printout report last night, you're using this trip as a platform to propagandize for your opinions."

"You're saying it, not me," Brandt

said. He was beginning to enjoy himself.

"So we'll begin with what you told the press you want." He made it sound like a challenge. "Vance Eberhardt's flown down from the Bay with our market studies. He can explain anything you want to know about them. Do you want them now?"

"Might be interesting," Brandt said. "But what 1 say to the media people and what I say to you aren't necessarily the same thing. I've got more than one thing on my mind, and what I tell them's only part of it."

Creeth scowled like a bull making up him mind whether to charge. "Oh?"

"The main thing I want to tell you people . . . you've got some guys from the engineering department here?"

"One. Reed Lonsdale. Director of Product Design. He ..."

"That'll do." Brandt twusted around. "Which one is he?"

"On the right. Second from the end." The man indicated half-raised a hand.

"I want to suggest something," Brandt said, casting his voice the length of the table and making it sound forceful in spite of his awkward posture. "Start thinking about ways to use the Freshaire's principles on industrial equipment. You've got some good tricks built into that thing, but you're using them at the wrong end."

He turned back to Creeth, but he didn't stop talking. "It doesn't make sense to try selling people a piece of machinery to clean up air so they can breathe it. It's air that shouldn't of got dirty in the first place."

Creeth made a posturing movement of the body; an attempt to stand taller than he was, a backing off a half step, as if to prepare for physical violence. "That's a presumptuous attitude, you know. Our market research . . . Vance, let's have those papers . . . We have proof at least seventy three percent of the households in metropolitan regions of over five hundred thousand population would want to install one of our units, and—taking our production cost forecasts into account—at least fifty eight percent of them would actually make the purchase."

A thick folder was passed into his hands. He offered it to Brandt. "Take these and study them. Study them as long as you like. I think they'll convince you, our product is one for which the people of this country feel a need."

Brandt accepted the folder. He laid it on the table without inspecting the papers inside. "I'll want to see what you call proof, all right," he said. "But I'd better remind you of something. You're talking about what people want. I'm talking about what's in the public interest. They're different things."

Creeth put off having to reply by producing a cigar. His tongue lapped its tip. Then, carefully, he applied a butane lighter until the tobacco was smouldering evenly. All the while, his eyes never strayed from Brandt. Only when he had it going did he take it from his mouth and inspect it. "I'm sure you're aware," he said—and he wasn't looking at Brandt now— "that we've spent close to five million dollars on this design, getting it into shape for production. That's a considerable investment—not the kind that's made unless we have some assurance the investment will pay for itself. The in-

dustrial market . .. you have figures on that in the folder, too . . . is far less certain." He stuck the cigar back in his mouth. Its tip blazed.

Brandt smiled a wolf-keen smile. "What you're saying, industries don't spend any cash on pollution control they don't have to." He shrugged. "It makes sense. Money spent on cleaning up the excretions means the cost of producing the product goes up, and how can they boost the price when the competition down the street—the one isn't cleaning up—keeps its prices down? All right. There's ways to encourage people into being good citizens; there's people in a position to twist some arms, back in the District, and sometimes I get a chance to talk to some of'em. Now . . . I can't make you a promise, exactly—there's a lot of people in the District that have a hand in it, and a lot of them like to think they make up their own minds. Some of them think they know all the answers, and some of 'em do—including the wrong ones. But I think—if you come up with a good enough product—there'll be lots of heavy persuasion on certain people to put your gear on their shopping list. That make it sound any better?"

"You miss the point," Creeth said. "Our investment has been made. It's too late, now, to talk about what we ought to have done. Turning our attention to industrial applications would call for at least another three quarters of a million, and quite possibly twice that. Most of what we've already spent would be wasted. We'd be very reluctant to let that happen." His cigar made zigzag smoke trails in the air before Brandt's eyes.

"You people did the choosing," Brandt said. "You didn't ask anybody for opinions—you just put your money on the table. If you'd asked . . . the reason factory emission regulations haven't been made tougher is because they're about as tough as its practical to make them. Invent something that does a better job and doesn't cost half the gross national product, and Uncle—that's the elected representatives of the people of this great land of ours—they'll line up all your potential customers and they'll crack the whip."

"We could not anticipate that," Creeth said. "Nor—you admit it yourself—can we count on it now."

He had a point there, but not much of one. "Maybe not," Brandt said. "But I'm saying you can't count on the great white father to look the other way while you peddle a machine that gives people nothing they don't have a right to expect without a price tag on it." He snorted. "You'd work up a thing to reclaim used tea bags if the food laws'd let you and you thought there was people who'd buy it."

Cigar smoke leaked from Creeth's nostrils. He spoke, and smoke gushed from his mouth. "It makes very little difference whether people pay for clean air through the purchase of one of our units, or whether they pay for it as a part of the cost of other products they buy. I'm sure you realize—don't you?—the cost of emission controls is one of the factors considered when the price of a manufactured product is set. Don't you think it would be ... shall we say? . . . more in keeping with our traditions of free choice to put the tax—that's what it would be: a tax—only on

those who want the benefit? Our product will do that automatically. Your suggestions would not permit it."

The reasoning was specious, and it didn't look like Creeth had been paying much attention to what Brandt said, but nothing would be gained by saying so. Brandt picked up the market survey folder—tucked it under his arm. "Nobody that smokes cigars has any right to say anything about air pollution. Just remember, we're a complicated society, and we've got more than one way to make decisions. The marketplace isn't the only one. There's the ballot box. And the courts. And the back alley. All of 'em have some good and some bad in them. Don't try to say one's better than another."

He dropped down off the table, but his gaze didn't leave Creeth's face. "Well, thanks for listening, and for . . ." He gestured with the folder. "It's been an interesting morning." He took a step toward the door.

Creeth moved to stay with him—perhaps head him off. "But . . Tom . . . we expected you'd want to see our laboratories, and we have test reports, and. .."

Again Brandt made a nod to the folder. "I've got all 1 need right here. This . . . and those suggestions I made. Think about 'em."

Actually, the important part of his trip had been when he talked to the newsmen, but he couldn't tell Creeth that. "What you're talking about—those aren't things that make a difference. Let's get that straight: the things that matter aren't how smart your hired brains are, or how well your gadget does the job you gave it to do. I don't have any big complaints on that score. What I'm trying to tell you—and I don't think you've been listening, deep down—the thing you've built doesn't do the right job."

He pushed Creeth's hand out of the way. Creeth looked at his hand, let it drop, shrugged, and let him go.

T HAT SAME AFTERNOON, Brandt borrowed a backpack from a friend— a UCLA geologist—and caught a Greyhound to Lone Pine. The familiar weight of the packframe on his back was like the presence of a good companion—one who did not intrude on a man's thoughts; who let him walk in the quiet of late afternoon and quietly kept pace with him. He camped that night in the Alabama Hills, west of the town, in an amphitheatre of red, gnarled, old stone that in deep shadow—looked like clusters of people silently watching. The wind made groaning sounds. In the morning, he woke to the cry of birds, and the sun blazed on the grey and snow-splashed Sierra wall that lifted out of the land like a fortress of steel.

All morning he climbed that wall. It was an easy, well-kept trail, but the climb went on and on. The air turned cool, then cold. The wind cut like a blade. About midmorning, a party of teen agers—boys and girls—caught up with him, filtered past him, and went on. He heard their laughter and their happy chatter long after they were out of sight, and for the ten thousandth time he was amazed and heartened by the careless energy of the young.

He saw them again on their way down. He'd stopped for breath, and was gnawing on a ration bar. They

came skipping down the stone path like schoolchildren let out to play. Their hair was windblown. One of the boys paused to raise a pair of cheap binoculars and peer out over the valley far below.

Brandt went on. While he was still several hundred feet below the crest, he chose a campsite and left his backpack there. It was within an hour of noon when he mounted the last gentle slope to the mountain's crest.

He stayed there most of the afternoon. The freezing wind clutched at his clothes and sang atonal music among the crags. He stood on top of the world. The dazzle of sun on snowfield and frost—shattered rock struck needles at his eyes.

For a while he sat crosslegged in the shelter that had been built up there. It was a tiny cell with walls of stone collected on the site. He paged through the market report, studying sections of it with meticulous care and making notes. There was information here that he could use. It would need combination with data from other sources, but it looked probable he could prove that Freshaire units would be sold primarily to suburban homeowners who lived in areas where air pollution was noticeable but not genuinely serious. Meanwhile, because of cost, real estate values, and social conditions, the Freshaire would achieve little acceptance in urban areas where it was truly needed. Ghettos and slums, the residential sections were pollution levels were highest, would represent less than half of one percent of the projected unit sales. Downtown offices would not be a significant factor for a least five years. Stores and theatres could not be expected to install units for ten years or more.

After a while, he closed the folder and went outside. He tramped around the flat crest of the mountain, hands in his pockets, feeling the fitful force of the wind on his face. To the north, the south, and the west, mountains lifted their crests like the face of a frozen sea, but none of them rose as high as he stood now. To the east, the valley dropped away. It was a trench that cut from south to north as far as he could see. Toward its southern end, white plumes of windblown dust concealed the place where Owens Lake had been. Its bed was dry hardpan now. A city hundreds of miles away had coveted its water—had needed the water to live and to grow—so the lake had died. On the valley's far side, the Inyo Mountains slanted their flanks upward from the valley floor to shape a razorback ridge. Beyond, partly concealed by a shoulder of that ridge and by tongues of cloud, the Panamints blocked sight of the lowest point on the continent. It was less than a hundred miles away.

Late in the afternoon, when the valley was already deep in shadow, he went down to his campsite. He spent the night there, and the next day descended the rest of the way to Lone Pine and caught a bus to Las Vegas.

THE AIR TERMINAL at Las Vegas was full of people. The stubby, scorch-marked bulk of a space shuttle crouched like a sullen owl at the far edge of the field. It had made the weekly descent from Grissom Station two hours before—Brandt had heard its

sonic boom as the bus was climbing Furnace Creek Canyon out of Death Valley—bringing passengers from the orbit labs and, also, this time, a contingent of transfer passengers from Stevenson Base and Traverse Camp on the Moon. Some four hundred travellers were waiting for flights to half a hundred destinations.

Every seat in the bar was taken. The cafeteria lines and the mob around the snack counter would have discouraged anyone not actually starved. Brandt made a sparse lunch out of a chocolate bar and a cup of bitter coffee which he got from a vending machine.

There was still a long wait for his flight. At the newsstand, he found a copy of the *New York Times*. It was only twelve hours old. In a corner that was out of the main lines of foot traffic, remote from the shops and ticket counters, he sat crosslegged on the floor to read.

The fact that he'd spent only a hour at the Chemodyne Division's headquarters had not been long getting out. Fabricorp shares had dropped another seven points in New York before the 1:30 Friday closing of the stock exchange. More significant were several items scattered among the news columns—signs that Fabricorp had started to fight back.

In one small entry, an unidentifed Fabricorp official admitted the Freshaire's fate was slightly in doubt, and that—if the President was persuaded to order action against it (a move that would be battled in the courts, of course)—it would force the immediate termination of employment for seven hundred workers, and that the number of laid-off workers would eventually rise to a total of eleven hundred. Also, it would mean that a production force—initially planned for two thousand men—would not be hired.

The junior Senator from Delaware, Hiram Maddock, speaking in Wheeling, West Virginia, had declared that a proliferation of Presidential advisory councils, commissions, and committees had created an outside-of-channels adjunct to the executive decision-making process, and that these groups were populated by unknown men of uncertain qualifications. Existence of these cliques of so-called experts. Maddock said, posed a serious threat to the democratic process. He called for a congressional investigation.

From the governor's office in Sacramento, California, had come a statement. Willard Wayne had noticed there was public discussion over whether the Freshaire—a California product—should be allowed to go on sale. He could not, naturally, comment with authority on the technical aspects of the question, but he did want to make one thing clear. Of all states in the union, California was most seriously afflicted with pollution of the air. While government and industry quarrelled, the private citizen was gasping for breath. The office of the Government of California favored the use of any practical measures that would make the state's air even slightly — even temporarily — easier and/or less deadly to breathe.

Fabricorp's advertisement was on the back of the first section. It was one of the the kind that appeared in that paper

from time to time, intended to sell—not a product—but an idea. The public relations department must have stayed up all night. It took up the whole page.

While federal officials wrangled over policies and standards, it said, private industry was making real progress in the struggle against pollution. If the density of industrial emissions were measured against such basic indices of industrial activity as the gross national product, it would be seen that pollution from industrial sources was at its lowest level in ninety years. (A crooked statistic if there ever was, Brandt thought sourly. (Turn-of-the-century factories might have belched filth, but there hadn't been as many of them. Now there were enough to fill the nation's sky, and all its rivers, even if their individual output wasn't as large.)

Through the efforts of industry-sponsored research, the manifesto went on, automotive emissions had been substantially reduced. Further progress would be made, and further reduction would be achieved. A chart displayed the reductions already accomplished, and a dotted line extrapolated the downward slope toward zero. Brandt wondered if anyone could be fooled by a one-datum chart like that—decided, glumly, that some people would. (And industry wouldn't have sponsored all that expensive research if government hadn't made the choice clear to auto manufacturers: either cut down the pollutant output of their products, or go out of business. A lot of that progress was illusory, though. The efficiency of the emission controls was always better in lab tests than on the highway, and laws to force private car owners to keep the equipment functioning effectively either didn't exist or were laxly enforced. And the first thing a teen boy did to convert his bomb to a rocket was strip off or bypass all the excess plumbing.)

Putting the ad in the *Times* had cost Fabricorp a good twenty thou; they thought the message was worth it—and, to them, maybe it was. While progress was being made, it said, perfection was not a realistic goal. It couldn't be reached. (They had nerve, saying that, with that chart in the paragraph just before!) A certain level of pollution could not be eliminated; it was part of the price of civilization and high technology. And certain limited areas, by accident of geography, meteorology, and history, would continue to experience undesireable levels of noxious ingredients for some time. To make living in such places less distasteful, Fabricorp hoped soon to market to latest product of its Chemodyne Division, the Freshaire, which could supply a closed space—office, store, home—with air filtered perfectly clean of all vapors and particulate matter.

But a faction within the federal government—a faction that wasn't responsive to the needs of the people-was attempting to suppress the Freshaire as an ecologically incompatible innovation. The reasoning behind such an attitude was nonsense, of course, but some members of the faction were highly placed and influential.

Now, certainly, the Freshaire couldn't be thought of as a cure for pollution. It wasn't, any more than as-

prin cured the causes of a headache. But, like asprin, the Freshaire could substantially reduce the unpleasant aspects of life for people whom circumstance obliged to live in those limited regions that could not instantly be liberated from the coils of unclean air.

Brandt's flight was called. He folded the newspaper under his arm. For a midnight job, the ad was a good piece of work. There would be letters to congressmen because of it. Opinion-makers without opinions of their own would be swayed by it. Those "limited regions" were whole cities—thousands, even millions of square miles—but never mind that.

On his way to the flights loading gate, he passed a rank of phone cubbies. He still had time; the plane wouldn't go for another fifteen minutes. He slid into the narrow space. His credit card snicked into its slot. He punched buttons.

It was Saturday afternoon, but Graham Strauss was at his desk. After only two intermediaries—a switchboard girl and a secretary, taking no more than thirty seconds between them—the man himself came on the line. They exchanged greetings. Then:

"Where are you, Tom?"

"Vegas."

"Las Vegas?" Puzzled. "What are you doing in Las Vegas?"

"Seeing how easy the people out here are to entertain," Brandt said. "Out here, they sit in front of machines, and they put money in and pull the handle. And they watch the wheels go round. Last time I saw anything like it, there was this rat with electrodes in its pleasure centers."

Strauss laughed, but not very hard and not for long. "What's on your mind?"

"You've seen today's *TimesT'*

The voice at the far end of the line turned careful. "Tom, I think you're forgetting. *They* don't feed *us. We* feed *them.*

"Yeah. Well.. ."

". . . but if you mean that *PR* broadside Fabricorp bought on the back of the front section," Strauss went on imperturbably, "we know about it. In fact, we're putting together a piece about it. Any comment you'd care to make?"

"Ever know me to keep my mouth shut? Say that I said they're skipping around the issue. They . . . they want to sell us candy, when it's medicine we need." He took a breath. "Say this: they're like the man that offers to sell you a house after somebody burned your old one down."

The reply from Strauss came slow. "I don't know if we can use that, Tom."

"I'm saying it, not you," Brandt said. "Maybe it's not the best quote in the world, but it's the best I've got in me this afternoon."

"Oh, it's good, all right. Don't get me wrong," Strauss said. "What I was thinking, a lot of our subscribers take quiet a few columns of real estate ads. Some of them wouldn't print a quote like that. They'll cut it out."

"Some of 'em won't," Brandt said. "Let the nervous ones use the line about medicine. Anyway, I didn't call up just to feed you a quote. What I want..."

"Slow down, Tom," Strauss inter-

rupted. "Let's remember something. We've got a job here to report the facts. If I let you call the terms on this, tomorrow it'll be somebody else. And the next day it'd be special interest number three. Besides that, when it got out we're for sale, we'd lose our credibility. Then we wouldn't be any use to anybody."

He spoke again in a voice that sounded relaxed and lazy; it wasn't either. "I know you've got a tiger under your saddle, right now. And you need all the help you can get. We'll do what we can, but remember, we've got a bigger responsibility."

They slanted their news all the time, but they never admitted it. "Just do this," Brandt said. "Send a man to El Paso. Somebody with a camera. You know that petrochemical plant Fabricorp built in Juarez, across the border from there, five or six years ago?"

"I don't know it, Strauss said. "But I can find out."

"Don't tip 'em off," Brandt warned. "Don't let 'em know you're interested."

Strauss chuckled. "I learned to suck eggs a long time ago. What do you want? He's to take pictures of it?"

"That's the idea," Brandt said.

"Dirty, huh?"

"I've seen worse," Brandt said. "But not often."

"Yes," Strauss said; not an assent to anything Brandt had said, but a way of saying he understood.

"I'm only making a suggestion, remember," Brandt said. Taste of his own medicine.

"Read you, loud and clear," Strauss said, a sort of pleasure coloring his voice.

The terminal's speaker system reminded Brandt his flight was waiting. "Look—" he said to the phone. "I've got to cut off. My plane's out there hopping up and down and flapping its wings."

"You always did have your head in the clouds, Tom," Strauss said and—chuckling—hung up before Brandt could react.

Muttering the answer he hadn't been able to speak—*at least a man can breathe, up there*—Brandt headed for the loading gate. He passed a trash barrel. It was full to overflowing but, putting his weight behind it, he forced his copy of the *Times* deep into the mess. Then he went on to board his plane.

• VICE PRESIDENT of Fabricorp, Inc., charged that abuse of high federal office poses a serious threat to the free enterprise system. "Irresponsible officials," he said, "who ..."

—San Francisco *Chronicle*
June 3, 1987

ON THE TELEPHONE, Grant Hastings' voice was relaxed, self-assured. "You've made an impression, Tom. Don't misunderstand me. If you didn't have them running scared, I wouldn't hesitate to send Jones into court tomorrow."

Outside Brandt's old farmhouse, an approaching thunderstorm muttered and flared. "Call it what it is," Brandt said. "They're fighting back, that's what."

"Say it that way, if you like," Hastings said, as if the shade of meaning meant nothing to him. "The point is, things haven't gone all your way. They've won some people to their side, too. And there's this Congressional subcommittee ..."

Brandt made a noise in his throat. "And they're people with loud voices," he said. He made it sound like profanity. Like an echo, the storm grumbled. Wind gusts rattled the windows of his study.

"Yes," Grant Hastings said. He was unconcerned. "Well, I've found that in affairs like this—assuming both sides make equal efforts—the side with the best arguments comes out ahead. Most of the time, that is."

Brandt grimaced. What bothered him was that Hastings was still talking the old treatment language. Always a man of firm decisions when there wasn't any doubt which side to choose, this time the President was firmly staying out of the fight. It was still his own—Tom Brandt's—potato. He mumbled some sort of reply and hung up; further talk wouldn't win him a thing.

For a moment, the lights in the study went dim, then came on full again. The storm growled. Old timbers in wall and ceiling creaked as the house felt the force of the wind.

Martha was standing in the middle of the south room when Brandt emerged from the study. He shut the door. A month-old issue of *Mod Style* hung from her hand. "What did he say?" she asked,turning.

"Not much," Brandt said. He sat on the couch. "I'm still Lord High Official Flak Catcher, if that's what you mean."

"I don't like it, Tom," she said. She dropped the magazine fiat on a coffee table. "I hate it."

The windows blazed with a flash of lightning. Thunder cracked, reverberated, died. The first large, plopping drops of rain hit the side of the house like a handful of musketballs.

"He won't back me," he said. "He doesn't admit it, but he won't." It was a hard, grey knowledge in his soul. It was like standing alone in a circle of wolves. "There's a lot of people in this town who'd like to see me gone. They're sharpening their knives right now."

Martha came around in front of him. "Is he one of them, Tom?"

He looked up. Torrents pounded the walls. Water streamed down the windows.

"Do you think I'm deaf?" she asked. "Do you think I'm blind?"

He shook his head. "No. You've never been either of those. A lot of other things, but never those." He sat silent a moment. "Maybe he'd like to chop me down. I don't know. I've put him in some awkward spots, sometimes. Made him do some things he'd rather not. But..."

It was a hard thing to explain. As a Presidential appointee, he served at the President's pleasure. In theory, Hastings could squash him like an insect. Nevertheless ...

"Tom," she persisted. "Do you know how much we're hated here?"

"Any more than being wife of a department chairman in East Lansing?" he asked. It wasn't a fair question, and he knew it as soon as the words were

out. He went back to her first question.

"He hired me to tell him what I think," he said. "And that's what I've done. And everybody knows that's what I've done. If he tried to chuck me out without a reason, he'd be standing there with blood on his hands. And I'm not giving him any reasons. Just . . . well, some advice that's sometimes not so easy to go along with. This time, at least he's willing to buy the idea if I can get enough people on my side."

"Do you think he will, Tom? Do you really think he will?"

It wasn't an answerable question. "I don't know," he said. It was the only truthful reply. "Just one way to find out." He got up. He didn't want to talk any more. He crossed to the window. Thunder spoke. Lightning slashed. The rain came down hard.

FROM A PRESS RELEASE issued by the President's Council of Advisors on Environmental Quality:

> As of this date, Fabricorp, Inc. has not replied to the Council's request for information relating to the probable pollutant output of the processes involved in the manufacture of the unique selective membrane material scheduled to be the integral heart of that corporation's proposed consumer product, the Freshaire....

DENVER WAS A GOOD CITY for talking about the backlash of short term expedients. It was the city where a liquid waste had been pumped down a deep well, in the belief that such a novel method of disposal assured that no one could possibly be bothered by it again. As a method of disposal, it had worked fine until the earthquakes started.

It was also the city where, not much later, an accident in a nuclear weapons factory had distributed trace quantities of plutonium over a never-publicized number of acres—into the air and the ground water, into the reservoirs and streams. No injury to man or beast had been traced to that contamination, but apprehensive fears still trembled not far under the surface.

The Colorado Planning Commission had been sponsoring a series of public forums on the state's future development. It was the sort of affair Brandt might have joined in even if he wasn't looking for places and ways to put a message across. Wangling an invitation was no more difficult than picking up a phone.

When his plane put down at Stapledon Airfield, he had his suitcase sent to the Brown Palace Hotel, made a phone call, and caught a cab. The long slope of Colfax Avenue descended toward the city's core. Tall buildings poked up above the thickening afternoon haze. Beyond, humpbacked mountain crests gnawed the sky. Storm clouds gathered above them.

Howard Shane was in his office in the quarters of Public Service Co. of Colorado, and—alerted by the phone call—expected him. When they were seated—Shane behind his desk, Brandt in the cushioned visitor's chair—Shane said, "What's on your mind?"

"Thinking about what you'll say tonight," Brandt said.

Shane's round, boyish face matched the ancestry suggested by his name. His nose had been broken once—or

more than once—but the damage had been treated so it hardly showed. He had a halfback's stocky physique; he'd played a few seasons with the Houston Oilers and worked toward a Masters in business administration during the off season. He tilted his head quizzically.

"What do you think I'm going to say?" he asked. There was only a faint murmur of irony to his inflection.

Brandt didn't enjoy being mocked. "Pretty much what electricity people have been saying for the last twenty years. You're going to spread out a stack of statistics long enough to feed the numbers racket for a year, all about how much juice folks are going to want ten, twenty, or thirty years from now, and you'll tell them how your company's doing everything it can to keep up with the demand. And you'll say it's getting harder all the time. There's no good sites left for hydropower stations; and radiation hazards—or the fact people think there's a hazard—makes it hard to find places they'll let you build a nuke plant: and ordinary fuel-burning plants—including that oil shale stunt you people are diddling with—get more expensive all the time, and folks don't like higher electric bills, and they pour too much junk into the air, besides. Even with the best antipollution gadgets money can buy, they pour too much junk. Then you're going to say, don't shoot the piano player—he's doing the best he can, and besides, where would you find another piano player?"

Shane was unbending a paperclip. He held the kinky length of wire between his thumb and the tip of his little finger. He tested its springiness, then let it drop on his blotter.

"Well, my general outline isn't much different from that," he admitted. "I was going to soft pedal a few things—it's not really necessary to point out that some of our plants are a source of pollutants. I hope you weren't intending to embarass us; I mean, we know we have problems, and we're working on them, and I hope you understand something about what they are. We ..."

"Mainly, your problem's just that when people plug something in, they expect the juice to come out," Brandt said. "No exceptions tolerated. Where you get it—that's your problem, not theirs."

Shane nodded. The beginnings of a relieved smile reshaped his face. "They just don't understand," he said. "They seem to think we can ... I suppose you know we had twelve interruptions of service last summer ..."

"Blackouts," Brandt said.

Shane looked discomforted. "We prefer to call them interruptions," he said. "And we've already had to reduce voltage twice this spring. What we'll do this summer—all those air conditioners ..."

"You'll sweat," Brandt said. "And next year. And the year after that. Now, about tonight..."

"Tonight?" Shane echoed. The change of subject had come too fast for him, and the cause of it was outside his grasp.

"You know about the Freshaire? This thing Fabricorp's tinkering up to sell people?"

Shane's deep frown said he still didn't understand. "We're aware of it. Any

power using equipment that's likely to go on the market, we generally keep an eye of developments. But what... ?"

"A thing like that," Brandt said, if it goes on the market, you'll have a hard time to keep up the power demand. You want that?"

"Well, we're not against mere business," Shane said. "You understand, don't you?"

"What you mean is—" Brandt leaned forward. "—you don't mind selling more kilowatts as long as you've got the kilowatts to sell. This thing . . . it's going to have three busy little high pressure pumps—electric powered pumps. The power demands it'll make, you couldn't keep up with. You've done some studies, I suppose."

"We've done some studies," Shane nodded, taciturn. "I don't have the figures right here, but we know it would make problems for us."

Brandt had seen some studies, too. Shane was trying to set a record for understatement. "1 think there's a chance we can head it off. Better than an even chance. I want to tip it off the edge, and you can help me."

"Well, I'd have to consult..."

"Hear me out," Brandt said. "When I'm done, talk to anybody you like and ask your conscience what it thinks. What I want—what I'd like you to say tonight—if the Freshaire goes on sale, you don't know where you'll get the power to make them go. You're already running as fast as you can just to stay where you are. And tell the people what it means when you don't have the juice to do everything people want done. Blackouts and cut down voltage and all the other things. What I want—I want people told what's going to happen if they start plugging in Freshaires. The facts; I'm not asking you to fib a thing. Think you can do it?"

"I'll have to talk to Mr. Van Damm," Shane said. He didn't sound reluctant; just uncomfortable. "A public statement in the name of the company . . . you understand, don't you?"

"Go ask him," Brandt said. "I'll wait here." He stretched out his legs and crossed his ankles. Maybe it was for different reasons, but—the way he saw it—he and Public Service Co. of Colorado both wanted the same thing.

AUDITORIUM THEATRE WAS FULL that night—every seat taken and people standing at the back. There had been talk in recent months that radical changes in water rights laws would be proposed, and one of the other people at the forum was Mark Feltrinelli from the Bureau of Land Management. Water rights was a subject of more than casual interest to the agricultural life of the high plains. People were afraid of what he might say. As he walked out on the platform, Brandt felt thousands of eyes watching him.

After he left the provinces of Public Service Co. of Colorado, he'd gone to see Paul Desautels of the Planning Commission. Desautels was in charge of the program.

"If you've got no objection, I'd like to be first man to speak at this thing," Brandt said. He made himself sound more diffident than he was. When he saw Sigurd Rolvaag's name on the list, he'd known he had to do something to ensure he didn't have to go in front of

the crowd after Rolvaag had blathered them into deep lassitude. Rolvaag was second deputy undersecretary of the Interior; he was a talented man at his job, but in front of an audience his plodding, detail-by-detail explanations never failed to make even urgent matters sound as drab as last year's alfalfa production statistics.

And Rolvaag's subject for the evening—the prospects for revitalization of the heavy metals industry—stood little chance of stimulating the people to anything but snores; the mines were a matter of more than passing interest in Colorado—the region's first wealth had come out of those burrows in the mountains—but Rolvaag was not going to offer any new hopes. The good ore bodies had been hacked out years ago. The industry had no future. Only diehards thought otherwise.

Desautels touched fingertips to the tip of an eyebrow. "Any special reasons?"

Brandt had expected to be challenged, and he had arguments ready. The other men taking part in the forum would be talking about specific industries. He, Tom Brandt, was going to talk about planning—how it should be done, and why it had to be done. Besides, he wasn't about to let himself be pegged low man on the totem pole behind the biggest gasbag since the *Hindenberg.*

Desautels looked coy for a moment, then grinned. "I was more or less expecting to put you on first," he said. "To warm them up. Unless you had some other preference."

"Not likely," Brandt said, and left to check in at the Brown Palace Hotel.

HE TOOK A SHEAF of papers to the lecturn, not because he needed notes but because the act of arranging papers gave the crowd time to become silent. He looked up, and the babble ended as if a toggle had been snapped. He felt the warmth of a spotlight on his head, almost as warm as a desert sun.

He told them the secret of good planning: that every possible and impossible factor that could enter into the system had to be considered and—once considered—accounted for in the plan. Nothing could be ignored if it was part of the system.

"Here's what I'm talking about," he said. "There's a place near here, up against the slope of the Front Range, where the way the rocks are shaped it makes a good, natural amphitheatre. Good acoustics and all the rest of it. Drop a paperclip there and you hear it all over the place. Well, a few years ago somebody had the smart idea, why not make it into a real open air theatre for summer concerts, and maybe some Shakespeare and a few things like that? And everybody thought it was a good idea, so they went ahead and poured a few thousand cubic yards of concrete and put up benches for the audience, and a stage, and all the other things an open air theatre needs. And that summer they started having concerts under the stars."

He paused for a sip of water, and there wasn't a cough in the whole crowd. He had them. He set the glass down and went on.

"Funny thing, the climate you've got here. It's dry all summer. But right to

the west, you've got mountains. And something about those mountains and what's on the other side of 'em, they build up thunderstorms like an assembly line. So it just happened, that place where they built the amphitheatre, just about the time the soloist was starting on his second cadenza, down comes the lightning and thunder and enough water to float Cleopatra's barge. And the whole audience decides they've heard enough music for one evening, so they all go and sit in their cars as wet as a bucket of eels. And after that sort of thing happened a few times, the folks that were putting on these concerts noticed they weren't selling as many tickets as they did to start with, and the boys in the string section weren't too happy about having to dry off their Stradivari. And the people that were doing Shakespeare didn't think the balcony scene went over too good with Romeo holding an umbrella. So, if you know somebody that wants to buy a slightly used amphitheatre cheap..."

When their laughter finally chuckled into silence, he turned to another aspect of the need to make plans, and to keep them: that only fools shot arrows in the air without any thought of where they'd come down.

"Every time you plug a new something into a system, it's like trying to include your foot in a five-handed cat's cradle. All of a sudden, the relationships of everything are all different. What you've got to do, you've got to think about the system, and all the parts of the system; and you've got to think about the thing you're putting in. You've got to think about the changes it'll make. *All* the changes. Because—if you don't you're going to get a surprise.

"I don't care if the something is air conditioners, or automobiles, or something that takes polluted air and makes it fit to breathe; the principle's the same. Humpty Dumpty's off his wall again, and the whole world gets changed."

The hot lights above him were making him sweat. He glanced up at their blaze and felt their heat on his face. He slipped off his jacket and let it drop on the floor behind him. A murmur came from the crowd. He went on.

"I'll tell you what I mean. A few years ago, some oceanographers started finding some sort of fibrous material in the Gulf Stream, way out in the middle of the Atlantic. Lots of little thready things. They didn't know what the stuff was, or where it was coming from. There'd never been anything like it before. They scratched their skulls for quite a while before they found out. Know what it was? Toilet paper!"

He let them laugh for a while, and sipped from his water glass. When sobriety returned, he continued.

"I don't know what that toilet paper's going to do. Nobody does, yet. If there's enough, and it keeps getting put in, it'll turn the whole Atlantic—well, at least the whole *North* Atlantic—into a puddle of sludge. I don't really expect that, but it could happen. Another possible—but it's not the kind of thing you can count on—maybe some kind of bacteria's going to invent itself that'll think it's ambrosia. I've heard of odder things happening, like algae growing in a jet plane's fuel

tanks. One thing's fairly sure: all that solid matter in the water, it's going to make the water more opaque. Sunlight won't penetrate as deep. That means it's going to have an effect on the plankton life in the water, because the plankton need the sunlight, or they die. And fish need the plankton—for them it's food—or *they* die.

"From that point, things aren't so clear. There's all sorts of possible consequences, none of them certain. But you get the general idea—whatever *does* happen, you can be sure of this: the toilet paper's like bread on the waters—it may take seventy years, or seven hundred, but someday it's going to come back on us, and it's going to be a glorious mess when it does."

More laughter, but this time it was the kind that comes because it is less difficult to laugh than to accept the world the way it really is. Again, Brandt had to wait until he could be heard.

"What I'm saying," he said then, "it's not smart to think, just because a thing hasn't whipcracked on us yet, it's not going to. And every time a new product goes on the market—never mind how convenient it is, or how much chrome and pretty plastic. Toilet paper's convenient, too. Look for the booby trap, and be ready to jump out of the way!"

With that, he retired and let Rolvaag bore them with information about the heavy metals industry—what was left of it—and then Shane came on to deliver his explanation of the power industry's difficulties with success. What he said about the Freshaire fitted into the rest of his talk so neatly that, if Brandt hadn't known better, he'd have thought Shane planned to say those things all along. And it seemed to make an impression: that was what counted.

Finally, Mark Feltrinelli took the lecturn to say that, while basic water-use policy was under study for possible changes, the needs of the many diverse groups affected by a change were being kept scrupulously in mind. It was not the wish of any unit of government to deprive anyone of their means of livelihood. But the existing system had been created a century ago, when this country was still new, when there were fewer people—no cities, no industry, no need to be concerned about depriving someone else by diverting flow from one watershed to another, because that other watershed had no people but Indians in it, and Indians didn't count. That era was gone, gone forever, and it was that duty of government at all levels to ensure that available resources were apportioned fairly to all. Not just to some.

In the question period that followed, most of the ammunition was aimed at Feltrinelli. Feltrinelli answered in calm, measured, reasonable words. He kept his sense of humor. He'd stood up to verbal shrapnel before. And he'd had the sense not to wear glasses—still in this tag end of the twentieth century the hallmark of an I-know-better intellectual—even though he was myopic as a mole.

Only one question came at Brandt, and it had obviously been planted. "I'd like to clear up a matter of point of view," a voice from the audience said. "Mr. Brandt—isn't it true you're one of these people that go on camping trips

by yourself, on foot?"

The question was like an indictment. It suggested that any man of such tendencies stood impeached of everything he said and everything he stood for. Whoever asked that question must have spent hours rehearsing exactly how each word should be spoken.

Brandt went to the lectum. Feltrinelli stood aside. Brandt pulled the microphone down to where he could talk into it. He stayed silent a moment, looking out at the crowd. It wasn't possible, now, to pick out the man who'd put him on the spot. It didn't matter. Fabricorp had sent him.

"I like to walk," he said. It brought a little laughter. "See it this way," he went on. "If different people didn't like different things, there'd be only one flavor of ice cream. Myself, I've found it's a way to go off on my own and get myself sorted out. I don't recommend it for everyone, and it's sure not the quickest way to get somewhere—not when we've got airplanes that fly so fast you only hear 'em coming after they've gone. But if you're not in a hurry, and you don't mind being a distance from indoor plumbing . . . well, I don't know a better way to see a piece of country. Some people, I guess, only care where they're going, but I guess you'd say 1 like to watch the scenery on the way. You can do that, walking."

He stopped then. Maybe he'd made enough of an answer, but maybe he hadn't. He breathed deeply, held it a moment, and went on.

"It's a peculiar thing," he said. "I remember a few years ago, down in Arizona, I walked into a desert rat's camp just as he was fixing some rattlesnake steak for lunch, and he invited me to join the festivities. I'd been walking for five days without seeing anybody but hawks and lizards, and how long since he'd seen a people I wouldn't start to guess. So both of us were willing to talk, and we sort of exchanged rations and so forth. And somewhere in the middle of talking, I said I liked the country around there. Well, he looked at me from behind his whiskers. 'Mister,' he said, 'you can like it all you want. You don't have to live out here.' Ever since then, I've been careful not to be too sure what's good for other people. I don't try to push walking on anyone else. It's a thing you either like, or you don't. It's not a religion. It's just a thing I like to do, and I'll wave friendly as you please to people that tool past me in their Kamakazi 99's. As for my job, all I want is to keep some of this country fit to live in. It's a job that gets harder all the time."

He started to turn away, and the applause broke around him like the sudden rush of a sea on the shore. It caught him by surprise—he hadn't said anything that inspiring; he'd hoped for no more than respectful silence. But while the accolade poured forth, he couldn't leave the lecturn. He waited there, the heat of the lights on his shoulders, until it faltered and turned to quiet. Trapped there, he had to speak again.

For a moment, he didn't have the words. But then the words came. "Maybe I overstated things a little," he admitted. "I think it's still a good country. And a good world. I want to

keep 'em that way. But... here's something fundamental, people: there isn't an organism in the universe that can live in an environment that's saturated with its own waste products. I don't care if it's an amoeba, or an advertising executive. Sweeping the trash under the rug doesn't do it. And ignoring it doesn't, either. It doesn't just go away."

He paused then—gave them time to absorb what he'd said. Gave them time to understand.

"What we've got to do," he went on, "what's got to be done . . . we've got to find about a million ways to turn trash into something we can use. I don't have the answers, and it doesn't do much good to say we're working on it. Because we're not working hard enough. Results are the thing that count in this business; maybe you haven't noticed, but there aren't many dinosaurs around."

He laughed, then, with a sudden thought. "When I was a kid, there was a catch-phrase floating around: 'A hundred years from now, who'll know the difference?' Well, I've got sort of an answer to that. A hundred years from now, unless the direction of things gets turned around, there won't be anyone to know a difference. I don't want that. I'd like to think you don't either."

Quickly, then, before applause could anchor him again, he retreated to his chair. Only when he was seated did he see that it wasn't just handclapping that was going on out there. They were standing. Row on row—not just the ones in the back, but all of them. And the sound that filled the hall was like the sound of thunder.

HE STEPPED from the elevator in the Brown Palace Hotel and started down the hall toward his suite. Someone else had got off at his floor, but Brandt hardly noticed him until he spoke,

"Mr. Brandt? Could I speak with you a minute?"

Brandt stopped, turned, and took the measure of the man who'd followed him. A moderately tall young man, suntanned, and otherwise undistinguished of appearance. Somewhere in his twenties. He wore a leather thong in place of a conventional necktie, with a Zuni symbol cut into the silver medallion that clasped it at his throat. His suit had a western cut to it, undefineable but not to be mistaken.

"What about?" Brandt asked. "Who sent you?"

The young man pushed back a lock of hair. "I'm with Timber Industries, of Boise, Mr. Brandt. If that's what you mean."

"You're a long way from home," Brandt said. "They sent you after me?"

"Well. .. that is, yes."

Brandt shrugged. Might as well find out what they were thinking in Boise, though he already had a fairly good idea. "All right. We'll go to my room."

He resumed his stride down the corridor. His suite was at the end. He opened the door, nodded the man inside. The lock snapped behind them.

In the sitting room, two divans faced each other across a glass topped coffee table. There was a lamp, a chair, and a buffet with a vase of artificial flowers. Standard hotel layout. "Sit," Brandt invited. "Now who are you?"

"Ross Broomfield," the younger man said. He seemed to give it

reluctantly, as if he'd been touched by the superstition that to give a man your true name gave him power over you. Well, it wasn't far wrong.

"Drink?" Brandt offered.

Broomfield shook his head. "I won't take much of your time. 1 know you must be tired."

Right then, Brandt felt weary as a jumping bean. "All right, Ross Broomfield. What's on your mind?"

Broomfield was sitting on the divan's edge. His body bent forward. "Well, we need a man on our staff to redesign our tree farm reforestation methods—with an eye to increasing the yield, of course. We thought..."

"I've never been much of a trees man," Brandt said. He leaned back. There wasn't any question now, what this business was about.

"Oh, we've got lots of people that know forestry," Broomfield hurried to say. "We've had them all along. What we're thinking, though, is someone with a wider view of things. A forest isn't just trees. It's all kinds of wildlife, and other vegetation, and climate, and . . . they wanted me to sound you out. They're willing to pay a pretty high salary for the right man, they said; maybe I shouldn't tell you, but they told me they'd go as high as fifty thousand. And they said I ought to point out what a challenge it would be to ..."

"Nuts," Brandt said.

"Pardon?" As if he didn't understand.

"I said nuts," Brandt said. "If you're in the tree business, you know what they are. I suppose you've heard I'm in a brawl with Fabricorp, right now."

Well, I've heard some mention of it, I guess."

Did you know Fabricorp holds something like fifteen percent of Timber Industries, with a man on the board of directors?"

"Well, I . . . I guess I do know," Broomfield said slowly."But I don't see what that has to do with ..."

Maybe he really didn't see the connection. Brandt had crossed paths with more than a few of life's innocent children; some had been a lot older than this boy.

"Son," he said. "Stay out of Brooklyn. You'd wind up owner of the ugliest bridge you ever saw."

Broomfield frowned. He still didn't understand. "I don't.. ."

"Go back and tell your boss," Brandt said. "—tell him one of the first things I did was find out every connection Fabricorp has. Every pie they've got a finger in and every string they're fixed to pull. And I'm not in this job because I enjoy it. I don't. I like this country—that's why. I want to keep it halfway fit to live in—I meant what I said tonight. Were you there?"

Broomfield nodded glumly, not meeting his eyes. Brandt wondered if maybe he'd been the man who asked the question. Not that it made a difference.

"All right," he said. "The thing is, the job I'm in now's a lot more important than growing bigger and fatter trees four times as fast. Got that?"

Broomfield was studying the floor. "I guess so."

"Then git. It's been a long day," Brandt said. "Unless you'd care to stay for that drink I offered you a while ago?"

The young man stood up. "Oh no. I couldn't do that."

Brandt stood up too. "Don't take it personal, son. Once I had a job chasing another man's dogs, just like you. It's not much fun." Come to think of it, working for Grant Hastings wasn't sometimes much different.

Broomfield edged toward the door. Brandt stayed with him. With the door open and Broomfield in the act of stepping outside, he offered his hand. "Nice to have met you. Have a good trip back. Flying?"

Broomfield accepted the handshake. He still seemed bewildered. "Yes, sir," he said. Then he was wandering off down the hall.

Chuckling, Brandt set the door's locks. He poured himself a drink, downed it slowly, and went to bed. He slept well.

THE NEXT DAY, Fabricorp shares dropped to their lowest level in six years. Possibly, someone who'd known of their fumbling effort to take him out of the picture—and who knew, also, it had flopped -had decided to dump a block of shares because of that failure. Something like that might have been behind the drop; Brandt didn't know. Frabicorp shares had been going down all the time. The most one or two investors could have done was to hurry the process along.

THERE WAS A NEW DENT in the fender of Marta's gasbuggy. He was careful not to ask how it got there. He checked the medicine chest the first chance he got, but found nothing suspicious. He didn't stop looking, though.

The bottle, when he finally found it, had been hidden in the toe of an old golfing shoe in her closet. By the evidence of the label, she'd found another doctor who was too hurried to find out everything he ought to know before he scribbled a prescription. Maybe the woods weren't full of doctors like that, but the city sure was. Crouched down, holding the bottle in his hand, Brandt balanced on the balls of his feet. He could throw this one out, of course, as he'd thrown out the last one. She'd only get herself another bottle and hide it another place.

Smiling grimly, he dumped the capsules into his hand and counted them. Taking one, he dropped it into a shirt pocket and poured the rest in the bottle. He put the bottle back where he'd found it.

In the morning, he was slated to go in front of the Congressional subcommittee on advisors in the Administration, but that didn't start until ten. There'd be time before that to leave the capsule with Ned Bluestone at the National Institute of Health. Ned would know the man to give it to, and before you could say sal acetyl silicilate he'd have a pocket full of capsules that looked just like it, full of aspirin.

It would keep Marta out of trouble for a while. Until she found out, anyway.

"DAD?"

Nan's phone call tracked him down, finally, in Cincinnati where the air had taken the scent of warm soap from factories, and doctors were reporting an upsurge in detergent-induced allergies among patients who didn't use de-

tergents. Brandt sat down on the floor in his motel room, his back against the bedframe and one hand palm down on the floor.

It was trouble. He knew it was trouble as soon as he heard her voice.

"How's the varmints?" he asked. That was the first thing he feared.

"Fine, Dad. It's not that. It's . . ." She took a deep breath; he could hear it. "I don't know what it is. Mr. Boorstin had me into his office this afternoon. He said I was using my position for political purposes. He said it isn't allowed by the civil service rules."

Huh?" It sounded more like something the Mad Hatter would have said.

I didn't understand it either," Nan said. "But he said adding a breakdown of the principal source of pollutants to my reports—really. Dad, I think it's a good idea—but he said it was politically motivated and he was getting complaints, and if I didn't stop he'd fire me."

Brandt muttered something which, spoken clearly, would have shredded insulation off the wires.

"What, Dad? I don't understand you."

"Just an old cuss I made up for the occasion, guaranteed to dry up their milk and make stubble grow in the fields."

"Oh," Nan said. She knew her old man. "Well, I told Mr. Boorstin my job was to give information to the public." Her words came crisp, brittle, the way she'd said them the first time."He said sometimes giving information to the public is a political act. I couldn't argue with him. I didn't know what to say."

Brandt worked on his lip and kept his temper. It wasn't easy. "Wouldn't say he's wrong. What he means, political people prefer folks that don't ask too many questions. People that think about things are the ones that give'em trouble."

"Dad," she said, "I don't think they care about me. I'm just not that important, and my reports aren't that important, I think it's you they're trying to get at."

Nan was a smart girl. Not much got past her. "Wouldn't be surprised," he admitted. He felt an urge to tell somebody they should pick on people their own size, but he wasn't sure who it was that needed telling. "It's not your fight. Tell'em you'll be a good girl."

"Too late for that, Dad," she said. "I told Mr. Boorstin if he ordered me to drop that part of my reports, I'd resign and hold a news conference down in the lobby."

"So you're out of a job." It was the only thing that could have happened.

"Nope," Nan said, smug as a girl with her first boyfriend. "He lost his nerve. Or maybe he knew he couldn't get away with it, because I'd dojust like I told him." She chuckled. "He looked like he was trying to swallow a banana in one piece, skin and all. And all he said was . . ." Her voice changed tone. " 'Forget 1 said anything, Mrs. Rasmussen. Go back to your work.' So I did."

She was a girl to be proud of. Also one to worry about. "That's a tiger's tail you're tweaking," he warned. "Watch it. They don't only growl, and they don't play nice-kitty just because they got growled at."

"I'm a big girl now, Dad." Nan said. "I'm all right. And if they give me too much trouble I know how to land on my feet. I've had a lot ot experience. But I knew you'd want to know about it."

"They're putting pressure on me. They want to shut me up," Brandt said. "Tell 'em I said, if they want to work on me, let 'em work on me all they want. Leave you alone. I don't want you hurt."

"I'll be all right. Dad. It's you I'm worried about. They're so powerful."

Young people, always so full of brass and confidence.

"And the girls. Don't let 'em touch the girls."

"I won't, Dad. And they'd better not try."

He could imagine the lift of her chin as she said it. But a worry nagged him. "What about Karol? That cough."

"It's nothing, Dad. The doctor says a lot of children have a cough like that."

So sure she couldn't be hurt. He wanted to shout. "Get her out of that city," he said, "Get yourself out."

"We're all aright, Dad. Really we are." She'd said it so many times she believed it herself, and repeated it because she thought it was true.

"Nobody's all right, any more," Tom Brandt said. His eyes wandered. The carpet spread featurelessly before him. green, like fake grass; scratchy under his hand. He felt weary, weighed down. Maybe he'd been travelling too long. It was hard, even, to remember where he was.

"There's no such thing as being right, these days—just maybe a little less wrong than the other guy." He was talking too much. He stopped for breath, and to think. He'd said enough—too much. "Take care of yourself. And take care of the girls. Don't make 'em grow up too fast. It's hard on the bones."

"Sure, Dad," Nan said, full of good humor; perhaps a touch of love. "Bye."

He listened to the click, and then to the dead wire. He gazed at the emerald blue wall, the sterile, mass-produced furniture of plastic and steel, and then at the shoes on his feet, scuffed and worn.

REPRESENTATIVE HENRY SWARTHOUT (4th Congressional District, Iowa) was not quite stone bald; a thin growth of white hair grew behind his ears, but he kept it cut short. He wore thick-lensed glasses and affected wide, gaudy neckties.

Now, in the committee hearing room, he moved like a mongoose stalking its prey. "Very well. You have said, Mr. Brandt, that your function is to advise the President on matters relating to environmental policy. Is that an accurate statement of your basic duties?"

"Me and the other four men on the Council," Brandt said from the witness chair. "I bang the gavel at meetings, and I make sure the others get an edgewise word in, and I run and tell tales to the boss. But, I suppose, sure, you could say it your way."

The chair they'd assigned him was massive and hard, and it had been made with men of greater size in mind. Brandt was careful to shift his weight only now and then, and not to show his discomfort. He reminded himself there

wasn't anything personal in this grilling. Fabricorp had been the inspiration, of course—hoping the fact of his being called before a congressional investigation committee would cast discredit on anything he said in public, including his well-publicized judgment of the Freshaire. (And never mind what the committee was investigating, or why, or exactly what questions were asked. Never mind what answers he gave. It was the primary fact that counted, not details.)

The honorable gentlemen from Iowa, Delaware, and North Dakota were sitting on this panel for reasons that had nothing to do with Fabricorp. They had reasons of their own—mostly, it was their need to prove to the voters back home that they were Doing Their Job, a fact they could establish most convincingly by getting their names in the newspapers and printouts. Whatever embarassment they could cause Grant Hastings and/or his subordinates at all levels would, of course, add greater weight to their achievement. Nor, being politicians, would they mind having their names publicized beyond the limits of their respective districts. Such publicity would do them no harm when they judged the time was right to reach for more exalted office.

All the same, here he was—Tom Brandt—guest of honor and star attraction at this vicious charade.

"Thank you, Mr. Brandt." Swarthout paced a few steps, eyes on the plain carpet. "Now, in your judgment, would you believe the President is competent to make decisions in this particular area of policy without the advice of yourself and your fellow council Members?"

Swarthout had spent close to an hour building up to that question. Brandt had seen it coming long ago, so there'd been time to get ready for it. But it wouldn't be good to give an answer too quickly. It would seem too much like a triggered response—not something he'd spent some time thinking about.

"There's several ways to answer that," he said. "For one, when you fly back to Oskaloosa or wherever to remind the folks back home you're their man in Washington, you've got the sense to let somebody else drive the airplane. And it's my guess the airplane driver's the first guy who'd tell you he'd make a fairly miserable congressman."

That particular answer didn't exactly please the congressman. In a nation that still believed, deep down, that any poor orphan boy could get elected congressman—and, frequently, those were the only qualifications a candidate had—maybe it wasn't a very satisfactory answer even if it did exemplify the division of labor principle that had been with the human race since at least the middle paleolithic. The other two members of the subcommittee weren't amused, either. They glowered. The subcommittee's general counsel—over there on the left—looked like he'd just been asked to explain his 1972 tax return.

"Maybe that's not direct enough," Brandt said before Swarthout could speak his displeasure. "Take this tack on it. It's the President's job to make the decisions and give the commands. Mine's to tell him what I think about things and what the rest of the boys on the Council think. Now, if he was let-

ting me make the decision, I'd be doing his job and you've have some good reasons to complain. But that's not what we do.

"You see, the President's just one man, and what we've got here is a big country with a lot of things going on in it. He's got to decide whether to sign a piece of legislation that puts a tax of five cents a foot on garden hose—somebody's idea of how to reduce water consumption in places where they don't have enough—which is just about everywhere, these days. And ten minutes later he's got to make up his mind whether we should put another manned station in orbit, or make the two we've got bigger, or whether to spend the money on something else entirely. So you've got a problem, because you can't expect any man to have enough things—and the right things at that!—in his head, so he can make a halfway intelligent decision about both those things, not to mention the fifty others that go across his desk every afternoon. The last man that knew everything worth knowing died five hundred years ago—and besides, I don't think he could of got elected. Anyway, that's not how it's done."

He let them stew, waiting for him to go on, while he drank a whole glass of cold water. Talking to a congressional committee made a man dry faster than a walk in the desert, but they wouldn't badger him with another question while he plainly hadn't finished with the one he was working on. He set the empty glass down and reached for the pitcher, just to see the look in their eyes as he did it. But—after touching the handle- - he took his hand back.

"What we do," he resumed, "we tell the President what the problem is—not just what it looks like from the outside, but all the things under the skin. The way a professor of anatomy looks at a cadaver and knows every inch and wiggle of gut inside. Then we tell him what we think he ought to do—what we'd do ourselves, if we had our feet in his shoes. And we tell him why we think that way. And we tell him what we think would happen if he did some of the other things he might do—just for comparison purposes. And then the President says Thank You, nice and polite, and he smiles, and the minute we go out the door, he calls in another squad of advisors that specialize in another thing the problem involves. And they tell him what it looks like from their back yard. Sometimes, you'd have a hard time to know it's the same problem."

The three congressmen doddled studiously on their notepads and avoided Brandt's eyes. Brandt waited for their next question. Rep. Byron Kowalski (1st district, N. Dakota) took off his glasses and began to polish. The subcommittee's general counsel got up from his desk to go over and confer in low tones with Swarthout.

Rep. Victor Van Der Wolf (2nd district, Delaware) leaned close to the microphone in front of him. "Would I be correct to infer, according to your close up view, the President is not himself competent to make wise decisions concerning the health and welfare of the nation?"

Brandt had to smile. He wasn't fooled into thinking the question was meant for him. It was meant for

publication—nothing else. But he'd been called on to respond, all the same.

"Don't put loaded questions in my mouth," he said. "What I'm trying to tell you is, Grant Hastings can make decisions as good as any man that's had the job. But nobody can do the work right until they understand the thing they're making decisions about. That's where a staff of advisors earns their pay. They make him understand what he's doing—what kind of gun he's got in his hands, and where he's pointing it. Put that another way: if the President doesn't know what he's doing, it's because his advisors haven't done their job right. And . . ." He chuckled. ". . . the President starts by picking the people to advise him. So you can't say anybody's taking the power of decision out of his hands, even by accident—even if they don't realize it."

The Hon. Victor Der Wolf was not amused. Well, that was his problem. Brandt went on.

"You made me think of something else. Mind?"

Rep. Swarthout looked up. "If it's pertinent to the discussion, you may proceed. We're here to gather information."

"I just realized, you might have got the impression us advisors were a clannish bunch. We're not. It hasn't got so bad we have to be frisked for bowie knives before we go into the conference room, and we're always polite to each other in the elevator, but otherwise it's teeth and claws inside our big, happy family. Normally, our majority reports come from three out of five—and sometimes there's five different reports and five and a half different recommendations. And whenever we're talking together and we start sounding alike, I start to wonder what's wrong with the way we're all thinking—because, sure if Max Timmins says something I agree with, it's because I haven't been thinking careful enough. And—this is the thing I want you people to get hold of straight—for a gaggle of Presidential advisors, that's good. That's the way he wants us. Because it means we represent different points of view, and different slants of thinking. You'd better be glad we've got a President right now who sees that as something valuable. I could name a lot of people who'd like the job who wouldn't have a view of things that broad."

Rep. Van Der Wolf hunched forward to his microphone. "Mr. Brandt—it's a trifle soon for campaign speeches. Nor is this the proper forum."

"Sorry," Brandt said. But he wasn't, really. "Anything else you want to know?"

"I want to thank you for coming today," Rep. Swarthout said.

"Glad to do it. Any time," Brandt said. Taking his cue, he stepped down from the witness stand. "All in a day's work."

Rep. Van Der Wolf—whose aspirations toward higher office were not entirely unknown—glared from behind his microphone. Brandt could feel those eyes all the way out of the room.

THE FIRST SMOG ALERT of the summer was in St. Louis. An unlikely place, but these days no city was really immune. A chance meeting of air masses above the broad, shallow valley of the

Mississippi was all it took. It was as if a vast greenhouse had been built over the city, and the output of several hundred industries and several hundred thousand motor vehicles combined to turn the metropolitan zone's air into a mixture unfit for human consumption.

Brandt flew out to sniff the atmosphere and declare it bad. He conferred with the mayor, with the city council, and with officials of the metropolitan health department. Mostly, it was for the sake of appearance—a way of demonstrating to the public that everything that could be done was, in fact, being done. It was true enough, but the truth was that not much could be done. The smog would stay—would slowly thicken—until the weather changed. Then it would go away.

It was part of the public display of concern that he should meet with reporters. There were only a handful. Men from the two dailies, the printout, and the local rv stations, and a photographer, a stringer from Associated Press, and one from the Chicago *Tribune*. So small a squad he could deal with informally.

In the small city hall press room, he studied them. Their eyes were pinkish and red-rimmed, and they had the snuffles. The Man from the *Globe-Democrat* coughed, and it made an ugly, gluey sound in his throat.

"I hope you're getting paid for hazardous duty," Brandt said. They weren't amused. Brandt didn't give them time to decide they didn't like him. He started talking.

It was hard to say much that was new or colorful—he admitted it plainly. Like any organism, St. Louis was strangling on its own waste products. Like a colony in a culture dish, mindless and without foresight, the city had grown—sprawled outward from its center—until the countryside around it and the air above it and the mighty river that poured through it like a silver road, all were no longer able to absorb its wastes as rapidly or as voluminously as the city produced them.

"We've run out of open space to dump things in," he said. "They're dredging up beer cans from the deepest parts of the Caribbean. We've got to learn ways to get rid of stuff we don't want without throwing it away. Ways to store it. Better—ways to use it for something."

He dropped in the point that Fabricorp's Freshaire couldn't do a thing for St. Louis unless—he said sarcastically—the company could build a unit big enough to ventilate the whole metropolitan area. And that might be hard to do, with the sources of polution being mostly on the inside.

"We don't have any easy answers, because there aren't any. And the hard ones are twenty five years away." He made a choping gesture and looked up at the newsmen. He'd told them all he had to say.

They had questions, then. Some they'd brought along; some were in response to things he'd said. Some he'd anticipated, and to those he had answers ready. Others he adlibbed—careful with the knowledge that what he said was for publication. None, though, were out of the ordinary.

None, that is, until the man from the *Trib* edged forward in the little group. Brandt had wondered what a man from

Chicago was doing down here, but Chicago wasn't so far away that he was out of place. "Yes?"

"To change the subject a bit," the *Trib* man said. "I'd like to check some information that's come to us."

"Such as?" Brandt asked, wary. When a newsman started a question that way, he usually had something up his sleeve. Usually, it wasn't pleasant.

"We understand you have a brother-in-law named Maarten Boersma . . . that's Maarten with two a's and an e; Boersma, spelled ..."

"All right. That's him," Brandt said. "What's he done now?"

"And our information says he's employed by the brokerage firm of Rothman, Otis, and Sons."

"Last time I heard, he was. In their statistical analysis department. He couldn't sell dimes for a nickle, that guy-"

Brandt didn't know if it would disarm whatever was being aimed at him, but it was worth a try. It didn't take much to see something was going to break, even if he didn't know what it was.

The man from the *Trib* proceeded as if the remark hadn't been made. "Did you know," he asked, speaking as if he was reading the question from a slip of paper, "—did you know that in the past month the brokerage firm of Rothman, Otis, and Sons has turned a profit of approximately a quarter of a million dollars by short selling shares of Fabricorp stock? And that the principal factor affecting the value of those shares has been your public opposition to Fabricorp's venture into the field of antipollution equipment?"

Well, at least he'd found out why the *Trib* had sent a man this far from home. The knowledge didn't do much good, though. Brandt forced a smile.

"I'm beginning to understand," he said, "why sultans have their prime ministers castrated. No, I didn't know—and I still don't, for that matter. But whatever Rothman, Otis has done—if they've done it—it couldn't be because Maarten knew anything. He didn't have inside information, like you're trying to imply. I haven't seen him in years."

Saying it wouldn't do any good, though. The rotten egg had been neatly tossed, and truth had nothing to do with it. As a professional, he could even admire Fabricorp for the slick, simple, complete job they'd done on him.

HE WAS SUDDENLY fed up with hearing Iron Butterfly make noise. He set his glass down with extreme care and crossed to the tape player. Marta and her ancient tapes! The noise died under his hands, and the quiet that came was like the silence after a storm.

Turning, he spoke again to Marta. "No, it's not Maarten's fault," he said. Honesty obliged him to say that, but bitterness curled his tongue. "It's not anybody's fault. He's just a knife they found lying around, so they picked it up and stuck it between my shoulder blades. They'd been looking for one."

"I talked to Grace on the phone," Marta said. She picked at lint on her flawless lemon tunic. "She says they might fire Maarten."

"My fault, I suppose," Brandt said.

"Well, she said they're talking about him causing unfavorable publicity.

What does it sound like to you?"

"Like they don't care to see their name in the printouts," Brandt said.

She discovered her glass was empty. It had been empty two or three minutes. "Fix me a drink," she said.

He didn't move for a moment. "I think you've had enough," he said quietly.

For an instant, he saw rage looking at him through her eyes. "Don't say that to me, Tom." She got up from her chair. She had to steady herself with a hand against the wall before she could start across toward the cabinet. Then she had to turn back to retreive her glass, and had to steady herself again.

He intercepted her. Meeting her eyes with a silent, level gaze, he took her glass. She backed away from him as if frightened, though he had never been anything but gentle to her.

"I'll fix it," he said, and took her glass to the cabinet. He made a drink as mild as he dared, and put in all the ice the glass would hold. She was right: he should not have spoken in that voice to her. The drink she'd have poured, if he'd let her, would have been more powerful than she could hold.

He took the glass back to her. She was down in the chair again, her legs straight out, bare below the cuffs of her knee-lengths. She looked very ungraceful, and the veins in her right leg were like a splash of purple ink.

"If we'd stayed in East Lansing, this wouldn't have happened," she said. She tasted her drink and made a face, but she made no comment.

He stood there. So they were back to that again. "It was a chance to do some things worth doing," he said. A sudden dryness in his mouth made it hard to speak. "Now. . ." He could only shrug. "It was worth the try."

Her laugh was raucous. The corners of her eyes were pinched. "You're a dreamer, Tom," she said, and waggled teasing fingers at him. "You always were. You thought you could change the world, coming here."

"It needs some changing," Brandt said. He did not add, except in his private thoughts, that it was for Karol and Suzi that it had to be changed—Karol and Suzi and all the other small children who had not made the world the way it was, but who would have to grow up and live in it, if life was possible at all.

Maybe she didn't hear him. The words came from her tongue with glee in their articulation. "You're finding out, now. It's not easy to change the world, Tom. You can't do it. Do you want to know why?"

She wanted him to ask. He didn't give her that satisfaction. Finally, she gave up waiting.

"The world doesn't want to be changed. That's why, Tom. It doesn't want to be changed the way you want to change it. And it's bigger than you are. You think your way's the right way. You think it's the only way. Well, the world doesn't agree with you, Tom. You're wrong. You're one hundred percent, dead wrong."

He hadn't moved. He looked down at her, and he felt dead inside. It had been a good marriage, once, and it had lasted well, and there had been some good things in it up till now. But now... there was nothing left of it. It had become a hollow shell, as meaningless as

bravery in a war already lost. He tried to find words to answer her, but... this one time ... he did not have the words.

"You're drunk," he muttered, and left the room. A harsh caw of laughter followed him and clawed his ears.

IT DJD NO GOOD to point out that Rothman, Otis took the short position on Fabricorp stock ten days before Marta Brandt visited her brother, nor that Maarten Boersma had neither been consulted nor contributed information toward making the decision. Telephone company records showed a number of calls between Brandts home and Maarten's during that period. Nor did it help that Rothman, Otis—anxious to defend itself—reported that the decision had been made because Fabricorp had shown a slight dip in earnings in the final quarter of its fiscal year, and that its commitments for the new fiscal year were more than a projection of current earnings could justify; nor that a Rothman, Otis partner had heard a deep-whispered rumor that the bellwether Hubbard Fund planned to dispose of its Fabricorp holdings.

SENATOR HARVEY CHASE (Republican, Idaho) stood up on the floor of the Senate and demanded that Tom Brandt resign. Rep. Carlo Barraducci (Democrat, Massachusetts) told reporters the same thing. He used the phrase, "tainted advice," and the wire services took it up. It was a matter of public trust. Rep. Charles Buck (Republican, New Mexico) said, and added that in his part of the country a ranchman learned quick that an animal with hoof and mouth disease deserved no sympathy; you shot it dead and you burned the carcass. Rep. Henry Swarthout announced that his subcommittee. ..

One of the unwritten rules of politics is to stick your knife in a man on his way down. To add your own blade to all the others will increase your prestige. The plains Indians had a similar custom; they called it counting coup. Sharks have been observed displaying the same behavior pattern, stimulated by the water-borne scent of blood. There it is called a feeding frenzy.

I'M SORRY, TOM," Grant Hastings said.

Miles of telephone wire whispered and sang. At the desk in his study, Brandt grimaced as if with pain. He'd know the moment was coming. It hurt just the same.

"They want your scalp, Tom," Grant Hastings said. "I'm afraid this time I'll have to feed it to them."

"The old business about Caesar's wife," Brandt said. It wasn't enough for a man to be honest and honorable; it was necessary that he should never have had the opportunity to be otherwise. For there was a conviction, deep in the American subconscious, that if a man had a chance to sell out, he probably would.

"About your resignation . . ." Grant Hastings said.

"What about it?"

"How would it sound if we have you say this: that under present circumstances, you feel unable to be effective in the position. Does that cover it to your satisfaction?"

"That covers it, anyway," Brandt said.

"Anything you want to add?"

"Lots. But it's not the kind of language people expect to come out of the White House."

"Tom—I understand how you feel," Grant Hastings said, and he sounded almost as if he did. Over the years, he'd won a lot of votes with that voice of his. No matter what, he could always sound sincere.

Brandt gritted his teeth. "All right. It's settled. Now—while I'm still in the job, did you see that new Surgeon General's report?"

A hesitation. "Report?"

"About the Freshaire. The one I asked for." It had been on his desk when he got back from St. Louis. For Tom Brandt, it had come too late. For scuttling the Freshaire, though, maybe there was still a hope.

Hastings voice came slow. "No, Tom. I don't often have time to..."

"Have Ray send you a copy. It's sort of interesting."

"I'm sure, if it's important, the others on the Council will want to call it to my attention."

"Maybe. Maybe not," Brandt said. The chairborne schlunks. "Listen: what it says . . . one of the constituents of Seattle smog reacts with Freshaire's membrane material—you know, that miracle plastic they were so ecstatic about?—and the plastic breaks down into three different carcinogenic compounds."

"I'm not sure I follow that, Tom."

"Ask Ray," Brandt said. "He'll tell you. Or the folks that did the work will. What it means—are you listening, Mr. President?—the Freshaire's going to kill some people."

"Tom, I think you're exaggerating." The smooth, unperturbed voice of a man who heard nothing he was unwilling to hear.

"Not an inch," Brandt said. "Check it out."

"Rest assured on that, Tom," Grant Hastings promised. But, the way he said it, Brandt knew the last hope had been lost. "Now, about you, Tom. Have you any plans?"

"Not that's worth talking about."

A quiet moment. "Well, we should be able to find you a teaching position—not back to Oregon, I'm afraid, but somewhere. Possibly not right away, and perhaps not a top rank university. A lot of them are reluctant to take on controversial people. But..."

"Don't bother."

Hastings voice turned to cajolery. "Tom, I feel I should do something for you. You've been made a victim for a thing that is not your fault. I can't just toss you aside like a cigarette butt. It's not right, Tom. And it would be less than honorable to let you go without some display of personal support."

"Don't bother," Brandt repeated. "All I want—tell me one thing. I want to know . . . did you set me up for this?"

The pause from the other end of the line lasted a fraction of a second too long, and there was whispering in the wires.

"I don't think I understand you, Tom."

Forget I asked," Brandt said. He'd got his answer: the President had finally found a sufficiently adroit way to get rid of Tom Brandt.

He cradled the phone. "Thanks for the buggy ride," he said to the books on his shelves, and the empty room.

MARTA WAS IN the south room. Brandt stuck his head in. She looked like she'd had a bad night. Well, that made two of them.

"You can stop wondering what's going to happen," he said. "It's happened." A gesture across the throat said the rest of it.

Her expression hardly changed. Maybe it hardened a little. He didn't know if what he saw was satisfaction, or merely relief after the tensions of not knowing what to expect. He didn't understand her very well, any more.

"If you stay here, there'll be newspeople sniffing around," he said. "Go away, if you want, or stay if you want. I don't care. They'll want to know where I am. If they ask, tell 'em I went for a walk."

Her expression said it was a matter of complete indifference to her. He searched her face for some other sign, but there was nothing. Well, so much for that. He backed out into the hall. His pack was still in the corner behind the door. He swung it up on his back. He grabbed his bamboo staff and walked out of the house.

Maybe she'd be there when he came back; maybe she wouldn't. It didn't seem to make much difference, any more.

"THAT LOOKS LIKE the place."

From the air, it was hard to be sure. The land looked different from above. Brandt hunched forward, trying to imagine how the horizon would look from the ground. Dry washes traced talonlike patterns across the land's bare bones. "Let's go down."

The clattery whopping of the chopper's blades made it hard to hear the pilot's reply. They drifted forward and down. Like a dragonfly, they hovered—settled to a perch on the uppermost terrace of a gully-carved platform. Silence.

Brandt climbed out. He scanned the country all around. Low, flat crested mesas stood to the north—one near, the others far away. To the east, a mass of yellow rock lifted like a castle's battlements. Southward, Mt. Ellen's black hugeness stood, muted by haze. He scrambled down the slope to a ledge that overlooked the dry bed of a stream. There wasn't a mark or scar to show that any man had been here, but he knew this place. Over there, under that protruding brow of stone, he'd slept the night before he went back to Washington.

He climbed back up. Red earth cascaded away from under his feet. The exposed dirt was moist; it dried before his eyes. He glanced up at the midmorning sun. Hot. Savage.

He reached the top. "We're there, all right," he told the pilot. He heaved his backpack out from behind the passenger's seat.

"Sure you'll be all right?" The chopper pilot was blond, darkly tanned, and hadn't shaved that morning. He looked like he belonged in this country—all but his baseball cap and those mirror-bright sunglasses in front of his eyes.

Brandt bent to untie his walking staff from where it had been lashed to the chopper's undercarriage. "Safer here

than a lot of places I know," he said as the last knot came loose. Straightening, he swung the pack up on his back and busied himself adjusting the bucklcs.

The chopper pilot shrugged. You met some odd ones, out in this country. "Seems like a long way to walk, though."

Brandt slung one of his canteens, but paused as he reached for the other. "Son," he said, looking straight at those masklike glasses, "any place worth going to, it's worth walking."

"If you say so." He sounded dubious, but disinclined to argue with a cash customer. He climbed back inside the chopper's bubble. "Luck," he said, and fiddled with the controls preparatory to starting the motor.

"I've already had all of that I want," Brandt said, turning away. He started down the slope. Behind him, the chopper's motor burst into noise. The whuff of its blades turned to clatter. Brandt didn't look back. The racket built to a climax. A blast of air and a flash of shadow. Swiftly, the noise faded in distance.

By then he was down on the trail. It wasn't much of a path, and there was no way to know whether beasts or men had been the first to trace it. Ahead, the dry land lay beneath the sun, a country of desolation—of water-starved scrub and skittering lizard. Overhead, a hawk soared. Free? Not really. Brandt cast a speculative glance at the thunderhead starting to build in the west. Already, its belly was dark.

Not much of a country to live in, but good for walking through. And for getting yourself sorted out. The weight of his pack was a steady force against his shoulders. It had in it everything.a man had to have to live out here.

The trail ascended a gentle rise, winding among rocky headlands. He came to a place where it branched. He took the way less travelled. Not that he had a prejudice against the other; this one took him the way he wanted to go. The sky to the east was clean. Overhead, a jet's trail chalked the sky. The sun burned down like a cleansing flame.

—DEAN MCLAUGHLIN

Up Against The Wall (Continued from page 43)

He could hear the crowd outside moving awav, down the hall. They cheered once more, with some energy, and then seemed to laugh their way out of the building.

ROBERT TURSTON

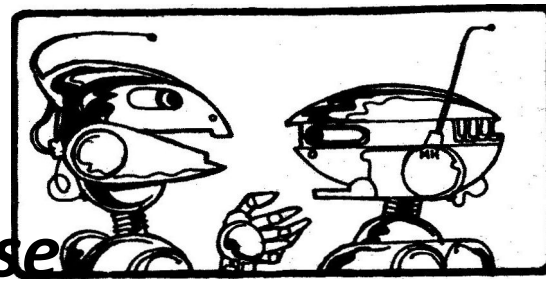
They Roar (Continued from page 50)

the roofing company. I want to take a case of shingles and open them up and put them on roof and go back to helping people. I want to do some thing thats worth some thing instead of sitting in the hospital watching people die.

I hate my job.

—CLARK COX

the Clubhouse



I USED TO DAYDREAM about attending a World **Science** Fiction Convention. Although at the time my only contact with fandom was through fanzines and correspondence, I had a pretty clear idea about what a large sf convention would be like: Although there would be lots of people there, we would all be united by our common interests in science fiction and fandom; it would be one large group of friends, in which everyone knew everyone else present. I'd long since shed such naive notions by the time I attended my first Worldcon (which was in Los Angeles less than a year ago as 1 write this) but it was still interesting to compare my early fantasies of what a Worldcon should be like with my actual impressions. Most noticeable was the sheer number of people present: people from all over the United States, and some few from outside it. The overwhelming majority were people whom 1 had never heard of, and I'm sure the anonymity was mutual. It was hard to make new friends in such a crowd, and I was lucky to find the people 1 specifically came to the con to see.

Fandom has grown to the extent that it has fragmented into a number of small groups, each of which probably thinks of itself as "Fandom." There has been an influx of people who have come to fandom through an interest in horror films or ***Star Trek*** or comic book collecting. In many ways these are separate fandoms, though there are such large areas in which the subgroups overlap that it is impossible to separate them completely. All of these groups share in the common fan activities of attending conventions, publishing fanzines, and forming fan clubs. At the same time they are separate enough that it is possible to be a Big Name Fan in one branch of fandom without being known in the other branches.

The fanzines published by such a diverse group of people are going to be wildly different in content and appearance. Some are reproduced on spirit duplicators or mimeographs, and others on professional-style offset presses. Some attempt to cover the science fiction field through reviews and critical essays, and others stick primarily to humorous ramblings.

Each fanzine is a mirror of the editor. Since few fanzines attempt to show a profit, they are published primarily to please the editor. If the editor does a good job of pleasing himself, it is likely that his fanzine will interest others as well. Very few fanzine editors, therefore, will change the style of their fanzines to gain circulation, the way professional magazines sometimes do.

1 will try to review fanzines with an eye to how closely they approach their self-appointed goals, rather than how closely they approach the sort of fanzine 1 might publish. A newszine may try to cover the entire science fiction field and should be judged on how well it does this, but the goal of another fanzine may be simply to tell what the editor has done since the last issue and give some insight into his personality. In this "personalzine," layout may not be important and artwork non-existent, so complaining about the absence of graphics would be »

pointless. In examining a fanzine that features art portfolios and experimental arrangement of text and art on the page, a consideration of the overall physical appearance is in order, simply because the editor himself has put more emphasis on that area. I am, of course, subject to my own biases—for example, 1 most enjoy reading the "fannish" fanzines (like ***Mota),*** and I regard the quality of writing as the single most important aspect of a fanzine. But 1 will attempt to keep the editor's interests and aims firmly in mind when reviewing.

I'm going to use a rating system in the fanzine reviews, with One as the lowest and Ten as the highest on the scale. This will be especially helpful, I hope, in giving some indication of the quality of the large number of fanzines that must be relegated to a simple listing at the end of the column. The ones I review at greater length will also be rated, to give you some idea of the standards and severity of the ratings.

And one more thing before I go on to the reviews: 1 want feedback. Send me criticism, comments, suggestions, questions, and threats. And keep sending fanzines. You'll find my address at the end of this column.

MOTA $s 5 & 6, Terry Hughes. Route 3, Windsor. Mo. 65360; Sample for 251, letter, contribution or trade: irregular, mimeographed: May, August, 1972. 39 & 22 pp.

"It seems like everyone has written about how at one time or another they somehow met a person who was Philip K. Dick's cousin or Harry Warner's cousin or Bob Tucker's nephew. But that had never happened to me. Once when I met a guy named Mike Freas I asked him if he was related to Kelly Freas. He said. 'Who?' A few months ago a guy started working at the hospital named Jim Boggs. I asked him if he was related to Redd Boggs. He didn't think so. I said, 'Redd Boggs, in California?' He said, 'No, definitely not.'

"Wow. In one short year 1 met two people who were not related to Frank Kelly Freas or Redd Boggs. Far out."

Mota is a warm, friendly fannish fanzine. one of the best of the fannish fanzines currently being published. It is the source of many good, humorous quotes, like the above sample from Terry's editorial in issue five. Then there are the interlineations (known as "linos"), which are short pithy statements scattered throughout a fanzine and placed between two dotted lines. Issue five of ***Mota*** has quite a few of these, my favorites being: "It's a nice museum, if you like old things," and one attributed to F. M. Busby. "Fandom needs some old blood, now and then."

There are also a number of longer pieces in these issues that sustain interest quite well. Cartoonist whiz Grant Canfield proves he's also a fine writer in issue six with "The White Dot Habit," which details his addiction to the deadly game of dominoes. In one sequence, he and his wife Cathy have gotten out their dominoes for the first time while quite drunk, only to realize they don't know any games to play with them.

" 'Well, then,' I said, 'why don't we test the Dominoes Theory?'

"We stacked the dominoes up on end in a long line. 1 tipped over the first domino, and the others tumbled in succession.

" 'It works!' Cathy cried. 'The Domino Theory really works! There goes Vietnam! There goes Laos! There goes Guam! There goes Port-au-Prince!'

" 'Port-au-Prince?'

" 'There goes The Phillipines! Now they're steaming into San Diego harbor, guns at the ready! This means war!' "

By the way, Grant eventually takes the cure and goes back to a simple life of drawing for fanzines, which is fandom's gain—he has several illustrations for his own article in ***Mota,*** as well as many good cartoons in other leading fanzines.

Creath Thorne offers several criticisms of fandom in his column, "The Captain's Tower," in the same issue. This is an article that should stimulate some discussions or arguments. Elsewhere in the two issues, Lee Hoffman comes out of fannish retirement. Hank and Lesleigh Luttrell contribute some

interesting fanzine reviews. Bill Kunkel contributes pages from his diary, and John D. Berry tells about an evening spent with the London fan group.

There is a well-edited letter column in both issues, and I suspect Terry follows the practice mentioned in Hank and Lesleigh's fanzine review column, that of editing most letters by at least half. Whatever he does, the letters come out as very readable even if you haven't read or can't remember the previous issue: The true test of a good letter column, and something more faneditors should emulate.

The art is of a generally high quality, the highlight being Steve Stiles' beautiful cover on ***Mow*** 5, which shows a Dylanish freak dragging his guitar through the rubble of a burning city. There are also three excellent Tom Foster cartoons in the interior to brighten things up.

Mota is one of the most consistently enjoyable fanzines on the current scene. I hope Terry publishes for many years.

Rating. ..8

is 16, Tom Collins, 4305 Balcones Dr., Austin, Texas 78731; $1.50, 4/S6.00; irregular, offset; September, 1972, 82 pp.

In a time when fanzine editors are experimenting with professional-quality printing and layout, Tom Collins publishes one of the most elaborate. With a quality package and the presence of big names like Isaac Asimov, Poul Anderson and Robert E. Howard, Tom hopes to finance ***Is*** through extensive mail-order and bookstore sales. It's an ambitious project, though I find the material in many smaller fanzines to be of more interest, and consider the art and layout here to be less pleasing than that of ***Algol, Granfalloon*** or ***Outworlds,*** to name only three.

The material in this issue varies in subject matter and quality. There is a transcription of an Isaac Asimov speech concerning ideas, ending with Asimov talking about the importance of ideas is science fiction, including in his own stories. Poul Anderson contributes an original essay about his visit to an Apollo launch.

Grant Carrington, associate editor of **AMAZING**, is present with "Tiptoeing Through Tulane," a personal account of the 1971 incarnation of what was originally the Clarion SF Writer's Workshop. This is the six-week course well-known both for its teachers (including Harlan Ellison, Joanna Russ and Damon Knight) and its success (a number of alumni have sold professionally). Grant concentrates on his own experiences at the workshop and provides an interesting view of the well-known and the would-be writers.

There is a lot more, ranging from an article pointing out the scientific flaws in Larry Niven's ***Ring-world,*** to letters from Robert E. Howard to August Derleth, to the beginning of a series called "A Clairvoyant Looks at Drugs."

I should mention that this is probably not a "typical" issue of ***Is,*** since contents have varied greatly in the past. Tom has become well-known for "theme" issues of ***Is,*** which focus on one person or subject. In the past he has published a memorial issue devoted to August Derleth ***(Is §*** 4, available for $3.00 from Tom) and one devoted to the Spectator Amateur Press Association, which contains much of interest to students of fan history ***(Is*** # 5, available at the regular price of $ 1.50). I recommend that you send for either or both of these if you're interested in the subjects covered.

Rating... 6

SYNDROME#2. Frank Lunney, 212 Juniper Street, Quakertown, Pa. 18951; 50e, preferably letter of comment, trade or old fanzines: bimonthly, mimeographed: December, 1972: 32 pp.

Frank Lunney is the former editor of ***Beabohema,*** for part of its life a large and frequently controversial fanzine. With ***Syndrome,*** however, he has decreased the size and toned down the controversy to produce a short, enjoyable fanzine carrying a variety of material. Frank doesn't want to be the center of fannish feuds or to publish reviews of all the new science fiction books any more. What he does want to do, it appears, is to publish a fanzine that is fun to edit and read.

There is nothing memorable in the second issue of ***Syndrome,*** and nothing likely to be pointed out for special notice or reprinted by some future fan historian. There are, however, some well-written articles and good cartooning.

"Pipe Dreams" is Frank's four pages of interesting ramblings. including a whimsical tale of the underground aspirin market in Quakertown, his bad experiences during long-distance bus riding, and the usual problems in getting this issue run off. I wish it had been longer. Frank's an entertaining writer who can easily slip from amusing sketches of everyday life to wild flights of fancy, leaving the reader unsure where one stops and the other begins. Gary Hubbard is present with the latest installment of his column "The Cracked Eye," generally well-written and with good illustrations by Danny Frolich each time.

Alexei Panshin has a fascinating article about the Sufis. He does a good job of making the subject matter interesting, and shows how his study of the Sufis is tied in with his attempt to understand science fiction. and all fiction. [Panshin's review of several Sufi works can be found in the June issue of this magazine.—**TW]**

Bill Kunkel's "Thawts That Jest World Out" (sic) is a series of thoughts and incidents from his life, including a fannish anecdote, some stories of being a member of a struggling rock band, and general observations of life. It is nicely done and often extremely funny. The issue also contains a large number of Bill's cartoons. Over the past year he has developed his own unique style and done some fine cartooning for a large number of fanzines.

In addition to Bill's art. there are the usual fine cartoons of Bill Rotsler, who has been overdue for a best fan artist Hugo for some time now. There is also an extremely good cover by Jay Kinney. ***Syndrome*** has a good group of fan cartoonists, all doing work at their steady level of quality.

Rating.. ,6'A

RICHARD E. GEIS/THE ALIEN CRITIC #S 1-4, Richard E. Geis, PO Box 11408, Portland, Or.. 97211; $1.00, 4/S4.00: irregular, mimeographed; undated, 44, 44, 55 & 49 pp.

"1 think my stopping publication of ***Science Fiction Review*** was the first major sign of the changes that have been occuring in me during the last year."

"A deep-seated dissatisfaction. Maybe a subconscious panic. Middle-aged man's terror. Whither. Geis? Alone? You've got maybe forty years left, and then comes the final blackout. 1 suppose I thought—deep in the murk of that stew we call our minds . . . mine anyway . . .

"Richard E. Geis is the title because it is a personalzine, a diary, and a journal, and a place for letters of comment. It has little structure. It is published for my benefit, mostly."

This is from the first page of the first issue of ***Richard E. Geis*** (retitled with issue four to ***The Alien Critic***) and is an accurate summary of what Geis has done so far with this fanzine. He doesn't shy away from putting his thoughts down on any subject, whether it is a book review or a discussion of personal problems. It is quite probably the most personally revealing fanzine ever published. In this respect alone it is quite an accomplishment, but it is even more a credit to Geis that he keeps you reading, wondering what he will talk about next.

The format is simple: no interior illustrations or outside columnists, just page after page of micro-elite type, two columns per page, with only brief quotes from letters and books to break up the flow of personal writing. He sits down at the typewriter to add something to the fanzine almost every day. It is divided up into a number of small sections such as "The Nature of the Beast," "The Mail," and sections of book, magazine, fanzine and television reviews. With the fourth issue, he has started a complete table of contents, listing all subjects covered, as well as every quote in the issue. In addition to being valuable in looking up favorite sections, the list is intriguing enough to make the reader immediately want to sit down and read the issue. Subjects discussed include "The War," "Watergate," "Sex,

Sex, Sex," a trip report, discussions of fanzines, and Geis's problems as a writer.

Of course some sections and even whole issues tend to be more interesting than others. In the first two issues there is a lot of highly personal material, but by issue three most of the "heavy" things have been revealed. As Geis himself puts it at one point: "All the good stuff is told." In issue two, there is a real-life drama which continues throughout the fanzine and does a lot to tie the issue together and to keep the reader morbidly interested in "What's gonna happen next?" When issue three arrived, I suppose I was expecting more of the same, for that issue seemed almost dull by comparison, with lots of reviews and quotes from the mail, and with a large part of the issue taken up with the editor's fiction. And I'll confess that on first reading issues one and two had a strange and unpleasant effect on me, almost as if I was getting to know more about Richard Geis's private life than I really felt comfortable knowing. Also, reading such long selections of one man's writing can get to be overwhelming, so perhaps it is best to read a few sections and put it down for a while to come back to later.

Section by section, however, it makes for fascinating reading. Most of the sort of criticism that generally applies to the fanzine with a variety of writers and artists does not apply here. You are either interested in the personality of Richard E. Geis as reflected in these fanzines or you are not. I do expect, however, that most readers would at least find some sections that make for interesting reading, others to chuckle at, and some to argue with.

Rating... 9

Other fanzines:

LOCUS, Dena and Charlie Brown, 3400 Ulloa Street, San Francisco, Ca,, 94116: 12/ $3.00, 26/$6.00; bi-weekly, mimeographed. A newsletter that covers the entire science fiction field. ***Rating .. . 716***

OUTWORLDS#3.5, Bill and Joan Bowers, PO Box 354, Wadsworth, Oh., 44281; 75«; irregular, mimeographed; undated, 37 pp. ***Rating . . . 8*** From the same address: **INWORLDS**, "a fanzine about fanzines," monthly, 25« or 5/$ 1.00, mimeographed. ***Rating.. .6***

ZEER OX ZINE#S l, 2, Lester Boutillier, 2726 Castiglione St., New Orleans, La., 70119; Samples free; bi-weekly, xerox; February, 1973, unnumbered pp. A personal zine. ***Rating... 3***

MAYBE #22, Irvin Koch, 835 Chattanooga Bank Building, Chattanooga, Tn,, 37402; 50f; bi-monthly, mimeographed; December, 1972-January, 1973, 21 pp. ***Rating ...3***

AMOEBOID SCUNGE, Seth McEvoy, Box 268, E. Lansing, Mi., 48823; samples free; biweekly, mimeographed. "A man came up to me, touched my arm, and said 'Pittsburgh.' " An enjoyable personalzine written by Seth and Jay Cornell. ***Rating...*** 7

ALGOL #19, Andrew Porter, PO Box 4175, New York, N.Y., 10017. 75*, 4/$3.00; twice yearly, offset; November, 1972, 43 pp. "A magazine about science fiction," and a good one. ***Rating... 8Vi***

DIVERSITY #3, Greg Bridges, 3711 Popular Ave., Memphis, Tenn., 38111; irregular, mimeographed; August, 1972, 34 pp. ***Rating ...5***

CELESTIAL SHADOWS#10, Tim Marion, 614-72nd St., Newport News, Va,, 23605; 25<, 4/$ 1.00; irregular, duplicated; undated, 27 pp. ***Rating... 3***

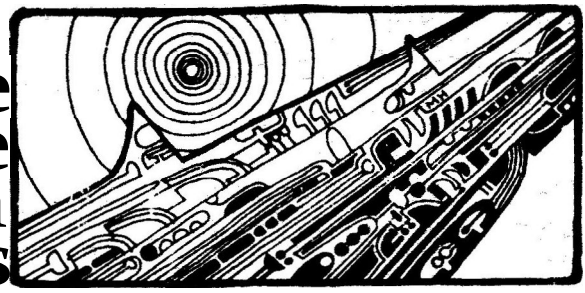
ASHWING#1 l, Frank Denton, 14654 8th Ave. SW, Seattle, Wash., 98116; letters or contribution; quarterly, mimeographed: January, 1973, 43 pp. ***Rating .. ,6'A***

HUITLOXOPETL #8, Meade and Penny Frierson, Box 9030, Birmingham, Al., 35213; $1.00; irregular, mimeographed; undated, 102 pp. ***Rating*** . . . J From the same address: **SCIENCE FICTION ON RADIO**, $1.50, mimeographed, 52 pp. A one-shot publication about sf radio shows. I don't know enough about the subject to rate it, but it seems complete.

Send fanzines for review to Ed Smith. 1315 Lexington Ave., Charlotte, N.C., 28203.

—ED SMITH

the Future in Books



Norman Spinrad: **THE IRON DREAM**. Avon Books, #N448, New York, 1972. 255 pages, paperback, 954.

Now, this is a dangerous book. It's dangerous to write, dangerous to read, and damned dangerous to review. Everybody knows that there are basically two kinds of sf published, as there are two kinds of anything (and 1 don't mean good and bad, necessarily). There's the nice, safe, ***normal*** sf. The space operas, the time-travel paradoxes, the parallel universe fantasies, etc. Then there's the controversial stuff. This is the kind of writing that usually begins with the Swell Idea: "Wouldn't it be a kick to write a book about. . ." Almost every writer must get notions like that at times. Fortunately, most writers are also good enough editors so these "plot ideas" die a-borning. Some gimmicks actually see the light of day; of these, according to Sturgeon's Conservative Estimate, some are good. Generally because, in the process of writing, the author has tamed his kicky concept with a little good sense and some other, more reliable fictional ingredients.

That brings us to the last sort and, unfortunately, to Spinrad's Swell Idea. 1 had the opportunity to see an advance copy of this book for a few minutes last fall. 1 looked at the cover, and was immediately made wary. It's a pretty blecchy cover. But. remember, remember, you can't judge books by them (sometimes). Anyway, the swastikas were backwards, wwn wasn't ***that*** long ago.

1 turned to the page immediately within. ***From* LORD OF THE SWASTIKA, *a science-fiction novel by Adolf Hitler.*** 1 shivered; it was a ***good*** shiver. I realized I was in the presence of a Swell Idea of enormous potential; I got the same feeling while reading ***To Your Scattered Bodies Go,*** among others: Wow. what a great idea for a book! A few pages further, another phony blurb: "Let Adolf Hitler transport you to a far-future Earth . . ." Here we learn that Hitler won a Hugo for this book in 1954. The list of other titles by Hitler is hilarious, beginning with the best parody of classic 'sci-fi' you can imagine ***(The Builders of Mars,*** etc.) and getting down, as Hitler's career progressed, to ***Savior From Space, The Master Race, Tomorrow The World,*** etc. Better and better. The bio notes on Hitler are tremendously funny; he came to the U.S. in 1919, where he became an interior illustrator for sf magazines. He began writing professionally, and published a fanzine called ***Storm.***

Now what? Well, faced with the problem of finishing what he started, Spinrad had to write a novel to go with it all. And he had to do it as though the paranoid Hitler had written it. Well, it's a bad job; some of the book's defenders will say it's because Hitler would have done a bad job. (1 ignore the "fact" that the book won a Hugo.) Nevertheless, it is sloppily written in a way that seems to indicate it was a first-draft manuscript for Spinrad, also. The constant repetition of the same word within paragraphs jars the reader from beginning to end; this is the kind of thing a careful writer takes out during the polishing stages. They have all been left in, and they are not clever enough, and they happen too often to be completely intentional. Spinrad was writing a joke, and he might not have considered it worthy of the time he puts into his more serious projects. Still, it was published, it

carries his name, and it does cost us a buck.

The technical properties of the book aside, the major flaw is basic to one's enjoyment of the novel: it isn't a novel. It is ***very*** thinly disguised historical fact. Spinrad took the rise of the Nazi party in the early to mid-30s, changed names, made the ss the good guys, and expects us not to notice. And when he borrows from history, certainly a time-honored practice among writers, he could at least have had the courtesy to his audience to ***add*** something. One large segment, the famous Night of the Long Knives, when Hitler and the ss wiped out the brown-shirted **SA** during the latter's mass meeting at Wiessee. is stolen not so much from history, but seemingly from such other depictions as the scene of the purge in Visconti's brilliant film. ***The Damned.*** It is unlikely that this is where Spinrad got his inspiration. But, for different purposes of course, both he and Visconti have taken some of the most dreadful incidents of this or any other century and clothed them with remarkable, shining garments. Visconti's effect, though admittedly exaggerated and inaccurate, is one of growing horror and disgust. Spinrad's is one of initial amusement and growing tedium. 1 was thankful for the latter, to tell you the truth, because 1 don't believe we're quite ready to laugh off Dachau and Auschwitz, ***Hogan's Heroes*** notwithstanding.

Writing a bad book, for whatever risible purposes, is still writing a bad book. I would much rather have read ***The Savior From Space*** than this one; if there had actually been a real novel from Hitler's viewpoint, 1 would have been entertained.- I don't need badly upholstered, brazenly cadged musical-comedy versions of ***The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich.***

Mr. Spinrad shows sparks of immense talent, incredible potential. We just have to wait. I guess.

- Bill Noble 3rd

Isaac Asimov: **THE GODS THEMSELVES**. Doubleday. New York, 1972. 203 pages, hardback, $5.95

This is Asimov's first "novel" (not counting his novelization of a screenplay) since his robot detective novel ***The Naked Sun.*** which was published in 1957. After the recent spate of embarrassingly inept efforts by a number of other former sf "greats" (i.e., Heinlein, van Vogt, and Clarke), it is a relief to report that ***The Gods Themselves*** is a competent but unexceptional book. Unlike the other "greats", Asimov has not completely lost his touch.

However, Asimov and Doubleday are being slightly deceitful when they call this book a "novel," since it is really a collection of three interconnected novellas. This was made obvious in the rather odd way in which the book was serialized: the first part appeared in ***Galaxy,*** the second in ***If.*** and the third in ***Galaxy*** again. Each of the three novellas has its own characters, its own plot, its own climax—but they are all related in some way to the Electron Pump.

The Electron Pump postulated by Asimov furnishes a cheap source of nearly limitless energy for the human race in the 21st century by exchanging tungsten 186 for plutonium 186 from a parallel universe. The first and last novellas in the book are set in our universe, while the middle one is set in the parallel universe the plutonium 186 originates from. The first novella is about the accidental discovery of the Electron Pump by Frederick Hallam in 2070, and the later attempts by another scientist, Peter Lamont, to discredit Hallam and prove that the Pump is dangerous. Lamont fails in these attempts. but his cause is taken up in the last novella in the book by Benjamin Denison, who originally goaded Hallam into making his discovery. Denison migrated to the moon, and is working with lunar scientists to not only prove that the Pump is dangerous, but also to find an alternative source of cheap energy. Asimov also weaves political intrigue and some love interest into the background.

These two novellas suffer many of the same faults. Asimov is prone to lecture his readers, and there are pages and pages of pure dialog. Asimov rarely ***shows*** or describes anything to his readers, but instead ***tells*** everything in a sometimes vague manner through the dialog of his characters, thus violating one of the oldest taboos in fiction writing.

This excessive dialog and tendency to lecture, in addition to being a fault in itself, leads Asimov to neglect some other aspects of these two stories. For instance, despite the great emphasis Asimov places upon the Electron Pump, and the way in which it has supposedly altered life on earth, very little has changed from the 1970's. In the first novella, no new social customs, inventions, or advances in technology (beside that of the Pump) are shown, and while the third novella is set on the moon and much more inventive in many respects, it reads like a rather staid compilation of all that everyone else has ever written about the moon. I'm afraid that the moon has been explored so often in sf that there is simply no more excitement or wonder left in its good dull grey surface. Neither of these two novellas is particularly imaginative, which is unfortunate, as imagination has always been one of sf s most important assets.

The middle novella, set in the parallel universe from which the plutonium 186 originates, is a much better work, and probably one of the best pieces of science fiction Asimov has written in many years. It focuses on the problems of an alien triad or family group: Dua (an "Emotional"), Odeen (a "Rational"), and Tritt (a "Parental"). The various relationships between these three, and the puzzle Asimov poses about the "Hard Ones," are all fairly interesting, but unfortunately Asimov makes the mistake of telling the story from the viewpoint of the three aliens. This is a mistake because Asimov's aliens become too familiar, too ***human,*** to appear genuinely alien. Dua Odeen, and Tritt lose their aura of mystery, the strangeness that makes aliens ***alien.*** Asimov's aliens supposedly consist only of gas and energy, since they are able at times to pass through solid stone walls, and thus physicially they are entirely different from humans. Yet the aliens' thoughts and emotions are very similar to that of humans—almost indistinguishable in fact.

Obviously, it is impossible for Asimov, or any other sf writer, to create a fictional alien that thinks and acts entirely alien, using a completely different system of logic, emotion, etc., since sf writers are only human themselves, and can write only about things they know. But there are at least two solutions to this problem. One, a writer can make his aliens both alien ***and*** human, as Ursula K. LeGuin did in ***The Left Hand of Darkness,*** thus justifying the human qualities in their aliens. Or two, a writer can always keep the thoughts and feelings of his aliens at least partially obscured, so that they remain mysterious and truely alien. But if an author does anything else, he is merely dressing human characters up in long green underwear—and ***not*** portraying convincing aliens.

This is why Asimov's aliens are ultimately failures, as cute and engaging as they are. Asimov shows their every thought, feeling, and emotion, and no alien character can survive that and remain truely "alien." Dua, Odeen, and Tritt are about as "alien" as the neighbors next door.

As I said previously, ***The Gods Themselves*** is a competent but unexceptional book, and while it's good to see Asimov back writing sf again, I'm afraid that he is going to have to produce a better book than this to be worthy of a Hugo or Nebula Award.

—Cy Chauvin

Damon Knight, editor: **PERCHANCE TO DREAM**, Doubleday, New York, 1972. Hardback, 206 pages, $5.95

Doubleday has marketed this one as Science Fiction, but it is really one of those books that contains elements of not only **SF,** but also all the other genres that lie around the margin of our field—fantasy, magic, occult, horror, etc. It is one of those collections that has been constructed around a specific theme (this one is stories about dreams) to justify its existence.

But in the case of ***Perchance To Dream*** there is much more than a theme to hold it together. Skillful prose and well-crafted plotting, for example. Damon Knight has searched carefully through the years of speculative literature to collect together twelve tremendous stories. The book is a credit to his reputation as an editor of distinction, and it is also a good way to expose the works of some writers who might

otherwise have escaped the attention of science fiction readers.

It is an accepted fact now that "mainstream" writers have been doing **SF** for centuries, so it shouldn't be a surprise to see a majority of the names in the table of contents coming from fields outside our own. Some of the authors collected, like Fyodor Dostoevsky and W. Somerset Maugham, are true giants of literature.

Perchance To Dream is a book of variegated styles that range from the ponderous details of Ambrose Bierce to the light rampagings of James Thurber. There is some of the strange and mystical prose of Borges to stultify and confuse the unsuspecting reader, following on the heels of a straight-from-the-shoulder piece of horror and fantasy by Fritz Lieber.

Some of the stories, particularly those by Kipling and Conrad Aiken, are filled with their distinctive brand of neo-romanticism in which the characters are intense, sensitive, and alive—real human beings. The story by Maugham is probably the most masterly written piece in the entire book, but it suffers from a plot that has become familiar and hackneyed by overkill on late-night, second rate flicks. Unfortunately the ending is no surprise. Bierce's tale, "An Occurence at Owl Creek Bridge," has likewise been taken up by both television and the cinema, thereby diffusing the gut-wrenching revelation at the ending. The fact remains, however, that it is a tour-de-force of nineteenth century literature.

Perchance To Dream is a fine collection, and I feel that you would be doing yourself a disservice if you don't get it and read it. The stories are for the most part, short and to the point. They are expressive tales with of lot of human feeling, and we can always use a little more of that.

*— **Thomas F. Monteleone***

J. O. Bailey: **PILGRIMS THROUGH SPACE AND TIME**, Greenwood Press, Westport, 1972: 341 pages, hardback $11.25, paper $3.50

Chad Walsh: **FROM UTOPIA TO NIGHTMARE.** Greenwood Press, Westport, 1972; 190 pages, hardback $9.25

The reprinting of these two books on sf by Greenwood Press (an academic publishing house) is yet another demonstration of the growing academic interest in sf. Bailey's ***Pilgrims Through Space and Time*** was originally published in 1947 by Argus Books, and has long been out of print. Thomas D. Clareson, in the forward to this edition, says that the book "marks the beginning of any serious consideration of science Fiction either as a literary form or as a vehicle of ideas." Bailey's book has often been criticized because it ignored (for the most part) science fiction that had been published only in magazine form. Clareson, however, points out that it was not Bailey's intention to focus on modern magazine sf, but rather on the early scientific romances and imaginary voyages out of which science fiction grew.

Modern sf undoubtably began in 1926 when Gernsback founded **AMAZING STORIES**, but Gernsback didn't ***invent*** sf. Verne and Wells, and dozens of others, wrote science fiction stories before this, many of which ended up being reprinted in the early issues of **AMAZING STORIES.** Bailey's book examines these early sf stories in exhaustive detail.

The book is divided into two sections. The first. Through Time, contains lengthy synopses of various early sf novels, and the chapters are arranged chronologically, from the earliest stories to the more recent. The chapters themselves are divided according to the subject matter of the novels they synopsize; Chapter Two, for instance, has four divisions: The Wonderful Machine, The Wonderful Journey, Utopias and Satire, and The "Gothic" Romance. The second section. And Space Anatomized, discusses characteristics common in early sf. One chapter, for instance, deals with the various imaginative inventions in sf, another the type of narration, structure, and characterization employed, etc. The chapters are also divided into various parts, like in the first section.

But despite all this careful precision and neat labeling. Bailey fails to do something else that is much more important: he fails to tell us whether any of these books he synopsizes is worth reading, and if so, why—or if they are better off left forgotten on some

dusty shelf. Possibly even worse yet, much of the book is simply dull reading: 190 pages of book synopses, followed by 135 pages of chopped up synopses disguised as analysis, is not likely to hold a reader's interest. This is a shame, because Bailey's book contains a lot of important information.

As science fiction, like the black man, gradually begins to arise out of its ghetto and gain respect, sf readers, writers, and fans will become more interested in finding out about sf's roots. And ***Pilgrims Through Space and Time,*** flawed though it is, is still the most comprehensive and detailed book on the subject yet published.

Walsh's ***From Utopia to Nightmare*** was orginially published in 1962, and **it** also **contains references** to many early sf works that are probably unfamiliar to the average reader. The book, **however,** is primarily interesting for Walsh's thesis: Why has **Utopian fiction** gradually become replaced by anti-**Utopian** or **dystopia fiction** (the "nightmare" refered to in the title)? Walsh deals **mostly with** classical **Utopias** and **anti-utopias,** but his conclusions can be applied to "hardcore" sf as **well,** and his **question** broadened to: Why the change from an **opti**mistic **attitude** to a **pessimistic** one?

Many of the reasons Walsh **gives** have been repeated many times before (such as "loss of hope and **vision,"** etc.), as might be expected, but he also comes up with some unusual and more original ideas. He suggests, for **instance,** that people may not **write** about **Utopia** because we have already ***achieved*** utopia—most of the things 19th century Utopian writers dreamed about in **their fiction,** from running water to freedom for slaves, has become reality. (Only now other **problems** have sprung up to take their place.) Walsh also draws up a list, in Chapter 12, of nine assumptions **often** held by **Utopian** writers, and then indicates what a dystopian writer might say **in reply.** One of the Utopian assumptions, for instance, is that "man is basically good." A dystopian writer, on the other hand, would say that man is basically bad, or at least that evil comes to dominate him more readily than good. It is interesting to read down Walsh's list and discover how many of the assumptions you agree—or disagree—with.

Walsh's book is, on the whole, far more lively and more readable than Bailey's, although the material he focuses on is probably not as important. Too, Walsh's book is not just a look at Utopia and dystopia fiction from a literary standpoint, but also from a "sociological, political, psychological, philosophic, ethical, and religious" one (as Walsh admits in his preface). The sf reader is thus bound to find a lot of the material in the book simply irrelevant.

Much of the flavor and mood of the book is also revealed in its conclusion, where Walsh says that "We dare not let [the Utopian dream] die. . ."We shall have no peace until we incarnate as much of it as we can in brick, stone, law, customs, and even [in] the free motions of the unplanned heart." In other words, ***From Utopia to Nightmare*** is not just an analysis, but a tract.

Neither of these books is a "must read", but of the two. Bailey's is probably the more important (but as a reference work, not as something to read for entertainment). Both books can probably be found in you local library, or can be ordered from Greenwood Press, Inc., 51 Riverside Avenue, Westport, Connecticut 06880.

Judging from these two books, if there is anything to fear from the growing academic interest in sf, it is that academia may make us all grow bo ed with discussion of sf. But in the long run, I think it will do sf far more good than harm.

—Cy Chauvin

Editorial (Continued from page 4)

magazine as Jack C. Haldeman II) if he would like to use this space to express his own opinions on the topics which have been discussed here. His comments:

Dear Ted,

I want to thank you for offering me the opportunity to discuss our worldcon plans in your magazine.

A lot has gone through your editorial and lettercol pages in the last year about escalating membership rates. It is a complex question, but here are my views on it.

As you are well aware, most of a modern Worldcon's expenses must be paid in advance. These include printing costs, Hugos, movie rentals, lots of postage, envelopes, mailing labels, hiring of security personnel, and so on. The problem is that this is the time when you have the fewest members and the least money. You have to get people to register early.

This is what brought about the sliding membership fees. If you waited until late to join the convention, it made things harder for the convention and they charged you more. Originally intended to spur advance registration, the extra-large at-the-door fee both penalized people for waiting to join and served to keep the "off the street" membership down. While not the ideal solution, it seemed workable in theory.

In practice, however, it was a different story. There is no evidence that the sliding scale brought in significantly larger numbers of earlier memberships. (If it did work, then no past Worldcon committee has bothered to inform us.) What it ***did*** accomplish was to bring in a lot of money to the convention after it was too late to be of much use. Where there is a lot of money floating around there is a lot of talk and the "happy family" atmosphere of past worldcons starts eroding.

So what are we going to do about it? For one thing we are going to look at the situation from the other side. Instead of penalizing people for registering late, we are planning to reward them for registering early. The first 1000 people to register for DISCON II will receive a special illustrated collection of Roger Zelazny's poems. There will be no charge for this progress report size booklet and each will be numbered with the individual's membership number. There will be only 1000 of these printed: none will be offered for sale.

We don't want to have to raise our rates, and if we get enough advance registrations, we won't have to. But we ***do*** have to have money to put on the convention, and if the only way we can do it is to raise rates, then we will be forced into it.

I'd like to talk a little bit about expenses at a Worldcon. Take the "all night movies" for example. This is a relatively new phenomenon, but one which, as you observed in a past editorial, has been interpretated as a necessary tradition. I disagree when you say that they serve little or no useful purpose. It is obvious that they are popular, not only to film fans but to anyone looking for something to do in the waning hours. The ***reasons*** for all night movies are closely tied to the increased size of the conventions.

The things that once served the purpose of these movies are fast disappearing. A few years ago conventions were one large party where you wandered through the hotel looking for open doors. Alice and I threw four years of bidding parties and we can tell you that throwing an open party these days is worse than riding a rush hour subway. Parties these days are almost all 'closed' or by 'invitation'. We got around this late in our bidding by opening our parties late in the evening and serving mostly coffee.

I'm sad to see the open parties go because I treasure the friends I made at them. At closed parties you seldom meet anyone new. They also make it harder for new people to meet the older fans. Towards this end, at DISCON II, we are setting up a large room central to the convention area where people can sit around and talk. There will be chairs and tables all around as well as a cash bar.

Another viewpoint on the films was brought to my attention by our hotel

representative when he went to LACon with us. The situation is simple. Fans sleeping in the lobby tend to make the hotel personnel uptight. The movies provide a place for fans to sleep if they don't have any place else to go. Although the hotel isn't too keen on this either, at least they are out of sight.

We are working on arrangements for dorm-type rooms in the hotel. As things are set up now, four people can share a quad for $8.00 a piece a night. The convention committee will serve as a clearing house for people who want to share a quad but don't have anyone to share it with. Details of this will be in our next progress report.

We have tried to cut our printing costs in a time-honored fannish way—doing it ourselves. I ran off the first progress report in my basement on my own offset press. No, I didn't get paid for my time. The convention paid for the paper and ink—I even made my own plates. The program book, with more ad space sold, will be professionally printed.

Hotel-related expenses are another problem, though they can be taken care of after the convention. Although we don't get all our facilities free, we don't have to pay for ***everything*** either. Some of the expenses involve movie equipment, charges for special set-ups in some rooms and variables such as special lighting for the costume ball.

1 think we have hit a happy medium concerning the relationship between room rates and charges for facilities. I notice that we were able to obtain lower room rates than Toronto.

Let's look at publicity for a minute, specifically at your thoughts on the way the Science Fiction Writers of America looks at the Worldcon. I don't think that the majority of SFWA members are out to "exploit" the worldcon, but I can see the developing potential for such a situation. If suspicion exists that fans are making large sums of money off these conventions, then it is natural that the writers, who form the bulk of convention programming, will want a piece of the action too.

As both a fan and a member of SFWA, I'll tell you where I would like to see us go. I'd like to see us take a giant step backwards. Back to the days when we were all one big "happy family" at these events. I am hoping that our financial outline will eliminate the suspicion that follows large chunks of money around.

But it is also natural that writers look for publicity at the Worldcons. A person who is a full time writer is in a business like anyone else, and he would be foolish to ignore something that would help him along. Beginning writers can make valuable contacts at the Worldcon as well as getting useful exposure. Winning Hugos sells books, too.

But should writers get paid for speaking at the worldcon as some people suggest? As long as we are all together as a "happy family" for a special weekend I'd say no. But if future conventions start ripping off the fans for large amounts of money, I'd say yes. If the committee is getting paid for putting on the convention, then the writers who draw the people there should be paid too. 1 hope we don't come to this—we would lose a lot of what a Worldcon is all about.

By the same token, convention committees should treat the writers with some respect, too. After all, they ***are*** providing most of the programming. By respect I mean observing some of the ***minimal*** niceties such as keeping pads of paper and pencils on the speaker's table, making sure there is a supply of water and glasses, and planning the program as far in advance as possible so that the speakers will know ***when*** they are speaking. At DISCON II we will be using a small room behind the podium for speakers to meet before they go on, so that they won't have to go qn "cold".

These are ***basic*** courtesies and should be extended to all speakers, fans and pros.

Our views on membership fees follow the "family" idea that we are all in this together. As long as we keep the rates down we feel that we are all co-operating on the convention. Towards this end, we expect everybody to take out memberships. All the

committee members, myself included, have paid. In the event that we are left with a surplus of funds, a high priority item is the refunding of membership fees for everyone, fans and pros, who speak on the program. But while we are trying to keep costs down, we will be unable to give free memberships in advance.

We are trying some new things at DISCON II, both at the convention and in advance. We are using a "recommendation" procedure so that members can suggest stories they believe are of Hugo quality and these stories will be listed in the progress reports while they are still current, thus making it easier when nomination time rolls around.

Erwin Strauss had a good idea in a letter in the October 1972 FANTASTIC. We are picking up his suggestion that the convention act as a clearing house for people needing rides to the convention or people having space to take riders. Details will be announced in our next progress report.

This is an example that convention committees are not inflexible people hiding behind a post office box number. We welcome ideas, and when they fit, we use them. But people have to write us about them. We can't read minds.

So drop us a line with your suggestions. Better yet, join our worldcon.

JAY HALDEMAN, Co-Chairman
DISCON 11
P.O. Box 31127
Washington, D.C., 20031

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, a change was made in the selection of future Worldcon sites, which up to then had been picked a year earlier at the preceding Worldcon. It was pointed out that this gave Worldcon Committees inadequate time to prepare their conventions and often made it impossible to secure the best hotels (which are usually booked several years in advance for conventions and similar uses). So the rules were amended and now the Worldcon is picked in leapfrog fashion: the **1973** Worldcon was picked in **1971:** the **1974** Worldcon in **1972.**

This has led to some new problems. Foremost I suspect is the confusion of prospective attendees whose information is scanty or second-hand: Just which convention is it we're going to ***this*** year? And, for the Worldcon Committees, the fact that progress reports (and their attendant expenses) must now be published over a two year period (instead of just one) and funds (and advance registrations) must now be sought earlier, in competition with another, concurrent Worldcon. Additionally, the question of passed-on funds from previous Worldcons has become murky. (The 1971 Worldcon has apparently not passed on any funds to subsequent Worldcons—an offer to the 1972 Worldcon was refused and no other offers were forthcoming—despite persistent rumors of large overages at that convention. The 1972 Worldcon dispursed most of its excess funds to a private charity—the building or purchase of a clubhouse for the Los Angeles fan group—and donated an unspecified sum to the Worldcon Emergency Fund in lieu of any pass-on directly to either the 1973 or 1974 Worldcon. This move has irked some fans who have pointed out that the Emergency Fund—established in 1969—exists only to bail out Worldcons which have fallen into debt due to unforeseen disasters and is no help to a Worldcon when it needs funds the most, in its early stages, as Haldeman notes above. Thus, neither the 1973 nor the 1974 Worldcon has received any financial assistance from prior Worldcons, although this was—until 1971—a long-established tradition.)

Therefore. I want to underscore Jay's appeal: The DISCON II Committee wish to avoid raising membership fees from their present low rates, but in order to do this they need your support now.

WORLDCON INFORMATION: In order to clear away some of the other confusion surrounding current Worldcons, here is a concise statement:

The **1973** Worldcon will be held over the Labor Day weekend, August 31 to Sep-

tember 3, 1973, in Toronto. Until August 1, 1973, the membership fees are $4.00 for a supporting (voting, but non-attending) membership and $7.00 for an attending membership. After August 1st, and at the door, the fee is $10.00. You can join by writing to TORCON 2, P.O. Box 4 Station K, Toronto 12, Ontario, Canada. The Guest of Honor is Robert Bloch, the Fan Guest of Honor is Bill Rotsler, and the Toastmaster is Lester del Rey.

The 1974 Worldcon will be held (over the Labor Day weekend) in Washington, D.C. At present the membership fees are $3.00 for a supporting (non-attending) membership and $5.00 for an attending membership. (At present no escalation of rates is planned, but this is contingent on sufficient early memberships; see the foregoing letter from Jay Haldeman.) You can join by writing to DISCON II, P.O. Box 31127, Washington, D.C., 20031. The Guest of Honor is Roger Zelazny, and the first one thousand members will receive a numbered, limited-edition illustrated booklet of his poetry.

It may be too late, by the time you read this, to join in the voting for the 1973 Hugo Awards. These are currently (as I write) undergoing nomination—nominating ballots are available to all members of either the 1972 or 1973 Worldcon—and the final ballot will be sent only to members of the 1973 Worldcon in early or mid-summer. However, an early membership in the 1974 Worldcon will assure you the right to nominate and vote for the 1974 Hugo Awards. (The broad base of informed voters for the Hugo Awards make these the definitive science fiction awards; they are open to ***you*** as a voter, when you join the Worldcon.) Worldcon members also select forthcoming Worldcon sites; non-attending members can now cast their ballots by mail.

A LETTER FROM DON DAVIS; Don Davis, the young artist who painted our much-acclaimed September and November, 1972, covers, dropped us the following note, which I thought would be of interest to you;

Dear Ted,

I happened to pick up the latest [January] AMAZING, and read eagerly your account of the LACon, and I wish to thank you for your kind words regarding my abortive art show.

It was particularly fitting to read of the Con at this time, just after the climatic 5-month adventure which, for me, had its beginning at the Worldcon.

All in all, I had a hell of a good time there, despite the art show hassles. However, my display served its purpose. Once in a while I would discreetly walk around the exhibits, listening to other people commenting on the paintings. On one of those occasions someone was expressing great excitement at my work, expressing aloud to his companions a desire to meet the artist. I obliged.

This young man was Richard Hoagland, creator of 'Starquest, Ltd.,' which was in the process of organizing "Voyage Beyond Apollo," an ocean cruise that would sail from New York in December and anchor off-shore to watch the night launch of Apollo 17.

Aboard the Holland-America ship, the S.S. Statendam, were a collection of SF writers, experts in fields ranging from nuclear propulsion engines to ecology, artificial intelligence, even white magic and witchcraft.

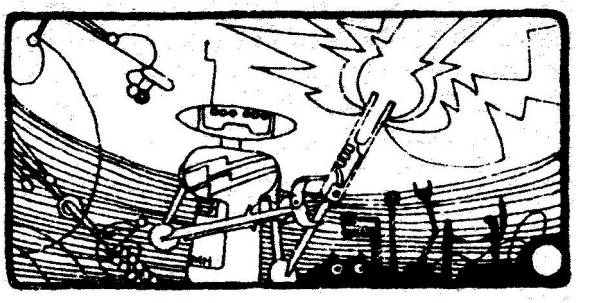
The official occasion was the 5th Conference on Space Mission Planning and the future of Civilization.

During the last tumultuous weeks prior to the voyage, some of the plans fell through. Arthur C. Clarke fell ill at the last moment and had to miss the trip, Werner Von Braun was tied up at the Cape, and Astronaut Edgar Mitchell's change of plans took him elsewhere.

Despite the glitches, however, the trip was enormously successful in my book.

(Continued on page 129)

...OR SO YOU SAY



Letters intended for publication should be typed, double-spaced, on just one side of each sheet, and addressed to: Or So You Say, ***Box 409, Falls Church, Va., 22046.***

Dear Ted,

The March issue of AMAZING STORIES was highlighted by the first installment of Jack Vance's novel, the cover, and the lettercol. "Trullion Alastor: 2262, Part One" astonished me when at the end of 71 pages it ended with the words "to be concluded." But the first installment itself was excellent. Generally I dislike space opera (into which category this novel has to fall) and avoid like the plague, but occasionally a bit of space opera is written which violates all the usual rules for such fiction. That is: it's imaginative, original, realistic in terms of the space science we know now and anticipate, and genuinely filled with the quality which started space opera off and stood it out as excellent among the rest of the sf that was then being written but which, over the decades, it has lost: that old fashioned sense of wonder. Space opera, like fantasy, is good and ***can*** be good ***only*** when it's dealt in sparingly. Not just anybody can write either and write it well. Both have the potential for really great stories. But since just about everybody seems to write fantasy these days and the few old time science fiction writers who are still around and writing science fiction (like Harry Harrison) seern to be confining themselves to space opera, both these two are usually very, very boring. The only fantasy, in fact, that I can remember greatly enjoying is ***The Hobbit, The Lord of the Rings,*** the Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser tales, and a few others by less well known writers. And the only space opera that I can remember greatly enjoying is the Asimov stuff and a few other pieces by other writers. But Jack Vance's new novel is ***good.*** Contrary to the mold, it's intelligent, imaginative, and really interesting And i say this even not having liked his first and second Durdane novels. Seventyone pages is an awful lot of space to give one feature, but in this case i think it was well worth it. although i still maintain a prejudice for novellas, novelettes, and short stories as against novels in sf magazines. One of the major threats to the sf magazines is the ever increasing competition from original paperback novels and anthologies. So in order to somewhat meet that threat, i think the sf magazines should concentrate first on novellas and novelettes (which haven't as yet begun to be published in original anthologies), secondly on short stories, and thirdly on features, leaving the original novels alone. Some of them, like the Vance novel may be very good, but I don't think it's the best way to compete.

The Mike Hinge cover was another experience but even belter than his previous covers for your magazines because of the darker colors used, especially the deep reddish purple (or maroon, if you like) at the top of the painting. And the letterco! was particularly interesting, especially because of the letter from John Robinson, one of the really better fan writers around in my

opinion. I wonder what effects his letter might have on the future composition of the AMAZING and FANTASTIC lettercols.

The rest of the issue averaged fair. "Hard Times" was interesting and competent but rather predictable. "Two Men and a Rock" was good hard science sf, of which we need much, much more today, but i don't think it took that fresh a look at a ***(very)*** old idea. I know Haldeman can do better, but with this story he almost seems to be trying to follow in the footsteps of Harry Harrison. And "Agony in the Garden" didn't thrill me the way it was supposed to, although probably because i'm an atheist and couldn't care less about theological speculations like those in the story.

The editorial was again interesting, but i've come to the conclusion that the only way to turn the worldcon into something that would satisfy you would be to limit attendance to fans and pros who've been active for. say, five or ten years or more. Then you'd have your old fashioned kind of worldcon. very exclusive. But that's just not possible nor. of course, desirable. And i think you'd agree to that. What might be the answer is to abolish the worldcon completely, let the Hugos be handled by a permanant. although changeable, committee, let everyone be eligible to vote at the cost of no more than $ 1.00 (and preferably for free), and let those who wanted to hold annual specialized cons of their own. like the annual Cimmerian Worldcon. or the annual Old Timer's International Con, to replace the subgroups that now go off on their own at worldcons for their own private discussions and meetings.

And not incidentally, despite my letter in this issue's lettercol, my name will be in the program book of the Torcon this year. I've decided actually to drop my idea of a boycott and join that and future worldcons anyway. No, your reply to my letter didn't do it. 1 already sent in my money to the Toronto people and the Washington, D.C. people, and i ***still*** believe as i do about nudity at worldcons. But i've thought more about it since my original decision. My original reasoning was that by sending in money to the con for a membership i'd be partly financing the exhibition of nudity at the con and that a boycott might turn back that trend at the worldcons. But since then i've come around to the belief that, really, in no way would i be financially "contributing to the occasion of sin" by buying a membership in the worldcon and also decided that there are other ways to attempt to force the trend toward nudity at worldcons back besides boycotting the worldcon, just as or more effective than the boycott. So i've joined Torcon 2 and Discon 2, although i still hold my same views about nudity at worldcons. I won't be travelling to either the '73 or the '74 worldcon because i can't afford it, but if New Orleans is selected as the site of the '76 worldcon, which i earnestly hope it is, i'll go to the worldcon that year, and who knows? 1 might even see ***you*** there. And i wouldn't get you confused with Teddy White of ***The Making of the President. . .*** because i know what both of you look like from pictures and besides he calls himself Teddy (or Theodore) and not Ted.

LESTER BOUTILLIER
2726 Castiglione Street
New Orleans. La. 70119

"Space opera. " as I understand the term, refers to action-adventure fiction in which other planets lor space itself) are substituted for more traditional locales like the Old West or East India. Although Vance has written space opera, he has not done so for a good long while and I would not classify "Trullion" as space opera.—TW

Dear Ted;

I'd appreciate it if you'd allow me a few paragraphs to correct a wrong impression some people might pick up from the March ***Or So You Say.***

Lester Boutillier is a very pleasant young man whose company I've enjoyed on several occasions. But he is not a member of the New Orleans in '76 bidding committee, nor will he ever be in a position of authority on any committee of which I am a part.

Should NOLaCon Ii become a reality.

there will be as many nude bathers as there are people who want to take their clothes off and go swimming (and I might add that New Orleans' climate lends itself admirably to such activity). There will be as many nude costumes as there are people who want to take their clothes off and walk across the stage.

As for marijuana, we'll naturally take the sensible "at your own risk" approach. The committee will not encourage illegal activity at the con. However, we'll naturally want to avoid unfavorable publicity that would arise from busts. And should a disagreement occur (which we'll do everything in our power to avoid), our sympathy will be with the congoers rather than with the narcs.

I don't want to turn your column into a forum wherein the relative merits of various bidders can be discussed to futility; therefore I'm not going into page after page of praise for my city and its WorldCon possibilities. But I do want to set straight any implication that NOLaCon II is in any way a "back to morality" bid. The NOLaCon II committee is as fond of looking at naked women as anybody else.

Incidentally, since Lester wasn't at LACon, I seriously question his right to have been outraged by anything that happened there.

DONALD D. MARKSTEIN
2425 Nashville Ave.
New Orleans, La. 70115

Dear Ted,

Amending my original loc to you on the March issue, in which i "not incidentally" said that i'd realized, after much thought and feeling of loss at not being able to vote on the relevant matters i ordinarily would vote on because i was boycotting Torcon, that buying a membership in the con was ***not,*** after all, in any way helping to financially "contribute to the occasion of sin," as my good Catholic friends would say, and that i'd sent in my $4.00 to the Toronto con group, and responding briefly to Don Markstein's letter to you on my letter, of which he's sent me a copy, i'd just like to make it clear that when i wrote that other letter i had no idea that it might in any way damage the New Orleans in '76 bid. Actually, i thought that it might help it by giving it a free plug. Apparently i was wrong, but i can understand this since i've only been a "fan" a relatively short while and obviously have a lot yet to learn. I'm not, of course, a member of the New Orleans in '76 committee, but am only a New Orleans fan whose chauvinistic attitude concerning New Orleans and lower middle class status (which makes it impossible to go to such places as Toronto and even Washington, D C. for worldcons) cause me to mention the fact that there is a bidding committee in New Orleans working for the city as the site of the 1976 worldcon. If i've ever caused any wrong impressions among anybody, it was unintentional and i'll sincerely try to watch that in the future.

"Incidentally," i wasn't at LACon, true, but i was never in Vietnam, either, but i think i have the right to pass moral judgment on what's happened there, in My Lai, on Hamburger Hill, etc., although i'm sure there are some people who'd disagree with ***that.***

Hoping i haven't made any enemies anywhere, i remain,

LESTER BOUTILLIER
2726 Castiglione Street
New Orleans, La. 70119.

I trust this brings this entire train of discussion to an end. As for your equation of non-attendance at both LACon and Vietnam, are you seriously suggesting that two humorous land non-***nude} costume entries in a masquerade ball have anything in common with war atrocities?*—TW**

Dear Mr. White:

It seems to me that David Book's obituary for the tachyon ***(The Science in Science Fiction,*** January, 1973) is rather premature. I won't be convinced that tachyons exist until they've been detected, but I think it's still worth while to look for them.

The argument against the tachyon used by Book and his friends isn't really original.

The tachyonic antitelephone seems an unnecessarily complicated way to illustrate Tolman's paradox, which is really just the causality paradox familiar to all of us from time-travel stories. The introduction of volitional observers who perform certain actions, depending upon what they observe, only confuses the issue by bringing up the question of free will; this is a philosophical (i.e., meaningless) problem, not a scientific one, since it isn't subject to resolution by experiment.

It seems to me that faster-than-light signals can be fitted into the framework of physical theory easily enough if we broaden the concept of causality a little—as so many other concepts have had to be broadened because of relativity. Let's say that an event, A. is the "cause" of another event, B. This means that B occurs if and only if A occurs. The distinction between "cause" and "effect" is that the "cause" precedes the "effect" in time. Information must somehow be transmitted between the space-time locations of the two events. It can be shown from the Lorentz transformations that, if the speed of the signal relative to A does not exceed the speed of light, then all observers will agree that A precedes B, although they won't agree on the length of the time interval between A and B. But if the signal speed is greater than the speed of light, different observers may not agree on the order of the events. Therefore, in processes involving faster-than-light signals, the distinction between cause and effect is not valid, since the order of events depends upon the observer's frame of reference. However, we can still say that A and B are "causally related," in the sense that B occurs if and only if A occurs and A occurs if and only if B occurs, although either may precede the other. Mathematical physics will have no difficulty with this concept. Cause and effect will still be distinguishable in processes not involving faster-than-light signals.

Faster-than-light signals may lead to the violation of the second law of thermodynamics. When this law was first introduced, it was considered purely empirical. It has since been given a microscopic, probabilistic interpretation, but this interpretation really rests on the ordinary concept of causality. It isn't an argument against the tachyon to say, "If tachyons exist, then the second law can be violated on a macroscopic scale. We've never observed such a violation, therefore tachyons don't exist." The fact that violations of the second law haven't been observed only means that no process has been observed in which information transfer by tachyons plays a dominant role. No one would argue with this statement, but it certainly doesn't mean that tachyons don't exist.

CONLEY POWELL, PH. D.
Mechanical Engineering Department
University of Kentucky
Lexington, Kentucky 40506

Dear Mr. White,

David Book's analysis of the tachyon paradox suffers from the same fallacy as D. G. Compton's ***Chronocules.*** Compton tells of a man transported through time to the period of the man's own youth. When he arrives, he is in two places at the same time, which is logically impossible. Therefore, he explodes.

Now logical contradictions don't cause explosions. Our mental constructs don't prescribe to the universe how it must behave. Logical principles are our devices for ordering and understanding our experience. They are products of our minds; they are "absolute" not because they are Ultimately True, but because we postulate them. If our theorizing fails to account for the behavior of the universe, it is our ideas which must change. Lecturing the universe for its failure to obey our laws is subject to the same fate as King Canute's forbidding the tide to rise.

Book backs up his discussion with a detailed description of hypothetical tachyon sending and receiving devices, but they aren't essential to his argument, which depends on the standard "time paradox" familiar to us all. He argues that a tachyon would be perceived by a human observer as an ordinary particle moving in the opposite

direction. If a stream of tachyons carries a message, it will seem that information is being sent from one who doesn't know it to one who does. Book says that this creates a paradox and therefore can't happen.

Only the last clause is false. There is no rule that paradoxes can't happen, that our concepts can't be violated. It was a paradox that the electron orbited the nucleus without radiating. If it orbits, it must be accelerated; if it is accelerated, it must radiate. Did orbiting, non-radiating electrons therefore explode? No; instead, scientific ideas change, first into, "well, orbiting electrons just don't radiate," and later into the uncertainty principle and quantum theory, which accounted for the electron's "orbiting."

I don't know how to resolve Book's paradox, but I know that tachyons cannot be ruled impossible by an act of the mind. There is no experimental evidence now for tachyons, but if they are discovered, Book and his fellow scientists will have no alternative but to develop some new ideas. Tachyons will not submit themselves to our ideas of the possible. This is what John Brunner means that "the real world can always be identified by its unique characteristic: it, and it only, can take us completely by surprise."

RICHARD S. BETH
1823 Riggs PI NW-#3
Washington, DC 20009

Dear Mr. White,

Hate to say this, but somebody goofed. In the current AMAZING, the first instalment of the Vance novel is entitled "Trullion: Alastor 2263" on the cover, "Trullion-Allastor 2262" on the contents page (note different spelling, punctuation, and date), and "Trullion Alastor: 2262" on the title page of the story itself. Moreover, the Ballantine sf lists for this fall list something by Vance called ***Alastor 3393,*** which I presume to be the same work.

Question: which title is Vance's own, and under which were you trying to publish the magazine serial?

Greg Feeley
41727 Murphy PI.
Fremont. CA„ 94538

Well, the manuscript put it this way:
Truillion Alastor: 2262

The error with the number on the cover is mine (*sigh*); the other errors are not. (The number is not, you'll note when you read the novel, a date.) Whether this novel is the same one Ballantine will be publishing I do not know; it seems reasonable to me that Vance may have others in mind for this overall setting. We shall see. —TW

Editorial

(Continued from 124)

Not only did we have a "Super Con," with the assembled talents of Isaac Asimov, Robert Heinlein, Ted Sturgeon, Norman Mailer, Carl Sagan, and many others, but for ten days we had, in essence, a microcosm of the dreams and skills of humanity gathered together, and in the conferences and informal discussions much was accomplished.

When I saw the night turned into day by the liftoff of the last Apollo moon expedition, I fulfilled a pledge 1 had made to myself nearly a year before—to see a Saturn V liftoff.

The memory of that shot will be carried by all those aboard for the rest of their lives.

Yours truly,
DON DAVIS

Don also mentions some of his plans for new paintings, many of which you'll be seeing here.

Also upcoming: new cover paintings by Jeff Jones, Mike Hinge and David Hardy, with the kind of innovative layouts and typography you've come to expect of this magazine. Stay with us!—TED WHITE

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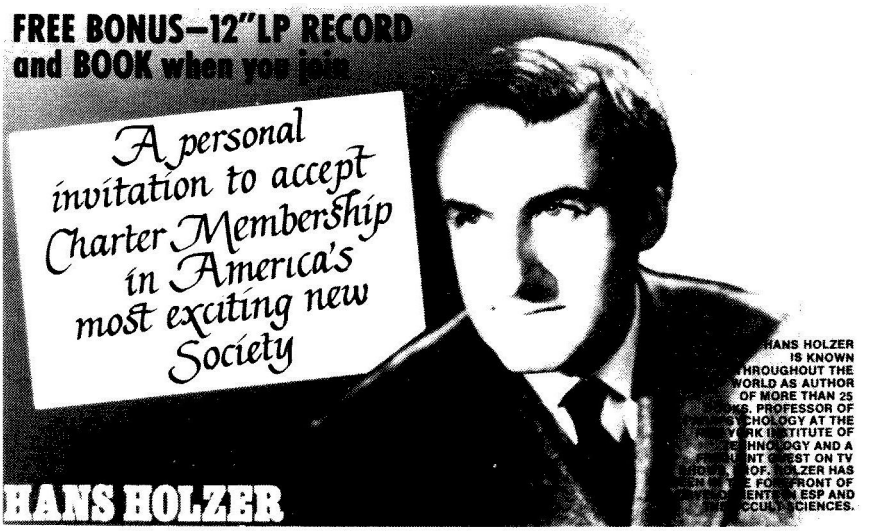

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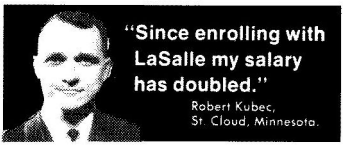

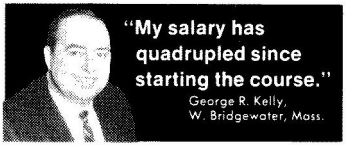

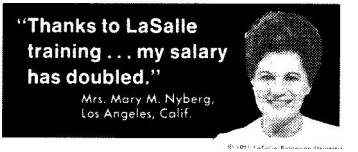

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