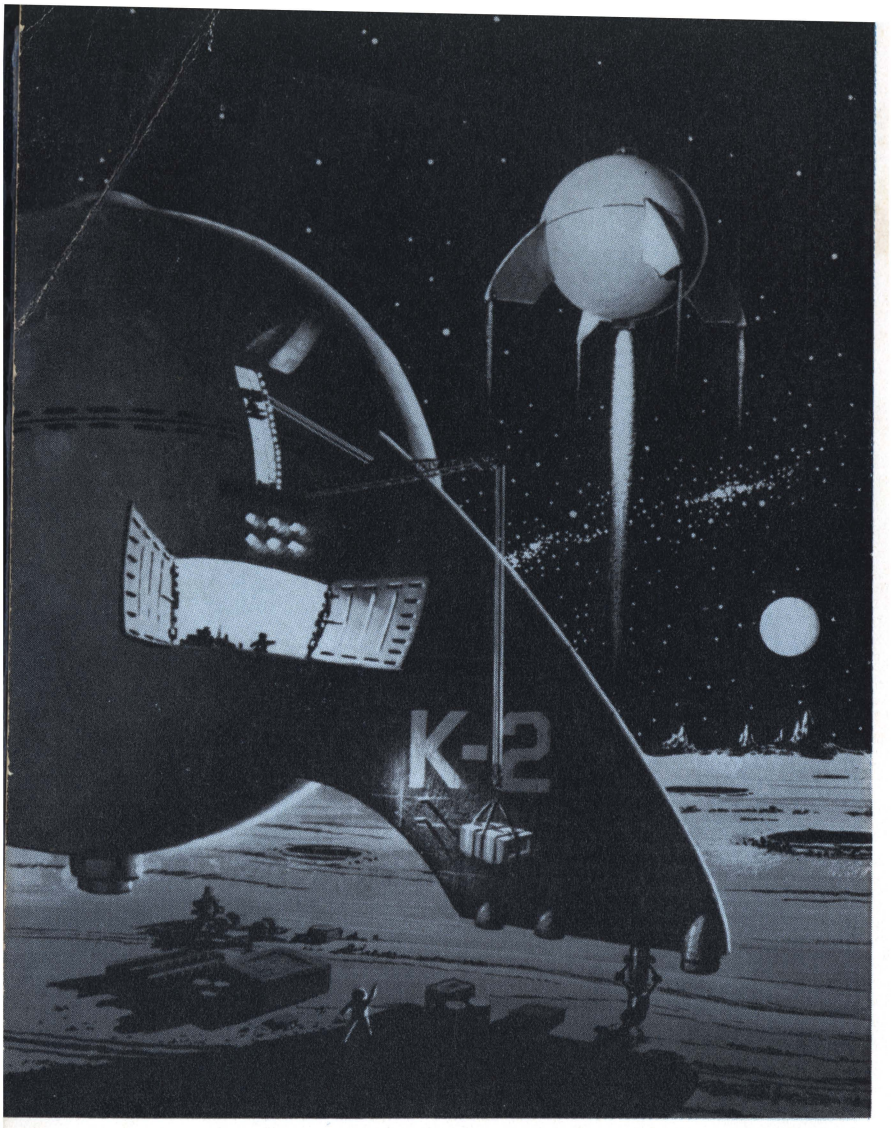
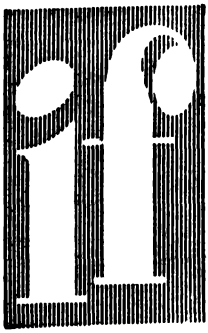

if
WORLDS OF
SCIENCE FICTION
AUGUST 1955
35 CENTS
FRANCHISE
by Isaac Asimov
BIRTHRIGHT a new short novel by April Smith
PHILIP K. DICK • WINSTON MARKS • CHAS. L. FONTENAY • WILLARD MARSH



PREVIEW—When artist Ed Valigursky introduced his spherical moon shuttle-ships in the May (1954) issue, one of the scenes offered such unusual possibilities as a cover we asked him to do it in full color. The scene is that of a shuttle-ship discharging its cargo on the moon and it will appear on the next (October) issue of IF. It is reproduced here in black on a blue tint—but you should see it in full color! It's the most colorful and effective moon action illustration we've seen in a long, long time. Don't miss it!



WORLDS of SCIENCE FICTION

AUGUST 1955

All Stories New and Complete

Editor: JAMES L. QUINN
Assist. Editors: EVE WULFF, ROBERT W. GREENE
Art Editor: ED VALIGURSKY

SHORT NOVEL

NOVELETTES

SHORT STORIES

FEATURES

COVER:

By Kenneth Rossi, illustrating "Bleedback"

IF is published bi-monthly by Quinn Publishing Company, Inc. Volume 5, No. 5. Office of publication, 8 Lord Street, Buffalo, New York. Entered as Second Class Matter at Post Office, Buffalo, New York. Subscription $3.50 for 12 issues in U.S. and Possessions; Canada $4 for 12 issues; elsewhere $4.50. Allow four weeks for change of address. 35c a copy. Printed in U.S.A.

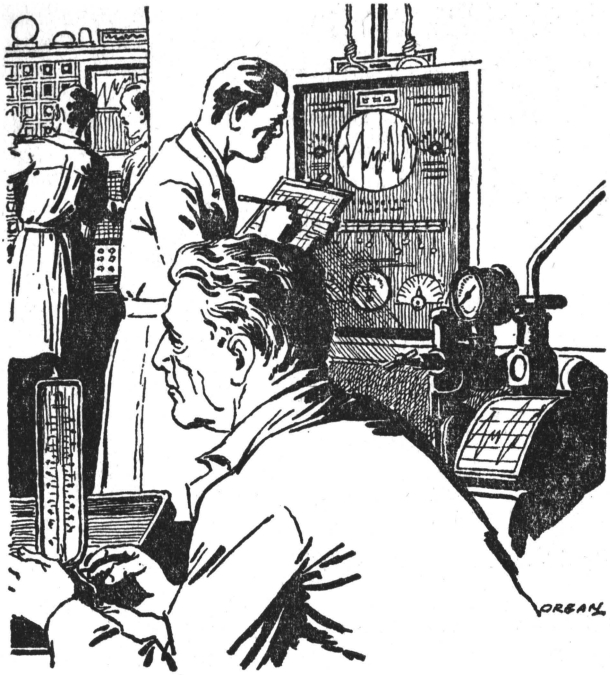
EDITORIAL AND BUSINESS OFFICES, KINGSTON, NEW YORK

Next issue on sale August 12th

BY ISAAC ASIMOV

FRANCHISE

It was a frightening thing to happen to a person; the responsibility was just too great. But Norman Muller couldn't back out. Multivac had chosen him, and the entire nation waited . . .



Illustrated by Paul Orban

LINDA, aged 10, was the only one of the family who seemed to enjoy being awake.

Norman Muller could hear her now through his own drugged, unhealthy coma. (He had finally managed to fall asleep an hour earlier but even then it was more like exhaustion than sleep.)

She was at his bedside now, shaking him. "Daddy, Daddy, wake up. Wake up!"

He suppressed a groan. "All right, Linda."

"But, Daddy, there's more policemen around than any time! Police cars and everything!"

Norman Muller gave up and rose blearily to his elbows. The day was beginning. It was faintly stirring toward dawn outside, the germ of a miserable gray that looked about as miserably gray as he felt. He could hear Sarah, his wife, shuffling about breakfast duties in the kitchen. His father-in-law, Matthew, was hawking strenuously in the bathroom. No doubt Agent Handley was ready and waiting for him.

This was *the* day.

Election day!

To begin with, it had been like

every other year. Maybe a little worse, because it was a Presidential year, but no worse than other Presidential years if it came to that.

The politicians spoke about the guh-reat electorate and the vast electuh-ronic intelligence that was its servant. The press analyzed the situation with industrial computers (the New York Times and the St. Louis Post-Dispatch had their own computers) and were full of little hints as to what would be forthcoming. Commentators and columnists pin-pointed the crucial state and county in happy contradiction to one another.

The first hint that it would *not* be like every other year, was when Sarah Muller said to her husband on the evening of October 4 (with Election Day exactly a month off), "Cantwell Johnson says that Indiana will be the state this year. He's the fourth one. Just think, *our* state this time."

Matthew Hortenweiler took his fleshy face from behind the paper, stared dourly at his daughter and growled, "Those fellows are paid to tell lies. Don't listen to them."

"Four of them, Father," said Sarah, mildly. "They all say Indiana."

"Indiana *is* a key state, Matthew," said Norman, just as mildly, "on account of the Hawkins-Smith Act and this mess in Indianapolis. It—"

Matthew twisted his old face alarmingly and rasped out, "No one says Bloomington or Monroe County, do they?"

"Well—" said Norman.

Linda, whose little point-chin face had been shifting from one speaker to the next, said pipingly, "You going to be voting this year, Daddy?"

Norman smiled gently and said, "I don't think so, dear."

But this was in the gradually growing excitement of an October in a Presidential Election Year and Sarah had led a quiet life with dreams for her companions. She said, longingly, "Wouldn't *that* be wonderful, though?"

"If I voted?" Norman Muller had a small, blonde mustache that had given him a debonair quality in the young Sarah's eyes, but which, with gradual graying, had declined merely to lack of distinction. His forehead bore deepening lines born of uncertainty and, in general, he had never seduced his clerkly soul with the thought that he was either born great or would under any circumstances achieve greatness. He had a wife, a job and a little girl and except under extraordinary conditions of elation or depression was inclined to consider that to be an adequate bargain struck with life.

So he was a little embarrassed and more than a little uneasy at the direction his wife's thoughts were taking. "Actually, my dear," he said, "there are two hundred million people in the country, and with odds like that, I don't think we ought to waste our time wondering about it."

His wife said, "Why, Norman, it's no such thing like two hundred million and you know it. In the first place, only people between 20 and 60 are eligible and it's always

men, so that puts it down to maybe fifty million to one. Then, if it's really Indiana—"

"Then it's about one and a quarter million to one. You wouldn't want me to bet in a horse race against those odds, now, would you? Let's have supper."

Matthew muttered from behind his newspaper, "Damned foolishness."

Linda asked again, "You going to be voting this year, Daddy?"

Norman shook his head and they all adjourned to the dining room.

BY OCTOBER 20, Sarah's excitement was rising rapidly. Over the coffee, she announced that Mrs. Schultz, having a cousin who was the secretary of an Assemblyman, said that all the "smart money" was on Indiana.

"She says President Villers is even going to make a speech at Indianapolis."

Norman Muller, who had had a hard day at the store, nudged the statement with a raising of eyebrows and let it go at that.

Matthew Hortenweiler, who was chronically dissatisfied with Washington, said, "If Villers makes a speech in Indiana, that means he thinks Multivac will pick Arizona. He wouldn't have the guts to go closer, the mushhead."

Sarah, who ignored her father whenever she could decently do so, said, "I don't know why they don't announce the state as soon as they can, and then the county and so on. Then the people who were eliminated could relax."

"If they did anything like that," pointed out Norman, "the politicians would follow the announcements like vultures. By the time it was narrowed down to a township, you'd have a Congressman or two at every street-corner."

Matthew narrowed his eyes and brushed angrily at his sparse, gray hair, "They're vultures, anyhow. Listen—"

Sarah murmured, "Now, Father—"

Matthew's voice rumbled over her protest without as much as a stumble or hitch. "Listen, I was around when they set up Multivac. It would end partisan politics, they said. No more voter's money wasted on campaigns. No more grinning nobodies high-pressured and advertising-campaigned into Congress or the White House. So what happens? More campaigning than ever, only now they do it blind. They'll send guys to Indiana on account of the Hawkins-Smith Act and other guys to California in case it's the Joe Hammer situation that turns crucial. I say, wipe out all that nonsense. Back to the good, old—"

Linda asked, suddenly, "Don't you want Daddy to vote this year, Grandpa?"

Matthew glared at the young girl. "Never you mind now." He turned back to Norman and Sarah. "There was a time I voted. Marched right up to the polling booth, stuck my fist on the levers and voted. There was nothing to it. I just said: This fellow's my man and I'm voting for him. *That's* the way it should be."

Linda said excitedly, "You voted, Grandpa? You really did?"

Sarah leaned forward quickly to quiet what might easily become an incongruous story drifting about the neighborhood. "It's nothing, Linda. Grandpa doesn't really mean voted. When he was a little boy, they had something they *called* voting. Everyone did that kind of voting, Grandpa, too, but it wasn't *really* voting."

Matthew roared, "It wasn't when I was a little boy. I was 22 and I voted for Langley and it was real voting. My vote didn't count for much, maybe, but it was as good as anyone else's. *Anyone* else's. And no Multivac to—"

Norman interposed. "All right, Linda, time for bed. And stop asking questions about voting. When you grow up, you'll understand all about it."

He kissed her with antiseptic gentleness and she moved reluctantly out of range under maternal prodding and a promise that she might watch the bedside video till 9:15, *if* she was prompt about the bathing ritual.

Linda said, "Grandpa," and stood with her chin down and her hands behind her back until his newspaper lowered itself to the point where shaggy eyebrows and eyes, nested in fine wrinkles, showed themselves. It was Friday, October 31.

He said, "Yes?"

Linda came closer and put both her forearms on one of the old man's knees so that he had to discard his newspaper altogether.

She said, "Grandpa, did you really once vote?"

He said, "You heard me say I did, didn't you? Do you think I tell fibs?"

"N—no, but Mamma says everybody voted then."

"So they did."

"But how could they? How could *everybody* vote?"

Matthew stared at her solemnly, then lifted her and put her on his knee.

He even moderated the tonal qualities of his voice. He said, "You see, Linda, till about forty years ago, everybody always voted. Say we wanted to decide who was to be the new President of the United States. The Democrats and Republicans would both nominate someone and everybody would say who they wanted. When Election Day was over, they would count how many people wanted the Democrat and how many wanted the Republican. Whoever had more votes was elected. You see?"

Linda nodded and said, "How did all the people know who to vote for? Did Multivac tell them?"

Matthew's eyebrows hunched down and he looked severe. "They just used their own judgment, girl."

She edged away from him and he lowered his voice again, "I'm not angry at you, Linda. But, you see, sometimes it took all night to count what everyone said and people were impatient. So they invented special machines which could look at the first few votes and compare them with the votes from the same places in previous years. That way the machine could

compute how the total vote would be and who would be elected. You see?"

She nodded. "Like Multivac."

"The first computers were much smaller than Multivac. But the machines grew bigger and they could tell how the election would go from fewer and fewer votes. Then, at last, they built Multivac and it can tell from just one voter."

Linda smiled at having reached a familiar part of the story and said, "That's nice."

Matthew frowned and said, "No, it's not nice. I don't want a machine telling me how I would have voted just because some joker in Milwaukee says he's against higher tariffs. Maybe I want to vote cockeyed just for the pleasure of it. Maybe I don't want to vote. Maybe—"

But Linda had wriggled from his knee and was beating a retreat.

She met her mother at the door. Her mother, who was still wearing her coat and had not even had time to remove her hat, said breathlessly, "Run along, Linda. Don't get in mother's way."

Then she said to Matthew as she lifted her hat from her head and patted her hair back into place, "I've been at Agatha's."

Matthew stared at her censoriously and did not even dignify that piece of information with a grunt as he groped for his newspaper.

Sarah said, as she unbuttoned her coat, "Guess what she said?"

Matthew flattened out his newspaper for reading purposes with a sharp crackle and said, "Don't much care."

Sarah said, "Now, Father—" But she had no time for anger. The news had to be told and Matthew was the only recipient handy. So she went on, "Agatha's Joe is a policeman, you know, and he says a whole truckload of secret service men came into Bloomington last night."

"They're not after me."

"Don't you see, Father? Secret service agents, and it's almost election time. In *Bloomington!*"

"Maybe they're after a bank robber."

"There hasn't been a bank robbery in town in ages . . . Father, you're hopeless."

She stalked away.

Nor did Norman Muller receive the news with noticeably greater excitement.

"Now, Sarah, how did Agatha's Joe know they were secret service agents," he asked, calmly. "They wouldn't go around with identification cards pasted on their foreheads."

But by next evening, with November a day old, she could say triumphantly, "It's just everyone in Bloomington that's waiting for someone local to be the voter. The Bloomington News as much as said so on video."

Norman stirred uneasily. He couldn't deny it, and his heart was sinking. If Bloomington was really to be hit by Multivac's lightning, it would mean newspapermen, video shows, tourists, all sorts of—strange upset. Norman liked the quiet routine of his life and the distant stir

of politics was getting uncomfortably close.

He said, "It's all rumor. Nothing more."

"You wait and see, then. You just wait and see."

As things turned out, there was very little time to wait, for the door-bell rang insistently, and when Norman Muller opened it and said, "Yes?" a tall, grave-faced man said, "Are you Norman Muller?"

Norman said, "Yes" again, but in a strange dying voice. It was not difficult to see from the stranger's bearing that he was one carrying authority and the nature of his errand suddenly became as inevitably obvious as it had, until the moment before, been unthinkably impossible.

The man presented credentials, stepped into the house, closed the door behind him and said ritualistically, "Mr. Norman Muller, it is necessary for me to inform you on the behalf of the President of the United States that you have been chosen to represent the American electorate on Tuesday, November 4, 2008."

NORMAN MULLER managed, with difficulty, to walk unaided to his chair. He sat there, white-faced and almost insensible, while Sarah brought water, slapped his hands in panic and moaned to her husband between clenched teeth, "Don't be sick, Norman. *Don't* be sick. They'll pick someone else."

When Norman could manage to talk, he whispered, "I'm sorry, sir."

The secret service agent had removed his coat, unbuttoned his jacket and was sitting at ease on the couch.

"It's all right," he said, and the mark of officialdom seemed to have vanished with the formal announcement and leave him simply a large and rather friendly man. "This is the sixth time I've made the announcement and I've seen all kinds of reactions. Not one of them was the kind you see on the video. You know what I mean? A holy, dedicated look, and a character who says: 'It will be a great privilege to serve my country.' That sort of stuff." The agent laughed comfortingly.

Sarah's accompanying laugh held a trace of shrill hysteria.

The agent said, "Now you're going to have me with you for a while. My name is Phil Handley. I'd appreciate it if you call me Phil. Mr. Muller can't leave the house any more till Election Day. You'll have to inform the department store that he's sick, Mrs. Muller. You can go about your business for a while but you'll have to agree not to say a word about this. Right, Mrs. Muller?"

Sarah nodded vigorously. "No, sir. Not a word."

"All right. But, Mrs. Muller," Handley looked grave, "we're not kidding now. Go out only if you must and you'll be followed when you do. I'm sorry but that's the way we must operate."

"Followed?"

"It won't be obvious. Don't wor-

ry. And it's only for two days till the formal announcement to the nation is made. Your daughter—"

"She's in bed," said Sarah, hastily.

"Good. She'll have to be told I'm a relative or friend staying with the family. If she does find out the truth, she'll have to be kept in the house. Your father had better stay in the house in any case."

"He won't like that," said Sarah.

"Can't be helped. Now, since you have no others living with you—"

"You know all about us, apparently," whispered Norman.

"Quite a bit," agreed Handley. "In any case, those are all my instructions to you for the moment. I'll try to co-operate as much as I can and be as little of a nuisance as possible. The government will pay for my maintenance so I won't be an expense to you. I'll be relieved each night by someone who will sit up in this room, so there will be no problem about sleeping accommodations. Now, Mr. Muller—"

"Sir?"

"You can call me Phil," said the agent again. "The purpose of the two days preliminary to formal announcement is to get you used to your position. We prefer to have you face Multivac in as normal a state of mind as possible. Just relax and try to feel this is all in a day's work. Okay?"

"Okay," said Norman, and then shook his head violently. "But I don't want the responsibility. Why me?"

"All right," said Handley, "let's get that straight to begin with. Multivac weighs all sorts of known factors, billions of them. One factor isn't known, though, and won't be known for a long time. That's the reaction pattern of the human mind. All Americans are subjected to molding pressure of what other Americans do and say, to the things that are done to him and the things he does to others. Any American can be brought to Multivac to have the bent of his mind surveyed. From that the bent of all other minds in the country can be estimated. Some Americans are better for the purpose than others at some given time, depending upon the happenings of that year. Multivac picked you as most representative this year. Not the smartest, or the strongest, or the luckiest, but just the most representative. Now we don't question Multivac, do we?"

"Couldn't it make a mistake?" asked Norman.

Sarah, who listened impatiently, interrupted to say, "Don't listen to him, sir. He's just nervous, you know. Actually, he's very well-read and he always follows politics very closely."

Handley said, "Multivac makes the decisions, Mrs. Muller. It picked your husband."

"But does it know everything?" insisted Norman, wildly. "Can't it have made a mistake?"

"Yes, it can. There's no point in not being frank. In 1993, a selected Voter died of a stroke two hours before it was time for him to be notified. Multivac didn't predict that; it couldn't. A Voter might be mentally unstable, morally un-

suitable, or, for that matter, disloyal. Multivac can't know everything about everybody until he's fed all the data there is. That's why alternate selections are always held in readiness. I don't think we'll be using one this time. You're in good health, Mr. Muller, and you've been carefully investigated. You qualify."

Norman buried his face in his hands and sat motionless.

"By tomorrow morning, sir," said Sarah, "he'll be perfectly all right. He just has to get used to it, that's all."

"Of course," said Handley.

In the privacy of their bedchamber, Sarah Muller expressed herself in stronger fashion. The burden of her lecture was, "So get hold of yourself, Norman. You're trying to throw away the chance of a lifetime."

Norman whispered, desperately, "It frightens me, Sarah. The whole thing."

"For goodness sake, why? What's there to it but answering a question or two?"

"The responsibility is too great. I couldn't face it."

"What responsibility? There isn't any. Multivac picked you. It's Multivac's responsibility. Everyone knows that."

Norman sat up in bed in a sudden access of rebellion and anguish. "Everyone is *supposed* to know that. But they don't. They—"

"Lower your voice," hissed Sarah, icily. "They'll hear you downtown."

"They don't," said Norman, declining quickly to a whisper. "When they talk about the Ridgely administration of 1988, do they say that Ridgely was corrupt and the nation was foolish to elect him? Do they say he won them over with pie-in-the-sky promises and racist baloney? No! They talk about the 'goddam MacComber vote' as though Humphrey MacComber was the only man who had anything to do with it because he faced Multivac. I've said it myself—only now I think, the poor guy was just a truck-farmer who didn't ask to be picked. Why was it his fault more than anyone else's. Now his name is a curse."

"You're just being childish," said Sarah.

"I'm being sensible. I tell you, Sarah, I won't accept. They can't make me vote if I don't want to. I'll say I'm sick. I'll say—"

But Sarah had had enough. "Now you listen to me," she whispered in a cold fury. "You don't have only yourself to think about. You know what it means to be Voter of the Year. A Presidential year at that. It means publicity and fame and, maybe, buckets of money—"

"And then I go back to being a clerk."

"You will *not*. You'll have a branch managership at the least if you have any brains at all, and you *will* have, because I'll tell you what to do. You control the kind of publicity if you play your cards right, and you can force Kennell Stores, Inc. into a tight contract *and* an escalator clause in connection with your salary *and* a decent

pension plan."

"That's not the point in being Voter, Sarah."

"That will be your point. If you don't owe anything to yourself or to me—I'm not asking for myself —you owe something to Linda."

Norman groaned.

"Well, don't you?" snapped Sarah.

"Yes, dear," murmured Norman.

On November 3, the official announcement was made and it was too late for Norman to back out even if he had been able to find the courage to make the attempt.

Their house was sealed off. Secret service agents made their appearance in the open, blocking off all approach.

At first the telephone rang incessantly, but Philip Handley with an engagingly apologetic smile took all calls. Eventually, the exchange shunted all calls directly to the police station.

Norman imagined that in that way, he was spared not only the bubbling (and envious?) congratulations of friends, but also the egregious pressure of salesmen scenting a prospect and the designing smoothness of politicians from all over the nation. Perhaps even death threats from the inevitable cranks.

Newspapers were forbidden to the house now in order to keep out weighted pressure and television was gently but firmly disconnected, over Linda's loud protests.

Matthew growled and stayed in his room; Linda, after the first flurry of excitement, sulked and whined because she could not leave the house; Sarah divided her time between preparation of meals for the present and plans for the future; and Norman's depression lived and fed upon itself.

And the morning of Tuesday, November 4, 2008, came at last and it was Election Day.

IT WAS EARLY breakfast, but only Norman Muller ate, and that mechanically. Even a shower and shave had not succeeded in either restoring him to reality or removing his own conviction that he was as grimy without as he felt grimy within.

Handley's friendly voice did its best to shed some normality over the gray and unfriendly dawn. (The weather prediction had been for a cloudy day with prospects of rain before noon.)

Handley said, "We'll keep this house insulated till Mr. Muller is back, but after that we'll be off your necks." The secret service agent was in full uniform now, including side-arms in heavily-brassed holsters.

"You've been no trouble at all, Mr. Handley," simpered Sarah.

Norman drank through two cups of black coffee, wiped his lips with a napkin, stood up and said, haggardly, "I'm ready."

Handley stood up, too, "Very well, sir. And thank you, Mrs. Muller, for your very kind hospitality."

The armored car purred down empty streets. They were empty

even for that hour of the morning.

Handley indicated that and said, "They always shift traffic away from the line of drive ever since the attempted bombing that nearly ruined the Leverett election of '92."

When the car stopped, Norman was helped out by the always polite Handley into an underground drive whose walls were lined with soldiers at attention.

He was led into a brightly lit room, in which three white-uniformed men greeted him smilingly.

Norman said, sharply, "But this is the hospital?"

"There's no significance to that," said Handley, at once. "It's just that the hospital has the necessary facilities."

"Well, what do I do?"

Handley nodded. One of the three men in white advanced and said, "I'll take over now, agent."

Handley saluted in an off-hand manner and left the room.

The man in white said, "Won't you sit down, Mr. Muller? I'm John Paulson, Senior Computer. These are Samson Levine and Peter Dorogobuzh, my assistants."

Norman numbly shook hands all around. Paulson was a man of middle height with a soft face that seemed used to smiling and a very obvious toupee. He wore plastic-rimmed glasses of an old-fashioned cut, and he lit a cigarette as he talked. (Norman refused his offer of one.)

Paulson said, "In the first place, Mr. Muller, I want you to know we are in no hurry. We want you to stay with us all day if necessary, just so that you get used to your surroundings and get over any thought you might have that there is anything unusual in this, anything clinical, if you know what I mean."

"It's all right," said Norman. "I'd just as soon this were over."

"I understand your feelings. Still, we want you to know exactly what's going on. In the first place, Multivac isn't here."

"It isn't?" Somehow through all his depression, he had still looked forward to seeing Multivac. They said it was half a mile long and three stories high, that fifty technicians walked the corridors *within* its structure continuously. It was one of the wonders of the world.

Paulson smiled. "No. It's not portable, you know. It's located underground, in fact, and very few people know exactly where. You can understand that, since it is our greatest natural resource. Believe me, elections aren't the only thing it's used for."

Norman thought he was being deliberately chatty, but found himself intrigued all the same. "I thought I'd see it. I'd like to."

"I'm sure of that. But it takes a Presidential order and even then it has to be countersigned by Security. However, we are plugged into Multivac right here by beam transmission. What Multivac says can be interpreted here and what we say is beamed directly to Multivac, so in a sense we're in its presence."

Norman looked about. The machines within the room were all meaningless to him.

"Now let me explain, Mr. Muller," Paulson went on. "Multivac already has most of the information it needs to decide all the elections, national, state and local. It needs only to check certain imponderable attitudes of mind and it will use you for that. We can't predict what questions it will ask, but they may not make much sense to you, or even to us. It may ask you how you feel about garbage-disposal in your town; whether you favor central incinerators. It might ask you whether you have a doctor of your own or whether you make use of National Medicine, Inc. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"Whatever it asks, you answer in your own words in any way you please. If you feel you must explain quite a bit, do so. Talk an hour, if necessary."

"Yes, sir."

"Now, one more thing. We will have to make use of some simple devices which will automatically record your blood pressure, heart beat, skin conductivity and brain wave pattern while you speak. The machinery will seem formidable, but it's all absolutely painless. You won't even know it's going on. So don't worry about it."

The other two technicians were already busying themselves with smooth-gleaming apparatus on oiled wheels.

Norman said, "Is that to check on whether I'm lying or not?"

"Not at all, Mr. Muller. There's no question of lying. It's only a matter of emotional intensity. If the machine asks you your opinion of your child's school, you may say, 'I think it is overcrowded.' Those are only words. From the way your brain and heart and hormones and sweat glands work, Multivac can judge exactly how intensely you feel about the matter. It will understand your feelings better than you yourself."

"I never heard of this," said Norman.

"No, I'm sure you didn't. Most of the details of Multivac's workings are top secret. For instance, when you leave, you will be asked to sign a paper swearing that you will never reveal the nature of the questions you were asked, the nature of your responses, what was done, or how it was done. The less is known about the Multivac, the less chance of attempted outside pressures upon the men who service it." He smiled, grimly, "Our lives are hard enough as it is."

Norman nodded. "I understand."

"And now would you like anything to eat or drink?"

"No. Nothing right now."

"Do you have any questions?"

Norman shook his head.

"Then you tell us when you're ready."

"I'm ready right now."

"You're certain there's nothing else you want to ask?"

"Quite."

Paulson nodded, and raised his hand in a gesture to the others.

They advanced with their frightening equipment and Norman Muller felt his breath come a little more quickly and his heart beat more rapidly as he watched.

THE ORDEAL lasted nearly three hours, with one short break for coffee and an embarrassing session with a chamber-pot. During all this time, Norman Muller remained encased in machinery. He was bone-weary at the close.

He thought sardonically that his promise to reveal nothing of what had passed would be an easy one to keep. Already the questions were a hazy mish-mash in his mind.

Somehow he had thought Multivac would speak in a sepulchral, superhuman voice, resonant and echoing, but that, he now decided, was just an idea he had from seeing too many television shows. The truth was distressingly undramatic. The questions were slips of a kind of metallic foil patterned with numerous punctures. A second machine converted the pattern into words and Paulson read the words to Norman, then gave him the question and let him read it for himself.

Norman's answers were taken down by a recording machine, played back to Norman for confirmation, with emendations and added remarks also taken down. All that was fed into a pattern-making instrument and that, in turn, was radiated to Multivac.

The one question Norman could remember at the moment was an incongruously gossipy: "What do you think of the price of eggs?"

He had answered, blankly, "I don't know the price of eggs."

Now it was over, and gently they removed the electrodes from various portions of his body, unwrapped the pulsating band from his upper arm, moved the machinery away.

He stood up, drew a deep, shuddering breath and said, "Is that all? Am I through?"

"Not quite," Paulson hurried to him, smiling in reassuring fashion. "We'll have to ask you to stay another hour."

"Why?" asked Norman, sharply.

"It will take that long for Multivac to weave the new data into the trillions of items it has. Thousands of elections are concerned, you know. It's very complicated. And it may be that an odd contest here or there, a comptrollership in Phoenix, Arizona, or some council seat in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, may be in doubt. In that case, Multivac may be compelled to ask you a deciding question or two."

"No," said Norman. "I won't go through this again."

"It probably won't happen," Paulson said, soothingly. "It rarely does. But just in case, you'll have to stay." A touch of steel, just a touch, entered his voice. "You have no choice, you know. You must."

Norman sat down wearily. He shrugged.

Paulson said, "We can't let you read a newspaper, but if you'd care for a murder mystery, or if you'd like to play chess, or if there's anything we can do for you to help pass the time, I wish you'd mention it."

"It's all right. I'll just wait."

They ushered him into a small room just next to the one in which he had been questioned. He let himself sink into a plastic covered armchair and closed his eyes.

As well as he could, he must wait out this final hour.

He sat perfectly still and slowly the tension left him. His breathing grew less ragged and he could clasp his hands without being quite so conscious of the trembling of his fingers.

Maybe there would be no questions. Maybe it was all over.

If it *were* over, then the next thing would be torchlight processions and invitations to speak at all sorts of functions. The Voter of the Year!

He, Norman Muller, ordinary clerk of a small department store in Bloomington, Indiana, who had neither been born great nor achieved greatness would be in the extraordinary position of having had greatness thrust upon him.

The historians would speak soberly of the Muller Election of 2008. That would be its name, the Muller Election!

The publicity, the better job, the flash flood of money that interested Sarah so much, occupied only a corner of his mind. It would all be welcome, of course. He couldn't refuse it. But at the moment something else was beginning to concern him.

A latent patriotism was stirring. After all, he was representing the entire electorate. He was the focal point for *them*. He was, in his own person, for this one day, all of America!

The door opened, snapping him to open-eyed attention. For a moment, his stomach constricted. Not more questions!

But Paulson was smiling. "That will be all, Mr. Muller."

"No more questions, sir?"

"None needed. Everything was quite clearcut. You will be escorted back to your home and then you will be a private citizen once more. Or as much so as the public will allow."

"Thank you. Thank you." Norman flushed and said, "I wonder —Who was elected?"

Paulson shook his head. "That will have to wait for the official announcement. The rules are quite strict. We can't even tell you. You understand."

"Of course. Yes." Norman felt embarrassed.

"Secret Service will have the necessary papers for you to sign."

"Yes." Suddenly, Norman Muller felt proud. It was on him now in full strength. He was proud.

In this imperfect world, the sovereign citizens of the first and greatest Electronic Democracy had, through Norman Muller (through *him!)* exercised once again its free, untrammeled franchise. • • •

A new moral outlook is called for in which submission to the powers of nature is replaced by respect for what is best in man. It is where this respect is lacking that scientific technique is dangerous.—*Bertrand Russell*

BIRTHRIGHT

Why was Cyril Kirk, highest man in his class, assigned to such an enigmatic place as Nemar? Of what value was it—if anything? No one could tell him the answer. He wouldn't have believed them . . .

BY APRIL SMITH

CYRIL KIRK'S first sight of the planet from the spaceship did nothing to abate the anger seething within him. He stared at it in disgust, glad there were no other passengers left to witness his arrival.

All during the long trip, he had felt their curious stares and excited whispers everywhere he passed, and he had felt a small wave of relief whenever a large batch of them had been unloaded on some planet along the way. None of them had come this far—which was hardly surprising, he thought; the last of them had been taken off two-thirds of the way to Nemar. He was very glad to see them go, though by that time they had stopped making their cautious, deferential attempts to draw him into conversation and elicit some clue about his mission

Illustrated by Kelly Freas

and destination.

He had let them wonder. He knew that his aloofness was being taken as snobbishness, but he was past caring. They all recognized that he was a Planetary Administrator by the blazing gold insignia on the dark uniform, insignia calling for awe and respect all over the galaxy. They guessed that this was his first appointment, but the thing that really aroused their curiosity was the bitter, angry look that went with what they considered his arrogant reserve.

Since polite efforts at conversation by the braver or more confident among the company were met with icy monosyllables that cut off further attempts, they were left with a wide range of controversy. Some of them held, though they had never actually seen a Planetary Administrator before in the flesh, that all PA's were like this. They argued that the long, grueling years of study, the ascetic, disciplined life from childhood, and the constant pressure of competition, knowing that only a small percentage would finally make the grade, made them kind of inhuman by the time they finished. Besides, they were near-geniuses or they wouldn't have been selected in the first place—and everybody knows geniuses are sort of peculiar.

One of the bolder and more beautiful girls on board had been argued into making a carefully planned attempt to draw information out of him, and bets had been placed on the results. She was eager enough to try her hand at this rich prize, and her self-confidence was justified by a long trail of broken hearts in high places, but the attempt came to nothing. Kirk was aware of her efforts and aware that in another mood he would have appreciated her charm, but he felt too sick and miserable to respond.

Remembering her piquant, laughing face later in his cabin, Kirk thought morosely of the long train of girls he had known in the past. Many of them had been lovely—a fledgling PA was considered a highly desirable date, even though the chances were always that he wouldn't make it in the end. But Kirk had always been filled with an iron determination that he *was* going to make it in the end, and this meant no distractions. If he began to feel he might get really emotionally entangled with a girl, he stopped seeing her at once. He saw them seldom enough, anyway. The regulations of the PA Institute gave him a fair amount of free time, but the study requirements made the apparent freedom meaningless.

How hard he'd worked for the day he'd be wearing this uniform, he thought bitterly. How proud and happy he'd thought he'd feel wearing it! And now, instead, here he was, practically hiding in his cabin, hoping nobody would discover the name of his destination and guess the reason for the humiliated rage that was still coursing through him.

He'd gone over the interview with Carlin Ross a hundred times since the trip started, and he wasn't any nearer to making sense out of it than when he began . . .

He'd entered Ross's office for the interview in which he would be awarded his post, full of confidence and pride. The final examination results posted in the main lobby were headed by his name. He knew that, because of his good record and general popularity, he had been watched with special interest by the teachers and staff for some time; and he looked forward to being awarded a particularly desirable planet, in spite of its being his first post.

Technical ability and sound training in administration had long ago been decided upon as more important than practical experience, as mankind began to sicken of the bungling of political appointees. The far-flung planets that had been colonized or held an intelligent, humanoid population were so numerous that even an experienced Planetary Administrator could know very little about each one. Only someone brought up on a planet could have a detailed knowledge of it, and it was a basic premise of the Galactic Union that governors with a common upbringing and training on Terra were necessary to keep the varied parts of the empire from splitting off and becoming alienated from the rest.

Ross was one of the half-dozen men in the top echelon governing the galaxy and its warring components. His official title was Galactic Coordinator, and one of his minor duties was the supervision of the Institute of Training for Planetary Administration, which had been home to Kirk for so long. Although he was the Institute's official head, he was too busy to be seen in its halls more than rarely, but Kirk had had several brief talks with him and one long one. He had the feeling that Ross had a special interest in him, and this had added to his anticipation on the fatal day.

As he entered the room, Ross looked up, his blue eyes friendly and alert in the weathered, tanned face. "Hello, Kirk," he said. As always, the simple warmth of his smile threw Kirk off guard. It had never failed to surprise him the few times he had seen Ross. In this place of dedicated, serious men, of military crispness of speech, of stiffly erect carriage, Ross's relaxed body and quiet, open expression seemed startlingly out of place. Except for the alertness and intelligence of the eyes, he looked like a country farmer who had wandered in by mistake. Kirk, and his friends, had more than once wondered how such an anomaly had risen to the high position of Galactic Coordinator.

However, if his manner left you puzzled, it also made you feel surprisingly comfortable, and Kirk had felt relaxed and happy as Ross motioned him to a chair. Nothing prepared him for the shock that was to come.

He remembered the apparent casualness with which Ross had spoken. "I'm sending you to Nemar."

For a moment Kirk felt blank. The name did not register. His private speculations had centered on the question of whether he would be sent to a thriving, pleasant, habitable planet or to one of

those whose bleak surface contained some newly discovered, highly valuable mineral and whose struggling colonists lived under pressurized domes. Either type could have held the chance to work up to the galactic eminence and power he had set his heart on. He had been over and over the list of planets that were due to receive new PA's (there was a rotational system of five years, with an additional five years made optional), and he had a private list of those which, as the star graduate of his class, he hoped he might draw. Nemar was not among them.

His face stayed blank for a minute as he searched his memory for the name, and as vague bits of information filtered through to him, his eyes widened in disbelief. "But, sir—" He fumbled for words. "That's on the very edge of the galaxy."

Ross's voice was quiet. "Yes, it's a long way."

"But there's nothing on it!"

Ross sounded a little amused. "There are some very nice people on it—the natives are of the same species as we are, though they look a little different. That means the air is breathable without aids. It's quite a pleasant planet."

"That's not what I mean, sir. I mean there's nothing of any value—no minerals, no artifacts, no valuable plant or animal products." He searched his memory for what little he could remember about Nemar from classes. He recalled that the planet had been discovered only forty years ago by a Survey ship that had gone off course far toward the outer rim of the galaxy. It had been incorporated into the Galactic Union because it was considered dangerous to leave any inhabited planet free of control; but it had not been considered a valuable addition. It was far off the established trade routes, and seemed to contain nothing worth the expense of transporting it. "The culture is very primitive, isn't it?" Kirk asked, half thinking aloud.

"It is so considered," Ross answered.

The reply struck Kirk as odd. A sudden hope filled him. Maybe something new had been discovered about the place, possibly something that only Ross and a few of the top command knew about. He threw a sharp glance at Ross's face, but it told him nothing. "I don't remember too much about the place from class," he ventured.

Ross rose, and with his incongruously quick, lazy grace strode to the filing cabinet along the wall, pulling out documents and pamphlets. He plumped them in a pile in front of Kirk. "Most of the factual information we have is in these. You can try the library, too, but I doubt if you'll find anything more." He added a book to the pile. "This covers their language. You'll have two months of intensive instruction in it before you go. You were always good in your language structure courses, so I doubt that you'll have any trouble with it. You'll have another two weeks to learn the stuff in these documents, and two more weeks to rest or do whatever you like before you leave." He resumed his chair. "You're luck-

ier than some of the others. The boy who got Proserpine will have a stack of books up to there to absorb." He gestured toward the ceiling.

At the mention of Proserpine, Kirk's brown eyes darkened. Proserpine had been recently discovered, too, but that was all it had in common with Nemar. Its inhospitable surface held vast amounts of a highly valuable fuel ore, and it had been one of the places on his list. He wondered who was going there, his insides suddenly twisting with envy. He tried to keep his voice even. "I don't understand why I'm being sent to Nemar." He searched for words. After all, he couldn't exactly mention his graduating first and his record. "Is there something I don't know about? Has something valuable been discovered that hasn't been publicized, or—" He waited hopefully.

Ross's answer was flat. "No, there's nothing there that can be transported that's worth transporting."

Kirk felt despair surging through him, then suddenly changing to sharp anger. "I've worked hard. I have a good record. Why are you giving me this—this lemon? Why don't you give it to whoever graduated lowest, or better still to some older PA who bungled things somewhere, but not quite enough to be retired!" His face was burning with rage. Somewhere inside he felt shocked at himself for speaking to a Coordinator this way; at the same time he felt a violent urge to carry it farther and sock Ross in the nose. His body was shaking . . .

Remembering the scene now as he watched Nemar swing closer, Kirk felt the anger again, time hadn't dimmed it at all. Ross must have perceived his fury, but he had shown no signs of it. Looking as friendly as ever, he had told him mildly that he did not consider Nemar a "lemon", that he had excellent reasons for sending him there, but he preferred not to tell him what they were. He wanted him to discover them for himself after he arrived. The rest of the interview had concerned itself mainly with practical information, most of which Kirk had scarcely heard through his fog of emotion.

His endless speculations since then had gotten him nowhere. He had dredged out of his memory every incident that might reveal some trait for which he was being discreetly given a back seat. He recalled a roommate who had said he was going to become a living machine if he kept it up, and no machine had the right to have jurisdiction over people. But Jere had flunked out along the way, like most candidates who had an attitude like that. He went over the time he had been called to Ross's office and gently rebuked for working men under him on a project too hard. "I don't ask anything from them I don't ask of myself," he had protested.

"I know," Ross had answered, "and I respect that. But *you* work that hard from choice." Then he had nodded in dismissal.

Kirk had puzzled over these and other incidents, searching for a clue, but found nothing. All his probing

in a more optimistic direction led to blind alleys also. The documents on Nemar, all the information he could dig up, confirmed Ross's statement that the planet held nothing of commercial value.

The planet, to judge by what he had read, was a pleasant place, apparently very pretty, with heavy vegetation and a warm, temperate climate, and the natives were hospitable and friendly. But all this held very little comfort for him and did little to assuage the sense of angry humiliation that had made him seek isolation from the other passengers.

He could see the planet more clearly now as the ship began to angle into an orbit, preparatory to sending out the smaller landing ship which would take him down. Hastily he reviewed in his mind once more the few facts he knew about the place, and shaped his tongue to the unfamiliar sounds of the native language. He fought down the feeling of humiliation, and straightened his shoulders. After all, to these people, he would be the most important person on the planet. If he was to be a big frog in a small puddle, he was still supreme administrator here, and he had no intention of letting them know his arrival signified a disgrace to him.

FROM THE airlock of the landing ship, Kirk looked out on a cleared plain. In the foreground a group of natives were gathered to greet him, and a scattering of dark uniforms among them indicated the officials who would make up the Terran part of his staff. As the natives approached him, he noted the green-gold hair and the slightly greenish tinge to their skin, for which his studies had prepared him.

Nothing in his studies, however, had prepared him for the extraordinary grace and beauty of these people.

They were dressed, men and women alike, in a simple fold of bright-colored cloth circling their body from the waist and reaching a third of the way to their knees. Kirk noted, with a slight sense of shock, that the women wore nothing above the waist except for a strand of woven reeds, interlaced with shells and flowers, which fell loosely to their breasts. In these brief and primitive garments, the natives bore themselves with such imperious grace and assurance that for a moment Kirk felt as if his role had been abruptly reversed—as if instead of being the powerful representative of a great civilization to a backward people, he were the humble primitive waiting for their acceptance.

One of the older natives stepped forward from the rest, his palm outstretched, shoulder high, in greeting. "Welcome to Nemar," he said, his glance steady and gracious on Kirk's face.

Kirk recognized the words of the native language with surprise. The clear, musical quality of the native's speech made his own words, harsh and grating by comparison, sound like a different language, as he replied. "Thank you. I am very

happy to be here."

As he spoke, he realized that the lie had for a moment felt almost like truth. For a moment he wondered if the planet's apparent primitiveness was deceptive and if its simplicity concealed a highly developed culture. But even as the hope surged through him, he remembered Ross's clear and definite statement to the contrary. Besides, there would be no point in keeping a thing like that secret from the rest of the galaxy, even if it could be done. Such a culture, moreover, would certainly have things of value to trade.

As these thoughts coursed through his mind, one of the Terrans stepped forward from the crowd. The insignia on his uniform were the same as his own, and he realized, with a surge of curiosity, that this must be his predecessor.

The man reached forward to shake his hand. "Hello. The name's Jerwyn." His tanned face was open and friendly, and reminded Kirk curiously of someone; he couldn't remember who. "Glad to see you."

I'll bet you are, Kirk thought: your gain, my loss. "Greetings from Terra," he replied, somewhat stiffly. "Cyril Kirk." He tried to keep his vague disapproval of Jerwyn's breezy informality out of his voice. It was hard to realize this man was also a Planetary Administrator. He seemed to have lost completely the look of authority that was the lifelong mark of the PA graduate.

After the various introductions and a short period of conversation, Kirk found himself seated beside Jerwyn in the small ground vehicle which was to take him to his headquarters. Jerwyn immediately resumed the standard Galactic-Terran language, which he had dropped during the introductions. "As soon as I show you around a bit, I'll be off on the landing ship you came in. I wonder how Terra will seem after all this time."

"Five years is a long time," Kirk ventured.

"Ten."

Kirk stared at him in astonishment. "You took the optional five years! Why in heaven would anyone—" He broke off suddenly. The question might be one Jerwyn would not care to answer. He threw him a speculative glance, wondering why he had been sent here and whether he, too, was bitter. Maybe a poor record, or something in his past he didn't care to go back to . . . ? That didn't fit in his own case—but then there was no knowing what did fit in his own case. Jerwyn had an alert, perceptive look that indicated considerable intelligence, but still he somehow looked inadequate. Some quality an Administrator should have was lacking . . . dignity? drive?

Jerwyn's voice interrupted his thoughts. "Beautiful, isn't it?"

The groundcar had left the plain and was entering a heavily wooded section. For the first time, Kirk took a good look at his surroundings. Some of the trees and plants were very like those he had seen in parks at home. Still, there was a definitely alien feel to it all. The trees were low and wide and had peculiar contours, different from

those of trees on Terra, and their flowering foliage came in odd sizes and colors. The sky wasn't quite the blue he was used to, and the shapes of the clouds were different. He noticed for the first time a heady, pungent perfume carried on the breeze, that was both pleasant and stimulating. It came, perhaps, from the wide-petaled flowers in oddly shimmering colors that clustered thickly everywhere.

"Yes, it's beautiful," he agreed, "but—" The feeling of despair and frustration welled up in him again. The warmth he sensed in Jerwyn made him suddenly long to blurt out the whole story. He controlled himself with difficulty, as he turned toward him. "It's pretty enough. It might make a good vacation resort if it weren't on the edge of nowhere." His pent-up emotion exploded as he spoke. "But five years in this hole! I'd feel a hell of a lot better if I were looking at some rocky, barren landscape with some mines on it—with *something* of value on it—with a name somebody'd heard of, where you could hope to get somewhere. I don't want to waste five years here!" He paused for breath, staring angrily at the lush landscape. "And for that matter, life on one of those planets where you live under domes, with a sealed-in atmosphere, is probably a lot more civilized and convenient than in this primitive jungle."

Jerwyn nodded slowly, an unspoken compassion in his face. "I know how you're feeling." He paused. "And it does seem pretty primitive here at first—no automatic precipitrons for cleaning your clothes, natural foods instead of synthetics, no aircars, no automatic dispensers for food or drinks or clothes; none of a hundred things you take for granted till you don't have them. But you get used to it. There are things to make up—" He broke off as the car began to descend into a valley. "Look!" His voice held an odd tone of affection. "There's your new home."

Kirk gazed downward at the settlement nested in the valley below them. He fished in his pocket for a magnascope to bring the view nearer and stared curiously, as the lens adjusted to the distance. He picked out groups of buildings, low units of some coarse, natural material, widely spaced. This was the largest city on the planet, he knew, but it seemed to be little more than a village. It was undoubtedly primitive—very primitive. Remembering the magnificent high buildings of Terra, he was filled with sudden homesickness for the speeding sidewalks crowded with people, the skylanes humming with aircars.

Turning the magnascope here and there, he kept his gaze trained on the town beneath him, studying it now in more detail. Slowly, some of his depression began to leave him, and he felt a strange sense of warmth begin to take its place. He stepped up the power of the glass till he could see the inhabitants walking in the streets. Like the natives who had met him at the landing ship, they walked with a beautiful, easy grace, a sumptuous ease that seemed somehow almost a rebuke of his own stiffly correct

military posture. They gave an impression of combined leisure and vitality.

Gradually, as he watched, an odd feeling of nostalgia began to stir in him, an old, childish longing. He remembered suddenly a dream he had had years ago, in which he had run laughing through green meadows with a lovely girl. He had fought against waking from it and returning to his desk piled high with books and his ascetically furnished room.

He blinked his eyes and put down the magnascope. "Rather attractive, in a way," he said grudgingly to Jerwyn. He settled back slowly into his seat.

"Just the same," he added, annoyed at himself for his sentimental lapse, "how have you managed to stand it all this time? I still can't figure how I came to get it in the neck like this." Abruptly, he plunged into the words he had been holding back, telling the whole story of his confusion to Jerwyn.

He rationalized to himself that perhaps Jerwyn could help him solve the mystery. At least he might tell him how he himself came to be sent to Nemar, without his having to ask directly; and this might give him a clue.

"I've been over the whole business a million times, trying to figure it out," he concluded. "Somebody with pull must have had it in for me. But who? And why? I never had any real run-ins with Ross. In fact, I'd always thought he liked me." He scowled. "Of course, he gives practically everybody that impression. Maybe he's just a professional glad-hander, though he certainly doesn't seem like it." He shook his head. "Maybe that's the secret of his success; I never could figure out how he got where he is. He certainly doesn't seem typical of the command. Oh, he's brilliant enough, but there's a quality about him I'd almost call—weak, I guess. Unsuitable for his post, anyway. He treats the janitor the same as—"

Kirk stopped abruptly. He suddenly had the answer to the question that had been nagging at the edge of his mind: it was Ross that Jerwyn reminded him of.

Trying to cover up his confusion, he went on rapidly, hoping Jerwyn would not notice. "Anyway, whatever his reasons were, he's played me a dirty trick, and if there's ever any way I can pay him back for it, I'll do it. I'll have five years to think about it. Me! The fair-haired boy of the Institute! On my way to the top!" His face flushed with resentment. "Sent to sweat out five years in this Godforsaken place with a bunch of savages hardly evolved out of the jungle!" He passed his hand over his forehead, wiping off sweat, feeling the full force of his pent-up anguish and rage flood through him.

Jerwyn spoke very quickly. "I felt pretty much the same way when I was sent here. But I feel differently now. I could try to explain. But I don't think it's a good idea. I don't think anyone could have explained to me. This is a place you've got to live in; you can't be told about it." He shifted in his seat as a small group of

buildings came into view. "As for Ross—well, he was responsible for my being sent here, too, and I spent some time when I first came, thinking of ways to cut his body in little pieces and throw them in a garbage pulverizer—but I wouldn't waste my time if I were you. I know now he had his reasons." As he spoke the car pulled to a stop. "Well, here we are. This is where you'll be living and working."

Jerwyn stayed with Kirk while he was shown through various buildings. He found most of the office buildings full of bright murals and little watered patios, but lacking the simplest devices for working efficiency. He was introduced to various officials, Terran and Nemarian. Some of the latter, to his surprise, were women—a rare phenomenon for a primitive planet, he remembered from his classes.

By the time the touring was over and he had said goodbye to Jerwyn, he was too tired to do more than glance briefly at the quarters to which he was shown. Left alone in his rooms, he took a quick, awkward bath, too weary to feel more than a brief annoyance at the lack of automatic buttons for temperature controls, soaping, and drying, and fell exhausted on the low bed.

FOR A MOMENT, as he woke, Kirk could not remember where he was. Drowsiness mingled with a sense of eeriness at the sound of long bird-calls unlike any on Terra and the unfamiliar rustling of leaves; the rays from the late afternoon sun seemed too crimson.

Then, as sleep fell from his eyes, he remembered. He glanced at the window above his bed from which the orange light filtered into the room and saw it was completely open to the outside air. Something would have to done about that, he thought grimly, or he'd never be able to sleep with an easy mind. There were always people, sooner or later, who hated you if you had power; or if they didn't hate you, they at least wanted you out of commission for one reason or another.

He sat up to take a better look at the room he had been too tired to investigate before. There were mats of woven reeds, and low carved chests, and flowers; the walls were clean and glimmering, and bare except for a single picture of two young native children. He got up and walked over to look at it more closely. A boy of about seven was holding his arm out to a girl, slightly younger, to help her on to the low, swaying branch on which he was sitting. The picture was full of sunshine and green leaves and happiness, and you could feel the trusting softness of her arms reaching up to him. An odd picture, Kirk thought. The children looked childlike enough, but the emotions looked adult.

As he looked at it, he heard a soft, swishing sound in the next room, and stiffened. There was no lock on the door, he noticed. Well, it was time to get up, anyway. He dressed hurriedly, trying to remember the layout of his rooms. Except for the bathroom, he recalled only one other room, a sort of arbored

porch, one side completely open to the air, with a low table and some cooking equipment at one end.

As he opened the door, a faint whisk of something made of reeds went out of sight. A primitive broom, he thought, with a faint sense of relief. Some servant was tidying the house. He opened the door further—and stared.

A native girl was standing before him. She was extraordinarily lovely. The gold-green hair of her race rippled and flowed in waves over her bare back and shoulders down to the circlet of vermilion cloth girdling her thighs. The band of small shells that circled her throat was netted with wide orange and red flowers that half-hid, half-disclosed the firm naked breasts. The light brown, gold-flecked eyes beneath the gold-green eyebrows were soft; so was the tender mouth, rose-colored against the flawless skin, with its undertones of faint green. Her body, too, looked soft and yielding, but was borne with imperious grace that somehow dignified even the broom held loosely now in one delicate hand.

Kirk stared at this vision of beauty, taken by surprise, and found himself caught up in sudden desire. She was like something out of a dream. He tried to get hold of himself.

You're just not used to half-nude women, he told himself. You're used to girls in uniforms, crisp, businesslike uniforms. A wild suspicion caught at the edge of his mind. He didn't know anything about this planet, really—except that there was something he didn't know. Maybe they made a practice of diverting their rulers with beautiful women. She certainly didn't look like a servant. He smiled at the thought that came to him: this servant was the first indication of the luxury befitting a Planetary Administrator. The thought enabled him to gain control of himself again. He regained a semblance of his customary reserved look.

"Good afternoon," he said, in the native language.

She smiled and held out her hand.

He hesitated, then held out his own awkwardly. Did one shake hands with one's servants here? He wished he'd asked Jerwyn for more advice about protocol.

She took his hand and pressed it lightly for a moment. "I am Nanae." Her voice was low and musical. "I am going to clean and take care of your house."

She turned and with exquisite precision gestured toward the low table and cooking equipment at the end of the room. "I thought you would be waking soon. I have prepared some *jen* for you."

Jen? he thought. Oh, yes, a very light stimulant—the local variety of tea. He walked over to the low table and sat down, fighting the impulse to enter into conversation with her. He watched her as she poured the hot liquid into wide cups of polished gourd, her hair radiant about her shoulders. A stab of longing shot through him. The long years of training in the Institute paraded through his mind, the years of strict routine, hard work, ascetic, bare rooms, with

women considered playthings that took too much time from needed study; the only beauty was the dream of power among the glittering stars.

Well, he wasn't going to give up and forget the dream, he told himself—and he wasn't going to be led astray by any pretty girls, particularly a maid. Hell, he thought suddenly, maybe Ross is testing me. Maybe he picked the worst planet in the whole damn galaxy to find out if I could do something with it. It's obvious if I can get this place on the trademaps, I can handle anything.

He looked speculatively at the girl as she pushed the cup toward him. He wondered how she came by her job. Did they hold beauty contests here for the honor of being cleaning woman in the PA's household? He realized he was feeling more cheerful. The *jen* and the soothing quietness of the girl's presence were doing him good. He felt a resurgence of his old energy and ambition that the interview with Ross had quelled for so long.

"Did you work for Jerwyn, too?" he asked. Yes, his voice was just right, courteous, but not too friendly, he thought.

"No, but I knew him." She looked at him with an odd smile. "He became one of our best dancers."

"Dancers!" Kirk stared at her in amazement. He started to open his mouth, then stopped. He'd better not ask any more questions till he'd had a chance to talk to some Terrans. Apparently, Jerwyn had gone native. Maybe it was his way of rebelling against being sent here in the first place—and he'd let himself go so far that he'd skipped his chance of reassignment at the end of the first five years, afraid of the problems of a new post after being a beachcomber for so long. That would account for the curious lack of deference he'd found in all these people. They were friendly enough, but they lacked proper respect for his position. You weren't supposed to be friendly to a PA; you were supposed to be humbly polite. He recalled the respect and awe he'd received on the ship.

As he finished his cup, he realized he was very hungry. He looked around instinctively for food. He had enough synthetics in his bags to do him for awhile, but he might as well make the plunge and start eating the native foods right away. No use coddling himself.

The girl noticed the look. "I didn't prepare food for you because dinner will be served in just a little while. We eat all together, down by the river. You will hear drums to announce when the meal is ready, and you get there by walking to the end of that path." She pointed a delicate finger at a small foot-path winding by a few yards from where he sat.

COMING OUT of the little forest at the end of the path, Kirk paused to take in the scene. Between him and the river was a wild jumble of men and women, laughing and talking, children running and stumbling over small pet animals, piles of nuts and fruits

and hot foods heaped together beside small fires. Some of the people sat on straw mats, but most, simply on the ground. There were neither tables nor chairs. To Kirk it looked like utter confusion.

With a sense of gratitude, he saw a tall, uniformed figure coming up to him, with a brisk, definite stride. The Terran's face was lined and firm, the kind of face Kirk was familiar with. The man with this face would be a man who stood for no nonsense, a man who was a little tough, but also fair and capable. He recognized him as he came closer.

"Hello, sir. I'm Matt Cortland, your second in command," he said brusquely. "I met you this afternoon, but you met so many people then it must have been just a blur of names and faces."

Kirk greeted him, feeling a sense of satisfaction that this man would be his chief assistant. He looked efficient; he should be able to help him learn the ropes and get a program of action started.

"No chairs," Cortland said laconically, as they walked toward the gathering. He chose a soft spot of lavender-tinted moss near a pile of hot food and sat down, cross-legged. Awkwardly, Kirk sat down beside him, folding his legs under him stiffly. "You can be served in your rooms, of course, if you like," Cortland went on, turning to him. "These people are very obliging. Very obliging." He reached for two of the leaf-wrapped, steaming objects, handing one to Kirk. "But you probably have a better chance of influencing them if you eat among them. If they can be influenced." He opened the leaf and bit into the yellow vegetable inside.

Kirk looked dubiously at the object in his hand. He hoped it wouldn't make him sick. Pushing back his sense of disgust, he bit into it carefully. The bland, sweetish flavor filled him with delightful surprise. It was rather like a mixture of sweet potato, carrot, and peach synthetics—but the texture and flavor were new and wonderful. Maybe civilization had lost something good when it gave up natural foods. Though, of course, their preparation was time-wasting and inefficient, he reminded himself; and swallowing synthetics required only a momentary break in your work when you were pressed for time. He looked up and found Cortland watching him.

"Pretty different from the food at home, eh?" He had slipped into the Terran language. "Good food and pretty girls." He gestured toward the graceful, half-nude women scattered along the mossy bank. "Everything for the lotus-eaters."

The phrase meant nothing to Kirk.

One of the girls came over to them with a large gourd full of fruit and nuts, and another on which she heaped hot foods from the piles on the ground as she passed. She placed them on the ground beside the two men.

"Yes, everything for the lotus-eaters," Cortland repeated. "Incidentally, I hope you're not under the impression that that girl is naked from the waist up."

Kirk looked at him questioningly.

"Oh, no. She's completely covered. They have taboos about naked breasts, just like we do." He laughed at Kirk's look of mystification. "You notice those strands of shells or woven reeds they wear around their necks?"

Kirk looked around. They all wore them.

"Well, that signifies they are dressed. If you ever see a native girl without one, she'll be terribly embarrassed." He stuck his hand out toward the bowl of hot food. "After you've been here long enough you'll think they're dressed, too."

He laughed, then looked more serious.

"I've been here a long time, getting nowhere," he said, in a different tone. "There are a lot of things that could be done here. I've spent a lot of time thinking about it. But Jerwyn—" He hesitated. "I hope *you* intend to make the name of the Galactic Union mean something here."

Kirk nodded, and Cortland went on. "Jerwyn tried when he first came. But after awhile he seemed to just give up. I couldn't do anything without him backing me, I don't have enough authority." He looked grim as he spoke. "And besides that, it takes more than one good man. Oh, the other GU men here are capable enough—" He glanced toward a group of Terrans sitting nearby. "They'll be over in a little while to speak to you, incidentally; I asked them to hold off for a little, while I briefed you a bit—no sense deluging you with new people while you're trying to eat."

"But to get back," he went on, "they're capable enough, or they were once, anyway, but none of them has the drive and brains it takes to push through a project to develop this planet. They've pretty well given up. Some of them like it here and some of them don't, but they've all stopped trying." A look of contempt crossed his face. "They go through the motions of doing some work to earn their salaries, knock off at noon, and spend their time lying around on the beaches with Nemarian girls. I've done what I could to keep a semblance of discipline, but it's uphill work."

Kirk looked at him steadily. "All that's going to be changed."

Cortland smiled. "Good." Their eyes met, with understanding.

"And I'm very happy to have a man of your caliber with me," Kirk said quietly.

Cortland gave him a long look. "Maybe you've got what it takes. Maybe you have." He nodded slowly. "I should have told you I don't entirely blame the men. This planet's a tough nut to crack." His voice was grim.

Kirk felt a vague uneasiness, but his look stayed determined. "We'll crack it."

"We've been here forty years, and we haven't made a dent. They're funny people, these Nemarians. They're really alien. I've been here fifteen years, and I don't understand them any better than when I came."

"That's quite a statement."

"They're very appealing. Naive.

Childlike. The soul of courtesy—on the surface. But it's deceptive. And you could spend a lifetime trying to find out what's underneath."

A young boy of about twelve came up as he spoke, setting a large gourd full of steaming liquid down beside them with lithe grace, filling smaller cups from it as he did so. Cortland nodded at him, turning again to Kirk as the boy walked away. "Even their children aren't really childlike. Did you see his eyes—makes you damned uncomfortable."

As Kirk started to answer, drumbeats began to fill the air, first softly, then louder. Strange sounds from unfamiliar instruments began to mingle with them, and a clear, high instrument added a melody. The whole effect had an alien, discordant quality for Kirk, but as he listened further he grew intrigued and began to enjoy it; a mood—happy and romantic and energetic, all at once—came through to him from the music.

"The dancing's beginning," Cortland informed him.

Kirk saw young men and women rise by ones and two's and begin swaying and turning their bodies to the music. They all seemed to be doing different things, and yet somehow it made an integrated pattern. To his surprise older people and even young children gradually joined in, and managed not to look inappropriate, although the dance movements were rapid and strenuous.

He noticed a sweet, pungent odor filling his nostrils and realized it came from the steaming bowl beside them. He picked up one of the filled cups and tried it cautiously. It was delightful. He emptied it and poured another.

He felt Cortland's hand on his arm, and looked up to find him grinning at him. "Hey, take it easy with that stuff. That's fermented kara root—the local variety of booze. They can drink quarts of the stuff and be all right; I've never seen one of them really drunk. But you'd better not try it."

Kirk frowned. "Something different in our metabolism? I thought—"

"No, they're quite human," Cortland broke in. "And it's not a matter of immunity. I wondered about it for a long time—and got quite disgracefully drunk a couple of times, keeping up with them, before I figured it out." He sipped at his own cup. "No, the secret of their success is the dancing."

Kirk looked at the light, whirling figures, puzzled.

Cortland smiled at his bewilderment. "It's the exercise. It burns up the alcohol as fast as they drink it. When they're having a real feast, they dance and drink all night, till they collapse from pure exhaustion. They wake up feeling fine—not a sign of a hangover. Of course, tonight they'll only dance for a little while, so they'll only drink a little . . ."

"Sensible, aren't they?" The voice came out of the air behind them, sardonic, feminine. The language was Terran.

Kirk whirled and peered through the dusk, which was gathering

rapidly. He saw a slightly amused pair of brown eyes, brunette hair, and a trim body dressed in chic good taste in expensive Terran clothes.

Cortland stood up. "Mrs. Sherrin . . . our new Planetary Administrator, Cyril Kirk."

She lowered herself to the ground, spreading out a small mat under her as she did so. "Jeannette, if you don't mind." She folded her legs under her carefully. "I don't mean to be disrespectful. But there's such a small number of us here, we need to be friends and stick together."

Cortland, who had been looking away for a moment turned to them. "If you'll excuse me, someone wants to talk to me." Kirk nodded.

"Did I meet your husband this afternoon?" he inquired politely, as Cortland strode off.

"No; I'm a widow."

"Oh, I'm sorry," he murmured.

"Don't be. Not for me, I mean. We'd been coming to a parting of the ways for a long time. But let's not talk about that. How do you like the dancing?"

He looked at the firelit figures, whirling in the growing dusk. "I don't know. I'm sort of overwhelmed by everything. It's all so new. I've heard so many confusing things—"

She nodded. "If you manage to make sense out of the Nemarians, you'll make history. It's better not to worry about it too much. Immerse yourself in their gay, happy life."

"What do you mean?"

She gave him a sharp look. "You'll find out what I mean. Didn't Cortland tell you?"

"What are you talking about?"

"Well, you might as well go in cold at that. Form your own conclusions as you go along. No use giving you prejudices before you start. Maybe you're the man who'll cut the Gordian knot. No use telling you it can't be done."

"What can't be done?"

"We'll all be rooting for you." She poured herself a drink and downed it quickly. "Great stuff, this. Makes you forget the petty annoyances of the garden-spot of the galaxy." She poured another. "To Nemar," she said, lifting it. "Now tell me about Terra. What's been happening back home?"

He could get nothing more out of her.

KIRK STRUGGLED to control his irritation as the last Nemarian on his list walked in, poised and self-confident, casually unconcerned about his lateness. Something would have to be done about their sloppiness and lack of discipline, but now wasn't the time. It wouldn't do to lose his temper at the first official meeting he called.

First he needed to stir some ambition in them, prod them out of their lethargy.

He looked around at the assembled members of his joint Terran-Nemarian staff. The Terran members were making an attempt to stand stiffly at attention, somewhat awkwardly as though they were out of practice. They threw rather disconcerted looks at his

stern, impassive young face. The Nemarians stood casually erect or lounged against the wall.

Once more, he found himself troubled by a faint sense of incongruity. Something about these natives was not primitive. Without saying a word, just by standing and looking at him, they made him feel awkward and insecure.

He straightened his shoulders and tried to make his expression even more stern. He wished he looked older.

A sense of the power of his position overwhelmed him for a moment.

He glanced at the speech he'd prepared, then at the faces before him. Slowly he pushed it aside. Somehow he couldn't use those formal sentences with these people. Diplomatic phrases didn't sound right in Nemarian.

"Good morning," he said abruptly. "I won't waste time on preliminaries." He paused. "I've only been here a day, but so far I've seen very few signs of Terran influence —a more or less obsolete type of ground transportation, a few tools and household conveniences, some art objects. Very little else. I don't fully understand why conditions are so backward here on Nemar when it has been part of the Galactic Union for forty years."

The Terrans in the group stirred uneasily.

"The important thing, however, is that the situation be changed so that Nemar may be given the benefits of galactic culture."

He paused and looked around. The natives were listening courteously and looking slightly bored. The Terrans looked uneasy or embarrassed.

"What prevents this change," he went on, "is the fact that there is nothing of value to export." He leaned forward. "But I don't believe that this or any planet can possess nothing of value. It's simply a matter of finding it. It's a matter of looking into new places, with new techniques, or for new things. If a sufficiently thorough search is made, something will turn up." He tried to ignore the signs of restlessness in his audience.

"I'm going to organize research groups for this purpose immediately. Each of you will head a committee to investigate the possibilities in a particular field—fuels, plants, animal products, etc. You will bring the reports to me, and I will check them and indicate further directions of search."

He continued, outlining his plans in detail, stressing the great advantages to be gained, the wonderful things galactic culture had to offer them—the marvelous machines and labor-saving devices, the rich fabrics and jewels, the vidar entertainments, the whole fabulous technology of a great, advanced civilization. He spoke with enthusiasm, but as he continued, a growing sense of apprehension began to creep into his energetic, determined mood.

Something was wrong with their reactions.

He puzzled over it as he watched them file out of the room after he finished. The voice of one of his younger subordinates drifted back

to him from the hall outside: "Made me homesick for good old Terra. I'd give a lot to see a good vidar-show right now . . . " Cortland pressed his arm lightly as he passed, nodding his approval of the proceedings.

One of the Terrans lingered a moment as the last of the group left. His expression was serious. "I'd like you to know that I'm all for you, sir, and I'm glad to see a man of your stature in the PA's office," he said nervously. "I hope we'll see some changes in the attitude of these Nemarians. I've never liked their attitude." He ran a hand through his sandy-colored hair. "They're funny people, sir. You've only been here a day, and nobody may have warned you yet. They're very courteous, but don't let it fool you. You're going to have trouble with them."

Kirk looked after him as he followed the others out, a sense of confusion and discouragement beginning to settle over him. He wandered slowly into the flowered patio adjoining the office.

The reaction of the Nemarian officials was the strangest. They had shown no open opposition. On the other hand, there had certainly been no cheering. Their attitude had been one of courteous interest, plus some quality he couldn't quite define. He searched for the right word . . . something almost like compassion, as if they were humoring a child's enthusiasm for a naive, impractical project.

He sat down by a clump of blue-green flowers. Maybe he was just nervous because of his inexperience, he thought. He'd had plenty of practice experience (supervised, of course), but it was a different matter managing an isolated planet, completely on his own. And he'd had the bad luck to come after a guy who'd apparently let discipline go to pieces. Maybe it was just the newness of the whole thing. Maybe—

But he knew better.

He had given them a good, efficient, well-organized plan of action. They should have been impressed—impressed and respectful. They should have been grateful he was plunging so enthusiastically into an effort to improve their situation. They should have been excited and hopeful.

There was something strange here, something he didn't understand.

He knew so little about Nemar.

The Terrans in the group had not reacted as they should have, either, he thought. Some of them had shown the sort of reaction he expected, but most of them had remained quiet, too quiet, with a peculiar, tolerant look. As if they knew something he didn't.

There was something disturbing about their whole manner. They were respectful and deferential, but not quite respectful enough. Their attitude was just a shade too casual. Something was wrong.

They even looked different, somehow, from the usual Terran on space duty. The dedicated look was gone and a softness had crept in.

Somehow, the planet had infected them.

THE CLEAR-EYED old Nemarian he'd been talking to had just turned away when she came up.

"Good evening. How do you like bird's eggs a la Nemar?" Jeannette pointed to the shells beside him.

"Hello. They're very good." He motioned her to sit down.

"The youngsters here gather them out of the trees. They make a sport of it." She reached for one from the pile near them and tapped it open. "Sentimental creatures—they always leave one or two so the mother bird won't be unhappy."

Kirk was trying to draw his eyes away from the young Nemarian mother in the group near him who was complacently nursing her baby in full view of everyone. Jeannette stared in the direction of his look.

"Oh, you'll get used to that soon enough."

He wondered if he would. They made a rather touching picture, though, he realized through his embarrassment. There was a lot of tenderness in the woman's gestures.

"They spoil their children rotten."

Kirk looked surprised. "The ones I've seen have been very courteous."

She shrugged. "Oh, they're polite enough. But just try and make them do something they don't want to! They're completely undisciplined—they're fed when they please, they sleep when they please, they do whatever they like. They have schools for them, but it's completely up to the children whether they want to go or not. The parents haven't a thing to say about it. No one ever lays a hand to them, no matter what they do."

"I haven't noticed any quarreling," he said, surprised at his own observation. It was true. He hadn't seen a sign of it, even between the children themselves, though they made enough noise yelling and romping.

"Oh, those tactics fit them perfectly for this society," she said indifferently. "The adults here are just like the children. Nobody ever does any work."

"But that's impossible. The food, the houses, the—"

"Well, I suppose I exaggerated. They do things they don't like once in awhile, if they want the end product enough. But mostly, if they can't make a big game of it, they don't do it. Tomorrow's nut-gathering day," she added irrelevantly.

"Nut-gathering day?"

"Yes. Everybody frolics off into the hills to pick nuts. Like a picnic. That's what I mean—if they didn't consider it a pleasure outing, the nuts could hit them on the head, and they'd never bother to pick them up." She cocked her head at him. "Want to go?"

"Go where? Nut-gathering, you mean?" He laughed. "No, thanks."

"Thought you might like to study the natives in their day-to-day activities, get the real local flavor. You might learn something, at that. Though I guess you'd have a rough time climbing the trees."

"I've had an hour a day at gymnastics for the past three years."

"Yes, you look in good shape." Her glance swept over him approvingly. "But gymnastics and

those trees are two different things. The edible nuts grow on the tall trees, not the short ones, and they sway in the wind. The young men do most of the climbing. They're pretty wonderful physical specimens, I'll say that." She glanced at one of them near by, who was whispering in the ear of a Nemarian girl.

Kirk felt oddly annoyed. They were magnificent physical specimens, he thought. But then so were the women and children. He realized that he hadn't seen a sickly or weak-looking native since he arrived. Even the old people kept their magnificent posture, and managed to make age seem a matter of gathering wisdom instead of collecting infirmities. Weren't they ever sick, he wondered.

"The girls are lovely, too," he reminded her.

"Yes, but try to get near one of them," she flashed back. "They prefer their own." Her eyes narrowed. "They're pleasant people, but they're not pleasant to live with. It gets on your nerves after awhile."

"Why didn't you leave, Jeannette?"

"On the spaceship you came on?"

"Yes. There may not be another for five years."

"That's the big question," she said slowly. "I'm not sure I know the answer. I half intended to leave on the ship when it came. But when it came down to it, I didn't leave." She stared ahead of her. "Something about the place gets you. Maybe it's the life. Maybe you get used to lying around in the sun, and you feel kind of frightened at returning to all the hustle and bustle of Terra. And then, you keep waiting, hoping that—"

"Hoping what?"

For a moment, she looked defenseless and a little hurt. Then the cynical smile came back. "You don't even know what you're hoping for, really," she said lightly.

He knew she was evading him.

He lay in bed later, wondering what Jeannette could have meant, what could account for that brief hurt look.

She was an attractive girl, he thought idly. He wondered why he felt nothing for her, when the native girl aroused in him such an unreasonable longing. It would be a good deal more convenient to fall for Jeannette.

He couldn't afford to get mixed up with his maid.

Remembering her, he suddenly felt his body trembling.

All right, he told himself, so she's an ignorant, backward native on a planet nobody ever heard of. Practically a savage. And even here, she's just a maid, a cleaning woman. Nobody a Planetary Administrator could think about getting mixed up with. But how do they turn them out like that?

How do they turn them out like that, he thought—every movement fluid, every position graceful, every gesture exquisite? How does this nonentity of a planet turn out a girl with the kind of walk the videostars back home practice and work years to approach? With a voice

with that indescribable music and precision? With a flawless skin, radiant hair, a serenity and self-confidence that would make the greatest beauties on Terra envious? With a quiet, careless pride that made him, the new ruler of her planet, awkward and insecure in the presence of his own servant?

Jeannette had been jealous, he realized suddenly. She was jealous of these girls, of their grace, of their radiance. Her cynicism covered a bitter envy.

For a long time he lay there, trying to sleep, haunted by Nanae's luminous eyes.

HE STARTED working the next morning.

There was no use putting it off, he thought. Nemar seemed to act like a drug, gradually depriving you of your drive and ambition. He wasn't going to give it a chance to let its poison seep into him.

He flung himself into his duties as Planetary Administrator with a grim determination. He struggled to organize the affairs of the planet on a more efficient basis. He introduced new methods and techniques. He worked tirelessly, relentlessly, hardly noticing their passage as one day followed another. And every moment he could spare, he devoted to the project for finding something of value to export.

He was going to put this planet on the map. He didn't know how yet, but he was going to do it.

He was going to turn his misfortune into a triumph.

Every hint of a possibility was followed up with eagerness. Every lead, every clue, was the subject of exhaustive study and investigation. His days were a succession of guarded hopes and disappointments, of surges of optimism and long stretches of discouragement. He pushed his wearied body into greater and greater efforts, working unflaggingly through the day and most of the night, spurred by the anger that still burned in him.

The natives, he knew, looked at the light burning late into the night and thought he was a little crazy. He gave up eating with them. It was too easy, there by the river, to drift into staying later and later, drinking their hot wine, chatting, watching the dancing. It was too hard to resist the temptation of midnight swimming later with the young men and women at the nearby beach, with revels and bonfires on the lavender sands afterward.

At the end of two weeks, he sat on his bed, taking stock of what he had accomplished.

It was very little.

And he was very tired.

The tiredness was familiar. It was just like school all over again, he thought, the same long exhausting hours of driving oneself relentlessly. He wondered when he'd be able to relax. He didn't dare relax now. When he had a lead, a definite hope of some kind, he could begin to let up. But not till then. It would be too easy to give up and let go altogether, go the way Jerwyn had gone.

He was beginning to understand

why Jerwyn had given up.

He was beginning to understand a lot of things—the odd, cryptic remarks he had heard about the natives when he first arrived, the mixed admiration and exasperation they seemed to arouse.

He remembered a man named Gandhi from ancient Indian history.

The Nemarians could have given Gandhi lessons.

Working with them was like working with an invisible wall of resistance that weakened here and strengthened there, gave in unexpectedly at one place and resisted implacably at another.

At times his plans were praised; then they were put into effect with an efficiency that astonished him. At other times they were criticized, in a casual, friendly manner that enraged him. Then they were not put into effect at all. When he insisted on obedience, the natives reacted with an attitude of patient tolerance, and did nothing. Most of the time, his orders were received indifferently and carried out with an agonizing slowness.

He pushed and prodded them. He reasoned with them. He shouted at them.

He reaped nothing but frustration.

They didn't hate him. He knew that. He had never seen a trace of malice in their expressions. People smiled at him when he passed, and children came up to tug at his hand and ask him to come to visit their house. There was none of the stony hatred here he knew existed in many places for the all-powerful Galactic Union.

They simply seemed to lack all appreciation of the importance of his position.

Yet they knew, he thought. They knew he had what amounted to almost unlimited power over their planet. They knew a space-fleet that had burned life off the face of entire planets lay at his disposal. They knew he could crush any rebellion instantly.

But, of course, they weren't rebelling, he thought. They weren't even openly uncooperative. There it was again: they weren't even unfriendly; they deluged him with constant invitations.

They knew of his power, but they acted as if it didn't exist.

And he wasn't sure they weren't going to win with him, as they had with Jerwyn. The Galactic Union did not look with approval on any call for aid except in a military crisis; such a request was in effect an affidavit of failure. Besides, he didn't want to complain. He didn't want to set himself against them. He was working for them, not just for himself.

He sighed and began to get ready for bed.

Primitive people had always fought progress and change. They had always clung to old, outworn methods. But there was more to it than that, he thought. Primitive people were usually full of superstitious fear of change, but the Nemarians were not afraid. You couldn't think of them as fearful. They knew the danger—they knew the strength and power that faced them—but they were not afraid.

They didn't even "handle with care".

Where did their courage come from?

Or was it just blind stupidity, he thought, a refusal to look facts in the face, to admit that they were the helpless, backward subjects of an immensely more powerful and more advanced civilization?

He pulled off a shoe absently, and he thought of all the documents and reports he had read about Nemar. Ross had given them to him, and he had searched in them for a clue to help him understand why Ross was sending him here. He had read and reread them, and they had told him little more than Ross himself about Nemar.

There was something peculiar about all those documents, he thought, something odd about the way they were written. They described an undeveloped planet without valuable resources or any kind of technology, in no way out of the ordinary. But between the lines was something that said this planet was out of the ordinary, in spite of the apparent facts. There was the unavoidable feeling that something was left unsaid.

What were they trying to hide? Why hadn't they let him know what he was in for?

Terrans had been coming for forty years. In forty years, they must have learned something. They must have found out something about what made these people the way they were, and about how to deal with them. There should have been warnings and suggestions and at least, if nothing else, descriptions of methods that had been tried and failed. It should all have been there, out in the open; it should have been down in black and white: this is the situation, so far as we know it; these are the problems.

Instead, there had been only routine description, and veiled hints and allusions.

He hadn't been here long, he thought. There was a lot to learn here yet. The other Terrans, the ones who had been here a long time, knew something he didn't know. He could tell from their faces, from their attitude toward him. Cortland didn't know, or he would have told him, and some of the others didn't either, but most of them did. They knew something, but whether it was pleasant or unpleasant knowledge, he couldn't tell. Whatever it was, it affected them. They neglected their work, and they had a different look from the Terrans back home.

Jerwyn had known, and he hadn't told him. He'd said he'd have to live here to find out.

He lay down and stretched out wearily on the bed.

Well, the answers here exist. he thought. Somehow, when he had all the pieces, the jigsaw would have to fit together and make a coherent picture.

Maybe he was looking in the wrong direction.

But he didn't know where to look.

He thought of the day he had just been through, remembering incident after incident when he had had all he could do to keep

his temper under control. Annoyance welled up in him again, as he recalled the series of frustrations, the useless arguments.

His mind was still revolving in an upheaval of confusion and anger as he fell asleep.

IT WAS BARELY past dawn when he awoke. He tried to fall asleep again and failed. Giving up, he dressed and wandered into the other room and the garden beyond. He felt the early morning coolness slipping over his shoulders like a garment, and a sense of the futility of all his struggling filled him. He felt a sudden longing to rest, bask in the sun, live as the natives did in sunny, amiable unconcern.

He stiffened, annoyed at himself. That would mean giving up everything he had worked so hard for all his life, ending up as a lazy failure. He felt a surge of anger inside him toward something he could hardly name.

As he stood there, he saw two Nemarian children, a boy and a girl about five years old, emerge from the trees and begin to pick the shimmering flowers in the garden. Irritation rose hotly in him. He knew that it was out of proportion, built out of a hundred frustrating incidents, but he found he didn't want to control it. He wanted to lash out at somebody.

"Stop stealing my flowers!" he yelled. He was surprised at the harshness of his own voice.

The children did not start fearfully or run, as he expected. They turned and stared at him in an unconcerned manner. "You can't steal flowers," the boy said matter-of-factly. "They don't belong to anybody." He looked at Kirk questioningly. "You didn't plant them, did you?"

Kirk stared at him, speechless.

The boy went on, his tone slightly indignant. "Anyway, it's very rude of you to speak to us like that!"

"They are quite right," an angry voice cut in. Kirk whirled around to find Nanae standing beside him, a basket in her hand. Her hair, radiant in the sunlight, was caught back from her face with a green ribbon, and the brown, gold-flecked eyes, for once, were not soft, but sparkling with anger. "These are my sister's children," she said icily. "They help me gather flowers for your table. Do you think just because they are young you have the right to treat them without respect?"

Staring at her angry face, Kirk felt his own anger ebbing. Into his mind a forgotten incident flashed back from his childhood. Through a door left ajar in a neighboring apartment he had seen a ripe purple fruit imported from a newly discovered planet, and had taken it, curious to find out what unsynthetic food might taste like. He had been discovered, and angrily whipped and locked in his room. He remembered wiping away the tears, alone in his room, smarting with humiliation, and vowing he would show them, he would show them all; he would grow up to be so powerful he could have anything he wanted, and everybody would

be afraid of him.

He looked now at Nanae, who had put an arm around each of the children, cradling them to her. His anger left him completely. Remembering the hurt child he had once been, he found himself longing for the touch of softness and kindness that had never come to him, wishing that even now for a moment he could take the children's place—lay his head against her breast, and feel her fold him in and brush her hand through his hair. He felt something melting inside of him. He could feel the lines of his face softening as he looked at them.

The words stuck, but he forced them out. "I'm sorry."

"It's all right," said the boy.

Leaning down, Kirk put an arm tentatively around each of the children, half-surprised at himself for the gesture. As he felt their small bodies relax against his, it seemed as though some deep inner tension began to flow out of him. He straightened up to find Nanae's glance on him surprisingly warm, almost tender. The approval in her eyes filled him with an unfamiliar kind of happiness.

"You mean Ross spent five years here!" Kirk stared in amazement at Cortland, sitting beside him.

The older officer turned toward him, shifting his position on the grassy ledge to which they had climbed for a look at the surrounding countryside. "Yes, that's right. Ross was straight out of the Institute then, had an A-1 record, and this place had just been discovered. They thought then it might have all sorts of valuable minerals and things. It seemed like a great chance." He shrugged. "As it turned out, of course, there was nothing, but nobody could have known then."

"They know now," Kirk said shortly. He sat looking over the valleys beneath them, silent for a moment. It was discouraging to learn Ross had been here and had not turned up anything: Ross was capable, whatever else he might be, and it would take luck as well as work to succeed where he had failed. And his luck didn't seem to be working out too well, he thought, unhappily.

But this might throw some new light on why he'd been sent here. Maybe Ross's reason for sending the Institute's star pupil had been one he could never have guessed at the time—a gesture of sentimentality. Maybe he wanted to help these people with whom he had spent his first years as an Administrator. Maybe he wanted to make up for his own failure to help lift their living standards.

He turned toward the other man. "Cortland, you say you've done a lot of traveling here. How about the rest of the planet? Are any of the other villages more advanced; are the people any different?"

Cortland laughed shortly. "Thinking of hiring yourself a new native staff? Your impatience about worn out bucking this one? Can't say I blame you, but it's no go. All these villages are the same. One outfit's as bad as the next. Oh, they go in for different things—

one will go all out for sculptures, one will be great on weaving, and another one maybe will grow a special kind of fruit. But the people are all alike—all equally charming and equally impossible. All sweet and friendly on the surface and stubborn as mules underneath. All acting like they know something they're not talking about, like they've got some secret hidden behind those clear, guileless eyes of theirs, some source of strength that makes them able to tell us to go to hell—figuratively, of course—when they don't like our orders." He leaned forward, intently. "I'd give a lot to find out what makes them tick." A look of insecurity, almost of anxiety filled his eyes.

A sudden gust of wind blew a flurry of leaves against Kirk's face. He brushed them away, feeling chilled.

Cortland blinked his eyes, and his face resumed its customary firm look. "But to get back to your question—this village here is supposed to be a center of government. When the Nemarians have to decide on anything that affects the whole planet, the Council in this village does it. The Council has nothing to do with the Galactic Union set-up, of course. It's strictly local, was here before GU discovered this place. You probably studied up on it before you came here."

Kirk nodded. Every planet with an indigenous population had its own political set-up. It was GU policy not to interfere with them, unless their interests clashed in some way.

Cortland went on. "Anyone who likes being in on that sort of thing packs up and emigrates to this village. I don't know whether you've noticed, but these people are pretty casual about moving from one town to another. Anyway, when your would-be politician gets here, the people take him in and watch him awhile, and then, if they like him all right, he's put on the Council. What a system! The truth is, most of the Nemarians consider political work something of a nuisance and would just as soon somebody else did it. They don't care for power the way we do. They look on it as just a heavy responsibility and a burden."

Kirk shifted his leg uncomfortably, feeling a bit self-conscious.

"By the way," Cortland added casually, "how are you getting on with that girl?"

"What girl?"

"That beautiful creature who keeps house for you."

"Nanae?"

"Yes, Nanae. The beauty of the village, the girl who cooks breakfast for you, the head of the Council—"

"What did you say? What was that about the Council?"

"She's head of the Council. Didn't you know?"

"How can she be? She's a maid, she—"

"They don't have maids here. She's being neighborly. And they have sort of a "power corrupts" philosophy here. If you're in a position of authority, you're sort of expected to go out and do humble tasks for people once in awhile, so you won't get to feeling above them.

These people like to keep everyone on the same low—"

"But head of the Council!" Kirk broke in. "She's just a young girl!"

"So what? You're just a young man."

"But—"

"Sorry for the levity. But they let women do everything here. They've got equality of the sexes, old man. They—"

We'd better be starting back," Kirk broke in. He rose to his feet.

He walked silently down the hill beside Cortland, his head whirling.

WHEN THEY reached the village, he left Cortland as quickly as he could and hurried in the direction of his house, incoherent thoughts tumbling over each other in his mind. His face burned as he remembered his condescension, the way he had fought his desire for her by holding her off with curt remarks, indicating with raised eyebrows that he wished no personal conversation. He thought of the occasional glint of amusement he had seen breaking through her serene courtesy.

Why had she kept coming, he wondered.

He saw, with a start, that he was nearly to his house, and he realized he had been hoping Nanae would be there. He had to talk to her, though he had no idea what he would say. As he drew closer, he saw a flicker of motion inside the porch.

He walked forward quietly, and then stood a moment watching her, silently. She had her back to him and was sweeping, as she had been that first time he saw her. Her thighs were wrapped in soft, violet cloth, and a cascade of violet flowers jeweled the lovely hair which rippled and swirled down her back and shoulders. Not a wasted motion, he thought, not a gesture that isn't beautiful. He wondered why he had ever felt sweeping a floor was a menial task. She moved like a great dancer.

She turned as he watched and saw him. "Hello." She smiled, and he felt himself tremble a little.

"I just heard about you—about your being head of the Council," he blurted out. "I want to apologize; I didn't know, I—"

"What difference does it make?" She looked genuinely puzzled.

"I thought you were a maid, a . . . a sort of person who waits on other people, on Terra," he tried to explain. "I didn't know you were just doing this to be kind. I've been very rude. I—I hardly know what to say . . ."

Her eyes widened. "Do you treat people who clean your houses on Terra one way and officials another? You are funny, you Terrans."

"Yes, I guess we are funny." He searched for words. "This is the first time I've really talked to you, isn't it?"

She smiled. "We've just been people in the same room." She spoke gently. "I've seen you were unhappy and confused under that proud manner. I wanted to help, but you weren't ready to let anyone help."

"Why did you keep coming?" He waited anxiously for her answer.

"I liked you." Her glance was half-tender and a little amused. "And I knew you wanted me here, even though you tried not to show it." She paused. "There was another reason, too."

"What was it?"

"You know Marlin Ross lived here once?" He nodded. "Well, there was a note from him on the spaceship you came on. It was addressed to my father, asking him to take care of you. He and Ross were good friends. But my father is dead now, and so the letter was given to me."

"And so you've been taking care of me."

"Yes."

"But I'm sure he didn't mean it literally—taking care of my house and fixing my food and—"

"No, of course not. He just meant to take care of you, give you what you needed. But you needed this. You needed to be waited on a little."

"I guess I did." He could find nothing adequate to say. "Thank you."

There was a moment of silence.

She put aside the broom, which was still poised in one hand. "Let me make you some *jen*. You look tired."

"Thank you." Kirk sat down, with a deep sigh, and leaned back, watching her precise, exquisite movements, as she prepared the hot liquid. He found himself longing to touch her, to reach out and feel the soft, supple flesh, the rippling hair. The sight of her beautiful, firm breasts moving as she worked tortured him. The low necklace that signified they were covered didn't work very well for him, he thought. The flowers twined into it kept falling aside as she bent and turned, tantalizing him more. He pulled his eyes away, and forced himself to think of other things.

She had been very kind, he realized.

She hadn't made him feel like a fool.

HE STOOD waiting for the last of the staff to assemble, letting the feel of triumph course through his body. He felt heady, exultant, a little drunk with joy. This was his moment. This made it all worth while—the long hours, the sleepless nights, the relentless work, the struggle. They would see. They would see he hadn't been driving himself and them for nothing.

He stared down for a moment at the piece of ore which he had brought to show them. It contained unpolished zenites.

Nemar possessed zenites, the fabulous gems valued all over the galaxy for their shimmering, glowing beauty of changing color. Infinitely more precious and rare than diamonds, they served often as a galactic medium of exchange, where weight was important. A handful of them could be worth the whole cargo of a trading ship.

He was not surprised that no one had found the ore deposits before. They were the products of immense and peculiar pressures and no appreciable amount of the ore was ever found except very deep under-

ground. He was very glad now he had specialized in geology and minerology instead of social structure and alien psychology. Otherwise, the geologic reports he had received of the area would have seemed perfectly routine and ordinary. The nagging feeling that there was something a little unusual about the soil analysis would never have come into consciousness as a definite, tremulous hunch.

He could have sent Cortland or one of the others out there with the tools and instruments to dig and make test after test, searching several feet under the surface for the elusive end-trail of a lode. But he had wanted to go himself. He had packed and prepared for the two-day trip, steeling himself against the disappointment he was almost sure to receive.

He looked at the faces of his staff members, all present now, thinking of that first meeting with them and the peculiar reception his plans had received. Now it would be different; now everything he had asked of them was justified.

Drawing a long breath, he began to tell them what had happened.

As he went on, his fiery enthusiasm began to waver. His voice boomed too loudly in the quiet room. Once or twice his words faltered, as he glanced at the dispassionate face of a native. As he finished, he looked around, a sense of dismay and fear creeping into his feeling of triumph.

They had listened too quietly. Only Cortland and a few other Terrans had shown any indication of the excitement and jubilation he expected. The others seemed unimpressed and undisturbed. With a sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach, he called for discussion.

There was a pause. Finally, one of the older Nemarians spoke. "This is a very important matter. If these mines are put into operation, it will affect the lives of everyone on Nemar. I must ask that you give us a little time to think over the implications."

He spoke courteously, but Kirk knew the request would have to be respected. He wanted to shout at them, to ask them to understand this wonderful thing that had happened, to tell them they were going to be rich! But this was the way they did things, and this was the way it would have to be done. He pushed down the impatience burning in him. "Will a day do?"

The Nemarian hesitated a moment, then nodded. "Very well. A day should be enough."

Kirk watched them file out a few minutes later. He wondered where his sense of elation had gone.

Apprehension filled him again as he watched the staff assemble the next morning. The faces of the Nemarian members increased his discomfort. Why didn't they look happier, more excited? Why should they look at him with that unspoken sympathy in their eyes. He was afraid to hear what they had to say.

The native who had spoken the day before moved forward a little. "We're very sorry," he said gently. Kirk felt his heart sinking. "We realize that you have worked very

hard in what you consider to be our interests. We hoped you would come up with something more acceptable than these mines. But we cannot put the plans for mining these gems of yours into operation. We are very sorry," he said again, "but the Council has voted against it."

"The Council!" Kirk stared at him. He fought to control his voice. "You know perfectly well that the power of my command is supreme over any local councils of whatever nature." He stiffened. "But that isn't the point. I guess I haven't made things clear to you somehow. These gems—which you refer to as if they were a child's baubles—can make this insignificant planet a power in the galaxy. They can make the name of Nemar respected throughout the whole Galactic Union. You can trade them." He spoke each word slowly and carefully as if he were explaining to a child. "I'm not having expensive machinery constructed and sending you down hundreds of feet into the ground so that your women can *wear* these jewels. They're extremely pretty, but you probably feel the flowers the girls pluck and put in their hair do just as well for ornaments, and perhaps you're right."

He paused, trying to hold on to his temper. "It will be dark and dusty and uncomfortable down in those mines, as I told you yesterday when you asked about it. It will be hard work, and I know you're not fond of hard work." He could not keep the sarcasm out of his voice. "But I assure you, it will be worth it. A really good specimen of one of these little *gems* (he underlined the word) can buy half the cargo of a spaceship. These jewels can make it worthwhile for the great trading ships to swarm through space out to this isolated fragment of the cosmos. You can acquire the technologies of other planets with them. The evolution of this planet can be speeded up a dozen times. You can become of importance in the scheme of things, leave this backward, primitive way of life behind you."

As he paused for breath, one of the Nemarians spoke quietly. "We don't want to push ahead that fast." He looked at Kirk serenely. "We are interested in improving conditions here, of course. We want to acquire things that will make our lives more pleasant and luxurious. Some day we wish to become a highly developed society, technologically. We wish growth and change—but only very slowly, very carefully. We want to be very, very sure we do not bring in pain when we bring in new pleasures. We need to study each new change to see what it might mean." He paused. "In this case, it took very little study. This mining project would mean the young men would be put to backbreaking labor in underground, unhealthy conditions. There might be circumstances which could justify such a thing. But not for jewels which are intrinsically worthless."

"Worthless! I just told you—"

"I mean they are not valuable in themselves. You can make cheap, synthetic jewels that are almost as beautiful, can't you?"

"Yes, of course, but—"

"So they are only valuable because they are rare, because you *call* them valuable, because they show the people who buy them have enough money to buy them. Wearing them is really a way of saying, I'm rich, to everyone who sees you." He shrugged. "We don't care about that sort of thing here."

Kirk clenched his fists in frustration. Maybe he should have specialized in alien psychology. He made another try. "I know you don't. That's not the point. The point is that you can trade them for other things, for—"

The older native who had announced the Council decision broke in again. "As you said, the mining is very hard, disagreeable work. We feel that when you begin to do disagreeable things for an end that is not valuable in itself, you are beginning to tread a dangerous path. There is no telling where it will end. One such situation leads to another. We might end up cooped up in a room all day, shut away from the sun and air, turning bolts on an assembly line to make machines, as we have heard often happens on Terra." He looked slightly shocked at the picture. "Being surrounded by technical conveniences isn't worth that." He looked at Kirk patiently, as though this should be self-evident. "On Terra and on most of the other planets we have had word of, people seem to spend their time making all kinds of things that have no value in themselves, because they can be sold or traded. Other people spend their time trying to persuade people to buy these useless things. Still other people spend all day making records of how many of these things have been sold. No! This path is not for us." He shook his head. "We don't know how it came about that all these people spend their time at these unpleasant, useless things. They can't have wanted it that way. No human being could want to spend his time doing silly, pointless things. How could you believe in yourself? How could you walk proudly? How could you explain it to your children? We must be careful not to make the mistake of taking the first step in that direction."

Kirk felt hopelessly confused. The reasoning was all wrong, but how could he explain it to them?

He began slowly, from another angle . . .

HE STOOD there for a long time after they had left, trying to control his rage. He had tried everything he could think of. He had argued, reasoned, pleaded with them. He had raged at them, threatened them. Nothing had worked.

The threats had not disturbed them.

He thought of sending out an emergency beam for help. But what would he say when the ship arrived: put these people under martial law—force them to work—it's for their own good? He'd like to see if they could do it, he thought. He'd be betting they couldn't.

He paced up and down, clenching his fists.

He could have all the council members jailed, he thought. Only there weren't any jails on Nemar.

Resentment burned in him. They'd let him work and struggle and slave day and night—for this. He swung his fist into the wall suddenly, with all his might. The pain stung, but he felt a little better.

He looked at the bruised hand, wondering what to do. He was too restless to go home and stay by himself, burning up with unspent rage; and he certainly couldn't go and sit among the natives, listening to them chatter and laugh.

He decided to take a walk.

He heard a rustle of leaves after he had gone a little way and saw a pair of feminine legs through the underbrush. He tried to turn aside. He didn't feel like talking to Jeannette now.

But she had already seen him. "Hello, there," she said, pushing aside a branch from where she was sitting. "Are you taking a walk, too? Thought you were always sticking to the old grindstone this time of day."

"Hello, Jeannette."

"Sit down and rest for a minute. I need some company."

He hesitated, then sat down reluctantly.

"You don't look too cheerful," she said, looking at him. "Something eating you?"

"Just this place," he said wearily. "And the people."

"Yes, it gets you after a while, doesn't it? It's pretty hard to take."

He leaned against a tree and tried to relax.

"It's hard to live with," she went on, "the constant sense of inferiority . . ."

He wondered if he had heard her correctly. "What did you say?"

"I said, it's hard to live with."

"No, no. I meant the last part."

"The constant sense of inferiority. Is something the ma—"

"What are you talking about?"

"I'm talking about the Nemarians, naturally."

"You surely don't consider them superior to us!" he said incredulously.

"Let's not fool ourselves," she said. "There isn't one of them that isn't superior to every Terran here."

He stared at her.

"Of course, we do fool ourselves. I've been doing it a long time. Or trying to, anyway. But I've been sitting here thinking. Among other things, about why I didn't leave on that ship you came on, as I'd planned."

"Why didn't you?" he asked.

The same reason nobody else did, but Jerwyn; and he had to."

"Plenty of them don't like it here," he said. "There's plenty of griping."

"Not really," she said. "It's not really griping. It's just a way of making yourself feel better. Only the ones who haven't been here too long do it, and one or two others who are real old-line die-hards, like your Mr. Cortland.

"Why didn't you leave?"

"Because this is a good deal, of course. The climate's lovely; the scenery's beautiful; life is sort of a perpetual pleasure outing. The only trouble is, you're always on the fringes. You're the kid from across

the tracks."

"I don't understand."

"That wasn't the right phrase, because that implies snobbishness, and they're not snobbish. But they don't quite accept you. They let you hang around; they let you play with them. But you're not really one of them."

"Why on earth should you want to be one of them! They're just a bunch of ignorant primitives, while we come from the highest center of culture civilization has ever attained."

"Yes, yes, I know all that. We're very good at pushing buttons and keeping in the right traffic lanes. But let's look the facts in the face. I've been sitting here making myself look the facts in the face. Have you ever seen one of them act mean?"

"Well, not mean exactly, but—"

"No, you haven't. They can get plenty angry, but they don't get mean. There's a difference."

He said nothing.

"Have you ever seen a child here tear the wings off an insect?" She went on, not waiting for his reply. "No, you haven't. And you won't. Have you ever seen a native with a hard, cruel face? No, again. Have you ever seen one that wasn't gentle with children?"

"I guess not. I never thought about it."

She turned to him with an odd tremulousness in her face, replacing her usual cynical look and slightly raised eyebrows. "They love their children here. They really love them." She looked at him. "They don't *say* they love them and then hit them and humiliate them because they accidentally break the vase Aunt Matilda gave the family for Christmas. Their child's happiness means more to them than any vase, than any material object. They never humiliate their children. That's why they grow up to walk like kings and queens.

"They grow up being loved," she said. "They all love each other. And it isn't because they try. They don't try to be good and nice and love their fellow-men, like we do. It's just something that flows out of them. They're full of warmth inside, and it flows out.

"And something else—" she went on. "Have you ever caught one in a lie?"

"No, but that doesn't mean—"

"People like your Mr. Cortland think they're sly and deceptive because they're always courteous, and still you can't push them around. But he's wrong. They're courteous because they're sorry for us, not because they're afraid of us."

"Sorry for us?"

"Yes, sorry for us. They're sorry for us because we don't know how to enjoy life, because we worry about all sorts of things that don't matter, and knock ourselves out working, and need other people to reassure us of our own worth. Because we have bad tempers and awkward bodies, and we don't have that warmth inside of us flowing out toward other people.

"Even toward us," she said. "They're kind to us. They're tolerant. They want us to be happy. And they do accept us eventually. If we stay here enough years. If we

change. Maybe not quite as one of them, but almost. Sometimes they even marry us."

Kirk shook his head, trying to clear it. "I can't think. I feel confused, I—"

"Still thinking about our great technological achievements? We're pretty cocky about them, aren't we? We come here all set to spread enlightenment among the savages." She shrugged. "They're not impressed with our magic machines. They're not selling their planet for a handful of beads. They took a good look at us and decided to try to keep what they had."

She looked at him steadily. "Personally, I've decided I can do without the vidar-shows. I'm going to stay and try to make the grade here. I'm going to work at becoming a better human being. I'm tired of being flippant and smart and sophisticated. I'd like to be happy." She paused. "Maybe a Nemarian will even fall in love with me eventually and marry me."

"You want to marry one of them!"

"You catch on fast." She blinked. "Sorry. That's not a very good beginning. It's going to take awhile to shake that flippancy." She caught his eyes. "Wouldn't you like to marry Nanae?"

He didn't answer.

She smiled oddly. "Yes, I'd like to marry one of them and have children like theirs." She hesitated. "I said once, they spoil their children rotten. I guess they do in a way, but the children turn out fine. We Terrans just aren't used to children with a sense of their rights. These children overwhelm me." She lowered her eyes. "You know how flippant I am—when I try it in their presence I feel terribly stupid. They make me aware of every affectation; their eyes are so clear—like a deer's—I feel like a fool." She looked at him tremulously, defensively. "Anyway, I said that about their being spoiled, out of envy. When I first saw how their mothers held them—all that tenderness, all that love, all that warmth—I envied them with a terrible bitterness. It wasn't that I had bad parents. Just ordinary ones, trying to do their best and all that."

"Why do you keep talking about children all the time? After all, it's the adults who run things."

"The children are the adults of the future. It's the way they're brought up that makes these people what they are. You and I—all of us from Terra—we've been brought up on a limited, scientifically regimented, controlled amount of love. These natives have something we'll never have. We've got to work and strive for what comes as naturally to them as breathing."

As she spoke, Kirk suddenly remembered the close-packed faces of Terrans speeding by in the opposite direction on the moving sidewalks at home—tense faces, hard faces, resigned faces, sad faces, timid faces, worried faces. Maybe one in fifty serene and self-confident, maybe one in a hundred vibrantly, joyously alive. Maybe. Probably not that many.

He thought of the faces of the Nemarians.

Jeannette was still talking. "They

are what human beings should be," she said slowly. "Somehow they've kept their birthright—the ability to be full of the joy of living whenever they're not in real trouble or sorrow, the ability to be happy just because they're alive. I haven't understood these people because I didn't want to understand them. I didn't want to see that they were better than I am. They're very simple, really; it's we who are complicated and devious."

"Why hasn't anybody ever heard of this place?" Kirk asked.

"It's isolated," she said, "and people don't leave here, once they've seen what's here. They don't write too much, either, because by the time the spaceship arrives again, they understand. They cooperate with the authorities, who are trying to keep this place as much of a secret as possible. Publicize it, and within ten years it would be swarming with wealthy businessmen on vacation and jaded neurotics trying to get away from it all. The Nemarians would be lost in the shuffle."

She was still a moment. "My husband came here to get away from it all. He heard rumors of this place a long way off and traced them. I didn't want to come. I liked cities and night-clubs; I liked being surrounded by amiable, promiscuous men. He dragged me here against my will. Now he's dead, and I'm caught up in his dreams. These people are irresistible; they call out to something basic and deep in you, and you respond to it whether you want to or not. You can't leave this place —unless you have to. like you will."

Kirk stood up abruptly. "Jeannette, do you mind? I feel terribly confused. A lot has happened to me today. I want to walk alone awhile and think things out."

She nodded, with a sudden look of compassion.

HE WALKED away from her slowly, turning half unconsciously in the direction of his house. His mind was a swirl of confusion. He tried to think. He needed to get it all straightened out.

The sense of inferiority, she'd said, the constant sense of inferiority. Let's not fool ourselves, she'd said. There isn't one of them that isn't superior to every Terran here.

And he'd just sat there, stupefied, not denying it.

Because once it was spoken, put into words, it had a certain rightness. A certain obviousness. He'd known it all the time.

He hadn't let himself know it, though. He'd struggled against it, choking it back when it started seeping up from his unconscious. He'd worked so hard and kept himself so busy and exhausted he didn't have time to think. He'd thought so hard about other things he didn't have time to think about the truth.

He'd arrived here looking for the answer to a mystery. Thinking maybe the planet had a secret value, hoping maybe it held an explosive or new weapon that was classified as Super Top Secret, wondering if maybe it weren't really primitive.

And nobody could have told him: it does have a secret value—secret because you're too blind to see it. Nobody could have told him; these people are more advanced than you are. Because advanced meant machines. Advanced didn't mean happy, loving, graceful, courageous, honest.

They couldn't have told him with words if he couldn't see it with his eyes—if he couldn't see that the glowing faces of the natives held a secret worth learning.

The only secret that really mattered.

How to be happy.

Nanae was there waiting when he reached the house, as though she had been expecting him.

She looked at him silently, then smiled. "You're not angry?"

"Angry?"

"About the Council decision."

"Oh—oh, I was. I'm all mixed up now. I've been doing some thinking."

She looked at him intently, then nodded slowly. "Do you know why you were sent here?" she asked.

"I'm just beginning to get a glimmering of it."

"Did you know we are the only planet yet discovered whose people have never known war?"

"No, I didn't know."

"Ross came to Nemar when the Galactic Union first discovered it. He didn't find any of the things he was looking for, but he did discover something else, a way of life." She paused. "Have you ever gone over his record?"

"No."

"You should, sometime. He's done a great deal of good." She looked at him steadily, her eyes clear and soft. "He keeps sending the very best of the Institute graduates here, hoping they'll study our society and work out some theories about what makes us the way we are. He hopes some of the happiness here can be transplanted.

"We don't know why we're the way we are. We don't even know how it's possible to be any other way, and we don't understand why anyone should be willing to fight wars, or why they should lie or hit their children or make long speeches that don't say anything."

Kirk was silent.

"We're inside the problem," she said. "We can't see ourselves from the outside."

Kirk spoke very slowly, thinking it out. "You mean, Ross sent me here to study you, to try to find out what factors are involved in—"

"Yes. He sent you here to learn."

He was quiet, digesting that.

"One day you'll be in Ross's place," she said.

He accepted the words quietly, knowing it was true.

Yesterday, that would have seemed like the most desirable thing in the universe, the height of happiness.

It seemed like a long time ago.

It meant nothing now but a heavy burden.

He sat thinking of Nanae after she had gone, of how he had longed to put his arms around her and draw her to him, kiss the soft mouth, run his hands through the long, glowing strands of hair.

He'd have to work first, work at changing himself, becoming the kind of person she could love. She would love differently and more deeply than the girls he had known. She would love with a passion and tenderness they'd never be capable of. That kind of love would have to be earned.

He wondered whether she'd be willing to go to Terra with him.

He got up and moved toward the bedroom. Tomorrow was going to be a busy day—changing things, making apologies. Feasting. Dancing. Going midnight swimming.

He realized suddenly that he was very happy. • • •

WORTH CITING

RECENT STATISTICS compiled by the United States Department of Labor have shown that it costs American industry about $2,500,000,000 each year for research which enables it to give you deadlier insecticides, better weed killers, more efficient and smoother-riding cars, more rugged home appliances, better surgical instruments, more sensitive radio and television sets and the host of other newer developments that are easing the burden of life for the men and women of today. Add to this another $1,250,000,000 for research in the development of better planes for your son in the Air Force, or warmer uniforms for the boys in the Army, or better life rafts for the sailor and his buddies, or safer landing craft for the Marines. The bill adds up to the staggering total of $3,750,000,000 a year just to keep American life *improving!*

It takes 96,000 research engineers and scientists laboring over test tubes and slide rules, blue prints and calculators, weather instruments and cyclotrons to produce these gimmicks and gadgets. And industry gets the utmost from these researchers by supplying them with a staff of technicians. About 143,000 supporting workers are busily engaged in twirling knobs, taking hourly readings and running series of long, routine tests. In short, research in this country is a big and costly business. And the organizational technique is such that it can help the country over industrial humps and bottlenecks created by war, famine, plague and cataclysm.

Our Citation this month goes to the researchers, those men and women of American industry, who conceive and make the machines and instruments and products that make the standard of living in this country the finest in the world.

BY WILLARD MARSH

They were used to retarded life forms, but this was the worst.

Yet it is a missionary's duty to bring light where there is none,

for who can tell what devious forms evolution might take?

the ethicators

THE MISSIONARIES came out of the planetary system of a star they didn't call Antares. They called it, naturally enough, The Sun—just as home was Earth, Terra, or simply The World. And naturally enough, being the ascendant animal on Earth, they called themselves human beings. They were looking for extraterrestrial souls to save.

They had no real hope of finding humans like themselves in this wonderously diversified universe. But it wasn't against all probability that, in their rumaging, there might not be a humanoid species to whom they could reach down a helping paw; some emergent cousin with at least a rudimentary symmetry from snout to tail, and hence a rudimentary soul.

The ship they chose was a compact scout, vaguely resembling the outside of an orange crate—except that they had no concept of an orange crate and, being a tesseract, it had no particular outside. It was simply an expanding cube (and as such, quite roomy) whose "interior" was always paralleling its "exterior" (or attempting to), in ac-

cordance with all the well-known, basic and irrefutable laws on the subject.

A number of its sides occupied the same place at the same time, giving a hypothetical spectator the illusion of looking down merging sets of railway tracks. This, in fact, was its precise method of locomotion. The inner cube was always having to catch up, caboose-fashion, with the outer one in time (or space, depending on one's perspective). And whenever it had done so, it would have arrived with itself—at approximately wherever in the space-time continuum it had been pointed.

When they felt the jar of the settling geodesics, the crew crowded at the forward visiplate to see where they were. It was the outskirts of a G type star system. Silently they watched the innermost planet float past, scorched and craggy, its sunward side seeming about to relapse to a molten state.

The Bosun-Colonel turned to the Conductor. "A bit of a disappointment I'm afraid, sir. Surely with all that heat . . .?"

"Steady, lad. The last wicket's not been bowled." The Conductor's whiskers quivered in amusement at his next-in-command's impetuosity. "You'll notice that we're dropping downward. If the temperature accordingly continues dropping—"

He couldn't shrug, he wasn't physiologically capable of it, but it was apparent that he felt they'd soon reach a planet whose climate could support intelligent life.

If the Bosun-Colonel had any ideas that such directions as up and down were meaningless in space, he kept them to himself. As the second planet from its sun hove into view, he switched on the magniscan eagerly.

"I say, this is more like it. Clouds and all that sort of thing. Should we have a go at it, sir?"

The Conductor yawned. "Too bloody cloudy for my taste. Too equivocal. Let's push on," he said languidly. "I have a hunch the third planet might be just our dish of tea."

Quelling his disappointment, the Bosun-Colonel waited for the third planet to swim into being. And when it did, blooming like an orchid in all its greens and moistnesses, he could scarcely contain his excitement.

"Why, it looks just like Earth," he marveled. "Gad, sir, what a master stroke of navigation. How did you realize this would be it?"

"Oh, I don't know," the Conductor said modestly. "Things usually have a habit of occurring in threes. I'm quite a student of numerology, you know." Then he remembered the Mission and drew himself erect on all his legs. "You may prepare for landing, Mister," he ordered crisply.

The Bosun-Colonel shifted over to manual and busied himself at the helm, luffing the square craft down the troughs of air. Gliding over the vast tropical oceans, he put down at a large land mass above a shallow warm sea, twenty-five degrees below the northern pole.

Too numbed for comment, the crew stared out at the alien vista.

They'd heard of retarded life forms from other Missionary expeditions—of planets where the inhabitants, in extreme emergency, had been known to commit murder. But this was surely the worst, the most vicious imaginable in the galaxy.

Here, with life freshly up from the sea, freshly launched on the long climb to maturity and self-realization—was nothing but horror. With so lush a vegetation, so easily capable of supporting them side by side in abundance, the monsters were actually feeding on each other. Great lumbering beasts they were with their bristling hides and huge tails, charging between the giant tree ferns; gouging living chunks from one another while razor-toothed birds with scaly wings flapped overhead, screaming for the remnants. As the sounds of carnage came through the audio ports, the youngest Oarsman keeled over in a faint.

Even the Conductor was visibly shaken. The Bosun-Colonel turned to him with a sick expression.

"Surely it's a lost cause, Skipper. Life like this will never have a soul worth saving."

"Not in its present stage," the Old Man was forced to agree. "Still, one never knows the devious paths that evolution takes." He considered the scene for a thoughtful, shuddering interval. "Perhaps in several thousand millenniums . . ."

The Bosun-Colonel tried to visualize the possibility of Ethical Life ever materializing through these swamp mists, but the logic against it was too insurmountable for the imagination.

"Even so," he conceded, "granting the impossible—whatever shape it took, the only worthwhile species would still be . . ." He couldn't bring himself to say it.

"Meat-eaters," the Conductor supplied grimly.

On hearing this, the Oarsman who had just revived promptly fainted again.

"It's too deep in the genes," the Conductor continued, "too far advanced for us to tamper with. All we can hope to do is modify their moral outlook. So that by the time they achieve star travel, they'll at least have a basic sense of Fair Play."

Sighing, bowed by responsibilities

incommensurate with his chronological youth, he gave the order wearily. It was snapped down the chain of command to the Senior Yardbird:

"All paws stand by to lower the Ethics Ray! Step lively, lads—bugger off, now . . ."

There was a din of activity as the outer locks were opened and the bulky mechanism was shipped over the side. It squatted on a cleared rise of ground in all its complex, softly ticking majesty, waiting for the First Human to pad within range of its shedding Grace and Uplift. The work party scrambled back to the ship, anxious to be off this sinister terrain. Once more the crew gathered at the visiplate as the planet fell away beneath them, the Ethics Ray winking in the day's last light like a cornerstone. Or perhaps a tambourine . . .

NIGHT CLOSED down on the raw chaotic world, huge beasts closed in on the strange star-fallen souvenir. They snuffled over it; then enraged at discovering it was nothing they could fill their clamoring mindless stomachs with, attempted to wreck it. They were unsuccessful, for the Machine had been given an extra heavy coat of shellac and things to withstand such monkeyshines. And the Machine, in its own finely calibrated way, ignored its harassers, for they had no resemblance to the Life it had been tuned to influence.

Days lengthened into decades, eons. The seas came shouldering in to stand towers tall above the Ethics Ray, lost in the far ooze below. Then even the seas receded, and the mountains buckled upward in their place, their arrogant stone faces staring changelessly across the epochs. Until they too were whittled down by erosion. The ice caps crept down, crackling and grinding the valleys. The ground stretched and tossed like a restless sleeper, settled, and the Ethics Ray was brought to light once more.

As it always had, it continued beaming its particular signal, on a cosmic ray carrier modulated by a pulse a particular number of angstroms below infrared. The beasts that blundered within its field were entirely different now, but they still weren't the Right Ones. Among them were some shambling pale bipeds, dressed in skins of other beasts, who clucked over its gleaming exterior and tried to chip it away for spearheads. In this of course they were unsuccessful.

And then one day the First Human wandered by, paused square in the path of the beam. His physiology was only approximate, his I.Q. was regrettably low—but he was Pre-Moral Life, such as it was, on this planet.

The Ethics Ray made the necessary frequency adjustments, tripped on full force. The Primitive froze under the bombardment, its germ plasm shifting in the most minute and subtle dimensions. Then, its mission fulfilled, the Ethics Ray collapsed into heavy molecules and sank into the ground. The first convert raced away in fright, having no idea what had hap-

pened. Neither did his billion sons and daughters . . .

BACK ON the home base, the Conductor reported in at the Ethication of Primitive Planets office. It was a magnificently imposing building, as befitting the moral seat of the universe. And the Overseer was an equally imposing human with ears greyed by service. His congratulations were unreserved.

"A splendid mission, lad," he said, "and I don't mind suggesting —strictly entre nous—that it could jolly well result in a Fleet Conductorship for you."

The Conductor was overwhelmed.

"Now just let me jot down the essentials while they're still fresh in mind," he continued, pawing through a desk drawer. "Botheration! I seem to have traded the last of my styluses. Do you happen to have one on you?"

"With pleasure." The Conductor handed over his monogrammed gold stylus, receiving in exchange a toy silencemaker.

"My youngster traded it to me this morning," the Overseer chuckled.

He wrote rapidly for several moments, then gave the stylus back. The Conductor found a weathered paper-weight in his rear pocket, which he traded him for it. It looked like it might have come from this very desk at one time. Then with a smart salute, he about-faced.

On the way out, a pair of secretaries paused in their trading of a pelt brush for a tail-curler to watch him admiringly. As well they might. Fleet Conductor!

The future Fleet Conductor of a solar system he would never think of calling Antares paused at the door. In its polished panel he regarded himself with due appreciation. He had sown the seeds of civilization on a far-flung planet where, countless light years from now, they would flower to maturity. Not among the strongest or cleverest species, to be sure, but among those most worthy of applying First Principles, the moral law of give and take.

Among those remote cousins of the Conductor himself—who under no circumstances would ever think of himself as resembling a rather oversized trader rat. • • •

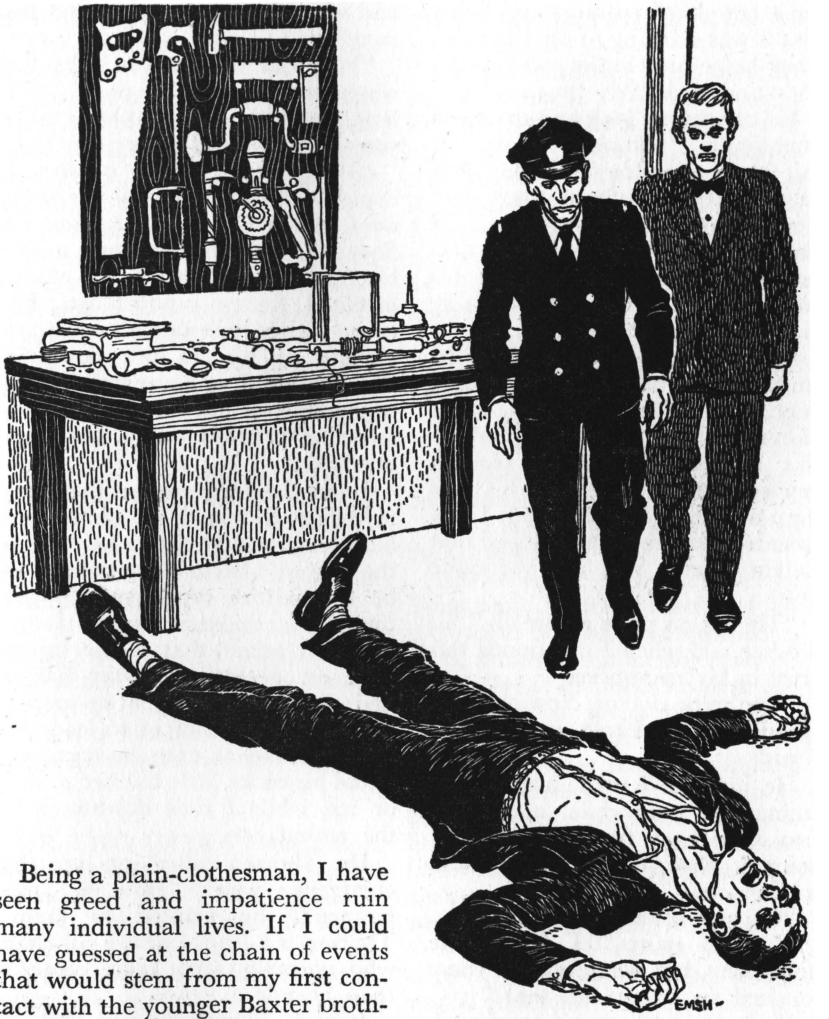
BLEEDBACK

BY WINSTON MARKS

It was just a harmless, though amazing, kid's toy that sold for less than a dollar. Yet it plunged the entire nation into a nightmare of mystery and chaos . . .

THE THING is over now, but I can't see a Teddy bear or a set of blocks in a department store window without shuddering. I'm thankful I'm a bachelor and have no children around to remind me of the utterly insane nightmare that a child's toy plunged our country into—the millions of people who died in agony—the total disruption and near dissolution of our nation.

And yet, as the United States tottered on the verge of complete chaos, it was, ironically, another child's toy that saved us. A simple, ordinary, every-day toy for tots stopped the "fever", halted the carnage that was tearing our flesh and eyes and viscera into shreds. With most the scientists in the world working for an emergency solution, they could come up with no better answer than a toy that'd been around for generations before the "Mystery i-Gun" was even conceived.



Illustrated by Ed Emsh

Being a plain-clothesman, I have seen greed and impatience ruin many individual lives. If I could have guessed at the chain of events that would stem from my first contact with the younger Baxter brother, I would have put a bullet through his head in cold blood and cheerfully faced the gas chamber.

Instead I took off my hat and followed him through the substantial old house to a moderately large room in the rear where, I'd been told, we would find a body.

Leo Baxter was a little guy about five-foot six, like me but with a better build. His size was important

for a couple of reasons, one being that it was startling to say the least, when he pointed to the giant on the floor and said, "My brother."

He caught my look and shrugged impatiently. "I know, I know, but this is no time for Mutt and Jeff gags. Calvin has been murdered. Now get with it, Lieutenant!" If Calvin *was* his brother, Leo's agitation was understandable, but his voice had a flat note of practicality in it that I didn't like.

As I looked down at the sprawled length of the big man on the tiled floor, the Mutt and Jeff angle didn't fit at all. David and Goliath was a better bet. This Goliath seemed also to have met his fate from a hole in the forehead. I say, "seemed," because it developed that Calvin Baxter was not yet quite dead.

"There's no pulse or breath," his brother said when I mentioned this error in his assumption.

"You're no doctor. Now call that ambulance like I told you. Jump!" I said.

He jumped. I made a quick examination, meanwhile, and when Leo came back from the phone I pointed. "See, the blood. It's still coming out."

"Corpses bleed, don't they?"

"Not in spurts," I said. "The hole's tiny, but whatever's in there touched an artery. See that?"

He looked and seemed convinced. "The ambulance will be here. Anything else I should do?"

"Yes. Nothing. Don't touch a thing in this room . . . or did you already?"

"Just Calvin. I heard him fall, and when I came in he was on his face."

"Why did you ask for homicide when you called the police? Or let's put it this way: What makes you think it wasn't an accident?"

"Two reasons. First, because I couldn't see any cause of the accident. When I turned him over the floor was smooth and clean under his forehead except for the smear of blood. Reason number two: Because Calvin just doesn't have accidents. All his life he's moved in slow motion. I've never known him to stumble, or cut himself, or drop anything or even bump into anyone."

I was checking around the room myself, and I had to admit that both reasons might be valid. A man the size of Calvin wasn't likely to be the skittish type. And by the time the ambulance arrived I was ready to admit that if the injury were an accident, Calvin Baxter had contrived to conceal its source.

It took several of us to load the unconscious man onto the stretcher. I told his cocky little brother to stay on ice, while I rode downtown in the ambulance.

Dr. Thorsen called me into the emergency ward. "How did this happen?" he wanted to know. Thorsen is a lean, learned old chap who normally gives more answers than he asks.

I said, "Don't know, Doc. I found him in a sort of home workshop. No power tools, nothing dangerous in sight. The bench at one end had a couple of little gadgets on it—looked sort of electrical. Some wire, soldering iron, books, a

few rough circuit drawings."

"The gadgets. What did they look like?"

I thought back and realized that what I had to describe would sound a little peculiar. "Sort of like flashlights with a pistol grip . . . and no lens where the light should come out. Just blunt, flat ends.

Thorsen shrugged. "Then I don't know. I expected you to report some kind of a blast or explosion."

"No sign of one."

"All right, then what else but a flying particle could drill a hole in a man's forehead the diameter of a piece of 16-gauge wire?"

"What do the x-rays show?"

"We'll know in a minute. What about the murder-attempt angle?"

I said that I had nothing to go on yet. That was the whole truth and the final truth!

When Doc's x-rays revealed *nothing but a blood clot* deep in the brain at the end of the tiny tunnel piercing the skull, I was left without even a "modus operandi", let alone a substantial suspect.

FOR TWO DAYS I investigated brother Leo, and when I wasn't investigating him I was questioning him. The small town in Minnesota where he claimed he and his brother were born had been the county seat, and the whole shivaree had burned up in a prairie fire years ago, courthouse, birth records and all. With no other living relatives, I had to depend on people who had known both men. From those whom I questioned, I ascertained that they had been passing for brothers, at least, for some time.

On the third day Leo's patience began to crack. "You keep asking me the same, stupid questions over and over. I tell you, I'm a mechanical engineer. My brother was a mathematician. We're both single. I make enough money in the construction game to support both of us. What's so suspicious about humoring my brother's research?"

"Among other things," I said, "is your ignorance of what he was doing."

"For the fiftieth time I tell you I *didn't* know!" His exasperation was mounting to the pitch I had been awaiting.

"You used the past tense. You do know now?"

He wheeled and crossed the living room, poured himself a drink of straight bourbon and downed it. "Yes, I have a notion now, but it's none of your damned business. His ideas may be patentable."

I said slowly and quietly, "Now I'll tell you what I've been waiting for. I've been waiting for you to offer me information about the two little gadgets that you removed from your brother's work-bench—against my explicit orders not to touch anything. Until you produce those items and explain your actions I'll be around here asking stupid questions. From now on, understand?"

"Damn cops!" He threw the shot glass to the floor and glared at me for a long minute. "All right, come with me."

We went into a little library. He took two volumes from a high shelf

and from the recess snatched the two gadgets with the pistol grips.

From a table drawer, which he unlocked with a key from his pocket, he took some drawings that looked like the ones that had disappeared from his brother's little work-shop.

"Calvin developed a new effect by applying one of his esoteric mathematical symbols to a simple electronic circuit," Leo began, in his surly tone. He pointed at the margin of the circuit drawing. There were jottings of algebraic formulae in which the quantity "i" appeared prominently. He pointed this out to me and continued, "Being a cop you wouldn't understand, but this symbol stands for an imaginary number, the square root of a minus one."

This rang a bell from away back in my own college math. I said, "Yeah, I think I remember. It's some sort of operational factor in polar coordinates. No real meaning in itself, but—"

"Well! An educated cop! That's right, except that Calvin managed to give this symbol an actual, functional application. I was telling the truth when I said I didn't know what he was doing. I still don't understand it, and I've been losing sleep over these formulae."

"Then why not take it to the university and let the professors—"

"Because," he interrupted, "whether I understand it or not, Calvin's gadget, happens to work. Watch this."

He picked an ordinary paper clip from the debris of pencils, stamps and rubber bands from the top desk drawers, touched it to the "muzzle" end of the gadget where it stuck as if magnetized. "Now keep your eyes on the paper clip," he ordered.

His forefinger pressed a button in the pistol grip, and without click, snap, buzz or murmur, *the paper clip disappeared.*

Leo stared at me, as thoughts of "hyper-space", fourth-dimension and space-warps flitted through my mind. It wasn't a Buck Roger's atomic disintegrator, because there was no heat, flash or sound. The clip was suddenly elsewhere.

"And I suppose the other gadget brings it back," I said.

"That's what I thought, but I can't make it work. I suppose my brother could, if he were here."

He tossed the thing to me, pointed at the little box of paper clips in the drawer and said, "Have fun."

I did, for about five minutes. Eight paper clips later I was convinced that whatever else it might be, the gadget was no potential murder weapon. The clips disappeared, totally. You could pass your hand through the point of departure without a tingle of sensation.

Leo briefed me further. The thing worked only on metallic conductors. It was harmless to human flesh and other organic matter. Then he removed the cover that ran the length of the rather crude, hand-carved, wooden barrel. From front to back, were: One pen-light cell, a lumpy-looking coil of wire hand-wound on a spindle-shaped iron core, and a short, cylindrical bar-magnet.

"In mass production," he said, "About 40 cents worth of material and maybe 50 cents worth of labor! Do you see why I wanted to keep it a secret until I could patent it?"

"No!" I said flatly. "Unless you consider a paper-clip disposal unit an item of commercial importance."

"But it's a whole new scientific principle—the rotation of matter completely out of our space-time continuum!"

"That much I grasp, but what good is it except as a demonstration of a piece of pure scientific research?"

"Good Lord, man, have you no imagination?"

"Okay, okay! Get rich," I said and slammed the front door behind me as I stomped out. I had been so certain that the missing gadgets would give me a motive for the attack on Leo's brother, or at least the method of inflicting the fantastic wound, that I was about ready to turn in my badge in frustration. All I could pin on Leo was a desire to cash in on his brother's gimmick—which, presumably, he could have done whether Calvin lived or died.

Suppose, I mused on my way back to the station, that Calvin had refused to let Leo commercialize on his discovery? Perhaps Calvin was preparing a paper for publication in scientific circles. Maybe cool-headed little Leo tried to knock off his brother to keep the secret in the family until it could be turned to a selfish dollar.

All right, suppose a jury would accept such an impalpable theory as a motive, then what? No murder weapon. No witnesses. Not even a genuine murder yet, because Calvin was still alive.

Yes, old Doc Thorsen had kept the mathematician alive somehow. The elder Baxter lay on his back across two, white iron beds pushed together in the City Hospital, and Thorsen came in to report to me.

"The clot seems to be absorbing better than I expected, but it's doubtful that we could operate to remove the paralyzing pressure. The puncture is deep into the brain tissue, and he's too nearly gone to survive such an ordeal."

"Any chance that he might recover consciousness?"

"Pretty remote," Thorsen told me. "We'll keep a special nurse with him as you ordered, just in case he does."

I left Calvin Baxter pale and motionless as some great statue supine amid the tangle of plasma, glucose and saline hoses, under his transparent oxygen tent. The wound that had laid him low was no more than a dot of dried blood on his massive forehead.

Until his death, his file would remain under unsolved crimes. In my own mind I was no longer sure of anything, except that if there was a nickel in Calvin Baxter's discovery, his mercenary brother would wring it out.

And he did. Even before Calvin died.

Some seven weeks later Leo marketed the "MYSTERY i-GUN" as a combined, toy, trick and puzzle, and it set the whole damned world on its ear!

I located Leo Baxter in his new suite of offices on the 34th floor of the State Building. He peeled back his lips in a sneery grin. "I thought you'd be showing up."

He waved away his male secretary who was still clinging to my arm trying to tow me back to the reception room. I said, "I kept your secret, then you pull an irresponsible thing like this! A kid's toy! Good Lord, man, that device might be dangerous!"

"I appreciate your professional ethics, Lieutenant. I've applied for a patent, so you can tell all your friends now. And stop worrying. The "Mystery i-Gun" is quite harmless. I experimented a week before going into production."

"A week?" I could scarcely believe my ears. "What happens when some kid jams his gun against a light-pole or an automobile . . . or the night lock on the First National Bank?"

"Nothing. It punches no holes. A large metallic object simply dissipates the field. The largest object it will handle is about a half-inch steel screw—"

"Baxter, your brother's accident is connected to that device—and you turn it loose as a novelty!"

"Nonsense. It's safe as a knothole. It simply makes things disappear. Little things, like tacks, ball bearing, old rusty nuts and bolts—"

"And dimes and mamma's earrings and the front door key," I snapped back. "Until you know how to bring those things back you had no right to market that rig."

He laid his small hands before him on the desk. "Lieutenant, I'm sick of working for other people. This is my chance to get a bankroll to back my own contracting firm. Yes, I financed Calvin's research because he's brilliant, and I knew he'd come up with something some day. Now he's done it, and I'm merely protecting his interests and my investment in him. See here." He shoved some documents at me. There was the patent application, a declaration of partnership for purposes of marketing the Mystery i-Gun, and the articles of incorporation of the Baxter Construction Company.

"Okay," I said. "So you've cut your brother in on all this. Who's his beneficiary when he dies?"

"Still looking for a motive for murder, aren't you, Lieutenant?"

I didn't admit it to him, but he was right. Calvin's "accident" seemed too convenient to the purposes of his practical little brother, Leo. What's more, the lab and medical men on the force were just as mystified today as they were when we brought Calvin in with the needle-thin hole in his skull. Old Doc Thorsen had admitted to me that he could name no implement—not even a surgical instrument—that could have inflicted such a narrow gauge hole. It had to be caused by a fragment, *but there was no fragment in the brain!*

"Leo," I said, "I know you consider this case closed, but I want you to do me a favor. I want to go over your brother's lab once more."

"But you've—" He stopped, shrugged and nodded his head. "Okay. I'm interested in finding out what hurt Cal, as much as you

are. I'll tell you, I'm busy the rest of this week, but I'll meet you at the old house next Monday evening at eight. You see, I closed up the place and moved downtown."

I agreed, with the feeling that he was deliberately making me wait just to annoy me. Leo Baxter was an important man now, a man graciously willing to cooperate with the police—at his own convenience. I stood up. "Your brother has been calling your name. I suppose they told you that?"

"They phoned. Doctor said it was just mutterings."

"You haven't even been to see him?"

"What's the use? He wouldn't recognize me."

Well, it wasn't any of my business, really, but it's funny how you get to hate a man for his attitude. I don't know what I expected to find by going over that lab-workshop again, but whatever it was, I hoped it would incriminate Leo. On the face of it he was guilty of nothing more than a premature marketing of a new device, but the way he was cashing in on Calvin's genius certainly did the dying man no honor.

Cash in was right! The toys sold like bubble-gum. The papers, radio, and TV picked up the sensational gimmick and gave it a billion bucks worth of free advertising. And the profitable part of it was that the i-Gun was so simple to mass-produce that Leo's fifteen contracting manufacturers were almost able to keep up with the astronomical demand.

Before that week was up, the Wall Street Journal estimated there were already more i-Guns in the hands of the juvenile public than all the yo-yos ever produced. They retailed at eighty-five cents, made of plastic with a hole in the back where you could change the penlight battery. They sold, all right. They sold in drugstores and toy stores and dime stores and department stores. Toddler's, tykes and teen-agers went for them. And adults. Maybe 30 million of them were in the hands of the public before I saw Leo Baxter next.

Which was almost two weeks instead of the one week he had promised.

I finally got an appointment. "Sorry," he said. "I've been tied up with government people all week. The A. E. C. tried to get me in trouble."

I said, "Skip it. You promised for tonight. Now let's go."

"I can't possibly make it tonight." He pointed at his desk. It was littered with correspondence, orders and contracts. "Give me one more week, Lieutenant."

It was an order, not a request.

There was nothing to do but wait the third week. It was not, however, uneventful. It was the week the accidents began to happen.

At 4:14 of a Tuesday afternoon, a man was admitted to a local hospital with a perforated belly. Straight through, hide, guts and liver. A newsman got hold of it and wrote a scare story about an attack with a pellet gun that must shoot needles.

Before the edition was sold out

the hospitals were loaded with emergency cases. People with holes in them. Tiny little holes, mostly, but holes that went right through them. Then dogs. Then automobiles, trucks and busses. Holes in their radiators. Holes in windshields that always went straight back, through seats and sometimes passengers—right out through the rear end.

THE CITY panicked. Then the county, state and nation. In two days, yes, the whole nation!

At first everyone thought we were being attacked by some secret weapon. By some miracle of statesmanship, the President of the United States prevented a "massive retaliation" attack by the army upon our most likely enemy—long enough for Intelligence to affirm that no enemy on Earth was that mad at us.

Then all thoughts turned to extra-terrestrial space. A bombardment from the sky? It was ridiculous to even consider, because none of the holes that appeared in people and things came from above. The holes were almost entirely in the horizontal plane.

Strangely enough during those first two days, nobody thought of the Mystery i-Gun. No one but me.

Leo Baxter had disappeared into thin air, as completely as if he'd turned to metal and crawled into the muzzle of one of his own "toys".

I had every known place he frequented staked out with a pair of plain-clothesmen, but it was the morning of the second day of accidents before I got a radio call from the squad car stationed near the old Baxter home.

Leo had come home at last. He was a sad looking midget when I got there. Obviously no sleep, unshaven, deep hollows under his eyes.

"I figured you'd be waiting for me, Lieutenant, but you know what?" he demanded. "I don't give a damn! I kept waiting for them to figure out the answer to these accidents and string me up. How come you didn't tell anybody?"

I said, "Shut up and let's go inside."

Sure, I figured the i-Gun was the cause, but the last thing I wanted was for Leo to get strung up before I laid my hands on that other device—the one that wouldn't work. I wanted that rig and all the plans and formulae, and Leo undoubtedly had them hidden deeper than Fort Knox.

He unlocked the door, and I told the others to wait outside. We went into the hall and closed the door behind us. "So your little toy was harmless?" I said, grabbing him by his wrinkled lapels. "So it just shoots stuff off into another dimension?"

He stared at me, his eyes half glazed. "I don't—know. That's what the notes said." He sank into a chair. "I guess it doesn't, though. It must ball up the metal object and shoot it out—infinite velocity—reduced in size—infinite mass—infinite inertia—keeps circling the globe like—like a satellite. Goes

right through anything it hits. Goes on and on. Forever. Little bullets. Right through steel. Right through flesh and bones—"

"Simmer down," I said. "You've been reading the papers. I've been checking the facts."

"What do you mean?"

"That you were right the first time. It does shoot metal objects into another dimension. But *they don't stay there.* They ooze back. Slowly. Real slow, so the first edge or corner that sticks back into our dimension is only a few millionths of an inch thick. Then a few ten-thousandths, then a few thousandths—and that's about the time they start making holes in people and objects *that run into them.*"

"Run into them?"

"Certainly. There are no holes in buildings or other stationary objects. The holes are all horizontal. Now look, Baxter, our only chance is to work on that other device and your brother's notes, and maybe we can develop an extractor of some kind."

"No. No, you don't understand," he said shaking his head like a sleep-walker. "It balls up the metal. Shoots it out. Infinite mass. Infinite veloc—"

"Knock off that nonsense, and tell me where those plans are."

"Trying to steal my brother's other invention, are you? It's not patented yet. You know that, don't you? Couldn't patent it because I can't make it work yet. You're smart, but you won't get it from me—"

I had a fair hold on him, but the pure insanity that flared in his eyes shocked me for just the instant it took him to wrench out of my hands. He stumbled to the door of the study and burst through it heading for the window. I didn't hurry after him too fast, because I knew the boys outside would take him.

Leo Baxter was only three paces into the stale air of the unused library when he screamed, clasping his hands to his chest and dropped. A peculiar grating, plucking sound came faintly before he thudded to the carpet.

I stopped hard in my tracks and wiped the sweat from my face while Leo Baxter twitched almost at my feet, his heart shredded and bubbling its last in his perforated chest.

The paper clips. The ones I had propelled into nothingness weeks ago.

Hat in hand I advanced slowly, waving it before me chest high. Then it caught suddenly, grated for a split second and passed on in its arc. Now there were several tiny holes in it. I backed away a foot and brought my hat down slowly on the same lethal spot of air. Chest-high it caught and hung suspended.

Leaving it there as a marker I took off my suitcoat, held it before me and inched forward toward the desk. Something plucked at the dangling garment, and a chill froze my spine. Had I been walking forward normally, the tiny speck of metal that barely caught the glint of light from the window, would have pierced my skin at just about the site of my appendix. I

circled the spot continuing to feel forward with my coat. That was the paper clip Baxter had fired to demonstrate to me that first day.

At the phone I called headquarters and told the chief what to do.

"You're so right," he told me, his voice slurring strangely. "Only you're a little late. The order went out to confiscate the i-Guns. They think the damned toys might have something to do with the accidents. And I bought one of the first ones for my little Jerry!" His voice sounded hollow.

So they were figuring it out! The next question was, how to extract the deadly particles from the other dimension, or how to keep them from bleeding back slowly into ours.

I moved cautiously through the old house fanning every inch of air ahead of me with a phone book. When I got to Calvin Baxter's workshop I was especially careful, but I needn't have been. The only metal particles stuck into the thin air seemed to be over his workbench where he had been experimenting with his device. All but one.

It was right where I expected to find it—better than six feet in the air, just fore-head high for a man tall as Calvin Baxter. He had fired his proto-type of the i-Gun just once into the middle of the room.

How long ago? Eight—ten weeks ago?

It seemed impossible that all this horror had occurred in such a short time.

But there it was, stuck in space, protruding about a hundredth of an inch from nowhere into clear visibility. So little was showing that I couldn't be sure, but it looked like the tip of an ordinary little nail or wood-screw.

This was my "murder-weapon", the cause of Calvin Baxter's accident. He'd run into it, jerked his head back, and the speck had come out the same hole it went in.

In twenty minutes by the clock I had the lab crew out from headquarters, and had explained the whole business to them. First they measured the length of the protrusion, and my guess was about right. It measured .0095 inches on the micrometer caliper.

If it were a screw an inch long, at that rate of "bleedback" it would take another 98 weeks to come the rest of the way out. Almost two years!

Paul Riley, the lab chief, was sharp. He caught it about the same time I did and turned to look at me. "We've got to figure a way of getting those things out of the way."

I nodded. "But quick."

Collins, our print man, said, "Why not just shoot them back into wherever it is they go, with another i-Gun?"

"And have them come bleeding back after a few weeks?" Paul frowned him silent.

He picked up a hammer from the bench and tapped the tiny, glinting speck. The point flattened out a bit, but the thud of the hammer indicated how solidly it was stuck. Then he walked around behind the point and struck it a hard blow from the cross-section side.

The hammer shivered in his hand and he dropped it, rubbing his numbed fingers with his other hand.

"Lieutenant," he said slowly, "we are up against something."

We found we could file away the metal easily enough. Sure it filed away until the file cut into empty space. But cold comfort that was. In a few hours, we knew, molecule by molecule, the screw buried in the other dimension would come oozing back, a minute but lethal speck ready to ambush the first very tall man who walked toward it.

Tall man!

That's why Leo Baxter and I had failed to find it in the first place. I had criss-crossed that room half a thousand times in my previous examinations. If I had been taller, or the speck of metal lower—

"We've got to bring Calvin Baxter back to consciousness somehow," I said. "We've got to find out how that extractor of his works."

"Right!" Jerry said, dropping his hands in resignation. We'd run out of ideas at the same time, and the senior Baxter appeared to be our only hope.

WE FANNED our way out of there, into the squad car, and proceeded at a gingerly five miles per hour back to headquarters. On my insistence, Calvin Baxter had been set up in a private room at the jail with Doc Thorsen in attendance. The city hospitals were so jammed with accident victims and frantic relatives that it was no place to work with a man who was our only salvation.

When I explained everything to Dr. Thorsen and told him how important it was that we bring Calvin back to consciousness he shook his head. "It might be done, but it would probably kill him—"

"But you said he'd never recover anyway," I argued.

Thorsen seemed to be considering that. "Yes," he said at last. "That's more apparent now than ever. He's beginning to suffer the usual complications of immobility. Probably won't last more than a few weeks anyway. But can't you get the dope you want from his brother?" he stalled while he weighed his ethics against the necessity of the moment.

"His brother," I told him, "is dead. Paper clips. Right through the heart."

"I see. Well, we could operate, but as I said, Calvin wouldn't survive for long. Maybe only hours or minutes. And maybe not even long enough to regain consciousness after we remove the clot."

I said, "I've left a crew at the Baxter house to tear it apart, board by board, until we find this so-called *extractor* that Leo hid. But even after we find it, we need Calvin to tell us how to make it work. There must be a part missing."

We had wandered into Calvin's room and were talking over his great, supine body, covered to the chin with a white sheet. The speck of scalp on his forehead had dried up and dropped off leaving only a faint white spot.

As I mentioned the missing part, his lips began moving and a grunt

issued from his throat. "Listen," I said. "He hears me! He's trying to talk!"

"No, Lieutenant." Thorsen said, putting a hand to his eyes. "He's been grunting like that for days. The only word that ever comes out is his brother's name, Leo."

The name struck anger and frustration in me. "Leo," I half-shouted. "That stinking little—never even visited his brother!"

"Relax, Gene. That won't do any good. The man's dead," he reminded me.

"Relax? When all over the country people are tearing their bodies to pieces? Innocent people. Little kids—"

"I know, I know. I just spent nine hours in the emergency ward. Peritonitis. Cardiac injury. Lungs. Torn eye-balls. And it's probably just the beginning."

"Then what are you waiting for?" I demanded. "Our only chance is to bring Calvin Baxter to consciousness long enough to explain how his extractor works."

Doc ran trembling hands through his fuzz of white hair. For the first time I noticed that the pupils of his eyes were moving back and forth in little quick, darting motions like a wild animal looking for escape. "I—don't know, Gene. I suppose you are right. Only—we need permission—we must—you see, he might die, and—"

I took a good look at him and suddenly realized that despite his calm voice, the old man was going to pieces. I grabbed him by the arm and hauled him out of there, across the hall to the chief's office. Durstine had his head down on his arms, slouched over the desk fast asleep between two clanging telephones.

"Wake up, chief!" I said, shaking him by the shoulder. "We have to get Baxter to City Hospital and—"

Durstine raised his head and stared at me. His usually sharp, gray eyes were dull, and his face looked dirty with a stubble of black whiskers. With a deliberate motion of both hands he knocked the receivers off both phones and fell back in his swivel chair. "Now what?" he asked thickly.

"You're drunk!" I exclaimed. *Durstine, who would fire a 20-year man without a qualm if he caught a single trace of beer on his breath on duty.*

"What else is new?" He could barely focus his eyes on me.

I swallowed a couple of times and began explaining what must be done. Get the mayor and Civil Defense on the phone. Commandeer all radio stations to explain the true nature of the metallic particles to the public. Tell them to stay put, and when they did move, to walk slowly, fanning the air ahead of them with something solid—an umbrella, a coat, newspaper, garbage can lid—anything to warn them of the tiny, suspended daggers.

"Yeah. Great idea. Some people doing it already." He said it without enthusiasm. "Only trouble is, the phones are swamped. Communications are breaking down already, and when people learn about the fever, they will blow sky-high."

"The fever?"

"The fever." He bobbed his head loosely. "My Jerry died of it this afternoon. Came down with it day before yesterday. By the time we got him to the hospital this morning he was running a hundred and five. Docs were too busy with bleeders. Wouldn't listen to me until it was too late. Jerry's dead. My little Jerry." His voice was flat, his eyes staring straight ahead.

Jerry was his only son, and one of the first kids in town to own an i-Gun. Durstine had said he bought it for himself. The chief went on, "What's more, the fever's epidemic. Before we left the hospital they were dragging victims in by the hundreds. Not just kids, either. On top of this other thing, we got the worst epidemic in history. No one knows what it is."

I looked at Thorsen. "You said you'd been at the hospital. What is it?"

"I—saw a few cases." He said it almost under his breath.

I grabbed him by his coat lapels. "Snap out of it, Doc. If you know what it is, for God's sake tell us!"

"They don't know what it is," he said looking down at the floor.

"But you do. I can tell by your face."

"All right, maybe I do." His face was drawn and defiant with an almost fanatical determination. "There aren't enough sulphas and antibiotics in the world to control it. We can't do anything about it, so why drive people crazy with fear?"

Durstine was coming out of his fog. He opened the big bottom drawer of his desk and handed an open fifth of whiskey to Thorsen. He said, "Doc, you're in no condition to make a decision like that."

Thorsen tipped up the bottle and let several swallows pour down his leathery neck. The stuff brought tears to his eyes. He blinked them away and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. "All right, public guardian, I'll tell you. It's pretty obvious, and other medical men will think of it pretty quick, I suppose—when they find out the cause of the punctures they are treating. This fever is just more of the same. Peritonitis. Only it's caused by particles so small that you can't even feel when they penetrate the skin. They're large enough to poke holes in your intestines, though. Large enough to make microscopic passages for bacteria. So, you see, for every bleeding patient, there will be hundreds, thousands, coming down with peritonitis—infection of the body cavity from within. Without drugs the inflammation spreads in hours, and the temperature goes up and up. It's fatal."

I could almost feel the pain in my belly and the fire in my veins as he spoke. Doc Thorsen took another drink and handed me the bottle. "You look a little pale, Gene. Have a jolt and see if *your* guts leak."

Durstine and I both had a drink, and the chief said, "I see what you meant. I wish you'd kept your mouth shut."

I said, "Dammit, we've got to do something."

"Like what?" Durstine asked bit-

terly. "Like quarantining the schools and the playgrounds?"

Thorsen nodded grimly. "And the parks? And all back yards and front yards?"

Durstine picked it up again. "And empty lots and all sidewalks and streets and public buildings and the whole damned outdoors plus the indoors?"

The enormity of the problem began to sink into my tired brain. In the space of weeks, more than 30 million i-Guns were sold in the United States alone. Multiply that figure by the number of times each was fired. Ten? Fifty? A hundred times? Only God knew how many billion nails, tacks, screws and rivets were launched into limbo, and were now just beginning to return—invisible at first—to skewer the American people.

Wherever kids had played—and that was virtually everywhere—death was hidden. And the semi-visible particles would keep emerging for weeks, in the order that they were shot into the other dimension. Worse yet, at the slow rate of emergence, it would be months or years before the metallic flotsam returned completely and dropped to earth!

A man could protect himself only by remaining motionless. But society was geared to motion, fast, space-covering motion. The nation would starve to death, if everyone didn't go insane first and tear themselves to pieces running around.

"We've got to get the secret of that extractor out of Calvin Baxter," I said. "If we can discover the principle, we can build large models, like a vacuum cleaner—"

GETTING Baxter into City Hospital and finding a competent surgeon in good enough condition to perform the delicate operation, took almost twenty-four hours. The hospital resembled an abattoir, the corridor floors slick from the drippings of fresh blood, as people seeking help wandered frantically from floor to floor.

Somehow we managed to impress upon the staff the fact that Baxter had priority, and we were allowed on the operating floor, which was guarded at all entries.

Sick with exhaustion, I waited with Durstine. Thorsen was impressed into duty immediately, and that was the last we saw of him. It was a good many hours before they called us into the operating room. I won't try to describe the sight in detail. Surgeons and nurses hovered over tables, weaving like drunken butchers in blood-soaked aprons. In one corner, on a cot, Baxter lay with his head and shoulders propped up high. His feet hung over the end at least fourteen inches. A single sheet covered him.

The top of his skull was bandaged, and he looked even paler than before. A doctor and one nurse stood on either side of him. As we came in the doctor said, "I've been told of the problem. We've done all we can, but this man is dying. I think we can bring him to consciousness for a few minutes. It's a terribly cruel thing to do, and I'm not sure he will be

coherent. Are you sure you want me to try?"

"It's his invention that brought on all of this," I said. "If there's any solution to it, he has it in his head."

"Very well."

He did things with a hypodermic needle while the nurse rigged an oxygen tent. The smell of ether and blood made me sicker. My throat was dry, and I remember wishing I hadn't drunk Durstine's whiskey. As we stood waiting the humid air felt almost unbearably hot, and I had difficulty focussing my eyes.

Durstine looked terrible, hollow-eyed, unshaven, but he seemed in better shape than I. It was he who caught the first flicker of Baxter's eyes and dropped to his knees. The color came back to the scientist's face in a rush of pink, and his chest heaved with deep breathing.

"Can you hear me?" Durstine began.

An hour later Baxter was dead as predicted. And so was all hope of removing the lethal debris with his other invention. The "extractor" didn't work, he had told us. Yes, he'd been trying to reverse the field to retrieve the metallic objects from the other dimension, *but the experiment was a failure!*

Durstine took my arm. "Come on, Gene. We've done all we can. I know one safe place—a place where no kids ever played."

"Yeah, I know," I said with a tongue two sizes too big. "The nearest bar. The damned kids! They've murdered us! Leo Baxter and the damned kids!"

Things were turning gray, but I remember the chief catching me by the shoulder and jerking me around. Too late I remembered about his little Jerry and the agony my words must have carved in his heart. I wished he'd slug me, but he didn't. He looked at me for a long minute and said something I don't remember, because the fog closed in—a hot, dry fog that swept into my brain and blacked out the light. I don't even remember falling.

The last thought I had was, *the fever! I've got it. And Thorsen said there were no more antibiotics or drugs left in the city.*

SOME WEEKS later it was a surprise but no pleasure, to discover I was still alive. Through the smoke of my unfocussed eyes I could tell that my "private" room was occupied by at least a dozen other patients. Some were on cots and some, like me, simply lay on the floor with a blanket over them.

I had one 30-second visit from the doctor before Durstine came to take me away. The doc said simply, "You're a lucky man, Lieutenant. We didn't save many 'fever' patients after the drugs ran out."

The chief brought a couple of boys in blue with a stretcher to haul me out. I was amazed to discover that automobiles were still moving about the streets—not many, but a few. I was too sick and exhausted to talk during the ride.

Durstine rode in back with me, a hand on my shoulder. "Don't wor-

ry, Gene," he said. "You're going to be all right. And we've got this thing pretty well licked."

He looked into my eyes and read the question I was too weak to speak aloud.

"No," he said, "we didn't figure out Baxter's extractor. But we do have a successful detector, and all we have to do now is use it—then hang a tin can or an old ketchup bottle on each speck of metal for a marker. Yeah, the country's going to be cluttered up like a hanging garbage dump for a long time, but if you can see 'em you can dodge 'em."

A detector? Why, they'd have to equip every person in the country with one! And surely nothing less than an electronic, radar-type gadget could detect the microscopic particles as they first began to emerge—the kind that had riddled my intestines and given me the fever without even leaving a mark on my skin.

"I know what you are thinking," Durstine said. His face was gray and drawn, but he wore a faint smile. "It was simple when somebody thought of it. What would be cheap enough to distribute universally, yet effective enough to give you positive warning? You see, these tiny particles are so fine at first that you can fan the air with a plank and never know when one passes through."

He raised me up from the stretcher and let me look out the window of the police ambulance. Through squinted eyes I made out a strange sight. A thin scattering of pedestrians was moving slowly on the sidewalks, winding their ways among a random collection of floating tin cans and inverted bottles.

When we stopped for a red light I watched a young woman in a business suit step between a whiskey bottle head-high, and a bean can about knee-high, and then proceed gingerly waving a colored sphere ahead of her. This sphere, about eighteen inches in diameter, suddenly disappeared. She stopped abruptly and began shouting. Before the traffic light turned green, a man came up with an empty motor oil can and placed it on the sidewalk, under the point she indicated in the air before her.

Durstine explained, "When that speck gets large enough to support it, that can will be hung on it. Meanwhile, other people are forewarned that the air over the can is out-of-bounds, so they won't waste detectors on it."

As he spoke, the young woman was fishing another "detector" from her purse. It was a limp bit of something which she placed to her lips and inflated until it was a foot-and-a-half in diameter, then she tied off the neck and proceeded down the walk waving it before her in great vertical sweeps.

It was as simple as that.

Our undoing had been a 85-cent kid's toy. And our salvation was a penny-balloon! • • •

Science surpasses the old miracles of mythology. —*Emerson*

What Is Your Science I. Q.?

HERE'S ANOTHER QUIZ to test your knowledge of the scientific facts that you read about in science fiction. How well do you know them? Counting five for each correct answer, you should score 50. Anything over 65 makes you a veritable Mr. Wizard. See page 120 for the answers.

1. A googol is a one followed by _____ zeros.
2. What percent of the moon's surface has been able to be observed by astronomers?
3. The measure of the extent to which one atom is able to combine directly with others is known as the _____.
4. In which constellation is the point which is known as "the apex of the Sun's way"?
5. The substitution of machines or mechanical devices for human beings in a manufacturing process is described by the newly coined word _____.
6. What is the scientific term for the bright streaks or areas on the surface of the Sun?
7. Zero on the Fahrenheit scale represents the temperature produced by the mixing of equal weights of snow and _____.
8. The distance from the Earth to the Sun, 93,003,000 miles, is the basis for what unit of measurement?
9. The height of the Earth's atmosphere is 600 miles, but about half of it by weight is below _____ feet.
10. What is the term used to describe different forms of the same element which have the same atomic number but different atomic weights?
11. The mass of the Earth is equal to _____ sextillion tons.
12. Are sidereal days longer or shorter than solar days?
13. The atomic weight of any element is represented by the total number of neutrons and _____.
14. What is the polar radius of the Earth in statute miles?
15. If an astronomical unit were represented by one inch, a light year would be represented by about _____.
16. During the fusion of deuterium and tritium, hydrogen is transmuted into what other element?
17. The tail of a comet always trails from the head in a direction _____ the sun.
18. The rotational speed of the Sun varies from about 24 2/3 days at the equator to approximately _____ days near its poles.

Illustrated by Ed Emsh

THE MOLD

BY

The obvious signs were missing, yet Callisto was moving steadily toward a state of totalitarianism. All the people were beginning to be exactly *alike!*

OF YANCY

PHILIP K. DICK

LEON SIPLING groaned and pushed away his work papers. In an organization of thousands he was the only employee not putting out. Probably he was the only yance-man on Callisto not doing his job. Fear, and the quick pluckings of desperation, made him reach up and wave on the audio circuit to Babson, the over-all office controller.

"Say," Sipling said hoarsely, "I think I'm stuck, Bab. How about running the gestalt through, up to my spot? Maybe I can pick up the rhythm . . ." He grinned weakly. "The hum of other creative minds."

After a speculative moment, Babson reached for the impulse synapsis, his massive face unsympathetic. "You holding up progress, Sip? This has to be integrated with the daily by six tonight. The schedule calls for the works to be on the vidlines during the dinner-hour stretch."

The visual side of the gestalt had already begun to form on the wall screen; Sipling turned his attention to it, grateful of a chance to escape Babson's cold glare.

The screen showed a 3-D of Yancy, the usual three-quarter view, from the waist up. John Edward Yancy in his faded workshirt, sleeves rolled up, arms brown and furry. A middle-aged man in his late fifties, his face sunburned, neck slightly red, a good-natured smile on his face, squinting because he was looking into the sun. Behind Yancy was a still of his yard, his garage, his flower garden, lawn, the back of his neat little white plastic house. Yancy grinned at Sipling: a neighbor pausing in the middle of a summer day, perspiring from the heat and the exertion of mowing his lawn, about to launch into a few harmless remarks about the weather, the state of the planet, the condition of the neighborhood.

"Say," Yancy said, in the audio phones propped up on Sipling's desk. His voice was low, personal. "The darndest thing happened to my grandson Ralf, the other morning. You know how Ralf is; he's always getting to school half an hour early . . . says he likes to be in his seat before anybody else."

"That eager-beaver," Joe Pines, at the next desk, cat-called.

From the screen, Yancy's voice rolled on, confident, amiable, undisturbed. "Well, Ralf saw this squirrel; it was just sitting there on the sidewalk. He stopped for a minute and watched." The look on Yancy's face was so real that Sipling almost believed him. He could, almost, see the squirrel and the tow-headed youngest grandson of the Yancy family, the familiar child of the familiar son of the planet's most familiar—and beloved —person.

"This squirrel," Yancy explained, in his homey way, "was collecting nuts. And by golly, this was just the other day, only the middle of June. And here was this little squirrel—" with his hands he indicated the size, "collecting these nuts and carrying them off for winter."

And then, the amused, anecdote-look on Yancy's face faded. A serious, thoughtful look replaced it: the meaningful-look. His blue eyes darkened (good color work). His jaw became more square, more imposing (good dummy-switch by the android crew). Yancy seemed older, more solemn and mature, more impressive. Behind him, the garden-scene had been jerked and a slightly different backdrop filtered in; Yancy now stood firmly planted in a cosmic landscape, among mountains and winds and huge old forests.

"I got to thinking," Yancy said, and his voice was deeper, slower. "There was that little squirrel. How did he know winter was coming? There he was, working away, getting prepared for it." Yancy's voice rose. "Preparing for a winter he'd never seen."

Sipling stiffened and prepared *himself;* it was coming. At his desk, Joe Pines grinned and yelled: "Get set!"

"That squirrel," Yancy said solemnly, "had faith. No, he never saw any sign of winter. But he knew winter was coming." The firm jaw moved; one hand came slowly up . . .

And then the image stopped. It froze, immobile, silent. No words came from it; abruptly the sermon ended, in the middle of a paragraph.

"That's it," Babson said briskly, filtering the Yancy out. "Help you any?"

Sipling pawed jerkily at his work papers. "No," he admitted, "actually it doesn't. But—I'll get it worked out."

"I hope so." Babson's face darkened ominously and his small mean eyes seemed to grow smaller. "What's the matter with you? Home problems?"

"I'll be okay," Sipling muttered, sweating. "Thanks."

On the screen a faint impression of Yancy remained, still poised at the word *coming.* The rest of

the gestalt was in Sipling's head: the continuing slice of words and gestures hadn't been worked out and fed to the composite. Sipling's contribution was missing, so the entire gestalt was stopped cold in its tracks.

"Say," Joe Pines said uneasily, "I'll be glad to take over, today. Cut your desk out of the circuit and I'll cut myself in."

"Thanks," Sipling muttered, "but I'm the only one who can get this damn part. It's the central gem."

"You ought to take a rest. You've been working too hard."

"Yes," Sipling agreed, on the verge of hysteria. "I'm a little under the weather."

That was obvious: everybody in the office could see that. But only Sipling knew why. And he was fighting with all his strength to keep from screaming out the reason at the top of his lungs.

Basic analysis of the political milieu at Callisto was laid out by Niplan computing apparatus at Washington, D.C.; but the final evaluations were done by human technicians. The Washington computers could ascertain that the Callisto political structure was moving toward a totalitarian make-up, but they couldn't say what that indicated. Human beings were required to class the drift as malign.

"It isn't possible," Taverner protested. "There's constant industrial traffic in and out of Callisto; except for the Ganymede syndicate they've got out-planet commerce bottled up. We'd know as soon as anything phony got started."

"How would we know?" Police Director Kellman inquired.

Taverner indicated the datasheets, graphs and charts of figures and percentages that covered the walls of the Niplan Police offices. "It would show up in hundreds of ways. Terrorist raids, political prisons, extermination camps. We'd hear about political recanting, treason, disloyalty . . . all the basic props of a dictatorship."

"Don't confuse a totalitarian society with a dictatorship," Kellman said drily. "A totalitarian state reaches into every sphere of its citizens' lives, forms their opinions on every subject. The government can be a dictatorship, *or* a parliament, *or* an elected president, *or* a council of priests. That doesn't matter."

"All right," Taverner said, mollified. "I'll go. I'll take a team there and see what they're doing."

"Can you make yourselves look like Callistotes?"

"What are they like?"

"I'm not sure," Kellman admitted thoughtfully, with a glance at the elaborate wall charts. "But whatever it is, they're all beginning to turn out alike."

Among its passengers the interplan commercial liner that settled down at Callisto carried Peter Taverner, his wife, and their two children. With a grimace of concern, Taverner made out the shapes of local officials waiting at the exit hatch. The passengers were going to be carefully screened; as the

ramp descended, the clot of officials moved forward.

Taverner got to his feet and collected his family. "Ignore them," he told Ruth. "Our papers will get us by."

Expertly prepared documents identified him as a speculator in nonferric metals, looking for a wholesale outlet to handle his jobbing. Callisto was a clearing-point for land and mineral operations; a constant flood of wealth-hungry entrepreneurs streamed back and forth, carting raw materials from the underdeveloped moons, hauling mining equipment from the inner planets.

Cautiously, Taverner arranged his topcoat over his arm. A heavy-set man, in his middle thirties, he could have passed for a successful business operator. His double-breasted business suit was expensive, but conservative. His big shoes were brightly shined. All things considered, he'd probably get by. As he and his family moved toward the exit ramp, they presented a perfect and exact imitation of the out-planet business-class.

"State your business," a green-uniformed official demanded, pencil poised. I-d tabs were being checked, photographed, recorded. Brain pattern comparisons were being made: the usual routine.

"Nonferric enterprises," Taverner began, but a second official cut him abruptly off.

"You're the third cop this morning. What's biting you people on Terra?" The official eyed Taverner intently. "We're getting more cops than ministers."

Trying to maintain his poise, Taverner answered evenly: "I'm here to take a rest. Acute alcoholism—nothing official."

"That's what your cohorts said," The official grinned humorlessly. "Well, what's one more Terran cop?" He slid the lock-bars aside and waved Taverner and his family through. "Welcome to Callisto. Have fun—enjoy yourselves. Fastest-growing moon in the system."

"Practically a planet," Taverner commented ironically.

"Any day, now." The official examined some reports. "According to our friends in your little organization, you've been pasting up wall graphs and charts about us. Are we that important?"

"Academic interest," Taverner said; if three spots had been made, then the whole team had been netted. The local authorities were obviously primed to detect infiltration . . . the realization chilled him.

But they were letting him through. Were they *that* confident?

Things didn't look good. Peering around for a cab, he grimly prepared to undertake the business of integrating the scattered team members into a functioning whole.

THAT EVENING, at the *Stay-Lit* bar on the main street of the commercial district of town, Taverner met with his two team members. Hunched over their whiskey sours, they compared notes.

"I've been here almost twelve hours," Eckmund stated, gazing impassively at the rows of bottles in the gloomy depths of the bar. Cigar

smoke hovered in the air; the automatic music box in the corner banged away metallically. "I've been walking around town, looking at things, making observations."

"Me," Dorser said, "I've been at the tape-library. Getting official myth, comparing it to Callistote reality. And talking to the scholars —educated people hanging around the scanning rooms."

Taverner sipped his drink. "Anything of interest?"

"You know the primitive rule-of-thumb test," Eckmund said wryly. "I loafed around on a slum street corner until I got in a conversation with some people waiting for a bus. I started knocking the authorities: complaining about the bus service, the sewage disposal, taxes, everything. They chimed right in. Heartily. No hesitation. And no fear."

"The legal government," Dorser commented, "is set up in the usual archaic fashion. Two-party system, one a little more conservative than the other—no fundamental difference of course. But both elect candidates at open primaries, ballots circulated to all registered voters." A spasm of amusement touched him. "This is a model democracy. I read the text books. Nothing but idealistic slogans: freedom of speech, assembly, religion —the works. Same old grammar school stuff."

The three of them were temporarily silent.

"There are jails," Taverner said slowly. "Every society has law violations."

"I visited one," Eckmund said, belching. "Petty thieves, murderers, claim-jumpers, strong-arm hoods —the usual."

"No political prisoners?"

"No." Eckmund raised his voice. "We might as well discuss this at the top of our lungs. Nobody cares —the authorities don't care."

"Probably after we're gone they'll clap a few thousand people into prison," Dorser murmured thoughtfully.

"My God," Eckmund retorted, "people can leave Callisto any time they want. If you're operating a police state you have to keep your borders shut. And these borders are wide open. People pour in and out."

"Maybe it's a chemical in the drinking water," Dorser suggested.

"How the hell can they have a totalitarian society without terrorism?" Eckmund demanded rhetorically. "I'll swear to it—there are no thought-control cops here. There is absolutely no fear."

"Somehow, pressure is being exerted," Taverner persisted.

"Not by cops," Dorser said emphatically. "Not by force and brutality. Not by illegal arrest and imprisonment and forced labor."

"If this were a police state," Eckmund said thoughtfully, "there'd be some kind of resistance movement. Some sort of 'subversive' group trying to overthrow the authorities. But in this society you're free to complain; you can buy time on the t-v and radio stations, you can buy space in the newspapers—anything you want." He shrugged. "So how can there be a clandestine resistance movement? It's silly."

"Nevertheless," Taverner said, "these people are living in a one-party society, with a party line, with an official ideology. They show the effects of a carefully controlled totalitarian state. They're guinea pigs—whether they realize it or not."

"Wouldn't they realize it?"

Baffled, Taverner shook his head. "I would have thought so. There must be some mechanism we don't understand."

"It's all open. We can look everything over."

"We must be looking for the wrong thing." Idly, Taverner gazed at the television screen above the bar. The nude girlie song-and-dance routine had ended; now the features of a man faded into view. A genial, round-faced man in his fifties, with guileless blue eyes, an almost childish twitch to his lips, a fringe of brown hair playing around his slightly prominent ears.

"Friends," the t-v image rumbled, "it's good to be with you again, tonight. I thought I might have a little chat with you."

"A commercial," Dorser said, signalling the bartending machine for another drink.

"Who is that?" Taverner asked curiously.

"That kindly-looking geezer?" Eckmund examined his notes. "A sort of popular commentator. Name of Yancy."

"Is he part of the government?"

"Not that I know of. A kind of home-spun philosopher. I picked up a biography of him on a magazine stand." Eckmund passed the gaily-colored pamphlet to his boss. "Totally ordinary man, as far as I can see. Used to be a soldier; in the Mars-Jupiter War he distinguished himself—battlefield commission. Rose to the rank of major." He shrugged indifferently. "A sort of talking almanac. Pithy sayings on every topic. Wise old saws: how to cure a chest cold. What the trouble is back on Terra."

Taverner examined the booklet. "Yes, I saw his picture around."

"Very popular figure. Loved by the masses. Man of the people—speaks for them. When I was buying cigarettes I noticed he endorses one particular brand. Very popular brand, now; just about driven the others off the market. Same with beer. The Scotch in this glass is probably the brand Yancy endorses. The same with tennis balls. Only he doesn't play tennis—he plays croquet. All the time, every weekend." Accepting his fresh drink Eckmund finished, "So now everybody plays croquet."

"How can croquet be a planet-wide sport?" Taverner demanded.

"This isn't a planet," Dorser put in. "It's a pipsqueak moon."

"Not according to Yancy," Eckmund said. "We're supposed to think of Callisto as a planet."

"How?" Taverner asked.

"Spiritually, it's a planet. Yancy likes people to take a spiritual view of matters. He's strong on God and honesty in government and being hard-working and clean-cut. Warmed-over truisms."

The expression on Taverner's face hardened. "Interesting," he murmured. "I'll have to drop by and meet him."

"Why? He's the dullest, most

mediocre man you could dream up."

"Maybe," Taverner answered, "that's why I'm interested."

Babson, huge and menacing, met Taverner at the entrance of the Yancy Building. "Of course you can meet Mr. Yancy. But he's a busy man—it'll take awhile to squeeze in an appointment. Everybody wants to meet Mr. Yancy."

Taverner was unimpressed. "How long do I have to wait?"

As they crossed the main lobby to the elevators, Babson made a computation. "Oh, say four months."

"Four *months!*"

"John Yancy is just about the most popular man alive."

"Around here, maybe," Taverner commented angrily, as they entered the packed elevator. "I never heard of him before. If he's got so much on the ball, why isn't he piped all around Niplan?"

"Actually," Babson admitted, in a hoarse, confidential whisper, "I can't imagine what people see in Yancy. As far as I'm concerned he's just a big bag of wind. But people around here enjoy him. After all, Callisto is—provincial. Yancy appeals to a certain type of rural mind—to people who like their world simple. I'm afraid Terra would be too sophisticated for Yancy."

"Have you tried?"

"Not yet," Babson said. Reflectively, he added: "Maybe later."

While Taverner was pondering the meaning of the big man's words, the elevator ceased climbing. The two of them stepped off into a luxurious, carpeted hall, illuminated by recessed lights. Babson pushed open a door, and they entered a large, active office.

Inside, a screening of a recent Yancy gestalt was in progress. A group of yance-men watched it silently, faces alert and critical. The gestalt showed Yancy sitting at his old-fashioned oak desk, in his study. It was obvious that he had been working on some philosophical thoughts: spread out over the desk were books and papers. On Yancy's face was a thoughtful expression; he sat with his hand against his forehead, features screwed up into a solemn study of concentration.

"This is for next Sunday morning," Babson explained.

Yancy's lips moved, and he spoke. "Friends," he began, in his deep, personal, friendly, man-to-man voice, "I've been sitting here at my desk—well, about the way you're sitting around your living rooms." A switch in camera work occurred; it showed the open door of Yancy's study. In the living room was the familiar figure of Yancy's sweet-faced middle-aged homey wife; she was sitting on the comfortable sofa primly sewing. On the floor their grandson Ralf played the familiar game of jacks. The family dog snoozed in the corner.

One of the watching yance-men made a note on his pad. Taverner glanced at him curiously, baffled.

"Of course, I was in there with them," Yancy continued, smiling briefly. "I was reading the funnies to Ralf. He was sitting on my knee." The background faded, and

a momentary phantom scene of Yancy sitting with his grandson on his knee floated into being. Then the desk and the book-lined study returned. "I'm mighty grateful for my family," Yancy revealed. "In these times of stress, it's my family that I turn to, as my pillar of strength."

Another notation was made by a watching yance-man.

"Sitting here in my study, this wonderful Sunday morning," Yancy rumbled on, "I realize how lucky we are to be alive, and to have this lovely planet, and the fine cities and houses, all the things God has given us to enjoy. But we've got to be careful. We've got to make sure we don't lose these things."

A change had come over Yancy. It seemed to Taverner that the image was subtly altering. It wasn't the same man; the good humor was gone. This was an older man, and larger. A firm-eyed father, speaking to his children.

"My friends," Yancy intoned, "there are forces that could weaken this planet. Everything we've built up for our loved ones, for our children, *could be taken away from us overnight.* We must learn to be vigilant. We must protect our liberties, our possessions, our way of life. If we become divided, and fall to bickering among each other, we will be easy prey for our enemies. We must work together, my friends.

"That's what I've been thinking about this Sunday morning. *Cooperation. Teamwork.* We've got to be secure, and to be secure, we must be one united people. That's the key, my friends, the key to a more abundant life." Pointing out the window at the lawn and garden, Yancy said: "You know, I was . . ."

The voice trailed off. The image froze. Full room lights came on, and the watching yance-men moved into muttering activity.

"Fine," one of them said. "So far, at least. But where's the rest?"

"Sipling, again," another answered. "His slice still hasn't come through. What's wrong with that guy?"

Scowling, Babson detached himself. "Pardon me," he said to Taverner. "I'll have to excuse myself —technical matters. You're free to look around, if you care to. Help yourself to any of the literature— anything you want."

"Thanks," Taverner said uncertainly. He was confused; everything *seemed* harmless, even trivial. But something basic was wrong.

Suspiciously, he began to prowl.

IT WAS obvious that John Yancy had pontificated on every known subject. A Yancy opinion on every conceivable topic was available . . . modern art, or garlic in cooking, or the use of intoxicating beverages, or eating meat, or socialism, or war, or education, or open-front dresses on women, or high taxes, or atheism, or divorce, or patriotism— every shade and nuance of opinion possible.

Was there any subject that Yancy *hadn't* expressed himself on?

Taverner examined the voluminous tapes that lined the walls of the offices. Yancy's utterances had run into billions of tape feet . . .

could one man have an opinion on everything in the universe?

Choosing a tape at random, he found himself being addressed on the topic of table manners.

"You know," the miniature Yancy began, his voice tinny in Taverner's ears, "at dinner the other night I happened to notice how my grandson Ralf was cutting his steak." Yancy grinned at the viewer, as an image of the six-year-old boy sawing grimly away floated briefly into sight. "Well, I got to thinking, there was Ralf working away at that steak, not having any luck with it. And it seemed to me—"

Taverner snapped the tape off and returned it to the slot. Yancy had definite opinions on everything . . . or *were* they so definite?

A strange suspicion was growing in him. On some topics, yes. On minor issues, Yancy had exact rules, specific maxims drawn from mankind's rich storehouse of folklore. But major philosophical and political issues were something else again.

Getting out one of the many tapes listed under War, Taverner ran it through at random.

". . . I'm against war," Yancy pronounced angrily. "And I ought to know; I've done my share of fighting."

There followed a montage of battle scenes: the Jupiter-Mars War in which Yancy had distinguished himself by his bravery, his concern for his comrades, his hatred of the enemy, his variety of proper emotions.

"But," Yancy continued staunchly, "I feel a planet must be strong. We must not surrender ourselves meekly . . . weakness invites attack and fosters aggression. By being weak we promote war. We must gird ourselves and protect those we love. With all my heart and soul I'm against useless wars; but I say again, as I've said many times before, a man must come forward and fight a *just* war. He must not shrink from his responsibility. War is a terrible thing. But sometimes we must . . ."

As he restored the tape, Taverner wondered just what the hell Yancy *had* said. What were his views on war? They took up a hundred separate reels of tape; Yancy was always ready to hold forth on such vital and grandiose subjects as War, the Planet, God, Taxation. But did he *say* anything?

A cold chill crawled up Taverner's spine. On specific—and trivial—items there were absolute opinions: dogs are better than cats, grapefruit is too sour without a dash of sugar, it's good to get up early in the morning, too much drinking is bad. But on big topics . . . an empty vacuum, filled with the vacant roll of high-sounding phrases. A public that agreed with Yancy on war and taxes and God and planet agreed with absolutely nothing. And with everything.

On topics of importance, they had no opinion at all. They only *thought* they had an opinion.

Rapidly, Taverner scanned tapes on various major subjects. It was the same all down the line. With one sentence Yancy gave; with the next he took away. The total effect was a neat cancellation, a skillful

negation. But the viewer was left with the illusion of having consumed a rich and varied intellectual feast. It was amazing. And it was professional: the ends were tied up too slickly to be mere accident.

Nobody was as harmless and vapid as John Edward Yancy. He was just too damn good to be true.

Sweating, Taverner left the main reference room and poked his way toward the rear offices, where busy yance-men worked away at their desks and assembly tables. Activity whirred on all sides. The expression on the faces around him was benign, harmless, almost bored. The same friendly, trivial expression that Yancy himself displayed.

Harmless—and in its harmlessness, diabolical. And there wasn't a damn thing he could do. If people liked to listen to John Edward Yancy, if they wanted to model themselves after him—what could the Niplan police do about it?

What crime was being committed?

No wonder Babson didn't care if the police prowled around. No wonder the authorities had freely admitted them. There weren't any political jails or labor gangs or concentration camps . . . there didn't have to be.

Torture chambers and extermination camps were needed only when persuasion failed. And persuasion was working perfectly. A police state, rule by terror, came about when the totalitarian apparatus began to break down. The earlier totalitarian societies had been incomplete; the authorities hadn't really gotten into every sphere of life. But techniques of communication had improved.

The first really successful totalitarian state was being realized before his eyes: harmless and trivial, it emerged. And the last stage—nightmarish, but perfectly logical—was when all the newborn boys were happily and voluntarily named John Edward.

Why not? They already lived, acted, and thought like John Edward. And there was Mrs. Margaret Ellen Yancy, for the women. She had her full range of opinions, too; she had her kitchen, her taste in clothes, her little recipes and advice, for all the women to imitate.

There were even Yancy children for the youth of the planet to imitate. The authorities hadn't overlooked anything.

Babson strolled over, a genial expression on his face. "How's it going, officer?" he chuckled wetly, putting his hand on Taverner's shoulder.

"Fine," Taverner managed to answer; he evaded the hand.

"You like our little establishment?" There was genuine pride in Babson's thick voice. "We do a good job. An artistic job—we have real standards of excellence."

Shaking with helpless anger, Taverner plunged out of the office and into the hall. The elevator took too long; furiously, he turned toward the stairs. He had to get out of the Yancy Building; he had to get away.

From the shadows of the hall a man appeared, face pale and taut. "Wait. Can—I talk to you?"

Taverner pushed past him. "What do you want?"

"You're from the Terran Niplan Police? I—" The man's Adam's apple bobbed. "I work here. My name's Sipling, Leon Sipling. I have to do something—I can't stand it any more."

"Nothing can be done," Taverner told him. "If they want to be like Yancy—"

"But there isn't any Yancy," Sipling broke in, his thin face twitching spasmodically. "We made him up . . . we invented him."

Taverner halted. "You *what?*"

"I've decided." Voice quavering excitedly, Sipling rushed on: "I'm going to do something—and I know exactly what." Catching hold of Taverner's sleeve he grated: "You've got to help me. I can stop all this, but I can't do it alone."

IN LEON Sipling's attractive, well-furnished living room, the two of them sat drinking coffee and watching their children scramble around on the floor, playing games. Sipling's wife and Ruth Taverner were in the kitchen, drying the dishes.

"Yancy is a synthesis," Sipling explained. "A sort of composite person. No such individual actually exists. We drew on basic prototypes from sociological records; we based the gestalt on various typical persons. So it's true to life. But we stripped off what we didn't want and intensified what we did want." Broodingly, he added: "There could be a Yancy. There are a lot of Yancy-like people. In fact, that's the problem."

"You deliberately set out with the idea of remolding people along Yancy's line?" Taverner inquired.

"I can't precisely say what the idea is, at top level. I was an ad writer for a mouth wash company. The Callisto authorities hired me and outlined what they wanted me to do. I've had to guess as to the purpose of the project."

"By authorities, you mean the governing council?"

Sipling laughed sharply. "I mean the trading syndicates that own this moon: lock, stock, and barrel. But we're not supposed to call it a moon. It's a planet." His lips twitched bitterly. "Apparently, the authorities have a big program built up. It involves absorbing their trade rivals on Ganymede—when that's done, they'll have the out-planets sewed up tight."

"They can't get at Ganymede without open war," Taverner protested. "The Medean companies have their own population behind them." And then it dawned. "I see," he said softly. "They'd actually start a war. It would be worth a war, to them."

"You're damn right it would. And to start a war, they have to get the public lined up. Actually, the people here have nothing to gain. A war would wipe out all the small operators—it would concentrate power in fewer hands—and they're few enough already. To get the eighty million people here behind the war, they need an indifferent, sheep-like public. *And they're getting that.* When this Yancy campaign is finished, the people here

on Callisto will accept anything. Yancy does all their thinking for them. He tells them how to wear their hair. What games to play. He tells the jokes the men repeat in their back rooms. His wife whips up the meal they all have for dinner. All over this little world—millions of duplicates of Yancy's day. Whatever he does, whatever he believes. We've been conditioning the public for eleven straight years. The important thing is the unvarying monotony of it. A whole generation is growing up looking to Yancy for an answer to everything."

"It's a big business, then," Taverner observed. "This project of creating and maintaining Yancy."

"Thousands of people are involved in just writing the material. You only saw the first stage—and it goes into every city. Tapes, films, books, magazines, posters, pamphlets, dramatic visual and audio shows, plants in the newspapers, sound trucks, kids' comic strips, word-of-mouth report, elaborate ads . . . the works. A steady stream of Yancy." Picking up a magazine from the coffee table he indicated the lead article. "'How is John Yancy's Heart?' Raises the question of what would we do without Yancy? Next week, an article on Yancy's stomach." Acidly, Sipling finished: "We know a million approaches. We turn it out of every pore. We're called yance-men; it's a new art-form."

"How do you—the corps, feel about Yancy?"

"He's a big sack of hot air."

"None of you is convinced?"

"Even Babson has to laugh. And Babson is at the top; after him come the boys who sign the checks. God, if we ever started believing in Yancy . . . if we got started thinking that trash *meant* something—" An expression of acute agony settled over Sipling's face. "That's it. That's why I can't stand it."

"Why?" Taverner asked, deeply curious. His throat-mike was taking it all in, relaying it back to the home office at Washington. "I'm interested in finding out why you broke away."

Sipling bent down and called his son. "Mike, stop playing and come on over here." To Taverner he explained: "Mike's nine years old. Yancy's been around as long as he's been alive."

Mike came dutifully over. "Yes, sir?"

"What kind of marks do you get in school?" his father asked.

The boy's chest stuck out proudly; he was a clear-eyed little miniature of Leon Sipling. "All A's and B's."

"He's a smart kid," Sipling said to Taverner. "Good in arithmetic, geography, history, all that stuff." Turning to the boy he said: "I'm going to ask you some questions; I want this gentleman to hear your answers. Okay?"

"Yes, sir," the boy said obediently.

His thin face grim, Sipling said to his son: "I want to know what you think about war. You've been told about war in school; you know about all the famous wars in

history. Right?"

"Yes, sir. We learned about the American Revolution, and the First Global War, and then the Second Global War, and then the First Hydrogen War, and the War between the colonists on Mars and Jupiter."

"To the schools," Sipling explained tightly to Taverner, "we distribute Yancy material—educational subsidies in packet form. Yancy takes children through history, explains the meaning of it all. Yancy explains natural science. Yancy explains good posture and astronomy and every other thing in the universe. But I never thought my own son . . ." His voice trailed off unhappily, then picked up life. "So you know all about war. Okay, what do you think of war?"

Promptly, the boy answered: "War is bad. War is the most terrible thing there is. It almost destroyed mankind."

Eying his son intently, Sipling demanded: "Did anybody tell you to say that?"

The boy faltered uncertainly. "No, sir."

"You really believe those things?"

"Yes, sir. It's true, isn't it? Isn't war bad?"

Sipling nodded. "War is bad. But what about *just* wars?"

Without hesitation the boy answered: "We have to fight just wars, of course."

"Why?"

"Well, we have to protect our way of life."

"Why?"

Again, there was no hesitation in the boy's reedy answer. "We can't let them walk over us, sir. That would encourage aggressive war. We can't permit a world of brute power. We have to have a world of—" He searched for the exact word. "A world of *law*."

Wearily, half to himself, Sipling commented: "I wrote those meaningless, contradictory words myself, eight years ago." Pulling himself together with a violent effort he asked: "So war is bad. But we have to fight just wars. Well, maybe this—*planet,* Callisto, will get into a war with . . . let's pick Ganymede, at random." He was unable to keep the harsh irony from his voice. "Just at random. Now, we're at war with Ganymede. Is it a *just* war? Or only a war?"

This time, there was no answer. The boy's smooth face was screwed up in a bewildered, struggling frown.

"No answer?" Sipling inquired icily.

"Why, uh," the boy faltered. "I mean . . ." He glanced up hopefully. "When the time comes won't somebody say?"

"Sure," Sipling choked. "Somebody will say. Maybe even Mr. Yancy."

Relief flooded the boy's face. "Yes, sir. Mr. Yancy will say." He retreated back toward the other children. "Can I go, now?"

As the boy scampered back to his game, Sipling turned miserably to Taverner. "You know what game they're playing? It's called Hippo-Hoppo. Guess whose grandson just loves it. Guess who invented the game."

There was silence.

"What do you suggest?" Taverner asked. "You said you thought something could be done."

A cold expression appeared on Sipling's face, a flash of deeply-felt cunning. "I know the project . . . I know how it can be pried apart. But somebody has to stand with a gun at the head of the authorities. In nine years I've come to see the essential key to the Yancy character . . . the key to the new type of person we're growing, here. It's simple. It's the element that makes that person malleable enough to be led around."

"I'll bite," Taverner said patiently, hoping the line to Washington was good and clear.

"All Yancy's beliefs are insipid. The key is *thinness.* Every part of his ideology is diluted: nothing excessive. We've come as close as possible to *no* beliefs . . . you've noticed that. Wherever possible we've cancelled attitudes out, left the person a-political. Without a viewpoint."

"Sure," Taverner agreed. "But with the illusion of a viewpoint."

"All aspects of personality have to be controlled; we want the total person. So a specific attitude has to exist for each concrete question. In every respect, our rule is: *Yancy believes the least troublesome possibility.* The most shallow. The simple, effortless view, the view that fails to go deep enough to stir any real thought."

Taverner got the drift. "Good solid lulling views." Excitedly he hurried on, "But if an extreme, original view got in, one that took real effort to work out, something that was hard to live . . ."

"Yancy plays croquet. So everybody fools around with a mallet." Sipling's eyes gleamed. "But suppose Yancy had a preference for—Kriegspiel."

"For *what?*"

"Chess played on two boards. Each player has his own board, with a complete set of men. He never sees the other board. A moderator sees both; he tells each player when he's taken a piece, or lost a piece, or moved into an occupied square, or made an impossible move, or checked, or is in check himself."

"I see," Taverner said quickly. "Each player tries to infer his opponent's location on the board. He plays blind. Lord, it would take every mental faculty possible."

"The Prussians taught their officers military strategy that way. It's more than a game: it's a cosmic wrestling match. What if Yancy sat down in the evening with his wife and grandson, and played a nice lively six-hour game of Kriegspiel? Suppose his favorite books—instead of being western gun-toting anachronisms—were Greek tragedy? Suppose his favorite piece of music was Bach's *Art of the Fugue,* not *My Old Kentucky Home?*"

"I'm beginning to get the picture," Taverner said, as calmly as possible. "I think we can help."

BABSON squeaked once. "But this is—illegal!"

"Absolutely," Taverner acknowl-

edged. "That's why we're here." He waved the squad of Niplan secret-servicemen into the offices of the Yancy Building, ignoring the stunned workers sitting bolt-upright at their desks. Into his throat-mike he said, "How's it coming with the big-shots?"

"Medium," Kellman's faint voice came, strengthened by the relay system between Callisto and Earth. "Some slipped out of bounds to their various holdings, of course. But the majority never thought we'd take action."

"You can't!" Babson bleated, his great face hanging down in wattles of white dough. "What have we done? What law—"

"I think," Taverner interrupted, "we can get you on purely commercial grounds alone. You've used the name Yancy to endorse various manufactured products. There's no such person. That's a violation of statutes governing ethical presentation of advertising."

Babson's mouth closed with a snap, then slid feebly open. "No—such—person? But everybody knows John Yancy. Why, he's—" Stammering, gesturing, he finished, "He's everywhere."

Suddenly a wretched little pistol appeared in his pulpy hand; he was waving it wildly as Dorser stepped up and quietly knocked it skidding across the floor. Babson collapsed into fumbling hysterics.

Disgusted, Dorser clamped hand-grapples around him. "Act like a man," he ordered. But there was no response; Babson was too far gone to hear him.

Satisfied, Taverner plunged off, past the knot of stunned officials and workers, into the inner offices of the project. Nodding curtly, Taverner made his way up to the desk where Leon Sipling sat surrounded by his work.

The first of the altered gestalts was already flickering through the scanner. Together, the two men stood watching it.

"Well?" Taverner said, when it was done. "You're the judge."

"I believe it'll do," Sipling answered nervously. "I hope we don't stir up too much . . . it's taken eleven years to build it up; we want to tear it down by degrees."

"Once the first crack is made, it should start swaying." Taverner moved toward the door. "Will you be all right on your own?"

Sipling glanced at Eckmund who lounged at the end of the office, eyes fixed on the uneasily working yance-men. "I suppose so. Where are you going?"

"I want to watch this as it's released. I want to be around when the public gets its first look at it." At the door, Taverner lingered. "It's going to be a big job for you, putting out the gestalt on your own. You may not get much help, for awhile."

Sipling indicated his co-workers; they were already beginning to pick up their tempo where they had left off. "They'll stay on the job," he disagreed. "As long as they get full salaries."

Taverner walked thoughtfully across the hall to the elevator. A moment later he was on his way downstairs.

At a nearby street corner, a group of people had collected around a public vid-screen. Anticipating the late-afternoon t-v cast of John Edward Yancy.

The gestalt began in the regular way. There was no doubt about it: when Sipling wanted to, he could put together a good slice. And in this case he had done practically the whole pie.

In rolled-up shirt sleeves and dirt-stained trousers, Yancy crouched in his garden, a trowel in one hand, straw hat pulled down over his eyes, grinning into the warm glare of the sun. It was so real that Taverner could hardly believe no such person existed. But he had watched Sipling's sub-crews laboriously and expertly constructing the thing from the ground up.

"Afternoon," Yancy rumbled genially. He wiped perspiration from his steaming, florid face and got stiffly to his feet. "Man," he admitted, "it's a hot day." He indicated a flat of primroses. "I was setting them out. Quite a job."

So far so good. The crowd watched impassively, taking their ideological nourishment without particular resistance. All over the moon, in every house, schoolroom, office, on each street corner, the same gestalt was showing. And it would be shown again.

"Yes," Yancy repeated, "it's really hot. Too hot for those primroses —they like the shade." A fast pan-up showed he had carefully planted his primroses in the shadows at the base of his garage. "On the other hand," Yancy continued, in his smooth, good-natured, over-the-back-fence conversational voice, "my dahlias need lots of sun."

The camera leaped to show the dahlias blooming frantically in the blazing sunlight.

Throwing himself down in a striped lawnchair, Yancy removed his straw hat and wiped his brow with a pocket handkerchief. "So," he continued genially, "if anybody asked me which is better, shade or sun, I'd have to reply it depends on whether you're a primrose or a dahlia." He grinned his famous guileless boyish grin into the cameras. "I guess I must be a primrose —I've had all the sun I can stand for today."

The audience was taking it in without complaint. An inauspicious beginning, but it was going to have long-term consequences. And Yan-

cy was starting to develop them right now.

His genial grin faded. That familiar look, that awaited serious frown showing that deep thoughts were coming, faded into place. Yancy was going to hold forth: wisdom was on the way. But it was nothing ever uttered by him before.

"You know," Yancy said slowly, seriously, "that makes a person do some thinking." Automatically, he reached for his glass of gin and tonic—a glass which up until now would have contained beer. And the magazine beside it wasn't *Dog Stories Monthly;* it was *The Journal of Psychological Review.* The alteration of peripheral props would sink in subliminally; right now, all conscious attention was riveted on Yancy's words.

"It occurs to me," Yancy orated, as if the wisdom were fresh and brand-new, arriving just now, "that some people might maintain that, say, sunlight is *good* and shade is *bad.* But that's downright silly. Sunlight is good for roses and dahlias, but it would darn well finish off my fuchsias."

The camera showed his ubiquitous prize fuchsias.

"Maybe you know people like that. They just don't understand that—" And as was his custom, Yancy drew on folklore to make his point. "That one man's meat," he stated profoundly, "is another man's poison. Like, for instance, for breakfast I like a couple of eggs done sunny-side up, maybe a few stewed prunes, and a piece of toast. But Margaret, she prefers a bowl of cereal. And Ralf, he won't take either. He likes flapjacks. And the fellow down the street, the one with the big front lawn, he likes a kidney pie and a bottle of stout."

Taverner winced. Well, they would have to feel their way along. But still the audience stood absorbing it, word after word. The first feeble stirrings of a radical idea: that each person had a different set of values, a unique style of life. That each person might believe, enjoy, and approve of different things.

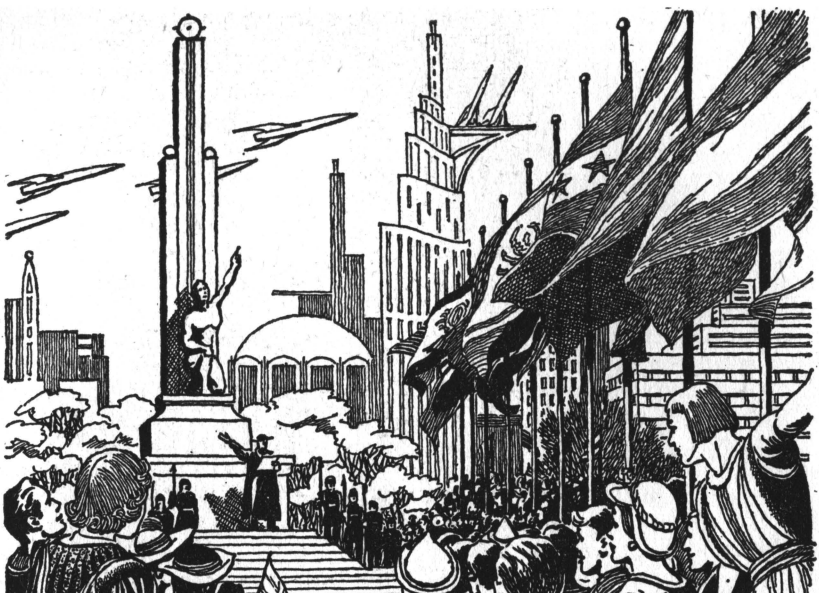
It would take time, as Sipling said. The massive library of tapes would have to be replaced; injunctions built up in each area would have to be broken down. A new type of thinking was being introduced, starting with a trite observation about primroses. When a nine-year-old boy wanted to find out if a war was just or unjust, he would have to inquire into his own mind. There would be no ready answer from Yancy; a gestalt was already being prepared on that, showing that every war had been called just by some, unjust by others.

There was one gestalt Taverner wished he could see. But it wouldn't be around for a long time; it would have to wait. Yancy was going to change his taste in art, slowly but steadily. One of these days, the public would learn that Yancy no longer enjoyed pastoral calendar scenes.

That now he preferred the art of that fifteenth century Dutch master of macabre and diabolical horror, Hieronymus Bosch. • • •

THE PATRIOT

Earth was through with war. And while it is right that man have peace, it is also right that he have freedom. But Mars was in slavery, and to Mars Cornel Lorensse dedicated his life and his talent . . .



Illustrated by Paul Orban

BY CHARLES L. FONTENAY

THE MARTIANNE is heard occasionally these days as a stirring concert or band selection. But there was a time when its playing was punishable by death—and its defiant strains challenged the harried police in tavern and drawing room all over the Earth.

In the days just before one *marche militaire* changed two worlds, Earth was weary of war, afraid of war, and desired to put behind it all reminders of war. The psychosociologists said uniforms of policemen, of postmen, of airline pilots, of lodge brethren, of theater ushers, were militaristic, and they were abolished. The psychosociologists said the march rhythm in music was nationalistic and instigated combative feelings, and it was banned. The scenes, the

sounds, the sights of antagonisms between men were forbidden.

The *Polonaise,* the *Marseillaise,* the *March of the Toys,* all suffered the same fate. Sousa's marches and Tschaikovsky's *1812 Overture* went the same way. *Dixie* and the *Hawaiian War Chant* were treated alike. All were relegated to tape in dusty archives, and their sale or public performance forbidden on pain of fine and prison sentence.

Whatever unlawful violence there might be on faraway Mars, Earth was through with all forms of war and its trappings.

Into these circumstances, Cornel Lorensse intruded on the night of December 6, 2010. He pressed his thin face against the steam-misted window of *The Avatar* in Nuyork and saw a piano standing idle inside

The Avatar was one of those small restaurants sunk a few feet below sidewalk level, which catered with exotic dishes to the tastes of a select group. It was well-populated at this hour, and Cornel licked his lips hungrily at the epicurean delights unveiled at each table.

He felt in the pocket of his worn coveralls. A single coin answered the exploration of his fingers. He was down to his last resource, and he was no nearer to finding the Friends than he had been when he landed.

He looked again at the piano, hesitated, then went down the three steps to the restaurant's door, pushed it open and went in. It was his good fortune that Wan Ti, owner of *The Avatar* was receiving his guests in person at the moment.

"I'll play you a concert for a meal," said Cornel, gesturing toward the piano.

Wan Ti's dark eyes swept over him, taking in the battered coveralls, the earnest face, the untrimmed blond hair, the slender hands. Wan Ti's yellow countenance remained bland.

"I have a piano player," said Wan Ti.

Cornel laughed, with a note of desperation in his tone.

"Let me play one selection," he urged. "If you want to stop me then, you can kick me out."

What Wan Ti thought could not be gauged from his expression, but he had not built his clientele against fierce competition by turning his face away from the unusual. He inclined his head slightly, and waved Cornel to the piano.

Cornel sat down at the keyboard, brushed his hair back from his eyes, and flexed his long fingers. Thrusting the tantalizing aroma of food to the back of his mind, he played.

The murmur of conversation in *The Avatar* faltered and died as the fervid melody of Beethoven's *Sonata Appassionata* filled the air. It was unusual music to people accustomed to hearing the more modern compositions of Schonberg, Harris and Westine. The comparison of Cornel's inspired touch to the mechanical renditions of Wan Ti's regular piano player was noticeable even to those who were unfamiliar with music.

When the final movements of the *allegro ma non troppo* faded, Cor-

nel sat back and looked toward Wan Ti. The proprietor cocked an ear toward the rare applause, smiled and nodded slightly. Exultantly, Cornel swung into Chopin's *Fantasie-Impromptu* and followed it, not pausing, with Liszt's *Waldesrauschen* and Schubert's *Serenade.*

The applause was just as enthusiastic, but by now the hum of voices and the click of eating utensils had begun to rise again. Frowning slightly, Cornel hunched his shoulders and began a composition the most musical of his audience had never heard before.

Like the molten notes of the nightingale, the music floated and throbbed above the diners, almost a physical thing. The people in the restaurant paused with food halfway to their lips. They turned to see the artist, carefully, so that no chair would scrape. The waiters stopped with trays in their hands. Wan Ti stopped a newly arriving couple, his fingers at his lips.

In the midst of the applause that roared through the room when Cornel had finished, a waiter tapped his shoulder.

"Excuse me, sir," he said. "Miss Meta Erosine asks that you join her at her table."

Rising and bowing to his audience, Cornel followed the man to a table at the rear of the room, where a woman sat with her escort.

Meta Erosine's pale, heart-shaped face, with its mop of short black hair and luminous black eyes, was widely known on Earth, but Cornel had never been to Earth before. Her vibrant beauty blazed on a victim unprepared for it.

She was clad in the cretan-can-can style just then becoming popular, with breasts exposed over a tight bodice and a short, ruffled skirt gathered in front to reveal the knees. She smoked a long-stemmed, tiny-bowled pipe, studded with jewels.

Beside her sat a sleek, mustached young man in ruffled lavender shirt and pink tights, his fingers covered with rings.

"Sit down and eat with me, musician," invited Meta. Somewhat dubiously, Cornel took a seat at her right, across the table from the beruffled escort.

"Meta, I wish you wouldn't demean yourself by taking up with tramps and guttersnipes," objected her companion, wrinkling his nose.

"Leave me, Passo," she ordered, waving an imperious hand. "Why should I sup with painted popinjays when I can adore genius?"

Passo flushed and his mouth fell open. But he arose and slunk quietly away.

"Now, musician," said Meta, leaning over the table so that her powdered breasts brushed the glassware, "tell me, what was that last number you played?"

"One of my own compositions," he said diffidently. The odor of food was too much for him, and he leaned across the table to appropriate Passo's untouched salad. "Its name is *Wind in the Canals.*"

"It should be *Le Vent dans les Canals,*" she said. "You should title your compositions in French —they will be more fashionable."

"I don't know French," he said,

munching a stick of celery. "We don't speak French on Mars."

She laughed, a laugh like the music of his playing.

"You will, my genius," she promised him. Her eyes ran over his lean face, his unkempt hair. "You look as though you could use shelter and clothing. Come home with me tonight. I shall give your genius to the world."

CORNEL never had experienced such luxury as was his in the apartment Meta assigned to him in her magnificent home in Jersi. He had his personal servant. New clothes were waiting for him. A barber cut his hair when he had finished a hot, scented bath, and the big bed in which he slept was soft as down.

Meta asked no information of him until they met at a late breakfast the next morning. There, beautiful in translucent white negligee, she sipped her coffee and asked questions.

"I came from Mars to get help for my people," he said. "We need guns and supplies, food and oxygen equipment."

"You're one of the Charax rebels?" she asked.

"Rebels?" He snorted. "We're free people, fighting for our freedom. We want self-government, we want to own our land and our homes, we want the right to rule our own lives."

"That's guaranteed in the Constitution," said Meta.

"Earth's Constitution. Mars isn't Earth. The Mars Corporation controls botn spaceports. It owns all business and industry on Mars. It's milking the planet dry of resources and profits, and it's set up a company government that makes the people of Mars no better than slaves."

He smiled a bitter smile.

"Earth's government protects the freedom of Earth's people," he said, "but the people of Earth don't know what's happening on Mars. The Mars Corporation has its senators and representatives, bought and paid for, so the Earth government sends troops and supplies to Mars to fight the battles of the Mars Corporation. We aren't rebels, we're fighting for our just freedom."

"If the Mars Corporation controls the spaceports, how did you get to Earth?" she demanded.

"We have three battered ships hidden in the desert near Syrtis Major," said Cornel. "It takes a long time for us to get fuel to take one of them up, but they thought it worthwhile if I could get to Earth and get help for my people."

"Why you?"

"My music is well known on Mars, and my people know that the people of Earth love music. Here on Earth, where there is peace and prosperity, people pay to hear good music and good musicians. Our plan was for me to give great concerts and at each concert ask the people of Earth to help their Martian brothers gain their freedom."

"A good way to get arrested," said Meta dryly. "You'd be convicted of inciting military action

and sentenced to prison in any court of Earth."

"I didn't know that, but I suppose the Friends would have a way."

"The Friends?"

"The Friends of Mars. It's an organization of Earth people trying to help us. I suppose it must be a secret and illegal organization, for I found that the man I was supposed to get in touch with had been arrested, and I haven't been able to find out anything more about the Friends."

"Such an organization would be illegal on Earth," said Meta. "Come here, Cornel. I want to show you something."

Taking him by the arm, she led him from the breakfast room to a terrace overlooking a snowy valley. She moved closer to him in the chill wind that billowed her thin garments around her, and waved her hand at the scene below them.

"This is Earth," she said. "Look at those mountain peaks, the blue sky and the white clouds. In summer, this valley is clothed with green, and warm breezes bring the scent of flowers to this terrace. Have you ever seen anything like this on Mars?"

"No," he said softly. "Mars is always cold and dusty, and the sky is nearly black."

"Cornel," she said softly, you're a great musician. Mars is rough frontier territory, and the frontier has no place for music. Last night you saw what your music could mean here.

"Forget Mars. You belong to Earth."

THE METEORIC rise of Cornel Lorensse to fame in 2011 and 2012 now commands a full column in the *Encyclopaedia Terrestriana.* Brushed off in a single sentence in the encyclopaedia, but much discussed in that day, was his close relationship with Meta Erosine, his patroness.

For half a decade, wealthy, beautiful Meta Erosine had been the toast of Earth. She was an actress, a painter, a singer, a socialite, and she had changed men almost as often as she changed the dresses she wore. Her face was familiar in newspapers and on television screens, her husky songs were on a million recording tapes, her colorful antics were the grist for magazine articles and the subject of denunciations from the pulpit.

In Cornel she seemed to have found a vehicle for all the burning fire of her energy. She pushed him, she groomed him, she threw the power of her wealth behind him. His slender figure clad in a black velvet suit sat at polished pianos on a hundred stages; and for each concert, the auditoriums and the audiences were bigger.

Meta was with him on these concert tours; and between tours he stayed in seclusion at the big house in Jersi, putting into music his memories of his native Mars. Each tour introduced to the world the new compositions of Cornel Lorensse.

What he wrote and played was the haunting music of the deserts, the canals and the marches. Into his music he poured the loneliness of the red sands and the violence of

the desert winds, the beauty of sable skies jeweled with enormous stars, the happiness of the helmeted traveler when he reaches the green valleys of the canals, the hopes and joys of human lovers gathered in bubble-like domes amid the chill wastelands.

He did not, as Meta had wanted to, give his compositions French titles. He named them as he would have named them on Mars: *The Desert Wanderer, Swift Phobos, Marsh Gardens,* names that were strange to Earth, but were familiar themes of his own people.

His melodies took music-loving Earth by storm. They burst upon a world in which 20th century dissonance had strangled 19th century romanticism, like flowers in a garden of crystal. It was Cornel Lorensse and those pioneer composers who avidly aped him who began the 21st century Renaissance in music.

Without shame, Cornel lived on the largesse of his patroness, for his growing fees and royalties all went for one purpose. He had found the society called the Friends of Mars, and everything that he earned he poured into their coffers to finance privateer space vessels able to elude the Mars Corporation's company-owned warships and to keep a thin line of supplies flowing to the Free Martian people scattered in their desert strongholds.

Like any secret society in a hostile culture, the Friends of Mars maintained dissociated chapters, connected by the slenderest and most carefully guarded lines of communication. Cornel knew of only one chapter, in Nuyork, and to this he took his contributions when he was between concert tours.

During one of those visits, late in the summer of 2012, Javan Tomlin, chief of the chapter, told him that all he contributed was still not enough for Mars to become free.

"Our base of support isn't broad enough," said Javan. "Ships cost money, fuel costs money, supplies cost money. Guns and ammunition are most expensive of all, because military weapons are illegal. No one man can support such an operation, even when he makes the kind of money you're making."

There were half a dozen of the Friends of Mars, besides Cornel and Javan, in the meeting room. The others nodded agreement at Javan's words.

"None of us are wealthy and we can't contribute much but our time and work," said one of them. "The wealthy people all sympathize with the Mars Corporation."

"That's too much of a blanket indictment," said Javan. "The Mars Corporation controls the spacelines to Mars, and what little information comes back to Earth is censored and heavily propagandized in their favor. Most people don't know what's happening on Mars. Our people need a powerful radio transmitter to broadcast to Earth, Cornel."

Cornel shook his head.

"What information the people of Earth get must be disseminated on Earth," he said. "Powerful radio equipment would take up space

and weight needed for arms. Besides, the Mars Corporation forces have air power and directional finders. They'd bomb a permanent installation before it had a chance to send out its second broadcast."

"All we can do is work and hope," said Javan gloomily. "If we had a fleet of about a dozen good ships, we might be able to swing it, but we have only two and a third abuilding."

"There are three on Mars," Cornel pointed out.

"One was blasted in space last week, and they're too old to lift more than half cargo, anyhow," said Javan. "The corporation controls the Earth space stations, through the government, and we have to use direct drive stage-rockets."

Cornel left, not feeling very optimistic. At the curb outside the club, he looked up and down the street for a cab to take him to the heliport where his copter was parked.

There was no cab in sight, but from a side street a little distance away a long black limousine swung into the boulevard, sped swiftly to the club entrance and halted. The back door opened and Meta leaned out, beckoning.

"Get in, quick!" she urged. "We've got to get away from here!"

Not understanding, Cornel got in. The car roared away with a burst of acceleration that thrust him back on the cushions beside her.

"What in Saturn?" he demanded and turned to look out the rear window.

A squad of police cars was converging on the club he had just left. Sirens screaming, they pulled up, blocking the street, and armed officers in plain clothes leaped out and hurried into the club.

Meta put her arms around his neck and drew his head down to her lap.

"They're raiding the Friends of Mars," she said, and a soothing note crept into her tone. "You're safe, darling. They don't know you were there."

"But how did they know? How did you know?" he demanded, struggling unsuccessfully to free himself from the imprisonment of her embrace. The sound of the sirens had died in the distance behind them.

"I told them," Meta said firmly. "Where do you think I get the wealth you've been living on, darling? I own a fourth of the stock of the Mars Corporation."

THE NEXT morning, Cornel had disappeared. Meta was frantic. Every available agency was pressed into service, but Nuyork was a city of fifteen million people and Cornel had vanished.

It was two weeks before he returned. When he did, he was gaunt and grim and dirty as he had been the night Meta had first seen him in *The Avatar*.

"Darling, why did you run away?" she asked, holding him close in her arms.

"I came back because I love you," he answered tiredly. "But I came back, too, because I love

Mars more, Meta. I had to go away and think what I was to do."

"It's all right now," she soothed. "You understand that the odds against your rebels are just too heavy. You have a life on Earth to live."

"Yes," he said in a low voice. "But there'll be no concerts this season, Meta."

"Cornel, you can't cancel now! The schedule's all arranged."

"I shall cancel," he said firmly. "You want me to live on Earth, so you must let me learn about Earth. I intend to spend this winter studying psychosociology and terrestrial law—and composing."

Her brow cleared.

"If you'll continue your composing, it's all right," she said. "Next season's concerts can be the greatest ever. I'll pay off the promoters, darling."

So it was done. That season the admirers of Cornel Lorensse's music had to content themselves with recordings. Cornel himself spent his time quietly at Nuyork University and at the house in Jersi.

As she had said, the 2013 concert season was Cornel's greatest, right from the start. In part it was due to Meta's own efforts, for she spent tremendous sums of money and utilized her own famous personality to great advantage in promotional work.

Across the nation, across the the world, the tour swept, snowballing constantly. Christmas of 2013, and Cornel Lorensse introduced a great new hymn, *From the Polar Caps.* New Year's Day, 2014, and *The Years to Come* was introduced by radio and television at a thousand parties.

There had been some quibbling at the beginning of the season, because the business directors of the tour had wanted to combine the drawing power of Cornel's name with that of well-known concert orchestras. Cornel insisted on using his own orchestra, built up carefully during his year of study. As the season progressed, it became apparent that Cornel's name alone was enough of a drawing card.

February, March, 2014, and every network had bought into the schedule. When Cornel Lorensse's weekly concerts were on the air, there was nothing else on radio or television, anywhere in the world, except on the non-affiliated local stations. April passed triumphantly, and the final concert was scheduled for May 15 in Rome.

The D'Annunzio Colosseum, built in 1971, was filled to capacity. Careful staging was necessary, to care for all the cameras and microphones of the various television and radio networks.

The program was not a long one: Debussy's *Clair de Lune,* Lorensse's *Swift Phobos,* Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata,* Waco's *Variations on a Theme by Altdown* —and the words "To be announced." It was a familiar phrase, and it always meant the introduction of a new composition by Cornel Lorensse.

The concert went smoothly before—how many listeners? Fifty million? A hundred million? Two

hundred million? On the great, brightly lighted stage Cornel played the concert grand with superb mastery and bowed to the applause, a pale, solemn figure in black.

When he had acknowledged the acclamation after the Waco piece, the audience waited in hushed silence for his announcement of the final number on the program.

"The composition I am about to play is the culmination of my musical career," Cornel said quietly into the microphones. "It is a product of my studies, not only of music, but of psychosociology and law.

"In hypnoschool last year, I studied the effects of music on the human mind. It is a new field, and many of you are aware of it only through the fact that certain kinds of music are forbidden by law as dangerous to peace on Earth.

"I have tried to go into it much more deeply than that."

He smiled bitterly.

"Most of you know that I am a Martian, one of the so-called Martian rebels," he said. "I think much of the appeal of my music to you has been its Martian quality. To the people of Earth, most of whom have never seen Mars, it has pictured my planet.

"My latest composition will do so even more graphically, for it has been composed on a deliberate psychological foundation. This song will show Mars to you. It will show you my people, and what my people want.

"I may add that I have studied the law carefully, and I can assure you that this composition is not military in nature.

"Ladies and gentlemen of Earth, accompanied by the orchestra I shall now play *The Martianne.*"

In the control rooms of the auditorium and of relay points throughout the world, censors, vaguely alarmed by Cornel's words, hovered with their fingers on cut-off keys. Then they relaxed. Cornel had told the truth. There was nothing of a military nature in the opening bars of *The Martianne.*

It was a theme handled, but less competently, in some of his other compositions. The woodwinds began on a soft, sad note, gradually rising in power, like the thin winds that moaned across the Martian desert sands. Into this, almost inaudibly at first, crept the clear piano notes that marked the cautious, wondering intrusion of humanity on an alien world.

The drums beat the construction of the domes, the horns blared the landing of the spaceships, the violins cried the hopes of the men and women who went to Mars to find a new life. It was a picture in music, so skilfully drawn that when the first discordance crept in, every listener could identify it instantly as the age-old greed of man seeking to subvert frontier freedoms to his own selfish ends.

When the blare of trumpets and the ruffle of drums thundered into the final militant theme of *The Martianne,* every listener knew it bespoke the valiant fight of men for freedom against an oppressor.

Every listener knew what he heard was music that had been

(Continued on page 120)

ECOLOGY ON ROLLINS ISLAND

BY VARLEY LANG

Man's every resource was being stripped to feed the millions on Earth . . . but George was a throwback, and a poacher, and his punishment had to fit the crime . . .

THERE'S a library in a small town near Charles Neck on Murdock Sound. It's so run down and useless that a lot of old books still hang around on the shelves, the big kind with stiff backs and all kinds of fancy little stars or small, curly designs to show the end of one section and the beginning of another. Very quaint. After the WFI took over the Sound in our remote area, I didn't have much to do in the day time, so I used to walk down the road to town and get a handful of these stiff backs once in a while. From reading them I got the notion I'm a one man resistance movement, which is pitiful and foolish, and, I gather, always has been a seedy, run-down sort of thing, a backward state of mind and feelings. That's me, alright: backward. I tried to be forward, but it made me hard to live with; and since I live mostly with myself, I had to quit. Still, I knew I couldn't get away with backwardness, and that sooner or later the WFI would slap me down, squash this bussing insect, and get on with its work again as usual.

Sure enough, one bleak November morning, when I was half through a couple of eggs and a cup of coffee, I heard the throb of a motor. I walked down to the end of my wharf and looked skyward. I was pretty sure they wouldn't come by land, because most of the secondary roads were in bad shape; and they wouldn't travel by water, because that took too much gas and time. In fact, the WFI never wasted anything. They couldn't afford to. Everything went for food, its

Illustrated by Paul Orban

growth, collection, and processing. The big freighters, some of them, had atomic piles, but that power was impossibly clumsy and expensive for smaller boats. So they came by air in the usual inspection helicopter. The pilot dropped her in the cove right alongside the wharf and made fast. Three men stepped onto the planks. They had the wheat sheaf insignia of the WFI on their overcoat arms and caps, and they looked cold and bored. A small sea sucked at the pilings and the helicopter rose and fell, grating against the wharf. I looked at the pilot and said, "Better put your chafing gear out if you intend staying a while." We all watched while the pilot put a few kapoks at the tight spots. Then he looked at a notebook and said, "You George Arthur Henry?"

I said, "Call me George."

This inspector was the usual type: tired from long hours, bored from doing nothing on a weary round of food inspections. He hunched his shoulders against the wind.

I said, "It's warmer inside."

They followed me into the kitchen of the house. All three of them started to sit down, then stopped, and walked over to the table in perfect step. They looked at the cold remains of my breakfast eggs. The WFI inspector shoved his hat up and said, "Eggs." The others nodded, wordless with wonder. Then the inspector said, "Chickens?"

"Where," I said, "do you think I got the eggs?"

The little man alongside the inspector came to life. In three dextrous movements he had glasses on, a notebook in his hand, and stylus poised. "What do you feed them?" he inquired eagerly.

"Seeds," I said, "insects, chopped up garter snakes, mussels, ground up oyster shells. You boys have all the grain."

There was an excited light in the little man's eyes. He hurried out to a broken down shed to examine the chickens.

That left two of them. The inspector continued to gaze at the remains on the plate in a dreamy way. The other man straightened his big shoulders, looked at me, and said, jerking his thumb toward the shed, "Mr. Carter's an ecologist. He just came along for the trip. He's on his way to the Government Experimental Farm over at Murdock. I'm a government sociologist. I was sent here to have a talk with you. My name is Ranson."

"Sure. Sit down. I guess I'm licked, but there's no use making a rumpus about it."

I turned to the inspector whose eyes were still caught in the egg plate. I said, "Ever taste them?"

"Once," he said, in a far away voice. I went to the cupboard and came back with a paper bag full of eggs and put it in his hands. He held them as if someone had just given him the wheat sheaf badge of merit.

"I won't be needing these after our little talk, I expect. Take them home to the kiddies."

He smiled, looked at the sociologists, who grinned back and nodded. The inspector walked very

carefully out of the back door and down to the wharf to stow his eggs in the helicopter.

Ranson shifted in his chair. He said, "That was very nice of you, Mr. Henry."

"George," I said.

"Against the law, of course." There was a smile around his eyes. "Are you against the law, George?"

"Yes. No use bluffing. You know the story. All the waters and everything in them are WFI. All the land and everything on it. I don't like packaged food. I like real food. I don't like my oysters, crabs, clams, fish minced up and blended with chick weed, cereals, yeast, algae, plankton, and flavored to taste a little like steak. And plenty of others feel the same. I have a market."

"An illegal market."

"Yes," I said. "By God, if you had told my father, before I was born, that the oysters he tonged could not be eaten as oysters, he'd have laughed in your face. And if you had told him he wouldn't even be allowed to tong them, he'd have cussed you good and proper!"

"People have to be fed. The only way we can do it is to combine the total food resources of the world, process and package them, and do it as efficiently as possible. That means absolute control of *all* food sources and their harvesting. You could work for WFI, George. It would be important work."

"I know. It's so important nothing else gets done. Have you seen the roads around here? Half the bridges are down across Charles Neck and Walter Hook. You can't get gas. You can't get telephones, and if you happen to have one, it doesn't work half the time. And the busses don't run any more. And—"

Ranson held up his hand. "It's an emergency, George. You have to realize that. It's been building up for a long time, long before your father worked the oyster beds in Murdock Sound."

"There's another thing," I said. "Before you fellows closed the Sound, I was independent. I had my own boat and I made my own way. Now you put your WFI scoops in the Sound and the whole job is done in a month or two. And who are the watermen? A couple of clerks to every scoop who turn a valve every once in a while and draw their packaged food, clothing, and entertainment once a week. Do you call that a job? Why, those food clerks couldn't even lift a pair of thirty foot rakes, let alone tong with them."

"We get more oysters, George, and in less time, and we do it scientifically."

Ranson tapped his notebook with the stylus and he looked out of the kitchen window. He was giving me time to cool off. He'd been kind and patient when he didn't have to be either. With his job he had no time to sit and reason with a one man resistance movement. He had no time for anything but food, and organizing society to keep it grubbing incessantly for food, and, at the same time, to keep society as orderly and contented as possible. I was not orderly and I was not contented. But I was just one man, not society. I cooled off.

I said, "Look, Ranson. It's like

this. I know you're right. I've had a look around, and I've thought about it some. The figures are with you: too many men and not enough food. Only thing is, even from your point of view, I'm not fit for WFI. I have to be on my own. There ought to be somewhere, someplace for a man, instead of a food clerk —" I trailed off unhappily.

"I'm afraid you have no alternative, George. You are a criminal in the eyes of the WFI. Either you will work for WFI or you will be punished." He paused.

"I won't work for them."

Carter, the ecologist, burst in at the door, slammed his gloves down in the middle of the kitchen table. "Ranson, you never saw anything like it. Fifty in the flock, two roosters, all in fine shape. Lice of course, some bone malformation in the legs. But healthy."

He began to ask me dozens of questions, but Ransom interrupted.

"I need your help, Carter, and time's wasting. Among other depredations, George Henry, here, has been robbing government oyster beds, trapping government crabs, netting government fish, presumably at night. I needn't add that he has a ready and lucrative market. In effect, he refuses to cease his depredations, he refuses to join the WFI, and he is generally uncooperative."

Carter said, "uncooperative," in an absent way. He dragged his mind away from a flock of fifty fowl living in a most unusual ecology, narrowed his eyes, and asked a shrewd question.

"How did he get there?"

"What?"

"To the beds."

Ranson said, "Where did you get the gas, George?"

"I didn't. Took the engine out, put in a well and center-board, shipped a mast, and rigged her for sail. She's tucked away up in Marshwater Creek."

They were astounded. Nobody had sailed pleasure craft for a generation: no leisure and no money for such a waste of time; and sail craft were too inefficient for food collecting.

"My God, George," Ranson said, "you're a living anachronism!"

Carter nodded. He adjusted his glasses, looked at me, and said quietly, "He is also an able man."

"His abilities will be largely wasted in a Penal Food Processing Plant," Ranson said grimly.

"Oh, I agree, I agree." Carter nodded his head emphatically. "The wrong environment entirely. No scope. No initiative." He gave me a glance of understanding that warmed me right through and also had the unfortunate effect of taking some of the starch out of me. I had been prepared for hostility and indifference. I stood up and walked to the sink for a glass of water I didn't want.

"Now," Carter said, talking to Ranson, "you take the way he walks. Notice how he swings his arms, with his hands a little forward, as if ready to grip, and the tilt of his head, alert, watchful. You don't see that often. Different attitude, different environment."

Ranson sighed. "Get down to

business."

"Yes. There's always this terrible lack of manpower, machine power, everything, all swallowed up in food. And besides, the men can't stand those bird stations. Too lonely. Can't meet an emergency. Four of them died on Rollins Island three winters ago when the power plant failed. Just sat there and froze. Terrible thing. Had to install emergency two-way radios; need the equipment elsewhere."

"They died of loneliness, if you ask me," Ranson said.

Carter nodded. "And no gas available for boat inspection. Helicopter too wasteful for a single station. Put George out there with one or two others. Could you sail out? Seaworthy? Big enough?"

I said yes.

"Good. Food processing all done by machines. Just feed birds in. Take up to half the colony of young birds when bred, half the old ones when coming to nest. Regular inspection of tern colonies by sail, your boat. Helicopter lands June twenty, small freighter in July to load processed birds in Rollins Harbor. Just the thing."

He took off his glasses to show that the problem had been solved.

"Look," Ranson said. "I don't have anything against George personally. I want him to be useful and contented. If he can't be contented, then at least I want him to be useful, instead of wasteful. Robbing government food resources is a grave offense, but even that doesn't justify putting him down in the middle of a pile of excrement where no ordinary man can breath for more than a few minutes without stifling."

"Healthy," Carter said. "Healthy. It does stink. That's one reason we have such trouble keeping the stations manned."

"Boys," I said. "What is this pile of dung I'm supposed to sit on? And what birds? And why?"

Carter explained. In the desperate search for food, the sea birds were now being subjected to an annual harvest. From various nesting places along all the ocean coasts in the world, birds were harvested, to say nothing of their eggs, in large numbers. It was simply a matter of catching and killing the birds, gathering their eggs, and feeding the processing hoppers with same. These foods were later shipped to Food Processing Plants to be added to other harvests and packaged for consumption. In some cases, more specialized processing was necessary, as with the fulmars on Rollins Island. The fulmars were much prized because their alimentary system contained an especially stinking oil rich in fat and vitamin A. In their case, no eggs were collected, since they bred only once in a season, and the birds were separately processed to retrieve the oil.

Literally millions of sea birds and their eggs were cropped yearly from nesting sites on the east coast of North America alone. It was a regular and assured source of food on an enormous scale the world over. The thousands of tons of excrement were also gathered every five years to be used in food processing and in agriculture. It was

the policy of the WFI to waste nothing and to use everything.

The cropping of the young birds took place in the spring and early summer, depending on the species. The adult birds were trapped by various devices when they returned to their nests. Over-cropping was carefully avoided to insure a steady annual production.

"If it's the island or a Penal Food Plant, I'll take the island. I'm a waterman, not a bird collector. At least I'll get a chance to use the boat once in a while."

Both the WFI men looked relieved. Then Ranson put a question.

"Do you know of anyone else around here who might be fitted for such work? I'm not asking you to inform. I know there's been a good deal of discontent in this Sound region, which is one reason why I'm here. The island may be a solution for other misfits as well."

I thought it over. "The Jackson boys aren't very happy. They were the best men with drift nets this Sound has ever seen. Now they sit on stools all day long and watch a row of bottles pass in front of lights. Once in a while they lift a bottle out of the line and put it aside. They get very drunk every night on some stuff they make out of berries and dandelions from the marsh."

Ranson sighed. Carter again passed a warming look of complete understanding, and nodded encouragement.

"Then there's Pete Younger. He was a trapper before WFI closed the muskrat areas. He turns a valve several hundred times a day in the Small Fish Processor. He oils his traps and talks to himself. He may be too far gone. I think he is."

"Anyone else?"

"Others. But the WFI has a bight on them for good, I guess. They were men, once."

"Are the Jackson men married?"

I smiled. "No. We're dying out."

Carter chuckled.

IT WAS a twenty-five mile sail to Rollins Island. The Jackson boys and I loaded the boat with clothing mostly. Food was stored on the island. I took along four pairs of oyster rakes, I didn't have the heart to leave them behind. And Bill and Joy took a huge ball of linen twine, ropes, corks, rings, all the makings for a drift net.

Unexpectedly, Carter showed up at the last minute by helicopter to see us off. He jumped up on the wharf smiling.

"About those chickens," he said, "they're condemned stock of course. Better take them along. And keep an eye on them. Want to know how they make out in a new environment."

Then he took me aside and handed me a small book.

"Lot of information in this. Written by a small animal ecologist. Read it. Read it carefully. Think about it. Read it again, and think some more. Got that?"

I said, "Sure. I'll read it." I had the notion he was trying to get something over without actually coming out with it flat, so I listened carefully.

He paused for a while, wiping

his glasses and pursing his lips.

"That island's not right for fulmars and gannets. Wrong environment. Never have multiplied as they should. Whole thing should be concentrated north. Plenty of cliff sites north. None here. Won't do. Terns, yes. Fulmars and gannets, no. Trouble is, WFI is tenacious. Stupidly so. It works, they say. I tell them it works badly. It's going to take a lot to move them: total failure of a colony or two.

"You're intelligent, George. Put two and two together. Wish you luck."

He shook my hand quickly and jumped into the helicopter. Bill and Joy had to call me twice before I could come out of a trance of bewildered speculation. In a daze I helped the boys load our last piece of equipment: a huge barrel of salt they had pilfered from the local Food Plant.

THE ISLAND is big, about five by fifteen miles, and it must have been a fine piece of land. It still was, even though mucked everywhere with white-to-greenish bird dung. There were steep hills on the mainland side, marshes to seaward, and in the middle natural meadowland broken by woods containing pine, and some beech and maple. We moored in a small but fairly deep harbor at a wharf for loading foods. Our barracks stood just off the wharf. In addition to all the necessities, there was a two-way radio, marked "Use in emergency only", and a handbook with information on approximate numbers of birds to be taken, locations of nesting sites, and so on. Equipment, including snares and nets, was stored in an equipment room. And there was a storeroom containing packaged foods, no freezing or cooling necessary for preservation.

Behind the barracks stood a warehouse for storing processed birds, and a shop with the processors themselves. Everything looked orderly and efficient. A small plant supplied us with light and heat and power for the machines.

We arrived in November. By December, the first sea birds began to return to their nesting sites, a few at a time. Soon we were so busy snagging them as they came to land that we had little time for anything but work and sleep. Even so, Bill took the time to salt several dozens of gannets and fulmars for future eating, and he was looking forward to the eggs.

Spring and early summer soon rolled around, and we were collecting young birds, the nestlings. So it went.

I can't say any of us liked the work. For one thing we all sickened of the endless slaughter. For another, the stench and dirt were overwhelming. The island should have been a fine place for living. There were sheltered spots for houses, a small harbor, woodlots, meadows for cattle and pigs, some bottom land for food crops, the sea for fish—a fine location; but it was ruined by birds. It was a slimy, stinking hell.

The birds flew everywhere in huge flocks, especially in the morning when the gannets and fulmars

came back from fishing at sea. Excrement fell from the sky like a stinking sleet. We couldn't get away from the smell or the smell away from us. It was in our clothing, hair, under our fingernails. No watermen ever washed so often or so thoroughly as we did, but the stink remained. We lost weight and appetite steadily, for the packaged food tasted of excrement soon after it was opened, or seemed to, which is just as bad.

However, by the end of June most of the birds had left, and we had our helicopter inspection. The same man who was fascinated by the cold remains of a couple of eggs in my kitchen was on this route, and we cooked three or four of our chickens. His enormous appetite sharpened ours, and we had a feast. He was almost tearfully grateful. By July, the freighter had put in, loaded, and left. For the first time in many months, we were unoccupied.

Bill and Joy immediately set about knitting a large drift net. They were happily excited at the prospect of gilling large numbers of government fish. As for me, I sat down to read a book on small animal ecology.

I read that book through three times. I kept at it night and day, and it was the hardest work I've ever done, because I wasn't reading just to pass the time. There was a message in that book, I was sure of it, a message from Carter, a man I liked and trusted.

By the time I began to get a glimmering of an idea as to what Carter's message was, the boys had their net knitted and hung. I went back to the book to find out what to do about this idea, and the boys sailed out to drift the net. I waited for them in a sweat of impatience. They came back at dawn the next day with a boat load of food fish. I met them at the wharf.

"Bill," I said, "what are you going to do with that load of fish?"

Bill looked at the fish. He said with slow and tremendous satisfaction, "I aim to eat them fish, George Henry."

"Bill," I said, "not even you can eat all those fish. I've got a scheme. Save back some of the fish, sure. Let Joy smoke a few even. But take the rest into Murdock tonight and sell them to Hornsby. He used to buy my oysters. He'll buy your fish."

"What for?" Bill asked.

"Get some bootleg gin," I said.

"That makes sense. What else?"

"Rats," I said. "I want rats. Buy some traps or get Pete Younger to make some. Not muskrats. Barn rats. As many as you can catch."

"Fish," Bill said. "Fish for rats. Boy, the birds has got you."

He gave in after a while, more to keep me good natured than for any other reason, that and the gin. He came back with two dozen live, healthy specimens, and watched with an open mouth as I let them loose.

THE MONTHS passed, and I was worried. To drive the problem from my head, I took the boat out and surveyed the shallow waters off the island. I found something. I found a bed of oysters in broken

rock, a bed not marked on WFI charts, because you could see it hadn't been worked for a long time. Later, I located clam beds on the marshy side of the island. The damn place was a paradise, or might be, once those birds were cut down, but I couldn't eliminate them by sheer slaughter because of the WFI.

There didn't seem to be many rats around. December came and all the filthy, stinking work with it, and still no rats. Once in a while, eggs would be missing from occupied nests, and that was all. Gulls could have gotten those. We toiled through stinking February, foul March, odiferous April, and evil-smelling May. Still no rats.

I sent Bill back to the mainland for more; and by September, rats were everywhere. Bill looked at me from his bunk one night and said, "I hope you're satisfied."

I was more than that. I was terrified. They absolutely swarmed. It was impossible to walk from the barracks to the boat at mid-day without having to kick rats off the path. They consumed most of the non-metallic gear in the boat, including the sail. So far, they hadn't gnawed a way into our barracks store room, or we'd have literally starved to death.

"Boys," I said, "just sit tight. Wait till December. These rats are the best friends you ever had. They're going to make this island livable. No more stink and stench."

"What," said Bill, "are you going to do with the rats when the birds are gone?"

Joy merely moaned.

"We'll kill them."

"If they don't get us first," Bill said.

It was an awesome and bloody slaughter. The fulmars and gannets, most of the gulls, some of the terns, were either wiped out or harried off the island in a single season. And the island became a heaving, moving, revolting mass of rats, and nothing but rats. They attacked us on sight, from sheer hunger. Not a blade of grass grew anywhere on the island, and rats are not grass eaters as an ordinary thing. There was one hopeful sign. They were beginning to eat each other.

Day after day we were caged in our barracks. The constant squealing and scratching under the barracks was bad enough. What made us desperate was the fact that they had gnawed a way into the store room and most of the packaged food was gone. We still had some smoked fish hung on the rafters, and a few salted fulmars in the barrel, but that was all. It was then that we remembered the two-way radio, marked "Use in emergency only". Bill said, after weighing all the evidence coolly and carefully, that this here, in his opinion, was an emergency.

I got WFI mainland and finally persuaded them to put me in touch with Carter, Bird Stations Ecologist. I told him we were having a little trouble with the genus Rattus, and would he, for God's sake, do something about it, quick. I can still near him laughing. It was a while before he could speak at all.

"Keep them at bay, general. I'll be over early tomorrow morning."

I don't believe any men have ever been so happy to see Carter as we were.

"They'll balance," he said. "Starvation will do its work. I've brought along a couple of pairs of barn owls. They'll help a lot. I see you read that ecology book. Good job. Station virtually wiped out. I'm sending supplies over in a week's time. Anybody wants to know, you're supposed to be helping extend and restore the tern and gull colonies. Wouldn't be a bad idea to try a few other animal experiments. Milder, though. Smaller scale. Send canvas for a sail too."

He was gone before we could answer. The small freighter put in July fifteenth. She had no cargo of processed birds to take back, of course. The captain detailed a few men to unload our supplies, and we helped them eagerly. There were six calves and heifers, two cows and a bull, five pigs, one boar and two sows, several dozen hens and a rooster. Best of all, there was a big case containing seeds: corn, barley, oats, seed potatoes, melons, beets, kale, dozens of others. A plow and two draught horses, mare and stallion. Several pounds of rat poison. A hand forge and several tons of coke. Iron. A hundred pounds of linen twine for nets, as well as ropes of all sizes. Canvas. Tools of all kinds. A big medical kit.

IN A YEAR'S time, we had prospered. No richer land, due to the bird droppings, was ever farmed. And the sandier areas could be depended upon for melons and other crops demanding a lighter, drier, and not so rich soil. Not only that, but we were five, now, instead of three. The Jackson boys had lured a couple of husky girls to the island in the boat. The boys claimed the women fell in love with them. I think they fell in love with the island.

This fast work on the part of the Jacksons seemed a little rash to me. I was still not at all sure we'd be allowed to remain and enjoy the work we had done. Several times, I was tempted to use the radio again, but decided to wait. I'm glad now I did.

In August, a little more than a year after his last visit, Carter set his helicopter down at the wharf again.

After lunch in the barracks of baked fish, fresh milk, potatoes, salad, and melons, he pushed back his chair and said, "I suppose you've been wondering."

"We'd like to know," I said.

He nodded. "The mainland's going to pieces. So is the whole world. It isn't just food. We can still produce that. Remember what you said about the bad roads, bad telephones? You put your finger on it. So much manpower, machinery, energy, material is used up in getting food and processing it and distributing it, there isn't enough for other things. A tenth of the world's population and a quarter of its total power resources go into processing plankton alone. We are literally eating ourselves to death. Utilities and services are breaking down rapidly. No new dwellings of any kind have

been built for ten years or more. Oil is short, cement, iron, steel, coal, plastics, wiring, radios, telephones, everything is in short supply and getting shorter. Transport is staggering to a halt."

He paused, took off his glasses, and twirled them by one side piece.

"Many of us saw it coming. A few decided to do something. We thought there should be undisturbed nuclei, a few able people with ample food supplies. You are one such center. There are others at various bird stations along the coast. You'll be joined shortly by a few more people, young men and women, among them a trained nurse, a doctor, a skilled carpenter, so on."

Bill cleared his throat.

"What you said, I guess it was all around me, only I never seen it, not to put together. Just one thing. The manager at the Food Plant, he used to stop and kid me about all the fish I'd stole from the government in my time. He was abraggin' about how WFI had newer and better ways of gettin' things done, always newer and better every year. How come they couldn't keep caught up?"

"Bill, those new techniques that manager talked about were old stuff a hundred, two hundred years ago. The applications are new, some of them, but the basic ideas are old.

"The World Food Institute drew off all the scientific, inventive brains of the world, and put them to chasing food. No time for basic research, basic development; just time for tinkering and retinkering old ideas. Been no new basic idea for a couple of centuries. Too much need for immediate, practical results. The well is dry, and it won't be filled again with a reservoir of new, big ideas, not in our time. Been living off the past; and the present has caught up with us."

Before Carter left the island to visit the other stations, I had a chance to have a talk with him.

"Was that sociologist, Ranson, in on this?"

"No. We had to be careful. Still have to be. Just a few of us. That's why the loss of the bird colonies here had to seem natural, or at least a natural accident. And I had to keep clear of it. You can see that."

"Carter, what happens on the mainland when things break up?"

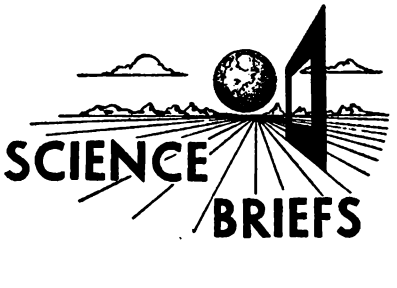
"Won't be pretty. Bad. Very bad."

"For example?"

"You read the ecology book. What happens when a species multiplies beyond its ability to feed itself?"

A dozen new Rollins Islanders showed up a few at a time in Carter's helicopter. We've been working and waiting a long time now, waiting for Carter to come back. For over a year now, our boat has made no crossing to the mainland. Last night, over twenty-five miles of sea in clear weather, we saw the sky lit by a great fire.

I haven't forgotten those rats. I dream about them, tearing one another with bloody fangs. • • •



Defense Department officials predict an intercontinental guided missile, carrying an atomic warhead, that can flash across 5,000 miles at speeds up to 9,000 miles an hour. The weapon would be able to hit a target area with a radius of about ten miles, be ten times as accurate as a German V-2, have twenty-five times the range. Plans call for at least two varieties of this intercontinental missile: 1. A ballistic type that streaks out of the atmosphere like an artillery shell at more than 12,000 feet a second. 2. A jet-propelled type that flies more slowly, but can be more accurately controlled all the way to the target and will be able to steer itself by the stars.

Pointless, ball-less writing pens are predicted by researchers working on new writing devices. The one now under development has a cone-like tip made of sintered metal—powdered metal partly welded together. Tiny capillary holes in the tip permit a thick ink to filter through and rub off on the writing surface. The pen will not leak when not in use, nor does it need to be shaken or rolled over paper to get it started after disuse. A special feeding system permits all ink to be consumed before another cartridge is needed.

The largest saucer-like radio telescope in the United States will soon be under construction at Harvard University's Agassiz Station Observatory. The great "dish", a steerable parabolic antenna sixty feet in diameter, will be used to study and record radio radiation being received on Earth from outer space. Plans also include a large radio astronomy observatory from which radio waves could be bounced off Mars and other planets as well as the sun.

Patients who need a blood-vessel transplant will grow and store their own when animal experiments now in progress are eventually applied to humans. Since the body tends to resist foreign tissue, person to person grafts in case of a damaged aorta are often untenable. The latest solution is to cut a vein to the size needed in the patient's own body and fit it over a plastic rod. It is then wrapped in muscle tissue and buried in the thigh muscle where it is nourished for two or three weeks until a firm tube is formed. When the vessel is needed for grafting, the thigh is reopened, the plastic rod removed, and the freshly elastic vein hooked into the aorta to replace the defective segment.

Future Motorists will drive on highways that will help steer the cars and on which the dips and curves cannot be felt. Highway engineers predict that "pavement geometry"

can be used to bank curves so that a blindfolded person riding beside the driver would never know of the change of direction after going around such a curve. During momentary lapses on the part of a motorist, such a highway would be able to "steer" the car until the driver could regain control.

Our grandchildren's children will have enough raw materials and energy resources despite gloomy predictions to the contrary. Recent scientific reports indicate that new methods of utilization of minerals, a curbing of waste, discoveries of new deposits and the substitution of common rock and ceramics are enough to quench any long range predictions of a raw material shortage. The harnessing of solar energy through new discoveries in photosynthesis, atomic reactors and the direct generation of electricity in transistor types of photovoltaic cells also promise a supply of energy far in excess of the demand even if coal, gas and petroleum, to which our civilization is now geared, should be exhausted.

Science and industry have caught up with fictioneers again. The latest thing in bedding is a gyrating mattress, set into motion by a small motor in the foot of the bed. Designed to overcome insomnia by lulling the bed's occupant to sleep, the "rock-a-by-bed" is the actual development of an idea that science fiction writers have been using as standard equipment in their "homes of the future" for many years.

A new profession—that of criminalist—may be what all little boys will aspire to be before many more years roll by. Such a criminalist will be a specialist, but not in any one field. He will have to qualify as an expert in identity, evidence of different kinds, from blood groups to ink—from textiles to metals—from vegetation to soil. In addition he will be well versed in the understanding of the practical side of crime investigation and legal requirements of courts and evidence. Like a physician, a criminalist will begin training with a broad knowledge of science, on this he must build a study of microscopy, microchemistry, law and any other off-branches concerned. Training will require a minimum of five years of college study which closely parallels that of pre-medical students.

Blind persons someday may be able to walk with certainty through unfamiliar territory without the aid of seeing eye dogs or canes. Scientists and researchers have revealed a new electron device to warn blind users of obstacles and potential hazards, such as curbs and lampposts. Carried like a lunch pail, the device shoots out a beam of light that is reflected by such obstacles. The reflected light is then picked up by a built-in optical reception system and a vibrator in the handle translates the reflections into warnings or reassurances for the user.

 (Continued from page 105)

prohibited on Earth for a decade —yet they listened. The censors, shocked, galvanized, started to act, to cut off the broadcast—and could not. The powerful music had crept insidiously into their minds, and their fingers were paralyzed above the keys while *The Martianne* flamed triumphant through the air of Earth.

When the final note had died away, Cornel stood up at his piano and said into the microphones:

"That is the music of Mars. Remember it, people of Earth."

It was a brief trial. Cornel was admittedly guilty of violating the law against inciting the public to military action, but because of Meta's influence and the temper of the people, he was not sentenced to prison. He was deported to Mars, freed to return to his own people.

Spurred by the Mars Corporation, the Earth government acted quickly. *The Martianne* was the most dangerous of any music the psychosociologists had banned. Its performance was prohibited on pain of death, possession of a tape of it was punishable by fine and imprisonment.

But too many tapes had been home-recorded on the night of Cornel's last concert. Too many people remembered the basic strains, the theme of *The Martianne*. Laws could not confine it. It was hummed, at first secretly, then openly and defiantly.

And too many people had hung on every televised instant of Cornel's trial and had heard him say, simply and earnestly, why he had violated the laws designed to protect the peace of Earth, why he had willingly endangered his life.

"It is right that men should have peace," said Cornel on the witness stand, "but first, it is right that they should have freedom."

At first secretly, then openly and defiantly, the Friends of Mars grew into an organization that poured the contributions of the people of Earth into ships and guns for the free people of Mars.

Every Martian year they play it formally now, on the anniversary of the signing of the Mars Charter. In solemn ceremonies, the military band of Mars plays *The Martianne* before the imposing edifice erected at Charax by Meta Erosine in memory of Cornel Lorensse, the patriot who died in action during the final seige of Mars City. • • •

WHAT IS YOUR SCIENCE I.Q.?

ANSWERS: 1—One hundred. 2—59 percent. 3—Valence. 4—Hercules. 5—Automation. 6—Faculae. 7—Common salt. 8—Astronomical unit. 9—18,000. 10—Isotopes. 11—6.6. 12—Shorter. 13—Protons. 14—3949.99 miles. 15—One mile. 16—Helium. 17—Away from. 18—34.

—Continued from Back Cover

$1.00 IS ALL YOU PAY FOR ANY 3 OF THESE GREAT BOOKS

when you join the Club

Each One Packed from Cover to Cover With Thrilling, Top-Flight Stories of Science-Fiction

THE TREASURY OF SCIENCE-FICTION CLASSICS

World-renowned stories that have stood the test of time — by H. G. Wells, Jules Verne, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Aldous Huxley, Philip Wylie, Edgar Allan Poe, E. M. Forster, F. Scott Fitzgerald, etc. 704 pages. (*Publ. ed.* $2.95)

OMNIBUS OF SCIENCE FICTION

43 top-stories by outstanding authors . . . stories of Wonders of Earth and Man . . . of startling inventions . . . of visitors from Outer Space . . . of Far Traveling . . . Adventures in Dimension . . . Worlds of Tomorrow. 562 pages. (*Publ. ed.* $3.50)

THE ASTOUNDING SCIENCE-FICTION ANTHOLOGY

A story about the first A-Bomb . . . written before it was invented! A story of the movie machine that shows "newsreels" of *any* past event. Plus a score of other best tales from a dozen years of Astounding Science-Fiction magazine by its editor, John W. Campbell, Jr. (*Publ. ed.* $3.95)

THE BEST FROM FANTASY AND SCIENCE-FICTION

Selected stories from *Fantasy and Science-Fiction Magazine*. The woman who became her own daughter . . . atomic power from beans . . . the man that lived 300 years . . . gambling on a strange planet . . . and many others. (*Publ. ed.* $3.25)

CHILDREN OF WONDER

21 remarkable and fantastic tales about some of the most awe-inspiring, charming and monstrous children imaginable, by outstanding authors like Bradbury, Graham Greene, D. H. Lawrence, and others. (*Publ. ed.* $3.00)

ASSIGNMENT IN TOMORROW

A complete short novel, 3 novelettes and 12 short stories combine to make a truly scalp-tingling volume about the cosmic life of the future — edited by Frederik Pohl. Absorbing stories that provide a chilling glimpse into tomorrow. (*Publ. ed.* $3.50)

PORTALS OF TOMORROW

A sparkling crop of weird and wonderful tales selected by expert August Derleth. The man who invented a solid vacuum . . . the Martian ship which lands on Earth on Hallowe'en, and many others. (*Publ. ed.* $3.75)

Now—THE BEST NEW SCIENCE-FICTION BOOKS FOR ONLY $1.00 EACH!

IMAGINE — ANY 3 of these full-size, brand-new science-fiction anthologies — yours for just $1! Each is crammed with the science thrills of the future . . . written by the most sought-after science-fiction authors of today. A $9.20 to $11.20 value, complete and in handsome permanent bindings.

Each month the SCIENCE-FICTION BOOK CLUB brings you only the finest brand-new full-length books FOR ONLY $1 EACH (plus a few cents shipping charge) — even though they cost $2.50, $3.00 and up in publishers' editions! Each month's selection is described IN ADVANCE. You take ONLY those books you really want — as few as four a year.

SEND NO MONEY

Mail Coupon TODAY!

We KNOW you will enjoy membership in this new book club. To PROVE it, we are making this amazing offer! Your choice of ANY 3 of the new Science-Fiction anthologies — at ONLY $1 FOR ALL THREE. Two are your gift books for joining; the other is your first selection. This liberal offer may have to be withdrawn at any time. So mail coupon RIGHT NOW to:

SCIENCE-FICTION BOOK CLUB
Dept. IF-8, Garden City, New York

WHICH 3 DO YOU WANT FOR ONLY $1.00?

SCIENCE-FICTION BOOK CLUB, Dept. IF-8, Garden City, New York

Please rush me the 3 anthologies checked below, as my gift books and first selection. Bill me only $1 for all three (plus few cents shipping charges), and enroll me as a member of the Science-Fiction Book Club. Every month send me the Club's free bulletin, "Things to Come," so that I may decide whether or not I wish to receive the coming selection described therein. For each book I accept, I will pay only $1 plus shipping. I do not have to take a book every month (only four during each year I am a member) — and I may resign at any time after accepting four selections.

SPECIAL NO RISK GUARANTEE: If not delighted, I may return all books in 7 days, pay nothing and this membership will be cancelled!

- ☐ **Assignment in Tomorrow**
- ☐ **Astounding Science-Fiction Anthology**
- ☐ **Best from Fantasy and Science-Fiction**
- ☐ **Children of Wonder**
- ☐ **Omnibus of Science-Fiction**
- ☐ **Portals of Tomorrow**
- ☐ **Treasury of Science-Fiction Classics**

Name .....
(PLEASE PRINT)

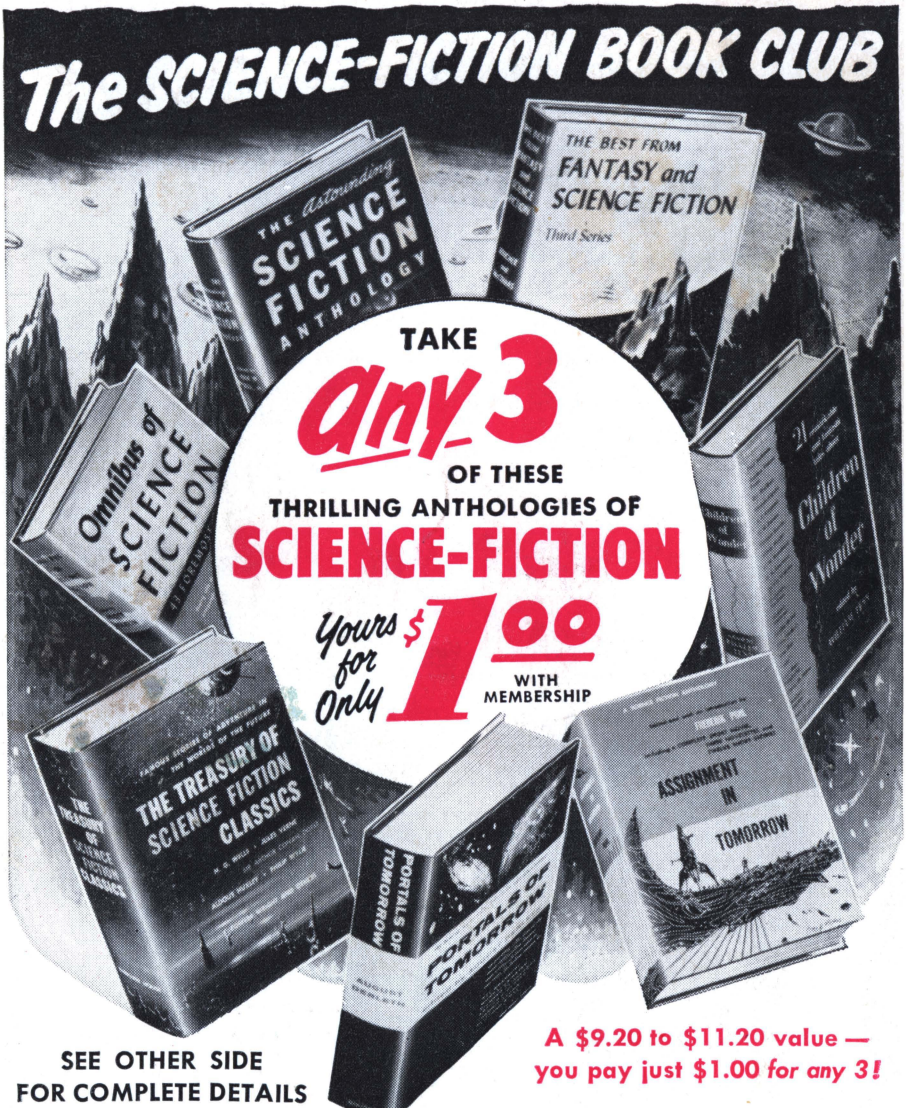
Address .....

City ..... *Zone* ..... *State* .....

Selection price in Canada $1.10 plus shipping. Address Science-Fiction Club, 105 Bond St., Toronto 2. (*Offer good only in U. S. and Canada.*)

The Most Generous Offer Ever Made By

The SCIENCE-FICTION BOOK CLUB



TAKE

any 3

OF THESE

THRILLING ANTHOLOGIES OF

SCIENCE-FICTION

Yours for Only **$1.00** WITH MEMBERSHIP

SEE OTHER SIDE FOR COMPLETE DETAILS

A $9.20 to $11.20 value — you pay just $1.00 *for any 3!*

HERE's an offer that is as thrilling as the incredible, spine-tingling stories crammed between the covers of these anthologies! These volumes contain not only "top-drawer" science-fiction, but also science *facts* by outstanding authorities. Handsome, permanent bindings. Any 3 of them would normally cost you $9.20 to $11.20 in publishers' original editions — but all you pay is just $1.00 when you join the Club!

This generous offer is made to introduce you to the SCIENCE-FICTION BOOK CLUB, a wonderfully new idea in bringing you the best of the new science-fiction books — *at a mere fraction of their usual cost!* Take advantage of this offer now — pick your 3 anthologies and mail coupon on other side of this page TODAY!