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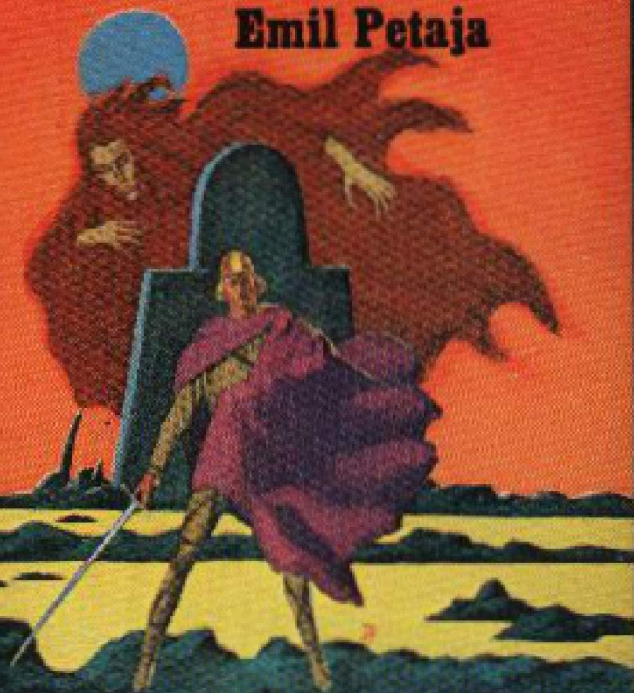
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The greater the civilization,  
the more it was bait for the Eater of Minds

# SAGA OF LOST EARTHS

**Emil Petaja**



"The Force is from outside our time and space, from outside anything we can humanly comprehend. I conceive of a great machine somewhere—alien beyond human thought—sending out tendrils like electric impulses . . .

"I believe that this present invasion was not the first. In the days of the Kalevalan heroes, actually before our present cycle of civilization began, the Force was thrust in on Earth . . . Perhaps it occurred elsewhere. Who knows? Atlantis? Mu? Perhaps it was Vainomoinen, the Wizard, who sealed the rift between our space-time dimension and Hiisi's with his own presence!

"Hiisi wants something from us. Perhaps something he and they need as desperately as a vampire needs blood to survive . . .

"So, Carl, believe! Believe in your gods and let them lead you to Hiisi. Find the machine that controls the Force. Destroy it, and close the rift!"

## NOTES ON KALEVALA:

*Kalevala* ("The Land of Heroes") is a loosely woven song-story in trochaic tetrameter meter, compiled by Elias Lonnrot, out of folk legends of Finland. One of the great epics of world literature, *Kalevala* is much neglected these days. Its fifty *Runos* tell of the creation of the universe by Ilmatar, of a wonderful family of gods, and loosely follow the contrary paths of four indomitable heroes:

*Lemminkainen* — handsome lover and warrior.

*Ilmarinen* — great smith, forger of magic things.

*Vainomoinen* — great minstrel and wizard.

*Kullervo* — dour-faced, doomed wanderer.

I have heard these song-stories since childhood, know great passages by heart. While the details of the legends have been altered at times, within the framework of this science-fantasy novel, I hope I may be forgiven. When this occurs I am aware of it; I love and revere this wonderful epic, and can only point out that the bards who sang the stories around northland fires changed them, too, from generation to generation, from fire to fire.

EMIL PETAJA

# *Saga of Lost Earths*

by  
EMIL PETAJA



ACE BOOKS, INC.  
1120 Avenue of the Americas  
New York, N.Y. 10036

SAGA OF LOST EARTHS

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*Cover by Jack Gaughan*

Dedicated to  
HANNA  
my mother,  
who loved the Old Songs—  
who remembered . . .

Printed in U.S.A.

## PART ONE

### Of Lost Earths

“O thou most unhappy Iron,  
Wretched Iron, slag most worthless,  
Steel thou art of evil witchcraft,  
Thou hast been for naught developed,  
But to turn to evil courses,  
In the greatness of thy power . . .”

KALEVALA: RUNO IX

## I

JIMMY TORE the wrappings off his birthday present with shining eyes.

“Wow!”

Inside was an atom-cannon like the old *real* ones of the Third Great War. It was pressed out of a new plas-metal alloy, and Psych-Head had approved it—for six year olds. Psych-Head reluctantly decided that such toys might relieve latent wisps of antagonistic behavior in children; later, in

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adolescence, these regrettable symptoms would be removed completely by stringent mental training.

"It shoots real toy bullets!" Jimmy bragged, pointing at the puff-light ammo ready in fire-tube. Mommy and Daddy watched and smiled to cap his pleasure.

"Who'll I shoot first?" Jimmy's eyes roved the small apartment gleefully. "Oh! I know! I'll shoot Daddy!"

Daddy grinned while Jimmy moved the gun into position.

"Ready . . . aim . . ."

Jimmy put his chubby forefinger on the release.

"*Fire!*"

Jimmy pushed the release. Daddy dropped dead.

"How are you, Carl?"

Carl said; "Fine," but his dour look of boredom didn't match. He looked up from his deck of blinking computer lights and forced a smile; he tried not to let his wince of active loathing for the row upon row of similar computers show too much. There were acres of them on this Level alone. Laura was standing there, holding out his morning's work.

Laura wore the usual brown uniform, was a little bottom heavy (the norm these days) and her smile had wistful yearning in it. She lingered, as she usually did, for an extra five minutes, at Carl's deck.

Her gray eyes took in Carl's six-foot-four of solid muscle—kept that way defiantly from his triple stints in the Level's gym, his close-cut wheat-blond hair, the sombre good humor in his handsome well-planed face, and his unusually penetrating blue eyes under brows darker than the crewcut. Laura smiled her brave best, openly.

"There's a swell new combo on the Level tri-D Vid tonight," she hinted.

"Sorry. I've got this book."

"*Book!*"

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Laura managed not to sound shocked. No wonder they said bad things about Carl Lempi. He read *books*. Not texts, but wild fiction about fighting and whatnot. Her best girl friends kept warning Laura: "So he is big and dreamy-built, has that breathtaking Viking looks, but wow—I'd sure like to get a gander at his Psych-complex record! They say he's had seventeen jobs in less than three years, not to even mention long stints with half a dozen different adjustment analysts. His personal Psych must have the patience of a saint!"

Laura made their hands touch when she handed him his morning's work. Carl grinned.

"Some other time?"

Laura nodded, hoping not too eagerly. *So the other girls made remarks. So let them.* Carl hadn't come to *their* apartments for home cooking.

"Sunday for sure?" she breathed. "I've got potatoes, real ones; don't ask me how. And steak—from cows." She shivered a little over this one. How anybody in this day and age could stand to eat—

"Sure, Laura." Carl nodded. "Around fifteen o'clock?"

He went to work on his deck, sighing as the girl moved on about her tapes dissemination. What was wrong with him, damn it? Laura was an okay gal. Some of her curves were in the wrong places, but she was a dandy cook. Knocked herself out, broke herself buying organic foods just for Carl, when everybody knew the edibles World-Fed concocted in the oceanic plankton labs were far more wholesome, containing exactly what each segment of the great antiseptically-clean Cities needed in order to fulfill its designated function.

Yeah, he would probably marry Laura. Why not? At least she put up with him when he sounded off, during their Sunday get-togethers in her cubicle. She didn't understand what he was talking about, half the time. Maybe Carl didn't, himself.



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Why should anybody gripe the way he did? Why should he want things that were dead and buried and gone? That old festering world had been full of hate and suspicion and war. It had taken the Psychs to clean it up, the only way it could be cleaned up, *from inside*.

Inside people's mind. Right along with exactly the right kind of food (you are what you eat), and just the correct balance of worktime and playtime.

The Cities were marvels of ingenuity, with their billions of cubicle-apartments, central food complexes and work complexes and play complexes. Everything meticulously Psyched to prevent War from starting, the way it almost had that fourth time, by coding every human being mentally, classifying, retraining whenever necessary. Everything was so damned well adjusted. Everybody's mind was kept on an even keel.

Except Carl Lempi's.

God knows he *tried*. He tried hard. He listened to the analysts when they examined him, each time he goofed up a new job, agreed with them as anybody must that the wicked old days of smoldering desperation people had endured—desperation which all too frequently burst out in war and suicide—was inferior in every way to the new welfare Psych-Head controlled world. Medical advances kept people living longer, and the planet was overpopulated, of course, so births had to be rigidly controlled; colonization of other planets was still enormously expensive; but when the earth's wealth and brainpower could be expended constructively instead of on pointless internal quarreling—there was no end to what Mankind might achieve!

That was the theory. Deep inside of Carl rankled the notion that there was something wrong with such a theory. It left no room for the to-hell-with-convention splashout of minds that had once soared beyond the limits of Space and Time to . . . to *somewhere*.

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Carl remembered, while he worked his deck, that he had forgotten to take his Downboy pill again this morning. Dutifully, he swallowed the capsule with a dry gulp, and tried to make his overactive mind a blank.

Last night he had run across a poem during his frowned-upon reading period (the Level Vids were preferable, because the entertainment they provided were suitably bland and kept people from latching on to "wrong" ideas) by a man named Robinson. About a man called Miniver Cheevy, who "wept that he was ever born, and he had reasons." How did it go, again?

Miniver yearned for Priam and Helen of Troy and the wild battles fought in shining armor. He couldn't have them, so he went into one of those fascinating pubs they had two centuries back and got smashed on some allowable alcoholic drink. He had his nerve, that Miniver, complaining. Living during a wild century of do-or-die, before the atom had been split, before the Psychs and cushioned regimentation.

"He was a damn fool!" Carl said, out loud.

"No talking," said the tape-deck.

"Shut up, damn your blinking eyeballs!"

"No talking," said the tape-deck.

When a shrill whistle inside his head told Carl it was time to have lunch, he unhooked his legs from the pedal clamps, and stood, closing his eyes and stretching. His replacement, a small hunch-shouldered chap, slid into the bucket seat briskly and clamped his legs into the pedals, with a blank-faced nod for Carl.

"All he needs is a broom." Carl grimaced and made his way through the labyrinth of computer decks to the lunch-room lift-drop.

In the mechafeteria, he reached a sandwich and something that looked like a salad out of the slots, and decanted some

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phony coffee to wash it down with. He found a corner table, where he could sneak the pocket-sized adventure novel out of his brown tunic and read while he ate.

"You are Carl Lempi."

A shadow moved down across his open book. Carl's frown relaxed and grew into a grin that uptilted his eyebrows in something less than belief. The shadow-caster wore the conventional brown uniform; sure she did. But on her it looked more than just good. She had sleek raven's-wing hair, worn shoulder length and turned under, with pageboy bangs. Something that stirred behind those aquamarine eyes brought all of Carl's storybook charmers within the realms of reality.

In a word—fabulous.

He let the book drop. "Yup, I'm Carl Lempi. Call me Carl."

Those enigmatic eyes studied him carefully, taking note of his wide shoulders, sheathed with muscles seldom seen these days, the way his hair curled crisply around his flat-to-head ears.

"Suppose I call you Lemminkainen. What then?"

It was as if an elfin bell sounded, deep, deep in his mind.

"You?" he blurted.

"Silia."

"Silia Who?"

"That's enough for right now." She smiled with lips like dewy cherries. "Shall we go?"

Carl blinked.

"Go? Go *where?*" In the middle of a work-day. Incredible!

She just nodded, a beckoning nod that dazzled Carl into rising from his chair. He shot a look around him for the Psych-Meds, the usual kind who scooped him up after he had bungled another job so badly that his superiors begged for his dismissal.

Nothing.

"It's not like that," Silia assured him, smiling. "Come on."

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Carl slipped his book in his tunic and moved after her, wondering what kind of a new Psych trick this was. From the little his examiners had leaked out, he was above-norm; he didn't belong in Level b7. It was just that nothing they tried him on worked out. He was a rebel everywhere. He rebelled fiercely at the stringent routine; from the time the Level's mind-nipping awakener routed him out of his bachelor's cubicle, through his Mechafe meals, his stints at the computer-deck, even his playtime. Had it not been for the books, he would have been brainbusted into one of the Psych camps for hopeless nuts.

It was this very tidy routine (after a person's mental-emotional psych had been established) that eliminated all poverty, all war, all disease. It was an antisepticized Utopia. *Safe*. Safe from antagonisms. Safe from suicide.

Safe from adventure.

Now, to his utter amazement, he was swing-shouldering after a dazzling beauty through a back door in the cafeteria, past windows that showed how the food carrier belts supplied the endless quantities of hydroponics pap in various guises to Level 7b workers, while somewhere below thrummed robot-cooks preparing all those meals.

They reached a round tube-drop. The girl gestured Carl inside, then pressed a button. The pancake on which they stood shot down like a pea out of a pea shooter.

Down. Way down. Below street level

This was something else. Carl's routine hardly ever took him off 7b at all; random movement outside of one's normal sphere was frowned on, even forbidden. So enormous was the population of this particular metro-area that foregatherings of large groups was unthinkable. Why bother, anyway? Each level had its own amusement areas; was, in fact, self-sustaining. No normal person would want to rove about, anyway. Rambling and meandering were primitive syndromes; they

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could possibly lead to minor social disturbances, even to civil wars.

In the tight windowless passage through which they were moving, Carl quickened his stride to keep up with Silia and the light-tube she flashed ahead of them. The gloom made Carl uneasy; then, when Silia opened a second door at the end of the downramp, he gasped.

Beyond that door was total, primitive *dark*.

He had never seen *dark* before. The Psychs had long since decreed that total-dark was unwholesome. The cubicles, which were designed somewhat like giant crèches, were always suffused with a gentle happy-yellow glow, to engender pleasant, non-aggressive dreams.

He stared into the stygian night and felt his hackles stiffen. Silia's light-tube pierced the dark.

"Come on! Hurry! They're all waiting!"

Carl sucked in a breath of filtered air and moved in after her. Behind them the door slid shut. Now only Silia's dancing pencil of light kept back utter, elemental dark. They snaked up from deep inside of his bowels, those savage dark-fears from out of genetic ancestry.

For the first time in his life Carl felt fear.

"Why are you standing still?" Silia demanded.

"It's dark."

"So it's dark. Haven't you ever—no, of course not. I forgot. You've never even seen the sky at night."

"Sure I have," Carl snapped back. "Part of our training program." He was remembering his infrequent views, on those guided group tours, of a pale bright light they said was the Sun, and then those untidy splashes of random stars, on other occasions. The Simulatums were much better, everybody agreed. Nature was so crude, so ineffectual. The machines could reproduce all of its phenomena far more attractively.

"Hurry!" Silia swung her light-tube impatiently, so that

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the tube struck wall and went skittering across the black floor. The stud jarred to *off*.

Carl moaned as fear flowed into his veins.

"Well, don't just stand there," the girl's voice came out of the dark. "Help find the light!"

Carl knelt and groped, still shocked by the utter blackness. Once his sweeping movements touched warm flesh. Silia's arm. He took hold of her hand for a few seconds; Silia made a sharp quick sound. Carl had an immediate urge; it pushed up violently from the depths of his healthy young body. He wanted to take hold of Silia. Hold her close, close.

It was as if she felt the want, too. She seemed to yield, trembling. Then she pushed him away. -

"We've got to find the tubel" she cried tautly. "There's not a minute to lose!"

Carl swooped his palms across the floor in wide circles.

When his fingers found cold round metal, *it happened*.

## II

THE SUDDENNESS of the spectrum of light made him cry out. Its swirling brightness seared his optical nerves. While he knelt there, blinking, the argent iris of whirling lights took shape.

A woman.

No. Not a woman. A *goddess*.

No less appellation could do such a vision justice.

The goddess spoke to him. She spoke in a language new to him, yet not new. An idiom out of his childhood and before, out of his hungry dreams. The silvery words spilled out

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a chaotic montage of images; they skated giddily across the surface of his consciousness. Green trees . . . clear cobalt lakes . . . white surf slamming bleak rocks along a misted cliff-line.

"You are so much like him, Son of Lempi. I must call you by his name—Lemminkainen."

His eyes were still enamoured, his throat thick with wonder, his blood hammering in his heart.

Carl forgot Silia, forgot who he was, forgot everything. The goddess with the long silver hair was too beautiful to look at long. He bowed his head.

"*Mikä te haluta,*" he said. Whatever *She* wanted to be must be.

When he dared to look up again she was gone; instead, before him was a tall, attenuated patch of blackness so complete it seemed to be a hole in space itself.

A deep voice echoed out.

"The rod you are holding is a weapon," It told him. "Stand up."

Carl stood, grasping the rod tightly.

"The girl standing near you," said the Darkness. "She is your enemy. She brought you here to kill you."

"Yes." Carl swayed back and forth as if mesmerized.

"Point the rod at this ugly creature. With your thumb, release the catch at the end of the rod you hold in your hand. Now, point the rod at this girl."

Carl did as he was told. Something that grew out of the metal itself, something that spread up into his arm muscles and shoulder muscles made him do it.

"Now push the stud. Kill her."

From way off in the dark came a faint scream that made Carl frown in annoyance.

"Kill her!" the cold emotionless voice demanded.

"*Kyllä,*" Carl agreed.

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His thumb whitened on the death-stud. The scream of despair loudened by several decibels. Along with it came other voices, *agitato*. Windy movement around him in the dark corridor. Criss-cross stabs of light.

“No, Carl!”

Along with the protest something heavy smashed against his lower arm. The light-rod leaped out of his convulsive grasp. The patch of non-space moved forward to engulf him, then vanished.

Carl cried out at the loss of his goddess; his cry was sheared off when something like the edge of a practiced hand chopped down on the back of his neck.

Instant nothing.

It was as if he were painfully clawing his way up out of some deep cavern. Mentally, he strained every morsel of his being. Finally he made it.

He blinked up at Silia. It took a few seconds to remember what had happened. How the beautiful girl with sea-green eyes had unbelievably interrupted his routine job at the computer complex and brought him down to the underground passageway where he had seen *Her*.

Silia's oval face wore an anxious frown.

“He's coming out of it, Uncle,” Carl heard her say to somebody out of his view. Her raven hair swung down when she turned back to Carl, who was, he realized, lying on a lab table of some kind.

“Feel better now?” she asked.

Carl grimaced and tried to sit up. He didn't make it. It was as if something had sucked the strength out of him, back in that passageway. He fell back weakly. Sleep threatened, but he fought it. His mind roiled with questions. But for the moment his talk organs wouldn't work any more than his arm and back muscles would.



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He surrendered provisionally to lassitude, vaguely conscious of low voices above him. Once a needle jabbed his arm.

"Ouch!"

"Sorry," Silia's voice said. He blinked open his eyes. She was smiling crookedly. "I rather enjoyed that, after you tried to kill me and all."

"Tried to kill you!"

He bolted up painfully. "Where am I? What happened? And who the hell—"

"Easy, Carl."

The little man standing next to Silia was misshapen; one shoulder was higher than the other, one hand, his left, was half-normal size. But under a startling amount of gray-white frizzle were sharp gray eyes in a triangular face that glowed with a kind of impatient fervor.

"I'm Dr. Clifford Enoch. You have already met my niece. Silia works with me on my experiments. She is my right hand, literally." He held up the withered member.

Carl managed to swing his legs down off the padded table; a rapid glance to orient himself and make some small sense out of all that had happened revealed that he was indeed in a small experimental laboratory of some kind.

"And I suppose I'm one of your experiments," he grouched, wriggling his shoulders and members to set the sluggish juices flowing again.

"No, no." Dr. Clifford Enoch smiled faintly. "You were brought here after the . . . um . . . invasion."

"Invasion?"

"Yes. And a lucky thing it was that I became worried when Silia didn't get back as soon as expected, when she was sent to fetch you. I stopped you just in time. You were going to kill her, you know."

"I *don't* know!" Carl gave his head a savage shake. "I don't know anything!"

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"You will, presently."

"Take it easy, Carl." Silia's hand on his arm pushed back the bogies. "You must rest for a few minutes more, before Dr. Enoch takes you into the council chamber. They must be livid by now."

"Let 'em wait!" the little hunched doctor snorted. "He'll need all his wits about him, facing them and their pat little illusions!"

"My uncle doesn't always see eye to eye with the council," Silia explained. "They consider him something of a maverick." She added, laughing, "Like you, come to think of it."

"They lump me in with the old wizards and warlocks," Dr. Enoch told him, "just because I believe that there *are* alien powers, alien forces, hovering just out of sight. That the primitives were right to fear the dark and to invent runes to cast out what they called demons. My niece and I have traveled to all the dark musty corners of the world to find and tape such invocations.

"Them and their tight little minds!" He snorted like a stallion. "Who can even conceive of what is out there in the great immensity of Space, and what it feeds on? What it wants? Not to mention—" He interrupted himself with another snort. "Think this over, boy. If the history of this cinder of a planet in the great eye of space and time could be condensed into a single year, the whole history of man and his futile grabs at intelligence would occupy only one minute! Ah! So what about all the rest of Earth's history, eh? What about all the other 'legendary' eras?"

Carl shrugged wryly.

"Don't over-excite yourself, Uncle," Silia soothed. She turned to Carl anxiously. "Uncle has made so-called myths and legends his life's study; he believes that the answer, or part of it, lies in sonics: songs, chants, combinations of raw sound and light spectra, too, that can put mankind in touch

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with creatures from—" She shrugged and sighed, "Who knows?"

Carl slipped down from his perch and paced, scowling. "What I want to know is where I come in? And what about this 'possession' that took hold of me?"

Dr. Enoch pointed to the light-tube cradled in a cloth lab napkin, on a nearby table. Carl followed his grim look. He shrugged.

"Looks harmless enough, except for the weapon part," he observed. He reached out his hand.

"*Don't touch it!*" Silia grabbed Carl's arm.

"Why not? What—"

"It's one of the new alloys. Made in part from one of the Rare Earths recently discovered in a North European mine."

"Rare Earths?"

"Oxide mineral substances. Valence of 3. Once we thought they only numbered atomically from 57 to 71. We're not sure what, right now. The ones we've known about a long time—lanthanum, cerium, thorium and so on—have many industrial uses. It's been less than three years since the rarest of all of them, considered non-existent there on Earth, has been identified and commercialized in alloys which—"

A sharp buzzing cut him off, followed by a tart angry voice.

"We are still waiting!" it told them severely. "Will you kindly cut out the chatter and get the subject into the interrogation chamber! *At once!*"

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### III

THE CHAMBER was ovoid, with one end chopped off; around a long table, likewise oval-shaped, sat twenty-two men and women whose white or yellow or black faces all wore expressions of taut anxiety and impatience.

Carl sucked in a sharp breath. This was no ordinary fussy little business group. Represented here were the top Psychs, including Professor Anson Graves himself. Plus the pinnacle-level politicals and business bigwigs from all of the Cities.

Silia and her uncle took their places at two empty chairs at one side. Carl just stood there, squirming inwardly to realize that he was the focal point of all those critical looks. His drab brown uniform contrasted with the vivid yellows, scarlets, and greens of these world leaders, made him all the more self-conscious. He could scarcely believe what he was seeing.

Professor Anson Graves presided at the head of the table, a long-nosed cadaver of a man. He wore thick glasses which concealed a hearing aid. Graves was old, old, old.

"You may sit, Carl Lempi." He pointed a long forefinger at a chair on a dais, where they could all see Carl and assess his every eye-flick.

Carl restrained a grin; everybody was so solemn, so pompous, and of all human foibles, Carl considered pomposity most absurd.

"We represent the great leaders of all the Cities. I am Professor Anson Graves."

Carl could only nod.

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"Now"—the Chairman toyed nervously with his gavel—"do you have any idea why you were brought here?"

"No, sir."

Carl frowned and nibbled at his lip. The news-vids on Level 7b gave his sector periodic views of the machinations of World Government—they were called The Cities because they covered half the planet—but the vid-conclaves showed them impressive halls, with much pomp and circumstance involved. This little room was hole-and-corner, by comparison.

Why?

Was it possible that some kind of rebellion was brewing? Rebellion against Earth's cushioned regimentation?

He blurted out his thought. Some of the faces smiled. Some exchanged significant glances.

The weary hawk's face of the Chairman smiled glumly. He nodded at the others.

"Yes. This is Carl Lempi. Such a fantastic idea is quite compatible with his psych-record."

Something very like anger tightened Carl's jaw, rushed heat-prickles to the surface of his face. He had been asked what he thought. He had answered, truthfully. Now what? Back to the old tedious grind?

Professor Grave's dry voice cut short the small approving murmur that rippled across the conference table.

"While it is most improbable that we should find such an anomaly here in our enlightened age, with all symptomatic aggressiveness weaned out by controlled eugenics, perhaps, as Dr. Enoch points out, we are fortunate to find among us a creature with just these qualifications."

"What qualifications?" Carl demanded.

"The fight-syndromes of a savage. Knowledge of Finnish, even. That *was* a stroke of luck! And, above all, his incredibly high esp-emp faculty."

A bluff business tycoon spoke up, his voice booming out

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crankily. "Let's get down to cases, shall we? We've held off too long as it is. The cartel I represent is losing money hand over fist since the mine shutdown!"

Dr. Enoch gave his stallion snort. "Who cares about you and your damn stock sales curves? We have far worse things to fear than losing money! If we don't find an answer to what's happening, our slick Psych-patterned civilization will go down the drain with the dinosaurs and the dodos!"

The excited chatter that followed was stilled by the Chairman's gavel. "Please! We must progress with some semblance of order!" He stared at Carl as at a specimen under a microscope. "Now, we must have the facts straight. You *are* Carl Lempi. Son of John Lempi and Hanna Lempi, neé Koski. Born in Saginaw, Michigan on April 12, 2133. Age, 27. Level of education as prescribed by early psych-tests, 33a. Your Psych Code Number is G3pt61hhhhh. Seventeen jobs since school. Failure to adjust in sixteen. Currently operating a computer-deck in Level 7b, Unit jk7. Correct?"

"I guess so." Carl grinned. "I'm not much on mathematics."

"So we understand. Tell us what you know about your parents?"

Carl's bulky frame squirmed in his chair. "My father was born in Turku. *Suomi*. His parents came from the north. Around Inari Lake somewhere. He met my mother up that way on a summer trip.

"After they got married, both pretty young, they came to Michigan. They were both killed on a hike into the Canadian Rockies. I was only four, but I remember them well. They were beautiful. Beautiful and wild and wacky."

"Maladjusted, psychwise."

Carl shrugged. "They were wonderful," he insisted. A haunt of misted memories flooded his mind. "Hanna talked to the animals. I remember once when she found a wounded fawn in—"

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"Never mind. To proceed, you were brought up in a Cities-G orphanage. Your record indicates that you were taught Finnish by an old peasant woman who knew your parents, followed them from Suomi, in fact. She lived alone in the woods. You used to sneak off periodically and—"

Carl swallowed hard. Old Touni. He'd never forget her. She had never even seen a City, nor wanted to. He grinned to remember what a wild kid he had been, running off, hiding, half-starving sometimes, then eventually being dragged back to the World-Fed orphanage.

Professor Graves brought his life's history crisply up to date. Then he asked, sharply, "Carl, do you know what the 5h's at the end of your psych-code-number stand for?"

"No."

"Ordinarily you never would find out. Now—" He waved a hand brusquely. "The h's signify that your sense of emp-esp is fantastically strong. Five times normal, in fact."

"Emp-esp?"

"Extra sensory perception. Random telepathy at moments of stress. Mental control on a staggering level. The 'emp' signifies 'empathetic transference,' which means simply that you can, under certain conditions, enter into another emp mind and become interlocked with it. Form a *oneness* with it. Usually there has to be some kind of catalyst."

Carl's blood leaped. "Like that light-tube!"

"Not quite. Partially. Hell, I don't know! We're getting into Dr. Enoch's department and, frankly, I don't quite—" He brushed a set of fingers over his bald head in exasperation. "You probably will recall times when you touched responsive minds. Momentarily. Finns are well-known to be high on the emp-esp lists. Irish, too. The folklore tales of these countries, and others, are cluttered with just this sort of thing, all of which can be explained in scientific terms." He shot a sour

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look at Dr. Enoch and Silia. "This is where we part company. Perhaps you care to amplify, Doctor?" He grimaced distaste.

Dr. Enoch nodded.

"The Finnish legends of the *Kalevala* tell of great heroes who could sing magical things into existence. In the old sailing days a Finn was a jona because he could chant up a storm any time he wanted to. To my niece and me, all of these things have their bases in supernormal *occurrences*. Cosmically important occurrences that predate our civilization's brief flick of existence on this planet. Things that reach out into the black reaches beyond our galaxy—into *Time*."

The business tycoon growled a loud protest.

"Can the fairy stories! Let's get to the meat!"

"Very well."

Professor Graves reached under his cut-off end of the table and lifted out something carefully wrapped in heavy fabric. He held it gingerly as if it were a deadly snake. Then, with a reflective toss, he slid it across the table in front of Carl.

"Would you please take out what is wrapped in this cloth and tell us what you think of it, Carl?" His lips were a grim line; his tone was sardonic.

"No, Carl!" Silia cried. "Don't!"

Carl looked down at the wrapped thing for a few seconds, then he picked it up and unwrapped it, fast.

"Just a raw chunk of ore of some kind," he told all those eager faces.

He was hefting it and trying to decide, from his limited experience with minerals, what the black striations in the rock were, when it happened.

A sudden riot of images exploded in his mind: Emotion-fraught patterns, a wild ecstasy, then stark terror that blotted the saliva from his mouth. He was aware of a kind of mindless chattering of alien voices.

"Drop it!" Dr. Enoch shouted. "*Fast!*"



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He tried to, but he couldn't let go. The chunk of ore seemed to have become a part of him; it was alive with inimical *Force*.

### IV

HIS PANIC was blind to everything except one thing: he must kill himself; it was the only way to relieve himself of this engulfing wave of horror.

Silia moved first. Her surgical-gloved hand slapped the thing out of his hands; it went spinning to the table's center, once again a harmless chunk of inert raw ore.

"W-What in the living hell—?"

Professor Graves proceeded, in his dry, crisp, Anglo-accent. "Sorry, Carl. But it seemed the best way to demonstrate what our world is up against."

"You mean there are more of these *things*?"

"Quite. A mineful of them, apparently. Of course we have sealed it off, but before we were aware of the hideous danger, our manufacturing cartels had put it to thousands of uses. It alloys beautifully, lends itself to innumerable production facilities. And the Cities are in dire need of raw resources. Watch."

He pressed some buttons on the arm of his chair. The room lights softened, while an oblong section of wall to his left slid away to disclose a tri-D Vid's characteristic glow.

"This part of your briefing will give you some idea of just what is happening, randomly, all over the world. Some of these scenes were actual, routine psych monitorings; others

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were simulated. But they all *happened*. These and thousands like them."

Carl felt his mind and muscles tense up for shock.

First came a prosaic shot of an elderly man shaving himself, using a straight razor. He was obviously something of a coddler, pensioned off, living alone in a cubicle that was cluttered up with old time artifacts. Shaving and humming in a tuneless, routine way.

The old man stopped shaving suddenly. He looked down at his hand with the sharp razor in it. He let out a scream, a yell of animal terror. Then, equally sudden, a smile of pure rapture grew in the Santa Claus froth of shaving soap. He chuckled; then, with one blithe stroke, he cut his throat from one ear to the other.

Next came an old lady, a fusty type, puttering at her windowbox of flowers. First, she watered them with a plastic sprinkling can, then she noticed with a frown that several of the marigolds were withered brown. She slipped a small garden shears out of a new wrapping to snip off the dead blooms. She never made it. That puzzled stare, again, followed by shuddering terror. Then she began to giggle. Then she stabbed herself in the heart with the new shears.

A teen-age youth, a food-processing engineer's new helper, was moving about his duties in one of the great plants serving the mecafes. His overseer moved through, shooting out critical glances; he stopped to give the youth some directions before he moved off between the rows of enormous vats. The youth wore a white uniform and white gloves. He proceeded to twist faucets and check dials, feeding pipe-lined components of vitaminized gruel into a great mixer at the center of the kitchen. Later the gruel would be flavored and solidified into psuedo-steaks and psuedo-vegetables; for the moment it it was just so much gray-white goo.

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He whistled, checking the color-coded dials; then, as if in a spate of boyish curiosity, he climbed up the ladder to watch the guck spill out and the sharp blades far below do their work of blending. He grinned down at the whirling blades, checking the quantity-dial from time to time. His nose began to itch, so he took off a glove to scratch it. This put him off-balance on the high ladder; he grabbed hold of the edge of the great mixing vat.

He yelled out and tried to pull his hand off. It wouldn't pull. Then he wasn't terrified any more; he was laughing, gleefully, hysterically. Blissfully he jumped down on the sharp whirling blades.

"Had enough, Carl?"

Carl nodded. "You mean to tell me this is happening in all the Cities?"

Graves nodded. "Every day, every hour, we receive news of dozens more. So far we have kept the truth from the general populace. We can't much longer. Conceive, if you will, what the result would be on all our billions, living their patterned, orderly lives in all of our cities! The panic!"

Carl pushed out a sharp breath. He, himself, was an atavistic rebel with a craving for adventure. All those others—amiable sheep with their studiedly mild psych-codes.

He scowled. "This metal, this Rare Earth—it seems to be *alive*, somehow. But why does it want us to kill ourselves?"

Dr. Enoch put in. "Rare, indeed. So rare it wasn't known to exist until that Finnish mine near the Arctic Circle suddenly popped out with it. I've put samples of it to every known test. It doesn't fit in atomically with any of the Tables. In fact, in some ways it reacts as if only *part* of it exists in our concept of matter in space. As if it were not matter at all, but anti-matter. Anti-matter forced partially into our space-time and *controlled!*"

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Graves batted his gavel to indicate his disapproval.

"With all due respect, Dr. Enoch, the rest of us don't go along with your theory that this odd specimen of Rare Earth is the result of some alien non-space invasion. We believe that it is simply an odd phenomenon in the natural course of events. Something like the drugs—hashish, peyote, the magic mushrooms, and so on—which produce weird emotional effects on users. This metal does the same thing, only by mere tactile propinquity. We eradicated all those bad drugs, except for medical purposes. We will eradicate this too, once we have more information to work on."

Dr. Enoch clucked sharp dismay. "By the time you finish your fiddlings Earth will have become a lifeless ball of rotting suicides."

"What's your idea, Dr. Enoch?" Carl asked.

"My niece and I have spent years studying sonics and their relationship to intelligent matter. We spent all of last summer in Finland and Lapland working on the folkloric songs of the *Kalevala*. We uncovered strange forces that exist in sound waves and light waves. We never quite made contact, but we came close. So very close!"

"Close to insanity!" Graves snapped. "Next thing you will do is to equate this metal with voodoo poppets!"

Carl saw Dr. Enoch's gray eyes spit fire, and Silia hasten to coax him out of blowing his top.

"I seem to have been dragged into this thing," Carl said. "I'd like to hear what Dr. Enoch has to say."

Silia flashed him a swift smile. The others moved uncomfortably in their seats. Graves scowled, shrugged his grudging consent.

"Briefly, here it is." Dr. Enoch ignored the others, speaking directly to Carl. "Somewhere outside of our narrow concepts of space and time there exist beings. Intelligent beings quite unlike ourselves, subject to none of our laws of what consti-

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tutes matter, or energy. It is my firm belief that these Forces have visited our galaxy, our universe, our *time*, before this. Our ethnic legends are filled with stories of beings who somehow made themselves known and felt, then vanished.

"Perhaps their motives are *not* inimical. Only curious. The Force with which we are contending is such a creature, or the result of his curious probing. The suicidal metal is a catalyst that enables him to make himself felt if not seen. He is still in the experimenting stages. Sending out little Force tentacles through the Rare Earth metal. Perhaps he doesn't mean to cause death. Perhaps he is only endeavoring to examine our mental processes, but the reaction he obtains is lethal. The deaths may be merely a by-product of his tentative efforts to study us, the way we would study a protoplasmic culture under a microscope."

"And you think that by sound waves we might make contact? Find out what gives?"

Dr. Enoch's bushy head nodded vigorously.

"Sound waves. Light impulses. I believe that some of our so-called primitive groups actually did make contact."

"Like the heroes of the *Kalevala*?"

"Yes. All of their magic was contained in songs. In word patterns."

Carl rubbed his neck to relieve the bursting conviction that none of this was really happening! It was the stuff that dreams and adventure books were made of! He had fallen asleep at his computer-deck and—

"Just where do I come in?"

Professor Graves took over.

"As we pointed out before: you possess an aggressive fight-motivation that has been painstakingly bred out of our people since the Third Atom War; you speak Finnish; your emp-esp is h5."

"So?"

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"We want you to go to Finland. To the little mining village where the metal originates. Talk to the people. Intuit. Find out anything you can, anything which might help us in our war against—"

"War against an inorganic mass of metallic rock!"

"Or what lies behind it," Dr. Enoch put in softly.

Carl whistled. "I still don't know what I—"

"Think of it this way, Carl." Silia spoke up. "A long time ago, fearful of our atomic weapons, that any small squabble might touch off a war that would destroy our planet, the Psychs took over. It was as if our whole world had gone lunatic and needed drastic psycho-therapy. What we got was a complete about-face from our previous nationalistic belligerence. Eventually we were trained to believe that even a harsh word was regrettable and appalling. At the merest hint of an aggressive syndrome any Cities citizen was rushed to his own Psych-Control for a mind-cleaning."

Her sea-green eyes met his and made sparks.

"And somehow none of the treatments worked on me."

Carl grinned wryly. "I'm the proverbial bad apple."

Silia's cherry lips smiled.

"If you are, then we're lucky. Especially since you are Finnish, have an emp-esp of h5, and—" She stopped short, twin spots of red blushed her cheeks.

"I . . . what?"

"You are an almost perfect prototype of the legendary Finnish warrior-lover, Lemminkainen."

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### V

THERE WAS NO question of refusal. On the strato-ship arcing over the unseen Arctic Circle to Helsinki, Carl strapped in for the rocket thrust, sat back and indulged himself in a wash of Finnish curses born out of marvel and disbelief. He was the only passenger. Everything top secret.

He thought about all that had happened to him within the past twenty hours: it was insane, of course. How could he, Carl Lempi, muscles or no muscles, esp or no esp, battle an invader as completely alien as this probing Force?

As Professor Graves had indicated, each passing hour brought the Psych-Head news of hundreds and thousands of new, random suicides. The only shred of sense they could glean out of this strange invasion was that in each case that Finnish Rare Metal was involved, either in the form of a manufactured alloy product, or a chunk of the raw mineral rock which had somehow or other strayed out of the processing procedures.

Inasmuch as the new metal had proved wonderfully useful, possessing both pliability and great tensile strength, which lent these qualities in alloy form amazingly, the Cities were full of it. By now the plants using it had been shut down, in spite of the howls of their management, and the labor element discreetly shifted elsewhere.

Everyone was required to wear special gloves. Great warehouses of suspect products were sealed up. Still, the populace began to realize that there was something wrong. Why were so many great cartels suddenly shut down? Why were work-

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ers in many areas drained off to other jobs? Why was sunbathing, swimming, in fact every type of activity involving skin exposure, suddenly taboo?

Only the world's severe Psych-Control prevented rumor spreading into blind panic. The non-aggressive citizens of the Cities accepted the plausible lies invented hastily for their benefit. Life went on. A child's toy, a table knife, a musical instrument—any of these or ten thousands of other things made of metallic alloy might turn on you and kill you.

Or force you to kill yourself.

"I'm hungry," Carl complained to the empty seats around him. His briefing hadn't admitted of animal needs.

There was a two-way monitoring device over his head. It heard him. Five minutes later a waiter came out of the service alcove to the rear of the ship. He was small, wore heavily tinted glasses, and, of all things, a Lappish garment with an ermine-tailed parka. He carried a tray of food and set it down on the flop-table in front of Carl.

Carl's attention was on the food, not on the waiter. Sniffing hungrily, he drooled at the sight of the red meat steak, the honest-to-Jumala vegetables, the warm rolls and the berry pie.

"It looks real!"

"It is," the little waiter told him, taking a seat opposite Carl's. "That's one thing, at least; you'll be well fed, as any hero should be."

Carl chomped his meal with gusto. Then he turned to the gnome in the blue parka. "You wouldn't by any chance have a cigar? I know smoking is taboo but—"

The man across the aisle produced a packet of cigars out of his tunic and lit one up for Carl. "It's not tobacco, but a derivative of a marsh plant grown around Lake Imari, where you'll be going." When he bent to light Carl's cigar for him,



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Carl blinked. There was something familiar about him, bundled up in all that hand-woven, hand-dyed wool.

Carl took hold of his wrist and flicked off the lighter.

"You're not just a waiter."

The little man shrugged, then made a thumb gesture at the monitor over their heads. Carl let go of his wrist with an understanding nod. The little man went back to his alcove, then reappeared five minutes later with a cup of ersatz coffee and a note tucked under the saucer.

Carl ignored the coffee, read the note.

*"I am Dr. Enoch. My conscience would not permit me to see you risk your life, alone. When I requested permission to go with you I was refused. Psych-Head scorns the knowledge my niece and I have gleaned. Some of this knowledge might help you in your task—even save your life."*

Carl gave a noisy yawn for the benefit of the monitor. He fished out a pen and scribbled, at the bottom of Dr. Enoch's note: *"What about Silia?"*

*"It was hard enough for me to manage. Besides, I wouldn't let her come. The chances of our ever coming back from this venture are one in billions."*

While the land-car swung Carl to his hotel along the wide avenues of immaculate Helsinki, Carl stared with wonder at the rows of lace-leaved trees and the splashes of colorful June flower beds in the park-like pedestrian areas. Here were towering monoliths, too, but not to be compared to the limitless complex of levels of the Cities to the south.

Helsinki retained some of the charm of olden times by virtue of its lesser population.

Carl breathed deep of the open, honest air.

Pushing into the hotel's lobby, he was brought back to reality with a jolt. Here, the same robotic impersonal tenor

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of the Cities was evident. He flashed his Psych-Priv card at the automatic desk clerk and was shown to a windowless cubicle up in the higher levels. The porter who saw him to his room and bailiwick flashed open his door by demagnetizing the lock, and when Carl and his baggage were inside, locked it again.

Carl was a prisoner.

He grimaced around the green-psyched walls. The music intruding gently from the ceiling was Sibelius, which helped. It sang of great forests, cool blue lakes, foaming tides.

He flicked out the bed from the wall, undressed, showered, and flaked out.

Next morning he found a green-gold uniform neatly hung beside his bed. It was close-fitting, his size, and thermalized for his Arctic trek. It was Midsummer, the time of endless twilight; still who knew where he would end up?

When the door buzzed open, Carl looked with curiosity at the odd, stocky Finn who came in with his breakfast tray. His wide face wore a persistently dour expression, his mouth was a *pukko* gash under flanging nostrils. His oversized ears gave the effect of being pointed; his slag-blond hair needed cutting and had for some time.

"I am your servant," the ugly one said.

"Servant?"

He shrugged as he set out the food. "They call me Kullervo."

The name rang a bell in Carl's mind, a kind of warning tocsin.

"I have no need of a servant," Carl told him.

"They told me to stay near you." Kullervo moved back against the wall, folded his oversized arms, and stood there. Carl tried to ignore the penetrating stare of those slanted mud-gray eyes.

"Okay." Carl shrugged. "If you insist."

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While he ate he mulled over that name. Kullervo. It had an ugly sound. It brought him dark, unpleasant emotions. Then it came to Carl, pushing up out of some subconscious rift in his brain.

Kullervo. The bad boy of the *Kalevala* legends. The youth whose ugly exterior hid an even uglier nature. Kullervo of the *Kalevala* had allied himself with the Pahaliset, the Evil Ones. His nature was to be sinister, a harbinger of dire elemental forces. On top of everything else, Kullervo of the *Kalevala* had, like the tragic heroes of Sophocles and Aeschylus, committed sins which even the gods could not forgive.

Here was the misbegotten creature who had been selected to accompany Carl on his trek and see to his needs. *Selected by whom?*

Sipping his pretend-coffee, Carl pushed up a grin.

"Anyway, all that's only an old legend. Eh, Kullervo?"

The dour youth showed lupine teeth. He said nothing, but there was an odd look in those shifting eyes.

Breakfast over, Carl told Kullervo he would like to take a walk around the city, for exercise. He didn't trouble to point out that he had to find Dr. Enoch before starting his journey north.

He walked down Mannerheim Way, past the great patriot's equestrian statue, and further along the peninsula to the docks. He watched the lumber barges transfer their cargo to the great ocean freighters, barges which for centuries past had hauled the felled trees down the Kymi and Oulo Rivers. It was significant that the three large ships anchored in the quays belonging to the mineral warehouses and offices lay idle and unmanned, everything steel-fenced and triple bolted.

He wandered off into the triangular park across the busy thoroughfare. It was pleasant under the sun-sprinkled trees. Carl dawdled along, scenting the iodide odor of the bay along

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with the smell of fish, listening to the swallows chirp among the branches. He wandered over to the plaza's central fountain and the statue of Sibelius, the Finnish composer who had set nature and the elements to music.

His music drifted across the esplanade.

*Tapiola*. Forest of gods and their creatures.

*Swan of Tuonela*. The sombre lake beyond which lies death.

Carl's mind churned with *Kalevala* legends. Lemminkainen, Son of Lempo. Lemminkainen, the beautiful, the golden apple of Ilmatar, creatrix of the universe. Swordsman and brash warrior. Vainomoinen, the wizard, who had dared to cross the black lake, defying even the rulers of the dead. Ilmarinen, the wondersmith, who had fashioned the arch of sky over the universe. The magic Sampo—

"Is it not time?"

Kullervo's harsh question pulled Carl out of his reverie. Standing at the rim of the fountain, Carl looked down in the water at Kullervo's image reflected in it. For a brief instant it seemed that the ill-starred youth wore a shabby dung-spattered garment and held up a sharp *pukko* knife. And he, Carl Lempi, had long golden hair braided across his golden-mailed chest, almost to the sword sheathed in a scabbard that shimmered with green and red fire.

There it was, then gone.

"Time to go back to the hotel, you mean."

Kullervo shrugged his wide bent shoulders. "First, how about a real Finnish sauna, to wash away the taint of the *toinen*."

Carl grinned. "Maybe you're right, Kullervo. I don't feel like a *veiras*. I feel that I belong here, more and more every hour." He started off. "Where is this *sauna*?"

They left the robo landcar at the city's edge. The afternoon sun glinted on scrub pines and an occasional clapboard

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house with woodsmoke curling out of its chimney. Kullervo's bandy legs stalked purposefully ahead of Carl into a stand of new-growth fir which gave out onto a marshy meadow and a dark blue apron of a lake, fringed by birch and alder.

Carl squinted up at the lowering skies; the blue and white morning and early afternoon had given way to wind-harried clouds, black with rain. From the purple horizon came an ominous roll of thunder.

"Ukko is angry," Carl said.

Kullervo said nothing, prowling through the cattails across the fen, leaving muddy little footstep-ponds in his wake. He was headed for a small ancient cabin on the lake's edge, where random rays reflected streaks of dull silver. Like an animal, he avoided the twisty path, charging beeline through the twittering willows.

Blue puffs of smoke emerged from the log cabin's rock chimney. The door came open while they were yet twenty paces away.

"Dr. Enoch!"

The gnome-twist of mental genius smiled and nodded them in. There were hard, unpainted benches in the cabin proper, a rough table and some shelves; Carl noted also two nylon packs, bulging under their leather straps, leaning against the wall by the door.

Dr. Enoch poured them out mugs of dark ale, sat himself opposite Carl. Kullervo sat apart from them, in the darkest corner.

"The fire's all stoked up; the sauna's almost ready. We will talk while we bathe and beat each other with birch branches."

Carl grinned. "But no diving in the lake after. I'm not Finn enough for that, yet."

While the heat welled up off the heated rocks and Carl felt the sweat river out of every pore, they talked.

"I'm a little uneasy about Kullervo." Dr. Enoch frowned,

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after the misshapen figure had hauled in buckets of ice-cold water for the dousing, and left. "But I had to see you, Carl. So far Psych-Head is keeping you under wraps, and Kullervo was the only local I could locate."

"How'd he manage to get to me through the P-H barrier?"

"Magic, of course." Dr. Enoch seemed to come near meaning just that, Carl thought.

"Forget him." Carl swabbed his dripping face while the doctor flung more water on the rock stove. "I want to know everything I can, from your view, before I start my trek to Lake Imari."

"Before *we* start our trek," Dr. Enoch corrected. He scowled and wagged his sweat-dappled head. "Hard to know where to start. I've spent more than fifty years on my sonics-vibration theory. How can I possibly— Never mind, I'll try."

"You know about psychokinesis, latent mind-power moving and even creating material objects. In fact, my guess is that you've got a lot of this inside of you, Carl, waiting for the time of extreme necessity that will set it off. All Finns have it, is my guess. That was why they were called wizards and demons. It's simple, really. For many, many generations this mysterious race of seemingly commonplace tree-choppers and fishermen have nurtured these mind vibrations, put them into song-legends. Racially they are tuned to the high oscillations which *cause* things to be. The Finn race is old, very old. Some of the evidence which Silia and I uncovered even hints that they didn't originate on this planet at all. They migrated here from somewhere else! They remember the old Powers, some of them, and on occasion they use them."

"You don't think that *they*—"

"No! Quite the opposite! In their own way they are fighting the intruders. You have read the *Kalevala*, of course. How the metals of the Earth possess a strange sentience of their own: Vainomoinen's strange battle to tame *iron*; Ilmarinen,

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the wondersmith, wrestling terran elements into submission with his forge and mystic songs.”

Dr. Enoch grimaced.

“Here I go again. This is the kind of talk that gets me boot-ed out of P-H. In 1944—that long ago—Dr. H. S. Burr and co-workers at Yale University experimented for decades and came to the conclusion that an electrical aura of their creation surrounds all living things, that life is connected electrically to the whole pattern of the universe itself! Carl, everything that exists is vibration, the same magnetic principle that causes gravitation, chemical affinities, in macrocosm and microcosm, controls our galaxy and the galaxies beyond it. Time, itself!”

Carl scowled this over. “Now you’re leaning too far in the other direction. Okay, matter is vibration, energy is matter. Whatever you say. But”—he stopped to move down to the next pineboard shelf—“where does all this lead to? Where do the Finns and their legends come in?”

“Thomas Edison said, ‘Ideas come from space.’ Dr. Richard Bucke declared that the power in our own minds, which is cosmic in origin, can create ‘brilliant white light.’ Don’t you see, Carl? Everything is possible to the human mind because it possesses a direct wire to the all-power of the infinite cosmos.

“Somehow or other, the Finns knew this. It spilled out in their legends, all of which have their bases in *elemental natural forces*. The Finns, through infinite centuries, here and perhaps elsewhere, caused their legend to become real by the power of their combined and implicit belief!”

Carl whistled.

“Then the heroes of the *Kalevala* do exist?”

“Somewhere, yes. Some *mindwhere*. It is the tapping of the cosmic force allied to the mind that made these things happen before, and will again. We, in our stagnant, womb-like

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Cities, have almost lost the most important source of Power there is."

"And?"

"The latent power of the human mind. The power which, combined with the implicit belief such as the Finns possessed (many have, of course, lost it by now) can create whole solar systems and universes. Control of the sonic-vibratory secrets within their songs can cause anything to exist. Benificent or evil. *Anything!*"

Dr. Enoch's eyes glowed. Carl allowed his mind to whittle on all this while they beat each other vigorously with branches of fresh birch, then doused each other with buckets of cold water.

While Carl put on the Lappish costume of colorful hand-woven wools, he asked, "What about the Rare Earths and the suicides? Seems like we've wandered off into left field."

"No, Carl. What I've been doing is preparing your mind to accept what you must accept to discover the truth. Even Professor Graves would agree with me here. Your 5h mind potential must reach a peak which you can't even imagine yet, if you are to succeed in your task. Your unconscious mind must already be working, accepting fantastic new concepts, preparing you for incredible surprises and shocks!"

Carl went over to the rough table and finished off his now-tepid mug of *kallia*. "But you'll be with me, Doctor?"

Dr. Enoch's face, roseate from the scrubbing, was a study in desperate hope. "I will try. But I don't possess the latent mind-power that you have, Carl. This makes me vulnerable."

"And I?"

"You must become a true hero. Like Lemminkainen. Like Vainomoinen. All modesty and self-effacing must be sloughed off. You must *believe* and trust the power inside of that head of yours, with all the ancestral cumulative belief in your blood and bones to back it up."



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Carl reached down and picked up one of the packs Dr. Enoch had prepared. He set it down again abruptly when he caught a strange intense look on the little doctor's face. It was a look infinitely sad.

"You've been avoiding the issue, Doctor. Putting my unconscious mind to work, maybe. But still, you've been beating around the bush. What about the Force—the Thing I was sent up here to find?"

He faced Dr. Enoch squarely; Kullervo, skulking in his corner, gave an odd, wolf's growl.

Carl's mind burst into pyrotechnics of alarm. *Something was among them. Something had been listening, absorbing, waiting to pounce.*

Outside, Ukko, God of Thunder, let fly a clap of sonics to shred the very planets.

"It's no use," Dr. Enoch said, his face ash-gray. "I . . . I'm old, and besides, I don't have the power to fight." His gnarled frame shuddered as he gave a quick look around, as if waiting. "The dark is closing in."

Carl grinned and went to the table. "Then we must light the lamp."

"*Don't touch it!*" Dr. Enoch's voice was a shriek.

He stumbled and half fell before he could reach the metal-base oil lamp and sweep it out of Carl's reach.

The storm darkness thickened. Carl heard a malevolent *alien* chuckle spill out of Dr. Enoch's lips, where he lay on the log floor, surrounded by hungry little tongues of yellow flame. The lamp was crushed under him.

"Gol"

The gurgled word was Dr. Enoch's last prodigious effort. By the time Carl had groped out a hand torch from one of the packs, while Kullervo tramped on the oil flames with heavy boots, there was nothing on the floor but the bent lamp base and a thousand crystalline shards of glass.

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Dr. Enoch was a black shattered thing in the ring of torch-light, then only ashes.

While he stood gaping, ravished by sorrow, Carl heard a voice, a deep cold voice, from the occult areas of his mind.

*"I am Hiisi,"* the voice said. *"Dr. Enoch went too far. Take warning."*



## PART TWO

### Of Ilmarinen

“For ’twas he who forged the heavens,  
And the vault of air he hammered  
Ere the air had yet beginning,  
Or a trace of aught was present . . .”

KALEVALA: *Runo X*

## VI

THE SLEDGE, hand-carved and decorated with intertwined marshberry flowers, moved swiftly across the ever-twilight. The six elk-hounds pulling it sought out the places where the springtime snow was patched most liberally. The wide tundra seemed never-ending.

By turns, Carl and Kullervo would run alongside, cracking the reindeer-hide whip over the heads of the yelping animals.

Now it was Kullervo's turn with the muscular dogs, whose thick gray pelts left harness-chafed bits in the sledge-wake, fur-tufts of their summer shedding.

Carl lay back in the sledge and tried for sleep. But Utamo, chieftain of all dreams, was not in good humor and sleep

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would not come. Carl stared up at the arch of cobalt sky and thought.

He thought how, at a thick forest's edge, he had looked back at the old sauna by the lake as the June-dry logs went up in a pillar of flame, sending sparks skyward to a grumbling Ukko. Dr. Enoch was gone, victim of his ambition to learn cosmic secrets. "The thing I feared has come upon me." What Enoch had wrested from out of the consciousness of the Infinite had taught him to fear, and his fear had given Hiisi the opportunity he needed.

*Hiisi.*

That soul-chilling voice had revealed itself. Hiisi, The Evil, master of all the Pahaliset. Of all whose desires are destructive and needful for fear beyond death.

"Want me to spell you off?" Carl shouted to Kullervo, whose bandied, stunted legs propelled him somewhat ludicrously alongside the lean, rangy elk-dogs.

"Presently, Lemminkainen."

"Why do you call me that?"

Kullervo shrugged and cracked his whip, cursing.

Carl turned his attention to a worn copy of the W. F. Kirby translation of the *Kalevala* which Dr. Enoch had included in his pack of concentrate foods, sleeping bag, and utilitarian tools. The frayed volume had been wrapped in a wide leather belt with a silver buckle that had runic symbols scratched on it. For some reason Carl had donned the belt, slipping his *pukko* sheath onto it as well.

The book opened to an underscored passage:

"Quick he sped upon his journey,

To the great smith Ilmarinen,

He the great primeval craftsman . . ."

It would seem that Dr. Enoch was urging Carl to find the wondersmith, first. But where could he find a hero out of legend?

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He turned his puzzlement in the direction of Kullervo. According to legend, the misshapen Calibanish youth had been born to evil. As a baby he kicked his cradle to bits and turned his swaddlings into rags. The wily crones of his village tried to drown him; the water would not take him. They tried burning; the fire rejected him, as well. They hanged him but the oak tree shook him off. Finally his own father sold the ill-starred, ill-natured youth into slavery. It was shortly after that, in his meanderings, that he committed the unspeakable. Like Oedipus, Kullervo was destined for tragedy.

"*Perkele!*" Kullervo's harsh voice cursed the straining hounds. "*Mennäl Mennäl!*"

It was three days and nights, not by the sun now in mid-summer, but by Carl's chronometer and his belly, that cried out for fresh meat and fresh bread, when they sighted Lake Imari. Village dogs heard their sledgehounds bay and gave answer, long before the mining village around the ice-edged lake, with the great beetle-brow of cliff hanging over it, came bluely in view.

The hospitality of the solemn-faced villagers was marred by their anxiety about the sealed mouths of the Rare Earth mines.

Over a dinner of fresh round loaves baked in outdoor ovens, of reindeer steaks and a compote made of marsh-cherries and cranberries, the village spokesman, a rawboned Lapp with bramble bushes for eyebrows, spoke up.

"You have come to open the mines, yes?"

Carl watched an ancient witch-crone drive Kullervo out from the main communal eating room, but made no comment. Truly, there was something about the youth that repelled, and this breed of *soumalinen* peasants was quick to sense it. Their honesty forbade hypocrisy.

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"Eat scraps with the dogs!" Carl heard her croak, flapping her apron after him. "Offspring of misfortune! Son of Pahalainen!"

Carl turned back to his platter of food.

"These have been bitter times for us," Tuuri, the Lapp, grunted. "The winters have been long, with little game to be found. Even the lake-perch have hidden themselves from our seines. The mines have been a great boon to this village and to others around the lake."

The ring of grave-faced villagers behind him nodded.

Carl sighed and pushed away the platter. Life was hard in these northernmost villages; they had given him their best, out of politeness to a *veiras*.

"The mines were closed because there is something evil in the rocks you take from it," Carl told them. "Haven't your miners noticed anything peculiar?"

Tuuri's head hung down to avoid Carl's sharp look; some of the others exchanged glances. During the ensuing silence, Carl could hear the white-haired crone keening to herself in the darkest corner.

"We worked hard. Everyone in our village worked. We hauled out the rocks from deep under the ground, and loaded it onto the fly-things the *veiras* brought. They wanted the ore from our mine and we gave it to them. That is all."

"Have there been any . . . any deaths among the miners?"

Tuuri shrugged.

"There are always accidents. Jumala does not always have time for everybody. We sing the old songs every day, when we work in the mines."

Carl sighed. The old songs. The old Words that protected by their sonic vibrations. Rhythmic shields against Hiisi and his crew. The old crone was singing one of the old never-to-be-forgotten songs right now. Against who? Kullervo?

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"You could go down to The Cities," Carl suggested. "There you would never know hunger or want."

Tuuri snorted and crashed his great fist down on the table, slopping the pitcher of goat's milk. "Cities! We are of the *Vanhat!* We stay here where we belong. We must live and sing our songs and dance our dances under the clean sky. How can we live in cages?"

A sun-freckled youth with blonde braids to his waist and a yew bow slung across his shoulder, stepped forward. His wide smile was frank and infectuous.

"Tuuri," he said. "Have I your permission to speak?"

Tuuri nodded dourly. "Speak, Hunter Kauppi."

The youth in buckskin bobbed his wheat-blond head. "Perhaps it is that Lemminkainen has journeyed so far to our village for another reason. To find and destroy the evil of which he speaks."

Carl stood up and gripped the youth's hand, hard.

"You have said it, Kauppi. Our Cities are not protected from the evil in your mine metals by ancient songs. Bad things are happening everywhere." He explained his mission, briefly, omitting technicalities. After all, he was among Believers, now—Believers such as Dr. Enoch had told him of—humans who lived simply, yet who possessed fragments of cosmically-linked mind-power that could shake the world.

He sympathized with them for their yearning hunger of Tapiola, the forest magic; of Otava, the constellation they called Great Bear or Great Father; of Ahava, the wind, and Ahto, the thundering seas that battered their northern shores. And why not? This was what Carl had always wanted, a want spilling up from the very atomic structure of his being.

"You call me Lemminkainen," he told Kauppi.

The hunter screwed up his blue eyes. "You look like Lemminkainen. With those muscles, I shall be damned if you cannot be as great a fighter!"



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"How do you *know* what Lemminkainen looks like?" Carl demanded.

Kauppi only laughed and tapped his forehead. Surely it was obvious how he knew. Being who and what he was, this man from the Cities must understand!

Carl turned to Tuuri as the village leader. "Can any among your people help me to find this Evil Force?"

The villagers shrugged and shook their heads.

"We know how to protect ourselves," Tuuri said slowly. "We see the Gods sometimes, dimly, as in a dream. But you must seek elsewhere for an answer to this problem." He hesitated, massaging his bony knuckles. "Further to the North, perhaps. It is dangerous, this path you have taken, yet—"

"What about Ilmarinen?"

The hag muttering among the hanging deer meat and laurel branches rolled out of her corner like a bundle of gray rags. "Ilmar is there, at the topmost crag of the great cliffs! I have seen him standing at the mouth of his cave, his long red beard tossing in the north wind!"

Carl turned to the others. All of them shook their heads. What had not this crazy old *mummu* seen while gathering her magic herbs and potions at the far end of lake?

Kauppi, the hunter, spoke up. "I know where that wall of rock is. I will take you there, Lemminkainen."

"When?"

"After one sleep. I will give you and your servant snowshoes for the snow that never melts. I am the greatest of all builders of snowshoes!"

Carl grinned and nodded. Somehow, he knew this was true.

All of the village was there to wish the three safe journey and safe return. Among them was the bent witch with her rowan stick brandished. Bells jangled on the sledge as the dogs leaped ahead.

But all that Carl could hear was the crone's cracked croon-

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ing, vibrating on his eardrums over the jangling, the shouting, the yelping:

“Thus did Lemminkainen perish,  
Perished thus the dauntless lover,  
Down in Tuoni’s murky river,  
Down in Manala’s abysses . . .”

### VII

KAUPPI knew all the best ways of avoiding the treacherous bogs along the scalloped western rim of the lake; his laughing good nature was good company for Carl, too, after those long days of Kullervo’s sullen silences broken by sky-hurled curses; presumably aimed at the dogs.

Carl found his webbed snowshoes awkward for the first hour or so and himself, at times, left far behind the sledge, which then became a small black patch bobbing in and out of sight as it traversed the blue-white snowdunes.

“*Ai!*” he yelled at last, “*Olkaa hyvää!*” The crusted drifts glinted silver under a sombre sky, and, together with a mournful nag of the north wind, suggested that they were racing timeward, too, into the chill of Arctic winter.

Gulping the wine-sweet air into his lungs, Carl loped over the crest of a pine-dotted dune to find Kauppi among the panting dogs, feeding them, while snow melted over a primitive oil burner for a human bracer of bark-tea. Kullervo crouched, toad-like, among the sledge furs, arms akimbo, eyes veiled, grim.

Kauppi greeted Carl with a shout and a nod that flopped his tasseled blue toque from side to side. Carl dropped easily

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on the side of a snowbank and accepted his tin cup of bark-tea with a grinned, *kiittää*. Kauppi gulped his own tea fast, then went back to checking the elk-hounds' harnesses for sore spots and a paw which the lead dog seemed to favor.

"I imagine that up here you establish a close relationship with your sled dogs," Carl commented.

"Yes. Not to fondle them too much, for they are not pets. Take Musti, our lead. We are fast friends already. He would fight off a pack of wolves to the death for me. I was worried he might have picked up a hawthorn spine. Not so."

"How long to the escarpment where the witch said she saw Ilmar?"

"Three days. Two and a night with luck, and if—" The Lapp grinned down at Carl's snowshoes, which were staked into the snow before him like twin grave markers. "If you keep up better."

"I will," Carl vowed wryly. "Let's get mushing."

Kauppi's lively conversation, as they took up their journey, made Carl forget to be awkward; his Cities-bred psych marveled at the fund of woods lore Kauppi spilled out with boyish flair. Carl learned the best way to take a bull elk, and how to set copper snares out, and where, for the small furbearing Sons of Tapio, the God of the Forest.

"What about—" Carl jerked a nod back at Kullervo among the bear furs. "Why did the old crone chase him out? Just because he is named Kullervo?"

Kauppi clouded up thoughtfully.

"No. It is a something—a sense that one has in this wild country. Like something smells bad, you know? Kullervo smells bad with that other sense. Understand?"

"I think so. And the ancient crone—"

"Irde has this sense along with others, more so than any others of our village. She heals sick people with her hands and her rasping songs. She knows when a bad thing is going to

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happen. Not *what* bad thing, always, but something. As for him,"—a winced gesture back—"we wish it were not so, but he is born with evil. He cannot help it, perhaps. I don't know. I'm not like Irde, who can see clear bright in the long dark of our Winter. I wish it were not so, Kullervo being akin to the Pahaliset, but—" He shrugged, and cracked his whip over the flanks of the swift-moving animals.

Carl nodded. Even in his tight cosy world of the patterned Levels, where the witches were Psychs, there were to be found persons who seemed to be born out of evil itself. When cures could not be found, they were put away in farms surrounded by high force-field fences, so that they could not spread their tainted psychs. In the bad old days, the hell-years of the Great Wars, it was just such creatures who had caused them.

"Maybe we should have left him behind in the village?" Carl mused.

Kauppi shook his tasseled toque vigorously. "No. You brought him this far. It is his destiny to follow, to seek, as you are seeking. Our village would not accept him; it would spew him out as Death spewed out his namesake of the Old Songs."

During the next days of monotonous twilight, while the northwind, wailing icily, protested their intrusion into his domain, Carl queried Kauppi about the Rare Earth mines. How, in this largely ignored wasteland, had they come to be discovered suddenly? How was it that the Finns, scrupulously honest and religiously ethical as they were known to be, could permit these malignant rocks to be carried out into the great Cities and take a terrible toll among innocent humans?

"Our people have known about the network of natural cave-shafts since . . . since . . . since the Great Bear brought us

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here. But we are not miners. We are hunters, fishermen, followers of the reindeer herds across the tundras.

"Sometimes children would wander into the caves. Old Irde warned us most severely to stay away from them, but you know how youngsters are. They brought out with them bits of shiny rock. One day a small craft that rides on the wind had a misfortune with its machines; it was almost as if *something* forced it to land not far from our village. While the pilot was recovering from his injuries and a horseman was sent to the nearest town where they have a radio, to have parts sent up for repair, this pilot found out about the mines and the ore samples."

Kauppi made an odd pagan sign toward the aurora borealis, cascading down the north sky.

"I get it," Carl said grimly. "The Force that found a weapon against us through the Rare Earths somehow pulled that stray ship down to this Lake village. *They* wanted the ores to be discovered and scattered over the planet."

"It didn't take long." Kauppi nodded. "In less than a week the mining interests flooded us with tools and food and promises. That winter, as Tuuri told you, game was so scarce that we all knew many days of empty bellies and dark despair. Tuuri accepted the mining company's deal, but only on the provision that we of Imari work the mines alone—no *vieras*—and in our own way. They would send a cargo airship once each week and we would load it."

He snapped his whip for emphasis. "As for our knowing that the ore which we wrested from the caves and loaded on those great ships was like a poison we were helping to disseminate across your great Cities—need you ask?"

"No, of course not. But how about, say, Old Irde? Didn't she and other high-esps suspect anything?"

Kauppi smiled a grim smile.

"Old Irde has many suspicions, many dire prophecies. But

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they flash in and out like summer lightning. She knows many, many things. Perhaps even she wishes evil for the *vieras*; perhaps the Pahaliset twisted her mind-gifts to other forks in the time-stream. We of the Great Bear—" Kauppi stopped bluntly.

Carl empathized at once. The great space-trek from the Great Bear, Otava, in times so ancient there were no numbers to count, was seldom spoken of, and *never* to *vieras*. But Carl was purely of the Vanhat. He could half-know.

He stared up at the dazzling aurora, thinking, with a thickness in his throat, of Ilmatar, who had once called him her Golden Apple. Would he ever see her again? Was such a privilege possible?

He thought, too, of Silia.

His total immersion of thought patterns, vibrating in counterpoint to the soft crunch of their legged feet through the snow crust, was like an inborn song. A song laden with joy and awe and wonderment that he should be here among the elements, churning and rocking their portion of the cosmic song from which all in this universe borrows its purposeful, non-ending rhythms.

"You are trying to remember, Lemminkäinen," Kauppi murmured. "Trying to believe that which seems impossible to believe, to one clothed in flesh."

Carl thought about what Dr. Enoch had told him. *It is the tapping of the cosmic sonic-vibrations that causes things to exist. For everything, by its atomic structure, is pure vibration: the whirling electrons, the whirling planets, the stars, the great clock that is Time. Everything! And the tremendous power that exists within the human mind is dipped out from that source of endless energy.*

Believe. That was what Kauppi said. To believe, utterly and completely, was to cause that which one believes to be!

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The Finns had harnessed this power of belief, long, long ago. They had believed their heroic legends into existence.

*You must become a true hero, Dr. Enoch had told Carl. All trace of modesty must be flung to the winds. It is only as this actual, fierce, indomitable hero that you can save us and yourself.*

They called him Lemminkainen.

It was the first step.

Wild cranberry bogs and cattails and bleating lake birds in the rushes where the dark wind-rippled water still bore a thin patina of ice: all of this gave way to white birches bending to the wind, then, past a brief clearing, to a thick front of evergreens.

"We will make camp here." Kauppi put his nose to the wind as if consulting with the natural elements. "Tomorrow midday we will reach the cliff."

Selecting a spot surrounded by trees, they set about creating a hole-in of branches and windbreak for the darkless night of rest. Kullervo did only what he was told to do, and that in a silence which Carl found irritating and sinister. He watched Kullervo's bear-like shoulders lumber off a small distance from the fire Carl built to heat up their supper, and something like an alarm bell clanged in his mind.

"Yes"—Kauppi nodded across the firelight—"he will bear watching." Carl would remember Kauppi, the hunter, like that: his amiable fire-shadowed face grim with deep pre-cognitive thoughts, standing lithe and tall in his ermine-tailed deerskins, savoring the piney domain of Tapio, god of the forest, fearless yet tautly aware of lurking danger.

"We'll keep the fire going." Carl yawned, leg-weary, bone-weary, from their long day's trek. "Shall I take first watch?"

"No." Kauppi gave him a grin. "You do well for a Cities fellow, but right now the marrow of your bones cries out for

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sleep. Me? Tapiola is my home. The children of Tapio are my friends. Sleep well. I will waken you when it is your turn."

Obedient to the demands of his muscles and to Kauppi's insistence, Carl pulled into his sleeping bag. He listened to the whispering of the wind up in the branches, tried to remember that quick stab of alarm and put a label on it. But sleep won out.

*Lemminkainen!*

Dream or no, it was her. Ilmatar. Goddess of the rainbow. Her cry was a sword thrust.

*Wake!*

He snapped his eyes open with effort. First he lay there in his nylon cocoon, stiff as one of the dark fir-trunks around their bivouac. His neck muscles protested when he lifted, wincing, to refute the painful alarm which had yanked him out of sound sleep.

"Kauppi," he whispered, shrugging his shoulder muscles out of their relaxed response to gravity. "How come you didn't wake me and—"

Kauppi was gone. The fire was ashes.

Carl unzipped the bag and leaped out in one blurred motion.

"Kullervo!" He reached the branch-bed Kullervo had fixed for himself beyond a lightning-blasted stump, in keeping with his insistence on being alone and unwanted.

Kullervo was gone, too.

"Kauppi!" he yelled through cupped hands.

A wan midsummer's moon glimmered down on the forest. No bird sang. No small animal disturbed the silent mosses. Tapiola lay mantled over with breathless portent.

The rhythmic vibration of the universe seemed to stop.

Carl yelled out and crashed, panicked, to where they had left the sledge and the dogs, at the forest's edge. While he



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ran, his hand worried the leather handle of the knife on his silver-buckled belt. His pointed *pukko*.

Sledge and dogs were gone. He blinked down at the disturbed brush and dry needles in disbelief. From around the sedge and clay-bank of the lake came a far-off yelping. While he squinted and mumbled imprecations, the faint jangling of the sledge bells and the noise of the dogs receded and vanished on the wind.

When he swung a look campward he noticed a dark patch huddle off in the trees. Part of a blue ermine-tailed head-piece.

"Kauppi!"

Carl wrenched out a groan when he ran to it and saw that it was the hunter. What was left of him. His body was torn and mangled, as if some huge supernormal creature with rapping claws had ripped Kauppi into rags, in a wild torrent of rage, then flung him away when its fury was spent.

## VIII

CARL SANK to his knees, retching, sobbing. Kullervo had done this, with some terrible magic, with the think-power of pure evil. Carl had brought him up here and made such a horror possible, in spite of the nagging warnings in his psych. He wept dry tears for the young hunter while he set about preparing his pack for his lonely last thrust in search of Ilmarinen, the wondersmith.

Jamming cooking gear into his pack, he heard it. He froze, standing there over the dead fire.

Behind him in the dark trees, a dim roaring and snuffling,

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like an angered grizzly. It grew louder while he shivered there, the spittle drying in his throat from his sudden mindless fear.

Kullervo had called forth something from out of his evil id. Filled with flaming hate, Kullervo had created this Thing that had killed Kauppi. Now it was lurking back in the trees, waiting for Carl.

His lashing fear made it impossible for him to turn. Dr. Enoch had taught him to fear the monsters which the Finns had created out of their implicit belief, as well as the gods and heroes.

Kullervo was born out of evil, possessed of it, able to create its manifestation. The old *Kalevala* Kullervo had created bears to devour his hated mistress and all of her household. Now this new Kullervo had created a monster-bear to kill Kauppi.

"Kauppi died because he was trapped by his inborn ancestral belief in Kullervo's power to do this thing."

Carl said it, loud. Saying it, thinking it, believing it, Carl turned around.

There was no giant bear.

There was nothing.

He filled his pack from what Kullervo, the thief, had left him, cinched up the straps and heaved it up on his back. Then he set upon his way through the forest, grimly. There was no going back. He had defeated the residuum of Kullervo's hate by refusing to believe in the creature it created. But this lingering Thing was weak, spent, sated. How strong would he be, next time?

The crackling of brush under his boots was reassuring; somehow the simple sounds of reality pushed back the hovering Unseen. Carl whistled, talked to himself aloud, chanted tuneless bits of doggerel, anything to keep his thoughts off the baleful potential for his destruction that haunted Tapiola,

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this forest of elemental magic. He refused to see the gray-brown gargoyles that peeked out suddenly from behind a gnarled tree trunk or bubbled up malodorously out of the places of quaking bog. Tapiola was alive with vibrations which had no place on Earth, yet lingered, waiting to be believed back into existence.

Carl kept Them away by concentrating on the prosaic routines of his life in the Cities. Every once in a while he would pull his *pukko* knife out of its sheath and slash twigs out of his path, or just heft it. Long ago Vainomoinen, the greatest wizard of them all, had tamed iron and its son, steel. What great warlock could tame the Rare Earth from its fumbling paths of destruction?

He thought about the old days, before the Psychs had dominated all facets of human behavior. The old wars and the old weapons they were fought with were shunned memories. Guns, atomic weapons, stun-needles—all of them were gone from the Cities now. There were no animals to fight in the Cities. Mankind had exploded them out of existence, except for the zoos and protected areas.

Old dreams of conquest, old hates were no longer permitted. Only in this bleak wilderness were the primitive weapons and the needs for them believed.

The new psych-clean earth was peculiarly vulnerable to this elemental Force because it had stifled the very idea of need for conflict. Earth was a sitting duck for alien take-over.

Carl crashed his way through the bracken, stopping only to grope out a round of hardtack bread from his pack and munch it on his dogged path. He shook his water canteen. It was empty; he squinted among the lofty trunks and the underbrush for signs of a spring or clean pond. While he zigzagged about, following false leads, his thirst mounted to obsessive demand.

"Tapiol!" he yelled out. "Bring me to water!"

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Echoes and bird chirps stirred the silence.

Then, panting, he saw it, a mossy break in the timber. A deep green field of velvet moss with tufts of yellowish reeds here and there, in the center a gently bubbling pool.

He ran for the sky-reflecting spot of water.

Halfway across the mossy carpet his boots began to sink. The greenery was a mock; he was being sucked down into black iridescent slime. Stench of decayed animals which the swamp had eaten gurgled up in great bubbles as the mosses quaked and parted.

In less than a minute the mire had him to the waist.

"*Ahti!*" he shouted, parch-lipped. "*Ilmatar!*"

Echoes mocked. A crow fluttered the top of a tall pine, cawing doom while it fled from the noise.

Around him demon mouths chuckled.

Carl lurched and squirmed while the ooze bubbled up to his chest.

"*Ilmatar!*" he cried again.

Crying out the name, he turned his face toward the sky. Directly above him was a birch branch; shafts of prism-broken light shimmered through the pale leaves. Carl reached his hands up forlornly. It was hopelessly high.

Despair clung to him like a leech. He must cast it aside! He must *make* it happen!

His brain exploded suddenly with *need*: Esp, incantation, power, belief!

"Drop, damn you!" he cried out. "Break!"

The heavy branch seemed to sway closer; the twinkling lights mocked him, yet beckoned.

"*Ukko!*" Carl blared out, from the deepest part of his mental being. All of his h5 power, all of the magic of his ancestors, plus something like a thread of intense cosmic light—all of this rushed together and became one solitary urgent *Must*.

Ukko roared thunder. Lightning struck the branch. It fell

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with a crash that echoed up and up, beyond time and eternity.

Carl dragged his befouled body onto firm ground; he lay there, face-down, for an hour. He hurt. Every cell of his body hurt; not from his struggles with the swamp, no. From having done the impossible.

He lifted finally, with a groan. Every muscle of his body ached. He cocked an eyebrow at who was standing fifteen yards away, at the bog's edge, watching him gravely. A doe. An elk doe. She wriggled one of her long ears to flag off a busily whirling swarm of mosquitoes; her moist black snout quivered; her large luminous brown eyes stuck to Carl's as if held there by sorcery.

Carl blinked while he maneuvered to his knees, holding back a whistle of surprise. There was a crackling of brush but the doe's eyes kept vigil. Carl adjusted his muddy pack and raised to a crouch.

The doe watched him. She lifted up one delicate hoof. Then, with a shake of her beautiful head, she showed him her brush, and bounded away.

The shake seemed to say: *Follow.*

Carl rocked dizzily up on his feet. That powder-puff tail bobbed and leaped, over fallen logs and huckleberry bushes, but always it reappeared when Carl's clumsy human feet lagged and he stopped to totter, panting, against a tree trunk. Tapiola, the forest, dwindled into meadowland; the young doe paced him fast, although now the terrain was rising to meet a sheer wall of escarpment so lofty it might well leap its way off the earth itself.

He dragged wearily up to it with a moan.

"I'll never make it. Sorry, Ilmar."

He stared up, up, up into a sombre gunmetal shroud of mist, then grunted and deliberately turned his back on such a wall of rock. He plopped down as if he intended never to

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get up again; his eyebrows met in stubborn anger. This was too much.

"Go to hell!" he cried out, when the young doe circled him and stood twenty paces off, waiting.

He dug in his pack for something to eat. He found a foil wrapped bar of chocolate, gnawed at it, trying to ignore the doe's persistent stare.

"Go to hell!" he said again, and let his head fall back. He slept.

Icy needles of rain pelting his face woke him. He sat up and looked for the doe. She was gone. "Good riddance!" He grinned, but he didn't fool the sharp pang of guilt in his *sisu*.

A high-pitched whinny whirled him toward the cliff. There she was, looking down at him from an outcropping of rock twenty yards straight up. He shivered. He was cold down to the marrow of his bones. And now this drizzle, wind-driven across the rising meadowland.

He thought, *maybe I can find a cave. Shelter of some kind.*

Dragging his pack along, he made for the cliff; he prowled along it, ignoring another shrill admonition from Tapio's nagging offspring. He found no cave, but a kind of path zigzagging upcliff. There were places where the lichen had been scraped by the doe's nimble hooves.

Carl swore. Then he hauled his pack up on his back, and followed the path up to the outjut. Of course the doe was no longer there. She was higher up, shaking her head at him and uttering that imperative scream.

While he followed, inching his way from crevasse to crevasse, his reason for doing so changed. When they got up there he was going to artfully inveigle her close, then kill her with his *pukko*. She'd make a delightful change of diet from hardtack, wild berries, and vitamin pills.

It got so he didn't dare look back down. It was some slim comfort to move up into the wet dark mists. He didn't want

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to see up or down, at this point. Miraculously, handholds—fissures, cracks into which he could force his numbed fingers—kept appearing. When shards gave way he screamed silent prayers and curses.

The doe was gone. Hope was gone. He started to slide and slip down the wet lichen-slimed rock.

He screamed and flailed a hand skyward.

It hit something like a clammy rope. *Roots*. He hung from them, dangling his boots against the beetling rock. Dirt showered down on him but the root-ropes held. He inched his way around the projection of earth and rock by groping roots, then reedy grasses. He kept his face down in the wet dirt, so that he realized that he had made it only when his fingers curled around a six-inch trunk of tree and the world had become horizontal again. He lay there with his fingers gouged into the ground, greedily pulling air into his oxygen-starved body.

The plateau he had reached was haunted by skirling winds and clinging mists. Misshapen trees loomed among wild rock outcroppings. It was desolate, demon-designed, un-human. But there was no going back.

Carl battled the sharp wind across the bleak tundra, wondering about the doe. Ilmatar had sent her, he decided, and, real or phantom, her task of guiding him out of the forest to this strange highland was finished.

He found water in a natural bowl among the rocks; it was brackish, but he scooped it up and drank until he could hold no more.

Pushing on, the tundra kept rising, and there were few trees now, and more rock. He wondered without caring much, so thick were the swirling mists, if he might not be traveling in a circle and suddenly plunge with any next step down that precipice. Pakkanen, the frost imp, nibbled at his fingers and numbed his nose and his cheeks.

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When he flopped on a knoll for a breather his numbed ears thought they heard a buzzing chopping sound from above him in the mist. Carl refused to give it credence until it grew to be an angry demonaic roar and moved right down at him.

Itsu. The wind demon. Itsu lived up here, just off the end of the world, and Itsu resented human intrusion.

Carl looked up and saw the dark shape whirling down on him, seeking him out. He screamed and pulled out his *pukko*. One of its odd blade-like wings sheared off the top of a dead tree: it blundered off with a hissing of wings and a dragon's roar, then swooped back, and landed below the knoll. There was a shriek of scraped rock, a sidewise skittering, then silence.

Knife poised, Carl squinted into the driving mist. The wind pulled the tatters of cloud away from the demon, and now Carl saw that it seemed to be giving birth.

A figure pulled out of the thing and started running and stumbling across the tundra, screaming, "Carl! Carl! Where are you?"

## IX

"SILIA!"

He crumpled into a heap at her feet. Awareness left him for a while, then he kept waking up out of his faint of sheer exhaustion to the feel of her deft hands scraping and washing the clotted mud off of him and swabbing his torn hands and welts with unguents.

"Drink!" She forced warm liquids between his lips.

He groaned himself to full consciousness and found that



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Silia had dragged him down to the crashed copter and even set up a synthetic tent of sorts for a wind-break. Her emerald eyes watched him pull out from his total exhaustion with grave satisfaction.

She had a small fire going, for warmth and to heat up the broth she kept poking into him. The yellow flames took careful account of her beautiful oval face, framed within that elfish green hood.

Carl managed a grin.

"How in the name of Ukko did you—"

Silia laughed. "I swiped the copter. Bet you didn't realize I was that resourceful! When I didn't hear from my Uncle I knew something dreadful had happened. I jetted to Helsinki, found out about the sauna getting burned. You had vanished. The local authorities had logical explanations for everything—Psych-Head took no responsibility, as they warned you—but I *knew*. I followed you to Lake Imari. That part was easy; my uncle and I had been there before, years ago. They told me you were headed for Ilmarinen, so—"

"In this eggcrate!" Carl growled. "You know *why* these areas are shunned by all sensible aircraft. The cross currents and sudden storms are almost certain death. That's why—"

"Never mind the lecture. I made it. I *had* to!"

"Total belief," Carl scowled. "Just like your uncle."

"Exactly like my uncle." Tears welled up in her eyes; she brushed them away with a stoic shake. "Now what?"

Carl gave her a rundown on what had happened. Silia nodded. "Even before the Third War our scientists were grudgingly beginning to admit and study preternatural phenomenon such as anti-matter, a Time all-dimension, and the fantastic powers of total belief. But Psych-Head stifled almost everything in their anxiety to create a bland, strife-free world. Oh, they admit of esp and so on, but refuse to take the large, sweeping view of tapping cosmic energies, and so on. Safety,

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they feel, lies in limiting the human mind, not expanding it. They are wrong. Uncle knew that. There are forces beyond our dreaming, thrusting in on us, whether we believe in them or not."

"The Finns believe."

"Because they intuitively *know*. Still, they hold this in leash, protect themselves by sonic vibrations, by incantations and runes."

Carl wondered grimly, "How about us? And the rest of the world, for that matter? We know the song-magic works, but it's limited. The Finns believed their gods and heroes into existence, tapping cosmic energies to create them, but destructive Forces are stronger because they *exist*." He stroked the blonde fuzz sprouting into a beard on his chin. "Perhaps Ilmar has answers."

Festival Midsummer's Night was near, but here at the end of the world only the savage wind danced and cavorted. Packing what they could carry and needed most from among the wrecked copter's supplies, they took up their journey. Silia clung to Carl, and Carl stroked the silver buckle with the runic symbols on it, against the whispering Unseen who darted nearer, just out of human sight, the further they advanced.

There was nothing to guide their path now, only a kind of extra-sensory tug Carl felt whenever his boots took a wrong step. The dreary misted tundra seemed to have no end, but finally they found themselves facing a wild series of uprearing crags fashioned in terms of some alien geometry. There were patches of snow; the wind was space-cold.

When Silia collapsed, sobbing, Carl lifted her gently but stubbornly to her feet; now he half-carried her with a dogged strength that coursed up into his muscles and veins out of sheer unreasonable self-demand.

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She melted against him. "Let me die here," she begged. "Shut up!"

He kissed her frostbitten cheeks and forehead roughly, forcing her stumbling feet on. Every breath became a raw scream for life; he mumbled idiot prayers to any god who might happen to be listening.

There was a dark blink of shadow ahead of them in the wind-ripped clouds. A patch.

"A cave!" Carl shouted. "*Ilmar!*"

He half-dragged the girl into the ragged interruption in the rock, then allowed her to sink to the ground.

"*Ilmar!*" he yelled into the dark hole, then fell.

The apparition moving suddenly out toward them carried a pitchy torch; uneasy flame lighted up a hollow-cheeked face with fierce blue eyes. The creased parchment of skin was surrounded by wild reddish tangle, hair and beard blended.

Without a word, the seven-foot cave giant picked them both up and hauled them back into the cave where warmth radiated from a forge carved into the rock. An eagle, perched up in a narrow niche above the forge, fluttered down for a look at the weird event of visitors in this hermitage.

"Back, Virokannas!" Ilmar brushed the bird off his shoulder and set about defrosting and feeding his guests.

Warm food put Carl's mind and senses in order, but the girl's exhaustion resisted any waking. Carl sought out the old man and found him, wearing a leather apron, busy with a glowing strip of metal at his forge. When the eagle spoke to Ilmar, in a warning screech, the smith thrust the sword he was forging down into a cauldron. Steam hissed up and around his hair-matted chest.

"You are Ilmarinen?" Carl demanded. "The wondersmith?"

The fierce blue eyes pinched under wild eyebrow thatch. "I am Ilmar," he admitted.

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Carl cast a look around. Silia was sleeping back in an alcove on a bed of bearskins; the cave was redolent of pine pitch and stranger smells; near the smith were great iron cauldrons bubbling yellow and blue and bloody crimson.

"You are creating a magic thing?" he wondered.

"A sword," Ilmar said. "For Lemminkainen."

"The Lapps call me Lemminkainen."

The tall hermit shrugged. "That is for you to decide." He tapped his forehead. "Each man is who he wishes to be. The greater the wish, the stronger must be the belief."

"Then I will become Lemminkainen if, as, and when I want to badly enough?"

The smith seemed to nod.

"And you are Ilmarinen when you wish it to be?"

"I am of my ancestors in All-Time as you are of yours."

Carl asked, "Do you know why I have come to you?"

Ilmar gave off working his handfashioned bellows. "I know. You wish help for your world. Help in destroying Hiisi and the Pahaliset."

"Will you do it? Will you help?"

Ilmar stared around him at the rock walls and the flame shadows. "I have nothing to do with your world. I am of myself. Virokannas is my only friend."

"Ilmarinen fought Hiisi. He was a great hero, friend to the wizard Vainomoinen and Lemminkainen."

Ilmar sighed and allowed the eagle to perch on his shoulder. "The rocks in my cave are shot with silver. Silver protects against Hiisi and his Evil."

"And that silver sword you are singing into being will destroy Hiisi?"

Ilmar shook his head. "Not destroy. Protect, no more. This is the most I can do for Lemminkainen. If you are Lemminkainen, the sword is for you."

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It was time to leave the warmth of Ilmar's silver-safe cave. Silia's green eyes were wistful.

"You are welcome to remain here, daughter," Ilmar told her. His smile was clouded, as if he saw something in her eyes that worried him.

"Of course she'll stay here!" Carl cried.

"Of course I will come with you," Silia said, gently but adamantly.

It was their last meal with the smith. Black rounds of cakes, fresh venison, cranberries sweetened with honey.

Carl appealed to Ilmar. "She must stay here until I return."

The smith's face was a hollow mask. "Silia is like Kyllikki. Of her bent. She will remain if she wishes to remain; if forbidden to go with you, she will follow."

Silia nodded, like a curtain closing.

"Where, exactly, are we going?" she demanded, while they donned cleaned garments and Carl sheathed the silver sword Ilmar had created out of the elements and his secret songs.

Carl scowled and flung out angry words of protest; Silia just smiled faintly and put on her pack.

"I will seek out Vainomoinen," Carl said. "He was the greatest of all heroes and the wisest. Not so, Ilmar?"

Ilmar's shaggy head nodded dourly. "You will not find Vainomoinen here in any world you know. Even the mind of a wizard cannot soar back among the living from Tuonela."

"Across the dark water where the black swan mourns the death of heroes." Carl closed his eyes in ponderous thought. "That's the legend. But what else is Tuonela? Some dark dimension outside of time and space? Is the intruder in the Rare Earth, Hiisi?"

They looked at Ilmar, standing behind his forge with the flame shadows licking the caves in his cheeks, making his curling red beard redder, his eyes polished flint.

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"I am a worker of metals; I know naught of your Cities. But we Finns here at the top of the world live close to the things that are of nature. We understand the songs the trees and grasses sing, and the very ring of my hammer against a shaft of pure silver is its heartbeat, its shout of joy at being released from bondage within rock. We know these things; we are one with them. When we plant our rye we whisper to it 'Grow tall and beautiful!' And it does, because we are one. *Vieras* do not understand."

"Some do," Silia murmured. "I've read old books of the farmers who talked to their crops and were rewarded with lush harvests, who read the signs on the moon; of children who lived with animals and shared their emotions. Father believed implicitly that from the microcosm to the macrocosm there exists an affinity which most minds can't begin to accept. Our civilization rejects it wholesale; only the primitives accept the Oneness of everything that exists in our world, from a grain of sand at the bottom of the ocean to the universe itself. And time—"

"Time is an illusion," Ilmar said. "To those Outside, One-time is Alltime." He scowled fiercely. "Hiisi and the Pahali-set are *different*. They are not made of the substances we are made of."

"Anti-matter?" Carl wondered. "Something in reverse to our chemistry, with the rarest of the Rare Earths the only connecting link? They can't enter our dimension because—Ilmar said it—they aren't of our substance. But they did manage to poke in a Force that operates only through the molecular structure of the Lake Imari Rare Earth."

"What do they want from us?"

"To destroy," Ilmar said. "They are pure evil."

Carl shrugged. "Somehow I don't quite buy that. To *us* they are evil, sure. I still think they want something. I think the key to it's in the way the victims react when—"

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"You mean the unbearable terror, then ecstasy?"

Carl nodded. "As if their souls were about to be transported to some dreamed-of Nirvana."

The eagle fluttered noisily down from his perch, clawing a perch behind the bubbling cauldrons. Virokannas beat his mighty pens and screamed, "*Hiisi! Hiisi!*"

"The bird is right." Ilmar nodded grimly. "Tuonela is no paradise of flowers and singing birds. It is dark and wholly evil. Somehow Hiisi managed to trap Vainomoinen's soul and to carry it across the black lake in space and time; and greatest of wizards as Vaino is, singer of the most powerful magic, he can never return." His blue steel eyes dug deep holes in Carl's brain. "You are bold indeed, Lemminkainen, to attempt to do what Vainomoinen could not!"

Carl fought off the icy shudder that meshed through him from head to foot. "Someone must stop what is happening to our world. I was elected to try."

Ilmar turned to Silia and his eyes softened. "You, my daughter?"

"She'll stay here!" Carl decreed.

"But—"

"*Right here!*" he gritted. "For once in your life do what you are told." Carl picked up the snowshoes Kauppi had strung for him. "Wait here for me. I'll pick you up on my way back." He managed a grin, over the thick in his throat when he met her eyes.

Silia stood like carved ice. Virokannas, the eagle, flapped his wings over Carl and hissed a benediction. Ilmar's oak-tough palm rested on his shoulder. "Your silver sword is the best magic which I have to give you. It was fashioned with love and muscle and songs, powerful runic songs. It will defeat anything human." His face darkened. "Go, Lemminkainen. But whatever happens, do not let yourself be caught in Hiisi's net. Those who are carried over the dark lake are for-

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ever changed. Like metal wrenched from the earth and blasted by the forge's flames, you will be recast so that you can no longer live among men."

### X

ILMAR had no sledge, no dogs, no horses to offer Carl. Trudging the frozen wastes, with the northwind whipping the evermists into a blue-gray porridge, Carl comforted himself with the knowledge that Silia was safe, at least. Ilmar's warm cave was surrounded by silver ore, and it seemed that Hiisi's Force was stopped cold by the molecular structure of silver.

Still, he frowned, he had expected her to put up more of a battle, at the last minute. Well, he shrugged, maybe some of the old-world, virtually legendary acceptance of male dominance had rubbed off on her.

Time to make night camp, he set up his light, neat wind-break on the leaside of a jagged outcrop of rock. He heated his brick of vitaminized soup plus clean snow on the auto-stove and spooned it down, before insinuating his flagged body into the sleep bag.

Wild demonaic shrilling stabbed his dreams.

He lay there, stiff as dead, his blood congealing. The wild skirling noise came again; it swooped down out of the sky. *Something* clawed the tied-down flap of his minitent. Some wind demon sent by Hiisi?

Carl managed to move his right hand muscles, then his arm. It sneaked down to where Ilmar's silver sword was sheathed, across him within the thermal sleep bag. His finger curled around the rune-carved hilt.



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The unearthly screaming hiss came again; claws beat at the tent flap. There was something vaguely familiar—

“Who is it?”

The thought enabled Carl to bolt up, unzipping himself as he did so. He yanked the sword free and reached it across the dark; with its tip he nipped open the two places where it was knotted. Limned against the muddied twilight of sky was a shadowy figure, like a woman wearing Lappish woollens. Above her flapped great wings.

Ilmar’s eagle!

Carl scrambled out of his tent with satanic curses quivering on his lips. The woman approached, smiling.

“What in the hell are you doing here, Silia?” Carl ground his teeth and took a sword swipe at the hovering bird, out of mingled relief and rage.

“Did you honestly believe that I would sit back there in that warm cave, knitting you socks and woolly tasselcaps?”

Carl’s heart hammered joy, but its admixture was alarm. The alarm bell was pure esp, a strong precog of danger for Silia. Close. Soon.

“You’ve got to go back!”

“How?”

“The way you got here. That damned bird will show the way, like he trailed me here!”

Silia pointed up at the dwindling speck, high in the mauve mist. “That damned bird is on his way back to Ilmar already.”

“Call him back!” Carl stormed.

“You know I can’t. Virokannas responds to Ilmar, nobody else. He was instructed to bring me to you, then come back at once.” Silia moved disturbingly close to Carl, so that he had to draw her to him. “You see, my hero, Lemminkainen, I happen to be in love with you. It’s pretty deep. If you end up across the dark space-lake in Tuonela, changed—so will I. You had better face up to it, *rakastaa*.”

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"Finnish 'love' sounds like crushing rocks."

"That, too." Silia nodded, rubbing her nose on his.

Carl tried to push back the esp-alarm that clung like spider's webs to his mind; he tried by holding her fiercely to him, by admonishing, then by occupying himself with breakfast and pulling up stakes. He had slept some four hours; so had Silia, just out of his campsite. Four hours sleep ration, with six or seven hours of pushing on, were minimum adequate. Silia was all for pushing ahead.

Carl decided not to tell Silia about his precog. The sword's point over his own head was a constant; Silia had decided and anchored her mind to the thought that whatever Hiisi and the Force represented, they **must** face them together.

"Uncle left a letter for me, to be opened in case anything happened to him."

"Why didn't you tell me before?"

"I was saving it for a weapon to hold over your head. And speaking of weapons, here's something I worked out, taken from the hundreds of runic tapes Uncle and I have made over the years."

Carl looked down at the gray oblong box that Silia revealed by unzipping the plastic case strapped around her shoulder. "A tape recorder."

"With variations," Silia told him. "It has recorded on this minitape over two hours of the most powerful runic incantations against evil we could find. And it's been rigged to repeat indefinitely."

"Or until the power battery wears out," Carl grunted.

"How about credit where it's due?"

Carl grinned. "First let's see if it keeps Hiisi away or not."

When Silia was unable to hide her weariness well enough to persuade Carl that she wasn't beat, he sighted a likely if scanty wind-break on the tundra, and called a halt. He built

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a fire against the white wolves circling them on their trek, now voicing lonely ululations from time to time beyond the gray-blue drifts. Or were they indeed creatures of Hiisi, like Kullervo, dedicated to his service?

While they nibbled their frugal hardtack and sipped their soup, Silia read Carl the letter which Dr. Enoch had left in trusted hands for his niece. It was a hasty crabbed scrawl, but it pointed up what Carl already knew and added the scientist's remedial hints.

*"The Force is from outside our time and space, from outside anything we can humanly comprehend. I conceive of a great machine somewhere—alien beyond human thought—sending out tendrils like electrical impulses, with the Finnish Rare Earth as conductor. I believe that this present invasion was not the first. In the days of the Kalevalan heroes, actually before our present cycle of civilization began, the Force was thrust in on Earth and the 'legendary' heroes called the intruder Hiisi. Perhaps it occurred elsewhere. Who knows? Atlantis? Mu? Anyway, the Finnish heroes, with their sons and their preternatural beliefs, were able to push back the Force. Perhaps it was Vainomoinen, the Wizard, who sealed the rift between our space-time dimension and Hiisi's, with his own presence!*

*"In any case all of the myths and songs are spawned out of cosmic truths. This is something Psych-Head will not admit. Nor will they admit that sonic-vibration holds the key to everything. They refuse to believe these things, and belief is the strongest weapon we have!*

*"Hiisi wants something from us. Perhaps something he and they need as desperately as a vampire needs blood to survive. That's what makes a vampire evil—the fact that it wants our blood. Perhaps discovering what Hiisi and the Pahaliset (to call them by the only name we*

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*know to call them) want will prove the answer, provide us with a weapon against the Force. The vibrations of patterned sonics keep back lurking evils out of non-space; we know that. Perhaps it is the lack of belief in the efficacy of the runes that has enabled Hiisi to come back, after all these centuries.*

*"My work is pitifully incomplete and inadequate, yet. Silia's child-like capacity for belief has helped. My mind is trained, perhaps overtrained, beyond belief, in the incredible. Carl's 5h psych is even better, since it has within it all the cumulated beliefs of his ancestry. He showed this clearly when he actually saw Ilmatar, the rainbow goddess. So, Carl, believe. Believe in your gods and let them lead you to Hiisi. Find the machine that controls the Force. Destroy it, and close the rift. Believe as I cannot, and perhaps your believed-in gods will help you to find a way. And may Jumala protect you both!"*

It was after their third sleep that Carl saw the faces. They were nebulous shadows of pure color, color beyond the range of human knowledge, so he *sensed*. The shadows were like specks floating on his retina, yet when he lifted a mitten-edge and brushed them away, back they came, drifting against the perpetually dreary arch of sky.

"What is it?" Silia asked once.

"Nothing."

"Please, Carl! I'm 3h, and it is strong in your direction. *What is it?*"

"It's as if things were darting around us. Things in another dimension. Trying to get through. I know they're in my mind but they're *there*."

Silia glanced fearfully around them. "I can't see anything but—"

"They're pushing out their thoughts. That's it. They can't

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actually exist in our world. But they want to push their thoughts through. Still, to do that—" Carl broke off sharply.

"They would have to make themselves felt in a way we could understand."

"That's it, of course! They'd have to communicate on human terms. Fit themselves into a frame of reference which we can understand. So they used the Finnish legends! That was their gimmick!"

Silia moved close to him; Carl felt a shiver and in his high esp-emp mind the girl said: *I'm afraid. I would rather take the legends straight.*

They made camp at a woods' edge; stunted pines they were, but the sight of their gnarled trunks and skimpy boughs shaking in the growling wind gave Carl a warm inner patch of happiness. No wonder the Lapps emped so closely with all living things, animal and vegetable. They were so few and far-between up here.

Silia felt it, too. Carl smiled at the way she hugged against a rough wind-bent trunk as she completed her night task of putting the runic-tape into repetitive action.

"Ouch!" she cried. "Damn! Caught my fingernail!"

Carl squatted and took hold of her unmittened hand. He kissed it. "Better?"

"Much." She blew him a kiss and crawled into her own wind shelter attached to her sleep bag. "I can't keep my eyes open, I'm so exhausted. It's like when the old Louhi of Pohyola and all her guests had their eyelids pinned down by Vainomoinen's sleep-needles and—"

Carl grinned. In the middle of her thoughts about the wizard and his magic, Utamo, dispenser of dreams, had cut her off. She lay like a child, fast asleep, the tape-player clutched in her mittened hands, whispering its incantations against evil.

In his own woolly cocoon some yards away, Carl put his

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hands behind his head and looked up between the dark pine-needle clusters; he fancied he could see stars glinting faintly, when the gray tatters scattered in the wind. Yes, there it was—Otava. Carl's mind traced out the constellation of the Great Bear. Special to the Finns in some strange haunting way. Memory of a memory.

Carl stared up at it; it was as if something tugged at some part of him, the part of him that belonged to Otava and to Ilmatar.

The Great Bear and all the stars seemed to rush down on him suddenly. He saw. He relived.

*"Perkele!"* raw-boned Ilmarinen blustered, tramping the log floor and spitting sparks of rage in every direction. "I built the old hag her Sampo, I accomplished all the heroic feats she flung into my teeth, to gain her daughter's hand. And now, here in our own country we starve, while Old Louhi's magic Sampo grinds out corn and barley and all she tells it to!" He dragged out his broadsword and chopped a three-legged stool into flying pieces.

Gray-bearded Vainomoinen hid a laugh under his voluminous scarlet sleeve.

"And where is your beautiful bride? How is it that you return alone, friend Ilmarinen? I set up this project for you, knowing that only the wondersmith could create the Sampo. Even I, with wizard's songs capable of conjuring storms that tear the stars out of their sockets—"

"Don't brag, old one!" the smith grunted, flinging himself down on one end of the long plank table so roughly that the beer mugs danced and slopped over. "Why didn't you give the task to Lemminkainen, here? He is the youngest and his golden hair delights the maidens so that he counts his conquests by the hundreds. Perhaps he could have handled the vixen!"

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"What happened?" Carl heard himself demand, with a low chuckle. "You had the maiden safely in your sledge. The vows and feastings were over. Nothing remained but for you and the Daughter of Pohyola to return to your house and—"

"She wept and cajoled, repenting her bargain! I was too old for her; she was only a child, she said. I, Ilmarinen, whose arms are bands of pure steel! *Too old!*"

"You were drunk," Vainomoinen placated. "Perhaps that was the trouble."

"Yo." The smith's brass-red shag of beard and hair whipped in a shrug of self-contempt. "That was part of it. Weary of persuasions, I fell asleep. And the girl ran off and cuckolded me!"

His two friends shouted their disbelief.

"To be cuckolded on a man's wedding night," the Wizard clucked. "That is the ultimate disgrace!"

"What did you do? Beat her?"

Ilmarinen pulled down a great flagon of dark beer before he could answer. It was plain that his mind was a torment of mingled anger, shame, and dismay.

"I . . . I could have killed them with these two hands!" he grated, staring down at his snaky callused fingers. "But no. That was too easy for her. I was determined to sing the vixen into something suitable to her evil nature. I should have realized—spawn of such a mother as Old Louhil"

"Well?"

"I took her down to the cliff where the cold sea pounds against the crags. Here I sang her into a bird, a seamew."

There was a deep hush over the great raftered hall; outside the storm pushed snow against the door; a wolf howled hungrily on the highland.

Carl could hear the unfortunate Daughter of Pohyola screaming, like a lost soul.

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His mind seemed to splinter into pieces.

He flung out of his sleep tent and ran to Silia's. While he had been dreaming of old friends and old lives Hiisi had been busy! Silia, moving in restless sleep, had knocked the tape-machine over, so that it jammed to a stop. Now it lay there in front of him on the empty sleep bag, crushed as if by a heavy careless boot.

Silia had vanished.





## PART THREE

### Of Lemminkainen

“O my mother who hast borne me,  
Bring me here my war-shirt quickly,  
Bring me, too, my mail for combat,  
For my inclination leads me  
Hence to drink the beer of battle . . .”

KALEVALA: *Runo XXVIII*

## XI

WHEN THE grief-mists cleared away, Lemminkainen put his hand to his silver swordhilt, turning his grim face resolutely toward the fog-blurred north horizon. That way was Pohyola. Who but the wily crone herself would have engineered such a strangeness. While he, hero Lemminkainen, lay sleeping and dreaming preposterous longwinded dreams of fantastic Cities and wall-machines that blinked lights and streets that moved in colored bands, then had the Mistress of Pohyola torn his beloved away! Some eldritch wizardry had dazzled him down the labyrinths of Utamo's chambers of sleep.

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*They had taken Kyllikki.*

"I will find you!" he shouted into the wind. "Whether in the realms of Iku-Turso, in the form of a green-eyed pike under the ocean or in the foul land off the world's edge, called Pohyola. I will find you! Even to Tuonela, the Land of Black Shadows beyond the endless black sea."

He cried out lavish prayers to Ilmatar, spinning out new planets and suns on her golden shuttle. But Ilmatar, Creatrix of the Universe, was busy weaving new worlds.

Some small voice urged him to fumble his hands among the strange artifacts he saw about him in the camp where he woke from his long sleep. Mostly he touched nonsense things which he flung away with contempt, then, deep inside one of the packs he discovered a round silvery tube. He squinted down at it clutched in his mittened fist.

Poking at it awkwardly, he pressed his thumb against a small stud on its shiny surface. When he did this a circle of light sprayed across the wood.

Lemminkainen grunted satisfaction as he slipped it in his tunic, and hefted the pack to his broad back. "It will serve well in the dark land of Pohyola."

Shreds of memory guided him to the banks of a wide lake where a few birches and cattails braved the blasting chill. He peered sharply across the dark, wind-chopped water. The far shore was shrouded in purple-black gloom, but Lemminkainen's animal-keen sense of orientation said to him that here was the land he sought.

"I must build a boat," he told the otters playing and scooting across the icy lake's edge.

He flung off his pack and went to work. The old skills moved his sinewy muscles at familiar tasks; with his sharp *pukko* and the odd hatchet-like tool he discovered in his pack Lemminkainen had his boat well begun. While he worked he sang. His words told the boat what it must be: strong, light,

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swift. The ancient thought-magic would weave itself into his craft and make it so.

A night and a day Lemminkainen worked, while far on the horizon the sun kept its summer vigil.

He scorned the firemaking sticks in the pack; whether it was the flint and dry shavings and leaves or something he had learned from Vainomoinen about pushing his mind into the kindling, the *tulii* sprouted into merry flames. In the cookpan he heated up pine pitch to seal up the cracks of his boat.

Only then did he allow himself a meal of lake perch he sang into his improvised net, and stretched his long body out for an exhausted sleep.

The sail he hoisted, made from the small tent, caught the north wind. Frowning over the hand rudder, with the dark water chopping nervously around him, Lemminkainen lifted his handsome face skyward. The song he sang, like the others, gushed up from some deep Time well inside his brain:

“Wind, O Etelatar, thou southwind!  
Wind of summer drive my vessel,  
Onward drive my boat of birchwood,  
Forward to the misty island,  
Louhi’s nameless promontory!”

Subtly the wind changed. The northwind vied with Etelatar in taking possession of the canvas sail; the boat skittered like a crab atop the blue-black surface, while little eddies flung sprays to the hero’s face. Lemminkainen’s wide mouth showed his teeth in a grin when he heard Etelatar’s musical laughter echo across the white-capped water. Her lips seemed to caress his brown cheek as she whispered:

“Who can fail to hear young Kauko?  
Thou, most beautiful of heroes?”

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Still it was a constant struggle to keep the frail bark from capsizing when the growling bully from the North slapped the canvas back and scudded Lemminkainen first to westward, then east. Lemminkainen twisted the rudder, alternately singing and swearing. So it went, across the sun's watery path.

Now, finally, the great wild crags whereupon Old Louhi, Witch Mistress of Pohyola, kept her lookout with the great thunderhorn to warn of any attempt at invasion into her realm beyond the world's end. The dark cliffs stood like the walls of a high castle, brooding, timeless, and strange, among the elements.

Lemminkainen shaded his eyes, then sent the boat sidling toward a dark crevasse where the cliffline was broken. He shouted and stood up, splashing icy water into the boat, as he drew near the sand-strewn cove that spilled out from the break in the rock. Beyond the sand, on a mossy ledge, were three maidens, maidens unbelievably beautiful, laughing and dancing.

Lemminkainen's blood pounded his temples to see them. He called out:

“Is there room upon this island,  
On the surface of Pohyola,  
Where my boat may moor upon it?”

The maidens laughed and sang back:

“There is room upon this island,  
Space where you may sing your ballads,  
And intone your splendid verses,  
Join us in our summer revels!”

Lover Lemminkainen needed no second invitation. Quickly

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he maneuvered his birch boat onto the white sand, where otters played and curlews mourned. He jumped from the boat, grinning. Boastfully, while he swaggered toward the mossy cliff shelf, he sang:

“Know thou three enchanting maidens,  
I am hero Lemminkainen,  
Swordsman rash, and eager lover,  
One thousand damsels have I taken!  
One thousand heroes have I conquered!”

So saying, he rushed with pounding blood, to embrace the dancers. The revels of Midsummer were more wild and pagan than anywhere in this unholy island, floating through the mists of unnatural time and space.

The first one gave her waist-long dark hair a laughing toss with her pale arms; her cranberry red lips pouted a preliminary kiss. Now Lemminkainen ran, dry-throated. Now his powerful arms went out to take her.

His arms closed around air.

The maidens vanished, and, from high, high up on the cliff-fortress came a hideous mocking cackle.

## XII

LEMMINKAINEN had only time to wrench his eyes from the moss ledge and squint upwards into the dark mists. In that instant the copper-mesh net dropped over him.

Ignominy and blind rage burst out of him in hoarsely shouted curses and imprecations while the second rope to

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which Old Louhi's copper seine was attached yanked him off his feet as it whipped shut the bottom. The hero's great body of bulging muscles bumped against the black rock and alternately swung out lakeward, under his threshing and floundering. His hands were pinned over his head, so that he could not reach his silver sword. He was bunched into a metal sack created by that wily witch, the Mistress of Pohyola. After having been tricked by the most threadbare of illusions!

Like Iron itself, Copper was likewise recalcitrant and uneasy under its human domination. This Copper had been witch-sung into a spider's web that detested heroes; it clung to Lemminkainen's straining arms and bit into him, while the winch far above turned to drag him upward into Louhi's toils.

A curious hawk swooped in for a look.

"Where go you, Lemminkainen?"

"To Pohyola, as was my plan."

"Ah, but not the *way* you planned! Kauko, the great hero, trussed up like a boar for slaughter. A plaything for Witch Louhi's demon cousins!"

"Off to your nest, Old One!" Lemminkainen snapped. "I have no ladder to help me up this black wall. No wings like yours to bear me up. Let it be the witch herself who pulls me up."

"So you say. But take council: 'ware the snakes! 'ware the Midsummer's demon-feast! 'ware the Hag of the Rock most of all!"

So saying, the hawk swooped down to seek a fat rodent for his supper.

Dragged over the beetling cliff-lip onto icy headland, Lemminkainen fought Copper to raise for a look around him in the swirling purple mist. If Louhi had been here before, she was not now; his angry eyes saw only the muffled statue of a lookout beyond the stone-anchored winch, holding his

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giant thunderhorn belled out against the rock between his thonged leggings. A pole was thrust through loops deftly hitched into the two ropes that had borne him upcliff, by two swarthy, short-legged creatures whose brutish faces were framed by black cowls; the pole-ends were grunted up on their massive shoulders and away they went down the path between the rocks, toward Old Louhi's castle.

Lightning tore across the island in the sky. Ukko sent wild thunder spilling out across this outrage in time and matter. Once, during a spasm of furious squirmings to escape, Lemminkainen saw the witch's shadow on a knoll, for only an instant while the forked lightning blasted the churning mass of black clouds banked beyond the ramparts of her farm-surrounded castle. Crookbacked, ancient, hideous. And once again that mocking cackle.

Now Lemminkainen decided to play possum. His struggles had exhausted him completely. He lay docile as a kitten while the two warriors carried him through the gate and around the great stone block of Louhi's Castle to the edge of a field of barley, to the stables beyond the captive slaves' quarters, the cow and bullock stables.

When they dropped him heavily on a pile of seasoned dung, he didn't even grunt. Only after they had yanked the copper net off him and flopped him over on his back did the hero move, and fast.

He sprang to his feet with drawn blade, and an involuntary battle cry bursting from his throat. Before the gaping duo of kill-trained warrior guards could quite recover what little wits they had, Ilmar's silver sword slashed them down; their blood warmed the barnyard filth.

Lemminkainen's cry brought others, black, misshapen hulks with broadswords, maces and hayforks. His back to the weathered cow stable, Lemminkainen fought them, smiling to do so after his ignominious session in the copper mesh. His



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sword rang and sang while it split skulls and lopped off springing arms. More black-hooded creatures ran up in a tide from all corners of the yard when a great bell clanged.

What Ilmar's sword struck died. But there were too many, a veritable river. A side-tossed boulder smashed Lemminkainen's cheek; he tottered, off-guard, sword brushing the ground.

They were on him like grimy bees.

He fell backwards, shouting defiant fury.

Lemminkainen awoke shivering convulsively. It was freezing cold on the pile of urine-soaked straw where he lay. Underneath was no floor, but hard-packed dirt. The enclosure was pitch dark, but a lowing complaint and a heavy hoof-thumping from the stall next to him on either side, close, told him where he was. In the stable, in one of the narrow stalls, among the bullock and kine, shivering with cold-ague and wincing from the pungent odor of dung.

Gall boiled up in his throat; he rose dizzily, groping his way up the rough-adzed planks.

Teeth chattering like *metsola* magpies, he had gained his feet but shakily when a snarling explosion of amusement from between the stalls made him crack his neck in that direction. The garbled light of the oil lantern he carried dimly illuminated the wide ugly face, the filthy wool pants and homespun once-blue blouse of the stablemaster.

"Ai! You have slept too long already, cow-dung! Already it is near sun-up. Here are your tools to clean up this barn and all the others."

Lemminkainen's hand flashed for a sword, grasped nothing.

"I am Lemminkainen!" he cried. "I am no stablekeep!"

"Silence, offal!"

A fist like a pig-haunch slashed out; Lemminkainen found

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himself jolted back on the dung and straw. The hulking figure of the stablemaster hung over him with a pitchfork.

"I am your master, dung-hero. As Louhi is my mistress. If I came back to find any stable less than a bride's shift I shall beat you within one inch of Tuonela."

Words of hot passion quivered on his frozen lips, but Lemminkainen held them back. The sharp tines of the pitch were eager for his blood and near to having it. He closed his eyes, not to see that beast's face spit on him, laughing. He kept them shut until the sound of the keeper's heavy boots dwindled away between the stalls and the barn door slammed.

He knew Louhi's sadistic ways. The keeper was a match for the witch, herself, chosen to soften up her captive slaves into accepting their dreaded lot in this outworld island where time and sanity had no meaning. Blasphemous sorcery alone kept Pohyola drifting between the planets and the eons; fed and nurtured by the outworld creatures, Louhi catered to and served, in turn.

The hero's heart shriveled up in his great chest. The Mistress of Pohyola had old scores to settle with the three *suomi* heroes; killing Lemminkainen, whether by freezing, starving, overwork, or by some subtle magic means, would rid her of one.

Washing himself at the handpump in the courtyard outside the regular slaves' sleeping quarters, Lemminkainen felt a soft hand touch his shoulder. He straightened up from the ice-edged water trough.

"My name is Aiile," the girl said, smiling shyly. "I have heard many songs of Lemminkainen. I work in the kitchens; I saw you from the scullery window. Here is a cloth to dry yourself. And a cake of black bread." Her eyes dreamed up into his now-smiling face; she sighed. "If I can ever do more—"

"You are kind, Aiile." While he mopped the icy wet from

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his face and neck his blue eyes roved over her pretty peasant face, her servant girl's dress. "Don't the stable keeps get fed, along with the other animals?"

Aiile nodded, wincing.

"After your morning tasks you will be given crusts of black bread and lightning-soured milk. In the evening barley mush and a mug of beer. If you do your work well. If not—" Her thin face glowed worry. "Torvo will use you ill because you are a hero and an enemy of the Mistress. Whenever I can, I will steal you extra food from the kitchen. A hero needs—"

"Aiile!"

The scream from the kitchen door rose to warning pitch.

"I must go or she will beat me."

"First, tell me if Old Louhi has recently stolen a girl who—"

Aiile nodded fearfully, pulling away from him. "See you at the night fire!" she called back, and fled uphill toward the castle kitchens.

Days lagged meanly by; Lemminkainen grew lean from the gruel and occasional fish heads which the farm slaves were flung after the swine had been slopped. Hard work strengthened his sinews, nevertheless, and his burning resolve to find and free Kyllikki as well as to avenge his own humiliation. At the end of the wide meadow behind the swine pens and barns, where forest shagged the hills, the slaves had their nightsongs around a leaping fire. This was festival time and for the servants even such a one as Torvo relaxed his iron rules.

Lemminkainen carved himself a *kantele* from laurelwood and fishbones; the captives gathered eagerly at the cusp of each summer's night to listen to him strum the fox-gut strings and sing his songs of heroic deeds and passion. The young girls cast him shy glances. Lemminkainen looked among them for Aiile in vain. Apparently the great hulking ruler of household servants, well-named Mairikki (the Cow), had

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seen Aiile talking to him at the well and was seeing to it that there would be no more of that.

One night he lingered alone at the forest's edge, while the others moved off through feathery silver-tipped barley; he stared down at the few remaining coals of the sing-fire. Stars fingered their way out of the cloudwrack while he sang, softly:

“Kyllikki, my dearest heart-core,  
Thou my sweetest little berry,  
Let my eyes caress thy beauty,  
Let my arms possess thy splendor.”

A raw cackling cleaved his reverie. Lemminkainen whirled. Behind him on a hillock of stones, stood Witch Louhi, holding her twisted middle and rocking with laughter. Behind her stood the ugly black castle; her snake-stick caressed her splayed feet; her eyes shone evilly, out of caverns so black and deep they seemed to be no part of her hideous crooked body, and those long skeleton fingers. Over her ancient shoulders she wore a vivid green cloak that flapped to a gnawing wind; her medusa hair was allowed to whip about her sunken dark face at will.

“Sing more, Lemminkainen!” she screeched. “Even the *besalintut* are jealous of young Kauko's magic throat!”

Lemminkainen put down his *kantele*. He faced her without flinching, as few men could.

“I am no longer inspired,” he told her.

Louhi spat and rumbled curses. Somewhere behind all that horror was a woman.

“Where is Kyllikki?” he demanded.

The Hag laughed; her snake-stick hissed and showed a forked tongue. “Kyllikki is dead!”

“Dead!” His heart stopped beating.

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"Don't you remember? Long ago you took her by force on your sledge. Childishly fearful, Kyllikki drowned herself in the river and became a pike, rather than live away from her own hearth."

"No!" Lemminkainen refuted. But his head roiled with sudden doubt. Some part of this was true, and yet—"Silia." The name spilled out from a sibling mind. "Yes! *Silla!*"

"Yes, indeed, Silia." Louhi cackled her content in harrassing her ancient enemy. "One whom I know and serve sighted the wench with you on the tundras to the south. He wants her; so, to do him this favor, and to square accounts with you, I stole her. It was easy," she taunted. "Your mind is split in two pieces and this green-eyed *uusi* knows less than she thinks."

Lemminkainen scowled, while his mind tottered on the brink of knowledge unborn or forgotten.

"He may have the girl. But first she must be taught to be dutiful and bend to the whims of my friend. I have made her a kitchen drudge; for the moment her duties are to scrub kettles and carry the bedroom slops. She is permitted to sleep in the ashes to keep warm. Ai! You would not recognize your Silia, she is so covered with soot!"

Lemminkainen's sinewy body shivered; his hands itched to be around her throat. But Louhi's magic was strong; he must use every craft, be even more wily than she.

"Who," he asked, dry-mouthed, "is this friend who desires my Silia?"

"Keitolainen."

She said it with great relish, rolling the fearful name out very slowly.

Lemminkainen trembled. Keitolainen. Right hand of Hiisi. Keitolainen, called The Contemptible.

"Would you like to see her for the last time?" Louhi mocked.

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Lemminkainen could only nod.

"Then you shall. Your agony will amuse me. Tomorrow at the great Midsummer's feast. All of my dear friends will be there, all the way from Pakkanen and the darkest stars. My guests will enjoy the irony of your love songs, when you sing them as part of the entertainment, knowing well what is to follow when Keitolainen takes Silia back with him beyond the great black gulf."

In an eyeblink the hideous crone vanished. He was alone in the dusk with the droning clouds of mosquitos and the dirge-plaints of nighthawks over the souging trees.

Pohhi's great feast-hall was decorated with laurel and on every rafter hung gay red lingonberries. The assembled guests sat behind the long well-laden table, on one side only, so that the jugglers and dancers and singers could be well seen in the center of the floor, under the bright rings of five hundred starry tapers. The great platters on the table were heaped with char-roasted pork, with elk and deer, with salmon and pike, with mushrooms from the deepest forests, with cherries and strawberries, cranberries from the bogs, great rounds of unleavened rye bread and potatoes in milk gravy. There were huge round wooden buckets of ale and beer, with mead for the Norsemen.

Louhi sat on a great throne of oak, carved with dragons and star-demons.

In a small cell off the great kitchen larders, Lemminkainen was told to strip off his barnyard rags and sauna, lest he offend the witch's guests with his dung-stench. Mairikki flung him a rough towel and bellowed at him to be quick, the feast was already under way. Behind her came a thin slave girl with a yoke around her neck, from which hung on either side great buckets of icy water from the well. Her burden bent her lath-thin body and her head, so that it was only when

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Lemminkainen hastened to unhook the great oak buckets from her neck-yoke, that he saw that it was Aiile. The tyrannical Mairikki was too preoccupied with her feast chores to notice.

Aiile's wood-violet eyes shot the tall hero a look of shy love while the door slammed shut behind the household tyrant. Lemminkainen took hold of her work-bent shoulders.

"Damn the witch!" he muttered. "Why don't you slaves rebel? There are more of you than warriors!"

The yellow fire under the *sauna* rocks leaped into the girl's eyes; Lemminkainen saw hope trembling there.

"We cannot fight her magic!"

"Her strength is that you *believe* Louhi's magic is limitless. She is a mortal, like all of you!"

Aiile shivered. "There are those among us who would fight, had they a leader. They have even concealed hand weapons." She looked up at him desperately. "If only *you*—"

Lemminkainen gripped her tightly.

"Tell them not to wait any longer! *Tonight!* But,"—he gave his blonde head a savage shake—"I have need of a weapon. The silver sword Ilmarinen sang for me. If I had that I—"

Some of his fierceness flowed into the slave-girl, through her humble love. "It . . . it is possible. Midsummer's night there is much drinking, among the Mistress's warriors, as well as her guests."

"*Perkele!* That is it, my little wood-dove! Spread the word among the servants to see that all of the guards get double rations of ale and beer. Tell the men to watch for my signal. It will be the moment you hand me my sword, which you will have stolen out of the arms room after its drunken guards have had their heads bashed in!"

Aiile trembled against his wide chest.

"Can we do it? Tell us we can!"

"You can! Lemminkainen tells you that you must believe,

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you must stifle your terror of Louhi's magic, *and believe only him!*"

"I will tell them." Aiile nodded, tight-faced. "I will explain that you have ordered them to revolt and to succeed."

Lemminkainen grinned wide and kissed her. Washing himself, after the door closed behind Aiile and the resolution shining in her face, Lemminkainen told the glowing rocks, the pine walls, the stars: *That is the difference between heroes and slaves. Total belief. Implacable purpose.*

Clothed in minstrel finery, he waited in the arrassed alcove behind stone pillars, while jugglers and acrobats performed for Louhi and her strange guests. He pushed through to the tapestry's edge; from here he could see the scarlet-clad witch on her central throne, watching her demon revelers wallow in food and drink, while betimes lesser minstrels than Lemminkainen made up songs in praise of Louhi and each guest, in turn, as was the custom. He made a scornful sound deep in his throat at such fawning. He would be shredded under the hooves of the Black Oxen of Vammatar before he—

He pinched his eyes to see Keitolainen the Contemptible, the horror to whom Silia had been promised. Sweeping his look along the platters and trenchers and pinecone decorations, he admonished his starved stomach to stop gurgling at the sight of all that food, and hunt Hiisi's right hand.

*Yes.*

The Dark One at the end. The others wore colorful trappings and were practically human. Keitolainen the Contemptible was only a mind-paining blotch of nothing.

A hole in space.



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### XIII

LEMMINKAINEN stood before Louhi and her outworld guests in his leather breeches and loose-sleeved green blouse, his high-laced boots wide apart, his faint smile contemptuous of them all. Finally the crone deigned to take notice of him and his *kantele*.

"*Nahdal!*" she screamed over the tumult, as of hogs wallowing noisily in a slop-trough. "See what I bring you for a final entertainment! Lemminkainen, favored son of Ilmatar! Many times have I cast my copper net over the crag, but never have I caught such a handsome fish!" She brandished her snake-stick drunkenly, cackling. "Sing, hero! We have heard that Kauko's songs can charm the cuckoo from its nest and the World-Weaver from her rainbow beyond the Great Bear. Sing now, and well! Or I will have the tongue seared out of your head with your own sword!"

Lemminkainen's eyes widened when the drunken crone suddenly waved the silver sword Ilmarinen had created. It caught the candleflames so that his eyes were dazzled, and a pang of defeat stabbed his stomach. His signal to the captive slaves was to have been Aiile proving their valor by having purloined it out of the warriors' arms room. And now, there it was clutched firmly in Louhi's vulture-claw.

He sang of blood, of wild furious battles, of portent and doom. Song followed song. While he sang his mind raced. The longer he sang, the more the demons would drink and the more abandoned and careless Louhi's warriors and guards would become. There would be more time, too, for the slaves

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to prepare their revolt and steal weapons. Perhaps kill off a drunk guard here and there.

Midsummer's night was a time for folly.

Let it be Witch Louhi's.

He found that his glance was pulled time and again to the black shadow—the nothing-seeming that was Keitolainen. One of the other guests had a wolf's head, another that of a strange scarlet bird. Masks? Lemminkainen was far from sure. But none was so strange and terrifying as—

*Nothing.*

A vacuum in space, reserved for the three-dimensional shadow of a hideously tall, monstrously shaped alien who had found a way to cast his shadow across time and space and substance, to this dismal island of Pohyola from—

*Tuonela.*

His brain denied the notion that such a distortion as this could exist; unable to send it back across the vast space-sea to where it belonged, Lemminkainen felt his hackles rise and icy snakes caress his spine.

"Sing!" Louhi screamed, when he stopped. "Sing about love! Inspire our bride, and her groom!"

A torrent of despair overtook him. He must overcome it! Cast it off! Sing it away!

"None among the wizard's mighty,  
None of those whose souls are blackest,  
Whom he did not move to weeping,  
Tears unbidden claimed the singer,  
Even he, the minstrel hero."

Lemminkainen flung emotions at them, as if, swept along by the very depth of his own poignant agony, even those evil creatures would succumb. Perhaps some did. But the shadow called Keitolainen the Contemptible only grew larger, so

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that it filled that whole side of the hall, floor to laurel-wreathed rafters.

Louhi cackled and flung out spittle from her toothless gums. This she doted on: Lemminkainen's misery made vocal.

"Drink!" she screamed. "Sing happy songs, minstrel! For the bride!" She waved at her slave-attendants. "Now, bring in the bride!"

Lemminkainen gasped.

Silia was dressed in shining gold cloth, gold that encased her curves in a glittering cascade. Her raven hair hung demurely to her shoulders, on it was a bride's headdress set with brilliant stones. Behind her were four handmaidens, all in virgin white. Then came the mock-priest, tall, hawkfaced, wearing a long cloak that looked to have been dipped in fresh bullock's blood. All to the crashing of cymbals.

The priest took his place in front of the long table.

Silia's face was white as marble; she moved as if there were small wheels under that long golden wedding gown; she seemed resigned, to anything at this point, soul-stricken.

Keitolainen moved, too, like a great dark wing.

The cymbals were silent.

The monster-priest motioned for his attendants to bring up a brazier. He flung powders into it and dark smoke shuddered out of the flames, smoke with strange faces that changed shape and color while the priest chanted.

All eyes were on this evilness, and on the beautiful bride with her shadowy groom. Lemminkainen wrenched his eyes away. He leaped back into the pillared shadows. Things were different in the performers' alcove now; it was crowding up with slaves, and each slave carried some kind of a weapon, if it be but a strap of harnessing with an iron buckle, or a sharpened meat hook from the larder.

Aiile was among them, fear-white, but smiling.

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All the grim faces, crowding silently in and down hall, looked to Lemminkainen for the signal.

The hero nodded, hand-signaling *Wait*. He prowled along the tapestries to the closest point he could get to the table without being seen. The priest was still chanting, the guests tittering gleefully at this eldritch sport; through the drumming of tambors, now, and jingling of bells, Louhi's cackle of triumph ran like an evil thread.

He held up his hand for those behind him. Then, in an urgent flash his mind told Silia: *I am here. I will save you.*

For the first time Silia made sound. It was only a sharp sob, but sibling-Carl knew she had heard him. This was that moment of stress when minds touch across some fourth dimension where they drift, in truth.

*Carl! They told me they had killed you! I didn't care any more. Now . . . God! I see him! I . . . I think I'm going to—*

He heard her sobbing sigh as she crumpled; now Lemminkainen gave the slaves the signal. He leaped out, then onto the end of the table in one great cat's bound. Trenchers and beer mugs scattered in his path.

Louhi rose when she saw him; she loosened a wild screech and scrambled her claw for the silver sword. Her serpent-stick hissed and struck at Lemminkainen's arm when he reached for the sword. The drooling fangs missed by a fraction in time. Lemminkainen had it, and, in a reflexive lunge, rammed it at the witch's throne. It slashed oak, only. Louhi was vanished.

By now the unleashed fury of the captive slaves was turning the stone floor of the great hall into a slippery sea of blood. Even the powers of star-spawned demons such as these faltered under the hero-inspired flood of disbelief in them. Long enough. Sluggish from overfeeding, muddy-brained with drink, the sorcerers forgot their lines, and died.

"Silia!"

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Lemminkainen stopped lopping off heads to whirl and leap, when he heard her scream. The cadaverous red-cloaked priest blocked his way. Ilmar's silver magic whipped out; the cloak took on new blood and crumpled.

But an awesome horror was taking place.

Keitolainen's shadow was withdrawing, diminishing, melting back into his substance, and taking Silia with him. Sucking her through the spinning vortex with him. The red priest's incantations were not just mock-play, after all. They had opened the way, changed Silia's vibratory pattern, made it possible for Keitolainen the Contemptible to drag her home with him—like a reluctant bride.

### XIV

WHILE Lemminkainen stared, animal groans bubbling in his throat, the witch hag snapped back to view. She threw back her head and laughed. When the hero's swordtip dimpled the hollow in her throat she only shrugged.

"You cannot kill me, Lemminkainen. Not even with Ilmarinen's sword."

He glanced around. "Your slaves are slaying the other wizards along with your warriors, Hag. You are finished!"

The witch cackled and vanished. Now she was seated on a rafter over his head.

"As to my guest"—she shrugged—"most of them are simi-  
-acra. Star-demons die not easily."

Lemminkainen's veins froze. Deep within him, he knew Old Louhi, ancient enemy of the three heroes, was right. This revolt of her captives was a temporal thing; they would es-

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cape from the dismal Island Pohyola, indeed, and live out their lives, fishing and farming. They would marry and produce offspring, offspring who might be snatched off by the ageless witch's myrmidons to become her chattels in some distant time. Legends do not die. Time is a fallacy. He and the Hag of the Rock would cross minds again.

"Where is Kyllikki?" he demanded.

"You mean Silia," Louhi spat contemptuously. "Mortals, even heroes, have a lot to learn, with their machines and their pretensions. Know you not Carl Lempi—*yet?*"

Lemminkainen scowled and swore. The old witch was trying to confuse him, split his mind-power. The name she spoke rankled like a burr in his boot but he thrust it aside.

"*Where is she?*"

"Tuonela, of course. With her husband. Although what Keitolainen wishes of a wheyface *uuti* I cannot grasp. Still, Hiisi and his Pahaliset have strange needs."

"Such as—?"

Louhi shrugged. "I ask no questions of Hiisi, nor he of me. We have a fine symbiotic relationship."

"What are these strange *uuti* words?"

Louhi cackled slyly. "Ask Carl."

Lemminkainen whirled fiercely to aid a youthful plow slave in trouble with three hairy-chested guards who had wrenched out of their drunken slumbers. He slashed one's brutal head so that it lopped grotesquely before he toppled; thrust his well-sung blade into a second's gullet, while the field-slave finished off the third with the plowshare blade he had long nurtured to his bosom, honing it to a fine edge.

Lemminkainen wondered idly if any of Louhi's small army would join up with the slaves, and guessed not. They had been brain-burned to serve the witch and death was the only answer for them. The slaves were doing a thorough job of it; tyranny had begot a rare thirst for blood. Even those whip-

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masters lying dead-drunk in the halls never wakened to wield their lashes across the slaves' backs more.

"I will go across the dark sea to Tuonela and fetch Silia back! She is mine!"

"Go, by all means," Louhi cackled. "Take my fastest steed, Valkea. Join your Silia in the hell-pot!"

Louhi of Pohyola vanished, smiling. Her vengeance was complete, after all.

Lemminkainen found the handsome mare, Valkea, prancing and tromping, in her special stall in the horse barn. He flung the ornate golden bridle and the crimson saddle-pad on her and led her out of the barn. The slaves were by now drunk with their own heroic efforts and their victory, and with liquors, as well. Already they had fired the stables and their vermin-infested sleep hall; Lemminkainen leaped on Valkea and quit the downsloping courtyard where he, too, had slaved, with skyborne flames at his back.

He looked down at the flaming fields of barley and rye, crops which these same slaves with the rampant torches had sown and cared for with such loving hands; he swore to see lambs and bullocks run hither and thither in screaming panic. They, too, must die to assuage the captive slaves' uncorked fury.

Traditionally, Midsummer's night in the northland was the time for madness. This was madness indeed.

Lemminkainen turned his eyes away, gave the reins a sharp tug. Valkea reared up on her hind legs, gave a small scream, and set off like a bolt of white fire through the forest. Louhi, the sly crone, had already whispered into the steed's ear where to take Lemminkainen.

From the wild tumbled hills a crow cawed heartbreak.

Tuonela. Death's kingdom. Land of bittersweet song. The end.

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While Valkea's hooves pounded beneath him, and the purple mists thickened, Time rebelled its plodding course. Lemminkainen's mind pushed him in one direction—the direction of doom. They moved into strange gorges between cliffs that touched alien suns; Lemminkainen once had the throat-burning sensation of great thirst, so that Valkea led him to a chuckling spring and they both slaked their thirst. But the need for Silia was far greater, so that it hung across the hero's whole being as the mists hung over their hidden trail.

The madness of Midsummer had overtaken him, as well as Tapio's creatures and the elements, themselves. Lemminkainen's brain seemed to burst with a yearning to scatter itself to the star-suns, to become knowingly a part of all that exists.

This, then, was death? This—at the final moment of truth—at the crossover to Tuonela?

It was freezing cold, his hands were without feeling on the jeweled reins. His other senses had frozen, too, for he could not even hear the wind, nor see color.

Valkea stopped abruptly. Lemminkainen could not hear her scream that she would go no further but he felt the vibration of her shuddering muscles under him.

With much effort he slid off. His boots made no sound that he could hear; his hand, resting on Valkea's snowy flank, felt the wild agitation when she shook her beautiful head and shrieked soundless terror, before she wheeled and bolted.

Lemminkainen stood there, like an ash tree, looking but not seeing, listening but not hearing.

The vortex was there. The rift between matter and anti-matter. The place where the microcosm and macrocosm come full circle. The looking-glass place.

"Silia?" He didn't know whether he spoke her name aloud or only in his mind.

No answer.

Silence. It was as if *something* were at work, as if Hiisi's



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lessers were turning on some strange alien machine which would permit him to cross the black swan's legend-lake. They were doing this while Lemminkainen's mind and his senses were preparing *him*.

He tried to see. He strained. Now he was in the center of a whirling chaos, shrinking toward an apex *In* which rushed to meet the vortex *Out*.

At this point the flesh that was Lemminkainen died.

## PART FOUR

### Of Tuonela

“Many there indeed have ventured,  
Few indeed have wandered homeward,  
From the dread abode of Hiisi—  
From the midnight land of Tuoni . . .”

KALEVALA: *Runo XVI*

## XV

CARL WOKE regretfully from his hero's dream. It had been so detailed, so actual. He could still hear the echo of Witch Louhi's mocking cackle, feel the strong muscles of Valkea between his thighs, responding to his lightest pressures and whispered commands.

*Back to boredom,* he sighed. *Back to the hospital-clean world of the Psychs.*

Then he opened his eyes.

The sky over his head was deep orange, in that range of the spectrum. There were stars, yes, but they were strange stars, and a moon that *was* blue, like in the old song. He

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gaped around him. He lay on red grass and a pool of water nearby was a sulphur yellow and reflected black clouds. Billowy cirro-cumulus clouds without a drop of wet in them. Hardly, anyway.

He grabbed hold of his head and pressed in from both sides. Nothing changed.

Memories came, lagging at first, then leaping into full bloom, four-dimensional pictures on his brain. The three of his world, and time. Dr. Enoch. The weary northward plunge by dog-sledge, by foot. They stopped short at the pine forest's rim when he yanked open the flap on Silia's tent and found her gone.

He leaped to his feet. Every muscle in his long body screamed in abuse. He limped along the edge of what turned out not to be a small pond, but a wide yellow lake; gradually he managed to put his mind in some order.

Dr. Enoch had said:

*You must become a true hero, for only a fierce, indomitable hero can save our world and himself.*

Ilmar, the smith, had warned:

*Like metal wrenched from the earth and blasted by fire, those who go to Tuonela are recast. They can no longer live among men.*

Lemminkainen and his slavery in Pohyola under the Witch Louhi, Carl remembered only as a misty dream, too wild to have any reality. He screwed up his face in chagrin and distaste. Yes. That part *had* been a crazy dream, in spite of Lemminkainen's mind-push into Tuonela and Louhi's all too willing help getting him there.

"Silia!" he cried.

He had a mission, a vital mission to perform. To save his world from an invading Force that had thrust itself into his warfree world with strange purpose, using the long-buried Finnish Rare Earth as a vehicle.

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"I'm in fine shape to save anybody, even myself," he told the silence. His voice rushed across the arch of orange sky and the yellow lake like crackling thunder.

Standing there, straining to see across the glass-smooth expanse of liquid, Carl shivered under the impact of futility. He had blundered. They had asked him to go to Finland and *find out* what was causing the suicides. He had found out quite a lot; instead of crashing ahead on his own—letting whatever the Force was take Silia, perhaps destroy her as a menace to whatever the plan was behind all this—he ought to have gone back to Helsinki, delivered his report, let Psych-Head take it from there.

His sudden weight of despair added a repulsion toward the hero-myths; his identification with Lemminkainen was suddenly embarrassing and impossible. Ilmatar, Creatrix of the Universe, was a childish sham. Ilmarinen, Vainomoinen, Louhi—the whole kaboodle of them were suddenly Alice's pack of cards, cardboard dreams, spinning away into infinity. With a cry he whipped off Ilmar's sword and flung it far as he could across the yellow lake.

And this weird inside-out landscape was real.

Squinting his eyes across the lake he detected a faint broken line on the other side. Like oddly-shaped buildings, a city.

He squatted, put a hand out toward the smooth liquid. It was not water. It was viscous, dense, and the angry sulphurous color looked actively dangerous.

*It doesn't like me.*

Carl shivered. The flash of knowledge struck like lightning, then pushed up a tight grin. That was like the Finns and their songs. Vesting the elements with personalities. The new Carl Lempi scorned such ideas. He disbelieved.

To prove it he pushed his hand down into the liquid.

"Hey!"

The viscous substance rolled away a fraction of an inch

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from his hand. It wouldn't allow his hand to touch it. It left a cushion of air like a glove between itself and Carl's flesh. He tried both hands, then jammed a boot down into it. It wouldn't permit contact.

"Maybe it's alive," he scowled. "Not like Tapio, the forest or Etelatar, the South Wind. But sentient, some wild life-form of this dimension, that can't allow itself to be touched. *Well!*"

He straightened up, pulled in a sharp gulp of the warm metallic-pungent air, and stepped forward briskly. When he stepped down the yellow stuff leaped aside. Step after step.

"Hope it's not too deep."

It wasn't. The slope was easy and gradual, the unfriendly creature never quite took him to a depth below breathing level. A couple times he started to panic, sloughing his way through the sprawling entity, but his high esp insisted he could make it and nagged him on. It took a while to accept the notion that the creature's natural repugnance for him would keep it off no matter how fast he walked. One thing he couldn't do was sit down and rest. If he allowed It to cover his head he would die from lack of oxygen.

He gritted his teeth and pushed on for two earth hours that seemed more like ten. The thin black line of city where It ended grew wider and took on shape; exotic non-euclidian shape. But it was obviously a city and if Silia was still alive she was probably there. Trudging, he tried for esp contact with her. Nothing.

*She's dead*, he thought. Then he erased the thought, angrily. No! It couldn't be! She *had* to be alive!

Dragging himself up out of the yellow It he flung his long body down with a weary grunt. He lay there, face down, until the all-encompassing need for rest was somewhat satisfied. Curiosity and the demand that he find Silia put him back

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up on his feet, facing a sky-high wall of dead black that reflected no trace of light.

He moved along it, hunting for an opening. There was none. Finally he stopped walking. His legs rebelled and this could go on *ad infinitum*. The curvature of the black mass was hardly noticeable; it would take him forever to circumnavigate it.

"There's got to be some other way to get in!" The inhabitants probably teleported in and out or maybe they never left the black city at all. Likely this dense midnight bulk was the core and the totality of their existence. Except for the Force.

When he moved up close and touched the wall he cried out. It was like touching frozen metal. Cold as death. Outside, the Daliesque landscape was warm, even balmy, after the rigors of Lapland and points North. The icy cold of the black light-trapping wall repelled him. What would such a city be like inside? Freezing cold, soulless, inimical. Still, he must get in the city. He must.

*Silia!* he called out urgently with his mind.

Nothing. No faint trace that she still lived. Likely they had forced her to kill herself, as they did all of those other thousands.

*Why? Why did they kill?*

"I've got to get in, somehow," he gritted.

His hands involuntarily patted the pockets of the close-fitting green-gray uniform he had been furnished in Helsinki and still wore (refuting completely the whole Lemminkainen episode as a crazy dream: dung-spattered barnkeep clothes, minstrel finery and all) to find something that might scratch a way through. Deep inside his inner tunic, under his left biceps, he came up with a thin metal rod.

Silia's light-rod and hand weapon!

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Mindful of the weird tactile syndrome that went with this alloy tube, he pulled the gloves off his wide belt and slipped them on before he took the light-rod out of its narrow pocket.

He flicked it on.

Something wild happened.

The light ring cut through the impregnable black wall; it scooped out a concave hole; something about this earth-light pushed the wall's molecular structure back. Perhaps because it didn't belong here.

"I wonder!" Carl whistled. "Is it possible?"

It was. Splashing the white circle of light ahead of him, Carl moved forward in the hole it created—through the wall.

## XVI

ONLY ONCE did he glance behind him to see solid wall. Carl shuddered at the thought of the light flicking off, leaving him encased in alien metal. He moved at a run, as if by hurrying he could prevent such a fate. What now? Dare he *ever* turn the light off? Would he pass clear through it and out of its black shell, again?

*Carl!*

The mind-voice was sharp, agonized by desperation, and it was Silia!

*Where are you?* he esped.

*This way!*

Silia's esp begged for him to come to her, yet dreaded it, too. Beyond her fear for herself was her love-fear for him. He must not come. It would only make them both captive. *That was what They wanted.*

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Still, what else could he do? He had to follow her voice, find her, no matter what came after that.

He walked on into the nothingness created by the light. Where the secondary spill of light made a ragged black edge under his feet, Carl stepped, dizzy with vertigo. Then, all at once, Silia was standing there in the middle of the void, her feet resting on nothing.

"You can turn off the light now."

Silia said it, but behind the words, shoving the thought forward, was an alien demand.

Carl snapped off the rod. Instead of the plunging blackness he expected, came a pulsing blue light out of no detectable source. It was strongest where Silia stood; in the blue pool of effulgence she seemed to be an illusion from out of his yearning thoughts. Framed in the pageboy twin waves, her face was paper pale, her eyes lambent with joy . . . and pent-up terror.

"Silia!"

She moved a step or two toward him, incredulously; then she was in his arms, sobbing. In the while that followed there was only a crash of happiness as Carl felt her slim body close to him and their two minds interlock. The total emp lasted only the briefest part of their physical contact, not long enough to register more than her topmost thoughts. The pain and horror Silia had suffered, alone in this nameless black alien place, wounded Carl's mind. But joy in finding her alive took precedence.

"Where in Hiisi are we?" Carl demanded, pulling away for a study of the shadowy blue-lit area.

"Hiisi's land, the Finns say." Silia shivered.

"Tuonela!"

Carl moved out of the pool of sifting light to touch the wall, which seemed to be six or eight feet away. But as he moved,



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the sickly glow moved with him, and what seemed wall wasn't.

"It's no use," Silia told him. "I tried running. Everywhere it's the same, like running in a circle. Wherever you stop you're back here or someplace just like it."

Carl moved backward and forward experimentally. "There is a difference in molecular structure. Some places it is denser. It makes some kind of sense, I suppose. The Wall is dense enough to keep out anything." He went back to the girl. "Have you seen them? What are they like?"

"I've only seen one. He was like a great malformed patch of blackness. Only I think they do have color, colors completely off our spectrum. If our eyes could register these colors I think we would see subtleties of shape and body structure, not just a black blot that doesn't refract light."

"They detest light," Carl thought. "That's partially why they built that wall." He squinted up. "The city has a black cover on it, too."

"When I first opened my eyes I couldn't see anything at all. I thought I was blind or— Then, after what seemed like days the blue light came." Silia held his arm in a ten-fingered vise. "I couldn't hear anything. There's no sound here, either. Not a whisper, until you came."

"They're probably telepathic. I have a feeling they didn't originate here. Outside it's wild and alien, but not nightmarish, like in here." He nodded thoughtfully. "I see them roving about through space, perhaps right in this self-contained black city. Maybe it's a spaceship!"

"Or teleportation?"

"Maybe. Something like that. They're probably an old, old race, developed to the point of prowling and going about their predatory ways by mental control. No shiny machines. Only force of mind."

Silia nodded. "They have a loose molecular structure. I

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think they move right through these walls inside the city, spreading and changing at will.”

“Protean.”

“Oh, like the sea-god who changed shape. Except that they don’t bother to take on human shape or anything like that. At least so far.” She shuddered very close. “Before they made the light happen, in the darkness sometimes one of them would brush across me. Like an icy cobweb on my face. Ugh!”

“If it weren’t for our self-heated tunics we’d probably freeze in damn short order. That’s another thing they don’t like. Heat.”

“It was a lot colder before the blue light came. I think this blue nimbus that follows us around has heat in it.”

“Those cobwebs on your face probably were studying your basic needs. For some reason they want to keep us alive.”

“For the time being.”

Carl bent and brushed his lips over her cheek. “Hungry?”

“Starved!” She sighed. “It didn’t matter before, but now—”

Carl snapped a sealed emergency pack from his wide belt. “Have some concentrate. The vitamins will buck you up, help us think. There must be some way—” While they both chewed the flat lozenges Carl wondered why he wasn’t thirsty. “Maybe the blue stuff creates liquid that’s absorbed through our pores,” he decided. “Water and air we must have. As for food, they probably decided—”

“We won’t last long enough to need it.”

Silence, when Silia’s forlorn whisper died away, put Carl’s teeth on edge. His esp told him the danger lurking back in those black walls was quiescent, for the time being.

They sat. Carl said, “Tell me what happened back on the tundra. Do you know how you got here?”

Silia shook her head. “All I remember is the horrible dreams. They lasted forever.”

“Dreams?”

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"I was a vassal, a drudge, in a castle by a great cliff. The country was like an island, floating in and out of Time. It was cold and misty and bleak, ruled over by a hideous crone."

"Pohyola." Carl spoke the name with difficulty. He had rejected the legends and Lemminkainen as fantasies, the outgrowth of a thousand childhood dreams, fed, until it became a lunatic's reality, by all the stories pushed at him since the quest began, and most of all, by being called Lemminkainen.

"Yes, and the old witch was Louhi. She had a great Midsummer's feast. I was dressed in gold. There was a wedding. I was the bride, forced to marry a monstrous shadow called—" She huddled near; she couldn't speak the name.

Carl said it, harshly.

"Keitolainen, the Contemptible. Also out of the old legends." He took hold of her shoulders and stabbed her eyes angrily with his own. "Don't you see? All this legend stuff is nonsense! The Pahaliset only made use of it for their own purposes. Think! An alien civilization like these protean creatures, probing the Finn's minds many centuries ago, through the Rare Earth, found a ready-made bag of superstitions in these primitives. They made use of them, naturally. They identified themselves with some of the myth-creatures. That they were so elemental and basic made it that much easier." He snorted wild contempt. "I have no doubt that's the way they work it: roving among the planets in their own space, using primitive superstitions for the take-over gambit. Using the 'belief' your Uncle yapped about so much, twisting it against anyone naive enough to fall for it. Sure their legends 'came to life!' The Pahaliset had great mind-power. Tricking the Finns the last time they pushed into our Space with illusions of Ilmatar and what-not! Child's play to them! They took me in, too, but no more." Carl stood and paced, muscles snapping as he unleashed his flood of self-contempt. "Don't you

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see? Your Uncle was right about the vibrations, but dead wrong about the rest. Psych-Head was right!"

Silia watched him exude fury, gravely.

"You called them Pahaliset. That's from the legends. Evil Ones, I believe it translates."

Carl snorted. "Just a tag. Call them Proteans! Anything! What's the difference?"

"None, I suppose. But . . . in my dream I was forced to marry Keitolainen. The runic ceremony made it possible for him to bring me here."

"Illusions. The whole ball of wax."

"But why so . . . so elaborate?"

"Maybe they get kicks from it—finding a myth-pattern and spinning it out into a tri-D Vid entertainment. They're *mind* creatures, basically. That's why light and sound and tactile sensations mean nothing to them. Maybe at some point in their development they *did*. Now they're pure mind force, but, let's say they enjoy being reminded of their early, more physical, cycles. So they empathize with us. They take over a human mind through the Rare Earth contact, and drain it dry in a matter of seconds."

"Why *kill*?"

"They don't!" Carl cried. "I know, because I felt the Force when I touched that piece of ore at the Psych-Head conference. The alien being there in my mind *hurt*. It hurt so bad I wanted to destroy myself to stop the pain."

"Why does it hurt?"

"Because they're such giants, mentally. Our minds can't contain them."

"What about the wild emotional pattern? The terror, then ecstasy?"

Carl shrugged impatiently. "Who knows? Naturally the thalamus is—"

The built-in alarm bell in his mind cut him off. *They were*

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*here.* Silently, black patches of alien color moved in on them through the walls. The blue nimbi of light revealed darker places where the protean inhabitants of the black shell-city hung, waiting for some unseen, unheard signal.

Carl forced down his repugnance, his blood-riot of icy fear. Psych-Head didn't allow total-dark, along with all the fear syndromes which in the bad old days had led to conflict; now, here in this looking-glass Space, he and Silia were face to face with a horde of obscene shapes who abhorred the existence of light.

Carl choked down fear by his loud, hoarse demand.

"Who are you?"

The blotches seemed to retreat momentarily from the sound of his voice. Carl espied their detestation of noise. It was almost fear.

"I am Keitolainen," a mocking voice told his mind.

"Not really," Carl said, aloud. "He is only part of a primitive Earth legend. Like Hiisi."

"As you wish. We have names, but they would be meaningless to you because they are not sounds. The first time we found the way to your world the people of the snow country gave us names like Vipunen and Kalma and Keitolainen. Hiisi is our—" The concept was a mixed one. It implied Leader-God-Center-Mindforce, and more.

"What do you want from us? What is the Force?" Carl blurted.

Silence. Keitolainen evaded the first question. Carl espied that tendril of fear again. There was something more to their mind take-over than he had told Silia. Something they didn't want him to know. Even yet!

"The Force is Hiisi," the voice told him. "He wants you brought to him."

"Both?"

"Both."

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“What does he want?”

Hesitance. Intense silence. Then: “What he always wants—your minds. Afterwards, we will find use for the component parts of your physical bodies.”

Silia gasped. “You’re going to kill us!”

“You knew that, of course. But go right ahead. Excite your emotions. We—”

Carl’s muscles tightened into painful bands around his organs. Silia made a soft despairing sound against him. But, overlaying his thrill of sharp horror, Carl espied something resembling hope. Keitolainen had revealed more than he had meant to. Hiisi had cut him off. By their dispassionate nature, he knew suddenly that when Keitolainen said ‘excite your emotions’ it was not out of refined sadism. It was something else.

“We must hurry,” the black shape told them. “Hiisi has need. He is—”

Again the breakoff, but Carl espied the concept. *Hiisi has need. Hiisi is hungry.*

## XVII

“HIISI IS HUNGRY!”

He said it aloud. There was satisfaction in saying it, while Keitolainen and the black horde pulled them forward toward some central core of the black labyrinth. Because it told him, in a burst, that Hiisi and his creatures roved the planets of their dimension not out of choice, but out of desperate need!

*Hiisi hungered.* Hiisi had need! And when he hungered, all hungered.

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"What . . . what is it?" Silia whispered, clinging, while they moved firefly-like toward what must be the end for them.

"Hiisi is hungry!" Carl cried. "The Rare Earth contact was cut off and I suppose by now he isn't feeding so well! He's drained dry all the food-source he can reach. Psych-Head has put a stopper on his medium of contact. The random bits of the Finnish Rare Earth have been located. The mines are sealed tight!"

"But"—Silia's voice was hollow with strain—"what does Hiisi feed on?"

Carl's shout skittered into the tri-dimensional corridors; the black shapes seemed to shiver from the impact.

"What everything lives on, of course! *Energy*. But the energy Hiisi feeds on, and doles out to his people in turn, is *mental energy*, the power of the mind that your Uncle told me about! The emotional power that rocks civilizations. The sum-total of what all our wizards and psychs and religious leaders accepted and understood, without knowing they did! Sheer mind-energy! We've got it; they need it, desperately. They've drained this planet dry. The yellow lake-creature has no mind, or practically none, so it's safe. But these creatures of Hiisi must rove the universes, siphoning up all the mind-power they can find. They finally intruded into our Space until—"

He stopped short. Almost he shouted in triumph . . . and chagrin. How wrong he had been! Jumala, how wrong!

*Until the hero Vainomoinen drove them out.*

He thrust the thought into Silia's mind, but found it already there. It, and a flickering flame of hope.

Carl looked up at Hiisi and fought back a desire to scream. They had reached the center of the black city; now they were in a great central chamber. Above them, a convoluted ball

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of always-changing shapes and angry colors, hung the Force. Hiisi.

Hiisi allowed them to see him deliberately. And the shapes that he assumed by his protean nature were shapes out of nightmares. Earth nightmares, combined with the mind-vertigo that tears the human brain when it faces the utterly alien and inimical.

"He wants our minds to react," Carl muttered harshly. "He *wants* our emotions stimulated: horror, fear, despair. When the emotions are pulled to their tautest, the glands secrete panicked defenses, and the mind-power your Uncle talked about thrusts the brain into great need; this in turn strains all the mental energies of an intelligent mind to their utmost. *That* is what Hiisi feeds on! His race is old, ancient beyond belief. The mind-power is weak, although they need it more desperately than ever before, to thrust them onto new worlds and keep Hiisi strong. Our world's minds are young and virile still and when we believe—"

Above them Hiisi darkened and howled. The sound it made was mental, but there. Carl stared up at the blood-crimson nightmare, dry-throated, but charged with sudden new hope. Hiisi wanted to terrify them to that culmination point where the mind-power is greatest, when it is most defensive and battling for survival of the organism that contains it.

"What can we do?" Silia wailed.

He sped her mind slipping, teetering toward the Force, making it pulsate with new strength.

"Fight him!" Carl cried out aloud.

"H-how?"

"With what *he* wants—your mind-power."

"But we're so weak compared to—"

Hiisi was growing, expanding, pulling the energy out of their minds, feeding on Silia's wild panic. Carl felt a draining pull from him, too. He resisted; he began to know true fear.



## SAGA OF LOST EARTHS

Hiisi spoke:

"You have guessed well, earth-mind. Yes, we are old. So old that the histories of all your terran civilizations are but a bubble in the time stream. But you are wrong; your hope misleads you to say that my mental contact with your planet has been cut. Your Psych-Head is frail and stupid. Your people have been taught a gospel of weakness, and they have become like vegetables.

"Yet there were those among them who rebelled from the Psych-Head doctrines. They fought! They actually fought! And in the scramble of battle many of the carefully shielded warehouses with the Finnish Rare Earth in them were broken into. The results were glorious! Never has Hiisi ate so well!

"The rebellion is leading to open war. The placid sheep have learned to hate and fear and fight again! Before it is over your planet will be a mindless ball spinning around its minor sun. Even—"

Hiisi's voice stopped short, but Carl's thrill of anguish for his world made him unaware for the moment. All his bursting brain could think of was that Earth—beautiful, foolish, battered-by-war Earth—was about to lose its finest achievement: Man. The Third Atomic War had frightened humankind into becoming no more than a great culture of admitted psychotics, to be spoon-fed by Psych-Head until they recovered from their hostility syndromes toward one another. It was understandable that Psych-Head had overwritten its part in the recovery. The pendulum had swung too far in the other direction. Yet, this, too, was temporary. As mankind recovered, the overbalance would be corrected. The other planets of the Sol system were too unlike Earth to handle the overpopulation, but the stars still beckoned.

The stars would never know human laughter. Hiisi, the mind-eater, was even now ravishing the green planet. The human mind, nurtured and taught and expanded to soaring

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heights of technical and artistic achievement, was nothing but food for the predators, for Hiisi, fuel power for his monstrous crusade of devouring the mind-power of every planet he touched.

Carl's soul shriveled up in defeat. Psych-Head had looked to him to find the answer. Dr. Enoch had said: *You must be heroic as were the great legendary slayers of Evil. You must cast out all trace of timidity and fear. You must not allow for the possibility of failure. YOU MUST BELIEVE!*

That was the key. *Belief.*

But . . . how, against this enormously powerful mind? How could he, Carl Lempi, with his pitiful esp-emp that Psych-Head had relied on—How could he, alone . . . ?

"That's it!" he cried. "Not alone—!"

Silia was sobbing; the effort to resist having her mind sucked into the Thing suspended above them was too much.

"I can't—"

"Yes, you can!" Carl thrust the thought into her like a cruel sword. "Wait! Think of the Finnish songs! The runic patterns! Speak them, out loud! Hold on to your mind! Speak the vibratory word-patterns!"

It was as if Hiisi rumbled with laughter. Carl knew why. Every moment Hiisi was becoming stronger from the mind-power he was draining out of the warring humans in their confusion and panic brought on by the suicides. Mere word-patterns might protect on the tundras of Lapland, fend him off *if only by the implicit belief that they would.* Not here. Not in Tuonela. This was Hiisi's dark domain from which no one could ever return.

"Ilmatar!" Carl cried out. "Help us!"

Nothing. The Creatrix of the Universe had forsaken Carl's alter-ego, Lemminkainen.

Carl shook a look at Silia. Her eyes were closed and her lips were moving grimly over the *Suomi* songs against evil.

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At least it was an evasive action. It kept Hiisi from overwhelming her panicked mind as he overwhelmed the unwary terran suicides.

*A contact. Like Hiisi, himself, Carl must have a contact point. Something out of Earth.*

He whipped off his glove, scrambled out the light-rod. He gripped it fiercely.

*"Ilmatar! Ilmarinen! Vainomoinen!"*

Hiisi gave an animal growl; Carl felt him move down in a great crimson-black cloud. But now the hint of fear Carl had espied before was palpable. Hiisi must take him *now!*

Carl felt the sweat pour off his forehead into his eyes, down his long body muscles. It was like being in a sauna. "No," he told himself. "You can't have my mind. *We won't let you!*"

*We.*

"Lemminkainen! My golden apple!" Ilmatar's lilting voice thrust through the vortex, through the black shell, through Hiisi's ravenings.

"I am here, friend Lemminkainen!" said the red-bearded wondersmith.

"I, too," said Vainomoinen, the great wizard. "Hiisi tried to take me, as he is trying to take you. But I would not let him. My magic was strong. The best Hiisi could do was scatter my mind-power and chain it in the black walls of this cursed city-ship. *You* have enabled me to put my mind back into one piece, with your belief."

"Wonderful!" Ilmarinen cried. "Here we are again, we three heroes! The greatest heroes the world has ever known!"

Hiisi threshed the air above them by his wild anger.

"It is not enough!" he mocked.

Carl gasped. Then, when the black clouds enveloped his mind and started to squeeze out all recognition of his heroic friends and of Ilmatar, he knew Hiisi was right.

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It wasn't enough. Hiisi had become too strong. He had fed too well on helpless Earth minds.

"Ilmatar!" he cried out. "What can I do?"

"You *know*, my beautiful golden apple. Seek back in your mind. Far back."

With all the will he possessed, Carl kept Hiisi at bay. He thought. And then he knew. He called and called. It was like a great chain reaction, and it all spilled from his high-esp mind. All the genetic strength all of the implacable belief of his ancestors since before the Great Bear—all this, and the gods in which they believed. All crowded into his mind: the entirety of a great People.

It was as if all of this believing power was made physically present by the kinetic strength of this vast army. They crowded the black city. Their broadswords rattled. Plow on shoulder, fishnet swishing carelessly behind, songs spilling out and symphonies thundering courage and trust, they came.

Carl felt himself grow tall with bursting pride.

Little Aiile was there. Tuuri and the people of Imari. All determined, believing fast in the shining truth their legends had given them.

"We must destroy Hiisi," Carl told them. "He has plagued our world twice. He must not, again."

"Ail" agreed Vainomoinen and Ilmarinen, together.

The minds moved in as one.

He stood with Silia on the barren tundra where yellow flowers waved like bright flags between the patches of melting snow. Dawn was like a forever thing, a radiance of dazzling color, as the sun skimmed up over the rim of dark pines at the eastern horizon.

"Did we . . . they—"

Carl's arm circled her shoulder. He smiled. "Yes, we . . . they did. The power to defeat even Hiisi was there, and is

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there again, if we need it. It needs only concerted belief in the final infallibility of the human mind to bring it crashing into action."

"Where are we?"

Carl surveyed the arch of blue sky and the snow-dunes and woods with glad eyes. "Back where we first lost contact with each other and stepped into legend. See!" Above them Virokannas, the eagle, made slow circles, then swooped down to them, crying his harsh atonal greeting. "He will guide us back to Ilmar and the world."

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