F-113

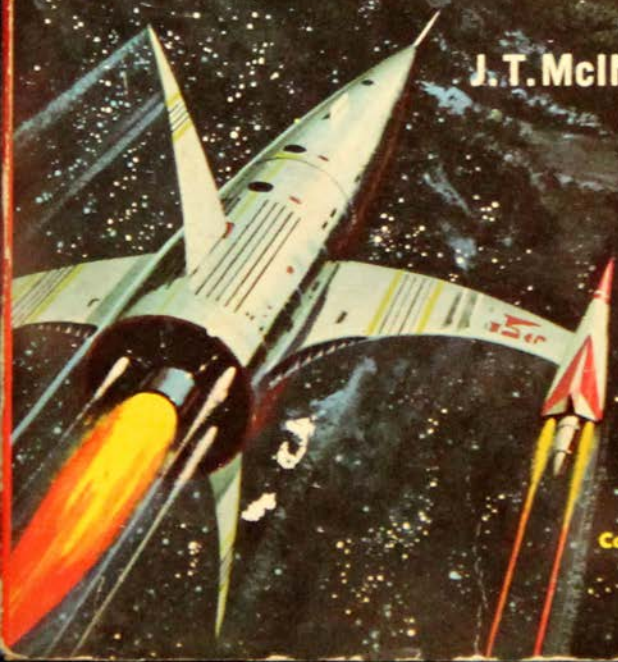
ACE DOUBLE NOVEL

40c

Crisis In The Tenth Generation

200 YEARS TO CHRISTMAS

J. T. McINTOSH



Complete Novel

SEED PODS OF A NEW HUMANITY

For almost two centuries the huge spaceship had speared its way through the stars, bound for another two hundred years of travel before it would put down on a new planet, a new home for the Earth people.

On board the metal-enclosed worldlet were four hundred people: the last survivors of Earth. It was up to them to start life anew, to correct the mistakes their ancestors had made.

But as the tenth generation neared maturity, the idle passengers found themselves face to face with these same problems—and this time there was no place to run and hide or to postpone their answers. For their miniature society was changing faster and faster. And the spaceship suddenly seemed destined to end as a star-bound coffin.

Turn this book over for second complete novel

J. T. McINTOSH was born in Scotland and attended the University of Aberdeen. He was only ten when he brought out his first magazine—*The Diamond*—which consisted mainly of a two-hundred-word story and a masthead. At the age of eleven, on the basis of several more stories, he was answering the familiar schoolroom question: "What are we going to be when we grow up?" with a quiet assurance, "I'm going to be a journalist."

Mr. McIntosh became a journalist and worked for several years as a sub-editor of a newspaper before interest in the news of the future replaced his interest in the news of the present. Since then he has written several top-flight science-fiction novels and many short stories and novelettes published both in England and in the United States. Mr. McIntosh lives and writes in Aberdeen.

His previous book in an Ace edition was ONE IN THREE HUNDRED (D-113).

200 YEARS TO CHRISTMAS

by

J. T. McINTOSH

ACE BOOKS, INC.
23 West 47th Street, New York 36, N.Y.

200 YEARS TO CHRISTMAS

REBELS OF THE RED PLANET

Printed in U.S.A.

CHAPTER ONE
Year 187

S12 was barer than a hospital corridor. There was nothing to see but naked metal floor, walls and ceiling—except for the trail of red, sticky stuff which started in the middle of the passage and ran under the half-open door of a room to the right.

Ted Benzil stopped and bent down to examine it. It looked more like tomato sauce than blood, but he didn't care to taste it to find out. He pushed the door wide open and went in. The door swung silently shut behind him.

"Boo, goose!" said a voice, and two hands went round him from behind, covering his eyes. He felt warm, bare, feminine arms.

"Freddy," he exclaimed.

He was released abruptly. "Must every girl on the ship be Freddy Steel?" the girl said crossly. He turned and saw a small, pert blonde, hardly more than a schoolgirl but too pretty to be treated as a schoolgirl for a moment longer than was necessary. She wore a dark-blue cape. Yet even in such a shapeless garment she looked startlingly nubile.

"Lila!" he exclaimed, surprised.

"Your conversation isn't very bright tonight, Ted," she said acidly.

He grinned. "Who said you could call me Ted?"

Her head came up defiantly. "You call me Lila. Why shouldn't I call you Ted?"

Ted's smile broadened. "Well, I've been calling you Lila for nearly ten years, and all that time you called me 'Mr. Benzil' or 'sir.' Why should I suddenly become Ted?"

"I'm not a child any more." Still defiantly.

"No, Lila," Ted agreed. "You're fifteen, aren't you?"

"I've left school!" Lila retorted, as if Ted were arguing with her.

"I know. All right, Lila, since you're grownup now and

since we've known each other such a long time, you can call me Ted."

"It's not fair," she exclaimed, half protesting, half laughing, "to take advantage of the fact that you used to be my teacher in school. You're not so much cleverer than I; you just know more. And you're not even much older, either. Yet you . . ."

"I what, Lila?" Ted asked mildly.

"You treat me as if I were still in your class in school. You don't—you never give any sign of—you don't even . . ."

Her eyes shifted focus, and Ted turned to see what she was looking at. He saw it, hanging over the door, and laughed.

"You think not taking the appropriate action is a gratuitous insult? No insult intended, Lila."

He drew her under the plastic mistletoe and kissed her. She flung her arms round him and responded fiercely—so fiercely and passionately that when he released himself he was startled and showed it.

"Maybe you should be back in school again for one more lesson, Lila," he protested. "You're just old enough to kiss a man like that, and not old enough to know better. Don't do that again unless you mean to follow through."

"I'm quite ready to follow through," she said breathlessly.

He frowned. "Lila, you're far too nice a girl to act like this. You've just been led astray by the times we live in. Girls like you just don't entice men twice their age into empty rooms to make passionate love to them."

"You're not nearly twice my age and I didn't entice you in to make passionate love to you. Look."

She drew the string of her cloak and flung it open to show her dress. Ted's eyes widened involuntarily. It was light-blue, what there was of it. It left no doubt whatever that Lila had an exceedingly provocative little body.

"Like my dress?" Lila asked.

"Why don't you put it on sometime?" Ted inquired. "Anyway, where do you think you're going in that?"

"To the Christmas Ball. You're going to take me."

"No, I'm not," said Ted definitely. "Certainly not in that dress."

"If I go and change it, will you take me?"

He shook his head. "I can't. You're—"

"Don't say I'm too young! If *you* take me, it'll be all right."

"If I took you, you wouldn't be thrown out, but that doesn't mean it'd be all right. It really isn't a place for a fifteen-year-old girl, Lila. Wait three years, or four, or five. In fact, maybe a nice girl like you shouldn't ever go to a Christmas Ball at all."

"Please, Ted!" Lila begged. "Don't think I'm going to hang around you all night. I know you'll be with Freddy Steel. Just get me in, and then forget I'm there if you like."

"Sorry, Lila." He shook his head again.

"Oh, you . . ." Lila began, recognizing defeat. Between disappointed fury and tears, she snatched the parcel he was carrying, a small packet wrapped in Christmas gift paper. Ted made a grab for it, but Lila tore the door open and slammed it behind her.

Ted didn't waste any breath in shouting. He opened the door and raced after Lila.

S12 was one of the minor corridors. At the next junction Lila pivoted neatly and flashed along J1. It was a mistake. Ted rapidly closed the gap and stretched forward to catch her. He grasped her cape, but with a breathless laugh she pulled the string and left him holding it. Recognizing her error in sticking to a main avenue, where Ted could work up full speed, she darted down T14, and was halfway along K3 before Ted could negotiate the corner behind her.

So long as she kept to a zigzag course through a maze of minor passages, she kept leaving Ted further and further behind. It was like a launch being chased by a battleship. But presently, reaching a section with which she wasn't entirely familiar, she found herself unexpectedly on M1.

M1 was the longest avenue on the *Arc-en-ciel*. It ran right from the storerooms in the rear to the observation rooms in the nose. And the whole middle third of it was

blank, a tunnel through engine rooms, water tanks, air-purifying plant, temperature-control pumps and hydroponics departments. There were inspection hatches, but not a single door.

There was only one thing to do. Lila let Ted overtake her and just as he was about to grab her dived under his arm and raced back the way they had come. She got such a start on him that by the time she had traversed a few more minor corridors she was able to try doors in search of a refuge.

During the chase they had seen hardly a soul. Everyone who wasn't at the ball or at a private party was too young or too old, apparently, and asleep.

The third door Lila tried, in B4, was an unoccupied single room. Inside, with the door shut, she leaned back against it for half a minute, getting her breath back and listening for Ted's steps pounding past the room. She didn't hear them. Perhaps he had lost the trail altogether.

While she was getting her breath back, Lila looked around the room she found herself in. Getting her breath back didn't take long, though she had run nearly a mile at top speed. Gravity on the *Arc-en-ciel* was artificial, and only two-thirds of what Lila's ancestors had had to cope with. Exertion was correspondingly less.

It was like all unoccupied single rooms: a fixed plastic bed, a foldaway washstand, a bed light, a recessed wardrobe with a full-length mirror in front of it, two chairs meantime clipped securely to the wall, and nothing else. Since there was nothing unusual about the room, Lila's attention turned to the packet she still held in her hand.

It was Ted's Christmas gift to Freddy, of course. Lila felt it with her fingers. She couldn't make out what it was.

She hadn't meant to steal it. She hadn't really meant anything. She had run off with the packet merely from pique when she saw that Ted wasn't going to take her to the ball. But her curiosity became unbearable. While she was still telling herself that she had no right to open the parcel, her fingers were doing it—carefully, so that she would be able to close it again.

It was a pearl necklace—artificial pearls, but Lila knew of no other kind. Instantly Lila decided that a pearl necklace was exactly what was needed to set off her blue dress to perfection. She put it on and looked at herself in the mirror.

A soft gasp of delight escaped her. The necklace broke up the exceedingly bare expanse between her face and the top of her dress. Then she frowned, envying Freddy because the necklace was going to belong to her and because Ted gave her such things. She frowned still more darkly, having a clear enough idea of what Ted and Freddy's relations must be.

She wasn't a child, of course, and she knew that nearly everybody who wasn't married had a lover. But she had always admired Ted enormously, and she hated the thought of her shining knight in armor being involved in anything furtive, or cheap, or sordid.

Even the enchanting picture in the mirror lost its enchantment when honesty compelled her to admit that she was only pretty while Freddy was beautiful—utterly, incredibly, heart-rendingly lovely. It was frustrating even to think of Freddy, who so obviously had *everything*. Including, apparently, Ted Benzil.

"You know what I ought to do?" demanded Ted from the doorway.

Lila jumped convulsively. Startled, for a moment she was terrified.

"Never mind," said Ted. "Keep the necklace. Merry Christmas!"

He shut the door behind him.

When Ted reached the ballroom, Gil Cordiner was playing the clarinet.

Ted postponed looking for Freddy. He leaned back against the plastic-covered wall, shut his eyes, and gave himself up to the music.

There were plenty of musicians on the ship. Although thousands of recordings of all kinds of music had been brought from Earth, the recordings never changed, and live

music had an appeal which the very greatest canned music lacked.

Gil very seldom played now. He didn't belong to the orchestra or the chamber music group or the swing band. Nevertheless, Gil was perhaps the only musician who could hold his own with the best of the recordings brought from Earth. Ted listened to him with delight, marveling once again at Gil's glorious invention, the charm of the melodic phrases, the calculated perfection of the rests. It seemed a pity that the best most of the people in the hall could do with music like that was dance to it. True, it was dance music, glorious dance music. But there was so much in it, Ted felt, that it deserved undivided attention.

All too soon Gil gave the clarinet back to the band's clarinetist and stepped off the stand. He waved his arm in modest acknowledgment of the applause, caught Ted's eye and grinned at him deprecatingly.

"I believe you'd rather listen to Gil than dance with me," Freddy said challengingly. She had come up behind Ted unnoticed. It was rather unusual for Freddy to join anyone unnoticed. She was the kind of girl who made all the other girls at a ball wish they hadn't come.

She was wearing the latest short-skirt evening fashion. It was so late that only she and four other women on the floor wore it. But since those were the five who really counted as far as fashion was concerned, the style was in all right and at the next big social occasion every woman would be wearing short skirts, except the extremists who would cling to the old style from obstinacy.

Freddy always looked as every girl wanted to look.

"Of course I would," Ted declared. "You're only a woman, but Gil is art."

"Don't I make a good job of being a woman?" Freddy demanded.

Ted grinned. "That's useful arts versus fine arts. Anyway, you don't make a particularly good job of being a woman, Freddy. Only one small part of it."

Freddy made a derisive noise. But Ted, who knew her,

knew she was hurt. He hadn't meant to hurt her. It wasn't easy to hurt Freddy.

He sighed and abandoned the subject. Freddy was spoiled; she could hurt if she liked, but no one was supposed to hurt her. That was one of the things which Friday's children came to expect.

"Sorry I haven't a present for you, Freddy," he said. "I had one up to a few minutes ago."

"What happened to it?" Freddy asked, her smoldering eyes lighting with interest.

"Since a lady is involved," said Ted lightly, "I can't tell you."

Freddy's interest grew. "A lady? Am I losing my grip, then?"

"No, nothing like that. The lady concerned is too young to concern you."

"Is she over twelve?"

"Oh, yes."

"Then she isn't too young to concern me."

"Merry Christmas anyway, Freddy."

"Christmas!" Freddy sneered, like a glamorous Scrooge. "What's that to us? We won't see it."

"Not *that* Christmas," Ted agreed. "Not the ultimate Christmas. But that doesn't prevent us from having fun now, does it?"

"Oh, no. If that's what you mean."

He was glad she was prepared to leave it at that. Occasionally she was in a mood so foul that the only thing to do with her was leave her alone and hope that time would mellow her.

She was thirty-one, five years older than Ted, and could refer back, when she liked, to incidents when those five years had been really significant. When she was an experienced, sophisticated woman of twenty-three and he a callow youngster of eighteen. When she was a very grownup nineteen and he a mere oversized child of fourteen. When she was nine and rather a bully, and he little more than a baby.

There had been many different Freddys, while there had

really been only one Ted. It was for that reason, among others, that their paths had run together only briefly and spasmodically during the last twenty years. One of the reasons why they were together now, at the biggest ball of the year, was that they were the two best dancers on the ship.

Freddy had always got what she wanted. And it hadn't been entirely good for her.

Nearly everyone at the ball was drinking hard. Ted wasn't because as a teacher in a small, utterly closed community he didn't think he should. Gil wasn't because he didn't like alcohol. Harold Phimister wasn't because (so people said) he disapproved of everything which meant pleasure to anyone, and only came to entertainments of any kind to disapprove of them.

But almost everyone else, including Freddy, was drinking, and drinking, and drinking, because it was the thing to do. And drinking was only part of it. All the usual things went with it. There was giggling, and petting, and kissing, and horseplay, and people snoozing in odd corners. A great deal of what went on was harmless. But not all.

Two men fought without warning, fiercely, the motive already forgotten. The people round them cleared a space, cheered on one or the other, laughed excitedly. No one except those in the immediate vicinity paid any particular attention, until suddenly the fight became insanely savage. One fighter lost control of himself utterly. His face went red with maniacal rage, and his purpose became nothing less than slaughter. His fists flailed and thudded brutally into his opponent, who fought back desperately, no longer concerned about anything beyond defense.

Some of the onlookers surged forward, then back, irresolutely. Somebody would have to do something, clearly, but the somebody was taking his time over emerging from anonymity. Meantime, the man who had gone into a killing fury snorted like a bull, chopped savagely at face, shoulders, ribs, neck, and his victim, a bigger man, blocked as much as he could and howled in sheer fright, shocked and terrified

to find that people would stand by while a man tried to kill him.

Eventually Jim Baker became, reluctantly, Lieutenant Baker of the police, stepped behind the man who was trying to become a killer and hit him neatly behind the ear with the butt of a small but quite hard revolver. The unconscious man was dragged away, and that was that. The incident and his disappearance had no effect on the merrymaking.

A dark-haired girl who couldn't have been much older than Lila Johns cried out: "No, Peter, I don't want to. Please, Peter." But Peter, breathing noisily, had picked her up and was carrying her, weeping, from the ballroom. Nobody paid the slightest attention.

In one corner, about twenty people were standing in a ring, clapping their hands on the off-beat, and in the cleared space Suzette Norris did a wild solo dance. Her long, black hair and her long, black skirt streamed first one way, then the other. Her long, thin legs flashed in and out of sight, twinkling deceptively, and the V to her waist opened and closed coyly as she strained back and came upright again.

She was laughing delightedly, her white teeth dazzling against the background of black evening coats, dark walls and the shadows under the balconies. She wasn't an outstandingly good dancer, but what she lacked in talent she made up for in sensuality. Barks of laughter burst from the group at each frankly coarse gesture she made.

Ted was neither shocked nor surprised by anything he saw. He had seen wilder balls, and very much wilder parties. Nevertheless, he was glad Lila wasn't present.

This was the Gay Phase, the carefree, careless, irresponsible time which must inevitably follow a period like the Know-More Phase. It was a time when nothing mattered except fun, amusement, pleasure of all kinds, without concern over the future. It was a time when even the most fleeting pleasure was grasped without thought of the most universal principles of morality.

Lila Johns could hardly be blamed for offering herself so

casually to Ted Benzil when most of her friends had lovers, when a couple of boys who had been in her class at school were already alcoholics, when the chief woman probation officer was known to be the mistress of both the High Court Judge and the Chief of Police.

"You don't think I ought to drink so much," said Freddy. It wasn't a question; it was a challenge.

"Don't I?" said Ted. "Perhaps you're right."

Swaying a little, Freddy demanded: "Why do you always make it so difficult to quarrel with you?"

"I don't like quarreling."

"Well, I do. Which brings us back to an earlier topic. Who was the girl who was too young to concern me? Is she here?"

Ted shook his head. "If I answered that, I'd have to answer the next question, and the next, and soon you'd know all you wanted to know."

"You'd tell me if she didn't matter to you."

"I didn't say she didn't matter to me. But I'm not in love with her any more than you're in love with Gil."

She stared at him. "What brought that up?"

"Or are you in love with Gil?"

"Suppose I were? What would it be to you?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing? You wouldn't care?"

"No, why should I?"

"Well, there's such a thing as jealousy, and it would be only decent for you to show some."

Ted laughed. "It's funny to hear you talk of decency. Don't you claim to be a diabolist?"

Freddy frowned. She had had too much synthetic whisky to be at her brightest, and Ted was doing his best to confuse her. For the moment she wasn't a match for him.

CHAPTER TWO

THERE WAS a roll on the drums, and everyone looked towards the door. It was time for the Christmas ceremony, and

the drum roll announced the entrance of Dr. Eric Martin and the Rev. Drummond Smith Johns.

There were shouts of protest at the interruption of the celebrations. However, gradually the company sobered. The petting couples disentangled themselves and patted their clothes into some semblance of order. Some of the people who had been sleeping it off in odd corners, impervious to the noise, were disturbed by the silence, opened an eye and came unsteadily to their feet.

By the time Martin and Johns reached the rostrum, unused so far, it was an almost sober, almost silent crowd who waited for them to speak.

Martin was young to be going bald. He was tall, broad-shouldered and narrow-hipped, with bushy hair on the left and right but a bare patch across the top. He had a pleasant strong face, the face of a scholar, almost the face of an ascetic. There was a certain strangeness in his face, a hint that this man could be dangerous, as fanatic, traitor, or saint.

Johns, by contrast, was an ordinary, straightforward, matter-of-fact man. He was small, like his daughter Lila, but that was the only thing they had in common—in appearance, at any rate. Johns was average, insignificant. The only notable thing about him was his deep, resonant voice.

"You know what I'm going to say," Martin said pleasantly, "but by tradition someone always says it. So will you be patient while I tell the story again, in my own way, and Mr. Johns says a few words, and then you can go back to your celebrations? Thank you."

He had a pleasant public-speaking manner. He was disapproving, yet not unfriendly. Obviously he didn't think much of the ball and the things that were going on there. His manner was that of a reformer, never haughty, distant or unfriendly, but always with that shade of disapproval.

"This is the hundred and eighty-seventh Christmas since this ship left Earth," he said quietly but not unimpressively. "That means it's about two hundred years now to that greatest, grandest Christmas of all—the Christmas we cele-

brate in advance, look forward to and pray for every year; the Christmas when we land on Lorraine.

"The Christmas eighteen or nineteen generations will have lived and died for. The Christmas when human beings begin to live once again as they were meant to live, on a big, free, open, almost limitless world instead of a tiny prison like this ship.

"The Christmas when we can end birth control for ever, when every couple can have as many children as they like. The Christmas we won't see, but our children's children's children *will* see . . ."

It was ritual. Ted had enough imagination for the words to mean something to him. Besides, the words had added significance for him because some day he would be speaking them himself, or other words to the same effect. He would be Martin's successor as rector of the school, and unless the Committee made a new law the rector would continue to speak at the Christmas ceremony.

Beside him, Freddy stirred restlessly. He knew her point-of-view. As Martin said, *she* wasn't going to be alive when the *Arc-en-ciel's* tremendous four-hundred-year trip was over. All that concerned her were the circumstances as they were now. What had happened two hundred years ago, to someone else, and what was going to happen in two hundred years, also to someone else, was nothing to her. Her world was the ship. She would never know any other.

Martin cut it short, and at the end of his little piece of history and prediction introduced Johns.

Johns said jovially: "Don't see many of you at church these days, and I suppose some of you feel this is taking an unfair advantage of you. Well, I'm not going to preach. All I want to say is this. Remember what Christmas used to be, what Christmas used to mean back on Earth. If you don't know, find out. It's worth while knowing. A time will come . . ."

"Why don't those two learn their job?" Freddy muttered impatiently. "They're trying to sell something, and who

would buy when that's the best line in sales talk they can scrape up?"

"They think people *ought* to be interested," said Ted. "After all—"

Freddy said a short vulgar word. "You could even make sex boring if you were dull enough," she retorted.

Ted and she weren't the only people who were whispering or moving restlessly. Very few people were much interested in what Martin and Johns had to say. The touble was, Ted thought, that unless one had a pretty strong imagination one couldn't very well be much concerned about any way of life violently different from one's own. People did long for life on an open, free, virtually limitless world, but it was the kind of longing which human beings had once had for Heaven.

That was just it. Living on a planet had replaced Heaven for the people on the *Arc-en-ciel.* Some people believed in Heaven, some didn't. The unimaginative couldn't picture life on a world at all. There could be no fear of being shut up in a spaceship for anyone born and brought up in one. Instead of that, many became ill at the very idea of living in the open, without a roof over their heads, with nothing between them and the distant stars.

And Christmas, just as inevitably, ceased to stand for the birth of a messiah whose life and times belonged to dead Earth, and became a different kind of day of hope.

The end of the brief ceremony was the only really effective part of it. The dancers stood and sang a hymn. It was a queer choice, but the Rev. Johns had to choose one of the few hymns which was still known to everybody, and for some reason this was one of them:

"I to the hills will lift mine eyes,
From whence doth come mine aid:
My safety cometh from the Lord
Who heaven and earth hath made."

It was a queer, clumsy, inconsequential sort of hymn

and quite inapplicable to the present circumstances. There were no hills to which to lift one's eyes. There hadn't been for nearly two hundred years. And a Lord who had made heaven and earth meant very little to the present audience. If it had been a Lord who had made the stars, that might have been much more impressive. Most impressive of all would have been a Lord who made the *Arc-en-ciel.*

But nevertheless, the people who stood and sang were much more affected by *"I to the hills"* than they had been by Martin's history and John's simplified Scripture.

The ball went on for quite a while after that but the celebrations had become sleepy and forced. Instead of collecting together, people were splitting off into groups and pairs, going to friends' rooms for a last drink, even going home.

Freddy and Ted went to Freddy's room. And there, before doing anything else, Freddy pried Lila's name out of Ted.

"One of your pupils only a matter of months ago," she taunted. "Must you rob cradles, Ted?"

"I haven't been robbing any cradles," Ted replied, unperturbed. "In fact I refused to get her into the ballroom tonight."

"Why?"

"Because it's no place for her. I don't want to corrupt the girl before her time."

"Then I will," said Freddy with sudden enthusiasm. "It's a long time since I corrupted anyone. I don't want to get out of practice. How long do you think it'll take me to make her thoroughly vile?"

"Behave yourself, Freddy," said Ted sharply.

"I mean it. It'll be fun to—"

"I know you mean it. And I mean it too when I say that if you try anything of that sort I'll make you sorry you were ever born."

"Ted!" exclaimed Freddy, amused. "Such uncivilized violence!"

"Such uncivilized violence," Ted agreed grimly. "You interfere with Lila and I'll beat you black and blue."

"There's not much finesse about that," said Freddy reprovingly.

"Finesse is for cases where you're concerned less with what you do than how you do it," Ted retorted. "All I'm concerned about is that you leave Lila alone."

Freddy wasn't displeased. She had shaken Ted out of his usual phlegmatic attitude. That wasn't easy to do. She was satisfied. She dropped the subject.

A little earlier Lila had slipped into the bedroom of her friend, Robina Phimister. "You awake, Robina?" she said.

"Yes. Put on the light, Lila, or you'll trip over something."

Lila put on the light. Robina blinked at her sleepily for a moment, then gasped.

"You haven't been walking in the corridors like that? And where did you get that necklace?"

"A friend gave it to me," said Lila complacently. "Like it?"

"You look wonderful, Lila. But if your father finds out—"

"My father isn't like yours. I can do what I like," said Lila smugly, parading about the room to let Robina have a good look at her. She knew how easy it was to make Robina jealous, but could never resist doing it.

"My father would kill me if I wore a dress like that."

"Why, for goodness sake?"

"My father says that sort of thing is wickedness and licenseness."

"Licentiousness," Lila corrected.

"Did you get to the ball?" Robina asked eagerly.

"No, I didn't go."

Robina recovered a little from her envy. "I thought nothing was going to stop you getting to the ball. I thought you were going to get in if you had to—"

Lila yawned elaborately. "I had other things to do," she said.

"What things?" asked Robina suspiciously, jealous again.

"Oh, just things." Actually Lila had spent the last few hours trying to sleep, but had been too excited by the faint sounds reaching her from the direction of the ballroom to close her eyes. Exactly as Robina had been spending them, in fact. But Lila wasn't going to admit that.

She yawned again. "I'm tired. I'm going back to bed. Good night, Robina."

She blew a kiss towards her friend and went out.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, finding herself face to face with Harold Phimister, out in the corridor.

"Have you been with my daughter, Miss Johns?" asked Phimister coldly.

"Yes, I—"

She stopped, feeling Phimister's eyes on her. Phimister's eyes, burning, deep-set, black, were the sort of eyes one could feel. Lila was suddenly conscious that a dress expressly designed to show that she wasn't wearing anything underneath it wasn't what she would choose if she knew she was going to be closely examined by someone like Harold Phimister.

"Frankly, Miss Johns," Phimister said in the same cold tone, "if you were the daughter of anyone else I should seriously consider forbidding you to see Robina at all."

Lila lost her nervousness in indignation. "You can't just forbid like that!" she declared. "People pick their own friends. Fathers haven't got any right over their children. You—"

"Perhaps not—not now. But things may change, Miss Johns. Change for the better."

And with that he went into his suite, not by Robina's entrance but by the main door to the family apartment, leaving Lila staring.

However, Lila wasn't the one to puzzle over things like that. She went back to her room, wondering why Phimister went to balls at all, where Mrs. Phimister was, what it must be like to put up with the two of them all the time as poor Robina had to do, and how Phimister had ever come to be married at all and have a daughter.

Lila had one last look at herself in the mirror before getting

ready for bed, and giggled half nervously, half delightedly at what Phimister must have thought of her like that.

He would certainly think her pale-blue dress was licentious.

Lila thought it was cute. But then, perhaps that came to the same thing, she admitted.

The *Arc-en-ciel* ran herself, which was a pity. Routine jobs like cleaning, growing fruit and vegetables, checking the electrical wiring, reclaiming waste, regulating the control pumps for temperature and humidity, preparing synthetic food, making clothes, printing books, distilling whisky and so on were too few and too simple to occupy the hundreds of people on board for long enough to keep them out of mischief.

It would have been better if the planners who had built the ship had left out a few refinements. Then more people would have had to work longer. Hard-working people are happy people. They have no time to be discontented.

But the planners, in their infinite wisdom, had built a ship which needed little or no attention in really important matters. Distrustful of fifth-generation and seventeenth-generation navigators, they had made the actual control of the ship automatic.

Indeed, so much was automatic that if the entire population of the *Arc-en-ciel* fell in a drunken stupor, she would carry on much the same as if everyone was hard-working and conscientious. Only their personal comfort would suffer.

There had been a possibility, when the ship had been built in orbit around Venus, that the survival of the human race depended on the Lorraine project. The solar system had been sliding then into a vast cloud of gas almost dense enough to burn, certainly dense enough to have effects beyond the imagination of a race which had hitherto lived a charmed life in a savage, dangerous universe.

Nobody on the *Arc-en-ciel* knew what had happened in the solar system. The ship had a velocity too near the speed of light for any changes to be visible from her yet. A hun-

dred and eighty-seven years after leaving Earth, the people on the ship, looking back, still saw a sun only a few years older than it had been when their ancestors left it.

The disaster, if it happened, had been expected thirty years after the *Arc-en-ciel* left the solar system. Earth might have been destroyed a hundred and fifty years since, yet the telescopes still showed the system unharmed.

Since it had been known that the future of the race might depend on this ship, the planners had left nothing to chance or human error. Life on board the ship had been set from the beginning in an inescapable pattern:

Live and go on living. Laugh, dance, kill each other, copulate, eat and drink till you burst. But leave the ship alone. She will take care of you, so long as you don't tamper with her. Live like kings or like swine so long as you go on living—and leave the ship alone!

And left to their own devices, with little or no responsibility for the guiding of their vast home among the stars, there had been nothing for the hundreds of people on board to do except make social experiments, not even knowing that was what they were doing.

They didn't matter, these thousands of people who would live and die inside the metal walls of a vast coffin. Only the last generation mattered, the generation which would reach Lorraine and build a settlement there. All the others, those who lived and died on the way, were merely fertilizer for that last shining race of humans who would be alive when Christmas came.

CHAPTER THREE
Year 189

ANYONE WHO had seen Lila wandering around her bedroom, picking up things and laying them down, would have been able to guess she had a date later and didn't know what to do with herself until it was time to start getting ready.

Two years hadn't been enough to turn her from an attrac-

tive adolescent into a woman, but they had made her an even more attractive adolescent. Though she would never be a Freddy Steel, she was intelligent and pretty and adorable, and many young men were ready and willing to adore her.

She had picked up her little gold watch for the fourth time from its place on her dressing table and put it down with increased impatience, as if certain it was hardly bothering to move its arms at all, when a light tap sounded on her door. She knew it was her father. He always treated her with a certain mild formality, as if she were a ward and not his daughter.

Her mother had died long since, and bringing up Lila had devolved entirely on him. The Rev. Johns was a very modest man. He realized all his responsibilities and invariably devoted careful thought to them.

In the matter of Lila he had decided that the way to bring her up was to develop her, not try to mold her. He had always allowed her complete freedom in everything except certain matters of principle. He never forced her to be a Christian, but he had always taught her that certain things were generally wrong and certain things generally right.

He let her dress as she liked, act as she liked, think as she liked, but he made sure she respected and venerated and loved some things, no matter what. He had told her: *If nothing really matters to you, you'll never really matter to other people.*

He wasn't quite sure how he had succeeded. Sometimes in his modest, self-deprecatory way he thought he had made a frightful mess of the job of bringing up a daughter. At other times it seemed that whether he was due any credit or not, there was nothing much wrong with Lila and a great deal which was very much right.

"Come in, Daddy," Lila called. She loved him, and she made no effort to hide it. On the other hand, she often went her way, knowing it wasn't his. She tried not to bring the things she knew he would disapprove of to his attention, not because she had the slightest fear of what he would do, but because she didn't want to hurt him. Occasionally, not often,

she refrained from doing something just because she knew he would have to know about it and that it would hurt him.

The little minister came in and stood a little hesitantly on the threshold. He had always carefully respected Lila's privacy, and only on invitation did he ever enter her room.

"Are you going to the service tonight, Lila?" he asked.

Lila hesitated. She hadn't had the slightest intention of doing so. "Why?" she asked.

"It would be better if you did."

She knew he never threatened and would never on his own account interfere with her freedom of choice. So she asked curiously: "Why, Daddy? Is there something special about tonight?"

"Yes, Lila. I think it'll be carefully noted who's at church. And more so, who isn't. You know I don't object if you never come to services, but . . . I think you should come tonight."

"You mean this Revival business?"

Johns nodded. Lila frowned. "I don't quite understand, Daddy. You say yourself that you've always said you'd never force people to go to church. But this Revival—it's forcing people, isn't it?"

"I'm not running Revival, Lila."

"Do you disapprove of it, then?"

"Oh no, not in the least. It's a great thing. The church a living, dynamic force again, after all these years when—Disapprove of it!" he exclaimed, as if the enormity of disapproving of Revival had only just occurred to him. "It's the greatest thing that's happened since the ship left Earth. Perhaps there are a few extremists, but that's only to be expected."

"If you want it, Daddy," said Lila without enthusiasm, "of course I'll come."

Ted called on Freddy with much the same message. "We'd better both be at church tonight, Freddy—separately," he said.

"Very funny," Freddy sneered.

"I mean it."

"Can't. I'm going to the Blue Room party, even if you won't."

"You can go there afterward, if you must. But you've got to be at the service, Freddy."

"Why?"

"Public opinion."

"You may care for that, but you know I don't. Never did."

"Oh yes, you do. You don't want to be sent to Coventry, do you? Because that's quite apt to happen, these days. If it can do that to you, you do care for public opinion, Freddy. Everybody cares."

Freddy didn't argue. On a ship, in a small community, being sent to Coventry wasn't the mild punishment it would have been on Earth. It could be absolutely watertight. No one, but *no one*, dared to speak to the victim, because that meant joining him.

It was solitary confinement without the compensating privilege of privacy.

So Freddy didn't say anything so ridiculous as that being sent to Coventry was nothing to her.

"What is it, *salvation by order*, now?" she demanded.

Ted nodded. "Something like that."

"Ted, this Revival business can't go much further, can it?"

"Oh yes. Sure to."

"Jesus!" said Freddy fervently, but not in prayer.

"Isn't it obvious? The lesson of history. After the Militarist Age came the Freedom Phase, the Golden Age of Art, then the Dark Age. Then Know-More, and the Gay Phase—the swing of the pendulum, Freddy. Revival isn't a surprise, it's inevitable."

"But the Gay Phase isn't over."

Ted gave her one of his very faint smiles. "Merely holding a party like the one in the Blue Room doesn't change anything. Don't fool yourself, Freddy. The Gay Phase is in its last death throes. *Exactly* what's coming I don't know. It certainly looks like a religious revival, but it's too early yet to be sure. Anyway, tonight's affair is about five years too late."

"I'm going all the same. With or without you. Why aren't you going, anyway?"

"There's a meeting in the Small Hall after the service, and I'll have to go to it. A rather important meeting, I think."

"A Revival meeting?"

"Yes. It's all right, nobody's asking you to go."

"Just as well. Hell, it was bad enough when fashions went sad and sober and respectable, without people trying to interfere in your private life."

"Another thing, Freddy, we'll have to start being very careful ourselves."

"You mean . . .?"

"Well, people are beginning to look oddly at me already, especially when your name is mentioned. Three years ago nobody cared who slept with who, but now—"

"Are you telling me we're through?" demanded Freddy incredulously.

"No, but I think we'd better pretend to be. I think we should quarrel, and tell everybody we've quarreled, and be very careful where and how we meet."

Freddy frowned. "Surely you're taking this too seriously. This Revival could be over next week."

Ted grinned without much humor. "Listen, Freddy. A spaceship, no matter how huge, is a closed world. Everything that happens inside its blank hull is confined within it. Every action has its reaction within the boundaries of its vast shell.

"Every change, every movement, every act, every event bounces back off the multiply-insulated steel walls and becomes part of every new change, movement, act and event. Nothing is lost. Nothing can be lost."

"What's this you're giving me?" demanded Freddy suspiciously.

"On a big world, an open world, actions and changes are instantly blown to the four corners of the world, diluted to almost nothing and mingled with other actions and changes. But in a little world, a closed world, every swing of the pendulum means a swing the other way.

"True, the complexities of even a small world mean that the pendulum never quite goes back over its tracks. Yet it always swings. It can't stop, not unless an external force stops it. It can't go on and on in the same direction, for the further it goes one way, the more force there is building up to force it in another."

"That makes sense," Freddy admitted. "And the Gay Phase was quite a swing from Know-More. That means, I suppose, that this new age will be quite a swing from the Gay Phase. I hope you're all wrong about this, Ted."

Ted laughed. "Why? You wouldn't want the Gay Times to go on forever, would you?"

"Of course. Wouldn't you?" She was genuinely surprised.

"No, I'm prepared to welcome Revival. Vice is all very well, but you can have more than enough of it."

The church was any room where the services happened to be held, and the services were held in various rooms and halls which fitted the congregation at the time. Ten years ago the Small Hall, holding a hundred and fifty, had been used. Five years ago, at the height of the Gay Phase, the services had usually been held in one of the recreation rooms, holding up to forty people.

Since then the services had gone back to the Small Hall, then the Big Hall, and finally they had to go to the ballroom, the biggest hall on the *Arc-en-ciel.* It could take nearly six hundred, seated. Although there hadn't been a capacity congregation yet, that night's was very close.

Ted sat in the front row with all the others who had some sort of official position in the community: the doctors, police officers, chroniclers, chief technicians, ship masters, nursery matrons, labor officers and all the rest of them.

Behind sat the next-in-command—rank-and-file technicians, police, carpenters, joiners and so on. Round the middle block and pulpit and reading-desk sat everybody else, the people who merely existed without any particular purpose.

Lila and Robina sat together, Robina rather surprised to find herself with company. Her father, as a labor officer, sat

in the central block. Her mother was in the choir. No one ever heard much out of Mrs. Phimister, except when she was in the choir. Being married to a man like Phimister was not conducive to self-expression.

"I always sit here," Robina whispered. "Can you guess why?"

Lila looked around, wondering if there was a quick way out, but couldn't see any reason for sitting in the front seat of the back block unless it was to be seen. That was certainly a good enough reason. She crossed her legs, arranged her skirt exactly as she wanted it and pointed her toe gracefully. However, she didn't think that was Robina's reason.

"No," she whispered back. "Why?"

"Look," said Robina, and went pink. Lila looked, and saw Gil Cordiner. As a chronicler he sat in the central block, just opposite them.

"Haven't you got over that yet?" asked Lila. "Why, he must be twenty years older than you."

"Only fifteen!" exclaimed Robina, forgetting where she was. People turned to stare, for though the service hadn't started yet the organist was playing a voluntary, and everyone was settling down.

"Has he ever noticed you?" asked Lila mischievously, when the heads had turned back again.

Robina turned her face away and didn't answer, which Lila took to mean he hadn't. It was not unnatural that Robina had fallen in love with Gil, for so had a hundred other young girls in the last ten years, not to mention a couple of hundred older women.

Gil was the handsomest man on the ship. Nobody disputed it. Probably quite a lot of people would have done so if his temperament had been different. But he was so patient, so modest that nobody could be jealous of him, no matter how handsome he was or how many women were in love with him.

A little along from Gil was Ted. And a little along from Robina and Lila was Freddy. People had stared when they saw Freddy. It was only now, after fully ten minutes, that

heads had ceased turning to verify the startling fact that Freddy Steel was attending a church service.

Ted wouldn't have chosen to be staring straight at Freddy if he had had any choice in the matter, but he hadn't. His place was more or less fixed. Freddy's wasn't, and she had chosen to be stared at by the whole front row, reasonably enough. Being there to be seen, she had apparently decided to make a good job of it.

So Ted had to look at Freddy and realize that he still loved her. He didn't respect her, admire her, or like her. He simply found it impossible to face the fact that it might be a good idea to break with her. He loved the dainty set of her head, the way she wriggled her left shoulder occasionally, as if she had an itch.

He couldn't forget the secret half-smiles which danced across her face when she didn't know she was being watched, the unexpectedly naive pride with which she often glanced at her own beautiful ankles. He loved her voice, and when she was silent he wanted to do something, anything, to make her speak.

He realized perfectly well that he didn't love Freddy's soul but, in fact, doubted very much that she had such a thing. That didn't seem to make much difference.

The voluntary on the small electric organ came to an end, and the Rev. Drummond Smith Johns came in quietly and climbed into the pulpit. He made his appearance modestly and hurriedly, as if trying to be in his pulpit before anyone noticed him.

He should, perhaps, have expanded with Revival, become an important, imposing figure, but he wasn't the sort of man who could regard himself as important or try to make himself imposing. He was far too modest to believe he was in any way responsible for Revival.

All he could do was try not to be too unworthy of it.

CHAPTER FOUR

DURING the service, the Rev. Johns mentioned the meeting

to take place afterwards. He merely said the Revival meeting would take place an hour after the service in the Small Hall. Those who were to attend knew about it already.

But when the meeting was assembled, Ted knew very soon that his guess had been right and that this was going to be a very important meeting. There was an air of business about it. It hung in the air almost visibly.

Dr. Martin presided at the start, but almost at once there was a motion that a new council be formed, to be known as the Revival Council. There was no opposition, no debate. In less than half an hour the officials of the new council had been elected.

The Rev. Johns was honorary president. Phimister was president, with Martin as secretary. Almost everyone who was present was elected to the Council, together with about half a dozen who were not.

Only half a dozen. This was a meeting of Revivalists, and almost all the leading Revivalists were there. The new Council was a hundred strong, and there were twenty-three members of committee, including Ted and Gil Cordiner.

Almost before anyone knew it there was a complete new organization ready and willing to do anything.

And long before the newborn Revival Council expected to be called upon to do anything, it had its first job.

Ted, like most of those present, found things happening so fast that it was all he could do to keep up with them, let alone protest. It was like a well-arranged sports meeting, with each event following the last so closely that there was no time to reflect on the last before the present one claimed everybody's attention.

Yet it wasn't true to say that Phimister or Martin or anyone else was rushing them into anything. It was like some other meetings about which Ted had read, back in Earth's history—revolutionary meetings, political meetings, religious meetings, last-stand meetings. Everybody happened to feel the same way at the same time in the same place. And that was that; the thing was done.

"It's all very well talking," somebody said, "but there's been plenty of talk and it's time something is done."

"Vice is still rampant," said someone else.

"Why, this very night," someone else remarked, his voice trembling with indignation, "I happen to know there is an orgy taking place in the Blue Room."

"An orgy?"

"Hardly that," remarked Gil. "Just a party."

"A drunken orgy," said the first someone else, in tones of considerable satisfaction.

"If I may say something," said the chief electrician. "At Mr. Phimister's suggestion, at the President's suggestion, I—"

He was stuttering and his voice wasn't very clear at the best of times. Phimister took it up.

"I, too, had heard of this, ah, entertainment," he said coldly. "In view of the nature of the thing—a blatant attack on the sanctity of the Sabbath, and not merely that, as I understand the matter, but an orgy which is a deliberate insult to Revival—I have taken certain steps . . ."

Ted wondered who else would be at the Blue Room, as well as Freddy. Gil? No, Gil was here. Gil didn't quite fit either in the Gay Phase or in Revival, but apparently he had cast his lot with Revival.

At the Blue Room would be almost everybody of any importance who wasn't here, Ted decided. It was a natural dichotomy.

Revival was on the way up, with startling rapidity. The Gay Phase was on the way down, with equally startling rapidity. Apparently the Gay Timers couldn't quite believe they were being left behind so thoroughly, so quickly. Here was a powerful new Council militating against an orgy which, only two or three years ago, would have been just another party.

". . . and if someone at the back will kindly turn off the lights, we'll see just how these people are spending their Sunday evening," Phimister said with disapproval.

"Just a moment," said Gil sharply. It was like an icy

rain to hear Gil use that tone, and Ted, who had been dreaming, came right up-to-date and realized what Phimister had been telling them.

Phimister had suggested to the electrician that the meeting should see what went on at the party. Tiny spy-eyes planted there were to be used to show the new Council, on the giant screen behind Phimister, exactly what was going on in the Blue Room. Phimister had told them that and nobody had raised any objection or made any protest, until Gil spoke.

"That's a filthy business," Gil said, reverting to his usual gentle tone, "spying without warning on a private party. It's immoral."

Everybody was looking at him, but Gil wasn't in the least self-conscious. He stood and waited. Ted started to get up to support him.

Martin spoke first, however. "We could only consent to this," he said, "on the basis that no retributive action will be taken, no matter what we see. Does that satisfy you, Mr. Cordiner? In effect, we are merely making an inspection."

"In effect, you are spying," Gil declared, with conviction but without heat.

"Perhaps there is something in what Mr. Cordiner says," the Rev. Johns observed. "I wonder if we should wait until—"

"Until," Phimister said sharply, "everyone is warned? I merely suggest this so that we can see what we're up against. We are fighting evil—"

"With evil?" Gil demanded. "I'm not going to argue. I never have believed in argument. I'm simply saying if you go ahead with this, I want no part of the Revival Council."

"In fighting evil," said Phimister, "we must sometimes—"

Gil walked out of the hall.

Ted wondered whether to follow him or not. He hesitated.

Martin stood up. And Martin was Ted's boss, so to speak. Ted waited.

"I see Cordiner's point," Martin said, "but I think he greatly exaggerates its importance. He referred to the Blue Room affair as a private party. As I understand the matter,

anyone who cares to go along can go. All we are doing is going there, as observers, a hundred of us instead of one. What's immoral about that?"

"Naturally," Phimister took it up, "if we sent a messenger along to the Blue Room to warn the persons there that there was going to be an inspection, there would only be a respectable, sedate private gathering when we switched on the viewer."

He stopped. Taking consent for granted, or unbearably impatient, the electrician, who had done a big job and wasn't going to have it wasted, switched on to put an end to the argument. Someone at the back put out the hall lights. And the first person who came into focus at the Blue Room party was Robina Phimister.

After that there was no question of switching off again.

No one at the dimmed-out Revival meeting knew what to say. Nobody said anything and nobody did anything for a long time. Everybody was watching the bright screen.

Ted had been attending parties like this one with Freddy until quite recently. Not for quite a while did he see anything to startle him at all. But he realized that many of the people around him had been leading sheltered, model lives for long enough to forget that they themselves had ever been as abandoned as this. And some, of course, had never been abandoned at all.

Abruptly he realized how different company put a different complexion on things. He found his face getting hot as he watched the screen, and was glad of the darkness.

There was no dancing going on when the first picture appeared. There were three spy-eyes, apparently—one at each end of the Blue Room, a little above eye-level, and one about the middle, fairly high up, so that people seen from that viewpoint were clearly recognizable, but foreshortened. Distance was no object; the electrician who was picking up sight and sound was switching at will from one viewpoint to another and adjusting magnification to fill the screen with whatever he wanted.

Robina wasn't doing anything reprehensible, but she was

there, and she was wearing a dress which Phimister could not possibly know anything about. Before the Revivalists had recovered from the shock, Lila Johns appeared, laughing, with a glass in her hand.

And after that none of the watchers dared speak.

The wife of the chief electrician was in the arms of the husband of the woman on Phimister's left. She wasn't merely in his arms, but had obviously been there for a long time, intended to stay there, and liked it. Involved in a kissing game in one corner were daughters, cousins, husbands, wives, nephews and nieces of almost everyone watching at the Revival meeting. Suzette Norris, the black-haired dancer, had about twenty spectators: she was doing a sinuous belly-dance, to a gramophone record. Everyone else was drinking, necking, or both.

Three years ago a party like that would have been considered slow. But what people think of a thing depends on the people, not the thing, and Ted knew very well what the people around him were thinking.

The chief electrician, not unnaturally, turned the scanners back on his wife for another incredulous look. She was not merely being kissed, she was sitting on her Lothario's knee and kicking her legs up in delight. She was winding herself about him as if she were trying to win a prize for the closest possible contact, and kissing him as if drinking champagne.

Then, again rather incredulously, perhaps, the operator turned the scanners back on Suzette, and the magnification increased until she filled the screen. There was no doubt, Ted reflected uncomfortably, that all those dances which had originated in warm countries back on Earth, in which a girl writhed her hips and made waving motions with her wrists bent, could mean only one thing.

Nevertheless, what was going on at the party, in general, was more harmless than Ted, rather on the side of the revelers, expected—until Freddy took a hand.

The operator picked her up as she emerged from the women's room. Alcoholically happy, she obviously intended to liven up the party. There was nobody with her, apparently;

Ted was surprised but gratified to see that she didn't automatically replace him with some other escort when he didn't happen to be available.

"Hold it," she shouted. "Hold it."

The music stopped and silence took over gradually. Freddy made a gesture, and abruptly all the lights went out.

There were squeals, scuffles, rustlings, semi-hysterical giggling and laughing. Still nobody in the Small Hall spoke, afraid of missing something.

When the lights came on again there were more shrieks and hasty readjustments of position and clothing. Freddy tried to climb on a table but was stopped by her tight skirt. She unfastened it, to loud cheers, and let it drop to the floor. In a couple of lithe movements she was on the table.

"No wallflowers at this party," she announced. Her forefinger stabbed the air, pointed at Robina Phimister, who blushed scarlet. Freddy's finger moved again. A tall, thin young man, finding all eyes on him, blushed too.

Freddy pointed at Robina and the youth with her two index fingers, and then moved them together. As if on strings, Robina and the thin youth stumbled together, amid laughter.

"Kiss her," Freddy ordered. The young man gulped and did so. "Put your arm round her waist." He obeyed. Robina was self-conscious, but game. "Take his other hand." She did so.

"Surely I don't have to tell you any more?" said Freddy. "I will if you like."

They shook their heads quickly. Freddy made another gesture and the lights went out again.

"We've got to stop this!" Phimister shouted, his icy calm broken for once. "Put those lights on, I tell you!"

Nobody in the darkened Blue Room paid any attention, because though the people in the Small Hall could see and hear what went on in the Blue Room, there was no communication the other way.

The lights did come on again at last. Freddy was still standing on the table. Robina and her swain were flushed and breathless, half sitting, half lying on the floor. One of

Robina's shoulder straps hung loose over her arm, and her hair was disheveled.

The camera swooped again on Suzette, who was dancing again, this time nude above the waist. Almost instantly the camera swung back as Robina screamed in protest. Her new friend was pouring a glass of whisky down inside her dress.

"Take it off," Freddy advised. "You don't want to catch cold, do you? Help her to get it off, somebody."

This was too much for Phimister.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE WHOLE Blue Room party was before the new Council.

It was a mad scene. Sitting in judgment in the ballroom, where the church service had been held only a few hours since, were the whole Council, a hundred strong. In the middle, surrounded like human sacrifices in an arena, were the revelers, still in their party clothes, exactly as they had been when a detachment from the council meeting in the Small Hall, armed, froze the party in an instant, chipped it into so many nervous units, shoveled the whole lot up and dumped it on the half-cleared floor of the ballroom.

"You can't do this," a little fat man in evening dress shouted angrily.

"We've done it," said Martin drily.

Some of the revelers were frightened, some angry, but most were merely puzzled. The man who had been kissing the electrician's wife was one of the puzzled ones. Like the fat man in evening dress, he couldn't comprehend that a new force in social affairs had emerged in the last few hours. He knew about Revival, about a loose, ill-organized committee with a vague constitution and aims. He didn't realize that the new Revival Council was not merely a fact but also a strong, confident, retributive body.

Suzette Norris was doing her best to brazen it out. They hadn't let her wrap herself up, and she made no attempt to cover herself. She stood defiantly with hands on hips, smiling when any member of the council caught her eye.

In contrast, Robina was terrified. She knew she had sinned. She knew retribution was at hand. She wished she were dead.

Freddy was calmly waiting to see what happened. If the members of the Council stared at her, she stared right back at them.

"This is ridiculous," the little fat man said with decreasing assurance as the whispering around him subsided and he was the only one left protesting.

When his voice died away there was silence.

"You miserable sinners," said Phimister with biting contempt.

The protest broke out again. Sterile and empty protest, however, for it presently collapsed, defeated, before the patient stare of Phimister and the Revival Council.

"You have chosen to break almost every commandment there is," said Phimister, "and would no doubt have broken all the rest, among you, if you had been left alone to do so. You—"

"So we are charged," said Freddy with irony as biting as his contempt, "not only with what we did, but with what we were going to do. This is a new conception of justice."

Such noise as there was stopped. The conflict crystalized. Each side had a leader.

And how just it was, Ted thought, that they should be Phimister, always a Revivalist, and Freddy, for ever and ever a Gay Timer. One didn't even have to hear what they said to understand the conflict; one merely had to look at them.

Phimister: black-coated, broad-shouldered, cold, disapproving. A man of stone. A man who stood for virtue, but not virtue which was going to bring sensual delight in heaven. *Virtue is its own reward.* That kind of virtue.

Freddy: beautiful, gleaming, vital and warm, her long, slim legs bare, her full breasts straining at the soft material of her bodice. A woman of the half-world. A girl who stood for vice and the pleasure of vice. *The sweetest fruit is forbidden fruit.*

"You are not charged with anything," said Phimister frigidly, "but what we saw with our own eyes."

"What you saw by spying," retorted Freddy. "By stealth, by prurience. By the high moral principles of a Peeping Tom. Your evidence is what you saw through a keyhole."

Her gaze swept the ranks of the Revival Council scornfully. It passed over Ted without stopping. He didn't know whether she was angry with him for being there among her enemies, for not doing anything to help her, or was merely pretending, as he had suggested, that they were nothing to each other.

"There's no suggestion," someone behind Phimister said, "of taking any—"

"Quiet!" Phimister snapped.

It was obvious that Phimister had no intention of letting the people before the Council know that no action would be taken against them until he had given them a good fright.

"Are you a new dictator, Phimister?" Freddy demanded.

"There are no dictators," said Martin disapprovingly. "Neither here nor—"

"Then why are we here, before a new council which can't have any authority until someone gives it authority? What right have you people to break up a private party and bring us here by force of arms? If you are a dictator, Phimister, set up in the last couple of hours, give your orders and tell us who is to be shot. If you're not, I spit in your eye."

She had been turning the tables since she first spoke up to oppose Phimister.

"I'm the president of the new Revival Council," said Phimister. "But that isn't the point. My daughter—"

Freddy laughed ironically. "I suppose we took her to the Blue Room in chains?"

"This is getting out of hand," said Martin. He was only stating the obvious.

"Very true," said Freddy. "I think it's gone on long enough. Too long."

"This is ridiculous!" said the little fat man. Freddy had given him back his confidence. He could speak again now.

"I think—" said the Rev. Drummond Smith Johns.

"Wouldn't it be better if—" said Martin.

The ex-revelers behind Freddy realized vaguely that while earlier on they had been promptly silenced when they attempted to protest, now was the time to confuse the issue. The noise in the hall swelled as if a volume-control knob had been slowly turned up.

The trial ended in complete confusion. As an admonition, a threat, a declaration, it might have been very successful if the bluff hadn't been called. Once Freddy stood up to Phimister, however, it soon became clear that only if a dictatorship had been set up, as Freddy suggested, could any action be taken against people who had merely been holding a rather reckless private party.

Nevertheless, the trial did serve as a warning. If nearly a hundred people could be haled before another hundred people—involving a quarter of the total population of the ship—and made to give an account of themselves, things had changed, a new phase had been entered, and Revival was very strong indeed.

The Blue Room orgy would be remembered as the last of its kind.

And, of course, the part of quite a few people in it would be remembered. Particularly four women.

Robina, Phimister's daughter, would be watched like a dangerous criminal for the rest of her life.

Lila, not because she had played a major part but because she was the minister's daughter.

Suzette, who had shown herself to be without shame, without modesty, without decency.

Freddy, because both at the orgy and at the trial she had taken command and responsibility for the whole thing. Freddy, because all the others might change, but one somehow knew that Freddy would never pretend to change. Freddy, because she represented everyone else at the party, because she had set herself up an an enemy of Revival.

CHAPTER SIX

Year 191

TED reached P17 without seeing anyone, had one last cautious look around, opened a door, entered the room without switching on the light and shut the door.

When he turned, Freddy was in his arms. She found him unerringly in the dark from knowledge of his habits. She knew exactly how he turned after closing a door, exactly where he would be, how he would be holding his arms, where his lips would be.

She knew him so well that even before he spoke she read something of what he was going to say through contact with his body. She released herself and asked sharply: "What's wrong, Ted?"

Ted switched on the light. Often when they met they never did switch on the light. There was always a danger that it would show under the door or through the ventilator, or even that someone was checking on the power supply.

"Everything's wrong, Freddy," he said. "We can't go on meeting like this."

She drew in her breath sharply.

"Sooner or later we're bound to be caught," Ted said. "And you don't want to spend forty-eight hours in the stocks as a fornicator, do you?"

"If it were only that—"

"Yes. If it were only that, who would care? But I'd never be allowed to teach again, in case I infected the children with my own corruption. And you, well, you're still Freddy Steel of the Blue Room Orgy, and you can't afford to add anything to that."

"Ted," said Freddy bitterly, "how long is this madness going to go on?"

Ted shrugged. "Not being a prophet, I can't tell you. Anyway, Freddy, I'm still not convinced that it's all madness."

"Not madness? Why—"

"Oh, I admit morality's being overdone. There isn't much doubt that Revival is going a little too far in many ways."

"In *every* way," Freddy exclaimed. "Think of it—no alcohol for human consumption, any lie punishable, attendance at church compulsory, and the stocks for me if I wore last year's clothes. Stocks, a punishment from ancient history, at a junction of two main avenues, as if this were Seventeenth Century England."

"So it is, in a way. We may be on a huge spaceship in the middle of a four-hundred-year trip to a new world, Freddy, but Phimister is another Cromwell and Revival is Puritanism reincarnated."

It was the truth. Revival had been a purely religious renaissance at first. Perhaps one of the things which had turned it slightly was the fact that the Rev. Johns, so kindly, modest and matter-of-fact, would never be a leader in any extremist movement. So the movement carried on without him, or at least bypassed him and what he stood for. Gradually Revival had become Puritan rather than religious, a strict, severe, super-moral way of life with religion merely an adjunct.

It was overdoing morality, as Ted said, to spy on people to make sure no law was broken, to ostracize anyone who told a lie or took the name of the Lord in vain or spoke obscenely, to throw in the stocks anyone taken in adultery, to publish all discovered and proved sins so that everyone knew every sinner and his sin, for all time.

Yet, on the other hand, people who didn't do these things were safe. Ted might have been a little lax in his own behaviour at times, but he didn't approve of swearing, lying, obscenity, blasphemy, and all the other things which were punished in a way they had never been before.

"There's too much stress on rectitude," Ted remarked, "and there used to be too little. But to come back to the point, Freddy. I don't think the game's worth the candle any more."

"*You* don't think!" exclaimed Freddy. "What about me?"

"Well, we each have to decide for ourselves, Freddy."

"I don't get a chance, apparently. You decide for me."

"Only for myself."

"That's right. You thought only of yourself, didn't you?"

"As a mater of fact," said Ted quietly, "I've delayed this moment as long as possible because I was thinking of you."

She flared up at that. "You think you're the only man on this ship? You think I couldn't have anyone I liked?"

"Once you could, Freddy. Not now."

She threw herself at him, claws unsheathed. He spun her around, pinioning her arms. She tried to bite his hands, his wrists.

"This doesn't prove anything, Freddy," he protested.

She was beyond reason. She kicked and struggled until she was weak with her efforts and Ted was in little better state.

At last he released her. She threw herself on the bed, leaning back on her elbows and looking at him broodingly. She was dressed in the current fashion, the fashion of Revival. Instead of short, crisp, frivolous frocks which had characterized the Gay Phase, she wore a dark, sober dress buttoned to her neck and reaching below her knees.

Although unattractive in itself, on Freddy it was very attractive indeed. However, Ted sometimes sighed for the gay Freddy, in light, bright colors instead of the drab hues of Revival, a frankly painted Freddy, a Freddy showing her magnificent legs and her smooth, creamy arms and shoulders.

Soon after the Blue Room Orgy he and Freddy had quarreled, by agreement, and built up a façade of indifference to each other. Since then they had been civil to each other in public, no more, and had met only in secret, in unoccupied rooms like the one in P17. They had had to be more and more careful as time went on, not only because the check on public morals became more and more stringent, but also because the consequences of discovery kept getting more serious.

After all, Ted had thought time and again during those months when they kept up the furtive, ultracautious

meetings, Freddy had been true to him in the Gay Phase, when she could have had anyone she liked; it was only fair that he should stick to her now. Besides, she wasn't getting any younger. True, she was only thirty-five and as beautiful as ever. But she was no longer a young girl, able to start her life anew if necessary.

"So this is the end?" she said bitterly. "Quarreling, fighting, afraid—and no mention of the one way we could stay together."

"Marriage?" said Ted. "Would you marry me, Freddy?"

"The way you put it shows you hope I won't!"

"No, I thought *you* didn't want it. That's why I—"

"That's right, make up my mind for me again."

"Will you marry me, Freddy?"

She continued to stare resentfully at him for about half a minute. Then as his smile broadened, she began to mirror it.

"No, I never did want you to marry me, Ted," she said. "I've got one phobia: fear of being tied to one man. Particularly now, when the only way to get away from him is death."

Divorce, of course, had become practically impossible under Revival.

She smiled. "Last time," she said, and held out her arms.

It was very sweet. Freddy cried, the only time Ted had ever known her to cry. Ted felt like crying, too. But through it all he was aware that this was uncharacteristic, misleading. It was only because it was the last time that it was so sweet, so tenderly delightful.

The *Arc-en-ciel* was in free fall, had been in free fall for nearly two centuries, and would be in free fall for another two centuries. Most of the maintenance which had to be done could be regarded as housekeeping. The men who had planned the ship had seen to that.

Near Christmas—*the* Christmas—a lot of people would have to train themselves and be trained for the jobs which would exist again then. While the ship was merely in free

fall, it hardly had to be checked at all, for every part of it and everything in it was going in the same direction, without the slightest strain on it. It wouldn't have mattered if the ship had merely been tied together with strings.

But when the time approached when the *Arc-en-ciel* would have to be put in orbit around a planet, problems which hadn't existed for four centuries would exist again, and strains which hadn't existed for the same time would have to be allowed for again.

Men and women would have to learn once more about stresses and strains and gravity, problems which had not concerned their ancestors for quite a few generations back. And there would be many other subjects—spatial mathematics, some aspects of astronomy, physiology, chemistry and physics —which would require experts before the tenders from the *Arc-en-ciel* could touch down safely on Lorraine.

Then, the landing over, the task of colonizing Lorraine would need another set of experts. The subjects which would be important then were agriculture, market gardening, dairy farming, engineering, architecture, surveying, town planning. . . .

That was the importance of Ted Benzil's job.

From some viewpoints the most important job on the ship was the rector's, and teaching in general. It was the job of the teachers to see that generation passed on to generation what must be passed on, what couldn't be trusted to the books alone. Not learning, but how to learn.

There was no money on the *Arc-en-ciel*. People didn't do things for the money they would bring, but for the satisfaction of doing them and the prestige attached to them.

Teaching was an important job with a lot of prestige attached to it. Since teachers constructed the link between generation and generation, they started in their job early and did it all their lives.

There were the rector, the deputy head and the class and subject teachers. The rector appointed everybody on his staff; he could have all the advice he wanted, but no one could dictate to him. The deputy head was appointed from

among the class and subject teachers, and almost invariably became the rector in due course.

Thus Dr. Eric Martin had been class teacher, deputy head and finally rector. Ted had been a class teacher and still was, but he was also the deputy head now.

Every rector naturally imposed his personality on his school to a certain extent. The school under Eric Martin was a very different thing from what it had been under Benjamin Wilson, the previous rector. And it would be different again, under Edward Benzil.

There was not only the difference for which the rector himself was responsible, there was also the difference due to the times. Benjamin Wilson had seen the Dark Age turn to Know-More—had helped to turn it. Martin, though he had only been rector for a short time, had guided the children on the ship through the Gay Phase and part of Revival.

Ted wouldn't be rector until after Revival, probably. He had often wondered what was in store for him. Something very different from Revival, certainly. And something else as different again.

Part of the rector's great responsibility—as Ted saw it, at any rate—was to cut down to reasonable proportions the effect of the periodic trends. Thus Wilson's children, who had been brought through the Dark Age, when all learning and talent were suspect, were capable of climbing to Know-More. The children of Know-More had been adaptable enough to live and thrive in the Gay Phase. And the children who had been at school in the Gay Phase had not been unfitted for Revival.

"You can't stop the pendulum swinging," Ted had told Freddy once. "Every swing means a swing the other way."

Some rectors had tried—mistakenly, Ted thought—to stop the pendulum swinging. It was natural enough that Jonathan Andrews, seeing the Golden Age dissolving into the Dark Age, should try to stop the change. It was even more natural that he had failed.

No, the rectors and teachers had to pay lip-service to

the trends, the inevitable and inevitably extremist trends that changed the face of life itself on the *Arc-en-ciel* every five to fifteen years, but they shouldn't pay much more than that. In the turmoil of trends, there were at least two classes who should be neutral: the teachers and the chroniclers. Ted and Gil both believed that.

Martin and Ted had to be on the Revival Council, of course. But sometimes, though Ted liked and respected the rector, though there was no question of jealousy—sometimes Ted wondered if Martin was neutral enough.

Freddy and Ted passed within two yards of each other and merely nodded. There was nothing new in that. That was how they had been treating each other, in public, for months. The only difference was that this time they meant it.

Freddy went quite openly to Gil's room, tapped on the door and went in.

"Hello, Freddy," said Gil, with his patient smile, and no hint of the surprise he must be feeling at Freddy's visit. There had been no warning.

"I'll speak plainly, Gil," said Freddy, leaning back against the door, arms behind her, looking like a memory of the Gay Phase. "I don't think much of Revival and I don't believe you do either. Right?"

"I don't talk about Revival," said Gil, smiling again.

"Very wise, I suppose. But you walked out of the Revival Council once, and you've never been back," said Freddy.

"True."

"Even apart from that, I'd know you didn't think much of Revival. Because of something you said long, long ago. Something I knew you meant. Something I remembered."

"What was that?"

"You said you could force people to be bad, but not to be good. It struck me that believing that, you couldn't think much of Revival."

Gil turned his calm, patient gaze on her. "I underestimated you, Freddy," he said.

"Well, that gives us one thing in common, a dislike of Revival," said Freddy.

"Only we dislike it for very different reasons. I because I don't believe you can force people to be good. You because you would like to force people to be bad."

It was a harsh judgment for Gil to make of anyone. But it was justified, nevertheless.

"I came to give you something, if you'll have it," said Freddy abruptly.

"What?"

"Me."

"No." Gil wasn't surprised. On the contrary, he now seemed to understand what hadn't been clear before. "Go back to Ted and marry him, Freddy. You won't do it, of course, but it's what you should do. Otherwise—"

"Otherwise what?"

"You'll be a Revival martyr," said Gil simply.

Freddy shuddered at the simple frankness of it.

"I don't see how you can avoid it," Gil went on, "now that Ted's broken with you."

"How do you know that Ted and I—"

Gil shrugged. Freddy remembered that Gil was brilliant—remembered it, for he never showed off, so that one was inclined to forget his intelligence. He had not been deceived, apparently, by the maneuvers of Ted and herself.

"Ted was careful," said Gil. "You won't be. You'll do something which, added to the Blue Room Orgy episode, will mean . . ."

He shrugged again.

"You don't mean Revival will ever come to the stage of execution?" Freddy demanded.

"What else? The Puritans executed people."

Freddy pushed herself away from the door and strode about the little cabin, frowning. "I think you're going around the bend, Gil."

"Oh, no," said Gil, gently. "Not me."

She had given up the idea which had brought her to Gil's room. When he said no, he meant it.

"But how can it be right to kill? How can people in a movement like Revival justify killing?"

"The Puritans executed people," Gil repeated. "They found no difficulty in justifying it. You execute people for the good of the community. For the good of their souls. For any reason you like, only you must find a phrase which suggests the execution has been personally ratified by God. It's quite easy."

"That sounds more like Ted than you."

Gil smiled. "I don't mind. Ted will live through Revival and be the next rector. He'll be one of the best rectors we ever had."

"But I—you really mean what you're saying about my being a martyr?"

"Unless you change."

"I can't change."

Gil shrugged his shoulders again and smiled.

Freddy left him rather abruptly and not at all as she had intended. She was frightened by his warning, chiefly because the way he gave it showed it was quite unemotional.

He didn't seem to care.

When she came to think of it, walking out of that meeting as Gil had done, though it sounded fine and high-principled and noble, was not the sort of thing an ordinary man would do. Ted hadn't done it. Nobody else had done it.

Perhaps Gil was too high-principled, too noble, too far above ordinary people, too impartial.

She left the room rather precipitately, and only pulled herself together when she almost ran into a girl at the end of the passage. It was Robina Phimister.

Freddy became herself in a flash. She musn't let the younger generation think she was slipping.

When Freddy hurried past Robina she wasn't particularly pleased with herself, or proud of herself, or happy.

But she was still the loveliest, smartest, most dashing woman on the ship. And if she didn't see why she should

be envied, Robina did. Robina didn't see how she could be anything but an object of envy.

Robina had been jealous of many things and people in her short life. It always seemed that what everyone else had was better than what she had, and everybody's life always seemed a better life than hers.

There was a certain amount of truth in this. Particularly in the case of her friend Lila there was a bitter contrast. Lila was prettier, there was no doubt of that. Even Robina had almost always admitted it. But the main contrast lay in the fact that Lila had been utterly free all her life—even after that Blue Room Orgy that still made Robina shudder when she thought of its consequences—while Robina had been checked, restricted, supervised and repressed, most particularly after the Blue Room Orgy.

But Lila wasn't the only person Robina habitually envied, not by a long chalk. Lila alternated with Freddy Steel as Robina's "Person I Should Most Like To Be."

Robina might have hated Freddy. Freddy had been responsible for much of the trouble which had arisen out of the Blue Room affair. Instead she admired her for the way she had taken the lead at the party and at the trial, the way she always looked, the way she always seemed to feel, her taste, her intelligence, her freedom, the fact that so many men desired her, everything about her . . .

Freddy coming from Gil's room was another matter.

Robina had been in love with Gil for a long time, though she had scarcely ever spoken to him. She sat in church where she could watch him, went to meetings which he might attend, and stood about where she might see him, always very unobtrusively so that he wouldn't see her.

But Freddy coming from Gil's room was too much. A switch in Robina's mind which had always been at "maybe" or "no" slammed over to "yes," and Robina dashed along the corridor, rapped sharply on Gil's door, and went in.

She was so jealous of Freddy that her momentum was tremendous. In less than a minute she was telling Gil breathlessly how much she loved him.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE SCHOOL was a self-contained unit above the ballroom. It had a hall off which all the other doors opened—six classrooms, a music room, a library and three private rooms, one for Martin, one for Ted, and one for the other teachers. When other accommodation was needed—a large hall, theater or gymnasium—the pupils had to march to a suitable hall elsewhere in the ship.

Martin was waiting for Ted when he arrived in the morning. "Sorry, Mr. Benzil," he said. "I'll have to leave you in charge today. And there's a Council committee coming to inspect the school library."

Ted didn't have to ask which Council. It could only be the Revival Council."

"Coming to inspect the school library? What do you mean, rector? Seeing how the books are arranged or if they're in good condition, or what?"

"I don't know. There was a meeting on the subject, but I couldn't go, and it was too late to get you to take my place. I know that this same committee had been inspecting the main library for a week. This is part of the same inspection."

Ted was frowning. Martin noticed it and put a hand lightly on his shoulder. "You're still not too sure of the Council and the President, are you, Mr. Benzil?"

Again, he didn't have to say which Council or which President. Not now.

"I do think they've been casting their net rather wide," Ted remarked. "This, for example. The school is entirely your affair, rector. Even the inspecters have to ask your permission before they can come through that door."

Martin shrugged and smiled, clearly not inclined to exert his authority. "The truth is," he said, "you're not a hundred percent behind Revival, Mr. Benzil, and I am."

Ted felt like saying: "You're a hermit, Martin. You don't go around much, and when you do, most of the time your eyes are shut. Otherwise you'd realize that Revival isn't quite perfect."

He didn't, however, and Martin left him to deal with the problems of the school for the day. Martin had been doing that a lot lately, concerning himself more and more with paperwork and less and less with teaching or the actual running of the school.

The committee, Phimister and eleven other members of the Council, arrived just after the children. Ted left his class in Marge Smith's charge and attended to the committee.

"Dr. Martin hasn't told me much about your visit," he said, shaking hands with Phimister. "So I suppose all I can do is show you the library and leave you to it."

"That will suit us excellently," said Phimister in his usual frigid way. He didn't mean to be unfriendly. He just couldn't help it.

He was the same cold, precise, disapproving character he had always been. One thing he and Martin had in common, Ted reflected, was that they disapproved of such a lot. Martin, true, approved of quite a few things. All the same, between them Martin and Phimister could always master enough disapproval for five ordinary people.

Ted left them in the library and went back to his class. Outside the door, however, he paused. What were they doing in the library? Were they going to report that certain books were unsuitable, and should be removed?

Very likely. And if so, Ted was going to oppose them strongly. He didn't approve of castrating literature, or refusing to let children read the complete *Gulliver's Travels* because it mentioned excretion and urination, or replacing the bloodthirsty tales they loved with moralistic, milk-and-water fables.

It occurred to him that if this committee had been operating in the main library for a week, some idea of their ends and means might be gained there. He left his class in Marge's charge and went to the library.

The librarian wasn't there, but Gil was, writing his reports.

It had been decided long ago that reports, both the news and the history of the ship, should be written by indepen-

dent people, men and women who had no other job. These people were called chroniclers.

When anything happened, Gil and his colleagues wrote two reports of it. One, a racy detailed account, went into the journal *Yesterday*, the ship's newspaper, printed six days a week and available to everybody. *Yesterday* was filed, of course. In addition, however, the chroniclers wrote more critical reports, trying to probe the significance of the events involved, for *Chronicles*, the ship's official history.

Ted sat down opposite Gil. "Say, Gil," he said. "I've got a library committee along investigating the school's collection. Apparently they've been here already. Do you know what's going on?"

Gil nodded. "I've been told not to report on it for *Yesterday*," he said.

Ted stared at him. "You've been what? That's—"

Gil smiled. "Exactly. Suppression of the truth. But that's not at all surprising, really, when you know what the report which has been suppressed would be. Here's my report for the *Chronicles*."

Ted took the sheet covered with Gil's tiny, neat handwriting and read:

> October 17, 191. The Revivalist's first overt fanaticism was the censorship of all books. Last Monday *A Midsummer Night's Dream* lost 79 lines, *Hamlet* 61, and *Othello* 94. Some 21,000 words were deleted from *Grapes of Wrath* and *Moll Flanders* appears to have disappeared entirely. A hitherto unmentioned marriage takes place in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. Joyce's *Ulysses* still exists, but it is now a relatively slim volume, little more than a short story. Flaubert, Lawrence Sterne, de Gautier, Rabelais (of course!), Maugham, Joyce, Defoe, Hemingway and Swift are among the Terran authors who most particularly . . .

Ted looked up angrily. "The fools!" he exclaimed. "The bloody fools!"

"Read on," said Gil.

Ted dropped his eyes to the next paragraph:

> This might have passed almost without comment in Revival. There would certainly have been no need to try to conceal what was being done . . .

"Are they mad?" Ted exclaimed. "How can they hope to conceal—"

"Read the next bit."

> While they were at it, however, the so-called library committee decided that as well as improving literature by deleting anything in it which they didn't like, they might as well improve history in the same way. They started by censoring the issues of *Yesterday* covering the Gay Phase . . .

"Good God!" Ted breathed. "Gil, you haven't gone mad, have you?"

Gil waved his arms at the shelves. "Look for yourself. The offending passages have simply been snipped from the microfilms, which have been so carefully spliced that only a very close examination shows where a section has been deleted."

"But what's been taken out?"

"Everything offensive. All the grim details. The facts are left, generally, but anything the Revivalists thought shouldn't have been mentioned isn't mentioned any more. Generally the censorship is mere deletion, but sometimes when the thing itself is nasty enough, the facts are changed slightly. And there's usually a moral."

"You mean, history reads as if nobody ever did anything evil?"

"Not at all. History reads as if crime never paid, and that retribution always follows wrongdoing. Plenty of crimes, without the grim detail to give people ideas, and always the vengeance of the Lord close behind, like Time's winged

chariot. Of course, this modern burning of the books isn't final, yet. The master copies of all the books exist in bond, in the master stores. But I've no doubt that later—"

"We've got to stop this, Gil. Don't they realize what they're doing? Do they think a lie can ever be better than the truth?"

"Obviously," said Gil gently, "they do."

"But—"

"No, that's wrong. They have a phrase: 'the essential truth.' Everything they've edited is *essentially* true. A criminal transgresses; he dies. The fact that he dies fifty years later is inessential truth. According to the records now, he dies for his crime immediately."

"I don't know which is worse," said Ted angrily. "The rape of literature or the rape of truth. Maybe history doesn't matter. But don't they see that our microfilm copies may be the last record of Shakespeare, Defoe, Swift in existence? Don't they understand what a crime it is to murder them?"

"That must be a rhetorical question," Gil murmured, "for you know the answer. Another illustration of how their minds are working: look up *Arc-en-ciel.* Instead of finding that that's French for rainbow, with a description of a rainbow and some color pictures to illustrate the phenomenon, you find that *Arc-en-ciel* means 'Way to Heaven.' We're the chosen, Ted. We're God's children. If Earth did die, it was because Earth was wicked. We lived because we aren't wicked."

"But they're always telling us how wicked we all are!"

"Relative, Ted. The wicked are destroyed. God's vengeance is swift. If you're not destroyed, you're not wicked. Simple."

"Don't you care about this?"

"I think the tone of my story has made my sympathies clear. Strictly, I shouldn't have written it that way. I should have been impartial. But since it isn't really for the *Chronicles* anyway but only for Phimister—"

He stopped at Ted's expression and explained politely: "I've been told not to comment on this in *Yesterday.* The offensive matter which has been deleted is to be quietly for-

gotten. It never existed. Phimister, our worthy moral leader, didn't mention the *Chronicles*, but naturally I'm not supposed to write anything like this. When it's discovered, it'll be deleted like the rest."

"Then why write it?"

"In much the same spirit as I once walked out of a Revival meeting."

Ted gazed steadily at him. That was like Gil. His protests were apt to be like that; strong, in a way, but empty. He would make it clear what he thought, but he wouldn't fight. Ted was going to fight. This time Revival had gone too far.

Martin didn't explode as Ted had thought he would. He listened with interest rather than the expected feeling of outrage, and said at the end:

"What a grand conception! You don't understand, Mr. Benzil. I realize how you feel about bowdlerizing Shakespeare, but what a grand idea it is to change history to what it should have been! No, I wasn't concerned in this, but I think a remark I dropped to Mr. Phimister must have given him the idea—"

"You mean you condone this?" Ted asked incredulously.

"Don't you see, Mr. Benzil, this is the whole essence of Revival!" said Martin enthusiastically. "Revival is based on the theory—which may, of course, be mistaken—that moral virtue may be achieved by assuming it. Phimister wouldn't agree with that statement. You will, I think."

"Yes, but—"

"Then you must give the idea a chance. It has never been done. You pretend that everyone is virtuous, and soon everyone is. That's the theory, and you can see it already operating. But it's impossible to achieve perfection so long as people have access to history, and to the literature of the past. They see—"

"Either I am mad," said Ted, "or everyone else is."

Martin smiled. "I leave it to you to decide which is more likely."

Ted went to Johns. Johns saw his point of view, and went some way toward agreeing with it.

"But you're exaggerating, Ted," he said. "Frankly, I don't think it's as serious as you make out that some of the questionable passages in literature have been removed. I never liked them much anyway."

"Don't you see," Ted almost pleaded, "that no good can ever come of denying the truth? And that is what this is, denying the truth in human relations and truth in history."

"Oh, I agree that this is going a little too far. But I don't see what can be done."

Ted swore and went back to Gil, still patiently finishing and polishing his report. Gil looked up and smiled.

"You seem to have discovered what I discovered when I tried to interest people in this," he said. "Nobody sees what the fuss is about."

"But if you do and I do," Ted exclaimed, "others must feel the same about it, surely."

Gil shook his head. "I've had a little longer to think about it than you, Ted. This is another case of what can be done in a closed world. This isn't the first burning of the books, for one reason or another, but this is the first time the despoilers could know they had done something final, that what they had destroyed could never be restored. It gives them a pleasant feeling of power. They really feel they have torn out something evil and trampled on it."

"But it's madness to destroy a few evidences of evil in the hope that it will destroy evil."

"Not at all," said Gil mildly.

Ted jumped. "You too?"

"I don't believe it should be done. But it's not madness, Ted. Bring people up in an atmosphere of realism, knowing all there is to be known about sex and crime and intrigue and violence, and their behaviour will echo it. I don't mean they'll be sadists, perverts, criminals and all the rest of it, but the chances are they'll be as lax morally as they believe everyone else is.

"On the other hand, if you set up the myth that everyone

else is highly moral, and that crime and even evil thoughts are rare, you'll get a society which at least *looks* pious and virtuous. Isn't that so?"

Ted gazed at him and recognized the truth of what Gil was saying. Four years ago Lila Johns, then fifteen, had offered herself to him quite innocently, thinking the fact that she liked him was more than enough justification for sleeping with him.

That had been in the Gay Phase, when the fact that you liked anybody *was* more than enough justification for sleeping with him or her. Lila's offer had been as innocent *then* as a photograph of a three-month-old baby with no clothes on. *Now* if Lila merely showed her pretty legs in public it would be a moral crime more severe than becoming his mistress four years ago would have been.

What Gil said could be taken further: a society which prized virtue highly, in which there was no evidence of vice, had a chance of becoming in the end as virtuous as it pretended to be. It was a society of good example, all the time and in every way.

"But the price is too high!" Ted exclaimed. "It's surrendering freedom, truth, justice and artistic integrity in the hope of producing—"

"*I* know all that," said Gil, waving the paper he had been writing. "I've been saying all that for the *Chronicles*. But if we can only find about twenty people who think as we do, what's going to happen?"

Ted looked around the library wonderingly, with bitterness and anger and helplessness, and saw it, in imagination, despoiled, ruined, falsified, by people who believed that cold virtue was better than art, truth, honesty and warmth.

CHAPTER EIGHT
Year 192

On January 1, 192, the Judgment Council met for the first time.

It was regrettable but punishment was necessary to keep daily life in the *Arc-en-ciel* virtuous and godly. Phimister said so, Martin said so, and all the other leading Revivalists said so.

When it had merely been a matter of sending people to Coventry, JC hadn't been needed. JC, however, arrived complete with power to inflict any punishment "as necessary," up to and including execution.

"Remember what I told you, Freddy?" Gil asked her half-seriously when he met her one day. "You don't *want* to be the first martyr, do you?"

Freddy pretended he hadn't said anything.

She hated Revival with a hate that crawled in her guts. It represented everything she loathed and permitted virtually nothing she could enjoy. Revival had taken Ted from her, and she couldn't get him back or find anyone else to take his place. She was choosy, after all, and people were scared. Only about a dozen men on the ship could have taken Ted's place in her affections, and none of them would. Gil and a couple of others really didn't want to; the rest were scared.

If she had been younger, she might have been able to wait for Revival to die. But she was thirty-six. Revival might not last forever, but it would outlast her attractiveness.

Once she said: "Look, Ted. Everybody knows there's nothing between us now. It would be safe—"

Already Ted was shaking his head.

"Don't you miss me at all?" she asked. She could control her voice but not her tears. They welled up and ran down her cheeks. She wouldn't sob. With an enormous effort she kept her breathing steady so that no sobs could escape.

"Of course I miss you. I've been missing you for months and I'm only just beginning to get over it. I'm not going to start over again."

Ted spoke more harshly than he had ever spoken to anyone except Freddy, once before.

"You never asked me to marry you, except that one time, grudgingly," said Freddy.

"I'm not like some men," Ted retorted, "who seem able to propose a dozen times to the same girl, or to two or three different girls. It takes me a long time to work up to proposing to a girl, and when I have, I expect the thing to be considered seriously, and answered once and for all. But since it's you, Freddy, since I miss you, since it's the only way we can be together, since you still want me, will you marry me?"

There was a long silence while they stood like two robots who had had their power cut off.

Then at last Freddy sighed and said: "No, I still don't want you that way, Ted. Maybe you're right and I'm a Gay Timer through and through. I want you as a lover, not as a husband. If we were held together by anything but just love, half the pleasure would be gone."

They were in a reading room off the library, as private as anywhere was. She threw back her head and put her hand to her throat, her purpose obvious.

"Don't be a fool," he said quickly. "It would be insane to start again, to start a series of last-times, each more binding than the one before. If you can't marry me, Freddy, find someone you can marry, or live alone and learn to like it."

Two days after that Freddy spent the night in the stocks.

The details were unimportant. Freddy misjudged the man concerned. Instead of being delighted at her advances, as most men would have been six years since, he reported her to JC and automatically she was sentenced to a night in the stocks followed by a week's Silence.

Being imprisoned in the stocks was rather different from the same punishment in Puritan England. The stocks were the same—holes for wrists and ankles, a lock, a hard seat—but in these days of civilization and culture and high morality there was no question of people throwing rubbish at the victim. No, people merely came along and gazed, perhaps looking sorrowful, perhaps laughing, perhaps merely looking curious and glad not to be in the stocks themselves.

Everybody went along and looked at Freddy, one way or another. It was such an incredible idea, Freddy Steel being

locked in the stocks all night, that there was only one notable defection, one person who was able to resist the temptation to go along and gloat or grin or at least see how the fashionable Freddy Steel looked in the stocks.

That person was Gil.

Ted went, several times during the night, in case Freddy wanted to ask or say something, and so that she would see at least one person whom she knew was friendly. The first time she refused to acknowledge his existence. The second time she swore at him, but that might have been because there were others about at the time. The third time she cried, and he hurried away in case anyone else saw her like that, which he knew she would hate. The fourth time was in the still of the night, and Ted stopped for a few words.

"Don't dare speak to me," said Freddy bitterly. "If you're caught, it's the same for you, remember."

"If it weren't for the school," said Ted, "I'd *be* caught, in the hope that people could see the injustice of punishing anyone for a friendly word."

Freddy sniffed. It might have been from disbelief, or because she was on the way to crying again.

"Frankly," Ted remarked, "I'm not sure you don't deserve to be in the stocks, Freddy. And me too. The trouble is, so long as these Revivalists have some justice on their side, they get away with things like this. But if someone was put in the stocks for merely speaking to you—"

Freddy burst into tears again.

"Revival must be a sad business for you, Freddy," Ted said. "I never knew you to cry before, but now it's becoming almost a habit. Here, since you can't dry your tears, I'll do it."

He wiped her face with his handkerchief.

"I hate *everybody*," she sobbed.

"I suppose that's natural."

"Including you for putting me here, and not being here with me."

"That's natural, too."

She called him a dirty name. He went on wiping her face.

There was a JC announcement when Freddy was sentenced that while the special death penalty of Revival had never been imposed, sinners shouldn't go on relying on it.

"The death penalty will only be imposed when it is felt the person concerned has failed to be influenced by good example, and is himself a bad example making evil thoughts or desires inevitable in others," the announcement said.

"That could be made to fit you," Ted warned Freddy, while she was still in Silence and he shouldn't have been speaking to her at all.

The next stock victim was Lila Johns, for "irreverence, profanity and blasphemy."

"This is the second act of madness," Ted said to Gil, the only person left he could safely talk to. It wasn't safe to talk to Freddy any more. "The censorship, then this—what next?"

"Is it madness?" asked Gil cautiously. "What did she say?"

"I don't know. But I'm prepared to swear, knowing Lila, she could only have spoken freely, not foully. She couldn't possibly have said anything really bad. She isn't capable of it."

Gil's report on the censorship of literature and history was still untouched in the *Chronicles.* Perhaps no one had read it. Certainly for anything so recent it was so natural to look up *Yesterday* and not the *Chronicles* that that was perfectly possible. Ted's various protests had come to nothing.

He was treated with an easy forbearance which he found frustrating, forbearance being uncharacteristic of Revival and only applied in his case, apparently, because he was regarded with favor by all the leaders of Revival.

He felt like a hypocrite. He *was* a hypocrite, still a member of the Revial Council commitee although he was coming to hate Revival almost as much as Freddy did, and on the best of terms with Martin, Johns and even Phimister. Yet it wasn't in him to be boorish simply because he thought differently from people.

Anyway, Lila spent a night in the stocks. Perhaps Johns refused to say anything in case it seemed he expected special treatment for his daughter. Perhaps it was a sort of test

case, to show that even Lila Johns could and would be punished for no more than speaking. Perhaps she asked for it, daring JC to punish her.

They didn't impose a week's Silence afterwards, as they had on Freddy, but otherwise it was the same. Everybody came, in a constant procession past the stocks, where Lila sat staring grimly in front of her, her chin set firmly.

There wasn't much laughing this time. Lila had never pretended to be somebody, or done anyone a bad turn, or got herself disliked. And even people who had meant to laugh, friends of hers who had decided to treat the affair as a joke, suddenly realized when they saw her that this was no joke, and that Lila had enough to bear without their adding to it.

Others who thought she deserved much worse than she was getting, and came along to give her some of it, saw the determination and courage in every line of her and walked quietly past without speaking.

Robina said: "I don't care what happens to me, Lila. I'm going to speak to you all the same."

Since she didn't really have anything to say and was very melodramatic about saying it, Lila would rather she hadn't bothered. It was easier to sit still and be resolute if nobody bothered her. Ted realized that when he came along, and didn't distract her.

He came six times during the night, however, when there was hardly anyone about, and talked to her.

"I never realized the night was so long," Lila murmured wistfully the first time.

"It can't be only four o'clock!" she exclaimed the second time.

The third time she was sleeping, despite the discomfort of her position, and he didn't waken her.

"Is this still the same night?" she asked incredulously, the fourth time.

The fith time, she was sleeping again.

The last time, she had been thinking, apparently. "You

must have stayed up all night," she said, "just to come and help me."

Ted didn't deny it. Instead, he leaned forward and kissed her. "Isn't that utterly vile?" he said. "To kiss a girl when she's held so that she can't do anything about it."

There was a pause. Then: "Do it again, if you mean it," Lila whispered. "Well, do it again, anyway."

CHAPTER NINE

THERE WAS the censorship, then Lila's night in the stocks, then Ted's removal from the school.

When it came it was utterly unexpected, for Ted had spoken his mind often enough before, with no effect. However, after a speech before the whole Council against the palimpsest, he found himself being asked to resign from his position at the school. He wasn't asked to stand down from the Council committee, curiously enough.

"Some of us feel," Martin told him sympathetically, "that believing what you do you shouldn't be allowed to pass on your attitude to the children. We hope your attitude will change, of course, and if it ever does we'll be only too glad to restore you to your former position—myself most particularly, Mr. Benzil. As for your membership of the Council committee, this isn't a dictatorship, and we feel you should remain on the committee and have an opportunity of airing your views."

"Thanks very much," said Ted.

There were still good things about Revival, and he wasn't blind to them. Nevertheless he was looking for every tiny sign of the next phase, wondering what it would be and thinking the sooner it came along to reduce the extremes of Revival the better.

He had seen no sign of it yet.

Ted had never realized quite how he felt about his job until he didn't have it any more. He found himself seriously considering doing all he would have to do to get it back.

But the thought of all he would certainly have to do and say and promise prevented him from actually doing it.

The fourth thing was the case of Gil and Robina.

Ultimately it was of less importance than the censorship, but it was the climax of Revival and made the names of Gil and Robina proverbial.

Phimister and a friend, calling on Gil with another appeal to join Revival, found Robina with him. She and Gil were, at least in the opinion of Phimister and his friend, only half dressed. And they drew at once what they regarded as the only possible conclusion.

Gil shook his head patiently. "We're not lovers and never have been," he declared.

But in subsequent interrogation Robina confused the issue by declaring defiantly that she loved Gil and had loved him for a long time.

Phimister, who gave no sign of emotion throughout the whole affair—in public, at any rate—remembered how seldom recently he had been able to find Robina, and how often he had wondered what new interest was occupying her. Gil, interrogated, admitted frankly that Robina had been spending a lot of time in his company, alone with him in his room.

Gil admitted everything except liaison, which he patiently denied over and over again.

Robina admitted everything and didn't seem very sure about liaison. It seemed to occur only to Ted Benzil that, raised as she had been and in such an epoch, she possibly had no very clear idea of what she was supposed to have done. She admitted happily that Gil had kissed her, and was very vague about anything else.

"This is a shocking story," said the Rev. Johns severely, at the first hearing of the trial which followed. "By your own admission, you have sinned, Gil Cordiner, in—"

"I don't admit sinning at all."

"But you admit having done things which *we* regard as sinning."

"Oh, yes. But shouldn't every man's conscience be his own guide?"

"If we recognized that," said the Rev. Johns rather sadly, "we should have to allow murder, if the murderer said it wasn't against his conscience. You've done wrong, Cordiner, and the worst thing about it is that you led a girl fifteen years younger than yourself, a girl who trusted you completely, into evil ways. She isn't responsible. She's too young to know how sinful she has been."

But later Phimister took up that point and said: "It can't be said on the girl's behalf that she wasn't responsible. She was fully aware that what she was doing was evil, and must bear her full share of the responsibility for this crime."

When Ted had his chance to speak he strove desperately to make the most of it, aware as he did so that his hearers knew he was prejudiced in favor of Gil and against Revival, and would therefore be prejudiced against him. But there didn't seem to be much to say except that he believed Gil and that they were making a mountain out of a molehill. He sensed that he was having no effect at all.

Very little attention was paid to Gil's patient insistence that they had been no more than friends, possibly because Gil was so mild about it and Robina obviously unsure whether to say yes or no, yet declaring over and over again that she was in love with Gil. The only time that point was seriously mentioned, one of the counsels asked Gil pointedly:

"If there was never any intercourse, why did you and Miss Phimister meet so often, so privately and so secretly, and why, on the occasion when you were apprehended, were you both undressed?"

"We met secretly and privately for this reason," said Gil, waving his arms at the court. "I, at least, knew what might have happened. Why meet at all? Robina has been repressed all her life. We've both been lonely. We met, and continued to meet, because we liked each other's company. And I think Robina has been developing lately, knowing someone liked her, into a more likeable, less repressed, less

jealous and much happier human being. As for why we were undressed, the question is ridiculous."

But he wasn't allowed to dismiss the matter like that. Forced to comment in more detail, he said, still as patiently as ever:

"I hadn't been expecting Robina. I was wearing my dressing gown. That seemed adequate. Robina, for most of the time she was with me, was dressed exactly as she'd have been out in the avenue."

"But not when you were discovered together."

"No. Some coffee was spilled on her skirt. She took it off to dry it."

"That sounds rather thin, Mr. Cordiner."

"The truth very often does. Some people still have difficulty in accepting the fact of the Immaculate Conception."

"Please don't be irreverent."

Robina, questioned about the skirt, said: "It was just as Gil said. You can see it if you like. There's a huge coffee stain on it."

"That's hardly the point, Miss Phimister."

"Well, I was soaking. I had to take it off."

"You had to take it off in a man's bedroom?"

"Yes—no—Gil isn't just any man. I feel at home with him. I love him."

"Surely, if you did actually spill coffee over yourself, the natural thing would have been to go to your room and change?"

"Well, maybe, but why should I? It would have been dry before I had to go."

So it went on. Sometimes it was farcical, sometimes grimly serious.

Inopportunely for Gil, his months-old report on the rape of the books in the *Chronicles* was discovered when JC investigated him and his words. It was quoted as proof that he hated Revival and its ideals. His walkout from the first Council was recalled too.

Then the court went back to the case in hand, dwelling with the painstaking thoroughness of all vice committees,

censors and watch committees on Robina's state of undress when discovered. No one wallows more sensuously in the details of sensuality than people who publicly disapprove of it.

And Gil made one big mistake.

He may have made others before, lost opportunities for puncturing the whole thing, but his last one was the important one.

He didn't offer to marry Robina until it was too late.

If he had said earlier on in his usual quixotic way that they were engaged and would be married soon, the Revivalists would still not have approved by any means, but little would have come of the affair, except that Gil and Robina would have had to get married.

But when at last he said he was prepared to marry Robina, it looked as if he was merely trying to avoid the punishment that was coming to them both.

"It's no use saying, after being caught trying to kill someone," counsel declared, "'It's all right, I won't kill him now.' No doubt you would marry this woman to avoid the consequences of your joint misdemeanor. The important point is that you hadn't done so, and had no intention of doing so, when you were caught *in flagrante delicto.*"

Suddenly, incredibly, the death sentence was passed.

Ted was struck dumb. So, apparently, was Robina. Gil merely nodded as if that was what he had been expecting. Johns seemed startled, Martin a little dazed. Phimister nodded impassively. All through he had acted as if Robina was a complete stranger to him.

It couldn't happen. But as that thought occurred to Ted, he remembered how he had thought the same about the censorship, how he had been sure that whenever people realized what was happening, they would stop it.

Before he knew it he was on his feet and shouting at Phimister: "Are you going to let your daughter be executed for a minor fault which hasn't even been proved, Phimister? Executed—do you understand what that means? Can you imagine Robina dead, at eighteen, not from any illness or

accident, but from your own fanaticism? Dead, Phimister, when you could have kept her alive?"

"I couldn't do anything of the sort—" Phimister began.

"You're still running Revival. Do you want Revival to kill your daughter, or do you still have some feelings left?"

It was useless. Phimister acted as if he were a mere instrument, incapable of doing anything to save Robina, so that the question of whether he would if he could didn't arise.

The next few days were mad days.

Some Revivalists talked with the old, fanatic, savage, Puritan satisfaction of the execution to come. *The Lord's will be done. The wages of sin is death.*

Some Revivalists said killing was always wrong, and that though Robina and Gil had sinned they should be forgiven, yea, a hundred times. *The Lord is merciful indeed.*

Ted ran a campaign on his own, refusing help from people like Freddy, Lila and his ex-colleagues at the school in case the campaign should be ruled anti-God and its members executed too. He cut his aims down so that, he thought, all reasonable people would be on his side. He merely pointed out how irrevocable execution was, and that there wasn't a man or woman alive who hadn't sinned in some way, who dared execute Gil and Robina.

But the reasonable people shrugged and asked what they could do against so many.

There was fear about. There were people who didn't dare give any opinion on the Gil-Robina affair simply because they realized how easily they could find themselves on the same or a similar charge.

Some people backed Revival because they believed in it, some because they were afraid to oppose it, some because all their friends were doing it, some merely because they couldn't see any reason why they shouldn't.

Some people who didn't back Revival, but didn't dare oppose it, believed, as Ted had done once before, that it

couldn't happen, that without their having to do anything, Gil and Robina would be reprieved.

And the days passed, with Ted working, and failing.

Gil and Robina weren't imprisoned. Their punishment was death, not imprisonment, and there was no risk of their being able to hide or escape. So they lived their normal life, free though with two policemen each seeing that in their despair they didn't try to destroy or damage the ship.

Lila often begged Ted to let her help in his campaign. She hadn't been called at the trial because unfortunately her evidence wouldn't do Robina any good unless she perjured herself. All Lila could say was that Robina had always been in love with Gil, and that recently she had changed enormously for the better, as if her love, at last, was returned.

But Ted went on working on his own, without letting Lila come into it. "The next thing," he observed bitterly, "would be you and me being sentenced to death for working together without being married. And when I asked you to marry me they'd say I was only doing it to save the two of us."

Lila was caught between delight and disappointment. "Is that a proposal, Ted? Or am I merely grabbing at straws like any other frustrated female?"

"No, I'll reopen the subject later, when I really have my mind on it. That's why I don't want you to get tangled up in this, Lila. I want Gil and Robina reprieved first."

"I've been thinking about that. Robina's a little innocent—she wouldn't even think of it—but I'm pretty sure that a medical examination would show she and Gil could never have been lovers."

She went pink, but didn't drop her eyes.

"We'll try it," Ted said, "but I don't expect anything will come of it. It's been decided that Gil and Robina are guilty in spirit. Whether they're guilty according to medical science will probably be considered an irrelevance."

And so it was. The best Ted could get out of JC was a promise that if Gil and Robina asked for this medical examination, it would be made.

It never was made.

Lila visited Robina to try to keep her spirits up. Robina wasn't in her bedroom, but the presence of the guard outside meant that she hadn't gone out.

"Robina!" she called, and tapped on the bathroom door.

Lila went in.

She didn't scream. She didn't have enough air in her lungs at the time to do more than gasp. One more breath and she was promptly sick, but even in such circumstances she had the presence of mind to turn and vomit into the sink.

Robina was lying in the bath, her throat slashed. The razor was still in her hand. Blood made a bright red blanket over one shoulder and breast and hip, then swirled in the few inches of warm water in the bath.

Lila recovered herself very quickly, and did the cruelest thing she had ever done in her life, the cruelest thing she could think of. She went and found Phimister, and without the slightest hint of what was to be seen, brought him to look at his daughter.

He didn't speak. He went white and swayed on his feet, that was all.

No one ever knew why Robina chose to do it like that. The razor had always been in the bathroom. Perhaps the thought, action and her death had all taken place within a few seconds.

Ted was sure, for some reason, that Robina's suicide would shock people into sanity and that Gil would be reprieved. On the contrary, he was executed the next morning, three days early—electrocuted. Most people heard of it as a *fait accompli*. The date was brought forward from some idea that it would be as well to get the whole unpleasant business over as soon as possible.

Gil didn't object. Apparently he felt the same way.

CHAPTER TEN

THERE WAS no doubt that the sentence of death on Robina

and Gil was an effective check on irregular sexual relations. In fact, Revival itself was marvelously effective in that immorality, crime, even mild misdemeanour, virtually ceased.

"But it's only rule by fear," Ted told Johns. "Of what value is a child's generosity in sharing his sweets when he knows that if he doesn't he'll be smacked afterwards? Is that what God wants?"

Ted had almost ceased to care what he said, and to whom. He realized now that Gil had been fatalistic, refusing to act or be a hypocrite or keep his mouth shut when he felt he had to speak. Ted felt much the same; he'd do anything Revival wanted him to do, rather than be punished, provided it was a single thing. He wasn't going to change his whole way of life.

"Quite a lot of value," said Johns quietly. "You have to *make* a child do things long before he understands why he has to do them. Later he begins to understand."

"So it was right to drive Robina to suicide and execute Gil?"

Johns shook his head. "It's never right to execute anyone, even a murderer. It can only be expedient."

Ted forgot he was talking to his prospective father-in-law and a leading Revivalist, and was very rude indeed.

Two nights after Gil's execution, Freddy burst into Ted's room wilder than he had ever seen her.

"Where did you get the whisky?" he demanded.

"I haven't been drinking, just thinking. One man made Revival, right?"

"More or less."

"Then one woman can break it."

Ted answered cautiously: "One man at the right time. Comes the hour, comes the man. Phimister was nothing during the Gay Phase, remember."

"And I was nothing during Revival. This is the right time again, Ted! Naturally Revival goes from strength to strength so long as nobody opposes it."

She wasn't drunk, but she was fresher, more vital, more determined than she had been for years."

"You'll end up like Gil," Ted warned.

"Fool!" she exclaimed fiercely. "I'll end up like Gil if I do nothing. He told me that himself, long ago. Know what's needed for Revival, or dictatorship, or any such herd madness to succeed? People have to let it. People have to stand around and let themselves be bent this way and that, dressed and undressed, turned to face the front or the back or the side, like so many dummies.

"That's exactly what people have been doing for years: sinking themselves in the herd. Looking to see what everyone else was doing, and doing the same."

"But people won't change just because you tell them to, Freddy."

Freddy turned away impatiently. "You don't understand."

"No, I don't."

"You will. I just don't care any more, Ted. I'll either end up like Gil, as you say, or I'll break Revival. Will you help me?"

"It's not enough just to fight Revival. You must have something else, some reason, purpose, goal. Something for people to believe in. Something to oppose Revival."

"We'll find something. You're in, Ted? You won't back out?"

"I won't back out," Ted promised. "After all, I can easily get another life."

Lila was thoughtful when she heard about it. "I think I've been growing up lately," she told Ted seriously, "and though I used to think a lot of Freddy Steel, I'm not at all sure now that she's the right person to lead an anti-Revival campaign. It's not much use tearing something down if you've got nothing to put in its place, is it?"

Ted grinned. "And she hasn't, you mean? Don't worry about that, Lila. If she accomplishes anything, there'll be something to replace Revival all right. But she won't."

The grin died. "She's never been careful," he went on. "She'll be before JC, like Gil, and with the same result.

God, Lila, I'm beginning to feel like Freddy. Will this madness never end?"

"I'm not so sure that Freddy is going to fail," said Lila, still thoughtful.

Ted stared at her.

At a Revivalist meeting Phimister rose to speak and silence fell.

Into the silence dropped one quietly spoken word: *"Murderer!"*

Phimister started. Perhaps if he hadn't admitted hearing it, and shown how it affected him, nothing further would have happened. But as he jumped convulsively, someone else said *"Murderer!"* more loudly. People stood up, people who were angrily looking for the accusers.

"Murderer!" someone shouted, and there was localized commotion in the hall. Presently someone called: "We've got him, Mr. Phimister!"

The program went on.

Ted and Lila attended a performance of *Twelfth Night* by the senior pupils of the school, and Lila proudly, not to say ostentatiously, wore an engagement ring.

She also wore a white dress. That wasn't unheard of, only unusual. Heads turned. Everyone noticed Lila's white dress, consequently Lila and Ted, consequently the engagement ring.

Martin came up to congratulate the couple. There was no mistaking the warmth of his congratulations.

"I've seldom been able to say as sincerely to any young couple," he said, holding them both by the hands, "that I not only wished they'd be happy, but knew they would be. Ted, you couldn't be getting a prettier, more sensible, better-natured girl. Miss Johns, if you could choose from every man on the ship, you couldn't do better for yourself."

People seemed to have forgotten that Lila had once been in the stocks and that Ted had lost his job. In general, Ted

and Lila were treated with such warmth that they almost forgot they had ever disliked anyone or anything.

Later, when the lights went up to show them sitting too close together in public, there was a hum of disapproval and they moved hastily apart. Then, defiantly, Lila moved back against Ted and almost laid her head on his shoulder.

Some smiled, some frowned. But gradually the people about them came to a tacit agreement to leave them alone to do as they liked.

And at last, quite openly, Lila did lay her head on Ted's shoulder, and Ted put his arm around her.

A former colleague of Gil's, a woman, wrote in *Yesterday*:

> At least one feature of this execution is disturbing to every human being on the *Arc-en-ciel*, which does *not* mean Way to Heaven. Quite apart from all considerations of being spied upon, tried and sentenced to death for a crime which never brought the death penalty before, one now has to take into account the possibility of having one's execution date brought forward from Friday to Tuesday, preventing an appeal and forestalling a possible petition.
>
> Gil Cordiner was found guilty and therefore, for all time, he *was* guilty. It is too late to argue the rights and wrongs of the case itself. But the premature execution is another matter.
>
> The fact that Cordiner gave his consent to the earlier date does not justify it. Many people, facing certain death, would rather have it immediately than in a week's time. That was precisely the case of Robina Phimister. Knowing she was to die, she couldn't bear the waiting.
>
> Is it not possible that Cordiner was executed early because it was suspected that if he wasn't executed at once, he wouldn't be executed at all?

Public opinion was never behind this execution. Public opinion created Revival. And public opinion, some leading members of Revival would do well to remember, could destroy it.

The woman who wrote that was summoned before JC. Some editions of the paper contained her story, some didn't. In all, fifty copies of that item were circulated.

A concert of Gil's recordings was arranged.

Gil hadn't systematically recorded his clarinet-playing. In fact, his own collection of tapes was small, consisting only of items which couldn't be easily repeated—unusual instrumental combinations, numbers recorded with musicians who had since died, examples from his earliest playing days, fifteen years ago.

But many other tapes had been made, and the other musicians concerned could generally supply copies.

There was no reason given for the concert. It was just a Gil Cordiner night, open to anyone who cared to come.

It was arranged for one of the recreation rooms. But half an hour before the start, the room chosen was packed. The concert was switched to the Blue Room, and finally to the Small Hall.

"Isn't it marvelous?" said Freddy joyfully, finding Ted in the gloom at the back of the hall just after the start. "I never hoped for this. I thought—oh, hullo, Lila."

Freddy and Lila could hardly be expected to treat each other with any great cordiality.

"This is your idea, this concert, Freddy?" asked Lila politely.

"Yes. I thought Gil the musician should be called in to reinforce Gil the martyr. But it's a complete surprise to find—"

"Quiet, both of you!" Ted hissed. "I want to hear this."

It was easy enough to be wise after the event. Three out of four people at the concert were women, of course. Nearly

every woman on the ship had been in love with Gil at some time in her life.

Perhaps it had been through jealousy, because of Robina, that all these women had done nothing, had left Gil to die, when their number and their weight could have saved him.

Or perhaps they had been waiting, saving their efforts for a last-minute appeal, and were frustrated by the early execution.

Many women wept as the music reminded them of Gil's physical presence. Even Lila sniffed once or twice, and thrust a small hand into Ted's. Ted had a lump in his throat himself, but it was the musical loss he was thinking of. He was resolving to collect all the tapes of Gil he could get his hands on. Some of these were entirely new to him.

The concert was in every way a magnificent success. Freddy didn't appear herself. She simply got Ted and a few others to say a little about Gil, and left the rest to the tapes and the memory of Gil.

There wasn't a word against Revival.

CHAPTER ELEVEN.

MARTIN had told Ted about his removal from the school, and he told him about his restoration.

"We hope you won't resent what was done then, Mr. Benzil," Martin said. "Perhaps we were right, or perhaps we made a mistake. At any rate, you'll remember I always made it clear that it was only your attitude we objected to, not your capacities or personality."

"But I haven't changed my attitude, Dr. Martin," said Ted.

"No, but we don't think it as dangerous as we once did. You remember I said at the time that you should be able to air your views on the Council committee . . ."

He didn't admit that he was making excuses. He kept trying to show that what had been said and thought and

done when Ted was removed from his position wasn't so very different from what was being said and thought and done now.

Ted was so glad to be restored that he would have said almost anything that Martin wanted him to say. He stopped pointing out that his attitude hadn't changed, and merely said truthfully and diplomatically that he would be very glad to be back.

And presently Martin found an excuse or reason he might have thought of before, but hadn't. "Besides, you're to be married soon. You won't be such a firebrand as some of us used to think you were. You'll be settliing down."

JC met and considered several cases, among them the case of the man who had shouted "Murderer!" and the woman who had said public opinion had never been behind Gil's execution.

The man who had shouted "Murderer!" was admonished. The woman chronicler was dismissed. Her article had been a legitimate expression of opinion, JC decided. And it took all sorts to make a world.

The people on the *Arc-en-ciel* were two hundred years each way from a world, but the cliché remained.

Freddy started advertising a Christmas ball, though it was only March. There hadn't been a Christmas ball during Revival, so her notices were tantamount to a declaration of war on Revival.

"You've got your nerve," Ted told her. "A Christmas ball in the Blue Room, arranged openly by Blue-Room-Orgy Freddy Steel. I know the wind's blowing your way now, but are you sure you aren't twisting Revival's tail a couple of years too soon?"

Freddy wasn't at all sure. She was nervous and didn't hide it, not from Ted. But she went on putting out her notices about the Christmas ball, making it clearer and clearer that the ball was going to be a free-for-all, a ball at which anything would go.

And as she expected, she was summoned before JC. She was given two days' warning.

Ted was worried by her lack of organization. "All the anti-Revival forces are working in different directions," he pointed out. "You're not co-ordinated at all. It's every man for himself. And that's no way to fight a battle, any battle."

Those two days before the trial of Freddy Steel were about the quietest ever on the ship. Was this to be another Gil Cordiner case? Was the power of Revival to be confirmed? Nobody dared do, say or think anything.

They were quite right, too. For if Revival won, finally and completely, half the people on the ship had put themselves in line for what had happened to Gil Cordiner. And if Revival collapsed—but that was unthinkable.

The two days passed like two barrels of molasses.

On the day of her trial, Ted and Lila accompanied Freddy to the courtroom. "Do I look all right?" she asked Lila, outside the doors. She had dressed as attractively as she could, short of being charged with contempt of court.

"They're not going to charge you with untidiness," Ted told her. "Pity it isn't your appearance that's on trial, but it isn't."

"I know," said Freddy. "I want to look my best, though. Don't you know anything about women, even yet?"

Together the three of them entered the courtroom, and stared about them in surprise.

The public part of the court was packed. And the court itself was all but empty. Phimister was there, of course, and Martin. Five, six, seven . . . fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen . . . that was all.

Ted and Lila moved towards the public part, though there was no room for them. Freddy stood alone for a moment.

Then the significance of what they had seen struck Freddy and Ted, and they stared at each other, between delight and incredulity.

All the other members of JC had stayed away, for one reason or another.

And seventeen people couldn't try Freddy. It wasn't a quorum.

Freddy made the most of the situation. Ted knew she would be wishing she'd had a few drinks, but she hadn't had a few drinks for years, and would have to get by without them.

She turned to the public gallery and bowed gracefully. Then, as if feeling that wasn't enough, wasn't doing her audience justice, she went down in a full curtsey.

"Thank you, ladies and gentlemen," she said, "for your interest. You came to see what would happen in this test case. You see what has happened. The enemy has left the field uncontested."

She strutted like a chorus girl, looking a very attractive eighteen. Ted wondered whether to applaud, but decided to wait for a better opportunity.

"I don't pretend *I've* won my case," said Freddy modestly. "All I claim is that Revival has lost, and we're going to have some sanity for a change."

There was an immediate protest from Phimister, behind her, and from some of the members of her audience in front of her. Ted decided the time was ripe to create a diversion, and applauded vigorously. Half a second after him came Lila, and then everybody, apparently, was applauding wildly.

"I think we'll agree now," said Freddy soberly, when she could be heard, "that the execution of Gil Cordiner and Robina Phimister was no execution, but murder. And it was the maddest thing that even Revival ever did, for it killed Revival."

There was a confused babble behind Freddy, as the seventeen Revivalists protested inarticulately.

"No one could continue to support Revival after that," Freddy declared. "No one except the men whose fortunes are so bound up in it that—"

Some anonymous Revivalist hurled a heavy metal box savagely at her back. A shouted warning was too late. The box struck her between the shoulderblades and sent her

pitching forward. She struck her head heavily and didn't get up.

Even as he and Lila ran forward to attend to Freddy, Ted felt exultant rather than sorry for Freddy, and he knew that Freddy would be grateful for the blow later. For the petty, cowardly brutality of it had dealt the final blow to Revival and the seventeen Revivalists behind her.

The roar of anger from the packed gallery who had seen it meant that Phimister and his interstellar Puritans would never again call the tune.

Things wouldn't, and didn't, change in a night; the pendulum swings didn't work like that. But Revival had passed top dead center and it was swinging down on the other side into . . .

"Funny how it takes so long to see what's happening, sometimes," Ted said to his new wife. "You don't see it until it punches you on the nose. Know what's going to follow Revival, honey?"

"I think I do, now," said Lila.

"Do you?" He sounded doubtful. One of the things about Lila he had not yet come to admire particularly was her brain.

"Let's say it together," she suggested.

"Free-for-all," said Lila.

"Individualism," said Ted.

They laughed. They were still at the stage of being amused by things that didn't seem at all funny to anyone else.

"Well, we know what we mean," said Ted, "and I think it's the same thing. Instead of the herd madness we've been going through, we're going to have everybody considered entitled to his own ideas, developing his own personality, trying to be different from everybody else, something like that. We'll see."

"Free-for-all, just as I said." She chuckled. "It should suit me. I've been brought up that way all my life. What

are you going to develop into, Ted? I hope it's something better, now that I'm Mrs. Benzil."

She had come a long way since she had begged Ted to take her to the last Christmas ball. She was sure of herself now, and of Ted. In fact, she was assured enough to be a little sorry for Freddy, even a Freddy who had won her battle at last and could begin again to live the gay life which was the only life for her.

The ship glided on silently through space on its four-hundred-year trip, and on the outside of its vast shape, nothing moved, nothing changed.

Inside, where there was life, it was all change. Every change meant more change. No one ever said: "It was good enough for my father, and it's good enough for me." That sort of thinking had no place on the ship.

The people in it were compressing five thousand years of change into four hundred years. They couldn't help it.

A reactionary was a man who was five years out of date.

There could be no end to the swinging of the pendulum. Not until the *Arc-en-ciel*—no longer the Way to Heaven—reached Lorraine.

Not until Christmas.