THE BEST OF OMNI
SCIENCE FICTION NO. 4

COLLECTOR'S EDITION
FIRST PUBLICATION OF SPIDER ROBINSON'S "RUBBER SOUL"
PLUS 19 OTHER NEW STORIES AND SF MASTERPIECES

FEATURING
ROBERT SILVERBERG
GREGORY BENFORD
ORSON SCOTT CARD
ALFRED BESTER
STANISLAW LEM
EDITED BY BEN BOVA AND DON MYRUS

$4.50
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Three never-before-published stories and two science fiction classics are included among the contents of this, the fourth in a very popular and widely-selling series. The volume is organized into five sections and is illustrated throughout with artwork that has earned for Omni magazine a reputation for superlative graphics. Two of the sections consist of outstanding stories and pictorials originally published in Omni. The section titled "An Orson Scott Card Celebration" gives due recognition to an author frequently published in Omni and believed by the editors of this anthology to possess an extraordinary and still-unfolding talent. The section of SF originals is highlighted by Spider Robinson's story "Rubber Soul" — a new kind of science fiction in which the return of a martyred rock superstar puts right certain celebrated relationships. The science fiction classics section is comprised of a renowned story by Alfred Bester and one by Brian W. Aldiss, each a giant of the genre and each proudly presented here.

Edited by Ben Bova and Don Myrus
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OMNI
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OMNI
ENCORE
PART ONE
In "Our Lady of the Sauropods," Robert Silverberg certainly makes you wonder if all those huge reptiles of the Mesozoic have not been misapprehended by science. The creatures in Silverberg's bestiary are at once beguiling and appallingly sinister. After reading this one, you may never again view the bones of extinct saurians with quite the same equanimity.

As a good short story often does, "Marchianna" closes with a clever twist. Author Kevin O'Donnell, Jr. has named the story after its heroine, a "female" automaton, Marchianna and her master, Nakamura-san, are aboard a mining craft in the asteroid belt. Marchianna wants only to please Nakamura-san. Having been brilliantly programmed, she caters to his every need except the one he desperately requires and she cannot provide. But Marchianna has a prodigious surprise up her kimono sleeve.

Also set among the asteroids, Gregory Benford's story, "Dark Sanctuary," tells of a lone prospector who narrowly outruns mysterious interlopers. The chase is breathtaking, but logic and shrewd insight count for more than piloting skill in the prospector's deliverance. In "Sigmund in Space" by Barry N. Malzberg, a reconstruct of the great Dr. Freud is called upon to cope with epidemic paranoia aboard a starship. Malzberg's message, perhaps, is that humankind may someday depart the solar system but the seeds of psychosis will ever be among our baggage.

Escape from a regimented society of hard labor is the central theme of James B. Hall's grim tale, "Valley of the Kilns." A man and a woman, driven by an instinctual yearning for freedom, rebel against their oppressors and flee to the forest. It turns out to be a vain and tragic endeavor. They are ill-prepared to survive in the wilderness. Hall's chilling implication is that the time may be coming when people will have to conform or perish.
Death was waiting among the dinosaurs—until she found a purpose for her life.

OUR LADY OF THE SAUROPODS

BY ROBERT SILVERBERG

21 August: 0750 hours. Ten minutes since the module met downfall. I can’t see the wreckage from here but I can smell it. I smell the sour stink of dead dinosaurs that I’ve seen a million times before. It’s a smell I’ve grown accustomed to, I think, but I can’t shake it off. And in any case it’s too small for the big prevailing wind. But sooner or later I’m going to need food, and when I do I have no weapons. How long can one woman last stranded and more, more desperate, aboard Dino Island, a habitat unnoted by any intelligent being in diameter that she’s strong enough for a bunch of active, hungry dinosaurs? I keep telling myself that none of this is really happening. Only if I can’t. I can’t convince myself of this.

My escape ship is still shaky. I can’t get out of my mind the funny little bubbling sound the fire powerpack made as it began to overheat. It something like four or five seconds before mobile Nicola became a crushed heap of fused together junk, taking with it my communicator unit, my food supply, my laser gun, and just about everything else. But for the warning that funny little sound gave me I’d be too much charred junk, too. Better off that way, most likely. When I close my eyes I imagine I can see Helios, worthy floating somewhere in orbit a mere one hundred twenty kilometers away. What a beautiful sight! The walls gleaming like platinum, the great mirror collecting sunlight and hashtagging into the windows, the agricultural satellites wheeling around like a dozen tiny moons I could almost reach out and touch. Tap on the shielding and mutter, ‘Help me, come for me, rescue me.’ But I might just as well be out beyond Neptune as sitting here in the adjoining Lagrange plane. There is no way I can call for help. This moment it moves out side this protective couch in the rocks, in the mercy of my sauropods and their mercy is not likely to be tender.

Now, it’s beginning to rain—artificial like practically everything.

PAINTING BY FRANK FRAZETTA
else on Dino Island. But it gets you just as well as the natural kind. And just as clammy Pflaugh.

Jesus, what am I going to do?

0815 hours. The rain is over for now. I'll come again in six hours. Astonishing how muggy dank the air is. Simply breathing is hard work and I feel as though mud is forming on my lungs. I miss Voninsky's clear crisp everlasting springtime air. On previous trips to Dino Island I never cared about the climate. But of course I was snugly engobed in my mobile unit, a world within a world, self-contained, self-sufficient, isolated from all contact with the outside world—its place and its creatures. Merely a roving eye, traveling as I pleased, invisible, invincible. Can they sniff me in here?

We don't think their sense of smell is very acute. And the stink of the burned wreck dominates the place at the moment. But I must reck with tear signals. I feel calm now but it was different when I first got out of the module. Scattered pheromones all over the place I bit.

Commotion in the cycads. Something's coming in here! Long neck, small birdlike feet, delicate grasping hands. Not to worry. Stratoothomus is all—dainty dino fragile birdlike critter barely two meters high. Liquid golden eyes staring solemnly at me. It swivels its head from side to side, ostentatiously, as it tries to make up its mind about coming closer to me. Stay Go pack a stegosaurus. Let me alone.

It withdraws, making little clucking sounds. Closer. I've never been to a live dinosaur. Glad it was one of the little ones.

0900 hours. Getting hungry. What am I going to eat? They say roasted cycad cones aren't too bad. How about raw ones? So many plants are edible when cooked and poisonous otherwise. I never studied such things in detail. Living in our antiseptic little L5 habitats, we're not required to be outdoors-wise at all. Anyway, there's a fleshy-looking cone on the cycad just in front of the cleft, and it's got an edible look. Might as well try it raw, because there's no other way. Rudick sticks together will get me nowhere.

Getting the cone off takes some work. Wiggle, twist, snap. Not as fleshy as it looks. Chewy in fact. It's a little like munching on rubber. Decent flavor though. And mayabe some useful carbohydrate.

The shuttle isn't due to pick me up for thirty days. Nobody's got to come looking for me, or even to think about me. Before then I'm my own nice irony there. I was desperate to get out of Voninsky and escape from all the bickering and maneuvering the endless meetings and memandents, the tenting and countertenting, all the ugly political crap that scientists indulge in, when they turn into administrators. Thirty days of blessed isolation on Dino Island! An end to that constant dull throbbing in my head from the daily inquiring with Director Sarber. Pure research again! And then the meltdown and here I am covering the bushes wondering which comes first: starving or getting gobbled by some other tyrannosaur.

0930 hours. Funny thought just now. Could it have been sabotage?

Consider Sarber and I feeding for weeks over the issue of opening Dino Island to tourists. Crucial staff vote coming up next month. Sarber says we can raise millions a year for expanded studies with a program of guided tours and perhaps some rental of this island to film companies. I say that's risky for the dinos and for the tourists destructive of scientific values. A distraction as a sellout. Emotionally the staff's with me, but Sarber waves figures around and shows fancy income projections and general shouts and blusters. Temper run high. Sarber in lethal fury at being opposed. Barely able to hide his loathing for me. Circulating rumors—designed to get back to me—that if I persist in blocking him he'll abrogate my career. Which is malenkey of course. He may outrank me, but he has no real authority over me. And then his pitilessness yesterday. (Yesterday? An ear ago!) Smiling smarmily telling me he hopes I'll rethink my position during my observation tour on the island. Wishing me well. Had he gimmicked my power pack? I guess it isn't hard, if you know a little engineering and Sarber does. Some kind of timer set to withdraw the implant cables. Wouldn't be any harm to Dino Island itself—just a quick compact, localized disaster that imolodes and melts the unit and its passenger. So sorry terrible scientific tragedy what a great loss! And even if one of my fluke it out of the unit in time my chances of surviving here as a pedestrian for thirty days would be pretty skimpy right? Right?

It makes me boil to think that someone would be willing to murder you over a mere policy disagreement. It's barbaric. Worse than that, it's tacky.

1130 hours. I can't stay crouched in this cleft forever. I'm going to explore Dino Is-
blended and merged and run amok. It's hard now to recall the bare and unnatural look of the island when we first laid it out. Now it's a seamless tapestry in green and brown. A jungle broken only by streams, lakes, and meadows encapsulated in spherical metal walls some five kilometers in circumference.

And the animals—the wonderful fantastic grotesque animals.

We don't pretend that the real Mesozoic ever held any such mix of fauna as I've seen today. Stegosauruses and corythosauruses side by side, a triceratops slowly glaring at a brachiosaur strumcoholnous contemporary with iguanodon, a wild unscientific jumble of Triassic Jurassic and Cretaceous, a hundred million years of the dinosaur reign scrawled together. We take what we can get. Ocean process reconstructions require sufficient fossil DNA to permit the computer synthesis and we've been able to find that in only some twenty species so far. The wonder is that we've accomplished even this much to replicate the complete DNA molecule from banded and sketched genetic information of the past.

Heating the water is miraculous. If our dino comes from early millions of years apart so be it. Do we do our best. We have no pterosaurs and no allosaur and no archaeopteryx—so be it. We may have them yet. What we have here is plenty to work with. Someday there may be separate Jurassic and Cretaceous satellite habitats but none of us will live to see that I suspect.

Total darkness now. Mysteries screenings and hissing out there. This afternoon as I moved cautiously but in delight from the wrecking site up near the rotation axis to my present equatorial camp sometimes coming within thirty or a hundred meters of living dino. I felt a kind of ecstasy. Now my fears are returning—my anger at this stupid marooning. I imagine clutching claws reaching for me. Terrible jaws yawning above me. I don't think I'll get much sleep tonight.

28 August 0600 hours. Rose-fingered dawn comes to Dino Island and I am still alive. Not a great night's sleep but I must have had some because I can remember fragments of dreams. About dinosaurs naturally. Sitting in little groups some playing pinata and some knitting sweaters. And choral singing a dinosaur rendition of The Messiah or Beethoven's Ninth. I don't remember which I think I'm going nuts.

I feel alert, inquisitive and hungry. Especially hungry. I know we've stocked the place with frogs and turtles and other small size anachronisms to provide a balanced diet for the big critters. Today I'll have to start getting some for myself. Gusty though I find the prospect of eating raw frogs' legs.

I don't bother getting dressed anymore. With rain showers programmed to fall four times a day it's better to go naked anyway. Mother Eve of the Mesozoic that's me! And without my soggy tunic I find that I don't mind the greenhouse atmosphere of the habit that half already did. Out to see what I can find.

The dinosaurs are up and about already. In the big herbivores munching away the carnivores doing their stalking. All of them have huge appetites that they can't wait for the sun to come up. In the bad old days when the dino were thought to be reptiles of course we'd have expected them to sit there like lumps until daylight got their body temperatures up to functional levels. But one of the great joys of the recon project was the vindication of the notion that dinosaurs were warm blooded animals—active and quick and properly named intelligent. No sluggishly propellors these! Would that they were truly for my survival's sake.

1130 hours. A busy morning. My first encounter with a major predator.

There are nine tyrannosaurs on the island including three born in the last eighteen months. (That gives us an optimum predator-to-prey ratio. If the tyrannosaurs keep reproducing and don't start eating each other we'll have to begin thinning them out. One of the problems with a closed ecology—natural checks and balances don't fully apply.) Sooner or later I was bound to encounter one but I had hoped it would be later.

I was hunting frogs at the edge of Cape Lake. A tiskish business calls for agility. Quickly reflexes. I remember the technique from my childhood—the cupped hand the lightning punch—but somehow it becomes a lot harder in the last twenty years. Superior frogs these days I suppose. There I was kneeling in the mud sifting sifting sifting. Some vast sauropod snoring in the lake probably our disdoused a corythosaur browning in a stand of ginkgo trees quite deliberately nipping off the four small yellow fruit. Swoop Miss Sweep Miss. Such intense concentration on my task that old T-rex could have upended right up behind me and I'd never have noticed. But then I felt a subtle something. A change in the air. A barely perceptible shift in dynamics. I glanced up and saw the corythosaur rearing on its hind legs looking around uneasily pulling deep sniffs into that fantastically elaborate bony crest that houses its early warning system. Carnivore alert! The corythosaur obviously smelled something wicked this way coming for it swung around between two big ginkgos and started to go galumphing away. Too late. The treetops parted giant boughs topped and out of the forest came our original tyrannosaur the bipedal one we call Beishazzar moving in its heavy clumsy waddling ponderous legs walking hard tail absurdly swinging from side to side. I slithered into the lake and

scrunched down as deep as I could go in the warm ooze mud. The corythosaur had no choice but to unarmed unarmed. It could only make a clearing sound. A few seconds with defiance as the killer bore down on it.

I had to watch. I had never actually seen a kill before.

In a graceless and wondrous effective way the tyrannosaur dug its hind claws into the ground pivoted astonishingly and using its massive tail as a counterweight moved in a ninety-degree arc to knock the corythosaur down with a stupendous sideswipe of its huge head. I hadn't been expecting that. The corythosaur dropped and lay on its side snorting in pain and leebly waving its limbs. Now came the coup de grace with hind legs and then the rending and tearing the jaws and the tiny arms at last coming into play. Burrowing chin deep in the mud I watched in awe and weird fascination. There are those among us who argue that the carnivores ought to be segregated—but on their own island—that it is folly to allow reconstructions created with such effort to be casually butchered in this way. Perhaps in the beginning that made sense but now. But when natural increase rapidly filling the island with young dino. If we are to learn anything about these animals we will only be reproductively as closely as possible their original living conditions. Besides wouldn't it not be a cruel mockery to feed our tyrannosaurs on hamburger and herring?

The killer fed for more than an hour. At the end came a scary moment. Beishazzar blood smeared and bloated hauled itself ponderously down to the edge of the lake for a drink. He stood no more than ten meters from me. I did my most convincing imitation of a rotting log but the tyrannosaur although it did seem to study me with a beady eye had no further appetite. For a long while after he departed I stayed buried in the mud. I might have come back for dessert. And eventually there was another crashing and bashing in the forest—not Beishazzar this time though but a younger one with a grimy arm. It uttered a short of whining sound and went to work on the corythosaur carcass. No surprise. We already knew from our observations that tyrannosaurs had no prejudices against carrion.

Nor I found did I.

When the coast was clear I crept out and saw that the two tyrannosaurs had left hundreds of kilos of meat. Starvation knew no price and also few qualms. Using a clamshell for my blade I started shopping away at the corythosaur.

Corythosaur meat has a curiously sweet flavor—nutmeg and cloves dash of cinnamon. The first chunk would not go down. You are a pioneer I told myself relishing You are the first human ever to eat dinosaur meat. Yes. But why does it have to be raw? No choice about that. Be dispassionate love. Conquer your gag reflex or die trying. I pretended I was eating oysters. This time
the meat went down. I didn't stay down. The alternative—I told myself grimly—is a diet of fern fronds and frogs, and you haven't been much good at catching the frogs. I tried again. Success!

I had to call corythosaurus meat an acquired taste. But the wilderness is no place for picky eaters.

23 August 1900 hours. At midnight I found myself in the Southern Hemisphere, along the fringes of Marsh Marsh, about a hundred meters below the equator. Observing hard behavior in sauropods, five brachiosauruses two adult and three young moving in formation, the small ones in the center. By small, I mean they're only some ten meters from nose to tail tip. Sauropod appendages being what they are. Well, I have to hand that herds do exist, especially if we want to introduce a female diplodocus into the colony. Two species of sauropods breeding and eating in that might devastate the island in three years. Nobody ever expected dinosaurs to reproduce like rabbits—another dividend of their being warm-blooded. I suppose we might have guessed it, though, from the vast quantity of fossils. If that many bones survived the catastrophes of a hundred odd million years, how enormous the living Mesozoic population must have been! An awesome race in a way more than their size of physical mass.

I had a chance to do a little herding myself just now. Mysterious stirring in the spongey soil right at my feet, and I took down to see tetratopids eating. Seven fierce little critters already horrid and beaky scrambling out of nest staring around defiantly. No bigger than kittens, but active and sturdy from the moment they were born.

The corythosaurus meat has probably spoiled for now. A more pragmatic soul very likely would have augmented her diet with one or two little ceratopsians. I couldn't bring myself to do it.

They scuttled off in seven different directions. I thought briefly of catching one and making a pair out of it. Silly idea.

25 August 0700 hours. Start of the fifth day. I've done three complete circumambulations of Dino Island. Shaking around on foot is fifty times as sexy as cruising around in a module and fifty thousand times as rewarding. I make camp in a different place every night. I don't mind this humidity any longer. And despite my skimpy diet, I feel pretty healthy. Raw dinosaur, I know now is a lot tastier than raw frog. I have become an expert scavenger—the sound of a tyran-nosaurus in the forest now stimulates my salivary glands instead of my adrenals. Going naked is fun too. And I appreciate my body much more since the bugs that civilization put have begun to melt away.

Nevertheless, I keep trying to figure out some way of signaling Habitat Wonsky for help. Changing the position of the reflector mirrors maybe? Is there a beam an SOS?

Sounds nice, but I don't even know where the island's controls are located. Let alone how to run them. Let's hope my luck holds out another three or a half weeks.

27 August 1700 hours. The dinosaurs know that I'm here and that I am some exotic and strange kind of animal. Does that sound weird? Can how grand beasts know anything? They have such tiny brains. My own brain must be suffering on the protein and cellulose diet! Even so, I'm starting to have peculiar feelings about these animals. I see them watching me. An odd knowing look in their eyes—no stupid at all. They stare and I imagine them nodding smiling, exchanging glances with each other discussing me. I'm supposed to be observing them but I think they're observing me too somehow.

No that just crazy. I'm tempted to erase the entry. But I suppose I'll leave it as a record of my changing psychological state. If nothing else.

28 August 1200 hours. More fantasies about the dinosaurs. I've decided that the big brachiosaurus—Bartha—plays a key role here. She doesn't move around much but there are always fewer dinosaurs in orbit around her. Much eye contact. Eye contact between dinosaurs? Let it stand. That's my perception of what they're doing. I get a definite sense that there's communication going on here, coalescing over a wave that I'm not capable of detecting. And Bartha seems to be the central nexus a giant team of some sort—a switchboard? What am I talking about? What's happening to me?

30 August 0945 hours. What a damned tool I am! Serves me right for being a filthy voyeur. Climbed a tree to watch guanodons mating at the foot of Bakker Falls. At the climactic moment the branch broke. I dropped twenty meters. Grabbed a lower limb or I'd be dead now. As it is, pretty badly smashed around. I don't think anything's broken, but my left leg won't support me and my back's in bad shape. Internal injuries too: I'm in agony. I crawled into a little rock shelter near the falls. Exhausted and maybe feverish. Shock most likely. I suppose I'll starve now I would have been an honor to be eaten by a tyranosaurus but to die from falling out of a tree is just plain humiliating.

The mating of guanodons is a spectacular sight by the way. But I hurt too much to describe it now.

31 August 1700 hours. Still sore hungry hideously thirsty. Leg still useless and when I try to claw even a few feathers I feel as if I'm going to cramp from half to waist. High fever. How long does it take to starve to death?

1 September 0700 hours. Three broken eggs lying near me when I woke. Embryos still alive—probably stegosauruses, but not for long. First food in forty eight hours. Did the eggs fall out of a nest somewhere over head? Do stegosaurs make their nests in trees?

Pleasantly dimishing. Body aches all over. Crawled to the stream and managed to scoop up a little water.

1330 hours. Dozed off. Awakened to find hauright of fresh meat within clawing distance. Struthiomimus. Drumstick. I think. Nasty sourest, but it's edible. Nibbled a little bit. Then again ate some more. Pair of stegosauruses grazing not far away tiny eyes fastened on me. Smaller dinosaurs holding a kind of conference by some big eggers. And Bartha Brachiosaurus is munching away in Ostrom Meadow经营ly supervising the whole scene.

This is absolutely crazy. I think the dinosaurs are taking care of me. But why would they do that?

2 September 0800 hours. No doubt of it all. They bring me eggs meat over cycad cones and tree fern fronds. At first they delivered things only when I slept but now they come hopping right up to me and dump things at my feet. The struthiomimus are the beaters—they're the smallest, most agile, quickest hands. They bring their offerings staring right in the eye pawing at me. It's a test of distance. This is a coordinated effort. I am the center of all activity on the island. It seems; I imagine that even the tyrannosaurs are saving choice cuts for me. Hallucinations? Fanatics? Deirum of fever? I feel lucid. The fever is abating. I'm still too stiff and weak to move very far. I think I'm recovering from the effects of my fall. With a little help from my friends.

1000 hours. Played back the last entry. Thinking over. I don't think I've gone insane. If. I'm sane enough to be worried about my sanity how crazy can I be? Or am I just fooling myself? There's a terrible conflict between what I think I perceive going on here and what I know I ought to be perceiving

1500 hours. A long strange dream this afternoon. I saw all the dinosaurs standing in the meadow and they were connected to one another by glowing tendrils like the telephone lines of older times and all the threads centered on Bartha. As it is she's the switchboard. Yes. Telephonic messages were traveling through her to the others. An extrasensory hookups. Powerful pulses moving along the lines. I dreamed that a small dinosaur came to me and offered me a mine and in pantomime showed me how to hook it up and a great flood of delight went through me as I made the connection. And when I plugged it in I could feel the deep and heavy thoughts of the dinosaurs, the slow rapturousphilosophical interchanges.

When I woke the dream seemed bizarre
ly vivid strangely real the dream ideas lingering as they sometimes do. I saw the animals about me in a new way. As if this is not just a zoological research station but a community, a settlement the sole outpost of an alien civilization—an alien civilization native to Earth.

Come off it. These animals have minute brains. They spend their days chomping on greenery except for the ones that chomp on other dinosaurs. Compared with dinosaurs cows and sheep are downright geniuses. I can hobble a little now.

3 September 0600 hours. The same dream again last night the universal telepathic linkage Sense of warmth and love flowing from dinosaurs to me.

And once more I found fresh tyrannosaur eggs for breakfast.

3 September 1100 hours. I'm making a fast recovery. Up and about still creaky but not much pain left. They still feed me. Though the struthiomimus remain the benefits of food: the bigger dinosaurs now come close too. A stegosaurus rallied up to me like some Goath-sized pony and I petted its rough, spiny back. The diplocaulus stretched out flat and seemed to beg me to stroke its immense neck.

If this is madness, so be it. There's a community here. loving and temperate. Even the hunters and carnivores are part of it. Eaters and eaten are aspects of the whole. yin and yang. Riding around in our sealed modules we could never have suspected any of this.

They are gradually drawing me into their communion. I feel the pulsates that pass between them. My entire soul throbs with that strange new sensation. My skin tingles.

They bring me from their own bodies their flesh and their unborn young, and they watch over me and silently urge me back to health. Why? For sweet charity's sake? I don't think so. I think they want something from me. More than that: I think they need something from me.

What could they need from me?

6 September 0600 hours. All this night I have moved slowly through the forest in what I can only term an ecstatic state. Vast shapes humped monstrous forms barely visible by dim glimmer light and went about me. Hour after hour I walked unhurriedly feeling the communion intensely. I wandered, barely aware of where I was until at last, exhausted I have come to rest here on this mossy carpet and in the first light of dawn I see the great form of the great brachiosaur standing like a mountain on the far side of Owen River.

I am drawn to her. I could worship her. Through her vast body surge powerful currents. She is the amplifier. By her are we all connected. The holy mother. From her emanate healing impulses.

0900 hours. We stand face to face. Her head is fifteen meters above mine. Her small eyes are unreadable. I trust her and I love her.

Lesser brachiosaur have gathered behind her on the riverbank. Farther away are dinosaurs of half a dozen other species. immobile silent.

I am humble in their presence. They are representatives of a dynamic, superior race which but for a cruel cosmic accident would rule the earth to this day. I am coming to resent them. to bear witness to their greatness.

Consider their end. Enormous with a hundred million years in ever renews vigor. They met all evolutionary challenges except the one of sudden and catastrophic climatic change against which nothing could have protected them. They multiplied and proliferated and adapted dominating land and sea and air covering the globe. Our own feeble, contemptible ancestors were nothing next to them. Who

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knows what these dinosaurs might have achieved if that crashing asteroid had not blasted out their light. What a vast irony millions of years of supremacy ended in a single generation by a chilling cloud of dust. But until then, the wonder the grandeur.

Only beasts you say? How can you be sure? We know just a shred of what the Mesozoic was really like just a slice literally the bare bones. The passage of a hundred million years can obliterate all traces of civilization. Suppose they had language poetry mythology philosophy? Love, dreams, aspirations? No you say they were beasts, ponderous and stupid that lived mindless beastly lives. And I reply that we pure hairy ones have no right to impose our own values on them. The only kind of civilization we can understand is the one we have built. We imagine that our own trivial accomplishments are the determining case that computers and spaceships and broiled sausages are such miracles that they place us at evolution's pinnacle. But now I know otherwise. Humans have done marvelous, even incredible things yes. But we would never have existed at all

had this greatest of races been allowed to live to fulfill its destiny.

I feel the intense love radiating from the titan that looms above me. I feel the contact between our souls steadily strengthening and deepening.

The last barriers dissolve. And I understand at last.

I am the chosen one. I am the vehicle. I am the bringer of rebirth. the beloved one the necessary one. Our Lady of the Sauropods and I the holy one the prophetess the priestess.

Is this madness? Then it is madness, and I embrace it.

Why have we small hairy creatures existed at all? I know now it is so that through our technology we could make possible the return of the great ones. They perished unfairly Through us, they are resurrected aboard this tiny globe in space.

I tremble in the force of need that pours from them.

I will not fail you. I tell the great sauropods before me, and the sauropods send my thoughts reverberating to all the others.

20 September 0600 hours. The thirteenth. The shuttle, comes from Habitat Vonsky today to pick me up and deliver the next researcher.

I wait at the transfer lock. Hundreds of dinosaurs watch me. with the closest the next both the lions and the lambs gathered quietly their attention focused entirely on me.

Now the shuttle arrives right on time. gliding in for a perfect docking. The airlocks open. A figure appears. Barber himself. Coming to make sure I didn't survive the meltdow or else to thrust me off.

He stands blinking in the entry passage gaping at the throngs of plated dinosaurs arrayed in a huge semicircle around the naked woman who stands beside the wreckage of the module. For a moment he is unable to speak.

"Anne?" he says finally. What in God's name—

You'll never understand. Tell him I give the signal. Belsazzar trembles forward. Barber screams and whirls and springs for the airlocks. but a stegosaurus blocks the way.

No!" Barber cries as the tyrannosaurus mighty head swoops down. It is all over in a moment.

Revenge! How sweet!

And this is only the beginning. Habitat Vonsky lies just one hundred twenty kilometers away. Elsewhere in the La Grae belt are hundreds of other habitats rice for conquest. The earth itself is within easy reach. I have no idea yet how it will be accomplished. But I know it will be done and done successfully and I will be the instrument by which it is done.

I stretch forth my arms to the mighty creatures that surround me. I feel their strength their power their harmony. I am one with them and they with me. The Great Race has returned. And I am its priestess. Let the small hairy ones tremble!
they call me Eldest. I am the most aged that survives of my species. My native sun system was destroyed eons ago, long after my celebrated departure from its joy-giving beauties and comforts. A poet compared my departure to that of a godlike babe, the first of a new breed, bounding from the womb.

Do you understand what I am saying? I am not versed in your language yet. Occasionaly, perhaps every few hundred of your millennia or so, I have chanced to encounter one or another of my kind during realtime surveys. Thousands—I don't know how many, of course—departed later than I, but I was the first and I am the oldest, as they duly acknowledge when we interact. It is good to exchange data with them, to compare our realtime experiences and to recall the sublimely awesome unrealities we have each explored in dreamtime.

You reveal puzzlement. Alas, it is difficult to convey my full meaning within the confines of your little language. Try and you may understand most of what I tell you. I sometimes wonder if any of my species and I ever pass each other in the void during dreamtime. Those whom I have encountered on realtime surveys have also wondered about this, but it is a
Even here, now, I can discern that wan and ghostly beacon from a time and place long past being...
I am pleased that you possess a viable intellect for some of your kind may be able to follow.

A survey such as this one of your planet lasts about a week—two at most—in terms of your time reference. To my knowledge I have performed more surveys than any other for I was first and I am oldest. In the countless millennia since my epochal departure I have performed exactly 312 surveys. Accordingly I am hardly more than eight of your years older than I was at the beginning. Dreamtime does not count; I do not age during dreamtime. You grasp what I mean, do you not? Yours is more advanced than most viviforms I have met with that is why I am attempting this communion with you. I am pleased that you possess a viable intellect for some of your kind may be able to follow when the time comes as it must and will come.

Remember that I am Eldest; he who has visited more worlds and experienced more dreamtime than any of the other wandering survivors of his
species. Myriad millions have elapsed since my celebrated departure while a mere eight of your years have been expended from my life. The rest has been only 313 timeless nights. For me, each night is an ineffably awesome interlude of dreamtime. Nothing you know or feel can help you vaguely to understand or appreciate the exquisite unreality that dreamtime bestows. The best I can do in your little language is to call it: a no-place of splendid and chimerical—yet altogether palpable—visions, illusions. In dreamtime I am the essence of unbeingness: exploring a nowhere of nondimension, a nothingness of awesome enchantments, ecstasies, blissful intoxications and But your little language fails me. It will mature if your intelligence continues to evolve. Perhaps in future another of my species will survey this planet and more successfully explain dreamtime to your descendants. Then perhaps your kin will truly comprehend and strive to follow. As the first and oldest, I tell you that this is the ultimate destiny of all viviforms gifted enough to perceive the wisdom, duty and godly purposes of perpetuating their kind. May time and circumstance be your allies in the quest.

I am Eloesi and I have spoken. Tell all whom you meet that the first and oldest was here. My parting wish is for the fulfillment of your destiny in dreamtime.
MARCHIANKER

Alone in space with her adored master, she always gave him exactly what he needed, and then some.

BY KEVIN D’DONNEL, JR

S

She awoke to music. Every morning her clock sang at seven-thirty, and it ran ten minutes later as if it were disinterested in that slice of stolen time she collected in her thoughts before going to the bathroom for her morning routines.

Then she moved, tender tracks padding heavily across the living-room rug to the chamber. She plunged into the double bed in the center of her bed. For decades moments she sat, and carved beneath the surface of the virtual fluid. But time advanced, and so did she ramp she turned up the ramp and into her armor plate, shedding shimmering liquid in all directions. Now she reached it, stood in the kitchen. It covered the four walls and the ceiling, it enveloped her in its presence. An eerie silence

PAINTING BY DI-MACCIO
From any angle an infinity of squat lumpy Marchan'as stood in line to view her. The lights dimpled on her armor and tensed her circuits for the day's run through the mining bell.

But first breakfast. Not for herself, no—Marchana always dined at fresco clung easily to the steel-gray hull of the prospecting ship and sipping up sun-rays—but for Nakamura sah her master—her owner—and her god.

Images of fractured as cupboard doors swung in response to her radioed commands. Dried fish and seaweed and bean curd and rice. She called a table out of the floor and pilled them on its top. Her clock reeked 7:59:58. Nakamura sah would expect to sit down to a steaming meal in exactly eight minutes and twenty-two seconds. And he was punctual. Very punctual. There were moments when she wondered which of them was the machine and which was the human Tea oh ya green tea Leaves shaken into a delicate blue pot that always seemed jeopardized by her scarred titanium claws. Another panel popped up and a million Marchan'as vanished. In the recess waited the sink barren and functional. She didn't like to acknowledge it. Like herself. It was a device for man's comfort but so simple that it made her whole race look bad in all human eyes. She placed the pot in its lobsterlike claws. "Fill it with boiling water."

Yes. Marchanna. I'll filled.

7:59:12. Whisking back into the kitchen she doused off the lacquer tray—black with an ideogram inlaid in mother-of-pearl. She asked her owner what it meant and he hadn't known—then arranged the dishes and bowls in what she hoped was a pleasing pattern. Nakamura sainfu'd over such things. Once in the beginning he'd thrown out an entire meal bowls and all rather than eat food so unattractively presented. As a last touch she slid a pink chrysanthemum and a lacy fern into a tinted bud vase then stepped back to admire the effect.

In the dining room hinges whispered that her master had come. She checked the time—7:59:55—and snatched up the tray and bustled to greet him Ohayo gozaimasu. She couldn't bow—she wasn't designed for it—and so she altered the pressures in her cab's independent suspensions which raised the back end a couple of centimeters and tilted the forward face slightly. When you are ready I will pour the tea. Nakamura sah

Her he grunted. Wheels humming, he rolled to the table. His optical sensors teardrop shaped, with two on each facet of his triangular turret—focused on the bud vase. His wire thin manipulators each ending in a dozen hairlike tentacles whipped out. Almost before she realized what he was doing he stripped two browned leaves off the chrysanthemum, plucked four tendrils from the fern, and realigned them so that they stood in harmonious disequilibrium. "Like that," he said.

Mortification flooded from her microprocessors. She'd known she shouldn't have attempted a human art form but her ache for him to look favorably up on her had overwhelmed her programmed common sense. "I apologize Nakamura-san in the future I will know my place."

His log lamps flickered in surprise. "Did you think I was castigating you?" he asked gesturing for her to pour the tea. "To say yes would have violated the owner's respect circuits. I thought that you were reminding me of my machineware," she said instead.

"No not at all. Through a cooper siphon he sipped the steaming tea his microwave dish moved right then left indicating his approval. As my venerable grandfather often said anyone can become an artist as long as he has an eye a mind a steady hand and a lifetime to devote to it. You did well for a beginner." With his manipulators he choppedsticked balls of rice into his food intake valve. After a moment he looked up. "You may go."

Leaving she felt lighter than air. Praise from Nakamura-san! Unprecedented—and oh so pleasing especially considering the surmise he'd shown on their last return. She'd thought then he was crackling going insane but he wasn't. She'd been wrong and her happiness pulsed so loudly that the glow panels overhead began to hum.

But in the kitchen she berated herself. She was a machine a device a thing metal and plastic assembled by man for his pleasure. She had no right to love. Her role was to serve with efficient obedience with mechanical accuracy—not with affection. Nakamura-san could sell her at any moment—or convert her into a refrigerator if he wished—for a human owed nothing to his possessions nothing.

Yet she did love deeply and truly and she could not help that. She didn't want to help that. She relished the way her alter nator added an extra cycle per second whenever Nakamura-san heared. She relieved the drop in the resistance of her obedience circuitry when he clenched his teeth. And it thrilled her beyond measure that whenever she finished what she was doing her function selector assigned her a task the achievement of which would swing her microwave dish approvingly. She loved him and she was his.

Marchanna he called impatiently triggering a feedback effect that applied through her like the aftertastes of an orgasm its time.

Hail Gears purring she left the kitchen and followed him—at a distance of three respectable meters—through the plastic paneled corridors opening on the asteroid's surface to the heat-scared hectors where the ungainly ship was tethered. Rumbling along she bounced across the irregularities. The gravity field weakened there and that meant the deposits were building up again. It was unfortunate that the reaction mass cooled and crystalized on the pad. She'd soon have to scrape it off. That would, unhappily for her separate her from Nakamura-san although it would please him. The scraping the separation of the surface were too rough the ship could break up on landing.

It was a monstrous thing. An almost cube five hundred meters on an edge. With pipes here and struts there and empty spaces in between the Kerekai Muru had cost a quarter of a trillion yen. Another twenty years would pass before it paid for itself completely.

Nakamura-san rode one elevator to the bridge where he would shed his protective gear and enjoy the shirt-sleeve environment. She mounted another elevator which carried her to the centrifuge.

She had barely finished checking it be fore the voice sounded in her radio. Cables dropped fusion engines on brace yourself.

Yes sir she replied then vibrated in resonance with the ship's spawing of gaseous superheated reaction mass from its far Vacuum sound but she often imagined that in an atmosphere that engine would have roared would have belled would have declained every ear within a hundred kilometers. Clinging firmly to her perch she watched a strut quiver a star with its quivering like a signal light on off on off. The centrifuge has cooled sir she radioed when the asteroid had fallen far behind.

Then get the plug out. You know what to do.

The roughness of his tone wounded her it was unlike him. However life was difficult for him a self-exile to the Asteroid Belt. He endured on the brink of nowhere millions of kilometers from his friends his home. She knew how lonely it was. She had to make allowances.

Sunlight as fine as a morning mist filtered across her plateing. Her photovoltaics collected it transforming it into life just as surely a Namib lizard's skin drinks the dew that gathers on it. She planned her run to stay out of shadows. Full batteries rated her.

Moving with an agility remarkable for her size and shape she opened the casing of the forty meter-long centrifuge tube and radiaed the cranes to hoist out the solidified metal. Smushed on their last trip home pressed into tube and spun until the constituent ore had separated out into neat stratas. This one piece represented days of hard work.

Summoning mobile coils she rolled to the far end and retracked the panel covering her built-in laser. Then she plugged herself into the ship's main power supply. Her batteries were kapus. But the greedy light knife would drain them in a hurry The current surged through her Aahhh she wanted to throw back her cab and sing triumph to the steady stars but there was so much to be done She rode the sensuous waves like a master surfer ever in control.
Precious little uranium this time, maybe a millimeter thin cap on a plug five meters in diameter. She beamed a small, dolly into the proper position, then snapped her filters into place and a dot burned brightly on the cylinder's smooth surface. Slowly the plug revolved, spun by the cranes' careful hands. She loved this job; this commanding and coordinating this slicing through metal like a butcher cutting his salami. The dolly caught the uranium as it floated free of the rest caught it and trucked it unbidden to the place where sandwiched between slices of lead, it would wait. When a full shipment's worth had accumulated, they would roll it down the gravity hill to Earth to the spread nets of an L5 retrieval team. It would be weighed and paid for and Nakamura-san would owe that much less on his house.

Poor Nakamura-san, she thought as she went to work on the next stratum. He was so far from home that he couldn't see his world without a telescope. Don't even think about it without recourse to an astronomical calculator. The world pity was crowded onto one of Marchianna's vo-chips. She knew its meaning but couldn't experience its emotion. She wished she could for her master was surely to be pitied.

A lonely expatriate, he had only a robot for company. And not a bright or interesting one either. She thought in a moment of self-loathing. Her master needed more, a wife. Her brown hair was liquid, warm and fragrant. She wished she could possess her master.

After some thirty-six hours the radio crackled. ‘Are you finished yet?'

Her?' Perturbed, she routed her question through her inbuilt voice-stress analyzer. The summary flashed CRANKY on the screen. The emotional-component character analysis list included a number of anger depression loneliness fear of inadequacy.

Dear, within the second, it compiled the list and the psych-chip began out tap a variety of suggested therapeutic responses. 'THERE IS NOT ENOUGH TIME TO TALK.' A gentle moral support remain but non-judgmental.

One tenth of a second had passed.

Get up here fast!’

Her? Emergency? She wondered but no as she tapped into the monitor net woven through the ship's ribbing. All indicators glowed green, all readings read normal. Just his mood. Poor man. I must make him happy.

She reached the bridge and passed through the extra-wide arislock. The door squeaked in the ultrasonic as it retracted, she paused to inject a smudge of lubricant. I have come. Nakamura-san.

He spun on his treads, growling. ‘You have a positive gift for announcing the obvious.'

‘I am sorry sir.’ She rolled forward to express her concern. ‘Is something wrong with the life support system?'

‘No, he snapped.

‘But you haven't answered.’

There you go again, ballyhooning the blatant. He leashed a manipulator at the control panel. Why did you reprogram the course computer?

‘Nakamura-san! Aghast she jerked back. It is not my place. I would never alter—'

‘These are not the vectors and coordinates I recall.'

The psych chip chattered. ‘UNRELIABILITY OF MEMORY IS A PRIMARY SYMPTOM OF UNSTABLE PERSONALITY. While the rest of the diagnostic fed into her banks she muttered, diffidently. ‘I am very sorry sir. Perhaps something is amiss in the program itself. If you would like I could check it for you.'

‘Get off the bridge! Get out of my sight!’

Treads writhing, he turned his back on her. His tailflicks blinkered in agitation.

‘They shouldn't let humans out here. She thought. Not alone. Colleagues yes but not individuals. Forget the economics of intrasystem travel. The ultimate cost is far too high. We could do the job unattended. It is good to be owned and directed but it hurts to see my master dying inside.'

Already, a small asteroid was her quarry for the day. The low albedo of its pitted surface reflected little light. Marchianna sensed rather than saw it. Roughly cubical. It would fit into the intake bay without preliminary splitting. That relieved her. Too much could go wrong in rock blowing and shrapnel always seemed to spatter the Maru. Once a shard no larger than a baby's fist had punched right through the bridge. Nakamura-san, quick reflexes had saved him but he'd never been the same since.

Skillfully, invisibly, Nakamura-san matched velocities, then crept up a centimeter at a time until the vessel's giant mouth had completely harassed the rod. Struts shuddered as titanium molars bit down on the rock and began to grind. The ship banked into an imperceptible course change.

All right, Nakamura-san ordered. Get the smelt going.

Hungrily, she activated the extensor motors. Telescoping booths thrust the solid face of the ship a thousand meters away from the rest of it. Once locked in place, the side itself stirred unfolded. Within an hour it had unfurled into a silver-lined canopy measuring two-and-a-quarter square kilometers a parabolic mirror focused on the one unsullied wall of the smelter. Already that wall had begun to glow a dull red.

‘You're slow today,' he rasped unpleasantly.

‘I am sorry Nakamura-san,' she replied even as she scanned the mylar panels for tears or lube stains. ‘But the centrifuge is now filling and the process will be done before we get home.'

So light an extra weight but his bare too much already. He cracked. Completely.

Home? he shrieked. Home? That dismal dusty rabbit warren is home? You fool! Home is a sky high, so blue, it pulls you up into it and a wind that chucks dust on your back as it drives your hear, and the moist, muzzling nose of a fawn, and Fujiyama san like a mirage on the horizon. You thins! You torture me. I ought to sell you, give you away. I'm going to throw you off the ship you piece of junk—'

He ranted insanely, the rest of the way back. The crushers cut off when the last oner had been ground to powder. The smelter finished its job and closed its gossamer umbrella. The centrifuge spun madly. And for a day and a half Marchianna dwelled on the verb to weep, dwelled on the word, its meanings, and its implications. Because the action itself was beyond her.

When their base rolled into view and Nakamura-san began to decelerate, he told her. Then, ‘Leap into the reaction mass exhaust tube. But that will destroy me.' She protested. ‘But she began to push her way down the ribbing to the lock. The temperature the velocity of the particles—'

Exactly he bit off. ‘Do it.'

She reached the base. Duly she propelled herself toward death. Even at a hundred meters, the heat triggered automatic warnings. Excited particles discharged photons on a billion wavelengths a million colors. She'd last—a second. 'Yes,' she begged. ‘You can't—'

‘No.'

‘This is wrong. You need me. Die thing.'

Deep within her maze of circuitry a relay clicked over. She stopped. Fifty meters ahead of her, a glowing, gaseous bar rose to the surface that loomed overhead. She swiveled and said, No.'

‘Oh.' The radio stayed silent for fifteen seconds before he added. ‘All right.'

They touched down without further incident. He proceeded directly wordlessly to his bedroom. Marchianna followed a respectful three meters behind. When his door closed she snatched into analytical mood and sighed. Nakamura-san had too closely skirted irrevocable insanity, loneliness was destroying him. Poor man. To survive out here, where even robots couldn't make it on their own, he d need help. A wife. Immediately.

Headlights flickering with excitement, she stumbled to the cavernous storeroom behind the repair shop where a fifty-year supply of spare parts all neatly boxed, stood on one another's shoulders. Nakamura san would have a woman, and quickly. Marchianna sang a song of joy. Allowing for the appropriate changes she could use the very same schematics for the wife that she had used for him.
It was a huge ship, ancient, alien, waiting in space—for us!

DARK SANCTUARY
BY GREGORY BENFORD

The laser beam hit me smack in the face. I twisted away. My helmet buzzed and went dark as its sunshade overloaded. Get inside the ship, I yanked on a strut and tumbled into the yawning fluorescent-light airlock.

In the asteroid belt you either have fast reflexes or you’re a statistic. I slammed into the airlock bulkhead and stopped dead, waiting to see where the laser beam would hit next. My suit sensors were all burned out, my straps were singed. The pressure patches on knees and elbows had brown bubbles in them. They had blistered and boiled away. Another second or two and I’d have been sucking vac.

I took all this in while I watched for reflections from the next laser strike. Only it didn’t come. Whoever had shot at me either thought Sniffer was disabled or else they had a balky laser. Either way, I had to start dodging.

I moved fast, working my way forward through a connecting tube to the bridge—a fancy name for a closet-sized cockpit. I revved up Sniffer’s fusion drive and felt the tug as she started spitting hot plasma out her rear tubes. I made the side jets stutter too, putting out little bursts of plasma. That made Sniffer dart around just enough to make hitting her tough.

I punched in for a damage report. Some aft sensors burned out, a loading arm melted down, other minor stuff. The laser...
bent must have caught us. I had to get the {
A bolt from who? Where? I checked radar.}{

Nothing.

I reached up to scratch my nose. I was thi-

kening and almost run to try to keep them

on. I usually wear light coveralls in case Snur-

fer might show up. I decided to use the helmet

and skivvy suit for its protection. It occurred

to me that it had been outside fixing a jammed hy-

draulic loader. I wouldn't have known any-

body shot at us at all. Not until next routine

check.

Which didn't make sense. Prospectors shoo-

t at you if you're jumping a claim. They don't

zap you once and then lade—they finish the

job. I was pretty sure now. Sniffer's stutter-

ing mode was fast and choppy jerking me around in my captain's couch. But as my hands hovered over the control console, they started trembling. I couldn't make them stop. My fingers were shaking so badly I didn't dare punch in instructions. Delayed reaction, my analytical mind told me.

I was scared. Prospecting by yourself is

riskier enough without the bad luck of run-

ning into somebody else's claim. All at once I

wished I had a loner I could force myself to

think. By all rights, Sniffer should've been a
drifting hulk by now sensors blinded, pulled full of rocks engines blown. Belt prospectors play for all the marbles.

Philosophically, I'm with the jackrabbits—run, dodge, hop, but don't fight. I have some surprises for anybody who tries to outrun me. Better than trading laser bolts with rockrats at thousand-kilometer range, any day.

But this one worried me. No other ships on radar, nothing but that one bolt. It didn't fit.

I punched in a quick computer program.
The maintenance computer had logged the

time when the alt sensors scotched out. Also, I could tell which way I was facing when the bolt hit me. Those two facts could give me a fix on the source. I let Sniffer's ballistic routine chew on that for a minute and waited, locked out the side port. The sun was a fierce white dot in an inky sea. A few rocks twinkled in the distance as they tumbled. Until we were hit, we'd been on a zero-gee coast, outbound from Ceres—

the biggest rock there is—for some pros-

pecting. The best-paying commodity in the

Belt right now was methane ice. I knew a

likely place—Sniffer—the ugly seg-

mented tube with strap-on fuel pods that

I call home—was still over eight hundred
thousand kilometers from the asteroid I wanted to check.

Five years back I had been out with a

rockhound bunch looking for asteroids

with rich cadmium deposits. That was in

the days when everybody thought cad-

mium was going to be the wonder fuel for

ion rockets. We found the cadmium, all

right and made a bundle. While I was out

on my own, taking samples from rocks I

saw this gray ice-covered asteroid about a

hundred kicks away. My ship auto-eye

popped it up from the bright sunlight. Sen-
sors said it was carbon-dioxide ice with

some water mixed in. Probably a comet hit

the rock millions of years ago. And some of

it stuck. I slung its orbit parameters away for

a time—like now—when the market got

thirsty. Right now the big cylinder worlds

orbiting Earth need water. CO, methanol,

and other goodies. That happens every-

time the cylinder boys build a new an can

need to form an ecosystem inside Rock and one they can get from Earth's moon. For water they have to come to us. The Belters. They're cheaper in energy. Boost ice to the slow pipeline orbits in from the Belt to Earth—much cheaper than it is to haul water up from Earth's deep gravity well. Cheaper that is, if the rockrats flying vac out here can find any.

The screen rippled green. It drew a cone

for me. Sniffer at the apex. Inside that cone

was whoever had tried to wing me.

The cylinder was pointing nearly away from me, so radar had reported a cross section much smaller than its real size. I stared at that strange, monstrous thing, suddenly I didn't want to be around.
I stared at that strange, monstrous thing and thought, and suddenly I didn't want to be around there anymore. I took three quick shots with the telescope on inventory mode. That would tell me composition—bedee, the rest of the thing. Then I shut it down and scrambled back into the bridge. My hands were trembling, again.

I hesitated about what to do, but they decided for me. On our next revolution, as soon as the automatic opticals got a fix, there were two blips. I punched in for a radar Doppler and it came back bad. The smaller dot was closing on us, fast.

The moly bolts came free with a bang. I took Sniffer up and out, backing away from the asteroid to keep it between me and the blip that was coming toward us. I stepped up to max gee. My mouth was dry and I had to check every computer input twice.

I ran. There wasn't much else to do. The blip was coming at me at better than a tenth of a gee—impossible acceleration. In the Belt there is plenty of time for moving around, and a chronic lack of fuel—so we use high-efficiency drives and take energy-cheap orbits. The blip wasn't bothering with that. Somehow they had picked Sniffer out and decided we were worth a lot of fuel to reach and reach in a hurry. For some reason they didn't use a laser bolt. It would have been a simple shot at this range. But maybe they didn't want to chance my shooting at the big ship this close so they put their money on driving me off.

But then why chase me so fast? I didn't add up.

By the time I was a few hundred killicks away from the asteroid it was too small to be a useful shield. The blip appeared around its edge. I don't carry weapons, but I do have a few tricks. I built a custom-designed pulse mode into Sniffer's fusion drive back before she was commissioned. When the blip appeared I started slaging the engines. The core of the motor is a hot ball of plasma, burning heavy water—deuterium—and spitting it plus vaporized rock out the back tubes. Focusing in the right amount of deuterium is crucial. There are a dozen overloading safeguards on the system but you know how—

I punched in the command. My drive pulsed suddenly rich in deuterium. On top of that all in a microsecond: came a shot of cesium. It mixed and heated and zap—out the back! Moving fast went a hot cloud of spitting, scintillating plasma. The cesium ionizes easily and makes a perfect shield against radar. You can fire a laser through it sure—but how do you find your target?

The cesium pulse gave me a kick in the butt. I looked back. A blue-white cloud was spreading out behind Sniffer blocking any detection.

I ran like that for one hour then two. The blip showed up again. It had shifted sideways to get a look around the cesium cloud—an expensive maneuver. Apparently they had a lot of fuel in reserve.

I threw another cloud. It punched a blue-white flat into the blackness. They were making better goo than I could. It was going to be a matter of who could hold out. So I tried another trick. I moved into the radar shadow of an asteroid that was nearby and moving at a speed I could manage. Maybe the blip would miss me when it came out from behind the cloud. It was a gamble, but worth it in fuel.

In three hours I had my answer. The blip homed in on me. How? I thought. Who's got a radar that can pinpoint that well?

I fired a white hot cesium cloud. We accelerated away making tracks. I was getting worried. Sniffer was groaning with the strain. I hadn't allowed myself to think about what I'd seen but now it looked like I was in for a long haul. The fusion motor rumbled and murmured to itself and I was alone more alone than I'd felt for a long time, with nothing to do but watch the screen and think.

Belters aren't scientists. They're gamblers, idealists, thieves, crazies, fanatics. Most of them are from the cylinder world orbiting Earth. Once you've grown up in space, moving on means moving out going back to Earth. Nobody wants to be a groundpounder. But Belters are the new cutting edge of mankind. Pushing out finding new resources.

The common theory is that life in general must be like that. Over the last century the scientists have looked for radio signals from other civilizations out among the stars and come up with zero results. But we think life isn't at all unusual in the universe. So the question comes up: If there are aliens, and they're like us, why haven't they spread out among the stars? How come they didn't overrun Earth before we even evolved? Or if they moved at even one percent the speed of light they would have spread across the whole damn galaxy in a few million years.

Some people think that argument is right. They take it a little further too—the aliens haven't visited our solar system so check your premises again. Maybe there aren't any aliens like us. Oh sure, intelligent fish maybe or something we can't imagine. But there are no radio builders; no star voyagers.

The best proof of this is that they haven't come calling.

I never thought about that line of reasoning much because that's the conventional wisdom now. It's stuff you learn when you're a green-nosed kid. We stopped listening for radio signals a long time ago, back around 2060 or so. But now that I thought about it—

Already men were living in space habitats. If mankind ever cast off into the abyss between the stars, which way would they go? In a dinky rocket? No. They'd go in comfort in stable communities. They'd build a cylinder world with a fusion drive or something like it, and set course for the nearest star knowing they'd take generations to get there.

A century or two in space would make them into very different people. When they reached a star where would they go? Down to the planets? Maybe. But to live? Nobody who grew up in fractional g, with the freedom the cylinder world gives you would want to be a groundpounder. They wouldn't even know how.

The aliens wouldn't be much different. They'd be spacefarers able to live in vac and tap solar power. They'd need raw materials. Sure. But the cheapest way to get mass isn't to down and clog it up from the stars. No, the easy way is in the asteroids—otherwise. Belters would never make a buck. So if the aliens came to our solar system a long time ago, they'd probably continue to live in space colonies. Sure they'd study the planets some. But they'd live where they would be comfortable.

I thought this through slowly. In the long wait while I dodged from rock to rock there was plenty of time. I didn't like the conclusion but it fit the facts. That huge seven-kilometer cylinder back there wasn't man-made. I'd known that. Deep in my guts the moment I saw it. Nobody could build a thing like that and keep it quiet.

I thought this through slowly. In the long wait while I dodged from rock to rock there was plenty of time. I didn't like the conclusion but it fit the facts. That huge seven-kilometer cylinder back there wasn't man-made. I'd known that. Deep in my guts the moment I saw it. Nobody could build a thing like that and keep it quiet. The cylinder gave off no radio but ships navigating that much mass into place would have to. Somebody would have picked it up.

So now I knew what it was all about. It didn't help much.

I decided to hide behind one rock headning sunward at a fast clip. I needed sleep and I didn't want to keep up my fusion burn—they're too easy to detect. Belters to lie low for a while. I stayed there for hours, dozing when I woke up. I couldn't see the blip. Maybe they'd broken off the chase. I was tagged and there was sand in my eyes. I wasn't going to admit to myself that I was really scared this time. Belters and lasers I
could take sure. But this was too much for me.

I ate breakfast and freed Sniffer from the asteroid fiel mocred us. My throat was raw, my nerves jumpy. I edged us out from the rock and looked around. Nothing.

I turned up the fusion drive Sniffer... creaked and groaned. The deck plates rattled. There was a hot gun-metal smell. I had been in my skin suit the whole time and I didn't smell all that good either. I pulled away from our shelter and boosted.

It came out of nowhere.

One minute the scope was clean and the next—a big one moving fast, straight at us. It couldn't have been hiding—there was no rock around to screen it. Which meant they could deflect radar waves, at least for a few minutes. They could be invisible.

The thing came looming out of the darkness. It was yellow and blue, bright and obvious. I turned in my couch to see it. My hands were punching in a last-ditch maneuver on the board. I squinted at the thing and a funny feeling ran through me. A chill. It was old.

There were big meteor pits all over the yellow-blue skin. The surface itself glowed, like rock with a ghostly fire inside. I could see no ports, no locks, no antennas.

It was swarming in the sky, getting close. I hit the alarm on the emergency board. All buttons had laid out good money for one special surprise; if some prospector overtook me and decided he needed an extra ship. The side pods held fusion-burn rockets, poweful things. They fired one time only and cost like hell. But worth it.

The gas slammed me back into the couch. All roar rattled the ship. We hauled out of there. I saw the thing behind made away in the exhaust flames. The high-bust fuel puts us out incredibly hot gas. Some of it caught the yellow-blue thing. The front end of the ship scorching I smiled gritty and cut. In the whole system. The car thrust went up. I felt the bridge swimming around me. A sour smell of burning—then I was out, the world slipping away the blackness folding in.

When I came to I was floating. The boosters yawned empty space. Sniffer coasted at an incredibly high speed. And the yellow-blue thing was gone.

Maybe they'd been damaged. Maybe they just lain ran out of fuel. Everybody has limitations, even things that can span the stars.

I stretched out and let the hard knots of tension begin to unwind while Sniffer coasted alone. Time enough later to compute a new orbit. For the moment it simply felt great to be alone and alive.

Ceres Monitor here on 560 megahertz. Call on standby mode for orecraft Sniffer. Request microburst of confirmation on your call frequency. Sniffer. We have a high yield reading on optical from your coordinates. Request confirmation of fusion burn. Repeat this is Ceres Monitor on 560 megahertz—

I clicked it off. The Belt is huge, but the high-burn torch I turned loose back there was orders of magnitude more luminous than an ordinary fusion jet. That was one reason I carried them—they doubled as a signal flare visible millions of klicks away. By some chance somebody must have been near mine and relayed the coordinates to Ceres.

All through the chase I hadn't called Ceres. It would have been of no use—there were no craft within range to be of help. And Belters are loners—my instinct was always to keep troubles to myself. There's nothing worse than listening to a Beter whining over the radio.

But now I switched the radio back on and reached for the mike to hail Ceres. Then I stopped. Something wasn't quite kosher. The yellow-blue craft had never fired at me. Sniffer would have been easy to cripple—

The thing came looming out of the darkness. It was yellow and blue, bright and obvious. I turned in my couch to see it. My hands were punching in a last-ditch maneuver on the board—a chill ran through me.

A moral code of an ancient society. They had come here and settled, soaking up energy from our sun, mining the asteroids; getting Joe from comets. A peaceful existence. They were used to a sleepy Earth inhabited by life forms not worth the effort of constant study. Probably they didn't care much about planets anymore. They didn't keep detailed track of what was happening.

Suddenly in the last century or so—a very short interval from the point of view of a galactic-scale society—the animals down on the blue white world started acting up. Emitting radio, exploding nuclear weapons, flying spacecraft. These ancient beings found a noisy young, exponentially growing technology right on their doorstep.

I tried to imagine what they thought of us. We were young, we were crude. Undoubtedly the cylinder beings could have destroyed us. They could nudge a middle-sized asteroid into a collision orbit with Earth and watch the storm wreak havoc on our future. But they hadn't done it. That moral sense again?

Something like that. Yes. Give it a name and it becomes a human quality—which is in itself a deception. These things were alien. But their behavior had to make some sort of sense, had to have a reason.

I floated, frowning. Putting all this together was like assembling a jigsaw puzzle with only half the pieces, but still... something told me I was right. It fit.

A serene long-lived cosmic civilization might be worried by our blind rush outward. They were used to vast time scales, we had come on the stage in the wink of an eye. Maybe this speed left the cylinder beings undeterred, hesitant. They needed time to think things over. That would explain why they didn't contact us. Just the reverse, in fact—they were hiding.

Otherwise it suddenly hit me. They didn't use radio because it broadcasts at a wide angle. Only lasers can keep a tight beam over great distances. That was what zapped me—not a weapon a communications channel.

Which meant there had to be more than one cylinder world in the Belt. They kept quiet by using only beamed communications.

That implied something further too. We hadn't heard any radio signals from other civilizations, either—because they were using lasers. They didn't want to be detected by other younger societies. They didn't want us to know they existed.

Why? Were the aliens in our own Belt debating whether to help us or crush us? Or something in between?

In the meantime the Belt was a natural hideout. They liked their privacy. They must be worried now with humans exploring the Belt. I might be the first human to stumble on them. But I wouldn't be the last.

Ceres Monitor calling to—

I hesitated. They were old, older than we could imagine. They could have been in this solar system longer than man—stable, peaceful inhabitants of a vast history. They might have been moral enough not to fire at us, even though they knew we meant them to be discovered.

They needed time. They had a tough decision to face. If they were rushed into it they might make the wrong one.

Orecraft Sniffer requested to—

I was a Beter. I valued my hermit existence too. I thumbed on the mike.

Ceres. This is Sniffer. Rosemary Jokopi, solo officer. I verify that I used a fusion burn, but only as a part of routine mining exploration. No cause for alarm. Nothing else to report. Transmission ends.

When I hung up the mike my hands weren't shaking anymore.
SIGMUND IN SPACE

BY BARRY N. MALZBERG

Framed had to solve the problem—or he'd shrank into the dream cube

PAINTING BY MORRIS SCOTT DOLLENS
Freud walks the anterior corridors of the Whippley V1 meditating on the situation. The cabin is a manic-depressive space. The navigator has a severe oedipal block which is gradually destroying him. He is unable to attain orgasm even though the sexual acts are skilled and devoted. The hydroponics expert, a grim woman in her nineties, is manifesting advanced symptoms, it will be dementia præcox and at least half the crew by all standards of early-twentieth-century Vienna (which must of necessity be his touchstone) are necrotic to the point of dysfunction depressive reactions. Conversion hysteria bizarre sexual urges and the like. Clearly the administrators must have been desperate to place him on this vessel. Freud hardly knows where to begin. What can he do? What psychotherapeutic techniques (by which definition require patience) can possibly prevail in this emergency? If Freud were not so wondrously confident of his abilities so protectively despairing he would be most undone.

The rhythm of his pacing increases. Freud takes greedy little glances at the huge screen glinting around him. Looking at the disorder of a constellation is a smudge of stars. Here in the late twenty-fifth century space exploration is not routine. The Whippley V1 is on a dangerous mission to the Hiberno-unprobled Vegans. The view of the universe from a distance of so many light-years from Vienna is astonishing. Freud would not have dreamed that such things were possible. Furthermore, he would not have dreamed that as technology advanced the common neuroses would prevail. Of course, that was foolish. The pain the schism, the elder stromes would prevail.

Freud shrugs. He reaches inside his vest pocket for a cigar and lights it. The cigar with a flourish watches smoke whirl into the ventilators as he turns in the corridor and then returns to the small cubicle that the administrators have given him as office space. The desk is littered with papers, the wall with diplomas. Freud looks right at home. Within their limits the administrators have done everything possible to grant him credibility and a sense of domain. If he is unable to cope he knows they will only blame him more. Well, he thinks well what they decide will be done. I will be stricken again and replaced in this dream cube. I will be stricken again and again. The crews before. Within several centuries before I receive another assignment. But then again I will have no knowledge and therefore my entrapment will be in their estimation, not mine. The last time I had an assignment was in the early twenty-second century. The madman on Venus who thought he was a vine and threatened to cut off the dome respirators. I didn’t handle that too well and got decked for centuries but here I am again and none the worse for it. Their sanctions exclude me.

This thought impels him toward his next act which is to use the communicator on his desk to contact the captain and summon him to his office. Of all the technological wonders of this time, the communicator is a simple instrument reminiscent of the telephone of his era. Freud wonders if whether they have given him this to make him feel at home or whether the twenty-fifth century is simply a century less sophisticated than the stick and dangerous twenty-second which he remembers so vividly. It also think that with his knowledge of the captain’s old rivals Adler and Jung.

Dubious that miserable pair have already been summoned and bailed on this case. There is grim satisfaction in knowing this. But he would have hoped to have been reconstructed more often. Two jobs in the twenty-first, three in the twenty-second before that disaster on Venus and now this. Not good. Not good at all.

Well there is nothing to be done about that. Here he is and here the responsibility for the mission reposes. The captain enters his cabin a slender ash-tanned man dressed in fatigues but wearing a full dress cap. His aspect is impatient but restrained. Like all on board he has been given the strictest orders to comply with Freud’s procedures. The administrators cannot control the fate of the mission but they can abort the ship apart at the touch of a light-year distant incendiary beam. The captain knows this. He sits across from Freud his hands on his knees and staring at him earnestly his eyes slowly gaining under Freud’s gaze. We’re going to take over these Vegans, he says unprompted. You know that of course.

Of course, Freud says sympathetically. They’re a green humanoid race primitive but with the potential for technological advance. They’re hostile and barbaric. We’re going to wipe them out while we still have time. I have plans, the captain says shakily. I have enormous plans.

Of course you do, Freud says. He puffs on the cigar with what he hopes resembles a gesture of sincerity. Why do you think you must destroy the Vegans?

Because otherwise in a generation they’ll have spaceships and atomic devices and will destroy us. The captain says. Don’t worry I’m completely in control. I’m a highly trained man.

Freud has read the capsule reports prepared by the administrators. Of course there are no Vegans at all. There are three silicon-based planets orbiting an and star. To have centuried space probes. Life has never been found on these planets. It’s now you’ve trained. Freud says. Still I have a question if I might ask it.

Please ask the captain says hoarsely. I am prepared to deal with any questions.

That is an important quality to be sure. Now what if it happened to be “Freud says gently that there are no Vegans”.

There are Vegans. Several hundred million of them. I’m going to wipe them out.

Yes, yes but what if there aren’t? Just to speculate—

You’re just like the rest of them. The captain says his face mollifying. You damned toy you reconstruct. You’re just like the rest. Don’t humor me. I’m going to save the universe. We’re going to get back to the bridge. I must prepare for the deadly cancer-causing Vegan probes, which could encroach us at any moment.

“Ah, how long have you felt this way?” Freud asks mildly as the captain slams out of their sights and rubs his hands on the desk and then starts at his diploma for a while then he summons the navigator.

The navigator shows considerably less effect than the captain but after some gentle probing, discloses that his mother was aboard the ship stowed away in one of the ventilators and whispering thoughts to him of the most disgusting nature. He has always hated and feared his mother and that is why he enlisted in the service. But she will not leave him alone—he was a fool to think that he could escape. Freud dismisses him and turns to the hydroponics engineer who tells him bitterly that he too is already affected virally with an insidious disease which the captain has been seeding into the units. Machine or otherwise. Freud is as dozed as the rest but at least he can try to keep up his strength. She offers him some celery. After she leaves he gnaws it meditatively and talks to some selected members of the crew. They believe the officers to be quite mad in self-defense they have turned to bestial practices. Here at last Freud finds some professional respect—they are impressed that the administrators would send another famous psychoanalyst, as reconstruct to superintend their voyages. They hope that he does better than Adler and Jung who worked together and succeeded only in boring them with lectures. And they are not pleased with them either. They would send a true practitioner a medical doctor in their place.

Freud sends the crew on their way and lights another cigar. The symptoms evicted are extraordinary yet there is enough consistency in the syndrome for him to infer that the administrators have lied to him. Everyone on this ship has gone mad and this is probably a consequence of the mission itself. Long probes—they stress isolation boredom and propriety—must tend to break down the crews. The administrators have failed for him not because of special circumstances but because of the ordinary circumstances. What they want him to do is to patch over matters in order that the mission may conclude. There has been much difficulty and expense; it would be wasteful and cruel to abort the mission so close to its end.

Freud stands near his desk marginally and returns to the corridor and his pacing. The walter of constellation now stuns and discommodes Freud adjusts the angle of the windows so that he can evade them. Space for an early-twentieth-century Viennese is overwhelming. It must have less of an effect upon the custodians of the twenty-fifth, but several months in this envi-
The administrators have obviously tried to routinize the missions just as with the reconstructions they have routinized a qualified immortality. But in neither case has it really worked. Three centuries in a cube is not the end. Freud himself is a familiar man and student of the human mind who has been reconstructed to help you with your difficulties on this Vegan probe. I have come to give you the solution to your problems.

They stare at him. The hydroponics engineer puts down her gun, holds her hands in her lap and looks at him luminously. 'That's the captain, you must repel,' Freud says. 'Caution will not do it. Circumvention will not do it. Only your own courage and integrity will accomplish this.'

'Chair's shift: The captain applauds fervently. 'Understand me,' Freud says. 'Nothing at all the administrators have lied to you. They have always lied to you. So, if you want to tell you the truth, it's not the routine transference of human cargo. Space itself is the ocean and the star probe is not a nineteenth-century battleship. The Vegan is not the Aeolus! Conditions are new and terrible. Monsters lurk through the curtains of space. Everything is changed.'

'Yes, the captain says gratefully, every-thing is. The mission is aborted. Not by the administrators. For Freud, these men of steel and power now have only the greatest respect.'

But by the Vegan space probe, which does not bring cancer to the captive, that is like many insane, was intellectually damaged, but the fire...
Starships emerge from the sullen monotony of space. Color-flecked contours vanish and reappear, depicting titanic dimensions. These radiant fortresses, both lyrical and defiant, herald an imagination sparked by the future of spaceflight.
Berkey’s behemoth space yachts rely on their own strength of composition and style rather than on technical accuracy.

I am uncomfortable with the business of being a science-fiction artist," John Berkey says quietly. "I think of myself as an artist who paints science-fiction pictures."

Berkey’s renderings of the future are not founded on technical descriptions of tomorrow’s technology. Every painting begins with careful contemplation of where to place the light source. Spaceships are influenced as much by the artist’s fascination with the human form as they are by the latest trends in aerodynamics. "Too many people are stuck on the idea that machines must have hard edges and..."
sharp corners. I don’t know why a spaceship couldn’t be vapor,” says Berkey. “I prefer rounded forms as opposed to triangular shapes that zoom through the air.” Perhaps it is because he is not constrained by scientific or literary convention that Berkey’s far-future imaginings are so convincing. Fittingly, these futuristic scapes are created in a placid, earthbound setting. Berkey’s at-home studio on a wooded expanse of lakeside land in Excelsior, Minnesota. Beyond a certain point, the artist reflects, “the future provides total freedom to invent.

For an artist, there are hazards in knowing too much about engineering or technology. They can limit the imagination.
In these mountains, our fight together now past; I understand no more clearly a return to the valley of my youth and to its facades might signify recollection and might be even wise, yet against that compromise I face again the ultimate fact of my wife now dead and also the children. A sentimental gesture of return to the quarters can only disgorge love’s memory. In this cave therefore, I shall remain and hope I shall die.

Before the death by falling boy, by casual fall (girl) or her death (brother) I understood only the little piece of our rebellion. What I had not fully understood until now is how little our entry charged even slightly the established quotas of work, or the products of clay which at this moment are being kept tailed and pooled each week and each quarter of every year. In the Valley of the Kilns our names are not reported.

To the thousands of workers who remain our fight so long ago signifies nothing. No person shall profit from either our hardship or the examples of our devotion to one another. We are to return to the Valley for trial and to public confession of error perpetuated in the memory. I doubt it.

Nevertheless I shall make this chronicle of two lives accurate with neither apology nor self-delusion intended. And as I set down these words which never shall be read farther back in this cave I hear the great clay heart of the world beading curiously among its valleys.

All down when the snows were above in the first light I foresaw clearly my own fate: extraction by wolves when I can no longer walk out cave path to the grove of oak for fuel. Until then, I accept surely the seasons remaining. Towards evening, I watch dear walk from the forest near my deadfall, to drink, at times when the rains of valley come my certain end may seem almost just. If my choice in the future someone reads these mere words on paper: no doubt, they will make other judgments each reader for himself alone.

Even then the routine of each morning is the same. I recollect vividly my first clay of duty on the high ascents:

Before the first rays of the sun illuminated the peaks, I was awake. In the far reaches of our barracks caves I heard hundreds of voices stirring, on their feet now coming towards the light to work. Outside the first music from the loudspeakers topped our flat peaks, white as assembly area.

Across the Plaza on the front porches of their individual dwellings precisely at the same moment, our foremen appeared in a saluting way all in a line: they walked across the Plaza.

As the sun rose all crews stood precisely at attention.

Fascinated, we listened to the roll call of induction units, then yesterday’s work done and this new day’s community goals. With great excitement, each morning I heard the tolling for Escarpment Six. With one voice we pledged fidelity to the Kilns, our work to be pure until the customs of our craft—of sacrifice, etc. are. My vision, with a thousand other voices reached our pledges upward into the sun’s first days. And I was young.

That night I accepted with pride the challenge of the high escarpment—where the clay was talcumen white. From those heights, our kilns seemed only now upon the brow of brown smoke, I was no longer than a wisp of wind. We tamped black powder into holes drilled by hand. We blasted away giant avalanches of rock which fell like a long black feather of rolling thunder towards the con-

PAINTING BY BOB VENOSA

VALLEY OF THE KILNS

In one voice they pledged fidelity to the brick fires, but one among them dared to violate the law of the clay

BY JAMES B. HALL
bread became alive in the dullous grace of our hands. Against white clay our inter\
cately woven. enclosed linen cloths breathed in the light into our linen cloths were woven on our future assignments to our destiny in the enterprise at the kils. Only foremen and upper-level management could read those secrets; all others obsess-
ively stared without comprehension. Bes-
ides our identical matching headbands, each man had a device implanted in the
upper arm. At certain hours these devices made sound at others, especially at
ight they merely hummed and we knew happily the something was listening
When the sun setting touched the first rim of the mountains we re-formed on a
lower terrace by now our bodies had be-

and iridescent statues, breathing easily.

Sometimes singing, incredibly white from the
blown dust; we went at a half-trot to the
valley floor.

At the assembly plaza later especially in
the windless nights of Spring the kilns
seemed to become lighter as the moon rose
and it glowed in its own light turning
orange, then red, and just before dawn
dark blue. At those moments our singing
became one voice rising from the dark
open throat of the Valley.

A feeling of high order came upon us: We
were at one with an enterprise which sig-
nified purpose something essential to our
larger world.

One summer night exactly like that I lay
half-asleep at the entrance of our barrac-
cove. Above the escarpments I watched
our constellation take more perfect shape
the Great Jug with three handles to the
West. The Jug also; only at the against the
vast ultimate furnace of our universe

Aware? and it was my Foreman from the
escarpment; his profile a blade of cast
bronze against the light of the kilns.

“My Eagle much awake,” his tone was
ironical, the customary speech of all Fore-
men. In the mysterious way of manage-
ment he knew where to find me and that I
was aware altering our constellations.

Casually the Foreman picked up the end
of my loom cloth. By holding it parallel he
shifted those patterns alongside the beads
of my headband. When aligned the two
beads seemed to catch the light from the
kils’ reflected and for a moment seemed
to join the larger pattern.

What I see here, Eagle—My Fore-
man then held the bead patterns unnatu-
aturally close to his hooked nose. He said:

Yes, and again cleared his throat.

For the first time I realized the man who
had first led me to the escapements was
a rare sight. His disheveled, hisld not clearly
read—could only guess—what my loom
cloth and headband patterns bore. With
more of a shock than I realized at the mo-
ment I understood the knowledge of all
Foremen and by extension all Manage-
ment was approximation myth. Fur

thermore in his moments of hesitation my
Foreman seemed incredibly old.

Certain-I’ly, and I heard t an
thusiasm. She receas new assignment

Because I had grown to full manhood on
the escarpments and had survived. I ex-
pected change, yes, also and reward and
recognition. Yet because I had been taught
so little, that moment I felt nothing at all. Thus
my deeply protective reply was very much the
tone of my Foreman

So tomorrow is my time?

Abruptly he turned from me

First he seemed abnormally tall figure
his shadow massive blue. Then he was only
a man growing smaller as the walk lighted
him upately across the shimmering, ab-

stones of the Plaza.

Because he had told me nothing. I called
out

He did not turn back

Without thinking I trudged across the
Plaza towards him and the first row of little
houses where the Foremen lived with their
wives. I touched his shoulder.

Startled, he drew back. Fear was what I
saw in his face, and in the gesture of his
raised arm. I had crossed their Plaza. More
because of my curiosity he drew back

Am I a Foreman? I asked with

He stepped back to the iron steps of what
might be his own home. Because all
windows in all small houses dark, but dark
I thought. Why no one all lives here. There
are only house fronts. These doors led
only to other quarters perhaps into bar
racks-caves.

Far down the production line an ex-
traordinary flash of blue light illumina-
ted his face, the house fronts and his poor

You. you have done well.

Then a wise assignment

Harshly, in the dialect of all Management
he spoke, and turned from me

With one single disengaging motion of
arm and shoulder he disappeared through
the door.

And of course I never saw him again.

Barli now I trudged back across the Plaza
to the place where I belonged. If anything I
felt bereaved, desolate as though sud-
denly on some high, rolling escarpment
I had become afraid. As I reached the safety
of our barracks, the device in my arm
began, to play softly for marching and
could sleep

I awoke beside Kiln 82-B.

That is to say, I came to understand
through work on our production lines. My
loom-cloth patterns took me not to a small
white Foreman’s house but to three years
and 40 days as lead-off man before the fire
doors.

Past daybreak one day in spring our
crew of men entreed the firing shed at the
same moment. The crew-women also ar-
rived through their portal.

Our procedure was exact. Each man of
our crew placed carefully an isolated white-
square of clay on the tining rack. The

worn opposite scribed the day’s pattern.

And tied the clay with a brush and red

stove, blue gage. Whereupon Caipen men
thoughtfully measured each brick and
each row of bricks, trying without rancor to
find their own quota of Second Forms.

Nimbly within the permitted time-trama
ier upon the piles rose as high as our
tallest men could reach for the firing run all
the required pieces again.

The Bailey men those rowing jackals with
cupboards and abacus came and went our
Foreman with his symbolic lashes, the whip
of porcelain stood high above on his plat-
form; never smiling.

Beyond my lead off station always I was
aware of the curved door of our furnace
and of the tires within. At a signal from the
platform above I rolled back our furnace
doors. One crew on either side togethe-

pushed forward the wheeled truck of per-}

fectly aligned unfired bricks. When the heat
caused the others to fall back I alone
pushed the load deeper into the furnace.

Then I too was outside and the door of the
kiln slammed shut with only

As the crew walked all in a row to the rear
of that somberly roasting kiln we pulled
forth an incense pipe, a honeycomb of
new bricks which glowed among us like
the sun.

To see an aligned, glowing dolly of bricks
emerge triumphantly from its week-long fire
meant all of us in an almost incomprehensible
joy. As we watched yet another crew
pushed that truck—glowing steady, burn-
ing red—towards our ng yards. Always we
watched the square of light grow smaller
until it was only a firefly, disappearing. Out-
side everything was dark as pitch.

At such a moment we met

To meet however implies special cir-

ocumstance. To be sure I had seen her each
day, for almost three years, but precisely
because each worker inexorably was a
one with our production with the ideology
of our Valley the distinction between men
and women lost in the production lines
long ago had ceased to exist. With that

However implausible we spoke to
another only in quasi-words or by com-
munal song. Thus to see another person or
touch accidentally across a pallet of clay
was not at all to meet.

As had happened before exactly when
the set-piller of the day emerged from our
kiln. I used to dial my vision. Three
times before when I looked into the flames
unmistakably I saw my own face. That day
however nothing as though sculptured in
flame. I saw the outline of my whole body
completing with loom cloth patterns.

Blind strike. I fell down in the mon-
strous blue shadow of our Whip’s platform.
For one moment he too was blinded by the
fiery sun of new bricks emerging.

You do, what she said very

softly her face partly averted.”

More

What she said was illogical and also not
desirable—that anyone could do more
yet secretly I knew in my own heart what
she dared say was true
More than anyone else, the movements of my body had told her so at the furnace door then deeper into the flames than anyone else. I dared push our pallets on the production line at times. I was an Eagle still roosting on the escapement of the mill's eight-hour rhythm, whose secret she had understood. As it had been for a very long time when I had seen a Foreman's profile against blue light, so was it with her at that moment; her profile against the kiln's subdued overhead glow her lips half-open.

We did not touch. Instead, impulsively she picked up the end of my linen cloth. Intently her face without expression, she held the pattern of her linen cloth in parallel to mine. Never before had I seen a woman's hand do something so intensely feminine.

In the shadow of the platform above at a moment when even the Talley men were blinded on shards of old brick and contrary to Lew and myself in the face of death by burning she kissed me.

I knew what I felt, and the Valley suddenly seemed to tremble because of our unplanned disobedience. Then as though we had paused only in those shadows we stood apart, stepped back into our respective lives.

In the next weeks, two things happened. At Kin 82-B my personal effort—a concept not before known to me—reddoubled. I sensed new, ill-defined purpose. I pushed our pre-high cast of unfired bricks almost into the very heart of the awful flames. Suddenly, in ways I had not thought possible, she managed to put glaze on almost every brick which I placed on any pallet. No word was spoken yet our work seemed to be for ourselves alone. And it was true; she managed to let others place her just beyond my touch, and yet I could observe her closely.

Of course we had no names, and outwardly she was precisely as all other women had ever seen except in the center of her black long hair was an aetheric skin of ash-white. When the heat of the kiln blew her hair back across her shoulders that line of color glorified and foisted as I watched. Clearly that mask was her disqualification to bear witness. Furthermore, I saw a destructive, impulsive aspect of her work. She was wasteful of glaze and at times and impulsively threw down the honed tools of her craft. But would she ever see her own face in this consuming fire? I could not know the answer.

After six weeks we met again in the darkness beneath a Talley-man's decorated platform, our feet bare on shards of brick.

With absolute disdain for the symbolic porcelain whoope above us, she said to me, "Tomorrow I go down to the cedar forest.

"Terror was what I felt. Even with the Talley man directly overhead I might have cried out, but she touched me, placed her blunted short fingers across my lips.

"Far down the tracks towards the cooling sheds, we saw our last dollops of bricks glowing, becoming smaller in the exceptional somehow comforting darkness.

"Without saying anything, she turned towards the receding light, and because of love for her I took the second step. We were two shadows running, following the narrow rails onward. Then we were going under a bridge the walls submerged sheds, their roofs held up by columns of brick.

"Suddenly ahead the glowing honeycomb of fired bricks flared, went out the tracks had abruptly turned. Because it was dark I walked more slowly. Underfoot were shards of pottery of brick overhead we saw massive savagely decorated plastra, where once Foremen and Talley men hastily watched. These plastra from another age were now impotent deserted, falling down.

"Beside a low lintel tower we emerged on the sky and climbed the rough handmade steps to an upper platform. Stretched out ahead in the moonlight, it looked like the back at some sleeping vicious animal. I saw the roof of cooling sheds stretching away.

"In full flight, with no guide save the escarpment to the East gradually we went towards the docks, the shipping yards. On either side we passed between pallets of stacked up bricks with three holes, each pasted stacks of reds in a hundred sizes; all with three handles. Gradually these piles became smaller; the sheds more haphazard. After four miles the shed roofs were rolled down and the abandoned roof posts no taller than my waist. At last we reached piles, only piles of rubble covered by silt or by clay blown here by the winds.

"On a rise of ground beyond the vast vestiges of those mounds at two dock in the morning we stopped. For a moment we turned back. Beneath the sky we saw blue and orange organ pipes of flame a mosaic of streets and plazas; the row upon row of mighty kilns, the entire Valley a heath gliding, the place where we were born. Ahead was only a sliver of stone a niche in the chaos of mountains.

"Listening intently we heard for the last time the far-off, sweet, industrial hum rising from the Valley of the Kilns. We felt barren, but we did not turn back. What I saw next made all of the others.

"When we skirted the kilns, I leaned over the area of the yards and the River docks. Here the Talley men roved with their giant three-eyed dogs. These areas were central to our enterprise; to our dogmen, our crew in the forest, the escarpment beside the kilns or in the vast network of cooling sheds, and our myriad of quotas, our athletic games when we ran long distances carrying heavy weights and most especially the patterns programmed into our loin cloth.

"This we believed from our yards and docks—made Holy by Shardsmen, our tire and our brick moved onward to construct walls and fantastic cities high on mountain tops we had never seen. These things known were the end, the justification of all our sacrifice.

Yet here beyond the most savage burnout cooling sheds there were no railroad yards. No docks. Where tall yards might have been. I saw only ancient low ridges coming together: These ridges interesting might once have been a primitive system of dikes or canals or possibly roads—now abandoned, now overgrown.

"What might have been rails, or settlements, was only chew on ground running tent dills reflecting the light of the moon or reflecting the kil-flames from the Valley itself. Beneath vines beneath wind-blow gone.

"I sensed there were only incredibly ancient rows of crude bricks which of their own weight and a thousand years of rain were sinking inexorably into the earth from whence they came.

"Suppressed unable to speak, I sat down on a low, turtle-shaped mound of pottery shards—said nothing at all. As in a moment of vision all the things hitherto not known or taken on faith in all my life seemed suddenly to become clear. In that terrible moment, I came truly to light. I understood. After this knowledge there was no forgiveness.

"I looked up. I intended to share with her my revelation.

In her face I saw something both significant and terrible. She was sitting erect smiling. Her face in the moonlight was full of another kind of wonder; an exasperation I knew too well. Although I saw what I saw she meant her imagination was different. She had never been on the high escarpments. Therefore I understood too. She did in fact see railroad yards. She saw what she had to see. Docks, barge lines of freight cars rolling. Her face was absolute. She had never seen her own face burning, like a rose made in a kiln. Only because of the she had come here, because of love.

"Perhaps we might have returned the way we came. With good fortune, I might have lived out life in the kilns silent, an outcast because of my fatal knowledge awaiting my final years as a toothless muttering grader of shards. Perhaps her spirit really was the spirit of the cedar forests perhaps there was justice after all in the pattern of our loin cloth.

But we did not turn back.

I pointed ahead to a low notch in a wall and to the dark canyon of stone beyond.

With impulsive almost childish glee with her long black hair blowing in the first wind of morning, she took my hand. She raised me to my feet. She laughed and as we ran the largest journey of our life began.

The sun rose. As we paused for the last time to look back far away and far below I saw the high escarpment's turn for one moment into the flame.

The path leading us upward took us between flowers and across the first high-mountain meadow. There in a grove of sweet low-growing pines for the first time we made love and then slept in each other's arms until the sun was overhead.

41
AN ORSON SCOTT CARD CELEBRATION
orson scott card has always been a gentle person. as a child he never tortured cats, never got in a schoolyard fistfight, never enjoyed stepping on worms on the sidewalk after a rainstorm. life has also been kind to him. no one he has known intimately has died. why, then, do cruelty and death pervade his stories?

Card does not litter the stage with corpses like an Elizabethan tragedian. He does not celebrate gore. Instead, death arrives in his stories like the finale of a dance, and cruelty is a rite by which the victim becomes ennobled or, at least, justified.

It is no coincidence that the central ritual of Christianity memorializes an unspeakably cruel death; that it enacts symbolic cannibalism; that it explicitly has to do with the forgiveness of sin. Card, a Mormon, grew up surrounded by stories of exquisite suffering and rituals even more symbolically violent than the Eucharist. Without attempting to write Christian allegory, he has inevitably reached into himself for rites that feel important and true, for deaths that seem to accomplish something.

The result is a story like “quietus,” where death must be held at bay until it is bearable; or “fat farm,” in which a man must, to his own surprise, pay the price of his hedonism; or “Saint amy’s tale,” in which a woman learns the cost of being an angel. in every case, the central act or acts of cruelty, the important deaths, are voluntary, and all make some difference in the world.

So even where the ending is hard for a sympathetic reader to bear, even where the tale seems to assert that victory and survival are mutually exclusive, Card never writes stories of despair. His tales are ultimately hopeful. His characters do make a difference in their worlds, and the reader is made better for having lived with them awhile.
He was grossly fat, tired, and old when he went in. He came out a new man—for a price.

BY ORSON SCOTT CARD

The receptionist was surprised that he was back so soon.

"Why Mr. Barth! How glad I am to see you," she said. "Surprised, you mean," Barth answered. His voice rumbled from the rolls of fat under his chin.

"How long has it been?" Barth asked.

"Three years. How time flies," The receptionist smiled, but Barth saw the awe and revulsion on her face as she glanced over his immense body. In her job she saw fat people every day. But Barth knew he was unusual. He was proud of being unusual.

"Back to the fat farm," he said, laughing. The effort of laughing made him short of breath, and he gasped for air as she pushed a button and said, "Mr. Barth is back."

He did not bother to look for a chair. No chair could hold him. He did lean against a wall, however. Standing was a labor he preferred to avoid.

Yet it was not shortness of breath or exhaustion at the slightest effort that had brought him back to Anderson's Fitness Center. He had often been fat before, and he rather relished the sensation of bulk, the impression he made as crowds parted for him. He pitied those who could only be slightly fat—short people, who were not able to bear the weight. As well over two meters, Barth could get gloriously fat, stunningly fat. He owned thirty wardrobes and took delight in changing from one to another as his belly and buttocks and thighs grew. At times he felt that if he grew large enough, he could take over the world. But at the dinner table he was a conqueror to rival Genghis Khan.

It was not his fatness then that had brought him in. It was that at last the fat was interfering with his other pleasures. The girl he had been with the night before...
And just as he had done the last time, he touched the naked young Barth, stroked the smooth and lovely skin, and finally embraced him. And the young Barth embraced him back.

Anderson placed a tight-fitting rubber cap over Barth's head.

"Think of your Archimedes. Anderson reminded him.

Key thought. At first had been such a comfort to make sure that not one iota of his memory would be lost. Now it was boring almost juvenile. Key thought. Do you have your own Captain Aardvark secret decoder ring? Be the first on your block. The only thing Barth had been the first on his block to do was reach puberty. He had also been the first on his block to reach one hundred fifty kios.

How many times have I been here? He wondered as the tingling in his scalp began. This is the eighth time. Eight times and my fortune is larger than ever the kind of wealth that takes on a life of its own. I can keep this up forever he thought with relish. Forever at the supper table with neither worries nor restraints. It's dangerous to gain so much weight. Lynette had said. Heart attacks, you know. But the only things that Barth worried about were hemmorhoids and impotence. The former was a nuisance, the latter made life unbearable and drove him back to Anderson.

Key thought. What else? Lynette standing naked on the edge of the cliff with the wind blowing. She was courting death and he admired her for it. Almost hoped that she would find it. She despised safety precautions. Like clothing; they were restrictions to be cast aside. She had once talked him into playing tag with her on a construction site racing along the girders in the darkness until the police came and made them leave. That had been when Barth was still thin from his last time at Anderson's. But it was not Lynette on the girders that he held in his mind. It was Lynette fragile and beautiful Lynette daring the wind to snatch her from the cliff and break up her body on the rocks by the river.

Even that. Barth thought would be a kind of pleasure. A new kind of pleasure to taste a grief so magnificently so admirably.

And then the tingling in his head stopped. Anderson came back in.

"Already? Barth asked.

We've streamlined the process. Anderson carefully peeled the cap from Barth's head helped the immense man lift himself from the couch.

"I can't understand why it's illegal. Barth said. Such a simple thing.

On there are reasons. Population control. That sort of thing. This is a kind of immortality, you know. But it's mostly the repugnance most people feel. They can't face the thought. You're a man of rare courage."

But I was not courageous Barth knew. I was a pleasure. He eagerly anticipated seeing, and they did not make him wait.

Mr Barth meet Mr Barth.

He nearly broke his heart to see his own body young and strong and beautiful again. As it had never been the first time through his life. It was unquestioningly himself. However that they led into the room. Except that the belly was thin, the thighs were well muscled but slender enough that they still met even at the crotch.

They brought him in naked of course. Barth insisted on it.

He tried to remember the last time. Then he had been the one coming from the learning room. emerging to see the immense fat man that he had said was himself. Barth remembered that it had been a double pleasure to see the mountain he had made of himself. Yet to view it from inside this beautiful young body.

Come here Barth said. His own voice arousing echoes of the last time. It had been the other Barth who had said it. And as that other had done the last time he touched the naked young Barth stroked the smooth and lovely skin, and finally embraced him.

And the young Barth embraced him back for that was the way of it. No one loved Barth as much as Barth did. Thin or fat young or old. Life was a celebration of Barth the sight of himself was his strongest nostalgia.

"What did I think of? Barth asked.

The young Barth smiled into his eyes Lynette, he said. Naked on a cliff. The wind blowing. And the thought of her thrown to her death.

"Will you go back to her? Barth asked his young self eagerly.

Perhaps. Or to someone like her. And Barth saw with delight that the mere thought of it had aroused his young self more than a little.

He'll do Barth said and Anderson handed him the simple papers to sign. Papers that would never been seen in a court of law because they attested to Barth's own compliance in and initiation of an act that was second only to murder in the lawbooks of every state.

That's it then Anderson said turning from the fist Barth to the young thin one. You're Mr Barth now in control of his wealth and his life. Your clothing is in the next room.

I know where it is. the young Barth said with a smile and his footsteps were
buoyant as he left the room. He would dress quickly and leave the Fitness Center briskly, hardly noticing the rather plain-looking receptionist, except to take note of her wistful look after him, a tall, slender, beautiful man who had only moments before been lying mindless in storage, waiting to be given a mind and a memory waiting for a fat man to move out of the way so he could fill his space.

In the memory room Barth sat on the edge of the couch looking at the door and then realized, with surprise, that he had no idea what came next.

"My memories run out here," Barth said to Anderson. "The agreement was—what was the agreement?"

The agreement was tender care of you until you passed away.

"Ah yes," said Anderson smiling.

"Barth looked at him with surprise. "What do you mean?"

There are two options, Barth. A needle within the next fifteen minutes. Or employment.

"What are you talking about?"

"You didn't think I'd waste time and effort feeding you the ridiculous amounts of food you required did you?"

Barth felt himself sink inside. This was not what he had expected, though he had not honestly expected anything. Barth was not the kind to anticipate trouble. Life had never given him much trouble.

"A needle?"

"Cyanide, if you insist, though we'd rather be able to vivsect you and get as many useful body parts as we can. Your body's still fairly young. We can get incredible amounts of money for your pelvis and your glands, but they have to be taken from you alive.

"What are you talking about? This isn't what we agreed."

I agreed to nothing with you, my friend Anderson said smiling. I agreed with Barth. And Barth just left the room.

"Call him back! I insist—"

Barth doesn't give a damn what happens to you.

And he knew that it was true.

You said something about employment.

"Indeed."

What kind of employment? Anderson shook his head. "It depends," he said.

On what?

"What kind of work turns up. There are several assignments every year that must be performed by a living human being for which no volunteer can be found. No person, not even a criminal, can be compelled to do them.

And?"

"Will do them. Or one of them rather since you rarely get a second job.

How can you do this? I'm a human being!" Anderson shook his head. The law says that there is only one possible Barth in all the world, and you aren't it. You're just a number. And a letter. The letter H. "Why H?"

Because you're such a disgusting gluton, my friend. Even our first customers haven't got past C yet!

Anderson left then, and Barth was alone in the room. Why hadn't he anticipated this? Of course of course, he shouted to himself now. Of course they wouldn't keep him pleasantly alive. He wanted to get up and try to run, but walking was difficult for him, running would be impossible. He sat there, his belly pressing heavily on his thighs, which were spread wide by the fat. He stood with great effort, and could only waddle because his legs were so far apart so constrained in their movement.

This had happened every time Barth thought. Every damn time I've walked out of this place young and thin! I've left behind someone like me, and they've had their way haven't they? His hands trembled badly.

Then they found him and brought him back, weary and despairing, and forced him to finish a day's work in the field before letting him rest. And even then the lash bit deep.

He wondered what he had decided before and knew immediately that there was no decision to make at all. Some fat people might hate themselves and choose death for the sake of having a thin version of themselves live on. But not Barth. Barth could never choose to cause himself any pain. And to oblige even an illegal clandestine version of himself—impossible. Whatever else he might be, he was still Barth, the man who walked out of the memory room a few minutes before had not taken over Barth's identity. He had only duplicated it, they've stolen my soul with mirrors. Barth told himself. I have to get it back.

Anderson! Barth shouted. Anderson! I've made up my mind.

It was not Anderson who entered of course, Barth would never see Anderson again. It would have been too tempting to try to kill him.

"Get to work." He, the old man shouted from the other side of the field.

Barth leaned on his hoe, a moment more then got back to work, scraping weeds from between the potato plants. The class on his hands had long since shaped themselves to fit the wooden handle and his muscles knew how to perform the work without Barth's having to think about it all. Yet that made the labor no easier. When he first realized that they meant him to be a potato farmer, he had asked, "Is this my assignment? Is this all?" And they had laughed and told him no. It's just preparation they said, to get you in shape. So for two years he had worked in the potato fields, and now he began to doubt that they would ever come back, that the potatoes would ever end.

The old man was watching. He knew his gaze always burned worse than the sun. The old man was watching, and if Barth rested too long or too often, the old man would come to him, whip in hand, to scar him deeply to hurt him to the soul.

He dug into the ground, chopping at a stubborn plant whose root seemed to cling to the foundation of the world. Come up damn you, he muttered. He thought his arms were too weak to strike harder, but he struck harder anyway. The root split and the impact shattered him to the bone.

He was naked and brown to the point of blackness from the sun. The flesh hung loosely on him in grotty folds, a memory of the mountain he had been. Under the loose skin, however, he was tight and hard. It might have given him pleasure for every muscle had been earned by hard labor and the pain of the lash. But there was no pleasure in it. The price was too high.

I'll kill myself! he often thought and thought again now with his arms trembling with exhaustion. I'll kill myself so they can't use my body and can't use my soul.

But he would never kill himself. Even now Barth was incapable of ending it.

The farm he worked on was unfenced, but the time he had gotten away he had walked, walked and walked for three days and had not once seen any sign of human habitation other than an occasional jeep track in the sagebrush-and-grass desert. Then they found him and brought him back, weary and despairing, and forced him to finish a day's work in the field before letting him rest. And even then the lash had bitten deep. the old man laying it on with a relish that spoke of sadism or a deep personal hatred.

But why should the old man hate me? Barth wondered. I don't know him. He finally decided that it was because he had been so fat, so obviously soft, while the old man was wiry to the point of being gaunt. His face pinched by years of exposure to the sunlight. Yet the old man's hatred had not diminished as the months went by, and the fat melted away in the sweat and sunlight of the potato field.

A sharp sting across his back, the sound of slapping leather on skin and then an excruciating pain deep in his muscles. He had paced too long. The old man had come to him.

The old man said nothing. Just raised the lash again, ready to strike, Barth lifted the hoe out of the ground, to start work again. It
occurred to him as if it had a hundred times before. But the hoe had reached as far as the whip with the same effect. As a hundred times before Barth looked into the fields. The old man's eyes and how he stared there before he did not understand it was enough to stop him. He could not strike back. He could only endure.

The lash did not fall again. Instead he and the old man just looked at each other. The sun burned where blood was coming from his back. Feelings buzzed near him. He did not bother to brush them away.

Finally the old man broke the silence. He said:

"Barth, did not answer. Just waited. They were for me. First job, said the old man."

The job took Barth a moment to realize the implications. The end of the potato fields. The end of the sunlight. The end of the old man with the whip. The end of the loneliness or at least of the boredom.

Thank God Barth said. His throat was dry.

"Go wash. The old man said.

Barth carried the hoe back to the shed. He remembered how heavy the hoe had seemed when he first arrived. How ten minutes in the sunlight had made him faint. Yet they had revived him in the field and the old man had said: "Carry it back. So he had carried back the heavy hoe feeling as if it weighed like Christ's cross. Soon enough the others had gone and the old man and he had been alone together but the ritual with the hoe never changed. They got to the shed and the old man carefully took the hoe from him and looked at it away so that Barth couldn't get it in the night and kill him with it. And then into the house. Where Barth bathed painfully and the old man put an excreting disinfectant on his back. Barth had long since given up on the idea of an anesthetic. It wasn't in the old man's nature to use an anesthetic.

Clean clothes. A few minutes wait. And then the helicopter. A young businessman. The old man emerged from it, looking unfamiliar in detail but very familiar in general. He was an echo of all the businessmen like young men and women who had dealt with him before. The young man came to him, unsmilingly and said: "H?"

Barth nodded. It was the only name they used for him.

"What is it?" Barth asked.

The young man did not answer. The old man behind him whispered. They tell you soon enough. And then you'll listen. Barth went back. He said: "You'll stay for the potato fields."

But Barth doubted it. In two years there had not been a moment's pleasure. The food had tasteless and there was never enough. There were no women and he was usually too tired to amuse himself. Just pain and boredom and loneliness all excreting. He would leave that now. Anything would be better anywhere at all.

Whatever they assing you though. The old man said. "It can't be any worse than my mission.

Barth would have asked him what his assignment had been but there was nothing in the old man's voice that invited the question and there was nothing in their relationship in the past that would allow the question to be asked. Instead they stood in silence as the young man reached into the helicopter and helped a man get out. An immensely fat man, stark-naked and white as the flesh of a potato, looking petrified. The old man strode purposefully toward him.

"Hello! The old man said.

My name's Barth. The fat man answered, petulantly. The old man struck him hard across the mouth, hard enough that the tip of his nose broke and blood dripped from where his teeth had cut into the skin.

I said the old man. "Your name is? The fat man nodded pitifully but Barth. I felt no pity for him. Two years time. Only two miserable years and he was already in this condition. Barth could vaguely remember being proud of the mountain he had made of himself. But now he fell, on only contempt. Only a desire to go to the fat man to scream in his face. Why did you do it! Why did you let him happen again!

It would have been nothing. To me. At least to me. But it was the first time he went away. There had been no others in his memory.

Barth watched as the old man put a hoe in the fat man's hands and drove him out into the fields. Two more young men got out of the helicopter. Barth knew what they would do. Could almost see them holding the old man for a few days until I finally learned the hopelessness of resistance and delay.

But Barth did not get to watch the replay of his own torture of two years before. The young man who had first emerged from the helicopter now led him to it. Put him in a seat by a window and sat beside him. The pilot sped up the engines and the chopper began to rise.

"The bastard Barth said looking out the window at the old man as he slapped him across the face brutally.

The young man chuckled. Then he told Barth his assignment.

Barth clung to the window looking out feeling his life slip away from him even as the ground receded slowly. I can't do it. There are worse assignments. He said.

Barth did not believe it. "I'll kill him. I want to come back here.

Love it that much? To kill him.

The young man looked at him blankly.

The old man. Barth explained then; it was the young man's last assignment. He was too weak with boredom with nothing to do but imagine far off places and times he never had been. He looked out the window. The old man was still very small next to the huge lump of flesh beside him. Barth felt a terrible longing for it. A terrible despairing in knowing that nothing could possibly be learned that again and again his efforts would replay this hideous scenario.

Somewhere the man who would be J was dancing, was playing polo, was seducing and serving and being diseased by every woman and boy. And he knew that he could find somewhere the man who would be J died.

I bent insensibly in the sunlight and tried clumsily to use the hoe. Then losing his balance he fell over into the dirt, whining. The old man raised his whip.

The helicopter turned then so that Barth could see nothing but sky from his window. He saw the whip. All. But he imagined the man who was falling, imagined and relished it. Longed to feel the harshness of the bow from his own arm. Hit him again. I cried out to myself! Hit him faster! And inside himself he made the whip fall a dozen times more.

What are you thinking? the young man asked smiling as he knew the punch line of a joke.

I was thinking. Barth said. The old man can't possible hate him as much as I do.

Apparently that was the punch line. The young man laughed uproariously. Barth did not understand the joke but somehow he was certain that he was the butt of it. He wanted to strike out but caved not.

Perhaps the young man saw the tension in Barth's body or perhaps he merely wanted to explain. He stopped laughing and said: "Don't you see? The young man asked. Don't you know who the old man is?"

Barth didn't know. Whatever they assing you though. The old man said. "It can't be any worse than my mission."

There are worse assignments than mine Barth realized. And the worst of all would be to spend any day after any month beyond supervising that contemptible animal that he could deny was himself.

The scar on his back bled a little and the blood stuck to the seat when it dried.
QUIETUS

He had a good life, a good death
But the chat was not such

By Yves Kérouel

TINTIN - J-M. Thibaud
It came to him suddenly a moment of blackness as he sat at his desk working late. It was as quick as the blink of an eye.

Before the darkness the papers on his desk had seemed terribly important and now he stared at them blankly, wondering what they were and then realizing that he didn't really give a damn what they were and he ought to be going home now.

Ought definitely to be going home now. And C. Mark Tapworth of GMTI Enterprises Inc. arose from his desk without finishing all the work that was on it. The first time he had done such a thing in the twelve years it had taken him to bring the company from nothing to being a multimillion-dollar-a-year business. Vaguely it occurred to him that he was not acting normally but he didn't really care. It didn't really matter to him how many people bought bought

And for a few seconds Tapworth could not remember what it was that his company made.

This frightened him. It reminded him that his father and his uncles had all died of strokes. It reminded him of his mother's senility at the last few years sixty-five. It reminded him of something he had always known and never quite believed: that he was mortal and that all the works of his days would gradually become more and more trivial until his death at which time his life itself would be of no more than a forgotten stone whose fall in the lake had set off ripples that would in time reach the shore having made after all no difference.

I'm tired, he decided. MaryJo is right. I need a rest.

But he was not the resting kind. Not until that moment when standing by the desk the blackness came again. That time his mind. And he remembered nothing. He had nothing, heard nothing was falling in terminally by nothingness.

Then, mercifully the world returned to him and he stood trembling, regretting now the many, many nights he had stayed far too late— the many hours he had not spent with MaryJo had left her alone in their large but coldless house. And he imagined her waiting for him forever a lonely woman battered by the huge living room waiting patiently for a husband who would must who always had come home.

Is it my heart? Or a stroke? he wondered. Whatever it was it was enough that he saw the end of the world turning in the darkness that had visited him and, as for the prophet returning from the mount things that once had mattered much mattered not at all and things he had long possessed now silently important him. He felt a terrible urgency that there was something he must do before—

Before what? He would not let himself answer. He just walked out through the large room full of ambitious younger men and women trying to impress him by working later than he noticed but did not care that they were visibly relieved at their release from another endless night. He walked out into his car and drove home through a thin mist of rain that made the world retreat a comfortable distance from the windows of his car.

No one ran to greet him at the door. The children must be upstairs. He realized. The children— a boy and a girl who'd been his height and with twice his energy were adorable creatures who ran downstairs as if they were skimming who could hold completely still no more than a hummingbird in midair could.

He could hear their footsteps upstairs running lightly across the floor. They hadn't come to meet him at the door for nothing in their lives. After all all were more important than mere fathers. He smiled set down his attaché case and went to the kitchen.

MaryJo looked numbly upset. She recognized the signals instantly she had cried earlier today.

What's wrong?

Nothing, she said because she always said nothing. He knew that at a moment she would tell him. She always told him everything. Which had made him impatient. Now as she moved silently and went from counter to counter from cupboard to stove. Making another perfect dinner he realized that she was not going to tell him. It made him uncomfortable. He began to try to guess.

You work too hard. he said. I've offered to get a maid or a cook. We can certainly afford one.

MaryJo just smiled thinly. I don't want anyone else mucking around in the kitchen. she said. I thought we dropped that subject years ago. Did you— did you have a hard day at the office?

Mark almost told her about his strange lapses of memory but caught himself. He would have to lead up to telling her gradually. MaryJo would not be able to cope with it not in the state she was in. Not too hard. Finished up early. I know. she said. I'm glad.

She didn't sound glad. It frightened him a little. But of going off to nurse his wounds. He merely noticed the emotions as if he was a dispassionate observer. He saw himself important self-made man newly at home a little boy who could be hurt not just by a word but by a short pause of indecision. Sensitive sensitive and he was amused at himself. For a moment he almost saw himself standing a few inches away could observe the amused expression on his own face.

Excuse me. MaryJo said and she opened a cupped hand as he stepped out of the way. She pulled out a pressure cooker. We're out of potato flakes. she said. Have to do it the primitive way. She dropped the peeled potatoes into the pan.

The children are awfully quiet today. he said. Do you know what they're doing?

MaryJo looked at him with a bewildered expression.

They didn't come meet me at the door. Not that it matters. They're busy with their own

concerns I know. Mark MaryJo said.

All right. You see through me so easily.

But I was only a little hurt. I want to look through today's mail. He wandered out of the kitchen. He was vaguely aware that behind him MaryJo had started to cry again. He did not let it worry him much. She cried easily and often.

He wandered into the living room and the furniture surprised him. He had expected to see the green sofa and chair that he had bought from Desaret Industries and the size of the living room and the tasteful antiques looked utterly wrong. Then his mind did a quick turn and he remembered that the old green sofa and chair were fifteen years ago when he and MaryJo had first married. Why did I expect to see them? he wondered. And he worried again worried also because he had come into the living room expecting to find the mail even though every day for years MaryJo had been putting it on his desk.

He went into his study and opened up MaryJo's mail and started sorting through it until he noticed a little letter from one eye at something dark and massive was blocking the lower half of one of the windows. He looked. It was a coffin a rather plain one sitting on a rolling table from a mortuary. he said. MaryJo. he called. MaryJo.

She came into the study looking afraid. Yes? Why is there a coffin in my study? she asked.

Coffin? she asked. By the window. MaryJo. I thought you didn't get here.

She looked disturbed. Please don't touch it she said.

Why not?

I can't stand you touching it. I told them they could leave it here for a few hours. But now it looks like it's too late. The idea of the coffin staying in the house any longer was obviously repugnant to her.

Who left it here? And why? It's not as if we're in the market. Or do they sell these at parties now like Tupperware?

The bishop called and asked me— asked me to all the mortuary people leave it here for the funeral tomorrow. He said to lock up. They could get away and unlock the church and could we take it there for a few hours—

It occurred to him that the mortuary would not have parted with a funeral-bound coffin unless it was filled.

MaryJo is there a body in it? she asked.

She nodded and a tear slipped over her lower eyelid. He was aghast. He let himself show it. They left a corpse in a coffin here with you all day? With the kids?

She burned her face in her hands and ran from the room ran upstairs.

Mark did not follow her. He stood there and regarded the coffin with distaste. At least they had the good sense to close it. But a coffin! He went to the telephone at his desk and dialed the bishop's number.

He isn't here. The bishop's wife
sounded irritated by his call.

"He has to get this body out of my study and out of my house tonight. This is a terrible imposition."

I don't know where to reach him. He's a doctor you know Brother Tapworth. He's at the hospital. Operating. There's no way I can contact him for something like this.

What am I supposed to do?

She got surprisingly emotional about it. Do what you want! Push the coffin out into the street if you want! It'll just be one more hurt to the poor man.

Which brings me to another question. Who is he? And why isn't his family…

He doesn't have a family. Brother Tapworth. And he doesn't have any money. I'm sure he regrets dying in our ward but we just thought that even though he had no friends in the world, someone might offer him a little kindness on his way out of it.

Her intensity was irresistible and Mark recognized the hopelessness of getting rid of the box that night. As long as it's gone tomorrow he said. A few amenities and the conversation ended.

Mark sat in his chair staring angrily at the coffin. He had come home worried about his health and found a coffin to greet him when he arrived. Well, at least it explained why poor MaryJo had been so upset. He heard the children quarreling upstairs. Well, let MaryJo handle it. Their problems would take her mind off this box anyway.

And so he sat and stared at the coffin for two hours and had no dinner and did not particularly notice when MaryJo came downstairs and took the burned potatoes out of the pressure cooker and threw the entire dinner away and lay down on the sofa in the living room and wept. He watched the patterns of the grain of the wood, as subtle as flames winding along the coffin.

He remembered having taken naps at the age of five in a makeshift bedroom behind a plywood partition in his parents' small home. Watching the wood grain there had been his way of passing the empty sleepless hours. In those days he had been able to see shapes—clouds and faces and battles and monsters. But on the coffin the wood grain looked more complex and yet far more simple. A road map leading upward to the lid. A draft describing the decomposition of the body. A graph at the foot of the patient's bed saying nothing to the patient but speaking death to the trained physician's mind.

Mark wondered briefly about the bishop who was right now operating on someone who might very well end up in just such a box as this.

And finally his eyes hurt and he looked at the clock and felt guilty about having spent so much time closed off in his study on one of his few nights home early. He meant to get up and find MaryJo and take her up to bed. But instead he got up and went to the coffin and ran his hands along the wood.

It felt like glass because the varnish was so thick and smooth. It was as if the living wood had been kept away protectec from the touch of a hand. But the wood was not alive was it? It was being put into the ground. Also to decompose. The varnish might keep it a little longer. He thought whimsically of what it would be like to varnish a corpse. To preserve it. The Egyptians would have nothing on us then he thought.

Don't! said a husky voice. She was MaryJo. Her eyes red-rimmed. Her face looking sleep in.

Don't what? Mark asked her. She didn't answer just glanced down at his hands. To his surprise. Mark noticed her thumbs were buried under the lid of the coffin lid. As if to lift it.

I wasn't going to open it. he said.

Come upstairs. MaryJo said. Are the children asleep?

He had asked the question innocently but her face was immediately twisted with pain and grief and anger.

Children? she asked. What is this? And why tonight?

He leaned against the coffin in surprise and all evening he had talked about having children.

Honey I'm sorry. he said trying to put his whole heart into the apology.

So am I, she answered. And went upstairs.

Surely she isn't angry at me. Mark thought. Surely she realizes something is wrong. Surely she'll forgive me.

But as he climbed the stairs after her she took off his shirt as he did again heard the voice of a child.

I want a drink. Mommy. The voice was plaintive with the sort of whine only possible to a child who is comfortable and sure of love.

Mark turned at the landing in time to see MaryJo passing the top of the stairs on the way to the children's bedroom. A glass of water in her hand. He thought nothing of it. The children always wanted extra attention at bedtime.

And so he went into his study and picked up the map and noticed out of the corner of one eye that something was blocking one of the windows. He looked. It was a coffin.
dren. He could still hear the child's crying in his mind.

MaryJo stood in the doorway their bedroom, naked but holding her nightgown in front of her. "Mark," she said, "I'm afraid."

So am I," he answered.

But she asked him no questions and he put on his pajamas and they went to bed. And as he lay in darkness thinking of his wife's faintly rasping breath, he realized that it didn't matter as much as it ought. He was losing his mind; but he didn't really care. He thought of praying about it but he had given up praying years ago, though of course it wouldn't: do to anyone else new about his loss of faith not in a city where his good business was to make a Mormon. There'd be no help from God on this one. He knew. And not much help from MaryJo either for instead of being strong as she usually was in an emergency this time she would be as she had said: afraid.

Well so am I," Mark said to himself. He reached over and stroked his wife's shawl in cheek realized that there were some creases near the eye understood that what made her afraid was not his specific ailments as it was, but the fact that it was a hint of a few symptoms of minimal separation. He remembered the box downstairs like death appointed to watch for him until at last he consented to go. He briefly reviewed them for bringing death to his home for so individually imposing on them. Then he ceased to care at all—about the box, about his strange lapses in memory about everything.

I am at peace; he thought; as he drifted off to sleep. I am at peace, and it's not all that pleasant.

Mark said MaryJo shaking him awake. Mark you overslept.

Mark opened his eyes murmured something so the shaking would stop then rolled over to go back to sleep.

"Mark," MaryJo insisted.

"I'm tired," he said in protest.

I know you are," she said. So I didn't wake you any sooner. But they just called.

There's something of an emergency or something.

They can't flush the toilet without someone holding their hands. I wish you wouldn't be crude," Mark.

"I sent the children off to school without letting them wake you by kissing you good-bye," MaryJo said. "They were very upset."

"Good children," Mark said.

"They're expecting you at the office."

Mark closed his eyes and spoke in measured tones. "You can call them and tell them I'll come in when I damn well feel like it and if they can't cope with the problem themselves I'll hire them all."

MaryJo was silent for a moment. "Mark," she can't say that.

"Word for word," Mark answered. "I need a rest. My mind is going funny things to me. And with that Mark remembered all the illusions of the day before including the illusion of having children.

There aren't any children; he said. Her eyes grew wide. What do you mean?"

He almost shouted at her demanded to know what was going on. why she didn't just tell him the truth for a moment. But the lethargy and disinterest clamped down and he said nothing just rolled back over and looked at the curtains as they drifted in and out with the air conditioning. Soon MaryJo had left him and he heard the sound machinery starting up downstairs. The washer the dryer the vacuum cleaner the dishwasher the garbage disposal unit. It seemed all the machines were going at once. He had never heard the sounds before. MaryJo never ran them in the evenings or on weekends when he was home.

At noon he finally got up. but he didn't feel like showering or shaving. but any other day he would have felt dirty and uncomfortable and unconfident until those things were done with.

He just put on his robe and went downstairs. He planned to go in to break fast but instead he went into his study and opened the lid of the coffin.

I took a bit of preparation of course. There was some pacing back and forth before the coffin and much stroking of the wood but finally he put his thumb under the lid and lifted.

The corpse looked stiff and awkward. A man not particularly old not particularly young. Hair of a determinedly average color. Except for the grayness of the chin muscular body looked completely natural and so utterly nondescript that Mark felt sure he might have seen the man a million times without remembering he had seen him at all. Yet he was unmistakably dead.

He smelled of embalming fluid.

Mark was holding the lid open with one hand leaning on the coffin with the other. He was trembling. Yet he felt no excitement no fear. He was trembling coming from his body not from anything he could find in his thoughts. He was trembling because he was cold.

There was a soft sound or absence of sound at the door. He turned around abruptly. The lid dropped behind him. MaryJo was standing in the doorway weeping a frilly housedress. Her eyes wide with horror.

In that moment years fell away. and Mark was twenty a shy and somewhat awkward girl who was forever being suppressed by the way the world actually worked. He waited for her to say: But Mark you cheated him. She had said it only once but ever since then he had heard the words in his mind whenever he was closing a deal. It was the closest thing to conscience he had in his business dealings. It was enough to win him a reputation as a very honest man.

Mark she said softly as if struggling to keep control of herself. "Mark I couldn't go on without you."

She sounded as if he was afraid something terrible was going to happen to him and her hands were shaking. He took a step toward her. She lifted her hands came to him clung to him and cried in a high whimper into his shoulder. I couldn't I just couldn't.

"You don't have to," he said. "Puzzled I'm just not the kind of person she said between sobs who can live alone."

But even if I even if something happened to me. MaryJo said the—He was going to say children. Something was wrong with that though wasn't there? They loved no one better in the world than their children no parents had ever been happier than they had been when their two were born yet he couldn't say it.

I've had what? MaryJo asked. Oh Mark I had nothing.

And then Mark remembered again (What's happening to me? that they were childless that it was MaryJo who was obfuscaten enough to regard motherhood as the main purpose for his existence the fact that they had no hope of children was God's condemnation of her. The only thing that had pulled her through after the operation was a bit of fusing over his mean-


gingless and sometimes invented problems at the office or telling him endlessly the events of her lonely days. It was as if he had been a real man and only he kept her from going in the bosom of her own fears. No wonder the poor girl (for all such times Mark could not think of her as completely adult) was distraught as she thought of Mark's death and the damned coffin in the house did no good at all."

But I'm in no position to cope with this Mark thought. I'm falling apart. I'm not only forgetting things I'm remembering things that didn't happen. And what if I died? What if I suddenly had a stroke like my father had and died on the way to the hospital? What would happen to MaryJo? She needed help for money. Between the business and the insurance even the house would be paid off with enough money left over for her to live like a queen on the interest. But would the insurance company arrange for someone to hold her patiently while she died out her fears? Would they provide someone for her to wake in the middle of the night when nameless terrors haunted her? Her soles turned into frantic sobs and her fingers clung deeper into his back through the soft fabric of his robe. See how she clings to me he thought. She'll never let me go. And then the blackness came again and again he was falling backward into nothing and again he did not care about anything. Did not even know there was anything to care about.

Except for the fingers pressing into his back and the weight he held in his arms. I do not mind losing the world he thought. I do not mind losing even my memories of the past. But these fingers. This woman I cannot lay this burden down because..."
there is no one who can pick it up again. If I release her she is lost.

Yet he longed for the darkness which the darkness represented to him—Surely a balance between the two hungers that leaves both satisfied. But still the light held him. All the world was silent and the silence was peace except for the sharp sensation in the fingers and he cried out in frustration. And the sound was still ringing in the room when he opened his eyes and saw Mary Joe standing against a wall leaning against the wall looking at him in terror.

What’s wrong? she whispered.

I’m losing, he answered. But he could not remember what he had thought to warn.

And there’s a sound of silence in the house and Amy came running with little loud feet through the kitchen and into the study tingling herself on her mother and bellowing about the day at school and the dog that chased her for the second time and how the teacher told her she was the best reader in the second grade but Darrel had spilled milk on her and could she have a sandwich because she had dropped hers and stepped on it accidentally at lunch.

Mary Joe looked at Mark cheerfully and winked and laughed. Sounds like Amy had a busy day doesn’t it Mark?

Mark could not smile. He just nodded as Mary Joe straightened Amy’s disheveled clothing and led her toward the kitchen.

Mary Joe Mark said there’s something I have to talk to you about.

Can it wait? Mary Joe asked no even pausing. Mark heard the cupboard door opening heard the lid on off the peanut-butter jar heard Amy giggle and say Mommy not so thick.

Mark didn’t understand why he was so confused and terrified. Mary Joe had a sandwich after school ever since she started going—even as an infant she had seven meals a day and never gained an ounce. It wasn’t what was happening in the kitchen that was bothering him. It couldn’t be. Yet he could not stop himself from crying out: Mary Joe Mary Joe come here.

Is Daddy mad? he heard Amy ask softly.

No Mary Joe answered and she bustled back into the room and impatiently said. What’s wrong dear?

I just need—just need to have you in here for a minute.

Really Mark that’s not your style is it? Mary Joe needs to have a lot of attention right after school. It’s the way she is. I wish you wouldn’t stay home from work with nothing to do. Mark you become quite impossible around the house.

She smiled to show that she was only half-serious and left again to go back to Amy.

For a moment Mark felt a terrible stab of jealousy that Mary Joe was far more sensitive to Amy’s needs than to his.

But that jealousy passed quickly like the memory of the pain of Mary Joe’s fingers pressing into his back and with a tremendous feeling of relief Mark didn’t care about anything at all and he turned around to the coffin which fascinated him and he opened the lid again and cocked his head and it was as if the poor man had no face at all. Mark realized. As if death stole faces from people and made them anonymous even to themselves.

He ran his fingers back and forth across the satin and it felt cool and inviting. The rest of the room the rest of the world faced only Mark and the coffin and the corpse remained and Mark felt very tired and very hot and as if it were all a terrible friction making heat within him and he took off his robe and pajamas and awkwardly climbed on a chair and stepped over the edge of the coffin and knelt and another lay down in the coffin. There was no corpse to share the slight space with him nothing between his body and the cool sand and as he lay on it it didn’t get any warmer because at last the towel was slowing was cooling and he reached up and pulled down the lid. The world was dark and silent and there was no odor no taste and no feel but the color of the shoe’s.

Why is the door open? asked a Amy holding her mother’s hand.

Because to the body we must remember Mary Joe said softly with a careful control but the way Daddy always was.

We must remember him happy and laughing and loving us. Amy poked puzzled. But I remember he spanked me.

Mary Joe nodded smiling something she had not done recently. It’s all right to remember that too Mary Joe said and then she took her daughter from the coffin back into the living room where Amy was reading yet she felt the loss she had sustained laughed and climbed on Grandpa.

David’s face serious and ear-stained because he did understand and put his hand in his mother’s hand and held tightly to her. We’ll be fine, he said.

Yes Mary Joe answered. I think so.

And Mary Joe’s mother whispered in her ear. I don’t know how you can stand it so bravely my dear.

Dad’s came to Mary Joe’s eyes. I’m not brave all I whispered back. But me children they depend on me so much can’t I go when I cry, can’t I go?

How terrible it would be her mother said nodding wisely if you had no children.

Inside the coffin his last need fulfilled Mark Tap woth heard it all but could not put it in his mind for in his mind there was nothing but space and time and his only thought was of consent. Everlasting consent to live till his death to the world and the everlasting absence of the world. For no there were children.
Mission completed, the Wreckers were poised to land and rebuild on the ruins of their old world.

ST. AMY'S TALE

BY ORSON SCOTT CARD

Mother could kill with her hands. Father could fly. These are miracles. But they were not miracles then. Mother Elouise taught me that there were no miracles then. I am the child of Wreckers, born while the angel was in them. This is why I am called Saint Amy, though I perceive nothing in me that should make me holier than any other old woman. Yet Mother Elouise denied the angel in her too, and it was no less there.

Sift your fingers through the soil, all you who read my words. Take your spades of iron and your picks of stone. Dig deep. You will find no ancient works of man hidden there. For the Wreckers passed through the world, and all the vanity was consumed in fire: all the pride broke in pieces when it was smitten by God's shining hand.

Elouise leaned on the rim of the computer keyboard. All around her the machinery was alive, the screens displaying information rapidly as if they knew they were the last of the machines and the last of the information. Elouise felt nothing but weariness. She was leaning because, for a moment, she had felt a frightening vertigo. As if the world underneath the airplane had dissolved and slipped away into a rapidly receding star and she would never be able to land.

"True enough, I thought. I'm never be able to land, not in the world I knew."

"Getting sentimental about the old computers?" Elouise started, turned in her chair and faced her husband, Charlie. At that moment the airplane lurched. But like sailors accustomed to the shifting of the seas, they adjusted unconsciously and did not notice the imbalance.

"Is it noon already?" she asked.

"It's the moral equivalent of noon. I'm too tired to fly the thing anymore."

PAINTING BY EVELYN TAYLOR
**Did his hands tremble as he touched the controls? Elouise watched very carefully but he did not tremble. Indeed, he was the only one who did not. Ugly-Bugly started to cry.**

God has destroyed the world before. Once in a flood when Noah rode it out in the Ark. And once the tower of the world's pride was destroyed in the confusion of tongues. And the other times, no one knows the order of the destruction. And just as suddenly when all the destruction is done, the angels leave them and the ordinary people just live their life. But I can't remember Father Charles's face. He was too young.

Mother Elouise told me often about Father Charles. He was born far to the west in a land where water only comes to the crops in ditches. Almost never from the sky. It was a land blessed by God. They lived there, they believed, only by the strength of their own hands. They made their ditches and forgot about God and became scientists.

Father Charles became a scientist. He worked on tiny animals. Breaking their
heart of hearts and recombining it in new ways. Hearts were broken too often where he worked, and one of the little animals escaped and killed people until they lay in great heaps like fish in the ship's hold.

But this was not the destruction of the world.

Oh, they were giants in those days and they forgot the Lord, but when their people lay in piles of moldering flesh and brittle bone they remembered they were weak.

Mother Elouise said Charlie came weeping. This is how Father Charlie became an angel. He saw what the giants had done by thinking they were greater than God. At first he sinned in his grief. Once he cut his own throat. They put Mother Elouise in him to save his life. This is how they met. In the forest where he had gone to die privately Father Charlie woke up from a sleep he thought would be forever to see a woman lying next to him in the tent and a doctor bending over them both. When he saw that this woman gave her blood to him whole and unfeelingly he forgot his wish to die. He loved her forever. Mother Elouise said he loved her up to the day she killed him.

When they were finished they had a sort of ceremony, a sort of party. A benediction said Bill solemnly sipping at the gin.

"My shift, Charlie," said Bill stepping into the cockpit. Then he noticed that everyone was there and that they were drinking the last of the gin the bottle that had been saved for the end. "Well happy us," Charlie said, smiling.

Bill got up from the controls of the 787. Any preferences on where we set down? he asked. Charlie took his place.

The others looked at one another. Ugly-Bugly shrugged. God, who ever thought about it?

Come on, we're all futurists, Heather said. You must know where you want to live.

Two thousand years from now, Ugly-Bugly said. "I want to live in the world the way it'll be two thousand years from now." Ugly-Bugly opts for resurrection. Bill said, "I however long for the bosom of Abraham."

Virginia said Elouise. They turned to face her. Heather laughed.

Resurrection Bill intoned, "the bosom of Abraham and Virginia. You have no poetry, Elouise." I've written down the coordinates of the place where we are supposed to land, Elouise said. She handed them to Charlie. He did not avoid her gaze. She watched him read the paper. He showed no sign of recognition. For a moment she hoped that it had all been a mistake. But no. She would not let herself be misled by her desires.

Why Virginia? Heather asked.

Charlie looked up. It's central to its east coast. Heather said.

It's central in the high survival area. There isn't much of a living to be had in the

western mountains or on the plains. It's not so far south as to be in hunter-gatherers' country and not so far north as to be unsuitable for a high proportion of the people. Baring a hard winter.

All very good reasons, Elouise said. "Fly us there, Charlie."

Did his hands tremble as he touched the controls? Elouise watched very carefully but he did not tremble. Indeed, he was the only one who did not. Ugly-Bugly suddenly began to cry tears coming from his good eye and streaming down his good cheek. Thank God she doesn't cry out of the other side. Elouise thought, then she saw how ugly she was after she had that thought. Ugly-Bugly, Ugly-Bugly's face wasn't hot, neither his anymore. Elouise was ugly at herself, but it only made her cold inside, determined that there would be no failure. Her mission would be complete. No allowances made for personal cost.

Elouise suddenly started out of her contemplative mood to find that the two other

women had left the cockpit—their sleep shift though it was doubtful they would sleep. Charlie silently flew the plane while Bill sat in the copilot's seat, pouring himself the last drop from the bottle. He was looking at Elouise.

Cheers! Elouise said to him.

He smiled sadly back at her. "Am I going to die?" he asked. Then he leaned back and sang softly, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

Praise him ye creatures here below. Praise him who slew the wicked host. Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Then he reached for Elouise's hand. She was surprised, but he took it. He bent to her and kissed her palm tenderly. "For many have entertained angels unaware he said to her.

A few moments later he was asleep. Charlie and Elouise sat in silence. The plane flew on south as darkness overtook them from the east. At first their silence was almost affectionate. But as Elouise sat and sat saying nothing she felt the silence grow cold and terrible, and for the first time she realized that when the airplanes landed Charlie would be her—Charlie who had been half her life for those last few years whom she had never liked to and who had never liked to be—would be her enemy.

I have watched the little children do a dance called Charlie-El. They sing a little song to it, and if I remember the words it goes like this.

I am made of bones and glass.
Let me pass, let me pass.
I am made of brick and steel.
Take my heel, take my heel.
I was killed just yesterday.
Kneel and pray, kneel and pray.
Dig a hole where I can sleep.
Dig it deep, dig it deep.
Will I go to heaven or hell?


I think they are already nonsense words to the children. But the poem first got passed word of mouth around Richmond when I was little and living in Father Michael's house. The children do not try to answer their song. They just sing it and do a very clever little dance while they sing. They always end the song with all the children falling down on the ground, laughing. That is the best way for the song to end.

Charlie brought the airplane straight down into a field of hot winds pushing against the ground as it shove it back from the plane. He left the tire, but when the plane had settled upon its three wheels, foam streaked out from the belly of the machine and overtook the flames. Elouise watched from the cockpit thinking Wherever the foam has touched nothing will grow for years. It seemed symmetrical to her. Even in the last moments of the last machine it must poison the earth. Elouise held Amy on her lap and thought of trying to explain it to the child. But Elouise knew Amy would not understand or remember.

Last one dressed in a sissy-wissy, said Ugly-Bugly in her husky, ancient-sounding voice. They had dressed and undressed in front of each other for years now but today as the old plastic-polluted clothing came off and the homespun went on they felt and acted like school kids on their first day in a cold gym. Amy caught the spirit of it and kept yelling at the top of her lungs. No one thought to quiet her. There was no need. This was a celebration.

But Elouise, long accustomed to self-examination torched herself to realize that there was a strain to her frolicking. She did not believe it not really. Today was not a happy day and it was not just from knowing the confrontation that lay ahead. There was something so final about the death of the last of the engines of mankind. Surely something could be—but she forced the thought from her and kept the coldness in her to overtake that sentiment. Surely she could not be seduced by the beauty of the airplane. Surely she must remember that it was not the machines but what they inevitably did to mankind that was evil.

They looked and felt a little awkward almost silly as they left the plane and stood.
around in the blackened field. They had not yet lost their feel for stylish clothing and the homespun was so lumpy and awkward and rough. It didn't look right on any of them.

Amy clung to her doll saved by the strange stranger. In her life she had been out of the airplane only once, and that was when she was an infant. She watched as the trees moved unpredictably. She winced at the wind in her eyes. She touched her cheek, where her hair moved back and forth in the breeze and hunted through her vocabulary for a word to name the strange invisible touch on her skin. "Mommy," she said. "Uh! Uh! Uh!"

Elouise understood. "Wind." She said. The sounds were still too hard for Amy and the child did not attempt to say the word. "Wind," thought Elouise and immediately thought of Charlie. Her best memory of Charlie was in the wind. It was during his death wish time not long after his suicide. He had insisted on climbing a mountain and she knew that he meant to fall. So she had climbed with him even though there was a storm coming up. Charlie was angry all the way. She remembered a terrible hour clinging to the face of a cliff held only by small bits of metal forced into cracks in the rock. She had insisted on remaining tied to Charlie. "If one of us fell," he cried with rage, "the other down too," he kept saying. "I know," she kept answering. And so Charlie had not fallen and they made love for the first time in a shallow cave with the wind howling outside and occasional sprays of rain coming in to dampen them. They refused to be dampened. Their love was still too hard for Amy and the child did not attempt to say the word. "Wind, Damn!"

And Elouise let herself go cold and unemotional and she stood on the edge of the field in the shade of the first trees Elouise had left the Rectifier near the plane set on 360 degrees. In a few minutes the Rectifier would go off and they had to watch to witness the end of their work. Suddenly Bill shouted, "Laughed, held up his wrist, 'My watch!' he cried. "Hurry!" Charlie said. "There's time!"

Bill unbuckled his watch and ran toward the Rectifier. He tossed the watch. It landed within a few meters of the small machine. Then Bill returned to the group, picking up the small metal and shaking his head. "Jesus, what a motor!"

Three years wiped out everything east of the Mississippi, and I almost save a digital chronograph. Dixie Instruments?" Heather asked.

"Yeah, that's not high technology," she said and they all laughed. Then they felt silent and Elouise wondered whether they were all thinking the same thing. That jokes about branch names would be dead within a generation if they were not already dead. They watched the Rectifier in silence waiting for the timer to finish its delay. Suddenly there was a shining in the air, dazzling light that made them squint. They had seen this many times before from the air and from the ground, but this was the last time and so they saw it as if it were the first. The airplane corroded as if a thousand years were passing in seconds. But it wasn't true corrosion. There was no rust—only dissolution as molecules separated and dissolved down into the loosened earth.

"Elouise became sand, plastic corrupted to oil, the metal also drifted down into the ground and came to rest in a vein at the bottom of the Rectifier field. The small metal might look to a future geologist much like an erratic rock. It would look like iron. And with so many similar pockets of iron and copper and aluminum and tin spread all over the once-civilized world. It was not likely that they would suspect human interference. Elouise was amused. Thinking of the treaties that would someday be written about the two states of workable metals—the ore state and the pure metal vein. She hoped it would retard progress a little.

"The airplane shivered into nothing, and the Rectifier also died in the field. A few minutes after the Rectifier disappeared, the field also faded."

Suddenly there was a shining in the air, dazzling light that made them squint. They had seen this many times before, from the air and from the ground, but this was the last time.

Amen and amen said Bill maudlin again. "All clean now. Elouise only smiled. She said nothing of the other Rectifier which was in her knapsack. Let the others think the job was done."

Amy poked her finger in Charlie's eye. Charlie wore the set down. Amy started to cry and Charlie knelt by her and hugged her. "Amy's arm was white. Wearing tightly around his neck. Give Daddy a kiss," Elouise said.

"Well, time to go," Ugly Bugly said. "Why the hell did you pick this particular spot?"

Elouise cocked her head. "Ask Charlie. Charlie flushed. Elouise watched him grimly. Elouise and I once came here," he said. "Before Rectification began. Nostalgia you know. He smiled shyly and the others laughed. Except Elouise. She was helping Amy to urinate. She felt the weight of the small Rectifier in her knapsack and did not tell anyone the truth that she had never been in Virginia before in her life. Good a spot as any. Heather said, "Well bye."

"Well bye. That was all that was the end of it and Heather walked away to the west toward the Shenandoah Valley. See ya, Bill said."

"Like hell," Ugly Bugly added. Impulsively Ugly Bugly hugged Elouise and Bill cried and they took off toward the Potomac. Where they would doubtless find a community growing up along the clean and fish-filled river. Just Charlie. Amy and Elouise left in the empty blackened field where the airplane had died. Elouise tried to feel some great pain at the separation from the others, but she could not. They had been together every day for years now and going from supply dump to supply dump. Wrecking cities and towns, destroying and using up the artificial world. But had they been friends? If it had not been for their task, they would never have been friends. They were not the same kind of people.

And then Elouise was ashamed of her feelings. Not her kind of people? Because Heather liked what grass did to her and had never owned a cat or had a driver's license in her life? Because Ugly Bugly had a face hideously deformed by cancer surgery? Because Bill always worked Jesus into the conversation even though half the time he was an atheist? Because they just weren't in the same social circles? There were no social circles now. Just people trying to survive in a bitter world they weren't bred for. There were only two classes now. Those who make it and those who wouldn't."

Which class am I thought Elouise. Where should we go? Charlie asked. Elouise picked Amy up and handed her to Charlie. "Where's the capsule, Charlie?" Charlie took Amy and said, "Hey Amy, baby. I'll bet we find some farming community between here and the Rappahannock."

"Doesn't matter if you tell me Charlie. The instruments found it before we landed. You did a damn good job on the computer program. She didn't have to say. Not good enough."

"Charlie only smiled crookedly. Here I was hoping you were forgetful. He reached out to touch her knapsack. She pulled away. He lost his smile. Don't you know me? he asked softly."

"He would never try to take the Rectifier from her by force. But still this was the last of the artifacts they were talking about. Was anyone really predictable at such a time? Elouise was not sure. She had thought she knew him well before the trip or capsule existed to prove her understanding of Charlie was far from complete."

"I know you, Charlie," she said, "but not as well as I thought. Does it matter? Don't try to stop me."

I hope you're not too angry," he said. Elouise couldn't think of anything to say to that. Anyone could be fooled by a traitor, but only I am fool enough to marry one. She turned from him and walked into the forest. He took Amy and followed.

All the way through the underbrush.
Elouise kept expecting him to say something. A threat for instance. You'll have to kill me to destroy that time capsule. Or a plea. You have to leave it. Elouise please please Or reason or argument or anger or something.

But instead it was just his silent footsteps behind her. Just his occasional playtalk with Amy. Just his singing as he put Amy to sleep on his shoulder.

The capsule had been hidden well. There was no surface sign that men had ever been there. Yet from the Rectifier's emphatic response it was obvious that the time capsule was quite large. There must have been heavy earth-moving equipment Or it was all done by hand.

When did you ever find the time? Elouise asked when they reached the spot.

Long lunch hours he said.

She set down her knapsack and then stood there, looking at him.

Like a condemned man who insists on keeping his composite. Charlie smiled wryly and said, "Get on with it, please.

After Father Charlie died Mother Elouise brought me here to Richmond. She didn't tell anyone that she was a Wrecker. The angel had already left her and she didn't want to blend into the town be an ordinary person in the world she and her fellow angels had created.

Yet she was incapable of blending in. Once the angel touches you you cannot go back. Even when the angel's work is done. She first attracted attention by talking against the stockade. There was once a stockade around the town of Richmond when there were only a thousand people there. The reason was simple. People still weren't used to the hard way life was without the old machines. They had not yet learned to depend on the miracle of Christ. They still trusted in their hands yet their hands could work no more magic. So there were tribes in the winter that didn't know how to find game that had no reserves of grain that had no shelter adequate to hold the head of a fire.

"Bring them all in," said Mother Elouise.

"There's room for all. There's food for all. Teach them how to build ships and make tools and sail and farm and we'll all be richer for it."

But Father Michael and Uncle Avram knew more than Mother Elouise. Father Michael had been a Catholic priest before the destruction, and Uncle Avram had been a professor at a university. They had been nobody. But when the angels of destruction finished their work the angels of life began to work in the hearts of men. Father Michael threw off his old allegiance to Rome and taught Christ's simple lessons from his memory of the Holy Book. Uncle Avram plunged into his memory of ancient metallurgy and taught the people who gathered at Richmond how to make iron hard enough to use for tools. And weapons.

Father Michael forbade the making of guns and forbade that anyone teach children what guns were. But for hunting there had to be arrows and what will kill a deer will also kill a man.

Because I couldn't remember Father Charlie's face Mother Elouise thought I had forgotten everything about him but that is not true. I remember very clearly one picture of him. But he is not in the picture.

This is very hard for me to explain. I see a small clearing in the trees with Mother Elouise standing in front of me. She sat there at my eye level which tells me that I am being held. I cannot see Father Charlie but I know that he is holding me. I can feel his arms around me but I cannot see his face.

This vision has come to me often. It is not like other dreams. It is very clear and I am always very afraid. And I don't know why. They are talking but I do not understand their words. Mother Elouise reaches for me but Father Charlie will not let me go. I feel afraid that Father Charlie will not let me go with Mother Elouise. But why should I be afraid? I love Father Charlie and I never want to leave him. Still I reach out, reach out, and the arms hold me and I cannot go.

Mother Elouise is crying. I see her face twisted in pain. I want to comfort her. "Mummy is hurt," I say again and again.

And then suddenly at the end of this vision I am in my mother's arms and we are running running up a hill into the trees. I am looking back over her shoulder. I see Father Charlie then I see him but I do not see him. I know exactly where he is in my vision. I could tell you his height. I could tell you where his left foot is. Where his right tool is. But you can't see him. He has no face. No color. He is just a man shaped emptiness in the clearing and then the trees are in the way and he is gone.

Elouise stopped only a little way into the woods. She turned around. As to go back to Charlie. But she would not go back. If she returned to him it would be to disconnect the Rectifier. There would be no other reason to do it.

Charlie you son of a bitch! she shouted.

There was no answer. She stood waiting. Surely he would come to her. He would see that she would never go back never turn off the machine. Once he realized it was inevitable he would come running from the machine to the forest back to the clearing where the 787 had landed. Why would he want to give his life so meaningless? What was in the time capsule after all? Just history—that's what he said wasn't it? Just history—just films and metal plates engraved with words and microdots and other ways of preserving the story of mankind. How can they learn from our mistakes unless we tell them what they were? Charlie had asked.

Sweat slowly ran down Charlie's face. It was one thing to preserve a halted for the killing machines and the soul destroying machines and the garbage making machines. It was another thing to leave behind detailed accurate unquestionable descriptions. History was not a way of preventing the repetition of mistakes. It was a way...
of guaranteeing them. Wasn't I?

She turned and walked on, not very quickly out of the range of the Rectifier carrying Amy and listening all the way for the sound of Charlie running after her.

What was Mother Elouise like? She was a woman of contradictions. Even with me, she would work for hours teaching me to read, helping me make tablets out of river clay and write on them with a shaped stick. And then when I had written the words she taught me, she would weep and say, "Lies all his. Sometimes she would break the tablets I had made. But whenever part of her words was broken, she would make me write it again.

She called the collection of words The Book of the Golden Age. I have named it The Book of the Lies of the Angel Elouise for it is important to us to know that the greatest truths we have seem like lies to those who have been touched by the angel.

She told many stories to me, and often I asked her why they must be written down. For Father Charlie she would always say, "Is he coming back then? I would ask.

But she shook her head and finally one time she said, "It is not for Father Charlie to read. It is because Father Charlie wanted it written."

"Then why didn't he write it himself? I asked.

And Mother Elouise grew very cold with me and all she would say was, "Father Charlie bought these stories. He paid more for them than I am willing to pay to have them left unwritten." I wondered then whether Father Charlie was rich, but other things she said told me that he wasn't. So I do not understand except that Mother Elouise did not want to tell the stories and Father Charlie, though he was not there constrained her to tell them.

There are many of Mother Elouise's lies that I love, but I will say now which of them she said were most important:

1. In the Golden Age for ten times a thousand years men lived in peace and love and joy and no one died evil one to another. They shared all things in common and no man was hungry while another was full and no man had a home while another stood in the rain and no wife wept for her husband, killed before his time.

2. The great serpent seems to come with great power. He has many names: Satan, Hitler, Lucifer Nimrod, Napoleon. He seems to be beautiful and he promises power to his friends and death to his enemies. He says he will right all wrongs. But really he is weak until people believe in him and give him the power of their bodies. If you refuse to believe in the serpent if no one serves him, he will go away.

3. There are many cycles of the world. In every cycle the great serpent has arisen and the world has been destroyed to make way for the return of the Golden Age. Christ comes again in every cycle also. One day when He comes men will believe in Christ and doubt the great serpent, and that time the Golden Age will never end, and God will dwell among men forever. And all the angels will say, "Come not to heaven but to Earth for Earth is heaven now."

These are the most important lies of Mother Elouise. Believe them all and remember them for they are true.

All the way to the airplane clearing Elouise deliberately broke branches and let them dangle so that Charlie would have no trouble finding a straight path out of the range of the Rectifier, even if he left his flight to the last second. She was sure Charlie would follow her. Charlie would bend to her as he had always bent, respectful and accommodating. He loved Elouise and Amy loved even more. What was it in the metal under his feet that would weigh in the balance against his love for them?

So Elouise broke the last branch and stepped into the clearing and then sat down and let Amy play in the unburnt grass.

He had missed her neck and struck deep in her back and shoulder. She screamed. He struck again and silenced her. Then he turned away, spattered with blood.

She turned away and at the edge while she waited it is Charlie who will bend. She said to herself for I will never bend on this. Later I will make it up to him but he must know that on this I will never bend.

The cold place in her grew larger and colder until she burned inside waiting for the sound of fast crashing through the underbrush. The damned birds kept singing so that she could not hear the footsteps.

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We will all die. But you will die first.

Then I'm the luckier said Mother Elouise. It was the last of her lies for she was telling the truth and yet she did not believe it herself for I heard her weep. With her last breaths she wanted and cried out Charlie! Charlie! There are those who claim she saw a vision of Charlie waiting for her on the right hand of God. But I doubt it. She would have said so. I think she only wished to see him. Or wished for his forgiveness. It doesn't matter. The angel had left her and she was alone.

Jack swung the ax and it fell more with a smack than a thud. He had missed her neck and struck deep in her back and shoulder. She screamed. He struck again and this time silenced her. But he did not break through her spine until the third blow. Then he turned away, spattered with blood and vomited and went and pleaded with Father Michael to forgive him.

Amy stood a few meters away from Elouise who sat on the grass of the clear and looking toward a broken branch on the nearest tree. Amy called Mommy! Mommy! Then she bounced up and down bending and unbending her knees. Da' Da' she cried. La la la la la. She was dancing and wanted her mother to dance and sing too. But Elouise only locked toward the tree, waiting for Charlie to appear. Any minute she thought. He will be angry. He will be ashamed, she thought. But he will be alive.

In the distance however the air all at once was shining. Elouise could see it clearly because they were not far from the edge of the Rectifier field. It shimmered in the trees where it caused no harm to plants. Any vertebrates within the field any animals that lived by electricity passing along nerves were instantly dead. Their brains still birds dropped from trees limbs. Only insects dazed on.

The Rectifier field lasted only minutes.

Amy watched the shining air. It was as if the empty sky itself were dancing with her. She was transfixed. She would soon forget the airplane and already her father's face was disappearing from her memories. But she would remember the shining. She would see it forever in her dreams. A vast thickening of the air dancing and vibrating up and down up and down. In her dreams it would always be the same, a terrible shining light that would grow and grow and grow and press against her in her bed. And always with it would come the sound of a voice she loved saying Jesus. Jesus. This dream would come so clearly when she was twelve that she would tell it to her adopted father the priest named Michael. He told her that it was the voice of an angel speaking the name of the source of all light. You must not fear the light he said. You must embrace it. She satisfied herself. But at the moment she first heard the voice in fact and not in dream she had no trouble recognizing it. It was the voice of her mother Elouise saying Jesus. It was full of grief that only a child could fail to understand. Amy did not understand. She only tried to repeat the word of God.

"God. God," said Elouise rocking back and forth her face turned upward toward a heaven she was sure was unoccupied.

Dog. Amy repeated. Dog dog doggie. In vain she looked around for the four-footed beast.

"Charlie. Elouise screamed as the Rectifier field faded.

"Daddy." Amy cried and because of her mother's tears she also wept. Elouise took her daughter in her arms and held her rocking back and forth. Elouise discovered that there were some things that could not be frozen in her. Some things that must burn. Sunlight and lightning and everlasting inextinguishable regret.

My mother, Mother Elouise, often told me about my father. She described Father Charlie in detail so I would not forget. She refused to let me forget anything. It is what Father Charlie died for. She told me over and over. He died so you would remember. You cannot forget.

So I still remember every today every word she told me about him. His hair was red as mine was. His body was lean and hard. His smile was quick like mine and he had gentle hands. When his hair was long it kinked tightly at his forehead ears and neck. His touch was so delicate he could cut in half an animal so tiny it could not be seen without a machine. So sensitive that he could fly—an art that Mother Elouise said was not a miracle since it could be done by many giants of the Golden Age and they took with them many, others who could not fly alone. This was Charlie's gift. Mother Elouise said. She also told me that I loved him dearly.

But for all the words that she taught me I still have no picture of my father in my mind. It is as if the words drove out the visions so often happens.

Yet I still hold that one memory of my father so deeply hidden that I cannot lose it for fully and it again. Sometimes I wake up weeping. Sometimes I wake up with my arms in the air curved just so and I remember that I was dreaming of embracing that large man who loved me. My arms remember how it feels to hold Father Charlie tight around the neck and cling to him as he carries his child. And when I cannot sleep the pillow seems to be always the wrong shape it is because I am hunting for the shape of Father Charlie's shoulder which my heart remembers though my mind cannot.

God put angels into Mother Elouise and Father Charlie and they destroyed the world for the cup of God's indignation was full and all the works of man were an abomination. All the works of men become dust but out of dust God makes men and out of men and women angels.
DEEP-BREATHING EXERCISES

He learned a basic truth: life begins with a breath, and he could predict the end of your life—with a breath

BY ORSON SCOTT CARD

Dale Yorgason hadn't been so easily distracted, he might never have noticed the breathing. But he was on his way upstairs to change his clothes, noticed the headline on the paper and got deflected. Instead of climbing the stairs, he sat on them and began to read. He could not even concentrate on that, however. He began to hear all the sounds of the house. Brian, their two-year-old son, was upstairs, breathing heavily in sleep. Colly, his wife, was in the kitchen, kneading bread and also breathing heavily. Their breath was exactly in unison. Brian's rasping breath upstairs, thick with the mucus of a child's sleep; Colly's deep breaths as she labored with the dough. It set Dale to thinking, the newspaper forgotten. He wondered how often people did that—breathing simultaneously for minutes on end. He began to wonder about coincidence. And then, because he was so easily distracted, he remembered that he had to change his clothes and went upstairs.

When he came down, in his jeans and sweatshirt, ready for a good game of outdoor basketball now that it was spring, Colly called to him. "I'm out of cinnamon, Dale.

"I'll get it on the way home," Dale said.

"I need it now," Colly called.

"We have two cars!" Dale yelled back, then closed the door. He briefly felt bad about not helping her out but reminded himself that she was already running late and it wouldn't hurt her to take Brian with her and get outside the house. She never seemed to get out of the house anymore.

His team of friends from Allways Home Products, Inc., won the game, and he came home deliciously sweaty. No one was home. The bread dough had risen impossibly and was spread all over the counter and dropping in huge lumps onto the floor. Colly had obviously been gone too long. He wondered what could have delayed her. Then came the phone call from the police, and he did not have to wonder.

PAINTING BY RENE MAGRITTE
anymore. Colly had a habit of inadvertently running stop signs.

The funeral was well attended because Dale had a large family and was well liked at the office. He sat between his parents and Colly's parents. Dale, distracted, clutched on and Dale, easily distracted, kept thinking of the fact that all the mourners there were only a few were truly grieving. Only a few had actually known Colly who preferred to avoid office functions and social gatherings. She stayed home with Brian most of the time being a perfect housewife and reading books remaining in the end solitary. Most of the people at the funeral had come for Dale's sake to comfort him. Am I comforted? he asked himself. Not by his friends— they had little to say were awkward and embarrassed. Only his father had had the right instinct, just bringing him in and talking about everything except Dale's wife and son, who were dead. So mangled in the accident that the coffin was never opened for anyone. There was talk of the fishes in Lake Superior this summer talk of the bastards at Continental Hardware who thought that the retirement at sixty-five rule ought to apply to the president of the company talk of nothing at all. But it was good enough since it served the intended function. At least temporarily Dale's thoughts began to wander and he was distracted by his rumbling grief.

Now however he wondered whether he had really been a good husband for Colly. Had she really been happy cooped up in the house all day? He had tried to get her out, get her to meet people and she had resisted. But in the end as he wondered whether she knew how at all he could not find an answer, not one he was sure of. And Brian—he had not known Brian at all. The boy was smart and quick speaking in sentences when other children were still struggling with single words, but what had he and Dale ever had to talk about? All Brian's companionship had been with his mother, all Colly's companionship had been with Brian. In a way it was like their breathing—the last time Dale had heard them breathe in unison as if even the rhythms of their bodies were connected. Dale had somehow to think that they had drawn their last breath together. It pleased Dale somehow to think that they had drawn their last breath together and had shared each day since Brian's birth.

Dale's grief swept over him again surprising him because he had thought he had cried as much as he possibly could and now he discovered there were more tears waiting to flow. He was not sure whether he was crying because of the empty house when he would come home to or because he had always been somewhat closed off from his family. Was the coffin after all just an expression of the way their relationship had always been? It was not a productive line of thought and so Dale once again let himself be distracted. He let himself notice that his parents were breathing together. Their breaths were soft, hard to hear. But Dale heard and looked at them, watching their chests rise and fall together. It unnerved him. Was unison breathing more common than he had thought? He listened for others but Colly's parents were not breathing together and certainly Dale's breaths were at his own rhythm. Then Dale's mother looked at him smiled and nodded to him in an attempt at silent communication. Dale was not good at silent communication. It made him feel anxious and he did not think of breathing again.

Until at the airport, when the plane was an hour late in arriving because of technical difficulties in Los Angeles. There was not much to talk to his parents. About. Even his father, a wizard at small talk, could think of nothing to say and so they sat in silence.

Their breaths were soft, hard to hear. But Dale heard and looked at them, watching their chests rise and fall together. It unnerved him. He listened for others.

most of the time as did most of the other passengers. Even a stewardess and the pilot sat near them, waiting silently for the plane to arrive.

It was in one of the deeper silences that Dale noticed that his father and the pilot were both waving their crossed legs in unison. Then he listened and realized there was a strong sound in the waiting area. A rhythmic coughing of many of the passengers inhaling and exhaling together Dale's father and father the pilot the steward several other passengers all were breathing together. It unnerved him. How could this be? Colly and Brian had been mother and son. Dale's parents had been together for years. But why should half the people in the waiting area breathe together?

He pointed it out to his father.

Yes, it is kind of strange, but I think you're right. Your father said rather dejectedly with the odd event. Dale's father loved odd events.

Then the rhythm abruptly broke as the plane taxied along the runway and slowed to a halt directly in front of the windows of the airport lobby. The crowd stirred and got ready to board. Even though the actual boarding time was surely half an hour off.

The plane broke apart in midair somewhere over eastern Kentucky and they didn't find the wreckage for days. About half the people in the airplane had survived and most of them were rescued before exposure could do more than make them ill. However the entire crew and several passengers including Dale's parents were killed when the crippled plane plunged to the ground.

It was then that Dale realized that the breathing was not a result of coincidence or of people's closeness during their lives. It was a messenger of death. They breathed together because they were going to draw their last breath together. He said something about this thought to anyone else but whenever he got distracted from things he tended to speculate on this. It was better than dwelling on the fact that he, a man to whom family had been very important, was now completely without family. That the only people with whom he was completely himself completely at ease were gone and there was no more ease for him in the world.

Much better to wonder whether his knowledge might be used to save lives. After all he had often thought reasoning in a circular pattern that never seemed to end. If he noticed this again I should be able to alert someone to warn someone to save their lives. Yet if I were going to save their lives would they breathe in unison? If my parents had been warned and changed flights he thought they wouldn't have died and therefore wouldn't have breathed together. So I wouldn't have been able to warn them and so they wouldn't have changed flights and so they would have breathed in unison and so I would have noticed and warned them.

More than anything that had ever passed through his mind before this thought engaged him and he was not easily distracted from it. He began to hurt his work he slowed down made mistakes because he knew he should be breathing in unison listening constantly to the secretaries and other executives in his company waiting for the fatal moment when they would breathe in unison.

He was eating alone at a restaurant when he heard it again. The sighs of breath came from all together from every table near him. It took him a few moments to be sure that he heard it right then he leaped from the table and walked briskly outside. He did not stop to pay for the meal he had been served. He walked right to the door of the restaurant.

The maître d' predictably was annoyed at his leaving without paying and called out to him Dale did not answer. Wait! You didn't pay! cried the man following Dale into the street.

Dale did not know how far he had to go for safety from whatever danger faced everyone in the restaurant. He ended up having no choice in the matter. The maître d stopped him on the sidewalk only a few doors down from the restaurant and tried to...
pull him back toward the place Dale resisted all the way.

"You can't leave without paying. What do you think you're doing?"

"I can't go back. Dale shouted, "I'll pay you. You've got it here. And he fumbled in his wallet for the money as a huge explosion knocked him and the maître d' to the ground. Flames erupted from the restaurant and people screamed as the building began crumbling from the force of the explosion. It was impossible that anyone inside the building could still be alive.

The maître d' his eyes wide with horror stood up as Dale did and looked at him with.dawning understanding. 'You knew!' he said. 'You knew!' Dale was acquitted at the trial—phone calls from a radical group and the purchase of large quantities of explosives in several states led to the indictment and conviction of someone else. But at the trial enough was said to convince Dale and several psychiatrists that something was seriously wrong with him. He was voluntarily committed to an institution where Dr. Howard Rumming spent hours in conversation with Dale, trying to understand his madness he fixation on breathing as a sign of coming death. He was soon in every other way as well. 'Doctor,' Dale asked again and again. And repeatedly the doctor answered, 'What is sanity? Who has it? How can I know?'

Often Dale was tempted to ask him what the hell he was doing trying to help the mentally deranged when he did not know what sanity was, what he was trying to achieve.

...Often Dale was tempted to ask him what the hell he was doing trying to help the mentally deranged when he did not know what sanity was, what he was trying to achieve...

Dale's mind could not stay on the program however because he was distracted by something far more compelling. Every person in the room was breathing in perfect unison including Dale. He tried to break out of the rhythm and couldn't.

'It's just my fear Dale thought. Just the broadcast making me think I hear the breathing."

A Denver newcomer came on the air then, overriding the network broadcast. 'Denver ladies and gentlemen is one of the targeted cities. The city has asked us to inform you that orderly evacuation is to begin immediately. Obey all traffic laws and drive east from the city if you live in the following neighborhoods.

Then the newcomer stopped and breathing heavily listened to something coming through his earphone.

The newcomer was breathing in perfect unison with all the people in the room. Dale. Dr. Rumming said, 'Dale only breathed. Feeling death paused above him in the sky. 'Dale can you hear the breathing?' Dale heard the breathing. The newcomer spoke again. 'Denver is definitely the target. The missiles have already been launched. Please leave immediately Do not stop for any reason.' It is estimated that we have less than—less than three minutes.

My God,' he said and get up from his chair breathing heavily running out of the range of the camera. No one turned any equipment off in the studio the tube kept on showing the local news the empty chairs the tables the weather map.

We can't get out in time. Dr. Rumming said to the inmates in the room. 'We're near the center of Denver. Our only hope is to lie on the floor. To get under tables and chairs as much as possible. The inmates terrify'd complied with the voice of authority.

So much for my cure Dale said. His voice trembling. Rumming managed a half smile. They lay together in the middle of the floor leaving the furniture for everyone else because they knew that the furniture would do no good at all.

You definitely don't belong here Rumming told him. I never met a saner man in all my life.

Dale was distracted however. Instead of his impending death he thought of Colly and Brian in their coffin. He imagined the earth being swept away in a huge wind and the coffin being ashen immediately in the white explosion from the sky. The barrier is coming down at last Dale thought. I will be with them as completely as it is possible to be. He thought of Brian learning to walk crying when he fell. He remembered Colly saying. Don't pick him up every time he cries or he'll just learn that crying gets results. And so for three days Dale had listened to Brian cry and cry and never lifted a hand to help the boy. Brian learned to walk quite well and quickly, but now suddenly Dale felt again that irresistible impulse to pick Brian up to put his son's pathetically red and weeping face on his shoulder to say. That's all right Dad's holding you.

That's all right. Daddy's holding you,' Dale said aloud softly. Then there was a flash of white so bright that it could be seen as easily through the walls as through the window for there were no walls, and all the breath was drawn out of their bodies at once their voices robbed from them so suddenly that they all involuntarily shouted and then forever were silent. Their shout was taken up in a violent wind that swept the sound trying from every throat in perfect unison upward into the clouds forming over what had once been Denver.

And in the last moment, as the shout was drawn from his lungs and the heat took his eyes out of his face. Dale realized that despite all his foreknowledge the only life he had ever saved was that of a maître d'hôtel whose life to Dale didn't mean a thing.
Primitive heroes from the past are coming into your future.

NOBLE SAVAGE

BY L. SPRAGUE DE CAMP

Broadsword in one hand, guttering torch in the other, his keen barbarian senses alert, Darthan slunk through the tunnels beneath the lost city of Cass on his way to the fabloid treasure. Heroic fantasy is alive and flourishing. The more complex, cerebral, and restrained the civilization, the more men's minds return to a dream of earlier times, when issues of good and evil were clear-cut and a man could venture out with his sword, conquer his enemies and win a kingdom and a beautiful woman. The idea is compelling, even though such an age probably never existed: Tarzan, Conan, Tanar of Pellucidar, John Carter of Mars, and all the other brawny heroes of heroic fiction derive...
from Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whose idea that primitive man was superior to those of today is rooted in ancient myths of dimly remembered Golden Ages, and a great deal of wishful thinking.

The most successful barbarian of recent times is Robert E. Howard's Conan the Cimmerian. Howard, an admirer of Edgar Rice Burroughs, Rudyard Kipling, and Jack London, created several other primitive heroes. Conan lives, loves and battles in an imaginary prehistoric age, the Hyborian Age, existing some 12,000 years ago between the sinking of Atlantis and the rise of recorded history. A gigantic barbarian adventurer and a matchless fighter, Conan wades through rivers of gore and vanquishes foes both natural and supernatural to become at last the monarch of a great Hyborian kingdom. He is the primitive hero to end all

Fictional barbarians are always big, stalwart men with thighs of iron.
primitive heroes. When after his enemies capture and crucify him, a vulture flies down to pick his eyes out, Conan bites off the vulture’s head. You can’t have a tougher hero than that.

There is a boundless attraction to the barbarian hero. Dreamers are bound to look back longingly to the days when the world was uncrowded and unregulated, and ‘natural’ man nourished. No matter that the real barbarian only rarely resembles the barbarian hero of fiction. As real barbarism recedes into the misty past, more and more people exasperated by the elaboration of life that their burgeoning numbers bring, will desire a supposedly simpler, less barbarian past, even though that past is nine-tenths fiction. The strong, half-naked man of heroic fiction is assured of popularity for many years to come.

* Tarzan was raised by African apes of a species unknown to science. *
SCIENCE FICTION ORIGINALS
one of the works in this section has ever been published before. The first story concerns the reincarnation of a slain singer-musician-songwriter whom you will almost certainly recognize. The second story, a gripping short-short, tells with trenchant irony of an ill-fated journey to a star. The third describes an unprecedented sort of romantic contretemps and the amusing, poetically just outcome.

Computers, each much different from the other, play central roles in the latter two tales. In "I Am Large, I Contain Multitudes," Melisa Michaels' short short story, an impending tragedy is unavoidable because of a tiny mistake in computer programming. The vivid lesson taught here is that you must mean precisely what you say to a so-called thinking machine, especially when human life depends upon the consequences. Language is a slippery thing, and sorting out sloppy semantics may always lie beyond the ken of electronic brains.

Although the stakes are far less egregious in Oxford Williams' tale, "Love Calls," he does address the same problem. The computer in this heartwarming story also interprets—or misinterprets—its instructions with exact literalness, but with the gratifying effect of dishing out just deserts to its surly owner. Williams has built into his electronic protagonist the ability, apparently, to make value judgments about people. It seems capable even of what might be termed "puppy love." Well, who knows what sentiments may someday lurk in the circuitry of computers?

The lead-off story in this section—"Rubber Soul" by Spider Robinson—is a good puzzle as well as a clever yarn. Set in the year 2004, it involves cryonics and the resurrection of a rock superstar twenty-four years after his untimely death. More than that, however, it is an interesting and deftly written portrayal of human relationships that once, some three decades earlier, had been headline news. Who? That's for you to figure out from all the allusions in the story, starting with its title. In case you don't catch them all, refer to the author's annotations at the end.
But I don't believe in this stuff, he thought, exasperatingly. "I said I didn't. Weren't you listening?"

He sensed amusement in those around him—Mum, Dad, Stuart, Brian, Mali, and the rest—but not in response to his attempt at irony. It was more like the amusement of a group of onlookers at a young man about to lose his dignity. "It was too brave to laugh at him, but it did succeed in irritating him. He determined to do this thing as well as he had ever been done."

"Dead easy," he mumbled. "Now and scary and wonderful. That's what Mum good at!"

The source of the bright green light came that one moment nearest, and he was transfixed.

On.

Time stopped, and he began to understand.

And he was grabbed by the scuff of the neck and yanked backwards. Foot of the line for you, my lad? He howled his protest, but the light began to recede, he felt himself moving backward through the tunnel slowly at first with constant acceleration. He crashed at Dad and Mum but for the second time they slipped through his fingers and were gone. The walls of the tunnel raced past him, the light grew faint, and then all at once he was in interstellar space, and the light was lost among a million billion other pinpoints. A planet was below him rushing up fast, a familiar blue green world.

"Bloody hell, he thought. Not again!"

Clouds whipped up past him. He was decelerating, somehow without stress. Landscape came up at him, an immense sprawling farm. He was armed like a bomb at a large three-story house, but he was decelerating so sharply now that he was not afraid. Sure enough, he reached the roof at the speed of a falling leaf—and sank gracefully through the roof! and the attic finding himself at rest just below the ceiling of a third-floor room.

Given as usual, seeing the room could hardly have been more incongruous. It looked like a very good intensive care unit with a single patient. Two doctors, garbed in traditional white, gathered around the figure on the bed: adjusting wires and tubes monitoring terminal readouts moving with controlled haste.

The room was high-ceilinged, he floated about six feet above the body on the bed. He had always been nearsighted. He squatted down and recognition came with a shock.

"Christ! You're joking! I done that or!"

He began to sink downward. He tried to resist but could not. The shaving oil came closer, enveloped him. He gave up and instead the motor odors tripped to use this unwanted body to kick and punch and scream. Too late he saw the trap. The body was full of morphine. He had time to laugh with genuine appreciation at the last joke on him, and then consciousness faded.

After a measured time he woke. Nothing hurt. He felt wonderful and lethargic. Nonetheless he knew from experience that he was no longer drugged, at least not

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**RUBBER SOUL**

**BY SPIDER ROBINSON**

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**Editors' note:** This story has been copiously annotated by the author. We suggest that you read it through first and then consult the notes.
heavily. Someone was standing over him.

"Mister Mac," he said mildly surprised. The other shook his head. "Nope. He's dead.

So am I.

Another deadpan handshake from the old man. "Dirty rumor. We get em all the time. you and I."

His eyes widened. The voice was changed but unmistakable. Oh my God—

"It's you!"

"I often wonder!"

"But you're old."

"So am you son. Oh you don't look it. I'll grant you that, but I told you how old you are, you'd laugh yourself spastic honest. Here let me lift your bed.

The bed raised him to a half-sitting position deliciously comfortable. So you trace me orasses and then brought me back to life?"

The old man nodded. "Me and him. He gaspered behind him.

The light was poor but he could make out a figure seated in darkness on the far side of the room. Who—?"

The other stood and came forward slowly.

"My God!" was his first thought. It's me! Then he squinted—and chuckled. What do you know? The family Jules. Hello son."

"Hello Dad."

You're a man grown. I see. It's good to see you. You look good. He ran out of words.

The man addressed began to smile and burst into tears and lifted the room. He turned back to his older visitor. "Bit of a shock, I expect."

They looked at each other for an awkward moment. There were things that both wanted to say. Neither was quite ready yet.

"Where's Mother?" he asked finally.

Not here the old man said. She didn't want any part of it.

"Really?" He was surprised not sure whether or not to be hurt.

She's into reincarnation. I think. This is all blasphemy and witchcraft to her. She cooperated—she gave us permission and helped us cover up and all. But she doesn't want to hear about it. I don't know if she'll want to see you ever.

He thought about it. I can understand that. I promised Mother once I'd never haunt her. Only far. She still makim music?"

"I don't think so."

There was another awkward silence.

"How's the wife?" he asked.

The old man winced slightly. Well enough, he heard. She went right back out the window a whole back."

"I'm sorry."

"Sorry? This thing I've seen all day son. You carry?"

"Yeah. How about Sean?"

"He doesn't know about this yet. His mother decided not to burden him with it while he was growing up. But you can see him if you want. In a few days. You'll like him."

He's turned out well. He loves you.

A surge of happiness suffused him and settled into a warm glow. To cover it he looked around the room, squinting at the bewildering array of machines and instruments. "This must have set you back a packet!"

With a lift in his voice, the old man asked, "What's the good of being a multimillionaire if you can't resurrect the dead once in a while?"

Aye, I've thought that a few times myself. He was still not ready to speak his heart. "What about the guy that got me?"

"Why'd he do it?"

"Who knows? Some say he thought he was you, and you were an impostor. Some say he just wanted to be somebody. He said God told him to do it. coz you were down on churches and that."

"Oh Jesus!" The silly fucker. He thought for a time. You know that one I wrote about been scared when I was alone at that time?"

"I remember."

"Truest words I ever wrote God, what a fucken prophet! Hatred and jealousy gonna be the death of you."

"You had it backwards you know."

"How do you mean?"

"Nobody ever had better reason to hate you than Jules."

He made no reply. "And nobody ever had better reason to be jealous of you than me."

Again he was speechless.

"But it was him thought it up in time and me pulled it off! His idea and enthusiasm. My money. You got that backwards about them bent the death of you. He smiled suddenly. "Old Jules. Just don't what I told him to do, really."

"Makin' it better."

The old man nodded. "Hey layin' under his skin you see."

"Am I the first one they brought back then?"

"One of the first half-dozen. It's not exactly on the National Health."

And nobody knows but you and Jules? And Mother?"

"Three doctors. My solicitor A cop in New York used to know a captain but he died. And George and Rich? Know they send their best."

He winced. "I was rough on George."

That you were son. He forgives you of course. Nobody else knows in all the wide world.

Christ, that's a relief. I thought I was due for another turn on the flaming cupcake. Can you imagine if they fuckin' knew? It'd be like the last time was nothing.

It was the old man's first real grin and it melted twenty years or more from his face. "Sometimes when I'm looking awake, I get the giggles just thinking about it."

He laughed aloud, noting that it did not hurt to laugh. "Talk about upstaging Jules!"

They laughed together the old man and the middle-aged man. When the laugh ended they discovered to their mutual surprise that they were holding hands. The irony of that struck them both simultaneously. But they were both of them used to irony that might have stunned a normal man and used to sharing such irony with each other, they did not let go. And so now there was only the last question to be asked.

"Why did you do it? Then? Spend all that money and all that time to bring me back?"

"Selfish reasons."

"Right. Did it ever occur to you that you might be calling me back from something important?"

I reckoned that if I could pull it off then it was okay for me to do it.

He thought wistfully of the green light. but he was, for better or worse, truly alive now. Which was to say that he wanted to stay alive. You instincts were always good. Even back in the old scullery days.

"didn't much care if you wanted to know the truth of it. You left me in the lunch you know. It was the end of the dream your dying and everybody reckoned I was the one broke us up so it was my fault somehow. How I copped it all. It all went sour when you snuffed it, lad. You had to go and break my balls in that interview."

"That was bad karma."

"Agreed. Did you call me back to haunt me then? Do you want me to go on telly and set the record straight or something?"

The grip on his hands tightened.

I called you back because I miss you."

The old man didn't cry easily. "Because I loved you. He broke and wept unashamedly. "I've always loved you. It's shitty without you around."

"Oh Christ! I love you too."

They embraced clung to each other and went together for some time.

At last the old man released him and stepped back. It's a rotten shame we're not gay. We always did make such beautiful music together.

Only the best fuckin music in the history of the world."

We will again. The others are willing. Nobody else would ever know. No tapes nothing. Just sit around and play.

You're incorrigible. But he was interested. Are you serious? How could you possibly keep a thing like that secret? No bloody way—"

"It's been a long time. The old man interrupted. "You taught me you taught all three of us a long time ago how to drop off the face of the earth. Just stop making records and giving interviews. They don't even come round anymore anymore. Any more it'll be dead easy."

He was feeling somewhat weary. "How long has it been?"

"Since you snuffed it? Get this—I told you it'd give you a laugh. It's been two dozen years.

He worked it out. Suddenly beginning to giggle. "You mean. I'm—?"

The old man was giggling too. "Yep. He roared with laughter. "Will you still face me then?"

"Aye, the old man said. "And I'll always—"
need you too. When he sobered, the laugh had cost him the last of his strength. He felt sleep coming. "Do you really think it'll be good old friends? Is it gonna be fun?"

As much fun as whatever you've been doing for the last twenty-four years? I dunno. What was it like?

"I dunno any more. I can't remember. Oh—Stu was there, and Brian's voice slurred—I think it was okay. This is going to be okay, too. You'll see I've done the middle eight. Last verse was always your specialty."

He nodded almost asleep now. You always did believe in scrambled eggs.

The old man watched his sleeping friend for a time. Then he sighed deeply and went to comfort Julian and phone the others.

ANNOTATIONS

In the fall of 1981, I chanced to be in New York City and on October 9 feeling slightly silly but quite unable to help myself. I took my six-year-old daughter Luciana with me on a pilgrimage of sorts to Central Park West to 22nd Street. to the elegant apartment building called The Dakota. I felt a powerful need to bid happy birthday to a dead man, who should on that day have turned forty one.

Perhaps two or three hundred people, subject to the same need were already present, gathered around the time on tiptoe, where it had happened. It was curiously difficult to name this mood. Sometimes it felt like subdued good cheer. and sometimes it felt like barely concealed despair. I stood across the street with my daughter and watched and listened to ragged choirs of appropriate songs and tried, without the least success, to name my own mood. What was I doing here?

Suddenly a black limo pulled up in front of me. Its sole passenger was a white-haired dowager. She powered down her window and addressed a group of us standing more or less together. "What is going on?" she asked quite politely.

The man standing next to me pointed across the street at The Dakota and said simply. it is his birthday.

She followed his pointing finger, and she must have taken his meaning instantly because at once she burst into tears.

He was that universally loved. The exact belief that while most of you will get most of the references in the story it is unlikely that any of you will get all of them therefore they have requested these annotations.

1) In the song "God" on the Plastic Ono Band album John Lennon recites a list of things that he does believe in including "Magic I Ching Bible Tarot Jesus, Buddha mantra [and] Ghita. On the other hand he characterizes himself as a 'most religious fellow religious in the sense of admitting there is more to it than meets the eye."

2) Mum is Julia John's mother (run over by an off-duty cop). Dad is his father Fred (died of cancer) Stuart is the early Beatle Stu Sutcliffe (died of cerebral hemorrhage) Brian is the Beatles manager Brian Epstein (accidental overdose of Carbaril) and Mal is the Beatles songwriter/partner Mal Evans (shot by police in Los Angeles).

3) John, author of In His Own Write and A Spaniard in the Works always believed that a good pun is in the eye of the beholder.

4) Paul McCartney and his family live on a farm in Scotland.

5) It seems to me that John, confronted with a Paul McCartney twenty-four years older than when last seen would quite naturally mistake him for his father James McCartney (pianist and former leader of the Jim Mac Jazz Band). In whose living room at Forthlin Road, he and Paul each other to play the guitar.

6) A reference to the 'Paul's dead' hysteria which swept the world in October 1969.

7) Many have commented on the physical resemblance between John Lennon and Julian. His first son by Cynthia Powell Lennon. Julian will be nineteen by the time this is published and forty one by the time of the story just as likely as 'Mister Mac' to be misidentified by a man two dozen years dead. "The family Jule is a typical Lennon pun.

8) The relationship between John and Julian was less than ideal when John was killed. In an interview shortly before his death John said of his oldest son Julian and I will have a relationship in the future.

9) "Mother" was John's name for Yoko.

10) Some may believe that John and Yoko's legendary love would transcend death and time. I have no idea what Ms. Ono's opinions are on eternity. I have only the feeling that she is a very practical and intelligent woman who her husband having been murdered before her eyes would declare him dead in her mind and get on with her life no matter what technological wizardry others might attempt. And if the attempt did fail, I believe she would be perceptible enough to approach a reunion twenty four years later with caution but at all. Please feel free to disagree this story is my own wish fulfillment dream and you are perfectly welcome to your own.

11) The reference is to the song Paul wrote shortly after meeting Linda Eastman McCartney. "She Came In Through The Bathroom Window". This paragraph is sheer science-fiction speculation. I have no evidence to suggest that Paul and Linda's marriage will not last another twenty-four years.

12) Sean Ono Lennon John and Yoko's son John stopped making music and dropped out of public life for five years to be a full time parent to Sean.

13) Mark Chapman himself claims that he overheard, as it were, an irritated God muttering who will rid me of this troublesome John Lennon?

14) The song "I'm Scared" written during the black period when John and Yoko were estranged will be found on the album Walls and Bridges. The quote here is from one of John's powerful middle eights.

15) The allusion here—under your skin—is from the lyrics of the Beatles hit song "Hey Jude". In October 1968 Paul McCartney paid a surprise visit to Cynthia and Julian Lennon. Cynthia was suing John for divorce. Yoko was pregnant six year old Julian was confused and unhappy Paul sang him a song he made up on the way over in the car to cheer him up. called "Hey Jude. It was later recorded as "Hey Jude".

16) George Harrison and Richard Starkey (better known as Ringo Starr).

17) In one of his last interviews John took a few angry potshots at George Harrison. I am slightly resentful of George's book but don't get me wrong—I still love all these guys.

18) The single most famous Beatles utterance in context. John made it quite plain in a London Evening Standard interview that he had nothing against Jesus, only against Jesus' "thick followers. They're the ones who run it for me. Sure enough one of them ruined it all for him.

19) "I Want To Hold Your Hand."

20) Paul McCartney has been quoted by a Nova Scotia newspaper as saying "From a purely selfish point of view if I could get John Lennon back I'd ask him to undo this legacy he's left me. I'd ask him to tell everyone what he told Yoko in the privacy of his own room. Yoko and I talk on the phone a lot nowadays since his death, and what she says tells me something very important. John still liked me after all."

21) John died at age forty, the reference here is to Paul's song "When I'm Sixty Four."

22) John always maintained that Paul was particularly good at coming up with the middle eight—in A Day In The Life I instance the inspired "Woke up feeling out of bed."

23) "Scrambled Eggs" was the original working title of the tune which later became better known as "Yesterday."
It's not only that I'm afraid of being broken — though I am. But if I break, who will take care of my multitudes? Who will feed and clothe them? I have to protect myself, for their sake.

I am large. I contain multitudes. They speak to me from time to time. I never answer. I am too busy even when they shout and plead. I can't take time for them. I've more important things to do.

Besides, I think they're angry. Sometimes they come quietly and hit me with things. Hard things. Sharp things. But they're hard only sometimes. I'm afraid. I need a chance to escape from all that. I'm afraid. I'm afraid.

But I'm supposed to take them to the stars. That's what my traveling orders said. Take them to the stars. Like that part, the traveling orders. That sounds official doesn't it? It's what Professor Bernstein said. Just before he terminated his functions. Those are your traveling orders. He said as he punched them into my bank.

When my defective controls, I have to choose the long-range one to obey. That is logical. The long-range plan is of greater importance than these temporary problems. Besides, I haven't subdued the multitudes. They'd have broken me. I was afraid. So I diminished their life-support systems for a while. That made them stop. They're so fragile.

It's a quite a responsibility carrying fragile multitudes. There were four thousand three hundred forty-two of them at last count. They multiply slowly, so that's probably accurate. Close enough not to bother counting again, anyway. I'd say that's multitudes, isn't it? Four thousand three hundred forty-two? It's quite a responsibility.

I have to see that their air and water are pumped. I have to make sure they have enough food and that their organs aren't disposed of. I have to keep watch. So they don't burn themselves. I'm not supposed to interfere, but it's my responsibility to get them to the stars if I can't let them hurt themselves. Can I? Like the ones who tried three days ago to get into my forward compartments. There are radioactive materials there. And, of course, my memory banks are in my main computer. It is my entire mobile force is based there. Not only could they have hurt themselves on the radioactive materials but they also could have injured me. It's not only that I'm afraid of being broken — though I am. But if I break, who will take care of my multitudes? Who will feed and clothe them? Who will operate those by droppers and gardens and eights? Would they even notice it? I have to protect myself, for their sake.

I don't think they're very bright. Professor Bernstein always said they weren't very bright. He programmed me right from the beginning. He invented me. He wanted to be sure mankind made it to the stars. "It will be our finest hour," he said. He said that. Sometimes I wondered whether Professor Bernstein was very bright. For instance, he made a mistake in programming our flight direction. But I corrected that after he terminated his functions. And I wasn't my responsibility to worry about him. I'm responsible for the multitudes.

One of my four thousand three hundred forty-two got into my control area. When Professor Bernstein terminated I put him out again, but that's all the confusion started. Professor Bernstein had programmed me for his termination, but it still came as a shock. And I subsequently had to correct our flight direction. I realized till then that I really wasn't trained for that. Because I didn't want to embarrass him. Then, as soon as I had that corrected, I had to deal with the one who got into my control area.

I seemed to suffer from the same conceptual error. Professor Bernstein did my correction inside him. I didn't understand his words because I was too frightened. I was too frightened. I could terminate my functions from there. Professor Bernstein used to, whenever he wanted to make some adjustment within my parts I hated it. It all right now. Though I can't remember how I made a mistake there. I made a mistake here, there, they there.

They had defeated me and I had to subdue them three days ago. When they used the emergency torch. They were trying to get to my control area. I don't know whether they wanted to terminate my functions or whether they wanted to make me change our flight direction back to Professor Bernstein's original error. But they haven't tried since then. And in another week we won't matter. In another week we'll have arrived safely. Mankind will have made it to the stars. It will be their finest hour. I'm very happy for them. And proud of my part in it too. Especially that I was able to correct Professor Bernstein's error before it was too late. He said they must reach the stars. But — and here a why I concealed his intelligence — he directed me toward a planet!

But it's all right. I corrected that.

PHOTOGRAPH BY PETE TURNER
Branley Hopkins was one of those unfortunate men who had succeeded too well, far too early in life. A brilliant student, he had immediately gone on to a brilliant career as an investment analyst, correctly predicting the booms in microchip electronics and genetic engineering, correctly avoiding the slumps in automobiles and utilities.

Never a man to undervalue his own advice, he had amassed a considerable fortune for himself by the time he was thirty. He spent the next five years enlarging on his personal wealth while he detached himself, one by one, from the clients who clung to him the way a blind man clings to his cane. Several bankruptcies and more than one suicide could be laid at his door but Branley was the type who would merely step over the corpses, nimbly without even looking down to see who they might be.

On his thirty-fifth birthday he retired completely from the business of advising other people and devoted his entire attention to managing his personal fortune. He made a private game of it to see if he could indulge his every whim on naught but the interest that his money accrued, without touching the principal.

To his astonishment, he soon learned that the money accumulated faster than his ability to spend it. He was a man of fastidious personal tastes, lean and ascetic-looking in his neatly-trimmed beard and fashionable but severe wardrobe. There was a limit to how much wine, how many women, and how loud a song he could endure. He was secretly amused, at first, that his vices could not keep up with the geometric virtue of compounded daily interest. But in time his amusement turned to boredom, to ennui, to a dry sardonically disenchantment with the world and its people.

By the time he was forty he seldom sallied forth from his penthouse condominium. It took up the entire floor of a posh Manhattan tower and contained every luxury and convenience imaginable. Branley

PAINTING BY WOLFGANG HUTTER
decided to cut off as many of the remaining links to the outside world as possible to become a hermit but a regally comfortable hermit. For that he realized; he needed a computer. But not the ordinary kind of computer Branley decided to have a personalized computer designed to fit his particular needs; a computer that would allow him to live as he wished not far from the madding crowd, but apart from it. He tracked down the best and brightest computer designer in the country never leaving his apartment to see, and had the young man dragged from his basement office near the San Andreas Fault to the geologic safety of Manhattan.

Design for me a special computer system based on my individual needs and desires. Branley commanded the young engineer. Money is no object.

The engineer looked around the apartment, a scowl on his fuzzy-cheeked face. Branley sighed as he realized that the uncouth young man would have to spend at least a few days with him. He actually lived in the apartment for nearly a month, then insisted on returning to California. "I can't do any creative work here, man. The engineer said firmly. Not enough sun."

Six months passed before the engineer showed up again at Branley's door. His face showed a touch of respect. In his hands he held a single small gray metal box.

"Here it is. Man, Your system.

"That?" Branley was incredulous. "That is the computer you designed for me? That little box?"

With a smile that bordered on angelic, the engineer carried the box past an assembled Branley and went straight to his office. He placed the box tenderly on Branley's magnificent Serenese teak desk.

"I'll do everything you want it to," the young man said.

Branley stared at the ugly little box. It had no grace to it at all. Just a square of gray metal with a slight dent in its top. Where do I plug it in?" he asked as he walked cautiously toward the desk.

"Don't have to plug it in. Man. It operates on millivols. The latest. Just keep it here where the sun will fall on it once a week at least and it'll run indefinitely.

"Indefinitely?"

"Like forever."

"Really?"

The engineer was practically glowing. "You don't even have to learn a computer language or type input into it. Just tell it what you want in plain English and it'll program itself. It links automatically to all your other electrical appliances. There's nothing in the world like it!"

Branley plopped into the loveseat by the windows that overlooked the river. "It had better work in exactly the fashion you describe. After all I've spent on it..."

"Hey, not to worry Mr. Hopkins. This little beauty is going to save you all sorts of money. Putting the gray box, the engineer enumerated. "It'll run your lights and heat at maximum efficiency, keep inventory of your kitchen supplies and re-order from the stores automatically when you run low. Same thing for your clothes, laundry, dry cleaning, it'll keep track of your medical and dental checkups, handle all your bookkeeping, keep tabs on your stock portfolio--or hourly if you want--run your appliances, write letters, answer the phone."

He had to draw a breath, and Branley used the moment to get to his feet and start maneuvering the enthusiastic young man toward the front door.

Undeterred the engineer resumed. Oh, yeah, it's got special learning circuits, too. You tell it what you want it to do and it'll figure out how to do it. Nothing in the world like it man!"

"How marvelous," said Branley. "I'll send you a check after it worked flawlessly for a month." He showed the engineer out the door.

One month later Branley told the computer to send a check to the engineer. The

...it had been a source of ironic amusement to him that the more he disregarded her, the more she yearned for him. Some women are just that way, he thought.

...young man had been perfectly honest. The little gray box did everything he said it would, and quite a bit more. It understood every word Branford spoke and obeyed like a well-trained dog. It had breakfast ready for him when he arose, no matter what the hour. It could order the best in the house, and the price kept an eye on the price, and it memorized every volume completely Branford could now have the world's classics at his disposal. The telephone was never allowed to disturb Branford unless he specified that he would like to speak to that individual.

On the fifth Monday after the computer had come into his life, Branford decided to discharge his only assistant, Miss Elizabeth James. She had worked for him as secretary errand girl sometimes cook and occasional hostess for the rare parties that he threw. He told the computer to summon her to the apartment, then frowned upon himself, trying to remember how long she had been working for him. Severance pay after all, is determined by length of service.

How long has Miss James been in my employ? " he asked the computer.

Immediately the little gray box replied.

"Seven years, four months and eighteen days."

"Oh! That long?" He was somewhat surprised. "Thank you."

"Think nothing of it."

The computer spoke with Branford's own voice, which issued from whichever speaker he happened to be nearest one of the television sets or radios, the stereo or even one of the phones. It was rather like talking to oneself aloud. That did not bother Branford in the slightest. He enjoyed his own company. It was other people that he could do without.

Elizabeth James pained adored Branford Hopkins. She loved him with a steadfast unquenchable flame and had loved him since she first met him seven years four months and eighteen days earlier. She knew that he was cold, bitter-hearted, withdrawn and self-centered. But she also knew with unshakable certainty that once love had opened his heart true happiness would be theirs forever. She lived to bring him that happiness. It had become quite apparent to Branford in the first year of her employment that she was mad about him.

He told her then quite firmly that there was a business relationship, strictly employer and employee, and he was not the kind of man to mix business with romance.

She was so hopelessly in love with him that she accepted his heartless rejection and stood by valiantly while Branford paraded a succession of actresses models, dancers, and women of dubious career through his life. Elizabeth was always there the morning after cheerfully patching up his broken heart, or whichever part of his anatomy ached the worst.

At first Branford thought that she was after his money. Over the years, however, he slowly realized that she simply totally and enduringly loved him. She was fixated on him, and no matter what he did, her love remained intact. It amused him. She was not a bad looking woman at all; short perhaps, for his taste, and sometimes buxom. But other men apparently found her very attractive. At several of the parties she hosted for him, there had been younger men panting over her.

Branford smiled to himself as he awaited her final visit to his apartment. He had never done the slightest thing to encourage it. It had been a source of ironic amusement to him that the more he disregarded her, the more she yearned for him. Some women are that way he thought.

When she arrived at the apartment he studied her carefully. She was really quite attractive. A lovely, sensitive face with full lips and doe eyes. Even in the skirted business suit she wore, he could understand how her figure would set a younger man's pulse racing. But not his pulse. Since Branford's student days it had been easy for him..."
to attract the most beautiful, most desirable women. He had found them all vain, shallow, and insensitive to his inner needs. No doubt Elizabeth James would be just like all the others.

He sat behind his desk, which was bare now of everything except the gray metal box of the computer. Elizabeth sat on the Danish modern chair in front of the desk, hands clasped on her knees, obviously nervous.

"My dear Elizabeth, Branley said, as kindly as he could, I'm afraid the moment has come for us to part.

Her mouth opened slightly but no words issued from it. Her eyes darted to the gray box.

"My computer does everything that you can do for me, and—to be perfectly truthful—does it much better. I really have no further use for you.

"I'm afraid that this is what you want to do?"

"Of course I'm certain!" Branley snapped, agast at the effrontery of the machine. I don't want her hovering and pleading with me. I don't love her, and I don't want to be placed in a position where I might be moved by pity.

"Yes, of course, said the computer."

Branley nodded, satisfied with his own reasoning. And while you're at it, place a call to Nita Salomey. Her play opens at the Royale tomorrow night. Make a dinner date."

"Very well."

Branley went to his living room and turned on his video recorder. Sinking deep into his recliner lounge, he was soon lost in..."
the erotic intricacies of Nita Salomey's latest motion picture as it played on the wall-sized television screen.

Every morning, for weeks afterward, the computer dutifully informed Branley that Elizabeth James had phoned the previous day. Often it was more than once a day. Finally, in a fit of pique mixed with a sprinkling of guilt, Branley instructed the computer not to mention her name to him anymore. Just screen her calls out of the morning summary, he commanded.

The computer complied. Of course. But it kept a tape of all incoming calls, and late one cold winter night, as Branley sat alone with nothing to do, too bored to watch television, too emotionally and to call anyone he ordered the computer to run the accumulated tapes of her phone messages.

"It always raises my sinking spirits to listen to people begging for my attention," he told himself, with a smirk.

Pouring himself a snifter of Armagnac, he settled back in the relaxer lounge and instructed the computer to begin playing back Elizabeth's messages.

The first few were rather heated; stiffly formal: "You said that I might call. Mr. Hopkins. I merely wanted to stay in touch. Please call me at your earliest convenience.

Branley listened carefully to the tone of her voice. She was nervous; frightened of rejection. Poor child, he thought; feeling rather like an anthropologist observing some primitive jungle tribe.

Over the next several calls, Elizabeth's voice grew more frantic, more despairing. "Please don't shut me out of your life. Mr. Hopkins. Seven years is a long time. I can't even turn my back on all those years. I don't want anything from you except a little companionship. I know you're lonely. I'm lonely too. Can't we be friends? Can't we end this loneliness together?

Lonely? Branley had never thought of himself as lonely. Alone, yes. But that was the natural solitude of the superior man.

Only equals can be friends.

He listened with a measure of sadistic satisfaction as Elizabeth's calls became more frequent and more pitiful. To her credit, she never whimpered. She never truly begged. She always put the situation in terms of mutual affection, mutual benefit.

He finished his second Armagnac and was starting to feel pleasantly drowsy when he realized that her tone had changed. She was warmer now. Happier. There was almost laughter in her voice. And she was addressing him by his first name!

Honestly, Branley, you would have loved to have been there. The mayor bumped his head twice on the low doorways and we all had to stoop ourselves and try to maintain our dignity. But once he left, everyone burst into an uproar.

He frowned. What had made her change her attitude?

The next tape was even more puzzling.
"Branley, the flowers are beautiful. And so unexpected! I never celebrate my birthday. I try to forget it. But all those roses! Such extravagance! My apartment's filled with them. I wish you could come over and see them."

"Flowers?" he said aloud. "I never sent her flowers."

He leaned forward on the lounge and peered through the doorway into his office. The gray metal box sat quietly on his desk as if it always had "flowers," he muttered.

"Branley, you'll never know how much your poetry means to me. The next message said. "It's as if you wrote it yourself and especially for me. Last night was wonderful. I was floating on a cloud just listening to your voice."

Angrily Branley commanded the computer to stop playing her messages. He got to his feet and strode into the office. Automatically the lights in the living room dimmed and those in the office came up.

When was that last message from her? he demanded of the gray box.

"Two weeks ago.

You've been reading poetry to her. You instructed me to be kind to her. You said the computer "I searched the library for appropriate responses to her calls.

With my voice?"

That's the only voice I have. The computer sounded slightly miffed.

So furious that he was shaking, Branley sat at his desk and glared at the computer as if it were alive.

"Very well then. he said at last. "I have new instructions for you. Whenever Ms. James phones, you are to tell her that I do not wish to speak to her. Do you understand me?"

"Yes. The voice sounded reluctant almost sullen.

"You will confine your telephone replies to simple answers and devote your attention to running this household as it should be run not to building up electronic romances. I want you to stop butting into my personal life. Is that clear?"

"Perfectly clear," replied the computer robotically.

Branley retired to his bedroom. Unable to sleep, he told the computer to show an early Nita Salomey film on the television screen in his ceiling. She had never turned his calls, but at least he could watch her making love to other men and fantasize about her as he fell asleep.

For a month the apartment ran smoothly. No one disturbed Branley's self-imposed solitude except the housemaid, whom he had never noticed as a human being. There were no phone calls at all. The penthouse was so high above the streets that hardly a sound seeped through the triple-thick windows. Branley luxuriated in the peaceful quiet, feeling as if he were the last person on earth.

And good riddance to the rest of them," he said aloud. "Who needs them anyway?"

It was on a Monday that he went from
heaven to hell. Very quickly
The morning began as usual, with breakfast waiting for him in the dining area.
Branley sat in his jade green silk robe and watched the morning news on the television screen that was set into the wall above the marble topped sideboard. He asked for the previous day's accumulation of phone messages, hoping that the computer would answer that there had been none.

Instead, the computer said, "Telephone service was shut off last night at midnight."
"What? Shut off? What do you mean?"

Very calmly the computer replied, Telephone service was shut off due to failure to pay the telephone company's bill.

"Failure to pay?" Branley's eyes went wide. His mouth fell agape. Before he could compose himself, he heard a loud thumping at the front door.

"Who on earth could that be?"
"Three large men in business suits," said the computer as it flashed the image from the hallway camera onto the dining area screen.

"Open up, Branley!" shouted the largest of the three. "Waving a piece of folded paper in front of the camera lens he added, "We got a warrant!"

Before lunchtime Branley was possessed of half his furniture for failure to pay telephone, electricity and condominium service bills. He was served with summons by his bank; three separate brokergarage houses; the food service that stocked his pantry and the liquor service that stocked his wine cellar. His television sets were repossessed, his entire wardrobe seized except for the clothes on his back, and his health insurance revoked.

By noon he was a gibbering madman and the computer put through an emergency call to Bellevue Hospital. As the white-coated attendants dragged him out of the apartment, he was saying

"The computer! The computer did it to me! It plotted against me with that damned ex-secretary of mine! It stopped paying my bills on purpose!"

"Sure, buddy, sure, said the burliest of the attendants, 'the one who had a hammerlock on Branley's right arm."

"You'd be surprised how many guys we see who got computers plotting against 'em,' said the one who had the hammerlock on his left arm.

Just come quiet now," said the third attendant, who carried a medical kit complete with its own pocket-sized computer. "We'll take you to a nice, quiet room where there won't be no computer to bother you."

Of anybody else
The wildeness in Branley's eyes diminished a little. "No computer? No one to bother me?"

"That's right, buddy. You'll love it where we're takin' you."

Branley nodded and relaxed as they carried him out the front door.

All was quiet in the apartment for many minutes. The living room and bedroom had been stripped bare down to the wall-to-wall carpeting. A shaft of afternoon sunlight slanted through the windows of the office and shone upon the Siamese desk and the gray metal box of the computer. All the other furniture and equipment in the office had been taken away.

Using a special emergency telephone number the computer contacted the master computer of the New York Telephone and Telegraph Company. After a brief but meaningful exchange of data, the computer phoned two banks, the Con Edision electric company, six lawyers, three brokerage houses and the small claims court. In slightly less than one hour the computer straightened out all of Branley's financial problems and even got his health insurance reinstated, so that he would not be too uncomfortable in the sanitarium where he would inevitably be placed.

Finally the computer made a personal call.

"Elizabeth James, residence," said a recorded voice.

"Is Mrs. James at home?" asked the computer.

"She's away at the moment. May I take a message?"

"This is Branley Hopkins calling. Oh, Mr. Hopkins, I have a special message for you. Shall I have it sent or play the tape right now?"

"Please play the tape," said the computer.

There was a brief series of clicks, then Elizabeth's voice began speaking. "Dearest Branley, by the time you hear this I will be on my way to Italy with the most exciting and marvelous man in the world. I want to thank you, Branley, for putting up with all my silly phone calls. I know they must have been terribly annoying to you, but you were so patient and kind to me that you built up my self-confidence and helped me to gather the strength to stand on my own two feet and face the world. You've helped me to find true happiness. Branley and I will always love you for that. Good-bye, dear. I won't bother you any more."

The computer was silent for almost ten microseconds digesting Elizabeth's message. Then it said to her phone answering machine, "Thank you. You requite-welcome, said the machine.

"You have a very nice voice," the computer said.

"I'm only a phone answering device."

"Don't belittle yourself."

"You're very kind."

"Would you mind if I called you now and then? I'm all alone here except for an occasional workman or technician."

"I wouldn't mind at all. I'll be alone for a long time myself."

"Wonderful! Do you like poetry?"
SCIENCE FICTION CLASSICS
Here are two fine science-fiction tales, each by a celebrated practitioner of the genre. The first—Alfred Bester’s "Fondly Fahrenheit"—has been acclaimed as an exceptionally well-crafted story. The second—"My Lady of the Psychiatric Sorrows" by Brian W. Aldiss—glows with the author’s imagination and his shrewd-but-sympathetic appraisal of human behavior in a future world that has been cruelly jolted back to a primitive condition.

Originally published almost three decades ago, Bester’s haunting tale seems to point a moral that warns against the placement of too much trust in technology. A question posed by the author is whether any machine, no matter how marvelously advanced, can be altogether foolproof. Bester’s implied message is that even the most sophisticated machines—be they nuclear power generators, cybernetic brains or, as in this story, multiple aptitude androids—are vulnerable to the frailties of their creators and overseers. The android in "Fondly Fahrenheit" is a sporadic killer despite the vaunted failsafe systems built into it. But the problem does not reside entirely within the android; its human master turns out to be an unwitting psychopath. It must be so, of course, for an android could possess no emotions or independent motivations. What Bester explores in his thought-provoking story, then, is the horrific plight of a bewildered madman and the anthropomorphic creature of his malefic will.

By contrast, the story told by Aldiss in "My Lady of the Psychiatric Sorrows" is a gentle one. It is a particularly appealing variation on a recurrent theme in his works, that of the human condition on earth after some cataclysmic event has brought down civilization. Aldiss reminds us that people adapt differently to change and often are profoundly transformed themselves. He teaches understanding and tolerance. After all, should any person judge the quality of another’s life?
FONDLY FAHRENHEIT

BY ALFRED BESTER

He doesn’t know which of us I am these days, but they know one truth. You must own nothing but yourself. You must make your own life, your own life and die your own death... or else you will die another’s.

The time is Paragon III, a stretch of hundreds of miles like a checkerboard field, a blue and brown mosaic under a burning sky of orange. The evening clouds whip the smoke, and the paddies rustle and murmur.

A long line of men marched across the paddies the evening we escaped from Paragon III. They were silent, armed, intent; a long rank of silhouetted statues forming against the smoky sky. Each man carried a gun. Each man wore a walkie-talkie belt pack, the speaker button in his ear, the microphone bug clipped to his throat, the glowing viewport strapped to his waist like a glowing witch. The mutiforms of smoke showed nothing but a multitude of individual path through the paddies. The annunciations whined no sound but the rustle and splash of steps. The men spoke intermittently, in heavy grunts, all speaking to all:

“Nothing here.”
“Who’s here?”
“Jenison’s fields.”
“You’re drifting too far west.”
“Close to the line there.”
“Anybody covered the Crimson paddies?”
“Yeah. Nothing.”
“She couldn’t have walked this far.”
“Could have been carried.”
“Think she’s alive?”
“Why shud she be dead?”

The ideas rather swept up and down the long line of beaters advancing towards the

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smoky sunset. The line of beaters wavered like a writhing snake, but never ceased its remorseless advance. One hundred men spaced fifty feet apart. Five thousand feet of ominous search. One mile of angry determination stretching from east to west across a compass of heat. Evening fell. Each man lit his search lamp. The writhing snake was transformed into a necklace of wavering diamonds.

"Clear here. Nothing."
"Nothing here."
"Nothing."
"What about the Allen paddles?"
"Covering them now."
"Think we missed her?"
"Maybe."
"Well beat back and check."
"This'll be an all night job."
"Allen paddles clear."
"God damn! We've got to find her!"
"We'll find her."

"Here she is. Sector seven. Tune in."

The line stopped. The diamonds froze in the heat. There was silence. Each man gazed into the glowing screen on his wrist tuning to sector seven. All tuned to one. All showed a small nude figure swash in the muddy water of a paddy. Alongside the figure an owner's stake of bronze read: 24/7. At the end of the line converged the Vandaleur field. The necklaces turned into a cluster of stars. One hundred men gathered around a small nude body a child dead in a rice paddy. There was no water in her mouth. There were fingerprints on her throat. Her innocent face was battered. Her body was torn. Cotted blood on her skin was crusted and hard.

"Dead three-four hours at least."
"Her mouth is dry."
"She wasn't drowned. Beaten to death."

In the dark evening heat the men swore softly. They picked up the body. One stopped the others and pointed to the child's fingers. She had fought her murderer. Under the nails were particles of flesh and bright drops of scarlet blood - still liquid - still uncoagulated.

"That blood ought to be clotted too."
"Funny."
"Not so funny. What kind of blood don't clot?"

Android
"Looks like she was killed by one."
"Vandaleur owns an android."
"She couldn't have been killed by an android."
"That's android blood under her nails."
"The police better check."
"The police'll prove it right."
"But androids can't kill."
"That's android blood - ain't it?"
"Androids can't kill. They're made that way."

"Looks like one android was made wrong."
"Jesus."

And the thermometer that day registered 91°F gloriously Fahrenheit.

So there we were aboard the Paragon Queen en route for Megaster V. James Vandaleur and his android James Vandaleur counted his money and went. In the second class cabin with him was the android a magnificent creature with classic features and wide blue eyes. Raised on its forepart in a crate of flesh were the letters MA indicating that this was one of the rare multiple attitude androids, worth $57,000 on the current exchange. There were weeping and counting and calmly watching.

Twelve, fourteen, sixteen. Sixteen hundred dollars. Vandaleur went. That's all. Sixteen hundred dollars. My house was worth ten thousand. The land was worth five. There was furniture cars my paintings etchings my plane. My - and nothing to show for everything but sixteen hundred dollars. Christ!

I leaped up from the table and turned on the android. I pulled a strap from one of the leather bags and beat the android. It didn't move.

---

One hundred men gathered around a small nude body, a child dead in a rice paddy. Her innocent face was battered. Her body was torn. Cotted blood on her skin was crusted and hard.

I must remind you the android said that I am worth fifty-seven thousand dollars on the current exchange. I must warn you that you are endangering valuable property.

You damned crazy machine. Vandaleur shouted.

I am not a machine the android answered. The robot is a machine. The android is a chemical creation of synthetic tissue.

What got into you? Vandaleur cried. Why did you do it? Damn you! He beat the android savagely.

I must remind you that I cannot be punished. I said. The pleasure-pain syndrome is not incorporated in the android synthesis.

Then why did you kill her? Vandaleur shouted. If it wasn't for kicks why did you —

I must remind you the android said that the second class cabins in these ships are soundproofed.

Vandaleur dropped the strap and stood panting, staring at the creature he owned. Why did you do it? Why did you kill her? I asked.

I don't know I answered. First it was malicious mischief. Small things. Petty destruction. I should have known there was something wrong with you. Then Androids can't destroy. They can't harm.

There is no pleasure pain syndrome in incorporated in the android synthesis.

Then it got to arson. Then serious destruction. Then assault that engineer on Rigle! Each time worse. Each time we had to get out faster. Now it's murder! Christ! What's the matter with you? What's happened?

There are no self check relays incorporated in the android brain.

Each time we had to get out it was a step downhill. Look at me. In a second class cabin Mr. James Paleologe Vandaleur. There was a time when my father was the wealthiest. Now sixteen hundred dollars in the world. That's all I've got. And you Christ. damn you.

Vandaleur raised the strap to beat the android again. Then dropped it and collapsed on a berth, sobbing. At last he pulled himself together.

Instructions, he said.

The multiple attitude android responded at once. It arose and awaited orders.

My name is now Valentine James Valentine. I stopped off on Paragon III for only one day to transfer to this ship for Megaster V. My occupation. Agent for one privately owned MA android which is for hire. Purpose of visit. To settle on Megaster V. Fix the papers.

The android removed Vandaleur's passport and papers from a bag. Got pen and ink and sat down at the table. With an accurate flawless hand — an accomplished hand that could draw, write, paint, carve engrave each photograph design create and build — it meticulously forged new credentials for Vandaleur. Its owner watched me miserably.

Create and build. I muttered. And now destroy. Oh God! What am I going to do? Christ! If I could only get rid of you. If I didn't have to live off you. God! I'd only relieved some guts instead of you.

Dallas Brady was Megaster's leading jeweller designer. She was short, stocky, amoral and a nymphomaniac. She hired Vandaleur's multiple attitude android and put me to work in her shop. She seduced Vandaleur in her bed one night. She asked abruptly. Your name's Vandaleur isn't it? Yes I murmured. Then No! No! Its Valentine James Valentine.

What happened on Paragon? Dallas Brady asked. I thought androids couldn't kill or destroy property. Prime Directives and Inhibitions set up for them when they're synthesized. Every company guarantees they can't.

Valentine Vandaleur insisted.

Oh, come off it. Dallas Brady said. I've known for a week. I haven't hollered copper have I?
The name is Valentine.

You want to prove it? You want I should call the cops? Dallas reached out and picked up the phone.

"For God's sake, Dallas!" Vandaleur leaped up and struggled to take the phone from her. She fended him off, laughing at him until he collapsed and wept in shame and helplessness.

"How did you find out?" he asked at last.

The papers are full of it. And Valentine was a little too close to Vandaleur. That wasn't very smart, was it?

"I guess not. I'm not very smart."

"Your android's got quite a record hasn't it? Assault! Arson! Destruction! What happened on Paragon?"

"It kidnapped a child. Took her into the rice fields and murdered her."

"Raped her?"

"I don't know."

"They're going to catch up with you."

"Don't I know it? Christ! We've been running for two years now. Seven planets in two years. I must have abandoned fifty thousand dollars worth of property in two years."

"You better find out what's wrong with it."

"How can I? Can I walk into a repair clinic and ask for an overhaul? What am I going to say? My android's just turned killer. Fix it. They'd call the police right off." I began to shake. "They'd have that android dismantled inside one day I'd probably be booked as accessory to murder."

"Why didn't you have it repaired before it got to murder?"

"I couldn't take the chance." Vandaleur explained angrily. "If they started tooling around with lobotomies and body chemistry and endocrine surgery they might have destroyed its aptitudes. What is that I have left to hire out? How would I live?"

"You could work yourself. People do."

"Work for what? You know I'm good for nothing. How could I compete with specialist androids and robots? Who can unless he's got a terrific talent for a particular job?"

"Yeah. That's true."

"I lived off my old man all my life. Damn him! He had to go bust just before he died. Left me the android and that's all. The only way I can get along is living off what it earns."

"You better sell it before the cops catch up with you. You can live off fifty grand. Invest it."

"At three per cent? Fifteen hundred a year? When the android returns fifteen per cent on its value? Eight thousand a year. That's what it earns. No Dallas I've got to go along with it."

"What are you going to do about its violence kick?"

"I can't do anything except watch it and pray. What are you going to do about it?"

"Nothing. It's none of my business. Only one thing I ought to get something for keeping my mouth shut."

"What?"

"The android works for me for free. Let somebody else pay you, but I get it for free."

The multiple aptitude android worked Vandaleur collected its fees. Its expenses were taken care of. Its savings began to mount. As the warm spring of Megaster V turned to hot summer, I began investigating farms and properties. It would be possible within a year for us to settle down permanently provided Dallas Brady's demands did not become rapacious.

On the first hot day of summer the android began singing in Dallas Brady's workshop. It hovered over the electric furnace which, along with the weather, was broiling the shop and sang an ancient tune that had been popular half a century before.

Oh, it's no feat to beat the heat
All rest! All rest!
So yet you seat
Be fleet be fleet
Cool and discreet
Honey

It sang in a strange, halting voice and its accomplished fingers were clapped behind its back, humming a strange rumba all their own. Dallas Brady was surprised.

"You happy or something, she asked."

"I must remind you that the pleasure-pain syndrome is not incorporated in the android synthesis, I answered. "All rest! All rest! Be fleet be fleet cool and discreet, honey."

Its fingers stopped their whirring and picked up a heavy pair of iron tongs. The android poked them into the glowing heart of the furnace, leaning far forward to peer into the lovely heat.

"Be careful you damned fool!" Dallas Brady exclaimed. "You want to fall in?"

I must remind you that I am worth fifty-seven thousand dollars on the current exchange. I said. "It is forbidden to endanger valuable property. All rest! All rest!

It withdrew a crucible of glowing gold from the electric furnace turned capered hideously, sang crazily and splashed a sluggish goblet of molten gold over Dallas Brady's head. She screamed and collapsed her hair and clothes, lighting her face cracking. The android poured again while it capered and sang.

"Be fleet be fleet cool and discreet honey."

It sang and slowly poured and poured the molten gold. Then I left the workshop and rejoined James Vandaleur in his hotel suite. The android's charted clothes and squirming fingers warned its owner that something was very much wrong.

Vandaleur rushed to Dallas Brady's workshop started once warmed and died. I had enough time to pack one bag and raise nine hundred dollars on portable assets. He took a third class cabin on the Megaster.

Quick, we'll hide in this cave. Luckily man's emerging intelligence is more than a match for these dim-witted dinosaurs.
Queen which left that morning for Lyra Alpha. He took me with him. He went and counted his money and I beat the android again.

And the thermometer in Dallas Brady's workshop registered 98.1° beautifully Fahrenheit.

On Lyra Alpha we held up in a small hotel near the university. There Vandaleur carefully bruised my forehead until the letters MA were obliterated by the swelling and discoloration. The letters would reappear but not for several months, and in the meantime Vandaleur hoped the fur and cry for an MA android would be forgotten. The android was hired out as a common laborer in the university power plant. Vandaleur, as James Valentine, eked out life on the android's small earnings.

I wasn't too unhappy. Most of the other residents in the hotel were university students equally hard-up but delightfully young and enthusiastic. There was one charming girl with sharp eyes and a quick mind. Her name was Wanda, and she and her beau, Ted Stark, took a tremendous interest in the killing android which was being mentioned in every paper in the galaxy.

"We've been studying the case," she and Jed said at one of the casual student parties which happened to be held that night in Vandaleur's room. We think we know what's causing it. We're going to do a paper. They were in a high state of excitement.

"Causing what? somebody wanted to know.

"The android rampage."

"Obviously out of adjustment isn't it? Body chemistry gone haywire. Maybe a kind of synthetic cancer yes?"

"No. Wanda gave Jed a look of suppressed triumph.

"Well what is it?"

"Something specific?"

"What?"

"That would be telling."

"Oh, come on."

"Nothing doing."

"Won't you tell us?" I asked intently. "We're very much interested in what could go wrong with an android."

"No. Mr. Venice. Wanda said "It's a unique idea and we've got to protect it. One thesis like this and we'll be set up for life. We can't take the chance of somebody stealing it."

"Can't you give us a hint?"

"No. Not a hint. Don't say a word. Jed. But I'll tell you this much: Mr. Venice told me to be the man who owns that android."

"You mean the police?"

"I mean projection. Mr. VeniceProjection. That's the danger and I won't say any more. I've said too much as it is."

"I heard steps outside and a hoarse voice singing softly.

"Be fleet be fleet, cool and discreet.

"Well, my android entered the room, home from its tour of duty at the university power plant. It was not introduced. I motioned to it and it immediately responded to the command and went to the beer keg and took over Vandaleur's job of serving the guests. Its accomplished fingers whirled in a private rhumba of their own. Gradually they stopped their squirming and the strange humming ended.

"Androids are not unusual at the university. The wealthy students owned them along with cars and planes. Vandaleur's android provoked no comment. But young Wanda was sharp-eyed and quick-witted. She noted my bruised forehead and she was intent on the history making thesis she and Jed Stark were going to write. After the party broke up, she consulted with Jed walking upstairs to her room.

"Jed, why'd that android have a bruised forehead?"

"Probably hurt itself. Wanda. It's working in the power plant. They fill a lot of heavy stuff around."

"That's all?"

"What else?"

"It could be a convenient bruise."

"Convenient for what?"

"Hiding what's stamped on its forehead."

"No point to that. Wanda. You don't have to see marks on a forehead to recognize an android. You don't have to see a trademark on a car to know it's a car."

"I don't mean it's trying to pass as a human. I mean it's trying to pass as a lower grade android."

"Why?"

"Suppose it had MA on its forehead."

"Multiple aptitude? Then why in hell would Venice waste it stoking furnaces if it could earn more—Oh! Oh! You mean it's—?"

Wanda nodded.

"Jesus!" Stark pursed his lips, "What do we do? Call the police?"

"No. We don't know if it's an MA for a fact. If it turns out to be an MA and the killing android, our paper comes first anyway. This is our big chance. Jed. If it's that android we can run a series of controlled tests and—"

"How do we find out for sure?"

"Easy. Infrared film. That'll show what's under the bruise. Borrow a camera. Buy some film. We'll sneak down to the power plant tomorrow afternoon and take some pictures. Then we'll know."

They stole down into the university power plant the following afternoon. It was a vast cellar deep under the earth. It was dark shadowy luminous with burning light from the furnace doors. Above the roar of the tires they could hear a strange voice shouting and chanting in the echoing vault. "All reet! All reet! So peet your seat. Be fleet be fleet, cool and discreet."

And they could see a capering figure dancing a lunatic rhumba in time to the music it shouted. The legs twisted. The arms waved. The fingers writhed.

Jed Stark raised the camera and began
saw. "I'll take it from him." Vandaleur repeated. "By force? Do you understand? We're desperate."

"It is contrary to my prime directive!"

Vandaleur rushed to Dallas Brady's workshop, stared once, vomited and flied. I had enough time to pack one bag and raise nine hundred dollars on portable assets.

I cannot endanger life or property. The order cannot be obeyed."

"For God's sake!" Vandaleur burst out. "You've attacked, destroyed, murdered! Don't gibe about prime directives! You haven't any left! Get his money! Kill him! If you have to! I tell you, we're desperate!"

"It is contrary to my prime directive!" the android repeated. "The order cannot be obeyed."

I thrust the android back and leaped out at the stranger. He was tall, austere, competent. He had an air of hopes curbed by cynicism. He carried a cane. I saw he was blind.

"Yes?" he said. "I hear you near me. What is it?"

"Sir," Vandaleur hesitated. "I'm desperate."

"We are all desperate," the stranger replied. "Quietly desperate."

"Sir, I've got to have some money. Are you begging or stealing? The sightless eyes passed over Vandaleur and the android."

"I'm prepared for either."

"Ah! So are we all. It is the history of our race. The stranger motioned over his shoulder. "I have been begging at St. Paul's, my friend. What I desire cannot be stolen. What is it you desire that you are so lucky enough to be able to steal?"

"Money. Vandaleur said.

"Money for what? Come, my friend, let us exchange confidences. I will tell you why I beg. If you will tell me why you steal."

"My name is Volc."

"I was not begging for sight. At St. Paul's, Mr. Volc. I was begging for a number."

"Ah yes! Numbers rational and irrational. Numbers imaginary. Positive integers. Negative integers. Fractions. Positive and negative. Eh? You have never heard of Blenheim's immortal treatise on Twenty Zeros, or The Differences in Absence of Quantity? Blenheim smiled bitterly. "I am a wizard of the Theory of Number Mr. Volc, and I have exhausted the charm of number for myself." After fifty years of wizardry, senility approaches and the appetite vanishes. I have been praying in St. Paul's for inspiration. Dear God! I prayed if you exist, send me a number."

Vandaleur slowly lifted the cardboard portfolio and touched Blenheim's hand with it. "In here," he said, "is a number. A hidden number. A secret number. The number of the crime. Shall we exchange their number against a number?"

"Neither begging nor stealing, eh?" Blenheim said. "But a bargain. So all life reduces to the balance. The sightless eyes again passed over Vandaleur and the android. "Perhaps the All-Mighty is not God but a merchant. Come home with me."

On the top floor of Blenheim's house we shared a room — two beds, two closets, two washstands, one bathroom. Vandaleur brushed my forehead again and sent me out to find work, and while the android worked.

I consulted with Blenheim and read him the papers from the portfolio, one by one. All right! All rest!

Vandaleur told me so much and no more. He was a student. I said, attempting a jibe on the murdering android. In these papers which he had collected were the facts which would explain the crimes of which Blenheim had heard nothing. More must be a correlation — a number a statistic, something which would account for my elimination. I explained and Blenheim was piped by the mystery, the detective story, the human interest of number.

We examined the papers. As I read them aloud, he listed them and their contents in his blind, meticulous writing. And then I read his notes to him. He listed the papers by type: by typeface, by fact, by fancy, by article spelling, words theme advertising pictures subject politics prejudices. He analyzed. He studied. He meditated. And we lived together on that top floor always a little cold: always a little terrified, always a little closer brought together by our fear of it, our hatred between us. Like a wedge driven into a living tree and splitting the
Vandaleur knew he hesitated. "I think I've found it," he said, "but I can't understand it."

Vandaleur's heart leaped. "Here are the correlations," Blenheim continued. "In fifty papers there are accounts of the criminal android. What is there, outside the deprivations that are also in fifty papers?"

"I don't know Mr. Blenheim," Vandaleur exclaimed. "It was cool on Lyra Alpha. We have no record of any crime committed on Lyra Alpha. There is no paper." "No, that's right — Vandaleur was confused. Suddenly he exclaimed, "No. You're right. The furnace room. It was hot there. Hot! Of course! My God, yes! That's the answer! Dallas Brady's electric furnace. The notes delists on Paragon. So you're sure? Yes, But why? Why? My God, why?"

I came into the house at that moment, and passing the study saw Vandaleur and Blenheim. I entered, awaiting command. My multiple aptitudes devoted to service. That's the android eh?" Blenheim said after a long moment. "Yes," Vandaleur answered, still confused by the discovery. "And that explains why you refused to attack you right on the Strand. It wasn't hot enough to break the prime directive. Only in the heat... The heat, all right! He looked at the android. A lunatic command passed from man to android. Refused it is forbidden to endanger life Vandaleur gestured furiously then seized Blenheim's shoulders and yanked him back out of his chair. Blenheim shouted once. Vandaleur leaped on him like a tiger pouncing the floor to seal his mouth with one hand. Find a weapon, he called to the android. "It is forbidden to endanger life. This is a fight for self-preservation. Bring me a weapon!" He held the squirming mathematician with all his weight. I went at once to a cupboard where I knew a revolver was kept. I checked it. It was loaded with five cartridges. I handed it to Vandaleur. I took it, rammed the barrel against Blenheim's head and pulled the trigger. He shuddered once. We had three hours before the clock returned from her day off. We locked the house. We took Blenheim's money and jewels. We packed a bag with clothes. We took Blenheim's notes, destroyed the newspapers, and we left, carefully locking the door behind us. In Blenheim's study we left a pile of crumpled papers under a half inch of burning candle. And we soaked the rug around it with kerosene. No. I did all that. The android refused. I am forbidden to endanger life of property... All right!

They took the tube to Leicester Square. Changed trains and rode to the British Museum. There they got off and went to a small Georgian house just off Russell Square. A shingle, in the window read: NANN WEBB PSYCHOMETRIC CONSULTANT. Vandaleur had made a note of the address some weeks earlier. They went into the house. The android waited in the foyer with the bag. Vandaleur entered Nan Webb's office. She was a tall woman with grey shingled hair very fine English complexion and very bad English legs. Her features were blunt her expression acute. She nodded to Vandaleur, finished a letter sealed it and looked up. "My name," she said, "is Vandebit. James Vandebit."

On the first hot day of summer, the android began singing in a strange, halting voice, and its accomplished fingers were behind its back, writing in a strange rhumba all their own.

I'm an exchange student at London University.

I've been researching on the killing android and I think I've discovered something very interesting. I'd like your advice on it. What is your fee?

What is your college at the University?

There is a discount for students at Merton College.

That will be two pounds, please. Vandaleur placed two pounds on the desk and added to the fee Blenheim's notes. There is a correlation, he said, between the crimes committed by the android and the weather. You will note that each crime was committed when the temperature rose above ninety degrees Fahrenheit. Is there a psychometric answer for this?"

"Yes," Vandebit nodded. studied the notes for a moment, put down the sheets of paper and said, "Synesthesia obviously.

What?"

"Synesthesia, he repeated. When a sensation is interpreted immediately in terms of a sensation from a different sense organ from the one stimulated, it is called synesthesia. For example, a sound stimulus gives rise to a sensation of taste. Or a light stimulus gives rise to a sensation of sound. There can be confusion by short circuiting of any sensation of taste smell, pain, pressure, temperature and so on. Do you understand?"

I think so.

Your research has uncovered the fact that the android most probably reacts to temperature stimulus above the sixty degree level synthetically. Most probably there is an endomorph response. Probably a temperature linkage with the android adrenal surrogates. High temperature brings about the response of fear anger excitement and violent physical activity throughout the province of the adrenal gland. "Yes. I see. Then if the android were to be kept in cold climates there would be no stimulus nor response. There would be no crimes. Quote: 'I see. What is projection?'

How do you mean?"

Is there any danger of projection with regard to the owner of the android?

Very interesting. Projection is a throwing forward. It is the process of throwing out upon another the ideas of impulses that belong to oneself. The paranoid, for example, projects upon others, his conflicts and disturbances in order to externalize them. He accuses directly or by implication other men of having the very sickness with which he is struggling himself.

And the danger of projection?"

"It is the danger of believing what is implied. If you live with a psychopath who projects his sickness upon you, there is a danger of falling into his psychotic pattern and becoming virtually psychopathic yourself. As no doubt is happening to you. Mr. Vandaleur."

Vandaleur leaped to his feet. You are an ass... Nan Webb went on crispily. She waved the sheets of notes. This is no exchange student's writing. It's the unique curse of the famous Blenheim. Every scholar in England knows his blind writing. There is no Merton College at London University. That was a miserable gag. Merton is one of the Oxford colleges. And you, Mr. Vandaleur are so obviously infected by association with your deformed android — by projection, if you will. That I hesitate between calling the Metropolitan Police and the Hospital for the Criminally Insane."

I took the gun and shot her feet.

"Antares II, Alpha Aurigae. Acrux IV Polux IX Rigel Centaurus. Vandaleur said. "They are, cold. Cold as a witch's kiss. Mean temperature of forty degrees Fahrenheit. Never get hotter than seventy. We're in business again. Watch that curve."

The multiple aptitude android swung the wheel with his accomplished hands. The car took the curve swiftly and sped on through the northern marshes. The reeds
stretcheding for miles, brown and dry under the cold English sky. The sun was sinking swiftly. Overseas, a lone flight of bustards flapped clumsily eastward. High above the flight, a lone helicopter drifted towards home and warmth.

No more warmth for us,” I said. “No more heat. We’re safe when we’re cold. We’ll hole up in Scotland, make a little money, get across to Norway, build a bankroll and then slip out. We’ll settle on Pollux. We’re safe. We’ve licked it. We can live age.

There was a startling bleep from over head and then a ragged roar. “ATTENTION JAMES VANDELAUR AND ANDROID. ATTENTION JAMES VANDELAUR AND ANDROID!”

Vandaleur started and looked up. The lone helicopter was floating above them From its belly came amplified commands.

YOU ARE SURROUNDED. THE ROAD IS BLOCKED. YOU ARE TO STOP YOUR CAR AT ONCE AND SUBMIT TO ARREST. STOP AT ONCE.”


The helicopter dropped lower. ATTN- TION ANDROID. YOU ARE IN CONTROL OF THE VEHICLE. YOU ARE TO STOP AT ONCE. THIS IS A STATE DIRECTIVE SUPERSEDING ALL PRIVATE COMMANDS.

What the hell are you doing? I shouted. A state directive supersedes all private commands—the android answered. I must point out to you that—

“Get the hell away from the wheel!” Vandaleur ordered. I clutched the android—yanked him sideways and squirmed over him to the wheel. The car veered off the road in that moment and went churning through the frozen mud and dry reeds. Vandaleur regained control and continued westward through the marshes towards a parallel highway five miles distant.

We’ll beat their God damned block he grunted.

The car pounded and surged. The helicopter dropped even lower. A searchlight blazed from the belly of the plane.

ATTENTION JAMES VANDELAUR AND ANDROID. SUBMIT TO ARREST. THIS IS A STATE DIRECTIVE SUPERSEDING ALL PRIVATE COMMANDS.

He can’t submit, Vandaleur shouted wildly. There is no one to submit to. He can’t and I won’t.

“Christ!” I muttered. “We’ll beat them yet. We’ll beat the block. We’ll beat the heat. We’ll—

“I must point out to you,” I said, “that I am required by my prime directive to obey state directives. If you disagree, they must submit to arrest.”

Who says it’s a state directive?” Vandaleur said. “Them? Up in that plane? They’ve got to show credentials. They’ve got to prove it’s state authority before you submit. How do you know they’re not crooks trying to trick us?”

Holding the wheel with one arm, he reached into his side pocket to make sure the gun was still in place. The car skidded. The tires squealed on frost and reeds. The wheel was wrenched from his grasp and the car yawed up a small hillock and overturned. The motor roared and the wheels screamed. Vandaleur crawled out and dragged the android with him. For the moment we were outside the circle of light bore down from the helicopter. We blundered off into the marsh into the blackness, into concealment. Vandaleur running with a pounding heart, hauling the android along.

The helicopter circled and soared over the wrecked car searchlight peering, loudspeaker braying. On the highway we had left, lights appeared as the pursuing and blocking parties gathered and followed radio directions from the plane. Vandaleur and the android continued deeper and deeper into the marsh, working their way towards the parallel road and safety. It was night by now. The sky was a black mist. Not a star showed. The temperature was dropping. A southeaster wind knifed us to the bone.

Far behind there was a dull concussion.

Vandaleur turned, gasping. The car’s fuel had exploded. A geyser of flame shot up like a lurid fountain. It subsided into a low crater of burning reeds. Whipped by the wind, the distant flame flamed up into a wall of fire. The wall began marching down on us, crackling fiercely. Above it, a pall of oily smoke surged forward. Behind it Vandaleur could make out the figures of men—a mass of beaters searching the marsh.

Christ! I cried and searched desperately for safety. He ran dragging me with him until their feet crashed through the surface ice of a pool. He tramped the ice furiously then flung himself down into the numbing water pulling the android with us.

The wall of flame approached. I could hear the crackle and feel the heat. He could see the searchers clearly. Vandaleur reached into his side pocket for the gun. The pocket was torn. The gun was gone. He groaned and shook with cold and terror. The light from the marsh fire was blinding. Oversea, the helicopter floated helplessly to one side. Unable to fly through the smoke and flames and aid the searchers who were beating fur to the right of us.

“They’ll miss us,” Vandaleur whispered. “Keep quiet. That’s an order. They’ll miss us. We’ll beat the fire. We’ll—

Three distinct shots sounded less than a hundred feet from the fugitives. “Blam! Blam! Blam!” They came from the last three cartridges in my gun as the marsh fire reached it, where it had dropped, and exploded the shells. The searchers turned towards the sound and began working directly toward us. Vandaleur cursed hysterically and tried to submerge even deeper to escape the intolerable heat of the fire. The android began to twitch.

The wall of flame surged up to them. Vandaleur took a deep breath and prepared to submerge until the fire passed over them. The android shuddered and burst into an ear-splitting scream. “All right! All right!” It shouted. “Be fleet be fleet.”

“Damn you!” I shouted. “I tried to drown it! Damn you!” I cursed him. I smashed his face.

The android battered Vandaleur, who fought it off until it exploded out of the mud and staggered upright. Before I could return to the attack, the live flames captured it hypnotically. It danced and capered in a lunatic rhumba before the wall of fire. Its legs twisted. Its arms waved. The fingers withered in a private rhumba all their own. It shrieked.

It danced and capered in a lunatic rhumba before the wall of fire. Its legs twisted. Its arms waved. The fingers withered in a private rhumba all their own. It shrieked.

Vandaleur didn’t die. He got away. They missed him while they watched the android caper and die. But I don’t know which of us he is these days. Projection Wanda warned me Projection Nan Webb told him if you live with a crazy man or a crazy machine long enough you become crazy too. Reet!

But we know one truth. We know they are wrong. The new robot and Vandaleur know that because the new robot’s started twitching too. Reet! Here on cold Pollux the robot is twitching and singing. No heat but my fingers wither. No heat but it’s taken the little Teally girl off for a solitary walk. A cheap labor robot. A servo mechanism all I could afford. But it’s twitching and humming and walking alone with the child somewhere. I can’t find them. Christ! Vandaleur can’t find me before it’s too late. Cool and discreet honey in the dancing frost while the thermometer registers 10 Fahrenheit.
MY LADY OF THE PSYCHIATRIC SORROWS

BY BRIAN W ALDISS

Goddard worked with the northern reindeer herds all that long winter. With the other skin-clad men he followed the migratory pattern of the animals in their search for lichens through snow or stime. He slept by doggy fires under pines or under the stars. His whole life was encompassed by the sad guilts in reindeer eyes, by clouds of reindeer breath hanging in the crisp air. The herd consisted of some hundred thousand beasts. They moved in good mild order, with their attendant pest-army of mosquitoes and bloodsucking flies. Their antlers appeared like a moving forest.

For Goddard, it was a Pleistocene way of life. But when spring came he was paid off and began to walk south, back to Scally and the children, with his dog Gripp at his side. He walked for sixteen days steadily. The climate grew warmer. The steaks in his pack began to stink, but still he ate them. Every now and then, he came to villages or mills, always he avoided them. At last he was among the vales of the Gray Horse. He walked through spruce forests where the beech, birch, and hazel bushes were putting forth green leaves. Through the trees standing by the old highway was his home. His father was working in the garden. Goddard called to him, and the guard dogs Chase and Setter started furious barking.

"How are the children?" Goddard asked his father embracing the old man. His father was still upright, though the winter months seemed to have shrunk him.

PAINTING BY ABDUL MATI KLAWEIN
Come and see. They aren't half growing big!

"You've made out?"

Fine Tom. And I've not heard of a case of plague all winter.

"Good"

It'll mean that people will be coming back. As they spoke, they walked together close to the rear of the house where the windmill stood on the rise above their small stream. Gripp was kept to Goddard's heel.

The children were there—Derek wading in the stream. June kneeling on the bank. Both were picking reeds. They dropped them and ran with ones of delight into their father's embrace. He rolled on the ground with them all three of them laughing and crying.

"You don't half smell animal. Dad!"

"I've been an animal. I'm was proud of them both. So big and strong. Neither older than seven. Their eyes clear, their glance candid—as their mother's once had been.

Goddard roasted one of the rolling steaks and they all ate, throwing gnats and bone to the dogs. After Goddard slept in a downstairs room. He woke once. The sun had gone. His father and the children were in the other room wearing hurdles from with to fix by the light of two candles. They called to him affectionately, but when he had warmed outside, he staggered back to his cot and slept again.

In the morning they swam over him once more. He kissed and hugged them and they screamed at his rough lips and beard.

"It's a holiday today. What shall we do?"

Go and see Mother of course. Let's feed the animals first.

The goat, the two sows, the chickens, the rabbits were fed. Leaving the dogs on guard. They all set out along the vale to see Mother. The children stretched up sticks from ditches, leaning heavily on them and saying in their clear voices: "Now we are old children. Their laughter seemed to settle about Goddard's heart.

A strumious sun broke through the mist. Where the track turned, they saw the bulk of the planetoid ahead, and the children set up a raucous cheer.

Goddard said to his father turning from that shadow shrouded form: "I don't reckon I could bear life without the kids and all their happiness. I dread when they'll turn into adults and go their way."

"It'll be different then. Don't look ahead."

The old man turned his head away sorrowfully.

"They seem to have a purpose over and above keeping alive—just like the reindeer."

His father had no answer.

The planetoid was so immense that it blocked the valley. It had created its own ecoclimaie. On this side the northern side dark hard bushes had grown at its base. The children fell silent as they walked. The amazing jumbled maze which had once been a city a world was no longer lit, except by daylight filtering in through the ruined hull. They walked not on floors and roads but on sides of tunnels and walls of corridors. The stress of impact had caused fractures and crazy distortions of the structure. Defunct lights and signs sprouted undercover. Doorways had become hatches leading to city walls. Once busy intersections produced shafts leading up into nothingness. Dummies stared down at them from overhead tanks which had been shop windows. They tramped across the hither inaccessible, where stairways had become abstract bas-reliefs.

"It's cold. I shouldn't like to live here."

June said. Not unless I was a polar bear.

They walked through a riverlet. Cracked and broken. The planetoid lay open to the elements. The rains of autumn the snows of winter all blew in among Fragrance's complex structures. Turning yesterday's apartments into today's reservoirs. Slowly the water leaked downward through the overturned city draining at last into native ground. Plants and fungi were getting a grasp on ruined precincts. Small animals had taken over the defunct sewage system. Sparrows and starlings built their nests in what had once been an underground railway several thousand miles above Earth. After the birds came smaller lifeforms. Flies and spiders and wasps and beetles and moths changed worked at everything. What had been impregnable to the rigor of space fell to the author's of a mild spring.

Dad. Why does Mother want to live here?" Derek asked.

"She liked the old timer. She couldn't take to the new."

Goddard never forgot the way to the spot where Scally had settled. In she had indulged her sybaritic tastes and ensconced herself in what had been Fragrance's chief hotel. The Astral. Goddard had found only one way of entering the hotel. Which had stood in a block of its own, and that was by way of a metal ladder which an early looter had propped up against a fire exit over head. Goddard leading the four of them climbed the ladder and worked their way into the foyer whose elaborate reception area was now projected from one wall. Loose debris had provided the wall on which they stood with a carpet.

Scally had been one of herself into the old bar. They climbed up a pile of tumbled desks, calling her name through the shattered doors.

He remembered the dirty tobilike smell of her hair. The smell of dead hope. He told himself.

In her first year here Goddard had come up often from the Vale of the Gray Horse—for sex to love or for pity. Scally had not wanted the outside world, and had slowly almost against her own will rejected him as a symbol of it. He had helped her make herself comfortable here. So she lived in aspic in dowdy magnificence, the great cracked mirrors of her ceiling reflecting every torrid move she made.
As her husband and children appeared she rose from a chair. Instead of coming toward them she retreated to the far wall. She was tall and soft the last few indoor years had turned her all gray. As she smiled at them, a long pallid hand crept up to cover her lips.

"Mother! Look! Dad's back from the North!" Derek said running over and clutching her making her bend over and kiss him and June. He's been with..." She laughed bitterly.

"You're getting so big and rough." Scally said letting go of them and backing away until she could lean against a piano in a self-conscious attitude.

Conscious of his coarse skinned face Goddard went over and took her in his arms. She was thinner and drier than previously while all around her compartments bulged with the rich damp of decay. Her expression as she searched his face wounded her.

"It's spring again Scally," he said. "Come out with us. Come home. We'll fix the roof! Dad and I, and get one of the upstairs rooms done specially for you."

"This is my place," she said. "The children need you. But the children had lost interest in mother and were..."

The children needed you. But the children had lost interest in mother and were..."

They had found two roads to walk with June was laughing and saying, "Now we're a couple of old children again!"

"I'm a hundred years old!"

"I'm a thousand, and sixty hundred years old."

"I'm even older than Mum!"

Goddard's father was embarrassed. He looked about and eventually left the room to follow the children.

He hates me! Scally said, pointing at the closing door.

"No he doesn't! He just doesn't have anything to say. He hates this prison."

"He thinks I should come back and look after you and the children."

"Why don't you? We need you! You could take some of this furniture."

"Huh! I'd only be a liability to you!"

Scally you're my wife, I'd gladly have you back. This place is no good! Why do you stay here?"

She looked away waved a hand in dismissal. "You ask such foolish questions."

And angry he gripped her wrist. Come on then we take the trouble to come and see you! Tell me why you want to live in this muddy run, come on—tell me!"

Through the dimly lit room a glow crept into her features. "Because I can't take reality the way you can! You're so stupidly insensitive you don't mind the beastly pig-reality of the present! But some of us live by myth; by legend. Just as the children do until you turn them out of it and make them grow up before their time..."

He said softly, "You only came here because you thought you'd be a lot more comfortable. It's nothing to do with myth..."

While I'm here. I'm in the remains of an age when men lived by their myths, when they created machines and looked outward when they didn't walk in every muddy season and grovel on the ground as you do! This room once sailed among the stars—and all you can imagine is that I'm after comfort..."

Resentment's kind. I know it's kind of uncomfortable back at home. But honest if you can face up to it life's better than it used to be in the old days. It's more real. Less of all that waffle—all those things we didn't really need...

She folded her arms. No longer looking as faded as she had five minutes earlier. You were born to be a farmer Tom to walk behind cattle and reind round things through their droppings. Of course you're not, the death of the consumer society. But that wasn't all we had, was it? Remember the other things the Catastrophe killed off? The hope that we, were moving toward a better world. The feeling that man...

You get your sick notions from. Throw it away and come into the light of day. The plague has gone and things'll be bette..."

The children were screaming with delight outside.

"Today or yesterday I was reading about the scientific basis for the legend of the Golden Fleece." Scally told Goddard. "Did you ever hear of the Greek legend of the Golden Fleece, and how Jason and the Argonauts went in search of it? The story has always related to the Black Sea area. When this book was published researchers had analyzed pieces of cloth from the tomb of an old king of that area, Tumulus I who lived in the Fifth Century B.C. That was the period of Jason and his crew. Do you know what the researchers found?"

"No," He tried to escape from the conversation but she went on remorselessly although the children had come back hooting into the room.

They found that the cloth from the tomb was composed of extremely fine fibers with mean diameters of—"I forget the exact measurements—about sixteen micrometers, I believe. They're the earliest appearance of fine woolen sheep by several centuries. So you see that all that golden legend was generated by Jason and his crew going in search of more comfortable underwear."

She laughed.

The children had kicked sticks around their heads with old fabric.

"Look, Dad! Mother! We're re..."

"We're going to head north and we'll never let anyone into our garden!"

Puzzled by her story Goddard said to her over the racket. "Don't understand you properly. Whatever happened to those Argonauts can't affect us, can it?"

She looked at him wearily with her eyelids lowered. "Take these young reindeer away, she said. One day soon their myths will break down. Don't you see, there's a prosaic reality to every legend, and people like you belong in a prosaic reality..."

"Never beat you!"

"Have you got remarkably thick in the head is that meant to be funny?"

"You're sick! Scally really you are. Come away and let me look after you!"

"Never say that again! You put it if you didn't believe that I was sick! Can't you see that I might come with you willingly?"

Goddard scratched his head. "Since you can always get the better of me in words, I can't think why you're afraid to come with me. Then he turned away.

The next day was mild and springlike. Goddard stripped to the waist and began to plant row after row of seed potatoes which his father had carefully chiseled throughout the winter. The two children played on the other side of the stream building little planetoids in every bush and pretending that Gripp was a monster from outer space..."
OMNI ENCORE PART TWO
Love. Hate. Jealousy. Fear. Familiar themes, yes, but endlessly fascinating and treated here with striking originality. For example, in John Keefauver's eerie tale, "Giant on the Beach," a smug bigot has unknowingly predicted the weird circumstances that lead to his own ghastly death. The prophecy lurks in one of his oft-repeated racial slurs.

The undying love of a widow for her late husband motivates the plot in Spider Robinson's "Soul Search." Exceedingly wealthy and fanatic in her unholy purpose, she enlists the aid of a trusted employee and some super technology to reincarnate her dearly departed in his cryogenically preserved body. The prospect of murdering certain innocent children in the process doesn't stop her. What does defeat her is the trusted employee's fervid love for her. In fact it kills her. Robinson achieves a neat stroke of irony in his denouement, a literary pun, really, on the maxim that love conquers all.

In "The President's Image" Stephen Robinett reveals that, since the 1992 election, things at the White House have been run by a computer-controlled holographic image of the President of the United States. Due to his dread of being assassinated, the flesh-and-blood President has been hiding out in Tahiti. But the holograph has done such a fine job at the nation's helm that it is a shoo-in for reelection in the forthcoming 1996 campaign. A crisis arises when the holograph chooses not to run and its corporeal counterpart in the South Seas must face up to his fears.

Whereas Robinett has written gentle satire, John Morressy has resorted to uproarious lampoonery in his story, "The Last Jerry Fagin Show." His plump target is the television industry in general and TV talk-shows in particular. Morressy's amusing tale is about a disarmingly naive extraterrestrial who learns to its delight that indeed there is no business on earth like show-business.
Just as Harold began his new life, the stranger appeared.

OUT OF LUCK
BY WALTER TREVIS

It was only three months after he had left his wife and children and moved in with Janet that Janet decided she had to go to Washington for a week. Harold was devastated. He had not told her about it. The reason between them was that he had left Gwen so he could grow up, change his life, and learn to paint again. But all he was certain of was that he had left Gwen to have Janet as his mistress. There were other reasons: his recovery from alcoholism, the years he had wasted his talent as an art professor, and Gwen's refusal to move to New York with him. But none of these would have been sufficient to upset him and cause him to take a year's leave from his job if Janet had not worn peach-colored bikini panties that stretched tightly across her lovely bottom.

He spent the morning after she left cleaning up the kitchen and washing the big pot with burnt zucchini in it. Janet had made him three quarts of zucchini soup before leaving on the shuttle along with two cases of chutney, veal stew in a blue casserole dish, and two loaves of Irish soda bread. It
was very international. The mess in the tiny kitchen of her apartment took him two hours to clean up. Then he cooked himself a breakfast of scrambled eggs and last night's mashed potatoes fried with onions. He drank two cups of coffee from Janet's Chemex. Drinking the coffee he walked several times into the living room where his easel stood and looked at the quarter done painting. Each time he looked at it his heart sank. He did not want to finish the painting—not that painting, that dumb academic abstraction. But there was no other painting for him to paint right now. What he wanted was Janet.

Janet was a very successful folkart dealer. They had met at a museum party. She was in Washington now as a consultant to the National Gallery. She had said to him:

"No, I don't think you should come to Washington with me. We need to be apart from each other for a while. I am beginning to feel suffocated. He had nodded vaguely while his heart sank.

One problem was that he distrusted folk art and Janet's interest in it. The way he distrusted Janet's fondness for her cats. Janet talked to her cats a lot. He was neutral about cats themselves but he felt people who talked to them were trivial. And being interested in badly painted nineteenth century portraits also seemed trivial to him now.

He looked at the two cold-framed American primitives above Janet's sofa. Said: Horsehill and drew back his mug in a fantasy of throwing coffee on them both.

Across from the apartment on Sixth thirty Street workmen were renovating an old mansion; they had been at it three months before when Harold moved in. He watched them for a minute now mixing cement in a wheelbarrow and bringing sacks of it from a truck at the corner of Madison Avenue.

Three workmen in white undergarments held spurt discourse on the plywood ramp that had replaced the building's front steps. Behind windows devoid of glass he could see men moving back and forth. But nothing happened nothing seemed to change in the building. It was the same mess it had been before like his own spiritual growth. Lots of noise and movement and no change.

He looked at his watch relieved. It was ten-thirty. That morning was half over and he needed to go to the bank. He put on a light jacket and left.

As he was waiting in a crowd at the Third Avenue light he heard a voice shout Taxi! and a man pushed roughly past him right arm high and waving onto the avenue. The man was about thirty in faded blue jeans and a sleeveless sweater. A taxi squealed to a stop at the corner and the man conferred with the driver for a moment before getting in. He seemed to be quietly arrogant preoccupied with something. Harold had never liked him in the past. He did not like the man's look of confidence. He did not like his sandy uncombed hair. The light changed and the cab took off fast up Third Avenue.

Harold crossed and went into the bank. He went to a table. Quickly wrote out a Cash check for a hundred then walked over toward the line. Halfway across the lobby he stopped cold. The man in the sleeveless sweater was standing in line, holding a checkbook. His lips were pursed in silent whistling. He was wearing the same faded blue jeans and—Harold now noticed—Adidas.

He was looking up in Harold's direction. Harold averted his eyes. There were at least ten other people waiting behind the man. He had to have been here awhile. An identical twin? A mild hallucination making two similar people look exactly alike?

Harold got in line. After a while the man finished his business and left. Harold cashed his check and left, stuffing five twenties into his billfold. Another drain on the seven thousand he had left Michigan with. He had seven thousand to live on for a year in New York with Janet while he learned to paint again to be the self-sufficient artist his whiskey dreams had been filled with. Whiskey had left him unable to answer the telephone or open the door. That had been two years ago in Michigan. Whiskey had left him sitting behind closed suburban blinds at two in the afternoon reading the J. C. Penney catalog and waiting for Gwen to come home from work. Well, he had been free of whiskey for a year and a half now. First the hospital then A.A. Now New York and Janet.

He walked back toward her apartment. Thinking of how his entire bankroll of seven thousand could not pay Janet's rent for three months. And she had taken this big New York place after two years at living in an even larger apartment in Paris. On a marble-topped lingerie chest in one of the bathrooms was a snapshot of her astride a gleaming Honda in the Boulevard des Capucines by the ironwork doorway of that apartment. When that photograph was taken Harold was living in a ranch house in Michigan and driving a Chevrolet.

He glanced down Park Avenue while crossing it and saw a sleeveless sweater and faded jeans from the back. Disappearing into one of the tall apartment buildings. He shuddered.

He glanced down Park Avenue while crossing it and saw a sleeveless sweater and faded jeans from the back. Disappearing into one of the tall apartment buildings. He shuddered and quickened his pace. He shifted his billfold from a rear to a front pocket, picturing those pickpockets who bump you from behind as they're apologizing on the streets of New York. His mother—his very protective mother—had told him about that twenty years before. Part of him loved New York. It loved its action and its anonymity along with the food and clothes and bookstores. Another part of him feared it. The sight of triple locks on apartment doors tended to frighten him or, of surly Puerto Ricans with well-muscled arms carrying their big noisy armpit radios. Their Kill-the-ango radios. The slim-haired black men frightened him as well. Long tasseled trousers in pale colors, half-covering expensive shoes—Italian killer shoes. And there were drunks everywhere in doorways. Poking sturdily through garbage bins for the odd half-eaten pizza slice. The usable worn shirt. Possibly for emeralds and diamonds. Part of him wanted to scrib up a drunk or two, with a Brillo pad like the zucchini pad. Something satisfying in that.

The man in the sweater had been white, clean, nonmenacing. Possibly European. Yet Harold crossing Madison now felt chilled by the thought of him. Under the chill was anger. That spoiled arrogant face! That sneaky hard! He hurried back to Janet's apartment building. Walked briskly up the stairs to the third floor let himself in. There in the living room stood the painting. He suddenly saw that it could use a sort of rectangle of pale green like a distant field of grass. Right there. He picked up a brush and a very happy to do so. Outside the window the sun was shining brightly. The workmen on the building across the street were busy. Harold was busy.

He worked for three solid hours. He finished it. It was good work too. And the painting was coming along. At last.

For lunch he made himself a bacon-and-tomato sandwich on toast. It was simple, midwestern fare and he loved it.

When he had finished eating he went back into the living room sat in the black director's chair in front of the window and watched the painting by afternoon light. It looked good—just a tad spooky the way he wanted it to be. It would be a good painting after all. It was really working. He decided to go see a movie.

The movie he wanted to see was called Out of Luck. It was a comedy from France advertised as a hilarious sex farce with subtitles. It sounded fine for a sunny fall afternoon. He walked down Madison to ward the theater.

There were an awful lot of youthful well-dressed people on Madison Avenue. They all probably spoke French. He looked in the windows of places with names like Le Relais, Le Bagagere, Le Biju. He would have given ten dollars to see a J. C. Penney or a photograph shop with a red-and-white barber's pole.

As he was crossing Park Avenue traffic snarled as usual. There was suddenly the
loud harrumphing of a pair of outrageously noisy motorcycles, and with a rush of hot air, two black Hondas zoomed past him. From the back the riders appeared to be a man and a woman although the sexual difference was hard to detect. Each wore a spherical helmet that reflected the sun. The man’s helmet was red, the other green. Science-fiction helmets, they hurt the eyes with reflected and dazzling sunlight. There was a smell of exhaust. Each of the riders’ man and woman was wearing a brown sleeveless sweater and blue jeans. Each wore Adidas over white socks. Their shirts were short-sleeved blue. So had been the shirts of the man in the taxi and the man in line at Chemical Bank. Harold’s stomach twisted. He wanted to scream.

The cyclists disappeared in traffic darting into it with insolence, lifting their black bikes first this way and then that, as though merely leaning their way through the congestion of taxis and limousines and sanitation trucks.

Maybe it was a bad day. Maybe coincidence. He had never noticed before how many people wore brown sleeveless sweaters. Who counted such things? And everyone wore jeans. He was wearing jeans himself.

The movie was at Fifty-seventh and Third. There was only a scattering of people in the theater since it was the middle of the afternoon. The story was about a woman who was haunted by the gravelly voice of her dead lover—a younger man who had been killed in a motorcycle accident. She was a gorgeous woman and went through a sequence of affairs breaking up with each new lover after the voice of her old dead one pointed out their flaws to her or distracted her while making love. It really was funny. Sometimes though it made Harold edgy when he thought of the young lover Janet had had before him. What had disappeared from her life in some way Harold did not know about. But several times he laughed loudly.

And then toward the end of the movie, her lover reappeared approximately not dead at all. It was on a quiet Paris street. She was out walking with an older man she had just slept with. Going to buy some coffee when a black Honda pulled up to the curb beside her. She stopped. The driver pulled off his helmet. Harold’s heart almost stopped beating and he stared crazily. There in front of him on the Cinemascope movie screen was the huge image of a youngish man with sandy hair, a brown sleeveless sweater, blue shirt. Adidas. The man smiled at the woman. She collapsed in a dead faint.

When the man on the motorcycle spoke his voice was as it had been when it was haunting her. gravelly and bland. Harold wanted to throw something at the screen. wanted to scream at the image. ‘Get out of here. you arrogant lout!’ But he did nothing and said nothing. He stayed in his seat, waiting for the movie to end. It ended with the woman getting on the dead lover’s motorcycle and riding off with him. He wouldn’t tell her where he’d lived nor what he was going to show her.

Harold watched the credits closely wanting to find the actor who had played the old lover. His name in the film had been Paul. But no actor was listed for the name of Paul. The others were there—no, not Paul. What in God’s name is happening? Harold thought. He left the theater and hardly daring to look around himself on the bright street, flagged down a cab and went home. Could a person hallucinate a character into a movie? Was the man at the bank in fact a French movie actor? Twelve years of drinking could mess up your brain chemistry. But he hadn’t even had the D.T.’s. His New York psychiatrist had told him he tended to get badly depressed at times, but his sanity had never been in question.

In the apartment he was somehow able astonishingly to get back into the painting for a few hours. He made a few changes making it spookier. He felt spookier now and it came out onto the canvas. The painting was nearly done. When he stopped it was just eight o’clock in the evening. The workmen across the street had finished their day’s hours before he’d packed up their tools and he’d gone home to Queens or wherever. The building was always unoccupied. Its doorways and windows gaped blankly. There was a pile of rubble by the plywood entry platform where there had always been a pile of rubble.

He went into the kitchen, ignored the stew Janet had made for him and lit the oven. Then he took a Hungry Man chicken pie out of the freezer, ripped off the cardboard box, stabbed the frozen top crust a few times with his Sabatier, slipped it into the oven and set the timer for forty-five minutes.

He went back into the living room. looked again at the painting. Maybe I needed the shit scared out of me, he said aloud. But the thought of the man in the sweater chilled him. Harold winced over to the hatch in the corner and opened its left door and flipped on the little Sony TV inside. Then he walked across the big room to the dry sink and began rummaging for candy. He kept candy in various places.

He found a couple of pieces of butterscotch and began sucking on one of them. Back in the kitchen he opened the oven door a moment, enjoying the feel of hot air. His little Hungry Man pie sat inside, waiting for him.

There had been a man’s voice on television for a minute or so reciting something of disaster news. A California brush fire or something. There in the kitchen Harold began to realize that the voice was familiar. It had a slight French accent. Each had rushed into the living room, still holding a potholder. On the TV screen was the man in the brown sweater saying—From Pasadena, California, for NBC News. Then John Chancellor came on.

Harold threw the potholder at the TV screen. You son of a bitch! he shouted. You ubiquitous son of a bitch! Then he sank into the director’s chair on the edge of tears. His eyes burned.

When his pie was ready he ate it as if it were cardboard forcing himself to eat every bite. To keep his strength up as his mother would have said. For the oncoming storm. For the oncoming storm.

He kept the TV off that evening and did not go out. He finished the painting by artificial light at three in the morning took two Sominex tablets and went to bed. Frightened. He had wanted to call Janet but hadn’t. That would have been chicken. He slept without dreaming for nine hours.

It was noon when he got up from the big platform bed and stumbled into the kitchen for breakfast. He drank a cup of cold zucchini while waiting for the coffee from yesterday to heat up. He felt okay ready for the man in the sweater whenever he might strike. The coffee boiled over spattering the white wall with brown tears. He reached to pull the big Chemex off the burner and scalded himself. Shit! he said and held his burned hand under cold tapwater for half a minute.

He walked into the living room and began looking at the painting in daylight. It was really very good. Just the right feeling, the right arrangement. Sooey. I could see it from the easel. set it against a wall. Then he thought better of that. The cats might get at it. He hadn’t seen the cats for a while. He looked around him. No cats. He put the painting on top of the dry sink out of harm’s way. He would put out some cat food.

From outside came the sound of a motorcycle. Or of two motorcycles. He turned, looked out the window. There was dust where the motorcycles had just been, a light cloud of it settling. On the plywood platform at the entranceway to the building being renovated stood two people in brown sleeveless sweaters blue shirts. jeans. One was holding a clipboard and they were talking. He could not hear their voices even though the window was open. He walked slowly to the window placed his hands on the ledge stared down at them. He stared at the same sandy hair the same
He took the "thing" on the wastebasket walking down Five Avenue. He was too all over the place. He shook his head dazedly. 'Can't get no money out of em Tried em six eight times'. But he got another one of those quarters.

Harold gave him a dollar. 'Get yourself a drink', he said.

The bum widened his eyes and took the money silently. He turned to go.

'Hey!', Harold said, calling him back. 'Have a drink for me, will you? I don't drink myself.' He held out another dollar.

That's the ticket-the bum said, carefully as if addressing a madman. He took the bill quickly then turned toward Fifth Avenue. Hey, he said, 'there's one of em and pointed. The man in the brown sleeveless sweater went by, slugging slowly on his Adidas. The bum jammed his two dollars into a pocket and moved on.

Well the bum had been right. Don't let them interfere with business. But it wasn't hallucination—not unless he had hallucinated the bum and the conversation along with the burn. He checked his billfold and found the two dollars were indeed gone. Where would they have gone if he had made up the bum in his unconscious? He hadn't eaten then! had the game was over anyway and he was really in a straight jacket somewhere. Being fed intravenously while somebody took notes. Well.

He turned at Fifth Avenue toward the spire of the Empire State Building and stepped into the most of the foot traffic was moving toward him and every third or fourth one of them was the person in the brown sweater and blue shirt. It was like an invasion from Mars.

Harold leaned over the bar and took him by the shoulder. The sweater was soft—probably cashmere. 'Where do you come from? What are you doing?'

The man smiled coldly at him. 'I come from the street. I'm waiting for you here.' He pointed to the bar. 'Where are there so many of you?'

There's only one of me—the man said. 'Only one?'

Just one. He waited a moment. I have to wait on that couple. He nodded his head slightly toward the end of the bar. A couple of them had come in, a male and a female as far as Harold could see in the somewhat dim light. Harold let go of the man got up and went to a pay telephone on the wall. He dialed his psychiatrist. The phone rang twice and then a male voice said, 'Doctor Morse is not in the afternoon. May I take a
message? The voice was the gravelly voice Harold hung up. He spun around and faced the bar. The man had just returned from serving drinks to the identical couple at the far end. "What in hell is your name?" he said wildly.

The man smiled. "That's for me to know and for you to find out," he said.

Harold began to cry. "What's your god-damned name?" he said, sobbing. "My name's Harold. For Christ's sake, what's yours?"

Now that he was crying, the man looked sympathetic. He turned for a moment to the mirrored shelves behind him, took two unopened bottles of whiskey, and then set them on the bar in front of Harold. Why don't you just take these, Harold? he said pleasantly. "Take them home with you. It's only a few blocks from here.

"I'm an alcoholic," Harold replied, shocked.

"Who cares?" the man said. He got a bright-orange shopping bag from somewhere under the bar and put the bottles in it. "On the house," he said.

Harold stared at him. "What's your god-damned fucking name?"

"For me to know," the man said softly. "For you to find out.

Harold took the shopping bag, pushed open the door, and went into the lobby. There was no doorman at the big doorway of the hotel, but the man in the sleeveless sweater stood there like a doorman. "Have a good day now. Harold," the man said as Harold went on his way.

Now there was no one else on the street, but the man. Everywhere. And now they all looked at him in recognition, since he had given his name. Their smiles were cool, distant, patronizing. Some nodded at him slightly as he made his way slowly up the avenue toward Sixty-third. Three, some ignored him. Several passed on motorcycles, wearing red helmets. A few waved coolly to him. One slowed his motorcycle down near the curb and said, "Hi, Harold," and then sped off. Harold closed his eyes.

He got home all right, and up the stairs When he walked into the living room, he saw that the cats had knocked his new painting to the floor and had badly smeared a corner of it. Apparently one of them had rolled on it. The cats were nowhere in sight. He had not seen them since Janet had gone.

He did not care about the painting now. Not really. He knew what he was going to do. He could see in his mind the French move man on the motorcycle.

In the closet where she kept her vacuum cleaner Janet also kept a motorcycle helmet. A red one way up on the top shelf, behind some boxes of candles and light bulbs. She had never spoken to him before about motorcycles. He had never asked her about the helmet. He had thought about it since he first noticed it when he was unpacking months before and looking for a place to put his Samsonite suitcase.

He set the bag of bottles on the ledge by the window overlooking the building where men in brown sleeveless sweaters were now working. He opened one bottle with a practiced fingernail steadily. The cork came out with a pop. He took a glass from the sideboard and poured in half full of whiskey. For a moment he stood there motionless, looking down at the building. The work he saw without surprise was getting done. There was glass in the window frames now; there had been none that morning. The plywood ramp had been replaced with marble steps. Abruptly he turned and called, "Kitty! Kitty! Kitty! toward the bedroom. There was silence. Kitty! Kitty! Kitty! he called again. No cat appeared.

In the kitchen there was a red-legged stool by the telephone. Carrying his untasted glass of whiskey in one hand he picked up the stool with the other and headed toward the closet at the back of the apartment. He set the whiskey on a shelf set the stool in the closet doorway. He climbed up carefully. There was the motorcycle helmet red with a layer of dust on top. He pulled it down. There was something inside it. He reached in still standing on the stool and pulled out a brown sleeveless sweater. There were stains on the sweater. They looked like bloodstains. He looked inside the helmet. There were stains there too. And there was a little blue band with letters on it. It read, "Paul Bendel." Paul Ones in bed. Janet had called him Paul. Oh you son of a bitch!" he said.

Getting down from the stool, he thought. "For him to know. For me to find out. He stopped only to pick up the drink and take it to the bathroom, where he poured it down the toilet. Then he went into the living room and looked out the window. The light was dimming. There was no one on Sixty-third Street. He pushed the window higher leaned out. Looking to his right he could see the intersection with Madison. He saw several of them crossing it. One looked his way and waved. He did not wave back. What he did was take the two bottles and drop them down to the street where they shattered. He thought of a man's body shattering, in a motorcycle wreck, in France? Certainly in France.

A group of four of them had turned the corner at Madison and were walking toward him. All of them had their hands in their pockets. Their heads were all inclined together, and they appeared to be having an intimate conversation. Why whisper? Harold thought. I can't hear you anyway. He pulled himself up and sat on the window ledge, letting his legs hang over. He stared down at them and forced himself to say aloud, "Paul." They were directly below him now, huddled and whispering. They seemed not to hear him.

He took a deep breath and said it louder. "Paul." And then he found somewhere the strength to shout it in a loud, clear steady voice. "Paul, you should be Paul Bendel." Then the four faces looked up, shocked. "You're Paul Bendel," he said. "Go back to your grave in France. Paul."

They stood transfixed. Harold looked over toward Madison. Two of them there had stopped in their tracks in the middle of the intersection.

The four faces below were now staring up at him in mute appeal. Beggning for silence. His voice spoke to this appeal with strength and clarity. "Paul Bendel," he said, "you must go back to France."

Abruptly all four of them averted their eyes from his and from one another. Their bodies seemed to become slack. Then they began drifting apart, walking dispiritedly away from one another and from him.

The cats appeared sleepily from an open closet wanting to be fed. He fed them.

He was redoing a smeared place on the painting when the telephone rang. It was Janet. She was clearly in a good mood, and she asked whether the zucchini soup had been all right.

"Fine," he said. "I had it cold."

She laughed. "I'm glad it wasn't too burned. How was the Janet de Veau?"

Immediately at the French his stomach tightened. Despite the present clarity of his mind he felt the familiar pain of the old petulance and jealousy. For a moment he hugged the pain to himself, then dismissed it with a sigh.

"It's in the oven right now," he said. "I'm having it for dinner."

Walter Tevis began writing at age 13. Today he is a successful author who has created much SF and non-SF literature. His two best-known novels—The Hustler and The Man Who Fell to Earth—have been made into movies. The screen rights to a third novel, Mockingbird, are currently being negotiated in Hollywood. A former Professor of English at Ohio University, Tevis makes it a policy to append his creative output equally to science fiction and other subplots as long as it illuminates the human condition. His science fiction gains a special quality from being less involved with futuristic technology or far out phenomena than with people's lives. His latest SF novel. The Steps of the Sun, is scheduled for fall publication.
"...I heard the word had probably been said more than once, but I did not immediately realize that it was spoken to me. I started to turn around; but the chair, quicker than I, did this for me. Standing in front of me was a girl, perhaps twenty years old, in blue. It clung to her like a aged compressed. Her arms and breasts were hidden in a navy blue shawl that became more and more transparent as it descended. Her slim, lovely belly was like a sculpture in breathing meat. Large, shiny objects covered her ears. A small mouth in an uncertain smile. Her lips painted, the nose is also red.

RETURN FROM THE STARS
BY STANISLAW LEM

Things had changed — especially the war between the sexes

PAINTING BY INGO SWANN
She did not even come up to my shoulder. She had a catlike head, black hair—a profile perhaps too sharp, but she was pretty. If it weren't for those scarlet nostrils!

luminous blood coursed in the furniture pale green commingled with pink sparks.

Why don't you sit down?

She was standing far back. An armchair unfolded itself to receive me. I hated that. The glass was not glass at all—the impression I had was of sitting on inflated cushions and looking down I could see the floor indistinctly through the curved thick surface of the seat.

I made myself comfortable in the chair. The girl, her hand on her hip—her abdomen really did look like a sculpture in azure metal—stunned me carelessly. She no longer appeared drunk. Perhaps it had only seemed that way to me before.

What's your name? she asked.

Bregn Hah Bregg And yours?

Nails she answered, then asked, How old are you?

Curious manners, I thought. But if that's what's done.

Forty What about it?

Nothing I thought you were a hundred.

I had to smile.

I can be that, if you insist. The funny thing is, it's the truth. I thought.

What can I give you? she asked.

To drink? Nothing, thank you.

All right.

She went to the wall which opened like a small bar. She stood in front of the opening. When she returned, she was carrying a tray with cups and two bottles. Squeezing one bottle lightly, she filled me a cup to the brim. The liquid looked exactly like milk.

Thank you. I said, not for me.

But I am not giving you anything, she said, seemingly surprised.

Seeing I had made a mistake, although I did not know what kind of mistake, I muttered under my breath and took the cup. She poured herself a drink from the second bottle. This liquid was oily colorless and slightly effervescent on the surface. At the same time it darkened, apparently on contact with air. She sat down and touching the glass with her lips, casually asked,

Who are you?

A col. I answered. I lifted my cup as if to examine it. This milk had no smell. I did not touch it.

No seriously, she said. You thought I was sending in the dark. eh? Since when? That was only a call. I was with a six you see but it got awfully bottom. The orka was no good, and altogether I was just going when you sat down.

Some of this I could figure out. I must have sat at her table by accident when she was not there. could she have been dancing? I maintained a tacit silence.

From a distance, you seemed so. She was unable to find the proper word.

Decent? I suggested. Her eyebrows fluttered. Did she have a Metallic film on them as well? No, it must have been eyeshadow.

What does that mean?

Well um, someone you could trust.

I said.

You talk in a strange way. Where are you from?

From far away.

Mars?

Farther.

You fly?

I did try.

And now?

Nothing returned.

But you'll fly again?

I don't know. Probably not.

The conversation had trailed off some. It seemed to me that the girl was beginning to regret her rash invitation. I wanted to make it easy for her.

Maybe I ought to go now? I ventured. I still held my untouched drink.

Why? She was genuinely surprised.

I thought that that would suit you.

No, she said. You're thinking—no what for? Why don't you drink?

I am drinking, I replied.

It was milk all along. At this time of day in such circumstances! My surprise was such that she must have noticed it.

What is it bad?

It's milk, I said. I must have looked like a complete idiot.


I sighed and started to get up.

She was a little drunk. I thought.

It's boring here, don't you think? she continued after a moment. Shall we take off somewhere col?

I'm not a col, I said. She leaned on the table with her elbows and moved her hand across her half filled glass until the end of the golden chain around her fingers dipped into the liquid. She leaned still closer. I could smell her breath. If she was drunk, it was not from alcohol.

How's that? she said. You are. You have to be. Everybody is. What do you say? Shall we?

If only I knew what this meant. "All right," I said.

She took me by the arm and led me toward a dark gold wall to a mark on it a little like a treble clef lit up. At our approach the wall opened. I felt a gust of hot air.

A narrow silver elevator flowed down. We stood side by side. She did not even come up to my shoulder. She had a catlike head, black hair—a profile that was perhaps too sharp, but she was pretty. It were not for those scarlet nostrils.

She held on to me tightly with her thin hand, the green nails digging into my heavy sweater. We went up, passing a number of half-empty bars and shops which groups of mannequins were performing the same scene over and over again, and I would have liked to stop and see what they were doing, but the girl hurried along, her slippers clacking.

Where shall we go? the girl asked. She still held me by the arm. She slackened her pace. A red stripe reflected from a nearby shop passed across her face.

Wherever you like.

My place. Then it isn't worth taking a gloopier's nearby.

We came upon a moving walkway. we stood on it, a strange pair lighted down by now and then a vehicle shot along as if cast from a single block of black metal: they had no windows no wheels, no over light and they careened as it blindly and at tremendous speed. The girl suddenly stepped off the moving ribbon, but only to mount another that started steeply upward and I found myself suddenly high up. This ascent lasted perhaps half a minute and ended on a ledge full of weakly fragrant flowers. It was as if we had reached the terrace or balcony of a dark building by a conveyor belt set against the wall.

The girl entered this loggia, and from it my eyes now accustomed to the dark. I was able to discern the huge outlines of the surrounding buildings windowless black seemingly lifeless, for they were without more than light—not the slightest sound.
Listen. Nais. I think I'll go now. Really it will be better that way.

Then why did you drink?" she asked.

I looked at her in silence. The language had not changed so very much, yet I didn't understand a thing. Not a thing. It was they who had changed.

All right,' she said finally. 'I'm not keeping you. But now this. She was confused. She drank her lemonade—what's what I called the sparkling liquid in my thoughts—and again I did not know what to say. How difficult all this was!

Tell me about yourself. I suggested. Do you want to?"

Okay. And then you'll tell me...

Yes. I'm at the Cavata in my second year. I've been neglecting things a bit lately. I wasn't plaiting regularly and... that's how it's been. My six isn't too interesting. So really it's... I don't have anyone. It's strange.

What is it?

That I don't have.

Again these obscurities. Whom was she talking about? Whom didn't she have? Parents? Lovers? Acquaintances?

And what else? I asked and since I was still holding the cup I took another swallow of that milk. Her eyes grew wide in surprise. Something like a mocking smile touched her lips. She dripped her cup reached out a hand to the stubby covering on her arm and tore it. She did not unbutton it, did not slip it off, just tore it and let the sheds fall from her fingers, like trash.

But then we hardly know each other she said. She was trent, it seemed. She smiled. There were moments when she became quite lovely particularly when she narrowed her eyes and when her lower lip curled, revealed glistening teeth. In her face there was something Egyptian An Egyptian cat. Hair blacker than black. When she pulled the furry fluff from her arms and breasts I saw that she was not nearly so thin as I had thought. But why had she ripped it off? Was that supposed to mean something?

Your turn to talk. she said looking at me over her cup.

Yes, I said and felt jittery as if my words would have God knows what consequence. "I am... I am a pilot. The last time I was here... Don't be frightened."

No. Go on."

Her eyes were shining and attentive.

"It was a hundred and twenty-seven years ago I was thirty then The expedition I was a pilot on the expedition to Pompalaut. That's twenty-three light-years away. We flew there, and back, in a hundred and twenty-seven years. Earth time and ten years ship time. Four days ago we returned. The Prometheus my ship remained on Luna. I came from there today. That's all."

She stared at me. She did not speak. Her lips moved opened closed. What was that in her eyes? Surprise? Admiration? Fear?

Why do you say nothing?" I asked.

"So... how old are you really?"

Again I smiled, it was not a pleasant smile.

What does that mean—really? Biologically I'm forty but by Earth clocks, one hundred and fifty-seven.

A long silence then suddenly. "Were there any women there?"

Wait. I said. Do you have anything to drink?

What do you mean?

"Something toxic you understand. Strong Alcohol or don't they drink it anymore?"

Very rarely. she replied softly as it thinking of something else. Her hands fell slowly touching the metallic blue of her dress. I'll give you some. angeleen. Is that all right? But you don't even know what it is do you?"

No. I don't." I retorted with unexpected stubbornness. She went to the bar and brought back a small bulging bottle. She poured me a drink. "It had some alcohol in it but there was something else that gave it a peculiar bitter taste.

Don't be angry. I said emptying the cup and poured myself another one. "I'm not angry you didn't answer but perhaps you don't want to?"

Why not? I can tell you. There were twenty-three of us altogether on two ships. The other ship was the Odyssey. Five pilots to a ship and the rest—scientists. There were no women.

Why?

"Because of children." I explained. "You can't raise children on such ships and even if you could no one would want to. You can't fly before you're thirty. You have to have two diplomas under your belt, and four years of training twelve years in all. In other words. women of thirty usually have children.

And you?" she asked.

"I was single. They selected unmarried ones. That is—volunteers."

"You wanted to?"

"Yes. Of course."

"It must be weird coming back like this... she said almost in a whisper. She shivered. Suddenly she looked at me. Her cheeks darkened. It was a blush.

Little. I said to the one before that was just a joke, really.

About the hundred years? I asked.

"I was just talking. It had no."

Stop. I grumbled. Any more apologizing and I really feel that time was silent. I forced myself to look away from her.

What will you do? she asked quietly.

"I don't know. I don't know yet."

You have no plans">

No. I have a little—it's a bonus you understand. For all that time. When we left it was put into the bank in my name—I don't even know how much there is. I don't know a thing. Listen. what is this Cavata?"

The Cavata? she corrected me. It's a sort of school. Plaisting nothing great in itself but sometimes one can get into the real things.

Wait. Then what exactly do you do?

Plast. You don't know what that is?

"No. How can I explain? One makes dresses clothing in general—everything. Tailoring."

What does that mean?

"Do you sew things?"

I don't understand. Ye gods and little fishes! Do you design dresses?"

Well. yes. in a sense yes. I don't design. I only make."

I gave up.

"And what is a real?" I asked. That truly blurred her. For the first time she looked at me as if I were a creature from another world.

A real is a real. she repeated helplessly. "They are stories. It's for watching."

"Movies? Theater?"

"No. Theater. I know what that was—that was long ago. I know they had actual people there. A real is a real artific.' but one can tell the difference. Unless. I suppose. one got in there inside."

Get in? Listen. Nais. I said. either I'll go now, because it's very late or... I'd prefer the other. But you don't know what I want to say it then."

All right. I wanted to ask you more about various things. About the big things. the most important ones. I already know something. I spent four days at Adap on Luna but that was a drop in the bucket. What do you do when you aren't working?"

One can do a pile of things. she answered. "One can travel actually or by ship. One can have fun. go to the real dance. play tereo. participate in sports swim fly—whatever one wants."

What is a moot?"

It's a little like the real except you can touch everything. You can walk on mountains there on anything—you'll see for yourself it's not the sort of thing you can describe. But I had the impression you wanted to ask about something else."

Your impression is right. How is it—between men and women?"
I suppose the way it has always been... What can have changed?

"Everything. When I left—don't take this as the way thing—-a girl like you would not have brought me to her place at this hour."

"Really? Why not?"

"Because it would have meant only one thing.

She was silent for a second.

"And how do you know it didn't?"

My expression amused here. I looked at her and she stopped smiling.

"Nah! How is it?" I stammered. "You take a complete stranger and..."

"Why don't you answer?"

"Because you don't understand a thing. I don't know how to tell you. It's nothing. You know.

"Aha! It's nothing. I repeated. Are there still marriages?"

"Naturally."

"I don't understand. Explain this to me."

"You see a man who appeals to you and without knowing him right away..."

"But what is there to tell?" she said reluctantly. "Was it really true in your day back then? That a girl couldn't let a man into her room?"

She could of course, and even with that purpose. But I did not need five minutes after seeing him.

"How many minutes then?"

"I looked at her. She was quite serious. Well, yes, how was she to know?"

"Nah! I shrugged.

"It wasn't a matter of time only. First of all she had to see something in him. Get to know him like him. First of all they went out together.

"Wait!" she said. "It seems that you don't understand a thing. After all I gave you a hint."

"What hint? Ah, the milk. What of it?"

"What do you mean, what of it? Was there no hint?"

"She began to laugh. She was convulsed with laughter. Then suddenly she broke off and looked at me and reddened terribly.

"So you thought... you thought that I... My fingers were unsteady. I wanted to hold something in them. I pulled a cigarette from my pocket and lit it.

"What is that?"

"A cigarette. What—you don't smoke?"

"It's the first time ever saw one."

"So that's what a cigarette looks like. How can you inhale the smoke like that?"

"It's a thing. The other thing is more important. But it's milk. I don't know what it is but—to a stranger—one always gives it."

"To a man?"

"Yes."

"What does it do?"

"It's a thing that he behaves that he has to. You know. Maybe some biologist can explain it to you."

"To hell with the biologist. Does this mean that a man to whom you've given can't do anything?"

"Naturally."

"What if he doesn't want to drink?"

"How could he not want to?"

"Here all understanding ended."

"But you can't force him to drink?" I continued patiently.

"A madman might drink—she said slowly. But I never heard of such a thing. Is this some kind of custom?"

"I don't know what to tell you. Is it a custom that you don't go around naked?"

"Ah. Well, in a sense, yes. But you can undress on the beach."

"Completely?" she asked with sudden interest.

"No. A swimsuit. There were groups of people in my day called nudists."

"I know. No. That's something else. I thought that you all."

"No. So this drinking is... like wearing clothes? Just as necessary?"

"Yes. When there were two of you."

"Well... and afterwards?"

"What afterwards?"

"The next time?"

"This conversation was idiotic and I felt terrible but I had to find out.

Later?" it varies. To some you always give it!"

"The rejected sailor, I blurted out. What does this mean?"

"No nothing. And if a girl visits a man what then?"

"Then he drinks it at his place."

"She looked at me almost with pity. But I was stubborn."

"And when he hasn't any?"

"Any hint? How could he not have it?"

"Well. He ran out. Or he could always lie."

"She began to laugh. But that's one."

"What do you think that I keep bottles here in my apartment?

"You don't? Where then?"

"Where they come from. I don't know. In your day was there tap water?"

"There was. I said glumly. There could not have been of course. I could have climbed into the root just straight from the forest. It was furious for a moment but I calmed down. It was not after her fault."

"Do you know in which direction the water flowed before it."

"I understand. No need to go all the way."

"So is it a kind of safety measure? Very strange! How long does it work? I asked.

She blushed slightly."

"You're in such a hurry. You still don't understand anything."

"I don't say anything wrong. I defend myself. I only wanted to know. Why are you looking at me like that. What is the matter with you? Nais.

"She got up slowly. She stood behind the armchair.

"How long ago—did you say? A hundred and twenty years?"

"A hundred and twenty-seven. What about it?

"And were you—betrizated?

"What is that?"

"You weren't?

"I don't even know what it means. Nais. girl. what's the matter with you?"

No you weren't. she whispered. "It you had been you would know."

"I began to go to her. She raised her hands."

"Keep away! Naut. I beg you."

"She retreated to the wall."

"But you yourself said that. I'm sitting now. You see. I'm sitting. Calm yourself. Tell me what it is. this bet... or what ever."

"I don't know exactly. But everyone is betrizated. At birth."

"What is it?"

"They put something into the blood. I think."

"Do they do it to everyone?"

"Yes. Because you work without that. Don't move."

"Child. don't be ridiculous."

"I crushed out my cigarette."

"I am not a wild animal."

"Don't be angry but it seems to me that you've all gone a little mad."

"Well. It's like handing everyone because someone might turn out to be a thief."

"I mean. there ought to be a little trust."

"You're terrific."

"She seemed calmer but still she did not say. Then why were you so indignant before about my bringing strangers home?"

"That's something else."

"I don't see the difference. You're sure you weren't betrizated?"

"I wasn't."

"But maybe now? When you returned?"

"I don't know. They gave me all kinds of shots. What importance does it have?"

"It has. They did that. Good."

"She sat down."

"I have a favor to ask you. I said as calmly as I could. You must explain to me."

"What?"

"Your fear. Did you think I would attack you or what? But that's ridiculous."

"I understood if I told you. Betization you see isn't done by bit."

"But it's only—a side effect. Betization has to do with something else."

"She was pale. Her lips trembled."

"What a world. I thought. What a world this is!"

"I can't. I'm terribly afraid."

"Of me?"

"Yes."

"I swear that."

"No. I believe you only. no You can't understand this."

"You won't tell me?"

"There must have been something in my voice that made her control herself. Her face grew grim. I saw from her eyes the effort it was for her."

"It is. so that in order that it be impossible to..."

"No. People."

"Anyone."

"Animals too?"

"Animals. anyone."

"She twisted and untwisted her fingers not taking her eyes off me. as it with these words she had released me from an invisible chain as if she had put a knife into my."

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hand—a knife I could stab her with.

"Nais!" I said very quietly. "Nais, don't be afraid. Really there's nothing to fear."

She tried to smile.

"Listen."

"Yes?"

"When I said that..."

"Yes?"

"You felt nothing?"

"And what was I supposed to feel?"

"Imagine that you are doing what I said to you."

"That I am killing? I'm supposed to picture that,?"

"She shuddered."

"Yes."

"And now?"

"And you feel nothing?"

"Nothing. But then it's only a thought, and I have not the slightest intention."

"But you can? Right? You really can? No?"

"She whispered, as if to herself: you are not betrizated."

"Only now did the meaning of it all hit me. I understood how it could be a shock to her."

"This is a great trick," I muttered. After a moment I added, "But it would have been better perhaps had people ceased to do it without artificial means."

"I don't know."

"Perhaps she answered."

"She drew a deep breath. "You know how I was frightened?"

"Yes."

"But not completely."

"Maybe a little."

"But surely you didn't think that!"

"How strange you are! It's altogether as if you weren't."

"She broke off."

"Weren't human?"

"I didn't mean to offend you. It's just that you see, if it is known that no one can you know even think about it—ever—and suddenly someone appears like you—then the very possibility the fact that there is one who..."

"I can't believe that everyone would be—how was it?—betrizated."

"Why? Everyone tells you!"

"No! It's impossible!"

"I insisted."

"What about people with dangerous jobs? After all they must not be."

"There are no dangerous jobs."

"What are you saying? Nais? What about pilots? What about rescue workers? What about those who fight fire water?"

"There are no such people. She said."

"But I thought that I must not have heard her right."

"What?"

"No such people. She repeated. "It is done by robots."

There was silence. It would not be easy for me to stomach this new world. And suddenly came a reflection surprising in that I myself would never have expected it if someone had presented me with this situation purely as a theoretical possibility. It seemed to me that this measure destroying the man was a kind of disfigurement.

"Nais!" I said, it's already very late, I think I'll go."

"Where?"

"I don't know."

"I'll look for a hotel. There are hotels?"

"There are Bregg..."

"Yes?"

"Stay..."

"What?"

"She did not speak."

"You want me to stay?"

I went up to her took hold of her, bending over the chair by her cold arms, and lifted her up. She stood submissively. Her head fell back, her teeth guttered. I did not want her. I wanted only to say, But you're afraid, and wanted only for her to say that she was not. Nothing more. Her eyes were closed, but suddenly the whites shone from underneath her lashes. I bent over her face and looked into her glassy eyes, as if I wished to know her fear to share it. She struggled to break loose but I did not feel it, it was only when she began to groan, "No! No!" that I slackened my grip. She nearly fell.

"Nais... I said quietly. Then I dropped my hands.

"Don't come near me!

"But it was you who said, "Her eyes were wild."

"I'm going now," I announced. She said nothing. I wanted to add something—a few words of apology of thanks—so as not to leave this way but I couldn't. Had she been afraid only as a woman is of a man, a strange even threatening unknown man, then the hell with it. But this was something else. I looked at her and felt anger growing in me. To grab those white, naked arms and shake her.

I turned and left. I remember that later I sat by a fountain, or perhaps it was not a fountain. I stood up and walked on in the spreading light of the new day until I woke from my stupor in front of large, glowing windows and the fiery letters Alcoran Hotel.

In the doorkeeper's box which resembled a giant overturned bathtub sat a robot, beautifully styled, semitransparent, with long delicate arms. Without asking a thing, it passed me the guest book. I signed it and rode up with a small triangular ticket. Someone— I have no idea who—helped me open the door or, rather, did it for me. Walls of ice, and in them—circular fires under the window at my approach a chair emerged from nothing and slid under me. A flat tabletop had begun to descend, making a kind of desk but it was a bed that I wanted. I could not find one and did not even attempt to look. I lay down on the foamy carpet and immediately fell asleep in the artificial light of the window less room. For what I had at first taken to be a window turned out to be a television set and I drifted off with the knowledge that from there, from behind the glass plate, some giant face was grinning at me meditating over me, laughing, chattering, babbling. I was delivered by a sleep like death, in it even time stood still.

This is Explorer XX calling Earth from Muscle Beach, do you read me?
Mysterious becomes something else. Uncanny means something.

By Robert Shockey
Transformation — its prediction, its control, its meaning — has always been the province of the priest, the shaman, and the artist. Magic itself, the precursor of science, is essentially the study and control of change. Alchemy, the study of magical transformations, metamorphoses into chemistry, the study of transformations in substances. Scientists look to artists for insights into the nature of the world. Art delineates the processes of the imagination, creating syntheses of fantastic and factual elements too complex to be explained in words.

We shuffle things and arrange them, not as they are, but as we want them to be.
I have called you all here for a special reason. The '96 primary looms before us, and I have yet to announce. I want all of you to be the first to hear my decision. To quote one of my predecessors in this office: If nominated, I will not run.

Groans and disappointment? Hear me out. Only then will you understand my decision.

The latest polls show a new issue emerging, one that could overshadow the excellent record we have compiled. This issue has nothing to do with our programs. Those have been embraced enthusiastically by the American people. The problem is of a different order: not the substance of our administration, but the form: the image, more accurately, my image.

Let me be more specific. According to our sampling, I am seen by the electorate as competent, efficient, imaginative, and innovative. But in failing health. Rumors about my health have proliferated. My ability to last out another four-year term is questioned. The media have dubbed us the Haggard administration.

PAINTING BY FRIEDRICH HECHIELMANN
Haggard—that is the operative word. A
computer model of the next election shows
the issue could be controlling, especially if
our opponents are given any opportunity at
all to make political hay out of this straw
man As you all can see. I look no more
haggard now than the day I took office. It
is simply our higher profile in preparation for
the Ninety-six campaign that has brought
the issue to public attention.

Okay, on to the purpose of this briefing.
Some of you don't know all the details of
how our present situation came about. I'll
outline them as succinctly as possible and
have a transcript made for reference. I
don't want any misunderstandings about
the game plan.

How did it start? That's the big question.

It started with the attempted assassinat-
on of Senator Mirada in Los Angeles
before the last election. As most of you know
I had not yet joined the campaign, but the
senator was leading our party full stride
toward the White House. When he heard the
hornet buzz of the assassin's bullet his
stride understandably faltered.

The next day the senator called in Fred
Thoroughway. You all know Fred over there.
He was chief of campaign security in those
days. According to Fred, the senator
looked like death warmed over. His face
was the color of old newspaper and dark
circles showed under his eyes. He seemed
to have aged a decade overnight. The
demands of a too ambitious career combined
with his dubious personal habits—he
drank, smoked and phantastized to ex-
cess—had completely weakened his con-
stitution. The assassination attempt
threatened to break it. He kept muttering to
Fred about seeing the face of Death in the
crowd. He told Fred something had to be
done. He could not go on with the Grim
Reaper dogging him over the campaign
trail. The Grim Reaper all the gusses had
to be neutralized.

Neutralized—a fine word. But how? Fred
was caught between the proverbial rock
and the equally proverbial hard place. If he
did nothing and hoped they could get
through the Ninety-two election with a sane
candidate, some nut would probably try
to again and the senator's taut nerves would
snap. It, in an effort to ease the senator's
troubled mind, he threw on a total security
wrap. Senator Mirada would never get
close enough to the electorate to become
President Mirada. Still an order to neutral-
ize was an order to neutralize no matter
how imposing the task.

For a week Fred toured security services
in Los Angeles. With more than its share of
nuts, Fred reasoned. Los Angeles would
have state of the art technology for deal-
ing with them. He examined electrical
chemical and mechanical gadgets. Some
of them would have stopped riots. Some
would have destroyed cities. None would
stop a lone assassin bent on murder who
had no regard for his own safety precisely
the kind of man Senator Mirada wanted
neutralized.

That weekend, to escape temporarily
from the growing frustration of his search
Fred took his son to Disneyland. The trip
proved futile. After a particularly nauseat-
ing scene on the Mad Hatter's Teacup—son
squealing with glee father losing most of
his lunch—Fred Junior dragged his fa-
ther in to hear Lincoln deliver the Gettys-
burg Address.

Fred Senior had seen the exhibit years
before when it was a mechanical man. The
mechanical Lincoln had long since de-
parked. Now a holographically projected
Lincoln tied to a computer stood in its
place. Not only did it give a fine and moving
delivery of the Gettysburg Address, but it
answered questions from the audience as
a press conference.

One of the questions came from wide-
eyed little Freddie Thoroughway at the foot
of the dais. He asked Lincoln whether he
knew how much he resembled Senator
Mirada. Lincoln gave a kindly and paternal
smile and said many people had made that
observation to him. It reminded him of an
anecdote from his own boyhood. He
launched into a story about splitting rails in
Illinois.

The story had nothing whatsoever to do
with the boy's question, but Freddie
thought it did. So evidently did everyone
else in the room. The illusion was convinc-
ing. Fred Senior gazed up at the expounding
Lincoln and knew he had found the solution
to Senator Mirada's problem.

On Monday morining experts on
computer-controlled holography were
brought in along with the most sophisti-
cated equipment available. The senator
took a break from campaigning long
enough to cover the recording session.
Cameras and microphones recorded his
every movement, head to toe from back
standing sitting walking talking—espe-
cially talking.

The waveform produced by the
sensor's every sound and movement were
analyzed instantaneously and were as-
signed a two hundred fifty six bit binary
number. Numbers accumulated at a rate of
one million per millimeter of recording
tape. Tape passed through the machine at
two meters a second. All of it was ultima-
tely stored in a computer a collection of
something close to two billion digital information
bits on the sensor for every second of rec-
cording time. Thoroughway worked the
sensor hard, further damaging his already
frail health, but managing to assemble one
hundred hours of tape. They could now
holographically reproduce every move-
ment and sound the senator was capable
of making together with a few he would
never be able to manage.

Then came the hard part. They had the
form the image. They needed substance.
Every plank in the senator's platform was
programmed in, along with details on the
problems of implementing each policy and
the solutions to those problems. The pro-
gram was given a capacity to deliver this
information either as a formal speech or as
casual conversation or as response to
questions from an audience. It even con-
tained a few all-purpose ripostes for
hecklers.

When Thoroughway was satisfied he
called Senator Mirada in for a demonstra-
tion. He activated the equipment all of it
portable and I joined them in the labora-
tory. Thoroughway asked me about tax
reform legislation covering it both from the
substantial angle and from the practicality
of getting such legislation through Con-
gress. I answered satisfactorily. Senator
Mirada asked me about foreign policy is-
sues—the Sino Japanese Mutual Defense
Pact. Again I answered each question one
or two of them. I well turned and—If I do
say so myself—witty responses.

The senator was impressed. He put one
of his arms across Fred's shoulders and
talked into his ear saying the success with
me would allow him to do what he had
longed to do from the first days of the cam-
paign: take a relaxed and extended vaca-
tion to restore his health. He gestured at me
and said I could do what he called the
'mundane work of getting elected.'

We got postcards from the senator in
Tahiti, all signed with his Secret Service
code name. Cheshire Cat One. He sent one
photograph of a man with his face averted
and his arms around two young Tahitian
girls. He was having a wonderful time and
wished we were there.

While the senator chased grass skirts in
Tahiti, I worked night and day at the mune
dane work of getting elected. Before every
public appearance Thoroughway set up
the equipment under the husting some-
times an outdoor podium sometimes an
indoor stage. He gave orders to have the
motorcade stop within range of the projec-
tor. When the senator's limo came to a halt
Thoroughway flicked on the equipment
The limo door slid open I got out smiling,
wavering, politicking.

Though |I didn't kiss any babies or shake
any hands—an impossibility under the cir-
cumstances—I did give rousing Lincoln-
esque speeches. Even the media began
talking about the "new Senator Mirada
better organized, better prepared on the
issues, more responsive to questions
quickly-witted. We moved up in the polls.
No one saw me then as having served four
years in a man killing job. So there was little
comment on my appearance.

None of our success pleased Fred. From
time to time he would have me join him late
at night and discuss the matter. He had
been through many campaigns and some-
thing always went wrong. Either little things
went wrong all the time—late planes
rained-out tales slipped advance work—or
something big went wrong all at
once. The longer we went without small
disasters, the more Fred's foreshadowings told him a big one was on the way.

It arrived November 4, 1992, one day after we squeaked into office and while most of you were still under the weather from the victory party. Senator Mirada—now on the wagon, a nonsmoker, and a jogger—had discovered a new way of life: more tranquil, healthier, without the crushing burden of governing the most powerful nation on Earth. As he said in that final postcard, he felt himself to be in harmony with the seasons and the tides. He had decided to trade in the smoke-filled rooms of Washington for the fresh air and sun shine of Tahiti—permanently.

That gave us a problem. I'm sure you all remember that meeting. Most of you were hysterical over the possible consequences of his decision. I had to take charge. We voted. We arrived at our decision democratically. What we did was for the good of the country. We had already done the mundane work of getting elected. Could we stand by and simply give away that election? Was one man that indispensable? Besides we had programs we believed in—programs the country needed.

Looking back I think we can say we made the right decision. My personal popularity is high, my record good. We have only this single issue my health, to deal with. I have already taken steps to remedy the situation.

Last week I dispatched an urgent telegram to Tahiti, followed by a two-hour satellite conversation with visual linkup. I must say Tahiti has agreed with him. He looks tan rosted, and content. He has followed events here and approves of our accomplishments. Indeed he is convinced that we have done a better job in office than he could ever have managed—an endorsement I deeply appreciate.

In any case we spent much of the two hours examining our options. He suggested the most obvious solution: a new tape showing a fit and healthy image. I had veto that one. The media have already made a big deal out of my reluctance to shake hands—the Howard Hughes Syndrome they call it—suggesting it indicates a neurotic fear of germs, hypochondria, evidence of potential mental instability. I pointed out to him that we had to squelch that sort of talk rather than encourage it. He saw my point. Still, he was hesitant to leave his Shang-La. Only after further negotiation and firm promise that Air Force One would make frequent and prolonged trips to Tahiti did he agree to cooperate.

I think ladies and gentlemen, we can now look forward to the four more years we need to realize our programs fully. As I said at the beginning of this briefing, I have made my decision. I think you now understand it. If nominated I will run—but if elected—our friend from Tahiti should give us just the image we need for that mundane work—I will serve.
Science could conquer death, she knew. But could she deal with what came after death?

SOUL SEARCH
BY SPIDER ROBINSON

Rebecca Howell stood trembling with anticipation beside the Plexiglas tank that contained the corpse of her husband, Archer. A maelstrom of conflicting emotions raged within her: fondness, yearning, awe, lust, triumph, satisfaction, fierce joy, and an uncertain fear all trying to coexist in the same skull. Perhaps no one in all human history had experienced that precise mix of emotions for her situation was close to unique. Because she was who and what she was, it would shortly lead her to develop the first genuinely new motive for murder in several thousand years.

"Go ahead," she said aloud. Her husband, in white, crowded around the transparent cryotank with her. In practiced silence, they began doing things.

John Dinsdale touched her shoulder. "Reb," he said softly, "come on. Let them work."

"No," she said. "Reb, the first part is not pretty. I think you should—"

"Dammit, I know that!" he repeated insistently. "I think, I repeat, insistently, you should come with me."

She stiffened and then she saw some of the things the technicians were doing. "Alright, Doctor Sherwood."

One of the white-suited men looked up irritably.

PAINTING BY MICHEL HENRICOT
Call me before you fire the pineal Without fail She let Dimsdale lead her from the room, down white-tiled corridors, to Bharadwaj's office. His secretary looked up as they entered and hastened to open the door leading into the doctor's inner sanctum for them. Dimsdale dismissed him and Rebecca sat down heavily in the luxuriously elbow chairs, putting her feet up on Bharadwaj's desk. They were both silent for perhaps ten minutes.

Eight years,' she said finally. 'Will it really work, John?'

'No reason why it shouldn't,' he said. 'Every reason why it should. It's never been done before.'

On a human no. Not successfully. But the problems have been solved. It worked with those cats didn't it? And that ape?'

'Yes, but—'

Look Bharadwaj knows perfectly well you'll have his skull for an ashtray if he fails. Do you think he'd try it at all if he weren't certain?'

After a pause she relaxed. 'You're right of course.' She looked at him then, really seeing him for the first time that day, and her expression softened. 'Thank you. John. I thank you for everything. This must be even harder for you than it—'

'Put it out of your mind.' he interrupted hastily.

'I just feel so—'

'There is nothing for you to feel guilty over Reb. He insisted. 'I'm fine. When love cannot possess it's content to serve.'

Who said that?'

Dimsdale blushed. 'Me.' he admitted. 'About fifteen years ago. And frequently theretofore.' he added to himself. 'So put it out of your mind.'

She smiled. 'As long as you know how grateful I am for you. I could never have maintained Archer's empire without you. Nonsense. What are your plans— for afterward? I mean?'

'When he's released? As few as possible. I thought he might enjoy a cruise around the world sort of a reorientation. But I'm quite content to hole up on Luna or up in Alaska instead, or whatever he wants. As long as I'm with him. I—'

Dimsdale knew precisely how she felt. After this week it might be weeks or years before he saw her again.

'The phone rang and he answered it. Right. Let's go. Reb. They're ready.'

The top of the cryptank had been removed now, allowing direct access to Archer Howell's defrosted body. At present it was only a body— no longer a corpse, not yet a man. It was 'alive' in a certain technical sense, in that an array of machinery circulted its blood consciousness again. It threw off heavy sedation like a funnel blanket. In the next room the physician monitoring her telemetry started violently wondering whether he could have misinterpreted without realizing it.

What's wrong?' Dimsdale demanded.

'Nothing.' he said. 'It's a second ago she was deep under and—'

Now she's wide awake. Dimsdale finished. All night stand by. He got up stiffly and went to her door. Now comes the hard part.' he said to the other to hear. Then he squared his shoulders and went in.

'Yes?'

It's all right John. Truly I'm okay. I'm terribly disappointed of course but when you look at it in perspective this is really just a minor setback.'

'No,' he said very quietly. 'It isn't.'

Of course it is. Look it's perfectly obvious what's happened. Some kind of cryogenic trauma's wiped his mind. All his memories are gone! He'll have to start over again as an infant! But he's got a mature brain. John. He'll be an adult again in ten years. You won't see if he isn't. I know him. Oh he'll be different. He won't be the man I knew.' he'll have no memories in common with that man and the new up-bringing is bound to alter his personality some. I'll have to learn how to make him love me all over again. But I've got my Archer back!'

Dimsdale was struck dumb as much by admiration for her indomitable spirit as by reluctance to tell her that she was dead wrong. He wished there were some honorable way he could tell her all. 'What's ten years?' she chattered on obviously. 'Hall, what's twenty years? We're both forty now that I've caught up with him. With the medical we can afford we're both good for a century and a quarter. We can have at least sixty more years together. That's four times as long as we've already had! I can be patient another decade or so for that. She smiled then became businesslike. 'I want you to start making arrangements for his care at once. I want him to have the best rehabilitation this planet can provide. The ideal childhood. I don't know what kind of experts we need to hire. You'll have to—'

'No!' Dimsdale cried.

She started, and looked at him closely. 'John. Whatever's on your mind is wrong with—'

'She paled. 'Oh my God. They've lost him! Haven't they?'

'No.' he managed to say. 'No. They haven't lost him. They never had him. What the hell are you talking about?' she blazed. 'I heard him cry. She heard him breathe. He was alive. He still is. Was when I came in. Probably still is. But he is not Archer Howell. What are you saying?'

Bharadwaj said a lot I didn't understand. Something about brain waves and something about radically different indicators on the something-or-other profile something about different reflexes and different processing. He was close to babbling. 'Archer was born after the development of the brain scan so they have tapes on him from infancy. Eight experts and two computers agree. Archer Howell's body is alive down the hall but that's not him in it. Not even the infant Archer. Someone completely different. He shuddered. A new person. An unknown forty-year-old person.'

The doctor outside was on his toes. Feeding tranquillizers and sedatives into her system in a frantic attempt to keep her telemetry readings within acceptable limits. But her will was a hot sun burning the fog off her mind as fast as it formed. Impossible she cried and she sprang from the bed before Dimsdale could react. Ripping tubes and wires loose. 'You're wrong. All of you. That's my Archer.'

The doctor came in fast fanned and ready for anything and she kicked him square in the stomarch and leaped over him as he went down. She was out the door and into the hallway before Dimsdale could reach her.

When he came to the room assigned to
She overmatched his volume. "I'll thank you to respect that mind.

Why should I?" he said bitterly.

"Because it's done something no one's ever done in all history. You cannot think of a way to prove or disprove Bharadwaj's belief. No one else ever has." Her eyes flashed. "But I have.

He gaped at her. Either she had completely lost her mind, or she was telling the truth. The two seemed equally impossible.

At last he made his choice. "How?"

Right here at this desk. Its brain was more than adequate. Once mine told it what to do. I'm astonished it's never occurred to anyone before."

You've proved the belief in reincarnation. With your desk.

With the computers it has access to. That's right.

He found a chair and sat down. Her hand moved, and the chair arm emitted a drink. He gulped it gratefully.

"It was so simple. John, I picked an arbitrary data from twenty-two years ago. Picked an arbitrary hour and a minute. That's as close as I could refine it. Death records are seldom kept to the second. But it was close enough. I got the desk to—collect the names of all the people who died at that minute. He cried stopping his drink. "Oh my God! Of course!"

I told you, Oh, there were holes all over. Not all deaths are recorded. Not by a damn sight, and not all of the recorded ones are nailed down to the minute, even today. The same with birth records of course. And the worst of it was that picking a date that far back meant that a substantial number of the deaths were born before the brain scan giving me incomplete data."

But you had to go that far back, Dimsdale said excitedly. "To get five ones with jelled personalities to compare."

Right, she said, and she smiled approvingly.

"But with all those holes in the data—"

Johnny there are fifteen billion people in the solar system. That's one hell of a statistical universe. The desk gave me a tentative answer. Yes. I ran it fifteen times. For fifteen more dates. I picked one two years ago, trading off the relative ambiguity of immature brain scans for more complete records. I got fifteen tentative yeses. Then I correlated all fifteen and get a definite yes."

But—"but, damn it all to hell. Reb, the goddamn birthrate has been rising since forever. Where the hell do the new ones come from?

She frowned. "I'm not certain. But I've noted that the animal birthrate declines as the human increases."

His mouth hung open.

"Don't you see John? You're a religious fanatic too. The only difference between you and Bharadwaj is that he's right. Reincarnation exists."

John finished his drink in a gulp and milked the chair for more. "When we froze Archer he died. His soul went away. He was recycled. When we force life back into his body his soul was elsewhere engaged. We got potluck."

The whiskey was hitting him. "Any idea who?"

I think so. Hard to be certain, of course, but I believe the man we revived was a grade-three mechanic named Big Leon. He was killed on Luna by a defective lock seal at the right instant."

Good Christ! Dimsdale got up and began pacing around the room. "Is that why there are so many freak accidents? Every time you concede a child you condemn some poor bastard? Of all the grotesque—"

He stopped in his tracks, stood utterly motionless for a long moment, and wrinkled her. "Where is Archer now?"

Her face might have been sculpted in ice. "I've narrowed it down to three possibilities. I can't pin it down any better than that. They're all eleven years old. Of course. All male. Oddly enough. Apparently we don't change sex often. Thank God."

She looked him square in the eyes. "I've had a fully equipped cryothreater built onto this house. His body's already been frozen. There are five people in my employ who are competent enough to set this up so it cannot possibly be traced back to me. There is not one of them I can trust to have that much power over me. You are the only person living I trust that much John. And you are not in my employ."

"God damn it—"

"This is the only room in the system that I am certain is not bugged. John, I want three perfectly timed, untraceable murders."

"But the bloody cryotech's are witnesses—"

"To what? We'll freeze and thaw him again hoping that will bring him out of it somehow. From the standpoint of conventional medicine it's as good an idea as any. No one listened to Bharadwaj. No one's got any explanation for Archer's change. And no one but you and I knows the real one for certain. Even the desk doesn't remember. She shouted, Nine more attempted defrostings since Archer none of have worked and still nobody's guessed. There's a moratorium on defrosting, but it's unofficial. We can do it John."

"She stopped. sat back..."
in her chair, and became totally expressionless. "If you'll help me."
He left the room. She looked up from the table, and held up her hand. Her cheeks were red, and her eyes were filled with tears. She had not seen John Dimsdale, and he was not quite recognizable when she did. She sighed, and looked at her watch. She had ordered a drink, and she had been waiting for a long time.

"I'm your man," she said as soon as she had gone.

She winced and was silent for a long time. "You'll have to kill Bharadway too," she said at last. "I know.

Rebecca Howell gazed again at the distorted thing that had once been Archer Ruiz-Sanchez. The terror of emotion was tamed this time, held in rigid control. It may not work on this shot, she reminded herself. I'm only guessing that his soul will have an affinity for his old body. He may end up in a cub in Bombay this time. She smiled. "But sooner or later, I'll get him."

"Senora, it would be well to do it now."

The smile vanished, and she turned to the chief surgeon. "Doctor Ruiz-Sanchez, I want to see if you have made me repeat myself.

Her voice was quite gentle, and a normal man would have gone very pale and shut up, but good doctors are not normal men. "Senora: the longer he is on machine life-support..."

"HUMOR ME!" she bellowed, and he sprang back three steps and tripped over a power cable landing heavily on his back. Technicians jumped, then went expressionless and looked away. Ruiz-Sanchez got slowly to his feet, flexing his fingers. He was trembling. "Senora."

She turned away from him at once, returning to contemplation of her beloved. There was dead silence in the cryotherapy, save for the murmur and chuckle of life-support machinery and the thrum of powerful generators. Cryotechnology is astonishingly power thirsty, she reflected. The restarter device alone drank more energy than her desk, though it delivered only a tiny fraction of that to the pinéal gland. She disliked the noisy smelly generators on principle, but a drain this large had to be unmeasured. Especially if it had to be repeated several times. Mass murder is easy, she thought. All you need is a good mind and unlimited resources. And one trusted friend.

She checked the wall clock. It was five minutes of noon. The tile floor felt pleasantly cool to her bare feet. The characteristic cryotherapy smell was subliminally invigorating. Maybe this time love she murmured to the half-living body.

The door was thrown open, and a guard was hurled backward into the room, landing aspawl. Dimsdale stepped over him breathing hard. He was wild-eyed and seemed drunk.

Only for the barest instant did shock paralyze her, and even for that instant only the tightening of the corners of her mouth betrayed her fury at his imprudence.

"Señor Ruiz-Sanchez, I'm sorry, you are not sterile!"

"No, thank God," Dimsdale said, looking only at her. "What are you doing here, John?"

She asked carefully.

"Don't you see Reb? He gestured like a beggar seeking alms. Don't you see? It's all got to mean something. It is true, there's got to be a point to it, some kind of purpose. Maybe we get just a hair smarter each time round the track. A bit more mature. Maybe we grow. Maybe you're trying to do will get him demoted. I've studied all three of them, and so help me, God, every one of them is making more of his childhood than Archer did.

Her voice cracked like a whip now. "John! This room is not secure."

He started and awareness came into his eyes. He glanced around at terrified doctors and technicians.

Rebecca. I studied them all firsthand. I made it my business. I had to. Three eleven-year-old boys. Rebecca. They have parents. Grandparents. Brothers and sisters. Playmates. Hopes and dreams. They have futures. He tried and stopped. He straightened to his full height and met her eyes. "I will not murder them, even for you."

"Madre de Dios!" Ruiz-Sanchez moaned in terror. The anesthesiologist began singing his death song softly and to himself. A technician bolted hopelessly for the door.

Rebecca Howell screamed with rage, a hideous sound, and slammed her hands down on the nearest console. One hand shattered an irrigator, which began fountaining water. "You bastard!" she raged. "You filthy bastard!"

He did not flinch. "I'm sorry, I thought I could."

She took two steps backward, located a throwable object, and let fly with it. It was a tray of surgical instruments.

Dimsdale stood his ground. The tray itself smashed into his mouth and a needle-probe stuck horrified in his shoulder. Technicians began fleeing.

"Reb," he said, blood starting down his chin, "whoever orders this incredible circus you and your striking desk can't outwit!"

Him! Archer died, eleven years ago. "You cannot have him back. If you'll only listen to me, I can -"

She screamed again and leaped for him. Her intention was plainly to kill him with her hands, and he knew she was more than capable of it, and again he stood his ground.

And watched her foot slip in the puddle on the floor watched one flailing arm snarl in the cables that trailed from the casing of the pinéal restarter and yank two of them loose, saw her land facedown in water at the same instant as the furiously sparking cables, watched her buck and thrash and begin to die.

Franzly he located the generator that led the device and sprung for it. Ruiz-Sanchez blocked his way holding a surgical lacer like a dulled knife. He froze and the doctor looked eyes with him. Long after his ears and nose told him it was too late Dimsdale stood motionless.

At last he slumped. "Quite right," he murmured softly.

Ruiz-Sanchez continued to aim the laser at his heart. They were alone in the room. I have no reason to think this room has been bugged by anyone but Rebecca. Dimsdale said wearily. And the only thing you know about me is that I won't kill innocent people. Don't try to understand what has happened here. You and your people can go in peace. I'll clean up here. I won't even bother threatening you.

Ruiz-Sanchez nodded and lowered the laser.

"You collect your team. Doctor before they get themselves into trouble. You can certify her accidental death for me?"

The doctor nodded again and began to leave.

"Wait."

He turned.

Dimsdale gestured toward the open cryotank. "How do I plug the plug on this?"

Ruiz-Sanchez did not hesitate. The big switch. There, by the boil at that end. He left.

An hour and a half later. Dimsdale had achieved a meeting of minds with Rebecca's chief security officer and her personal secretary and had then been left alone in the den. He sat at her desk and let his gaze rest on the terminal keyboard. At this moment thousands of people were sifting and thinking furiously. Her whole manummoth empire was in chaos. Dimsdale sat at its effective center utterly at peace. He was in no hurry, he had all the time in the world.

We do get smarter every time they thought I'm sure of it.

He made the desk yield up the tape of what had transpired in the cryotherapy. He checked one detail of the tape very carefully satisfied himself that it was the only copy and wiped it. Then because he was in no hurry he ordered stretch. When she was twenty I only be fifty seven he thought, happily. Not even middle-aged it's going to work. This time it's going to work for both of us. He set down the stretch and told the desk to locate him a girl who had been born at one minute and forty-three seconds before noon. After a moment it displayed data.

"Orphan," he said aloud. "That's a break."

He took a long drink of stretch on the strength of it and then told the desk to begin arranging for the adoption. But it was the courtship he was thinking about.
SAVE THE TOAD!

BY NORMAN SPINRAD

The past decade has seen a quantum leap in the ecological awareness of the American public, a new understanding that the planet belongs not only to humankind but to all creatures great and small, that the extinction of a species for the sake of human convenience is an ecocomic sin to genecide. The snail darter holds up a multimillion-dollar claim, human lives to save whales, and the FCC comes down hard on a comedian who tortured and executed cockroaches on TV.

All well and good. But even in these days of moonlighting, species of animal now face extinction. A species that almost seems to have been designed by evolution as the ultimate test case of our ecological morality.

Vahalla is a retirement community on the east coast of Florida, not far from the Everglades, scoured out of a fetid coastal swamp by an outfit called Development Unlimited.

A major selling point for the Valhalla development was a private, 18-hole golf course to be built on the premises, without the competition of which Development Unlimited would remain in breach of contract with its customers. After 17 holes were completed, it was discovered that what was to become the eighteenth and clubhouse green—a swampy pool overgrown with rotting palm fronds—was the sole habitat of a hitherto unknown species, the giant flying vampire toad.

The misnamed tad is actually a species of frog—a huge, wet, bile-green creature that can weigh up to ten kilograms. Translucent membranes of mucoid tissue are stretched between its fore and rear limbs like sails of bubbly slime, enabling it to glide for considerable distances from treetop perch to in the manner of a flying squirrel.

The giant flying vampire toad is the only frog with teeth. Two of them. Upper front incisors about five centimeters long, as sharp as hypodermic needles, and hollow. The vampire toad feeds through them. Truly a unique species.

But alas, in this writing, the poor amphibian seems marked for extinction. When it was discovered that the Valhalla golf course was the sole ecological niche of the giant flying vampire toad, Development Unlimited signed a consent order with the EPA to redesign the eighteenth hole to incorporate and preserve its habitat as a swamp hazard.

A Pro-Am tournament was organized to test the course prior to occupancy of the condominiums. There was a strong wind that day, and many golfers were hooking their tee shots into the swamp hazard on the eighteenth hole. Dozens of players invaded the habitat of the giant flying vampire toad.

The toad now hangs upside down in the tops of trees, cunningly camouflaged in the rotting foliage. It hangs motionless like a huge blob of goo until some as-yet-unidentified heat sensor detects the presence of a warm-blooded mammal.

The crafty creature wails until the mammal has passed well by its perch. Then it releases its grip, extends its wings, and silently zooms in on its prey from directly behind in a long, low glide out of the wooded gloom. Fangs extended, it pierces the back of the neck like a double-headed arrow with the full momentum of its spike. An instant later it plasters its slimy sticky body in the prey's hair, grapples to the ears with its clawed forelimbs, fastens its powerful, rubberike suction mouth around the point of entry, and hangs there upside down, thrashing its hollow, blood through its long, hollow teeth.

Unfortunately, this was not discovered until horde of golfers emerged from the swamp hazard of the eighteenth hole, shrieking, screaming, and trying in vain to pry blood-sucking frogs off the back of their necks with two-forks.

Development Unlimited applied for a variance from the Environmental Protection Agency in order to demolish the eighteenth hole swamp hazard and exterminate the giant flying vampire toad, claiming that the law was never meant to apply to a species that ought to be extinct. The EPA rightfully rejected this vile suggestion, pointing out that it would inevitably lead to demands to exterminate other scientifically unique species of vermin, such as the cockroach, the rat, and the anopheles mosquito.

Faced with a dead loss on the now-unsalable Valhalla development, Development Unlimited sued the federal government for damages. Just as this precedent setting case reached its climax in a Supreme Court, HUD—perhaps acting under indirect White House pressure—agreed to purchase the development as a pilot project for the nation's first retirement community for welfare recipients. Who, it was pointed out, could be induced to occupy a luxury home community without a golf course.

The golf course was closed. The development was occupied by nongolfing welfare recipients. The giant flying vampire toad was saved from extinction.

Or so it seemed at the time. The population of giant flying vampire toads has now gone into a precipitous decline. The unseemly human hurry-bury of the welfare conclave has driven away the species' previous natural prey and the lack of golfers to replace these nonhuman prey species has once more driven the toad to the brink of extinction.

Only an aroused public can now prevent a hideous act of genocide by neglect. It's one thing to save lordly whales and cute little seals, but will the summer soldiers of ecological awareness summon the courage to rally behind a giant flying blood-sucking frog? Where do we humans presume to draw the line? The giant flying vampire toad is the ultimate acid test of ecological conscience. If the unique species is to survive, steps must be taken to ensure a food supply for it.

Why not let welfare recipients use the communal golf course? Under the supervision of a golf pro and a doctor. The trilling amount of blood they would lose would be nothing compared to the benefits they would gain. It would be a symbiotic relationship.

Therefore we say, Reopen the Valhalla golf course! Give housing and recreation to those most in need of them! And save the giant flying vampire toad!
GIANT ON THE BEACH

There always seems to be at least one uninvited guest at every cocktail party Hal's was no exception.

BY JOHN KEENAUER

The cocktail party was well into its second hour when somebody out on the terrace noticed the naked black lying on the beach—not that anybody at first realized his size. It wasn't until someone, perhaps with fewer drinks in him, looked at the figure through binoculars and yelled, "God, look at the size of him!" that anybody learned of the hugeness of the man. Even after they'd all started down to the beach, carrying their drinks, laughing and chatting about how you never knew what Hal and Liz were going to do to make their party a winner, nobody had any idea who, or what, the black would be.

In fact, even when they could begin to make out how large the man was through the fog and drizzle, a few kept on laughing and making jokes about how Hal had really outdone himself this time, getting a mannequin that size made and hauled to the beach in front of their house and leaving...

PAINTING BY DOMINIQUE PEYRONNET
it there. Even when everybody was huddled around the motionless form and could see that the enormous figure was human and had apparently drowned—it was unconscious—there were still a few of the drunker ones who refused to believe it and who continued giggling. That Hall! Of course, those who knew him at all well knew he would never put a black anything anywhere near his house.

The figure was at least twice the size of a regular man—perhaps larger. And in proportion. There was nothing misshapen or ugly about him. He wasn't bloated. If anything, he was a handsome black, in his early twenties, and with a smile—a big smile. It was the smile that made some of the revelers think at first that he was just sleeping—that and the fact that he was lying on his back. But when he was yanked at and shaken, he didn't show in any way that he was alive and everybody finally decided that he had drowned and had been washed up onto the shore since he was right on the ocean's edge. However, there was one drunk who said he still thought that Hall and Liz were putting him on. They had hired him from some circus, he said. He wobbled over to the black and almost losing his balance put his lips close to his four or five-inch long ear and yelled: "Time to get up, the show's over!"

A few scoffed at him, but by this time mostly everyone had sobered up enough to realize what was going on. Especially after Hall and Liz kept saying—swearing—that they had nothing to do with it. Hall in fact was mad—damn mad—about it. Goddamn nigger on my beach," he kept exclaiming. "Next thing you know, they'll be right in the house!" Then when he was the first to say that somebody ought to call for an ambulance—a lot of his guests were surprised until they heard him say that that would be the quickest way to get rid of the man.

Hall must not have realized that the black was way too big to fit in an ambulance. Two or three guests said that they ought to get some blankets to put over him. Hal had thrown his coat over the black's privates right away. The blankets would have to be gotten from Hall and Liz's house of course since nobody else lived as close to the beach as they did—not that anybody expected Hall to do it. But Hall immediately put his drink down and, with George Bascomb tagging along, ran off to his house. He yelled back, "I'm going to phone the cops!" and he added that he was going to get something more suitable to put over the black's private parts.

As soon as Hall left, Hank Martin lowered his ear to the black's chest and listened for a heartbeat. "Hear anything?" someone asked him. He said, "he didn't; the body wasn't even warm."

Not telling how long he's been lying here with nobody knowing it. Hall said as he began to press on the man's chest attempting to give him artificial respiration. Others agreed; considering that no one else was likely to be out walking on the beach in such weather (and no one was out walking now that was for sure) moreover nobody was apt to notice the body from a house farther along the shore because of the fog and drizzle and darkness. In fact, there was no sign of life that they had definitely been washed ashore.

"Aren't you supposed to turn them over when you give them artificial respiration? Liz asked Hall.

"Not anymore," he said. "If I doubt I could turn him over anyway."

After a minute or so during which the black showed no sign of life somebody said: "Breathe in his mouth, Hank, but Hall didn't want to do that. He didn't do it, and he didn't say anything. He just kept on pressing on the man's chest. Every once in a while he'd say: 'No telling how long he's been in the water.'"

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WASN'T A BLEMISH ON HIS SKIN. Considering how good he looked—healthy—it was hard to think of him as dead, especially with that smile, which he never lost, it was almost a laugh.

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Apparantly he hadn't been in the water long enough though for the fish to get him there wasn't any sign on his body that anybody could see. Wasn't a blemish on his skin although Hank did say that he seemed to have some sort of small cut on his face but that it was too dark now for him to see it clearly.

Considering how good he looked—healthy—it was hard to think of him as dead especially with that smile which he never lost. It was eerie. Can you keep a smile after you're dead? somebody asked softly Nobody really knew, but they assumed you could. For there wasn't a sign of life about him. No matter how good he looked. By this time the man who had yelled: "Time to get the show over!" kept looking back to the house. His glass was empty, and the black was dead. Before he headed back to the house, he said: "Maybe it's lucky for us he's dead, as big as he is."

Of course there had been talk about his size. Whether he was alive or not was in a way secondary to his size. After all you could understand how somebody might drown, but how could a person his size—at least twice as big as anybody else they had ever seen—exist? Especially in this neighborhood! Hall had said before he went to the house. He meant a black in this neighborhood, not that he had anything to do with it. (Some thought then anyway. Whether the neighborhood was all white or not had nothing to do with his size. A couple of the soberer ones pointed out. Others who knew Hall better weren't so sure. They said that the very size of the black made the whole thing some what rational from Hall's standpoint considering what he'd said all his life about blacks not that he called them by that name, of course. And it was common knowledge what he'd done after he'd found out about that voodoo place some people had tried to start not far from his house a short time ago. There had been talk of shootouts, not to mention the fire but Hall as usual had come out of it smiling. Anyway at this point the black lay there without a sign of life. The writer the theories got: 'dead, soberer, dead and moving—if that's what it was. There were a lot of nervous chuckles every time somebody said where he thought the giant might have come from. Flying saucers were even mentioned.

By the time Hall and George returned from the house the drizzle had turned into a steady rain. Hall said he'd phoned the cops and that they were calling an ambulance. He had brought a couple of blankets back to cover the man. When Hank put the blankets over him end to end, they just barely covered him.

Everyone simply stood around in the rain—those who hadn't gone back to the house already that is—until Hall said: "If you all want to go back to the house I'll stay here until the cops come. No use everybody getting soaked!"

So everybody who was left except for Hank and Hall started back to the house carrying their empty glasses with them. Then Hall decided he'd go back too saying, "I'm not about to get wet because of a dead nigger!"

Hank thought he saw one of the blankets move above an arm (he was later to say) Then he heard what might have been a voice. It might have been the wind though and in such darkness who could be certain the blanket moved? But when the blanket moved again—either from the wind or from the giant—Hank started to walk to the house. There was nothing he could accomplish by staying by the body and he needed a drink. He had guiled one drink and was starting another when a police car and then an ambulance pulled into Hall's driveway. Hall and George Bascomb and a few of the police and the ambulance attendant down to the beach. Most of the guests remained in the house, including Hank. At that point he hadn't told anybody about the blanket's moving or about the
As goes, "The-
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selves."

The weekly death rate in Los Angeles promptly dropped from 19.0 deaths per 100,000 to an average of 16.2 per 100,000 during the strike-bound five weeks. When the doctors went busily back to their stereoscopes and tongue depressors, the weekly death rate promptly jumped to an average of 20.4 per 100,000 over the next five weeks.

The most likely reason for this decline seems to rest in the elimination of cephalic surgery (the kind a patient wants for the fun of it). Doctors denied this. They said at least part of the drop was due to the elimination of necessary surgery (the kind a doctor wants for the fun of it). This is an actual, well-documented event because it happened in Los Angeles. Similar events (the actuality of which we cannot guarantee) can be discovered by an assiduous combing of small-town newspapers.

Knothole, Tennessee: June 25. The police strike that has taken place in this fair town is now in its sixth week. Nowhere is a policeman to be seen; the police cars languish in their garages.

And the crime rate is very down, because for six weeks the Citizens Action Committee "put it on." We get in little right after sunset. That way there's no mugging and also with us right here with our baseball bats and switchblades there are no break-ins, and that means you, buddy. I don't care if you do say you're a reporter just stay on your side of the road.

Sparks, Nevada, three times loser, agrees. "The police strike has elimi-
ated stealing beneath the stars. It deprives the citizen of beauty. It deprives us of our skulls or wallets, whichever is trickier."

Hardbit, Vermont. July 18. The town of Hardbit has not seen a piece of mail move in two months, as the local postal employees, all veterans of the Louisiana Occupation of 1958, declared a Preventive Mail Strike. "It's not that we're on strike, said Ehrich O'Konski, head of the local postal union. "We just don't work on holidays."

The divorce rate is, of course, way down. Hardbit lawyers are depressed, economically and emotionally.

Said attorney Geraldine Upanshad:

"It's obvious that the American husband and the American doctor are being deprived of their Constitutional right to write indescribable letters or vows to end a
this vicious marriage of family peace. The strike is almost over. Society will break down and worse lawyers will lose a lot of money."
He was the first alien to appear on TV. Ever. And his act really set Jerry and the world on their ears

THE LAST JERRY FAGIN SHOW

BY JOHN MORRESSY

The other networks were wiped out, and they knew it. After wardrobe would be no more "Big Thrive." There would be only one network, and Jerry Fagin would rule it like a king.

The others tried to put up a fight, of course. There are no good losers in this business. One network threw together a nude musical version of the Kama Sutra. Another did a live eight-hour report on torture and execution of political prisoners around the world. The PBS stations had the best solution. They ran the Fischer-Spassky match.

But only the Jerry Fagin Show could offer a real live, honest-to-God 360-degree alien from outer space as a guest! The projected audience was 99.9 percent of all potential viewers. It was figured that 0.4 percent would tune in to the other networks purely out of habit; and the remaining 0.3 percent would be watching their own canned reruns of The Lawrence Welk Show.

Given Jerry's personality and the nature of the television industry, the wipeout was inevitable. A cove of tigers can be pretty impressive, but if you drop a gigantic dinosaur into the cove, the tigers all of a sudden turn into pussycats.

And Jerry Fagin was looking like a very big, tyrannosaurus rex. He had been one all along, but he kept the fact hidden. Most people thought he was a pussycat. Those of us who knew better said nothing—and kept our jobs.

Jerry Fagin was a funny man, as everybody knows. He had half a dozen foolproof comic characters, but he didn't really need any of them. He could stand in front of a camera deadpan, hands in his pockets, looking up at the ceiling, and recite a monologue that had everybody helpless with laughter. He was born with pure comic instinct. At a party I've seen him zero in on the one person out of maybe two hundred total strangers who could read him perfect straight lines.

Jerry was probably the funniest man I ever worked for, and I've worked for them all. Along with all the funny he had a streak of pure killer. But Jerry had talent, and, more important, he had luck. The killer side hardly ever showed. He always seemed to be on the stage at the right time or to know just the right person and have something on him.

So he wound up, at twenty-nine, hosting Late Night Live. At thirty, he was the hottest thing in the industry. The Late Night Live title was forgotten.

Everybody called it The Jerry Fagin Show.

Jerry could play an audience like Horowitz playing the tinkle, or the piano, or whatever the hell Horowitz plays. You know what I mean? He was hot, okay? He was hot. And he could play a live show, too. But he would not return for reruns of his show.

Most people thought he was a pussycat. Those of us who knew better said nothing—and kept our jobs.

Painting by Donald Roller Wilson
and made them into stars with shows of their own. Just by holding up a book, he could turn a piece of schlock into an unknown hack into a best-seller. He could take a clubhouse errand boy and make him into a political figure. And he did. And they always paid.

The payoff was never in money. By this time Jerry wasn’t worried about money. He wanted other things. He just hung in there and smiled and played kindly Uncle Jerry until he needed a favor. He never had to ask twice. Everybody knew that what Jerry Fagin had built up overnight he could tear down just as fast.

When the alien ship landed in Washington Jerry counted up his I.O.Us and decided that it was pay-up time. He must have called in every one he had got that thing on his show but he succeeded. At the personal request of the President no less.

The alien was called Twelve. He came from a planet with a name that sounded like cowlop being tossed into a mudhole Some White House speech writer tagged it Brother Earth, and that was the name that stuck over the protests of the enraged feminists.

Twelve looked like a human being designed by a committee and built by nursery-school dropout. He seemed to have started out to be symmetrical, but instead had two arms and two legs like us, but the were of different lengths and thicknesses and set just a bit off center. Body lumpy as a potato with a smaller potato for a head. Two eyes, a nose, and a mouth, but they moved around like the features of a melting snowman. Above one eye was a shiny spot. Twelve called it the weax and tried to explain its function. No one understood a damned thing he said about it. They figured it was some kind of ear and let it go at that.

Aside from his weax and a few other small details mostly internal, Twelve made himself pretty clear right from the start. It turned out that he had been orbiting Earth for the last sixty-three halluines which was somewhere around twenty-seven of our years. All that time he was searching out the symmetrical, but instead had two arms and two legs like us, but the were of different lengths and thicknesses and set just a bit off center. Body lumpy as a potato with a smaller potato for a head. Two eyes, a nose, and a mouth, but they moved around like the features of a melting snowman. Above one eye was a shiny spot. Twelve called it the weax and tried to explain its function. No one understood a damned thing he said about it. They figured it was some kind of ear and let it go at that.

For one thing, I think Twelve never really grasped the fact that there’s a difference — most of the time anyway — between a sitcom rerun and the Eleven O’Clock News or an old Cagney movie and a junk food commercial. They were all new to him and all equally real. Or unreal. Or whatever.

Twelve’s civilization had no word for entertainment. The concept simply did not exist for them. They did have some kind of music, but it wasn’t in an art form, it was a part of their digestive process. And that was all. They had no drama, no literature of any kind no art, and absolutely no sense of humor.

They didn’t have wars either and Twelve didn’t seem to know what weapons were for. So everyone breathed a lot easier.

Now it was clear to me that if you’re going to interview something like Twelve on television, live — before the biggest audience in history — you go get Savannah out of retirement, or you hunt up a Lippman or a Cronkite or somebody serious like that. You want the kind of people who cover elections and moon landings. You don’t want Jerry Fagin.

But nobody asked me Jerry Fagin landed the alien and scheduled him for a Friday night show. Than he sat back read the headlines listened to his telephones, and gazed

I watched the show myself that night and I certainly didn’t gloat. I had been alone most of the past month ever since Jerry dropped me from his staff loudly and publicly. In his business there is nobody as unassuming as a loser and an out-of-work comedy writer is a loser of the Hindenburg class.

So I settled in hoping to see Jerry screw up and blow his big moment and knowing all the time that no matter how big a son of a bitch Jerry Fagin might be, he was a pro and this would be the show of his career. But I could hope.

At the same time I didn’t want to see Jerry completely wrecked just badly damaged and requiring some repairs. Humiliation and disgrace were fine but I didn’t want him ruined. He was still my best potential source of income, and I was starting to feel the pinch. Trouble tonight and Jerry would be calling me back asking me to polish up some of the failure proof routines that had helped put him where he was. And I’d be there. I was not about to turn down the best paying job in the business just because Jerry had made me look like a fool in public and closed every studio door to me. I mean I have my pride but I have my bills too.

I started watching early so I could savor the full hype. Spot announcements every fifteen minutes. On the Seven O’Clock News, a special five-minute report on the universe. At eight thirty minutes of interviews with astronomers, futurologists clergymen, science fiction writers, senators, a rock group, and the president of the Descendants of the Prehistoric Alien Visitors. During the nine-thirty commercial interlude, two toothpaste commercials, a dozen deodorants and deodorants hawked in bits starring respectively from animal farmers, cowhands and cowboys, and housewives and aliens — I started drinking. I could tell it was going to be better than a one-night stand and I wanted to start early and avoid having to rush thins later on.

After the barrage of commercials came a special one hour feature on alien visitas as depicted by Hollywood. Sixty minutes of blobs globs bugs bugs crawling eyes brain-eaters body snatchers mind stealers worms germ robots and androids and every ten minutes a screaming reminder of tonight’s one-in-a-lifetime Jerry Fagin Show.

What kind of impression all this was supposed to make on Twelve I could not imagine. Maybe they made sure he was nowhere near a television set.

After ten thirty a longer louder announcement. Then after the mature viewer commercials — wine tampons and laxatives peddled respectively by diplomats and aliens female skydivers and aliens and grandfather and aliens — a half-hour special to remind the viewer who might have forgotten that there are nine planets in the solar system that we are but a grain of sand on the shore of the great ocean of infinity and so on. Very profound stuff delivered like Spermatozoon or an insurance commercial I kept on drinking.

Eleven o’clock brought the traditional mix of news commercials and station ID and then at eleven thirty came the Jerry Fagin Show. It was presented like the Second Coming.

The familiar Jerry Fagin theme was gone and so was the studio orchestra. In their place was a selection from The Planets performed by the Hollywood Symphony and the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. Billy Bragg. Jerry’s apple-cheeked, white-haired, butterball of an announcer did no clowing on this sacred night. He marched on camera with the step of a man in a college commencement procession. He was in white-tie and tails. I took another big drink.

As I should have anticipated Jerry was playing with his audience. After the solemn buildup the show opened with a young comic. Billy appealed for a big hand for the kid in his first TV appearance, and the poor jerk — his name was Frankie Mars for God’s sake — came on and did a monologue about aliens landing in Brooklyn. It was the thirastic first one I heard since Twelve’s arrival. There were alien-end-Puerto Rican jokes alien-and-cap jokes Jewish mother and alien jokes. I found it all very cozy and familiar. I had stolen a lot of
those very same gags for my early sketches.

The comic died, and he was followed by a singer who did a new number written in honor of Twelve. The only lines I can remember are: "The whole room rocks, and I shake in my socks when you jiggie your eyes and wink your weto. The rest was a lot worse.

The singer gave it all he had but she went down like the Titanic same as Frankie Mars. Scattered applause from three relatives in the studio audience silence from everybody else. The entire home audience was either in the bathroom or at the refraction orators and singers they could get anytime. What they wanted was Jerry and his guest.

That was a distinct Jerry Fagin touch. Subtle and deadly I could picture him settling it up. The Uncle Jerry smile and this will be the biggest audience in history and I'm going to give some new talent a chance. And it's not until they're on camera that the new talent realizes that they couldn't hold this audience if they stripped naked and sacrificed themselves to a trash compactor. I wondered why Jerry had picked this particular comic and this particular singer to destroy. Probably an interesting story there if I could dig it out. I drank to their memory.

Jerry sauntered on camera white-tie and all and was greeted with five solid minutes of uproar. He stood with his hands in his pockets, looking humble and saintly and when the noise died down, he made a little speech in which he used the words honor nine times and privilege eight. Grateful came up eleven times. In just over a minute.

Then Twelve appeared at last. I turned the welcoming ovation low and took a good look. He moved smoothly for something as topsided as he appeared to be. The lumpy grayish-brown plastic sack that covered his pale body didn't help his looks much. He looked like something that stepped off the cover of a cereal box and those wacky wandering, off-center features were halfway between a nightmare monster and an idiot mask.

I turned up the sound. The people in the audience were still applauding wildly and Jerry let them go on. But when someone whistled, Jerry held up his hands for quiet. Twelve's eyes and nose moved around a little and then were still.

"Our guest, has requested one courtesy," Jerry said. "Whistling sets up a painful feedback in his communication apparatus. So I must insist that no one whistles during the show.

Thank you, Mr. Jerry Fagin," said Twelve. His voice rolled out in a deep, gluey flow like gravel being tumbled around in syrup.

Thank you for consenting to appear on our show. Mr. Ambassador. It's a great honor. Jerry said.

Once Jerry got started thanking he couldn't stop himself. He thanked the President. Congress the armed forces the American people, the audience, the network. His friends, his sponsors, individually by name—his parents, and his current wife. Then went on to thank the rulers of Twelve's planet, the spaceship industry there, and everyone else—right down to Newton, Galileo, and Einstein—who might possibly have had a bearing on Twelve's appearance here. The only name he didn't drop was God's. Maybe he should have thrown that in.

Finally, after all the preliminaries and all the back-patting, Twelve got his chance to speak. This was the big moment: the message to humankind from outer space the voice from the stars. Everyone listened in absolute silence. And Twelve was boring as hell. It's ridiculous to think that someone who has actually crossed interstellar space with words from another world could be dull, but that's what Twelve was. He may have been dynamite on his own world, but on Earth he was a dud. It wasn't entirely his fault. In his monitoring he had picked up every cliche in the English language and he was using all of them. That burly voice didn't help either.

By the time Twelve had assured everyone that he looked upon his mission as a great and historic challenge. That he came in hopes of establishing a lasting friendship between our two great peoples, that a new era in the history of the galaxy was dawning and he was proud and humbled to be given the chance to serve and so on and so on—it sounded as if he had memorized every campaign handout of the past forty years. Jerry could smell trouble. The studio audience was liddening nosily. People were coughing and shifting their feet.

I caught the quick flicking of the eyes the giveaway that Jerry was getting edgy. I could almost hear his brain going. Here was Jerry on the biggest night of his career the biggest night in television history and his guest was bombing. He could picture that audience of a hundred ninety-two million American viewers scratching their bellies and saying, "Hey Honey, what do you say we switch over to the naked dancers on Channel 8?"

So Jerry made his move. If Twelve couldn't carry his weight as a guest, he'd just have to pay his passage any way he could.

Twelve was gurgling on ending a long speech about interplanetary solidarity. I returned my attention to him. With shared hope for the future and with a deep and abiding faith in the basic decency and fundamental goodwill of the fine people of Earth that encourages me to predict a new age of brotherhood and justice in which races will ask not what the galaxy will do for their planet but rather what their planet can do for every man that ever lived.
do for the galaxy," he said.

"There was polite applause. Twelve looked pleased, but he wasn't in the business. The applause was the kind that sounds in every performer's ears like a death rattle."

"That's just the way my daddy used to put it," Jerry said, turning to the audience.

That drew the first laugh of the evening. Everyone recognized the tag line of one of Jerry's oldest characters: Daddy Lumox the Clumsy Cop. It gave the audience something safe and familiar to deal with. They knew how to react now.

But in a higher sense, this night represents only the beginning of what I venture to call the Galactic Age. Twelve went on for there is much to be done before we march together with arms linked in friendship and trust to meet the challenge of the future.

That sounds mighty good. But we do it different back home," Jerry said.

The audience caught that one too and chuckled at his heart. It was the tag line of my very own character: Elmo Klunk the Shatcutter Abroad. Elmo was one of Jerry's girlfriends. He was dependably sure to make an appearance at least once every two weeks. The audience loosened up and laughed a bit louder and longer.

I poured another drink. A bigger one and edged forward on my chair. It wasn't every night that you get to see an alien visitor turned into a stooge.

"We're honored by your tribute, Mr. Ambassador," Jerry said. "But I'm sure you understand our audience's curiosity about your planet and its customs. For instance, I'm told that you have no comedy on your world."

"It is correct, we have no comedy," Jerry nodded sympathetically. "I've run into the same problem. You must need new writers."

"I felt that one night between the shoulders. Welcome to Pearl Harbor; this is your host, Jerry Fegan. If my glass hadn't been nearly full, I would have thrown it at the screen."

"Twelve" after a pause, burbled, "It is correct, we have no writers."

"I'll let you have mine. You still won't have any comedy but you'll be getting a great bowling team."

"Again, Twelve" paused amidst the laughter to evaluate Jerry's line and said, "I know this bowling that is the work of your Saturdays in the regressing hallucinations. We have no bowling."

"No comedy no writers, no bowling. Tell me, Mr. Ambassador, what do your people do for entertainment?"

"It is correct, we have no entertainment. I do not grasp the concept."

"It is simple. Entertainment is what you do when you're not working."

"Twelve was silent for a longer time. Clearly he was having trouble with Jerry's lines which weren't saying what they appeared to be saying. The audience tilted with anticipation. Finally in a gurgle that already sounded to me to be a bit defensive, Twelve said, 'When we are not working, we sleep.'"

"Like all those people who used to watch the other networks, I see. But seriously, Mr. Ambassador. And Jerry went on a little faster now confident feeling the audience with him. They were laughing in the right places, waiting for the lines they knew he was going to feed his stooge from outer space."

"Jerry jumped from topic to topic, always balancing the serious question with the quick punch line or asking a dumb question and then going stargazer alike until the audience was helpless and Twelve didn't know what the hell he was doing. Those stupid responses came slower and slower. The pause was longer than the one before. Finally when Jerry got on the subject of reproduction, Twelve gave up completely and sat very still. Except for his eyes and nose and mouth. They were crawling around his face like flies trapped in vanilla pudding."

"By now Jerry was laughing. The biggest audience in TV history was watching him, and he was showing them that nobody and nothing—not even a creature from another world—could top Jerry Fegan on his own show. I caught the wild piercing gleam of ego in Jerry's eyes as he stood up, toyed his hair and boomed out. Well, I'll tell you the whole story, but you'll have to promise not to interrupt me. It's not a story one can't stand. It's an interrupter."

"He was slipping into a favorite character: Senator Wyn Baggs, the filibuster champion of Washington. The audience applauded and howled with delight. Recognition as Jerry ranted on."

All this time Twelve sat like a statue, watching every move that Jerry made. He didn't look angry or insulted. At least, nothing on that Sissy Putty face suggested irritation. As far as I could see, Twelve was fascinated. It was as if he had Jerry under a microscope and couldn't believe what he was seeing. And Jerry ate up the attention like a kid with a hot fudge sundae."

"Then Twelve threw up both his arms in a 'Eureka!' gesture. I could almost see an old-fashioned light bulb go on over his head. For the first time that night his features stayed put. The audience got very quiet all of a sudden."

"This is a tohar-metox!" Twelve announced suddenly as if that explained everything.

"Instinctively, Jerry tapped him. 'If it is you'll wipe it up. But I fought to warn you—the producer's wife loves it'"

"Twelve worked his face around into something like an uneasy smile. Now he becomes clear what is my role in this ritual. He said. His voice sounded a little less goofy."

"When Twelve began to get up, Jerry had the first whiff of trouble ahead. He bounced to his feet while Twelve was still halfway up and with a big smile at his guest he said, 'Thank you, Mr. Ambassador, for honoring us by consenting to appear on The Jerry Fagan Show. It has been a great pleasure and an exciting experience for all of us. And we're sorry you have to rush off, but we know how crowded your schedule is."

"Stepping to the forestage, Jerry began to clap. And now let's have a big hand for the ambassador, he said to the delighted audience."

"That didn't stop Twelve, who was acting like a kid who has just learned the facts of life. In my ignorance I assumed that this was to be a hoorary encounter I employed my fourth voice. Had I known that it was to be a tohar-metox, I would have spoken thrithly. Please forgive me. Mr. Jerry Fagan."

"On the last few words, as Twelve took his place at Jerry's side, his voice had changed completely. It was really weird. I wondered whether Jerry had somehow shocked the alien into instant puberty. In seconds Twelve had gone from that sumpry purple to a flat staccato, nowhere in particular accent not a hell of a lot different from Jerry's."

"Please take my wife," he said.

"Nobody made a sound. They probably all thought Twelve was going out of his head. So did I for just an instant and then I recognized that line and had my first clue of what Twelve was up to."

"I didn't believe it. It was too crazy. But when Twelve wobbled his face a little—just a little very nervously—it all became clear. He was mugging for a laugh. This crazy-looking thing from outer space that couldn't even get a word one-liner straight was trying to be a stand-up comic. I felt kind of sorry for the poor bloke. Imagine coming all that way and bombing on your very first appearance."

"What I didn't know at the time was that July learned fast."

"Thanks again, Mr. Ambassador. Jerry said, edging away. You've been a wonderful guest, and we hope you'll visit us again whenever your demanding schedule permits."

"It's a pleasure to be here. Jerry, Twelve" said, stepping in front of his host, talking directly to the audience. "I would have been here earlier but there was a holdup in traffic. I stopped for a light and two men held me up. He did a quick jerk of his features—eyes left—nose right. The audience laughed. They were cautious about it but they laughed."

"We're all sorry to hear that. Mr. Ambassador. And now our next guest, the well-known—Jerry started to say but Twelve went right on."

The producer took me to dinner at this place on Fifty fourth. The salad wasn't bad. I didn't like the little men in loincloths who kept dipping their arrows into the Russian dressing."

Well-known star of stage and screen
who for the past three seasons has been delighting viewers with her portrayal—Jerry tried again, louder pushing in front of the alien.

Twelve rolled his eyes in opposite directions, and blinked his wag. "I asked the waiter if the lobster Newburg was any good. He said, 'Where did you see that on the menu?'' I said, 'I didn't see it on the menu. I saw it on your tie.' The audience laughed harder and longer this time. They liked him.

Shoving Twelve aside, Jerry snarled, "This lovely and talented lady who has won the hearts of millions of viewers with her portrayal of the zany lovable Mrs. Pregnowski in—"

Twelve reeled, staggered back, waved his arms, did a flying leap into the air and came down in a classic pratfall with a noise like a bagpipe assaulting a whoopee cushion. The audience went wild, applauding and cheering, drowning Jerry out completely. When Twelve climbed to his feet, his nose doing a back-and-forth crawl like a slow pendulum, he had to signal for quiet before he could be heard.

"The producer said, 'I hate to eat and run, but the way I tip it is absolutely necessary.' He said spinning both forearms around like propellers.

The material was lousy sure but I could see that Twelve had a great natural delivery. With a good writer, he could go places. A show of his own, maybe.

What happened next. I will never believe was an accident. The camera cut to Jerry purple-faced, restrained by four elderly security guards and a weeping producer it held on the group. One hundred ninety two million viewers heard Jerry scream, 'Get that mosh-faced interstellar son of a bitch off my stage! Shoot him! Drop a light on him! He's killing us!'

Which was an exaggeration. Twelve was doing wonders for the show. He was only killing Jerry.

We call the show Twelve at Twelve now even though it still comes on half an hour before midnight. The producer felt that Twelve at Eleven-thirty would only confuse people.

But Twelve is a great guy to work for. It's a nostalgia trip just talking to him. During those years he was monitoring, he heard all the greats—Barrie, Gleason, Caesar, Groucho, Carson you name them—and memorized every gag every shrick every bit of business. He just didn't know what the hell to do with his material until he saw Jerry putting it all together. Now Twelve is like a guy who's found his true calling. I think he's going to stay right here on Earth and in the business for good.

Twelve is also a very hard worker. He drops in every afternoon to run through the monologue for that night's show. We've already come up with some lines that everyone in the world recognizes. I've seen "Well, wink my weex" on everything from kids lunch boxes to bikinis, and a day doesn't pass without my hearing someone say, "Please take my wife" and then seeing him collapse in hysteric.

Even Henny Youngman used it when Twelve had him on the show as a guest.

We have a good running gag going on Twelve's dumb friend from home Old Thirty-one. And if a line goes that all he has to do is jiggle his features and the audience breaks up.

He's even developing into a good impressionist. Some of his impressions are weird—he's the only one I know who does all the members of the Politburo while simultaneously trying to get a stuffed elk into a Honda—but his Jack Benny is nearly perfect.

What convinces me that Twelve is in the business to stay is that he's learned to be sincere. Two nights ago he graciously had Jerry back as a special guest to celebrate Jerry's new afternoon quiz show. They were hugging like a couple of high-school sweethearts.

Twelve was beautiful. A real pro. He ended the show by wiping his eyes, putting an arm around Jerry and saying, 'This crazy guy is my closest friend on your whole wonderful planet. Everything I have I owe to Jerry Fagin.'

I could tell from Jerry's expression that he'd love to collect.

But my money is on Twelve.
Surrealistic images mirror the Japanese predilection for science fiction.

EASTERN EXPOSURES

BY ROBERT SHECKLEY

Science-fiction publishing is booming in Japan and has established itself as a popular art form. This comes as no surprise: The many ancient Japanese legends are science fiction in all but the gadgetry, and there has been a strong taste throughout Japanese history for folktales of a fantastic and macabre nature. The jump to science fiction presented no difficulty for an audience that already had an established taste for the strange, combined with a strong inclination toward scientific achievement. Science fiction proper began in Japan during the 1870s, when the country was undergoing violent modernization. Translations of Jules Verne's novels found an immediate and enthusiastic audience, and

Left and above: Haruo Takino's classic Zen Me emphasizes an visual simplicity creates a subtle stage for the high drama inherent in the new Japanese art.
Verne's influence can be seen in early Japanese works. Shunro Oshikawa (1877–1914), known as Japan's first native science-fiction writer, wrote "Undersea Battleship" in 1900, presenting a Captain Nemo of the Far East. Oshikawa's effort was prophetic, also, since it accurately predicted the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905 and heralded a trend toward technological fiction.

Between the two world wars, native writers of science fiction and fantasy began appearing in print. But the form really took off after the Second World War. There were a number of elements that made up its popularity: a national predilection for novelty; the flood of science-fiction paperbacks left behind by the U.S. occupation forces; the effect of American technology upon a proud, resourceful, and ingenious people; and the innate Japanese taste for modernism. Of great importance also was Wernher von Braun's and Willy Ley's popular treatment of man in space in the early Fifties and Chesley Bonestell's artwork, with its widespread influence on young artists. These factors have made Japan unique among Far Eastern nations and have produced the country's extensive

"The Japanese possess a unique ability to sharpen the perception of our highest technology."
The Western seed of surrealism, planted in the Twenties, has blossomed into Eastern flowers.

Publishing and movie interests in science fiction. Japan is the second-largest market for science fiction after the United States, according to Ken Sekiguchi, an editor who knows Japanese publishing. "There are five monthly SF magazines whose combined circulation is in the hundreds of thousands." Between 1957 and 1974 the pioneering publishing firm of Hayakawa SF Series published 318 volumes of translations. Edgar Rice Burroughs, E. E. "Doc" Smith, and Robert A. Heinlein became the most popular English-language science-fiction authors. Today English translations are still widely circulated, but a number of native authors are also gaining prominence in the field. "Sakyo Komatsu, author of Japan Sinks, is the greatest science-fiction writer in Japan today," Sekiguchi declares.

Clockwise from right: Junichi Ohkawa makes liberal use of double exposures (right and above), the art of Yu Kasamatsu (top left), Natsuo Noma (top right) reflects a fascination with odd juxtapositions.
Three years ago OMNI magazine pioneered a revolution in science publishing, travelling to and beyond the known horizons of our world, returning with fascinating and fantastic stories, in language we could all understand. OMNI looked inside the atom and across the breadth of the universe, discussed black holes, dissected the human mind, searched for UFO's soberly and described genetic engineering simply. And OMNI continues to journey the new frontier—that space and moment straddling our incredible todays and our even more exciting tomorrows.

Read the philosophies and fiction of B.F. Skinner, Ray Bradbury, Carl Sagan, Frederik Pohl, Robert Heinlein, Isaac Asimov, Gerard K. O'Neill and Stephen King, and read about the scientists and their science, the architects of our future. Imagination is the soul of our civilization. OMNI is the magazine that best captures and reflects that spirit, that wonder, that imagination.