

DAY OF THE GREAT SHOUT

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They were reborn on a fairer planet — to a new life, and a puzzle that shook the worlds!

He died. He knew that he faced certain oblivion. But then his eyes opened, and he knew from the strong beat of his heart and the power of his muscles that he was no longer dying.

It was so quiet that he could hear the blood moving in his head. The silence sung. He could hear, and he could see, yet he did not know what he was seeing. What were these things above him? Where was he?

He tried to sit up, felt panic as he realized that there was nothing to sit up upon, and was propelled slowly forward by the motion. Ahead, a foot from his fingertips, was a thin rod of bright red metal. He flung his hand out to grasp it, but something invisible was resisting him. It did not push heavily against him, but he had a feeling that some force was blocking him, something as unseen yet present as a heavy wind. Yet the only sensation of moving air came from that caused by his turning body.

He went over slowly in a somersault. Then the resistance brought him to a halt, and he straightened his body out.

At the same time, he sucked in air with a great sawing sound. Though he knew no hold existed he could not help flailing his arms about for one.

Now, he was face “down” —or was it “up”? Whatever the direction, it was opposite to that towards which he had been looking when he had awakened. Not that it mattered. “Above” him and “below” him, the view was the same. And so was his situation.

He was suspended in space and kept from falling by the force that enclosed him in an invisible cocoon. Six feet below him was the body of a woman, a naked young woman with a completely hairless head. She seemed to be asleep; her eyes were closed, and her breasts rose and fell gently. As he was, so she, too. Her body was stretched out as if in a coffin. Her legs were together and straight out and her arms by her sides. As he watched, she turned slowly, revolved as a chicken on a spit.

He became aware that the same force was also rotating him. There was no pressure he could feel, but whatever was buoying him up was also exerting energy to turn him on a spit.

Until now, he had been too stunned to utter a word or to scream. Now what he saw as he described a circle frightened him beyond speech or cry. He who had boasted that he knew no fear was stricken with horror.

At first the objects and the patterns they formed had meant nothing because the entire environment was too alien. After a few seconds something snapped. He could almost hear it, as if a window had suddenly been raised.

Above him, below him, on both sides, as far as he could see in the light — which seemed to be of equal intensity everywhere — bodies floated. They were arranged in vertical and horizontal rows both, and the up-and-down ranks were separated by the red rods, slender as broomsticks, which were a foot or so from both the heads and feet of the bodies. The rows across were divided by a space of about six feet.

The rods rose from an abyss and soared upward beyond the range of his vision. Between them stretched the revolving sleepers. And that grayness into which the bodies and the rods above and below

and left and right disappeared was neither the sky nor the earth. There was no horizon, only the lackluster of infinity.

Directly above him, at a distance of six feet, was a dark man with Tuscan features. The body next to him on his right was that of a Negress, her head hairless as all the others. At his left was a large man with a very fair skin. There was something strange about him, but the waker could not determine what it was until the third revolution.

Then he saw that the right arm, from a point just below the elbow, was red. Perhaps it lacked the outer layer of skin.

A few seconds later, he saw another body, in a row ten people across from him and four up, that lacked a head. Rather, a pink-red lump was on the end of its neck.

He continued turning and observing until he understood that he was in some place, perhaps the most colossal chamber imaginable, in which metal rods must be radiating some force that somehow supported and revolved perhaps millions or more of human beings.

Where was he?

Certainly he was not in the city of Trieste of the Austro-Hungarian Empire of 1890. Just as certainly, he was not on Earth.

He had died. Now he was alive in an afterlife, an event at which he had scoffed. For once, there was no denying that he had been wrong. But neither was there anyone present who seemed inclined to say, "I told you so, you damned infidel!"

Once again, as if this place were to be a continual parade of amazements, he saw something that made him draw in a deep breath. He had seen a body at an angle downwards (or upwards). It was nonhuman. No member of Homo Sapiens had four fingers on each hand and four toes on each foot. Nor a nose with thin black leathery lips like a dog's. Nor a scrotum knobbed as if it contained many small testes. Nor ears with such strange convolutions.

But all the other bodies, as far as he could see, were quite human. And all were sleeping. He alone was conscious.

Very well. He would take advantage of that fact. He must get away and to a place where somebody might have the knowledge he needed.

To decide was to act.

He drew up his legs and kicked and found that the motion drove him forward a half-inch. Again, he kicked and moved against the resistance. But, as he paused, he was slowly moved back towards his original position.

In a flurry of action, kicking his legs and moving his arms in a swimmer's breaststroke, he managed to fight towards the rod before him. The closer he came, the stronger became the web of force. Shortly, he was panting, and his arms and legs began to feel heavy. But he did not stop because he knew that giving up would result in being back where he had been and with less strength. Moreover, it was not his nature to give up until absolute exhaustion seized him.

Thus, when he was breathing hoarsely, his body coated with sweat, his arms and legs moving as if in a thick jelly, and his progress seemed imperceptible, the fingertips of his left hand lightly touched the rod.

At once, he knew which way was down. He fell.

It was as if his touch had broken a spell or broken an electrical circuit. The webs of air around him snapped soundlessly, and he was plunging.

But he was close enough for him to seize the rod with one hand, though the skin of his palm burned, and so bring his body down and against the rod with an impact that threatened to break his pelvic bone. He grunted with pain. Then his other hand had clutched the rod, and his legs were twined about it.

In front of him, on the other side of the rod, the bodies were falling. They descended with the normal velocity of a falling object on Earth, and they maintained their stretched-out attitudes and the original distance between them. They even continued the same rate of revolving; they turned over and over, slowly.

It was then that the puffs of air on his naked sweating back made him twist around on the rod. Behind him, in the row of vertically arranged bodies that he had just occupied, the sleepers were also falling. One after the other, like statues methodically dropped through a trapdoor, they hurtled. Their feet missed his head by a few inches; he was fortunate not to have been knocked off the rod and sent plunging with them.

One after the other, in stately but frightening procession, they fell. Body after body shooting down while, on either sides, the other rows of millions upon millions slept on.

For a while, he stared. Then he began counting those on his left until he had reached 3001. After that, he quit and gazed as the cataract of flesh continued. How far up, how immeasurably far up, were they stacked? He looked down. To the limits of his sight, they were still falling. And he, unwittingly, had precipitated them when his touch had disrupted some force emanating from the rod.

His head jerked upright, and he forgot about the fallers. Another noise than the whoosh of displaced air had reached him. Somewhere overhead, a humming noise had started.

For a minute he could not locate the source of the noise. Then he saw a narrow craft, shaped like a canoe but of some bright green metallic substance, sinking down between the six feet of space between the columns of fallers and the columns of suspended. A face peered over the edge. The craft stopped, and the humming noise ceased.

Another face appeared beside the first. It, like the other, had dark hair, in contrast with all the shaven heads around it. However, the owners of the faces were too far away for the man on the rod to discern any individuality of feature. They were archetypes of faces: thin lines for eyebrows, holes for eyes, angles for noses, slits for lips.



Presently, the heads withdrew. The humming was renewed, and the craft again descended towards him. Slowly it grew larger until, about five feet above him, it halted once more. One of the occupants spoke in a liquid language with many vowels, few consonants, and a distinct and frequently recurring glottal stop. It sounded like a Polynesian tongue.

Abruptly the invisible cocoon was replaced. The falling bodies visibly slowed in their rate of descent, then stopped. And the man on the rod could feel the retaining force close in on him and begin to lift him up. Though he clung to the rod, his legs were finally forced up and then away and his trunk followed.

Soon he was looking downward. Then his hands were torn loose, and he began to drift upward.

Somehow he managed to twist around so that he could face the two in the flying machine. They were not going to capture him as they would a sheep.

But a bare arm and a bejewelled hand were thrust forth from the craft, and in the hand was a pencil-sized metal object. Obviously, it was a weapon of some sort, for the possessor was sighting along it.

The floater shouted with rage and hate and frustration and flailed his arms to swim towards the two in the machine.

"I'll kill!" he screamed. "Kill! Kill!"
Oblivion came again.

God was standing over him and looking down at him as he lay on the grass by the waters. He lay wide-eyed as a new-horn baby weak with the shock of birth. God was poking him in the ribs with the end of an iron cane. God was a tall man of middle age. He had a long black forked beard, and He was dressed in the clothes an English gentleman wore during the 53rd year of Queen Victoria's reign.

"You're late," said God. "Long past due for the payment of your debt, you know."

"What debt?" said Richard Francis Burton. He passed his fingertips over his ribs to make sure that none had been removed.

"You owe for the flesh," replied God, poking him again with the cane. "Not to mention the spirit, both of which are one and the same thing."

Burton struggled to get up and onto his feet. Nobody, not even God, was going to punch Richard Burton and get away without a battle.

God, ignoring the futile efforts, pulled a large gold watch from His vest pocket, unsnapped its cover, looked at the hands and said, "Long past due."

God held out His other hand, its palm turned up.

"Pay up, sir. Otherwise, I'll be forced to foreclose."

"Foreclose on what?" said Burton.

Darkness fell, and God began to dissolve into the darkness. It was then that Burton saw that God resembled himself, Burton. He had the same black hair, the same Arabic-seeming face with the dark stabbing eyes, high cheekbones, heavy lips, and thrust-out deeply cleft chin. The same long deep scar, testimony to the wound inflicted by a Somali spearman in that fight at Berberah, was on His left cheek. His small hands and feet contrasted strangely with His broad shoulders and massive chest. And He had the long thick moustachios and the long forked beard that had caused the Bedouin to name Burton the "Father of Moustaches."

"You look like the devil," said Burton, but God had dissolved into the shadows.

II

Burton became aware that he had been dreaming. He was still sleeping but coming up fast from the depths, so close to the surface of the consciousness that he knew he was dreaming. Light was replacing the night; he could see it not too far away above him.

Then his eyes did open. And he did not know where he was.

Above was blue sky. A gentle breeze flowed over his body. Beneath him was what felt like grass; his hands, palms down, could feel the blades.

He was so amazed that he could not move, could not think clearly. He turned his head slightly to the right and saw a plain of very short, very green grass. Beyond, a range of hills that started out as mere slopes, then became steeper and higher as they climbed towards thick mountains beyond. The hills were covered with trees; the mountains were bluish-green, as if overgrown with a lichen.

Burton turned his head to the left and glimpsed a broad river close by. On the other side was another plain, then hills, then the same incredibly towering mountains.

But he did not linger on them. Between him and the river, which was perhaps two hundred yards away, were many bodies. These were men and women, all of them naked.

Burton rose on one elbow. All along the river's edge were unclothed human beings, spaced about six feet apart. Some were still lying on their backs and gazing into the sky. Others were beginning to stir, to look around.

All had bald heads; it was this that sent his own hands to his own naked skull. He ran his hands over his face.

It, too, was smooth.

Burton looked down at his body. It was not the wrinkled, veined, and withered body of the 69-year old he knew but was as smooth and powerfully muscled as when he had been 25.

And the hundred-or-so scars were gone.

Around his wrist was a thin band of some transparent material. It was connected to a strap, about six inches long, of the same stuff. The other end was clenched about a metallic handle like that of a pail's. The handle, in turn, was fixed to a grayish metal cylinder with a closed cover.

Burton lifted the cylinder; it could not have weighed more than a pound. Certainly it was not steel, for it had a diameter of about a foot and a half and was somewhat over two and a half feet tall.

Every one within his sight had a similar object strapped to his or her wrist.

Unsteadily, his heart racing with with an unfamiliar terror, he rose to his feet. He was beginning to know now what had happened.

Others must have felt as he did, for he could see stark fear on their faces.

Nobody had uttered a word; not one of the thousands he could see had made a sound, though the mouths of many hung open.

They began moving about a title. They shuffled their bare feet way, halted, turned, moved the other way. They did not know where to go.

Suddenly, a woman began moaning. She sank to her knees, threw her shoulders and her head back, and she howled. At the same time, from far down the riverbanks, came a similar howling.

It was as if the woman had given a signal. Or as if she were the key to the mass reaction, and she had turned and unlocked it.

All, or almost all, began screaming or sobbing or tearing at their faces with their nails or beating themselves on the breasts or falling on their knees and lifting their hands in prayer or throwing themselves down and trying to bury their faces in the grass as if, ostrich-like, to avoid being seen, or rolling back and forth in frenzy, barking like dogs or howling like wolves.

Burton felt the collective psyche of humanity trying to seize him, to draw him, too, into panic and hysteria. He wanted to go to his knees and pray for salvation from judgement, for mercy. He did not want to see the blinding face of God appear over the mountains. Like all the rest, he knew suddenly that he was not as brave and not as guiltless as he had thought. Judgment would be a thing so terrifying that he could not bear to think about it.

So he did what he had never done in his life on Earth. He fled. He ran across the plains and towards the foothills. Nor could he keep from venting his terror as he ran; he howled: "No! No! No!" His arms windmilled as if he would fend off unseen terrors; the metallic cylinder at the end of the strap around his wrist whirled around and around.

When he had run as fast as he could across the mile of plain, when he was panting for breath so deeply that he could no longer howl and his legs and arms felt as if hung with weights and his lungs burned and his heart boomed, he threw himself on the ground underneath the first of the trees.

Presently he saw a figure come across the plain toward him. As it got closer, he saw that it was not human.

It was then that Burton was sure that this Resurrection Day was not that which the religion he knew had told him it would be. Burton had not believed in the God portrayed by the Christians, Moslems, or Hindus; in fact, he was not sure that he believed in any Creator whatsoever. He had believed in Richard Francis Burton and a few friends, and he was sure that when he died the world, for him, would cease to exist forever.

Now, seeing the alien approach, he was sure that there was some physical, scientific, reason for his being here; he did not have to resort to Judaeo-Christian-Moslem myths for cause.

The creature — it must be a male — was a biped about 6 feet 8 inches tall. His pink-skinned body was very thin; it had four fingers on each hand and four very long and thin toes on each foot. There were

two dark red spots below the male nipples on the chest. The face was semi-human. Thick black eyebrows swept down to the protruding cheekbones and flared out to cover them with a soft brown down. The sides of his nostrils were fringed with a thin membrane about a sixteenth of an inch long. The thick pad of cartilage on the end of his nose was deeply cleft. The lips were thin, leathery, and black. The ears were lobeless and the convolutions within were nonhuman.

This was the creature he had seen in the tank when he had dreamed his first dream.

Dream? That had been no dream.

Burton rose as the creature approached. He looked around for a stick or a club with which to defend himself if it should be aggressive. He saw none. The tree under which he stood was towering, similar to a huge Norway pine. Near it was a tree of a type he had never seen; this had a thick gnarled trunk with a blackish bark and many thick branches bearing huge green leaves with scarlet lacings.

The creature smiled and revealed quite human teeth. He said, "I hope you speak English. However, I can speak with some fluency in Russian or Chinese."

"You speak English quite well—Midwestern American English," said Burton.

"Thank you," said the creature. "I followed you because you seemed the only person who might be able to talk coherently. Perhaps you have some explanation for this . . . what do you call it? . . . resurrection?"

"No more than you," said Burton. "In fact, I don't have any explanation for you."

The cleft nose of the alien twitched, a gesture which Burton was to find indicated surprise or puzzlement. "No? That is strange. I would have sworn that not one of the 6 billion of Earth's inhabitants had not heard of or seen me on the TV."

"TV?"

The creature's nose twitched again. "You don't know what TV . . ." His voice trailed, then he smiled again. "Of course, how stupid of me! You must have died before I came to Earth!"

"When was that?"

The alien's eyebrows rose (equivalent to a human frown), and he said, slowly, "Let's see. I believe it was, in your chronology, 2002 A.D. When did you die?"

"It must have been in 1890 A.D.," said Burton. He still felt a sense of unreality, of being detached from all that was taking place around him. He ran his tongue around his mouth; the teeth he had lost when the Somali spear ran through his cheek were now replaced. But he was still circumcised. "At least," he added, "I remember nothing after October 20th, 1890."

"*Aab!*" said the creature. "So, I left my native planet approximately 200 years before you died. My planet? The second revolving around what you Terrestrials call Tau Ceti. I was on the first interstellar expedition. We placed ourselves in suspended animation, and when our ship approached your sun we were automatically thawed out, and . . . but you do not know what I am talking about?"

"**N**ot quite. Things are happening too fast, in too alien an environment. Later, I would like to get details. What is your name?"

"Monat Grrautuft. Yours?"

"Richard Francis Burton at your service." He bowed slightly and smiled. Despite the strangeness of the creature and some repulsive physical aspects, Burton found himself warming to him. "The late Captain Sir Richard Francis Burton," he added. "Most recently Her Majesty's Consul in the Austro-Hungarian port of Trieste."

"Elizabeth?"

"I lived in the nineteenth, century, not the sixteenth," said Burton.

"There was an English Queen Elizabeth who reigned in the twentieth," said Monat. He turned to look towards the riverbank. "Why are they so afraid? All the human beings I met were either sure that there would be no afterlife or else that they would get preferential treatment in the hereafter."

Burton grinned and said, "Those who denied the hereafter are sure they're in Hell because of their

blasphemy. As for those who knew they would go to Heaven, they're shocked, I would imagine, to find themselves naked. You see, most of the illustrations of our afterlife show those in Hell as naked and those in Heaven as being clothed.”

“You seem amused,” said Monat. “What do you think?”

“I wasn't so amused a few minutes ago,” said Burton. “But I think there's an explanation for this. And it won't match any of the conjectures I knew on Earth.”

“I doubt we're on Earth,” said Monat. He pointed upwards with long slim fingers which bore thick cartilage pads instead of nails, and he said, “If you look steadily there, with your eyes shielded, you can see another bright body which seemed to be a quarter of the size of a full moon.”

When he put his hands down, he said, “I wonder what purpose this cylinder has?”

Monat unsnapped the strap attached to his wrist and placed the cylinder on the ground. He raised the lid and looked within. Burton followed his example. Inside the hollow cylinder were six snapdown rings of metal. These held various deep cups and pots. All the containers were empty.

Monat closed the cover and said, “Doubtless we'll find out their function in due course.”

By then, others were leaving the riverbank and walking towards them. One of the men at once attracted Burton. Where Monat was obviously nonhuman, this fellow was subhuman or prehuman. He was very short and broad and walked with his head thrust forward. The forehead was very low and slanting; the skull was shaped like a loaf of bread, long and narrow. Enormous supraorbital ridges shadowed dark brown eyes. The nose was a smear of flesh with huge nostrils, and the bulging bones beneath his lips pushed them out to give a pseudo-Negro appearance. The lips themselves were very thin.

His chest was huge and was matted with long dark hair. Hair lay in thick whorls over his shoulders and down his back and over the fronts of his bowed legs.

He stood a little apart from the others and looked questioningly at them. The human beings drew away from him as if afraid. Then, a man behind him spoke in English to him. The subhuman turned and answered back in a language Burton did not recognize, but he seemed grateful for the recognition. He pointed to himself and said something that sounded like *Kazzintuitruuaabemss*. This could have been his name or it could have meant anything. Later, Burton found out that it was his name and meant Man-Who-Slew-The-White-Long-Tooth.

Burton called to the man who had spoken to the subhuman. “You two come here, if you please! We might as well get acquainted. We've got nothing else at the moment to do.”

He took one step forward.

The youth, looking out of the corners of his eyes at Monat, came up to Burton and extended his hand. “Name's Peter Frigate,” he said. “F-r-i-g-a-t-e. Glad to make your acquaintance on mankind's most momentous day. Born under the Sign of Aquarius, during the last year of the Great War of 1914-1918 in Terre Haute, Indiana, U.S.A. Spent a misspent life as a writer and scholar of sorts. Died in 2008 through the devices of this Tau Cetan. But I don't hold it against him. He was only defending himself.”

Frigate spoke bravely enough but with a strained voice, as if he were trying to keep a tight control on himself. He was about Burton's height, almost six feet, muscular, and weighed about one hundred and seventy-five pounds. His face was craggy, the kind with which a caricaturist would have a field day. His eyes were hazel.

“Burton here. You sound as if you'd met Monat Grrautuft.”

“Not exactly,” said Frigate. “I saw him enough on TV, though.”

Hesitantly, he held out his hand to the alien. Monat smiled, and they shook.

Frigate said, “I think it'll be a good idea if we band together. We may need protection later on.”

“Why?” said Burton.

“You know how rotten most human beings are,” said Frigate. “Once people get used to being

resurrected, they'll be fighting for women and food or anything that takes their fancy. And I think we ought to be buddies with this . . . Neanderthal? No, he looks more like a reconstruction of an Australopithecus, or something similar. Anyway, he'll be a good man in a fight. Besides, you wouldn't want to pass up the chance to talk to a real live pre-human, would you? I was something of a linguist; think of the sheer joy of analyzing a pre-human language."

Kazz, as the others came to call him, seemed pathetically eager to be accepted. But he kept watching the others that went by as if he were looking for one of his own species.

A woman walked by muttering over and over in German, "My God! My God! What have I done to offend Thee?"

A man had both his fists clenched and raised to shoulder height, and he was shouting in Yiddish, "My beard! My beard!"

A woman making a pathetic attempt to cover herself with her hands hurried by. She was muttering, "What will they think, what will they think?" And she disappeared behind the trees.

A man and a woman passed them; these were talking loudly in Italian as if they were separated by a broad highway and not by several feet. "We can't be in Heaven. I know, oh my God, I know! There was Giuseppe Zomzini and you know what a wicked man he is ... he ought to burn in hellfire! I know, I know . . . he stole from the treasury, he frequented bad houses, he drank himself to death . . . yet he's here! I know, I know . . ."

Another woman was running and screaming in German, "Daddy! Daddy! Where are you? It's your own darling Hilda!"

A man scowled at them and said repeatedly, "—them. I'm as good as anyone and better than some."

A woman said, "I wasted my whole life, my whole life. I did everything for them, and now . . ."

A man, swinging the metal cylinder before him as if it were a censer, called out, "Follow me to the mountains! Follow me! I know the truth, good people! Follow me! We'll be safe in the bosom of the Lord! Don't believe what you see now; follow me!"

Others spoke gibberish or were silent, their lips tight as if they feared to utter what was within them.

"It'll take some time before they straighten out," said Burton.

"They may never know the truth," said Frigate.

"What do you mean?" said Burton.

"They didn't know it on Earth, so why should they here? What makes you think we're going to get a revelation?"

Burton shrugged and said, "I don't. But I do think that we ought to determine just what our environment is and now we can survive in it. The fortune of a man who sits, sits also." He pointed towards the riverbank. "See those? Those large stone structures shaped like low flat-topped toadstools? They seem to be spaced out at intervals of a mile. What is their purpose?"

Monat said, "If you had taken a close look at them as I did, you would have seen that the flat surface of each bears round indentations. These are just the right size for the base of one of these cylinders to fit in. In fact, they must be for that purpose. One of these cylinders sits in the center of the top surface. I think that if we examine that cylinder, we may be able to determine their purpose."

III

A woman approached them. She was of medium height, had a superb shape, and a face that would have been beautiful if it had been framed by hair. Her eyes were dark.

She said in a well-modulated voice, "I beg your pardon, gentlemen. I couldn't help overhearing you speak in English. I am an Englishwoman; I'm looking for some countrymen, some gentlemen whom I can trust to give me companionship and protection in the midst of these foreigners. I throw myself on your mercy."

"Fortunately for you, Madame," said Burton, "you have come to the right men."

“By all means,” said Frigate, “let’s preserve the English proprieties. Your name?”

“Alice Pleasance Hargreaves.”

Frigate’s eyes opened wide, and he looked as if he were going to speak. But he closed his mouth. Burton introduced himself and the others. She took the hand of Monat without flinching, but she merely nodded at the subhuman. Frigate explained to her a little about Monat. Alice made no comment; perhaps she was too amazed to say anything intelligently on the subject.

“The sun’s climbing high over the mountains,” said Burton. “I’m getting thirsty. Let’s go down to the river and drink.”

They walked back across the plain. The men and women and the few children there, none under five years of age, were sitting on the grass or milling aimlessly around. A couple was arguing loudly and redfacedly. Apparently, they had been husband and wife and were continuing what must have been a lifelong dispute. Suddenly, the man turned and walked away. The wife looked unbelievably at him, then ran after him. He thrust her away so violently that she fell on the grass. He ran away and quickly lost himself in the crowd.

Burton thought briefly of his own wife and wondered where she was. He did not have to guess what she was doing; she would be looking for him. Nor would she stop looking until she found him.

They drank the water of the river. It was cool and clear. “The waters of the River of Life,” said Burton. “The Styx? Lethe? No, not that. I remember everything of my Earthly existence.”

“I wish I could forget it,” said Frigate.

Refreshed, they climbed upon the top of the nearest “toadstool” structure. It was composed of a dense-grained gray stone flecked heavily with reddish iron-looking mineral. On its flat surface were six hundred indentations spaced concentrically. The hole in the center held one of the metal cylinders. Examining it was a little dark-skinned man with a big nose and receding chin. As they approached, he looked up and smiled. “This one won’t open,” he said in German. “Perhaps it will later. I’m sure it’s there as an example of what to do with our own containers.”

He introduced himself as Lev Ruach and switched to a heavily accented English when Burton, Frigate, and Hargreaves gave their names.

“I was an atheist,” he said. “Now, I don’t know. This place is as big a shock to an atheist, you know, as to those devout believers who had pictured an afterlife quite different from this. Well, so I was wrong. It wouldn’t be the first time.” He chuckled, and he said to Monat, “I recognized you at once. It’s a good thing for you that you were resurrected in a group mainly consisting of people who died in the 19th century. Otherwise, you’d be lynched.”

“Why is that?” asked Burton. “He killed Earth,” said Frigate. “At least, I think he did.”

“The scanner,” said Monat dolefully, “would have killed only human beings. It was adjusted to put an end only to those of a certain intelligence level. And it would not have exterminated all of mankind. It would have ceased operating after a predetermined number — unfortunately, a large number — had lost their lives. Believe me, my friends, I did not want to do that. You do not know what an agony it cost me to make the decision to press the button. But I had to protect *my* people. Yours forced my hand.”

“**I**t started when Monat was on a live show,” said Frigate. “Monat made an unfortunate remark. He said that his scientists had the knowledge and ability to keep people from getting old. Theoretically, using Tau Cetan techniques, a man could live forever. But, on his planet, the knowledge was not used; it was forbidden. The interviewer asked him if these techniques could be applied to Terrestrials. Monat replied that there was no reason why not. But rejuvenation was denied to his own kind for a very good reason, and this also applied to Terrestrials. Then the government censor realized what was happening and cut off the audio, but it was too late.”

“Later,” said Lev Ruach, “the American government tried to deny that Monat had said what he said. It reported that Monat had misunderstood the question, that his knowledge of English had led him to make a misstatement. But it was too late. The people of America, of the world, demanded that Monat

reveal the secret of eternal youth.”

“Which I did not have,” said Monat. “Not a single one on the expedition had the knowledge. In fact, very few people on my planet had it. But it did no good to tell the people this. They thought I was lying. There was a riot, and a mob stormed the guards around our ship and broke into it. I saw my friends torn to pieces while they tried to reason with the mob. Reason!

“But I did what I did, not for revenge but for a very different reason. I knew that, after we were killed, or even if we weren't, the government would restore order. And it would have the ship in its possession. It wouldn't be long before Terrestrial scientists would know how to duplicate it. Inevitably, the Terrestrials would launch an invasion fleet against our world. So, to make sure that Earth would be set back many centuries, maybe thousands of years, knowing that I must do the dreadful thing to save my own world, I sent the signal to the scanner satellite. I would not have had to do that if I could have gotten to the destruct-button and blown the ship up. But I could not get to the control room. A short time later the mob blew off the door of the room in which I had taken refuge, and I remember nothing but savage blows.”

“I wonder what happened to those who weren't killed,” said Frigate. “I was in a hospital in Western Samoa at that time, dying of cancer and wondering if I would be buried next to Robert Louis Stevenson. Not much chance, I was thinking. Still, I had translated the Iliad and the Odyssey into Samoan . . . then the news came. People all over the world were falling dead. The pattern of fatality was obvious; the Tau Cetan satellite was radiating something that dropped human beings in their tracks. The last I heard was that the U.S., England, Russia, China, France, and Israel were all sending up rockets to intercept it, blow it up. And the carrier of death was on a path which would take it over Samoa.”

“The interceptors failed,” said Rauch. “The scanner blew them before they even got close.”

Burton thought that he had a lot to learn about post-1890, but now was not the time to talk about it. I suggest we go up into the hills,” he said. “We should learn what type vegetation grows there and if it can be useful. Also, if there is any flint we can work into weapons. This fellow Kazz must be familiar with stone-working.” He started walking slowly across the plain.

The others seemed willing to let him lead. He walked across the mile-broad plain and into the hills. On the way, several others joined their group. One was a little girl of about seven years old. She looked pathetically at Burton as he approached, and Frigate, who knew a little Welsh and Gaelic, spoke to her. Her eyes widened, then she frowned. Obviously, the words seemed to have a certain familiarity or similarity to her speech. But not enough to be intelligible.

“For all we know,” said Frigate, “she could be a child of ancient Gaul.”

“We'll teach her English,” said Burton. He picked up the child in his arms and started to walk with her. She burst into tears, but she made no effort to free herself. The weeping was a release from what must have been almost unbearable tension and a joy at finding a guardian. After a while she nestled quietly against his shoulder.

Where the plain met the hills, as if a line had been drawn, the short grass ceased and a thick coarse esparto-like grass, waist-high, began. Here, too, the towering pines and the gnarled giants with scarlet and green leaves grew thickly. Further within the hills, clumps of bamboo appeared. These consisted of many varieties, from slender stalks only a few feet high to plants over fifty feet high and thick as a man's thigh.

“Here's the material for spear-shafts,” said Burton, “pipes for conducting water, containers, the basic stuff for building houses, furniture, boats, perhaps even for making paper. And the young stalks of some may be good for eating.”

They climbed on, going over hills whose height increased as they neared the mountain. After they had crossed about three miles, they were stopped by the mountain. This rose abruptly in a sheer cliff-face of some blue-black igneous rock on which grew huge patches of a blue-green lichen. There was no way of determining accurately how high it was, but Burton did not think that he was wrong in estimating it as at least 20,000 feet. Moreover, as far as they could see, it presented an unbroken front.

“Have you noticed the complete absence of animal life?” said Frigate. “Not even an insect.”

Burton, instead of replying, picked up a fist-sized chunk of stone. “Chert,” he said. “If there's enough in this area, we can make knives, spearheads, adzes, axes. And with them build houses, boats, many other artifacts.”

“Tools and weapons must be bound to wooden shafts,” said Frigate. “What do we use as binding material?”

“Perhaps human skin,” said Burton.

The others looked shocked. Burton gave a strange chirruping laugh, incongruous in so masculine-looking a man. He said, “If we're forced to kill in self-defense or lucky enough to stumble over a corpse some assassin has been kind enough to prepare for us, we'd be fools not to use what we need. However, if any of you feel self-sacrificing enough to offer your own epidermises for the good of the group, step forward! We'll remember you in our wills,” he laughed.

“Surely, you are jesting,” Alice Hargreaves said. “I can't say I particularly care for it.”

Frigate looked narrow-eyed at Burton. “What's your Christian name?”

“Richard Francis.”

“You couldn't be . . .?” said Frigate. “No, that would be too much of a coincidence, too much luck for me. Still, if you had a head of hair and a beard . . .”

Burton did not ask him what he meant but instead suggested they return to the river. Before they left, however, Kazz managed to make himself a sharp chert knife.

IV

On top of a tall hill, they paused for a moment. The sun was at its zenith. At this point, they could see for many miles along the river and also across the river. Although they were too far away to make out any figures on the other side of the mile-wide stream, they could perceive the mushroom-shaped structures there. The terrain on that side was the same as that on theirs. A mile-wide plain, perhaps three miles of foothills covered with trees. Beyond, the straight-up face of an almost insurmountable bluish-green mountain.



“Sunrise must come late and sunset early in this valley,” said Burton. “Well, we must make the most of the bright hours.”

At that moment a blue flame arose from the top of each stone structure, soared up at least twenty feet, then disappeared.

As one, the party cried out. A few seconds later, a sound of distant thunder passed them. The boom struck the mountain behind them and echoed.

Burton scooped up the little girl in his arms and he began to trot down the hill. Though they maintained a good pace, they were forced to walk from time to time to regain their breaths. Nevertheless, Burton felt wonderful. It had been so many years since he could use his muscles so profligately that he did not want to stop enjoying the sensation. He could scarcely believe that, only a short time ago, his right foot had been swollen with gout.

They came to the plain and continued trotting, for they could see that there was much excitement around one of the structures. Burton swore at those in his way and pushed them aside. He got black looks but no one tried to push back. Abruptly, he was in the space cleared around the base. And he saw what had attracted them. He also smelled it.

Frigate, behind him, said, “Oh, my God!” and tried to retch on his empty stomach.

Burton had seen too much during his Earth life to be easily affected. Before him lay the corpse of a man; its skin was burned off, and the naked muscles were deeply charred.

“What happened?” said Burton to a woman who was uttering a prayer in Italian.

“He was leaning against the rock and complaining that he was hungry,” whispered the woman. “He was wondering if we had been brought back to life only to starve to death. Then there was a roar and blue flames shot up from the top of the rock. They didn’t seem to touch him, but he fell over dead. And burned. It was horrible, horrible.”

“A discharge of energy,” said Lev Ruach behind Burton. “Electrical?”

Burton looked closely at the top of the structure. The gray cylinder in the center seemed to be untouched. He stepped up to the rock and reached out slowly to touch it.

“Don’t do that!” said Ruach. “It may not be completely discharged. Or there may be another as strong as the first.”

“I don’t think so,” said Burton. “I think that cylinder has some connection with the blue flames, that it was attached to the rock so we could learn something from it.”

He felt the rock with his fingertips and found it no warmer than might have been expected from its exposure to the sun. A few cries came from the crowd, which evidently expected him to drop dead also. He smiled and vaulted onto the flat top. Nothing happened, although he had not been sure that he, too, would not be destroyed. And the top did not feel unbearably warm to his bare feet.

He walked to the cylinder and took hold of the cover. It rose.

His heart beating hard, he looked within. Somehow he had expected the miracle, and there it was.

The racks within held six containers, and each of these was full.

He signalled to his group to come up. Without hesitation they obeyed him. Frigate, looking pale but no longer heaving drily, also came.

Gesturing at the interior. Burton said, “This cylinder is a veritable grail. Look! Steak! Bread and butter! Salad! What’s that? A pack of cigarettes? And a cigar!”

He closed the lid before they could all see and glanced at the crowd. Nobody had ventured to follow them yet, though some looked as if they would shortly have the nerve to do so. “When they find out there’s food here,” he said in a low tone, “there will be a fight. I say, let them have it. There won’t be much to go around anyway. Not that I’m avoiding a battle, you understand,” he said, looking fiercely at them. “But I think that this will not be the only food available. Our grails must be designed for the same purpose as this. I’m sure that later on they, too, will be filled. So let’s get out of here.”

He walked off with the others following. At once men and women swarmed upon the surface. Within a minute, they were fighting savagely for the contents of the cylinder. A tall burly man seized the cooked steak, jumped off the rock onto the riverside and dived into the water with the meat. Nobody followed him. He floated off on his back, paddling with one hand and holding the steak to his mouth with the other.

Burton waited until the excitement cooled and then announced, in a loud voice, what he suspected. They listened, and such was the impression of his authority, they agreed to try his experiment. Each man and woman placed his grail in a depression and noted carefully its exact location. Burton had warned them that it was very likely that only the grail attached to each person when he woke up could be opened by that person.

They waited. It was a long wait, for nobody wanted to leave the vicinity. Yet Burton could not be inactive unless under compulsion.

There was work to be done, anyway. The dead man had to be buried or gotten rid of in some manner. Burton picked up the front part of the corpse, asking Frigate to take the legs. Frigate looked very reluctant but did so, and they carried the body off across the plain. When the burden became too heavy, Monat and Kazz took over the job. Alice came behind them several yards with the child’s hand in hers.

Alice had been afraid that the sight of the dead man would terrify the child, but the little girl seemed only curious.

“If she really is an ancient Gaul,” said Frigate, “she may be used to seeing charred corpses. After all, if

I remember correctly, the Gauls burned people in big wicker baskets at religious ceremonies. I wish I had a library to refer to. Do you think we'll ever have one here?"

"That remains to be seen," said Burton. "If we're not provided with one, we'll make our own."

He and Frigate took the body back from Monat and Kazz and continued with it.

"If every one who has ever lived has been resurrected here," said Frigate, "think of the research to be done! Think of the historical mysteries you could clear up! You could talk to John Wilkes Booth and find out if Secretary of War Stanton really was behind the Lincoln assassination. You might ferret out the identity of Jack the Ripper. Find out if Joan of Arc actually did belong to a witch cult. Talk to Napoleon's Marshal Ney; see if he did escape the firing squad and become a schoolteacher in America. Get the true story on Pearl Harbor. See the face of the Man in the Iron Mask, if there ever was such a person. Interview Lucrezia Borgia and those who knew her and determine if she was the poisoning bitch most people think she is. Learn the identity of the assassin of the two little princes in the Tower."

He continued, "And you, Richard Burton! There are many questions about your own life that your many biographers would like to have answered. Did you really have a Persian love you were going to marry and for whom you were going to renounce your true identity and become a native? Did she die before you could marry her? And did her death really embitter you, and did you carry a torch for her the rest of your life?"

"And . . . and . . . well, it'll all have to wait, I can see that. But did you know that your wife had extreme unction administered to you shortly after you died and that you were buried in a Catholic cemetery? You, the infidel! And she burned your journal. Did the journal really horrify her enough to burn it?"

Lev Ruach, whose eyes had been widening while Frigate was rattling on, said, "You're Burton, the explorer and linguist? The discoverer of Lake Tanganyika? The one who made a pilgrimage to Mecca while disguised as a Moslem? The translator of the Thousand and One Nights?"

"I have no desire to lie. Nor need to. I am he."

Lev Rauch spat at Burton. The wind carried it away. "You son of a bitch!" he cried. "You foul Nazi bastard! I read about you. You were, in many ways, an admirable person, but you were an anti-Semite!"

"That's not true," said Burton. "My enemies spread that rumor. But—"

"I suppose you didn't write *The Jew, The Gypsy, and El Islam*?"

"I did," replied Burton, his body and face red. "And I think you had better go. A man who talks to me as you have just done has to defend his words with deeds. If you do not apologize or walk off, I am going to drop this corpse and proceed to make another."

Ruach clenched his fists and glared at Burton; then he spun around and stalked off.

"What is a Nazi?" said Burton Frigate.

The American explained as best he could in the short time it took them to reach the hills. Burton said, "I have much to learn about what happened after I died. England, you say, became a second-class power? Only fifteen years after my death? I find that difficult to believe."

"Why would I lie to you?" said Frigate. "Don't feel bad about it. Before the end of the 20th century, she had risen again, and in a most curious way . . ."

Listening to the Yankee, Burton felt pride for his country. Although England had treated him more than shabbily during his lifetime, and although he had always wanted to get out of the island and away while residing in it, he would defend it to the death. And he had always been devoted to the Queen.

Abruptly, he said, "If you guessed my identity, why didn't you say something about it?"

"I wanted to be sure. Besides, we've not had much time for social intercourse. Or any other kind," Frigate added, looking sidewise at Alice Hargreaves' magnificent figure.

"I know something about her, too," he said, "if she's the woman I think she is."

"That's more than I do," replied Burton. He stopped, for they had gone up the gentle slope of the first hill and were on its top. They lowered the body to the ground beneath a giant pine.

Immediately, the prehuman Kazz, chert knife in hand, squatted down by the charred corpse. He raised his head upwards and uttered a few phrases in what must have been a religious chant. Then, before the others could object, he had removed the liver.

Frigate and Alice cried out in protest. Barton grunted. Monat stared.

Kazz's big teeth bit into the bloody organ and tore off a large chunk. His massively muscled and thickly boned jaws began chewing, and he half-closed his eyes in ecstasy. Burton stepped up to him and held out his hand, intending to remonstrate. Kazz grinned bloodily and cut off a piece and offered it to Burton. He was very surprised at the refusal.

"A cannibal!" said Alice Hargreaves. "A bloody stinking cannibal!"

"No worse than our own ancestors," said Burton, who had recovered from the shock. "And, in a land where there seems to be precious little food, eminently practical. Well, our problem of burying a corpse without proper digging tools is solved. Furthermore, if we're wrong about the grails being a source of food, we may be emulating Kazz."

"Never!" said Alice, staring horrifiedly at the corpse and then at Burton. "I'd die first!"

"That is exactly what you would do," replied Burton coolly. "I suggest we retire and leave him to his meal. It doesn't do anything for my own appetite, and I find his table manners as abominable as an American frontiersman's."

They walked out of sight of Kazz and behind one of the great gnarled trees. Alice said, "I don't want him around. He's an animal, an abomination! Why, I wouldn't feel safe for a second with him around!"

"You asked me for protection," said Burton. "I'll give it to you as long as you are a member of this party. But you'll also have to accept my decisions. One of which is that the apeman remains with us. We need his strength and his skills, which seem to be very appropriate for this type of country. We've become primitives; therefore, we can learn from a primitive. He stays."

Alice looked at the others with silent appeal. Monat twitched his eyebrows; Frigate shrugged his shoulders. He said, "Alice, if you can possibly do it, forget your conventions. We're not in a proper upper-class Victorian heaven. Or, indeed, in any sort of heaven ever dreamed of. You can't think and behave as you did on earth. For one thing, you come from a society where women covered themselves from neck to foot in heavy garments, and the sight of a woman's knee was a stirring sexual event. Yet you seem to suffer no embarrassment because you're going about nude."

Alice said, "I don't like it, but why should I be embarrassed? Where all are nude, none are nude . . . anyway, if my figure weren't good I might be suffering more."

The two men laughed and Frigate said, "You're fabulous, Alice. Absolutely."

She did not reply but walked away until she was out of sight behind a large tree. Burton, watching the sway of hips, said, "Something will have to be done about sanitation in the near future. Which means that somebody will have to decide the health policies and have the power to make regulations and enforce them. How do we form any sort of legislative and judicial and executive bodies from the present state of anarchy?"

"To get to more immediate problems," said Frigate, "What do we do about the dead man?"

That was solved for them, for the present, at least. On returning to the site where they had left Kazz and the corpse, they found that both were gone.

Presently the broad hairy form of Kazz reappeared. He grinned toothily at them with now clean lips. He was wiping his hands with a tangle of grass blades.

"He must have buried it some place" said Burton. "He'll return later for snacks." He turned to look at the sun, which was only several degrees from the top of the western mountain. "We'd better hurry back to the grailrock."

The six walked swiftly back across the plains. At the rock, they deposited their grails in the depressions.

The sun plunged behind the towering rampart, and twilight came at once. However, the sky above

them stayed bright for a long time. Then, as the color began to dull, there was a roar. Blue flames shot up from every rock in sight.

Though they had been expecting it, everybody jumped and some screamed. Nor did they rush to the rock at once. They were not sure that the phenomenon would not repeat itself immediately.

Again Burton was first on the flat surface. He lifted the cover of his grail, looked within and whooped with delight. The others rushed up and seized their own cylinders.

Within a minute they were scattered over the plain or hurrying toward the hills, chattering with mingled relief and gaiety. Things were not so bad; whoever was responsible was taking care of them.

They made camp beneath the wide-flung and densely leaved branches of one of the gnarled giants which were to be called "iron-trees." In a short time a fire was built. It was not necessary to start one by working a friction stick, as they had planned. One of the items in the grails was a three-inch long slender cylinder of some hard metal or plastic. When pressed on one end, a thick growing wire slid out the other. The wire, applied to a pile of shaven bamboo splinters, started a flame swiftly.

Gasping, whooping, exclaiming, they pulled the contents of the grails out and examined them by the firelight. There was food in plenty: a tender medium-cooked cubical steak four inches thick; a small ball of dark bread; butter; potatoes and gravy; lettuce with salad dressing of unfamiliar but delicious taste. In addition, there was a five-ounce cup containing bourbon and another small cup with four ice cubes in it.

There was more, all the better because unexpected. A small briar pipe. A stack of pipe tobacco. Three panatela-shaped cigars. A plastic package with ten cigarettes.

"Unfiltered!" said Frigate. There was also one small brown cigarette which Burton said Frigate smelled and said, at the same time. "Marihuana!"

Alice, holding up a small pair of plastic scissors and a comb, said. "Evidently we're going to get our hair back. Otherwise, there'd be no need for these. I'm so glad! but do . . . they . . . really expect me to use this?"

She held out a container of bright red lipstick.

"Or me?" said Frigate, also looking at a similar tube.

"They're eminently practical," said Monat, turning over a packet of what was obviously toilet paper. Then he pulled out a sphere of green soap.

Burton was so hungry that he had forgotten his manners and had not waited until Alice had started. He did not think it mattered, not here. The steak was very tender, although he would have preferred it rare. On the other hand, Frigate complained because it was not cooked enough.

"Evidently these grails are not tailored for the individual owner," he said. "That's why we men got lipstick and Alice a pipe. It's mass production."

"Two miracles in one day," said Burton. "That is, if they are such. I prefer a rational explanation."

"If you compare the exterior and interior of the grail," said Monet, "you will observe an approximate three centimeter difference in depth. The false bottom must conceal some molar circuitry which is able to convert energy to matter. The energy obviously comes during the discharge from the rocks. In addition to the E-M converter, the grail must hold molar templates—molds—which form the matter into various combinations of elements and compounds.

"I'm safe in my speculations, for, we had a similar converter on my native planet. But nothing as miniature as this, I assure you."

"Same on Earth," said Frigate. "Before I died, we were making iron out of pure energy. But it was a very complicated and expensive process."

"Good," said Burton. "All this has cost us nothing—so far."

He fell silent for a while, thinking of the dream he had had when awakening. "Pay up," God had said. "You owe for the flesh."

Now what had that meant? On Earth, at Trieste, in 1890, he had been dying in his wife's arms and asking for . . . what? Something. He could not remember. Then, unconsciousness. And he had awakened in that tank and had seen things that were not on Earth nor, as far as he knew, on this planet.

That experience had been no dream . . .

They finished eating and replaced the containers in the racks within the grails. Since there was no water nearby, they would have to wait until morning to wash the containers. Frigate, with Kazz's help, however, had made several containers out of sections of the giant bamboo. He volunteered to go back to the river and fill the sections with water. Nobody objected. Burton wondered at the fellow's suggestion.

His eyes fell on Alice, and he knew what Frigate was looking for. The youth was hoping to find some congenial female companionship. He had given up hopes for Alice, if he had any, because of Burton's promise of protection to her.

Burton forgot about that, for the stars had come out in their full splendor. The sky was crowded with gigantic sparks and with several luminous sheets that could only have been nearby gas clouds or galaxies. Never had Earthly eyes seen such an awe-inspiring spectacle.

"We must be in the middle of a big star-cluster," said Monat. "They are so close together, they don't even form constellations."

Burton lay on his back on a pile of grass and puffed at a cigar. It was excellent; in London of his day it would have cost at least a shilling. He turned his head to watch the others. Monat was looking at the stars. Kazz had lost interest in them and was sitting with his back against a tree, his mouth open, his eyes closed, and his head nodding. The little girl had fallen asleep at once after eating; she lay by Alice with her hand outstretched to touch the woman's leg.

Looking at Alice, as the firelight flickered over the handsome aristocratic face (and bald head) and the curved body, Burton felt stirring what had been dead for some years. On Earth, during the last fifteen years of his life, he had paid heavily for the many fevers and sicknesses suffered while in India, Africa, and South America.

Now, he was young again, and healthy—and suddenly ridden by the strong drives of youth.

Yet he had given his promise to protect her.

Well, she was not the only woman in the world. As a matter of fact, if everybody who had died on Earth were on this planet, she would be only one among many billions.

The hell of it was that she might as well be the only one, at this moment, anyway. He could not get up and walk off into the darkness looking for another woman because that would leave her and the child unprotected. She certainly would not feel safe with Monat and Kazz, nor could he blame her. They were so terrifyingly ugly to human eyes. Nor could he entrust her to Frigate—if Frigate returned tonight, which he doubted—because the fellow was an unknown quantity. The American got sick very readily at unpleasant sights. His courage might be as weak as his stomach.

Burton laughed loudly at his situation and decided that he might as well stick it out for tonight. This thought set him laughing again, and he did not stop until Alice woke to ask him if he were all right.

"More right than you will ever know," he said, turning his back to her. He reached into his grail and extracted the last item. This was a small flat stick of chicle-like substance. Frigate, before leaving, had remarked that their unknown benefactors must be American, for they otherwise would not have thought of providing chewing gum.

After stubbing out his cigar on the ground, Burton popped the stick into his mouth. He said, "This has a strange but rather delicious taste. Have you tried yours?"

"I am tempted," she said. "But I imagine I'd look like a cow chewing her cud."

"Forget about being a lady," said Burton. "Do you think that beings with the power to resurrect you would have vulgar tastes?"

She smiled slightly and placed her stick in her mouth. For a moment they chewed idly, looking across the fire at each other. Burton said, "Frigate mentioned that he knew of you. Just who are you, if you will pardon my unseemly curiosity?"

"There are no secrets among the dead," she replied lightly. "Or among the ex-dead."

She was born Alice Pleasance Liddell on April 25, 1852. (Burton was thirty then.) She was the direct descendant of King Edward III and his son, John of Gaunt. She had had a happy childhood, an excellent

education, and had met many famous people of her times: Gladstone, Matthew Arnold, the Prince of Wales. She had married a 'country gentleman', liked to hunt, fish, play cricket, raise trees, and read French literature. She had three sons, all captains, two of whom died in the Great War of 1914-1918. (This was the second time that day that Burton had heard of the Great War.)

She talked on and on as if drink had loosened her tongue. Or as if she wanted to place a barrier of conversation between her and Burton.

She talked of Dinah, the tabby kitten she had loved when she was a child, the great trees of her husband's arboretum, how her father, when working on his Lexicon, would always sneeze at twelve o'clock in the afternoon, no one knew why . . . At the age of 80, she was given an honorary Doctor of Letters because of the part she had played in the genesis of Mr. Dodgson's famous book. (She neglected to mention the title and Burton, though a voracious reader, did not recall any works by Dodgson, whoever he was.)

"That was a golden afternoon indeed," she said. "I was ten. My sisters and I were wearing black shoes, white openwork socks, white cotton dresses, and hats with large brims."

Her eyes were wide as if she were struggling inside herself, and she began to talk even faster.

"Mr. Dodgson and Mr. Duckworth carried the picnic baskets ... we set off in our boat from Folly Bridge up the Isis, up for a change. Mr. Duckworth rowed stroke. The drops fell off his paddle like tears of glass on the smooth mirror of the Isis, and . . ."

Burton heard the last words as if they had been roared at him. Astonished, he gazed at Alice, whose lips seemed to be moving as if she were conversing at a normal speech level. Her eyes were fixed on him, but they seemed to be boring through him into a space and a time beyond him. Her hands were half-raised as if she had been so surprised at something that she had been paralyzed.

Every sound was magnified. He could hear the breathing of the other three around the fire, the pounding of their hearts, the gurgle of the workings of their intestines and the breeze as it slipped across the branches of the trees. From far away, came a cry.

He rose and stood listening. What was this? Why the heightening of senses? Why could he hear their hearts but not his? He was also aware of the shape and texture of the grass under his feet. Almost he could feel the individual molecules of the air as they bumped into his body.

Alice too had risen. She said, "What is happening?" and her voice fell against him like a heavy gust of wind.

He did not reply, for he was staring at her. Now, it seemed to him, he could really *see* her body for the first time. And he could see *her*, too. The entire Alice, the wholly beautiful and undeniably desirable Alice.

At the same time, he saw Kazz stand up. There was no doubt whatever about Kazz's condition or what he meant to do about it. Kazz reached for Alice, but before he could touch her Burton was on him. He swung with his right fist, and it connected solidly with all the weight of his body behind it. Kazz's head was thrown back; he staggered hack against the tree. Then, he shook his head and staggered toward Alice as if Burton did not exist.

He glanced quickly at Monat. The extra-Terrestrial was sprawled on his back on the ground and looking up at the stars. He did not seem aware that anything extraordinary had taken place.

Alice came towards him with her arms held out, her eyes half-shut, her mouth moist. She swayed, and she crooned, "Richard! Richard!"

Then she stopped; her eyes widened. He stepped towards her, his arms out. She cried, "No!" and turned and ran into the darkness among the trees.

For a second, he stood still. It did not seem possible that she, whom he loved as he had never loved anybody, could not love back.

His paralysis did not last long. She must be teasing him. That was it. He ran after her, and he called her name over and over.

VI

It must have been hours later when the rain fell against him and he woke. Either the effect of the drug had worn off or the cold water helped dispel it, for he seemed to emerge from the dreamlike state abruptly, without transitions. Alice was nowhere in sight.

When he awoke, he was in the gray light of the false dawn. He got up at once and found that, despite the short sleep, he felt refreshed. Nor did he have, as he had expected, any ill effects from the drug. The only thing that hurt was his right hand. It was bruised and torn across the knuckles, slightly swelled, and tender. Frigate, grinning widely, walked into the camp. "You look like the cat who ate the canary," said Burton.

"That wasn't all," replied Frigate. He looked around the site, at Alice, who was glaring at Burton, and at Monat and Kazz yawning and stretching. "Was a good time had by all?"

"It was lively," said Burton. He picked up his grail and awakened the girl. The others followed him out of the hills and across the plain to the rock. There, after depositing their grails, they stood around and talked to those of their own group or to others. Almost everybody, it seemed, had chewed the gum that night. The results had been tragic, amusing, or gratifying, depending upon the individual. Listening to them, Burton concluded that the substance in the gum was not an aphrodisiac. Not basically, anyway. The reaction of the chewers to it had taken a course which depended on whatever thought or drive was strongest in them at the time.

Consider the case of the husband and wife who had died on Earth at the same time and place and had been resurrected within six feet of each other. They had wept from sheer joy at their good fortune in being reunited. Then they thanked God for their good luck. They had lived together for over fifty years in married bliss; now they looked forward to being together for eternity.

Then, only a few minutes after both had chewed the gum, the man had strangled his wife and thrown her body in the river. He did not wait for any to question him on his behavior but had run away.

Another man had leaped upon the rock and used it as rostrum from which he delivered a speech that lasted all night. To the few who could hear, but were not listening, he had demonstrated the principles of a perfect society and how these could be carried out in practice. Now he was suffering from hoarseness and could only croak a few words.

On Earth he had seldom bothered to vote.

A man and a woman were recovering from the battering they had taken that night. Outraged at the public display of carnality, they had used physical violence to separate couples. The result: bruises, bloody noses, split lips. All theirs. Some men and women had spent the night on their knees praying and confessing their sins.

The sun rose. A few minutes later, the grailrocks spurted blue flame and thundered.

The grails revealed bacon and eggs, ham, toast, butter, milk, jam, a quarter of cantaloupe, and cigarettes.

Within a few minutes, Burton heard a Croat Moslem and an Austrian Jew raging in despair and disgust because their grails contained a product of the tabu swine. A Hindu screamed obscenities because his, grail held animal products. A fourth man, crying out that they were in the hands of devils, hurled his cigarettes into the river.

Several said to him, "Why didn't you give us the cigarettes if you didn't want them?"

"Tobacco is the invention of the devil; it was the weed created by Satan in the Garden of Eden!"

A man said to him, "At least you could have shared the cigarettes with us. It wouldn't hurt you."

"I would like to throw all the evil stuff into the river!"

"You're an insufferable bigot and crazy to boot," said another, and he struck the tobacco-hater in the mouth. Before the tobacco-hater could get up off the ground, he was hit several more times by friends of the man who had knocked him down.

Later the tobacco-hater staggered up and, weeping with rage, said, "What have I done to deserve

this, O Lord my God! I have always been a good man. I gave thousands to charities, I worshipped twice a week, I waged a lifelong war against sin and corruption, I . . .”

“I know you!” shouted a woman at him. She was a tall blue-eyed girl with a handsome face and well curved figure. “I know you! Sir Robert!”

He stopped talking and blinked at her. “I don't know *you*,” he said.

“You wouldn't! But you should! I'm one of the thousands of girls who had to work sixteen hours a day, six and a half days a week, for not enough money to put food in my mouth. I was one of your factory girls. My father worked for you, my mother worked for you, my brothers and sisters, those who weren't too sick or who didn't die because of too little or too bad food, dirty beds, drafty windows, and rat bites, worked for you. My father lost a hand in one of your machines, and you kicked him out without a penny. My mother died of consumption. I was coughing out my life, too, my fine baronet, while you —”

The baronet had gone red at first, then pale, then turned and walked off. But the woman ran after him and swung her grail at him. It came around swiftly; somebody shouted; he spun and ducked. The grail almost grazed the top of his head.

“Hmmm,” said Burton, “there's a weapon of which I had not thought.”

Sir Robert ran past the woman before she could recover and quickly lost himself in the crowd. Hoots of laughter followed him.

Surprisingly, the woman burst out laughing and then began talking to Burton. She introduced herself as Wilfreta Allport. Alice was courteous but cool. Burton accepted her attitude; it was better than could be expected from most English ladies. He was puzzled about one thing, however. Why, after last night, had she continued to stay with him?

“Better the evil you know,” she replied.

But they did not get a chance to continue their talk, for Kazz began to do that which was unacceptable in modern Western European society.

Apparently she was absolutely unconscious of the effect his act would have. Later Burton wondered why he had not caught Kazz doing this before, but he decided that Kazz had not had much in his digestive system.

Now there were cries of outrage and shocked modesty. A man rushed Kazz and tried to knock him down. Kazz caught the man by the arm and lifted him up and hurled him through the air. Wheeling, he picked up his grail and intercepted another attacker with the side of it against the man's head. The man crumpled, blood welling from his scalp, and lay on the ground.

Burton sprang in between the subhuman and the threatening crowd. He roared, “Stop! This is not a creature of our times! He comes from a period and a place where tabus differ! And, so far, we can communicate with him to a very limited extent. I'm sure that, once he understands how you feel, he'll shortly pick up a sense of shame. You can teach a dog good manners, you know! Forgive him, for he does not know what he's doing.”

Frigate and Monat moved up beside Burton, their grails held in their hands. Then the woman Wilfreda and Alice stood beside the men.

Seeing the outraged ones hesitate, Burton said, “If you think carefully about it, you'll see you may end up doing what he did, too. The only way to be sanitary is to build enclosed latrines here. Without tools, how will you do that?”

VII

Several days later Burton initiated the building of a boat. He had decided that this area was giving no answers to his questions.

It would have been easy to walk away, but travel on the river would be much swifter. Burton's gang, as it was called in that locality, worked well together. Their number increased by three men and three

women who had placed themselves under his leadership. They established camp in the hills. The discovery that grailrocks existed in the hills also, about a half mile from the mountains and spaced about a mile and a quarter apart, did away with the need to return three times daily to the riverside.

Kazz taught the others how to fashion flint and chert axes, adzes, and scrapers. With the axes, they felled several of the giant Norway pines. After shattering several axes, they began using the chopping technique of the pre-human. He did not swing with the entire arm but used short strokes involving action of the lower arm only.

Frigate, who had spent many years in southeast Asia and Polynesia, initiated them into the secrets of working bamboo. From this versatile plant they made a mast and a boom, woven mats for sails and rope. The double hull of the boat was also fashioned largely from bamboo.

Alice made a bamboo flute and a pan's pipe.

By then the population had found that, though the long grasses were too sharp to use as garments, the iron tree leaves could be used to make somewhat perishable skirts and brassieres. The discovery came too late.

One morning, three weeks after the day of resurrection, the grails refused to yield breakfast for the first time. However, they were not empty. Instead of food, they contained rectangles and strips of some terrycloth-like material. These were colored in many solid hues and could be fastened around the body with magnetic tabs concealed inside the material. Though soft and absorbent, they stood up under the roughest treatment. The sharpest flint could not cut them.

Mankind gave a collective whoop of delight on finding these "towels" as they were called. Though men and women had by then become accustomed or at least resigned to nudity, the more esthetic and the less adaptable had found the universal spectacle of human nakedness ugly and repulsive or both. Now, they had kilts and bras and turbans. The latter were used to cover up their heads while their hair was growing back in. Later, turbans became the customary headgear.

Men were no longer bald, but their beards did not return.

Burton was bitter about this. He had always taken pride in his long moustachios and forked beard; he claimed that their absence made him feel more naked than the lack of trousers.

Wilfreda laughed and said, "I'm glad they're gone. Why, kissing you with those would be like sticking my face in a bunch of broken bedsprings."

"How like you to think of something associated with bed," said Burton and he slapped her across her hips.

By then, it was no secret that she was his woman. She was the type he most liked: blonde, beautiful, good-tempered, willing, and not overly bright. Most of the men and women had paired off by that time. Very few of them retained the original feeling that they were in the valley on probation and, therefore, should behave circumspectly. Nobody had come down from above or broken through the earth below to tell them why they were here and what they must do.

Two months passed. The day of the launching of the boat arrived. They pushed the craft across the plain on big bamboo rollers.

The boat, *The Hadji*, was about thirty feet long, made of two bamboo hulls fastened together with a platform. It had a single mast and boom, lateen-rigged, and was steered by a great oar of pine. On the platform rested their launch, a dugout fashioned from a pine log.

Before they could get it into the water, Kazz made some difficulties. By now, he could speak a very broken and limited English and some oaths in Arabic, Baluchi, Swahili, and Italian that he had learned.

"Must need . . . whacha call it? . . . *wallah!* . . . what it word? . . . kill somebody before place boat on river . . . you know . . . *merda* . . . need word, Burton-*naq* . . . kill man so god, *Kabburguanagruebemss* . . . water god . . . no sink boat . . . get angry . . . eat us."

"Sacrifice?" said Burton.

"Many bloody thanks, Burton-*naq*. Sacrifice! Cut throat . . . put on boat . . . rub it on wood . . . then water god not mad to us."

“We don't do that,” said Burton.

Kazz argued but finally agreed to get on the boat. His face was long, and he looked very nervous.

Burton, to ease him, told him that this was a different world, as proved by the stars, and that the gods did not live in this valley. Kazz smiled, but it was several days before he quit looking into the river as if he expected to see the hideous green-bearded face and bulging fishy eyes of *Kabburguanagruebemss* rising from the depths towards him.

That evening, as they made their first beaching, an incident occurred that puzzled Burton.

Kazz had just stepped ashore among a group of curious people when he became very excited. He began to jabber in his native tongue and tried to seize a man standing near. The man fled and was quickly lost in the crowd.

When asked by Burton what he was doing, Kazz said, “He not got . . . uh . . . whacha call it? . . . it.” and he pointed at his forehead. Then he traced several unfamiliar symbols in the air. Burton meant to pursue the matter until he found out what Kazz was talking about, but at that very moment Alice cried out and ran up to a man. Evidently she had thought he was one of her sons killed in World War I. There was some confusion; the man denied it. Later Alice admitted that she had made a mistake. By then other business came up and he could not get back to Kazz.

Kazz did not mention the matter again, and Burton forgot about it. He was to remember.

Exactly 490 days later, they had passed 37,600 grailrocks on the right bank of The River.

This meant that they had sailed with the current and the wind approximately 37,600 miles. On Earth, that distance would have been about one and a half times around the equator. Yet the river went on and on, making great bends, winding back and forth. Everywhere, the plains along the river, the tree-covered hills beyond, and, towering, impassable, unbroken, the mountain range.

Occasionally the plains narrowed and the hills advanced to the river-edge. Sometimes the river widened and became a lake — three miles, five miles, six miles across. Now and then the line of the mountains curved in towards each other, and the boat shot through canyons where the narrow passage of the river stepped up its pace and the sky was a blue ribbon far above and the black walls pressed depressingly in on them.

Usually the river and the terrain were the same. And, always, there was humankind. Day and night, men, women, and children thronged the banks of the river.

By then, those aboard the boat recognized a pattern. Humanity had been resurrected along the river in a rough chronological and national sequence. The boat had passed by the area that held Slovenes and Austrians who had died in the last decade of the nineteenth century, had passed by Hungarians, Norwegians, Finns, Greeks, Albanians, and Irish. However, occasionally, they put in at areas which held peoples from other times and places. One was a twenty-mile stretch containing Australian aborigines who had never seen a European while on Earth. Another hundred-mile length was populated by Tocharians. These had lived around the time of Christ in what later became Chinese Turkestan. They represented the easternmost extension of Indo-European speakers in ancient time; their culture had flourished for a while, then died before invasions and the encroachment of the desert that brought famine with it.

Through admittedly hasty and uncertain surveys, Burton had determined that each area was comprised of about 60% of a particular nationality and century, 30% of some other one people, usually from a different time, and 10% from any random time and place. The reason for this mixing was unknown.

There were other things. So far, they had neither seen nor heard of a pregnant woman. Whoever had placed them here must have sterilized them and with good reason. If mankind could reproduce, the river-valley would be jammed solid with bodies within a few years.

At first, there had seemed to be no animal life but man. Now it was known that, at night, several species of worms emerged from the soil. And the river contained at least a hundred species of fish, ranging from creatures six inches long to six feet. Frigate considered that the animals were there for a good purpose. The fish served as scavengers to keep the river waters clean. Some types of worm ate

waste matter and corpses. Other types served the normal function of earthworms.

The children were growing up. Within fifteen years, there would not be an infant or adolescent within the valley, if conditions everywhere conformed to what the voyagers had so far seen.

On the 490th day after launching, the boat entered a three-mile wide lake. It was nearing noon, grail-charging time. Burton steered the craft towards the nearest rock; then he changed his mind.

The people gathered there had aroused his suspicious. They consisted of a number of armed men obviously guarding a larger group of unarmed men and women. The latter were dirty, downcast, and naked, and their ribs could easily be counted.

As the boat swung away, the armed men, who had been waving cordially at the boat's occupants, sprang into action. One of them shouted, and drums began beating in the distance. About a half mile ahead of them, men ran out of a wooden fortress. They pushed two long boats into the waters, and then began paddling strongly towards the *Hadji*. Seeing that resistance was useless against two boats, each filled with about thirty men, Burton tried flight. He directed the craft towards the other shore; if they could get there they could run on foot toward the hills.

However, before he had reached the middle of the lake, the warcanoes were almost upon him. A tall blond in the bow of the leading craft stood up and shouted in German, "Do not fight! We do not wish to kill you. We merely want you to work for us!"

Burton spoke to the women. "We'll try to hold them up long enough for you to get away. Start swimming!"

"We'll drown," said Alice. She was staring with her large doe-like eyes at the approaching boats, the big paddles dipping in unison, the paddlers grinning wolfishly at the women.

"Better that than what that gang will do to you," he said. "Quickly! We can't hold them long."

"I can't swim very good," said Wilfreda. "Anyway, what can they do that hasn't been done to me?"

Loghu, the red-haired green-eyed Tocharian whom Frigate had picked up, said, "Me, I won't leave Pete."



"You're all three bloody fools," said Burton angrily. "Very well. If you won't run, fight. Get your spears. And you, Gwenafra," he said to the little girl, "you lie down on the deck."

Kazz stood up, placed a stone in his sling, made of human leather, and whirled it over his head. The stone shot out, and the man in the bow fell backwards and over the side into the river. At that, those in the canoes gave a loud cry. While the rest paddled, six on each stood up and cast their spears. The crew of the *Hadji* ducked down behind the railing; the spears either struck the water or thudded into the

railing.

Burton and Monat rose and wrenched the spears loose and threw them back. Since they were standing on a much more stable platform, they were able to get a better aim. The flint head of Burton's shaft buried itself in the chest of a paddler. Monat's plunged into the thigh of another. A second stone from Kazz hit a paddler's arm and rendered it useless.

Again, the six on each canoe threw, and, under cover of this barrage, the warcanoes rammed into the *Hadji*. Burton signalled to Kan, who leaned over and raised a huge stone above his head. Though the rock had added to the weight on the boat, Burton had decided to carry it for just such a situation as this. While the crew of the *Hadji* hurled spears, Kazz dropped the stone onto one of the canoes. It crashed through the thin bottom; in a minute, the canoe was sinking and its crew was in the water.

However, the men in the other canoe had pulled it broadside of the *Hadji*. Thirty of them came over the railing at the same time.

The *Hadji* began to tip and undoubtedly would have capsized under the uneven distribution of weight if it had not been for its double-hull construction. Burton cursed at this. Better for them all to be in the water; some might be able to escape in the confusion.

He thrust a spear at a face coming over the side and drove it through the mouth. The face fell back, but the stone tip, deeply lodged in the neckbones, went with it. Burton dropped the wooden shaft and picked up another spear from the deck. He saw a hand, holding a club, rise over the railing, and he ran his spear through the hand, pinning it to the railing. Then he seized the fallen club and leaped among the invaders.

VIII

It was a good fight while it lasted. Burton, one of the foremost swordsmen of his time, wielded the club as if it were a saber. Kazz disarmed a man, picked him up, threw him, and knocked down two others with the body. Alice ran a spear into one of the fallen men but received a deep gash in her side from a javelin. Burton brained the man who had wounded her, then reeled back as the butt of a spear struck him on the head.

Monat, who combined long reach with a terrifyingly alien appearance, put three men out of combat. Then he was hit across the shins with a club and fell. Frigate, bleeding from four places, fought wildly but went under when three men piled on top of him.

One of the boarders seized Gwenaфра and threw her into the river. She rose once, screamed, and then went under.

The result was inevitable and might have been over sooner except that the strangers seemed bent on capturing rather than killing them. However, four of Burton's group were dead, and all were wounded. Burton took sour satisfaction in noting that their attackers must have lost at least twenty dead from slingstones, spears, or drowning, and that ten of them were wounded to various degrees.

Their leader, a tall rawboned redheaded Scot with a pronounced Highland accent, did not seem perturbed about the casualties. Instead, he congratulated the crew of the *Hadji*. "You put up such a bonnie battle, some of you may get a chance to join us," he said. "As soldiers, I mean. Not as slaves. You'll all join us in one way or another."

The *Hadji* was sailed, not toward the stockade from which the canoes had emerged, but about a mile further down the lake. Here it was put ashore near another and larger stockade of pine logs and earthen ramparts and sentinel boxes at each corner. A great log gate was open; through this the captives were marched. Inside the walls were several log blockhouses. The central one was a two-story building about fifty feet long. The captives were taken into its dark and cool interior where they blinked for a while before their eyes became adjusted. They saw that the lower story was one long hall with a single table and benches in the center on the dirt floor. Before this they were halted for an inspection by two men.

One was a short muscular man with a hairy body, black curly hair, brown eyes, and an aquiline nose. The second had blond hair, eyes that could have been blue or green and a fat-encircled waist which

indicated too much food and liquor.

“You look like Hermann Goering,” said Frigate in German, and then he dropped to his knees and screamed with pain from the butt of a spear slammed against his back.

The blond said, in English, “No more of that unless I order it. Let them talk.”

He scrutinized them for several minutes, then said, “Yes, I am Hermann Goering.”

“Who is Goering?” said Burton.

“Your friend can tell you later,” said the German. “If there is a later for you. Now, I have been told about the battle you put up. I am not angry about that; I admire men who can fight well. And, since I can always use more spears, I offer you a choice. You men, that is. Join me and live well with all the food and liquor and women you can possibly want. Or work for me as my slaves.”

“For us,” said the other man. “You forget, Hermann, dat I have yust as muck to say about dis as you.”

Goering smiled and chuckled and said, “Of course! I was only using the royal I, you might say. Very well, we. If you swear to serve us, and it will be far better for you if you do, you will swear loyalty to me, Hermann Goering, and to the one-time king of ancient Rome, Tullios Hostilios.”

Could this man actually be the legendary third king of ancient Rome? Of Rome when it was a small village threatened by the other Italic tribes, the Sabines, Aequi, and Volsci, who, in turn, were being pressed by the Umbrians, themselves pushed by the powerful Etruscans? Was this really Tullios Hostilios, warlike successor to the peaceful Numa Pompilius? There was nothing to distinguish him from a thousand men whom Burton had seen on the streets of Florence. Yet, if he was what he claimed to be, he could be a treasure trove, historically and linguistically speaking. He would, since he was probably Etruscan himself, know that language, plus archaic Latin and Sabine and perhaps Campanian Greek. He might even have been acquainted with Romulus, supposed founder of Rome. What stories that man could tell! And what stories he could be told, the history of the rise and change — for Rome did not really fall—of the sons of the she-wolf.

“Well?” said Goering.

“What do we have to do if we join you?” said Burton.

“First, I ... we . . . have to make sure that you are the caliber of man we want. In other words, a man who will do anything that we order, unhesitatingly and immediately. We will give you a little test.”

He ordered a group of slaves brought forward. Besides being gaunt, these were all crippled.

“They were injured while carrying stone or building our walls,” said Goering. “Except for two caught while trying to escape; they will have to pay the penalty. All of them will be killed by us because they are now useless. So you should not hesitate about killing them to show your determination to serve us.”

He added, “Besides, they are all Jews. Why worry about them?”

The Scot took a large club studded with obsidian blades and held it out to Burton. Two guards seized a slave and forced him to his knees. He was a large blond with blue eyes and a Grecian profile; he glared at Goering and then spat at him.

Goering laughed. “He has all the arrogance of his race. I could reduce him to a quivering screaming mass begging for death. If I wanted to. But I do not care for torture. My compatriot would like to give him a taste of the fire, but I am essentially a humanitarian.”

“I will kill in defense of my life or in defense of those who need protection,” said Burton. “But I am not a murderer.”

“Killing this Jew would be an act in defense of your life,” replied Goering. “If you do not, you will die anyway. Only it will take you a long time.”

“I will not,” said Burton.

Goering sighed and said, “You English! Well, I would rather have you on my side. But if you don't want to do the rational thing, so be it. What about you?” he said to Frigate.

Frigate said, “Your ashes ended in a trash heap in Dachau because of what you did, what you were.

Are you going to repeat all that here?"

Goering laughed and said, "I know what happened to me. Enough of my Jewish slaves have told me about that."

He pointed at Monat. "What kind of a freak is this?"

Burton explained. Goering looked grave, then said, "I couldn't trust him. He goes into the slave camp. You, there, apeman. What do you say?"

Kazz, to Burton's surprise, stepped forward. "I kill for you. I don't want to be slave."

He took the club while the guards held their spears poised to run him through if he had other ideas for using it. He glared at them from under his shelving brows, then raised the club. There was a crack, and the slave pitched forward on the dirt. Kazz returned the club to MacDonald and stepped aside. He did not look at Burton.

The guards marched the other slaves out. Goering said, "All the slaves will be assembled tonight, and they will be shown what will happen to them if they try to get away. The escapees will be roasted for a while, then put out of their misery. My distinguished colleague will personally handle the club. He likes that sort of thing."

He pointed to Alice. "That one. She will be with me tonight while the executions are taking place."

Tullios stood up. "No, no. I like her. You take de orders, Hermann.' I giw you bot' of dem. But 'er, I want 'er very muck. 'Er look like; what you say, aristocrat. A queen?"

Burton gave a roar, snatched club from MacDonald's hand and leaped upon the table. Goering fell backwards; the tip of the club narrowly missed his nose. At the same time, the Roman thrust his spear at Burton and wounded him in the shoulder. But Burton kept hold of the club, whirled, and knocked the weapon out of Tullios' hand.

The slaves threw themselves upon the guards and tried to wrest them weapons from them. Frigate jerked a spear loose and brought the butt of it against Kazz's head. Kan crumpled, unconscious. Monat kicked a guard in the groin and picked up his spear.

Burton did not remember any thing after that. Something struck him on the head, his knees gave way, and he was nothing.

He awoke several hours before dusk. He was on grass and a large enclosure of pine logs, stockade with a diameter of about fifty yards. Fifteen feet above the surface, circling the interior of the wall, was a wooden walk. On this, armed guards paced.

He groaned, for his head hurt very much. Frigate, squatting near him, said, "I was afraid you'd never come out of it."

"Where are the women?" Frigate began to weep. Burton shook him and said, "Quit blubbering. Where are they?"

"Where the hell do you think they are?" said Frigate. "Oh, my God!"

"We may be on a different planet," said Burton, "but the people haven't changed. Don't think about the women. There's nothing you can do. Why wasn't I killed after I attacked Goering?"

Frigate wiped away the tears and said, "Beats me. Maybe they're saving you, and me, for the fire. As an example. I wish they had killed us."

"What, so recently gained paradise and wish so soon to lose it?" said Burton. He began to laugh but quit because it hurt his head.

Later, during the day, Burton cleared up one of the things that had puzzled him. That was, why he had not been warned about Goering by the people in the neighboring areas upriver. Certainly, when the *Hadji* had put into shore for grail-recharging, the crew could have been told about the dangers it was soon to meet. He talked to Robert Spruce, one of the English slaves, and Spruce said that it was less than a month since Goering and Tullios had seized power. Afterward the two had been very careful to keep all their activities as secret as possible. For the time being they left their neighbors in peace. Eventually, of course, they would try to conquer the adjacent territories. So far, however, no slave had escaped to spread word about Goering's intentions.

“But the people on the borders can see for themselves that the walls are being built by slaves,” said Burton.

Spruce grinned wryly and said, “Goering has spread the word that these are all Jews, that he is only interested in enslaving Jews. So what do they care? As you can see for yourself, that is not true. Half of the slaves are Gentile.”

At dusk, Burton, Frigate, and Monat were taken from the stockade and marched down to a grailrock. There they found about two hundred slaves, guarded by the Goeringites. The grails of all were placed on the rock, and they waited. After the blue flames roared the grails were taken down. Each slave opened his grail. Guards removed the tobacco, liquor, and most of the food.

“We are seeing the beginning of a new form of servitude: grail-slavery,” said Burton. “Which also may explain why we weren't killed. Only the individual owner of a grail is able to open it. If you kill a slave, you can't use his grail.”

“I'll bet something like this is springing up all along the valley,” said Frigate. “As I remember your books, you thought quite a lot of the institution of slavery. What do you think of it now?”

“That was Oriental slavery,” said Burton. “This is different. There's no chance for a slave to gain his freedom and rise in this society. Nor is there any personal feeling, except hatred, between slave and owner. In the Orient, the situation was different. Of course, like any human institution, it had its abuses.”

“You're a stubborn man,” said Frigate. “Have you noticed that at least half the slaves are Jews? Late twentieth-century Israeli, most of them. That girl over there told me that Goering managed to start grail-slavery by arousing anti-Semitism in this area. Then, after he had gotten into power with Tullios' aid, he enslaved many of his former supporters.”

He continued, “The hell of it is, Goering is not a genuine anti-Semite. During World War II he personally intervened with Himmler and others to save Jews. He is something even worse than a genuine Jew-hater. He is an opportunist. Anti-Semitism was a tidal wave in Germany; to get any place, you had to ride the wave. So Goering rode, just as he did here. An anti-Semite like Goebbels and Frank, for instance, believed in their professed principles. Perverted and hateful principles, true, but still principles. Whereas big fat happy-go-lucky Goering did not really care one way or the other about the Jews. He just wanted to use them.”

“All very well,” said Burton, “but what has that got to do with me?”

“Dick,” said Frigate, “I admire you as I have never admired any other man. On Earth, you were my hobby. I collected all books by and about you. I even wrote a long biography and visited many of the places made famous by your explorations. I made a pilgrimage to your tomb at Mortlake; I formed a Burton Society and raised funds to restore your tomb—which was falling apart, grown around with weeds . . . But I am not blind. I know your faults.”

“Just which one is it this time?” said Burton testily.

“That book. *The Jew, El Islam, and the Gypsy*. It was published after you died. Dick, how could you have written it?”

“I was still angry because of the injustices I had suffered at Damascus. To be expelled from the consulate because of the lies of my enemies, among whom . . .”

“That doesn't excuse your writing lies about a whole group,” said Frigate.

“Lies! I wrote the truth! And I don't have to answer to you or to any man for my actions.”

“So,” said a voice. “You are here, also. We meet again, and not under very auspicious circumstances. I walked away from you—yet here we are together.”

The speaker was Lev Ruach.

“I could not help overhearing the conversation,” he said, smiling wanly at them. “Nor do I need to apologize. Slaves have no privacy. Burton, welcome to the concentration camp. This is probably your first taste of it. But it is an old old story to me. I was in a Nazi camp, and I escaped. I was in a Russian camp, and I escaped. In Israel, I was captured by Arabs and tortured. I escaped.”

“So now I think perhaps I can escape again. But to what? Another concentration camp? There seems to be no end to them. Man is forever building them and putting the perennial prisoner, the Jew, in them. Even here, where we have a fresh start, where all religions, all prejudices, should have been shattered on the anvil of resurrection, little is changed.”

“Shut your mouth,” said a man near Ruach. About six foot in height, he was built like a wrestler. He had led hair so curly it was almost kinky, blue eyes, and a face that might have been handsome if it had not been for his broken nose.

“Dov Targoff here,” he said in a crisp Oxford accent. “Late commander in the Israeli Navy. Pay no attention to Ruach. He's one of the old-time Jews, a pessimist, a whiner. He'd rather wail against the wall than stand up and fight like a man.”

Ruach choked, then said, “You arrogant Sabra! I fought; I killed! And I am not a whiner. What are you doing now, you brave warrior? I see you every day, slaving naked in the sun, submitting to every indignity that I . . .”

“It's the old story,” said a woman. She was tall and dark-haired and probably would have been a beauty if she had not been so gaunt. “The old story. We fight among ourselves while our enemies conquer. Just as we fought when Titus besieged Jerusalem and we killed more of our own people than we did the Romans. Just as . . .”

The two men turned against her, and all three argued loudly until a guard stepped up to them and began beating them with a stick.

Later, through swollen lips, Targoff said, “I can't take much of this longer. Soon ... Well, that particular guard is mine to kill.”

“You have a plan?” said Frigate eagerly, but Targoff would not answer.

IX

Shortly before dawn, the slaves were awakened and marched to the grailwork. Again they were left with a modicum of food. After eating, they were split up into groups and marched off to their differing assignments.

Burton and Frigate were taken to the northern limits of the area dominated by the Goering-Tullios gang. There they were put to work with a thousand other slaves, and they toiled naked all day in the sun. Their only rest was when they took their grails to the rock at noon and were fed.

At the point where the river suddenly broadened into a lake, the mountains also bent in towards the shore. The plain and the hills stretched not more than one and a half miles between the mountain and the river. Goering meant to build a wall between the mountain and the river; he also intended to erect another wall, which would run for the full ten-mile length of the lakeshore, and a third wall at the southern end.

Burton and the others had to dig a deep trench and then pile the dirt taken from the hole into a wall. This was hard work, for they had only stone hoes with which to hack at the ground. Since the roots of the grass formed a thickly tangled complex of very tough material, they could be cut only with repeated blows. The mingled dirt and roots were scraped up on wooden shovels and tossed onto large bamboo sleds. These were dragged by teams onto the top of the wall, where the dirt was shovelled off to make the wall even higher and thicker.

At night the slaves were herded back into the stockade. Most of them fell asleep almost at once, but Targoff, the red-headed Israeli, squatted by Burton.

“The grapevine gives a little juice now and then,” he said. “I heard about the fight you and your crew put up. I also heard about your refusal to join Goering and his swine.”

“What do you hear about my infamous book?” said Burton.

Targoff smiled and said, “Your actions speak for themselves. Besides, Ruach is very sensitive about such things—not that you can blame him after what he went through on Earth. But I do not think that you would behave as you did if you were what he said you are. I think you're a good man, the type we need. So . . .”

Days and nights of hard work and short rations followed. Burton learned enough through the grapevine that Alice and the other two women were still being kept in the long hall. Wilfreda was in MacDonald's apartment with several other women. Loghu was living with Tullios. Alice had been kept by Goering for a week, then was turned over to one of his lieutenants, von Kreyscharft, a Prussian who had been killed at Waterloo. Rumor was that Goering had complained of her coldness and had wanted to give her to his bodyguard to do with as they pleased. But von Kreyscharft had asked for her and gotten her.

Burton, hearing this, was in agony. He knew what a proud and sensitive woman she was; he could imagine her state. He decided to take action very soon. Late that night, while the sentries were occupied talking on the walk, he crawled over to Targoff.

"You said you knew I must be on your side," he whispered. "When are you going to take me into your confidence? I might as well warn you now that, if you don't do so at once, I intend to foment a break among my own group and anybody, else who will join me."

"Ruach has told me more about; you," said Targoff. "Could a Jew trust anyone who wrote such a book? Or could he be trusted not to turn on them after the common enemy has been defeated?"

Burton opened his mouth to speak angrily, then closed it. For a moment he was silent; when he spoke, he was calm. "In the first place, my actions on Earth speak louder than any of my printed words. I was the friend and protector of many Jews; I had many Jewish friends."

"That statement is always a preface to an attack on the Jews," said Targoff.

"Perhaps. However, even if what Ruach claims were true, the Richard Burton you see before you in this valley is not the Burton who lived on Earth. I think every man has been changed somewhat by his experience here. If he hasn't, he is incapable of change, inflexible. He would be better off dead.

"During the five hundred and ninety days that I have lived on this river, I have learned much. Some of my 20th century friends, Frigate especially, have cleared me of my superstitions and enlightened my ignorance. I resisted this knowledge, true, as most men resist things that go against their fallacies and prejudices. But I can say, with no false pride, that I am more open-minded than many men. Believe me, I have argued frequently and passionately with Frigate and Monat. And, though I did not want to admit it at the time, I was strongly influenced by them and did much reconsideration."

"Jew-hate is something bred into the child," said Targoff. "It becomes part of the nerve. No act of will can get rid of it, unless it is not deeply embedded or the will is extraordinarily strong. The bell rings, and Paylov's dog salivates. Mention the word Jew, and the nervous system storms the citadel of the mind."

"I have pled enough," said Burton. "You will either accept me or reject me. In either case, you know what I will do."

"I accept," said Targoff. "I've worked with you, eaten bread with you. I like to think I'm a good judge of character. Tell me, if you were planning this, what would you do?"

Targoff listened carefully. At the end of Burton's explanation, Targoff nodded. "Much like my plan. Here is what we will do. Now . . ."

The next day, shortly after breakfast, several guards came for Burton and Frigate. Targoff kept a stony face, but he looked hard at Burton, who knew what Targoff was thinking. Nothing could be done about it except to march off to Goering's "palace." There they found the German seated in a big wooden chair and smoking a pipe. He asked them to sit down and offered them cigars and wine.

"Every once in a while," he said, "I like to relax and talk with somebody besides my colleagues. They are not overly bright. I like especially to talk with somebody who lived after I died. And to men who were famous in their time. I've few of either type so far."

"Many of your Israeli prisoners lived after you," said Frigate.

"Ah, the Jews!" Goering airily waved his pipe. "That is the trouble; they know me too well. They are sullen when I try to talk to them, and too many have tried to kill me for me to feel comfortable around them. Not that I have anything against them. I had many Jewish friends . . ."

Burton reddened as Goering sucked on his pipe and continued, "Der Fuehrer was a great man, but he had some idiocies. One of them was his attitude toward Jews. Myself, I cared less. But the Germany of my time was anti-Jewish, and a man must go with the Zeitgeist if he wants to get any place in life. Enough of that."

He chattered on for a while, then asked Frigate many questions concerning the fate of his contemporaries and the history of postwar Germany.

"If you Americans had had any political sense, you would have declared war on Russia as soon as we knew we were beaten. We would have fought with you against the Bolshevik. We would have crushed them."

Frigate did not reply. Goering laughed and told several very obscene stories. Then he asked Burton to tell him about the strange experience he had had before being resurrected in the valley.

Burton was surprised at Goering's knowledge. Had he learned about this from Kazz, or was there an informer among the slaves?

He told his story of the floating bodies and also gave Monat's theory. Goering looked thoughtful. "So there is nothing supernatural about all this. After the first few days here, I began to think so myself. Tell me, have you changed your mind about joining me?"

Burton stood up. "I would not be under the orders of a man who takes women by force," he said. "Moreover, I respect the Israelis. I would rather be a slave with them than free with you."

"Very well," said Goering. "But, I've been having trouble with the Roman. If we have a power struggle, and I lose, you will see how merciful I have been to you slaves. You do not know him. Only my intervention has saved one of you being tortured to death for his amusement."

"Good luck!" said Frigate enigmatically.

At noon, the two returned to their work in the hills. Neither got a chance to speak to Targoff or any of the slaves, since their duties happened not to bring them into contact. They did not dare make an open attempt, for that would have meant a severe beating.

After they returned to the stockade in the evening, Burton went, to Monat and several others he had befriended. He told them what had happened. "More than likely Targoff will not believe my story. He'll think we're spies. Even if he's not certain, he can't afford to take chances. So there'll be trouble. It's too bad that this had to happen, for the escape plan will be cancelled for tonight."

Nothing untoward took place—at first. The Israeli avoided Burton and Frigate. Then the stars came out, and the stockade was flooded with a light almost as bright as a full moon of Earth.

The guards, as if sensing tension, became more alert. They consulted among themselves and peered down from the walk at the sun-and-dirt blackened bodies of the slaves.

"Targoff will do nothing until it rains," said Burton. He referred to the fact that the clouds always appeared at about three in the morning and were shortly afterward followed by a half-hour of downpour. He appointed a round of guards and then prepared for an hour's sleep. Frigate was to stand first watch: Spruce, one of their new friends, was to take second. Burton would be third.

It seemed he had scarcely closed his eyes before Spruce had touched him. He rose quickly to his feet and yawned and stretched. The others were all awake. Within a few minutes, the clouds formed. In ten minutes the stars were blotted out. Thunder grumbled way up in the mountains, and the first of the lightning flashed through the sky.

Suddenly the heavens emptied. The slaves had already jammed under the slight protection of the walk circling the interior of the stockade. Every night they were soaked; and only the fact that all diseases of physical origin seemed to have vanished saved them from colds and pneumonia.

Lightning struck near. By its flash Burton saw that the guards were huddled under the roofs sticking out from the base of the watch houses at each corner of the stockade. They were covered with towels against the chill and the rain.

He waited until darkness rushed in after the lightning. Then he walked to Targoff and said, "Does he plan still hold?"

“You know better than that,” said Targoff. A bolt of lightning showed his angry face. “Judas!”

He stepped forward, and a dozen men followed him. Burton felt mud thrown on him and heard the impact of a heavy object that must have fallen from a distance. He paused for another flash to reveal the object. A guard lay sprawled face down before him; the back of his head was smashed in.

Targoff, who had also seen the corpse, said, “What's going on, Burton?”

“Wait,” replied the Englishman. He had no more idea than the Israeli, but anything unexpected could be to his advantage.

Lightning came again, and it illuminated the dwarfish figure of Kazz on the wooden walk inside the wall. He was swinging a huge stone axe against a group of guards who were in the angle formed by the meeting of two walls. Another flash. Two guards were sprawled out on the walk. Darkness. At the next blaze of light, another was down: the remaining two were running away down the walk in different directions.

Another bolt very near the wall showed that, finally, the other guards were aware of what was happening. They ran down the walk, shouting and waving their spears. Kazz ignoring them, slid a long bamboo ladder down into the enclosure and then threw a bundle of spears after it. By the next flash he could be seen advancing towards the nearest guards.

Burton snatched a spear, placed the shaft between his teeth, and climbed, almost ran, up the ladder. Behind came the others, including the Israeli. All thought of killing him as a traitor was gone.

The fight was bloody but brief. With the guards on the walk either stabbed or hurled to their deaths, only those in the watch-houses remained. The ladder was carried to the other end of the stockade and placed against the gate. In two minutes, men had climbed to the outside, dropped down, and opened the gate. For the first time Burton found the chance to talk to Kazz.

“I thought you had sold us out!”

“No. Not me, Kazz,” said the subhuman reproachfully. “You know I love you, Burton-*naq*. You're my friend, my chief. I pretend to join your enemies because that playing it smart. I surprise you don't do the same! You're no dummy.”

“Certainly, you aren't,” said Burton. “But I couldn't bring myself to kill those slaves to prove myself.”

Lightning showed Kazz shrugging. He said, “That don't bother me. I don't know them. Besides, you hear Goering. He say they die anyway.”

“It's a good thing you chose tonight to rescue us,” said Burton. He did not tell Kazz why since he did not want to confuse him. Moreover, there were more important things to do.

“Tonight's a good night,” said Kazz. “Big battle's going on. Tullios and Goering get very drunk and quarrel. They fight; their men fight. While they kill each other, invaders come. Those brown men across the river . . . what you call them? Onondagas, that's them. Their boats come just before rain come. They make raid to steal slaves, too. Or maybe just for the hell of it. So I think, now's good time to start plan, get Burton-*naq* free.”

As suddenly as it had come, the rain ceased. Now Burton could hear shouts and screams from far off, towards the river. Drums were beating up and down the riverbanks. He said to Targoff, “We can either try to escape and probably do so easily, or we can attack.”

“I intend to wipe out the beasts who enslaved us,” said Targoff. “There are other stockades nearby. I've sent men to open their gates. The rest are too far away to reach quickly, they're strung out at half-mile intervals.”

By then, the blockhouse in which the off-duty guards lived had been stormed. Armed, the slaves started walking toward the noise of the conflict. Burton's group was placed on the right flank. They had not gone half a mile before they came upon corpses and several wounded, a mixture of Onondagas and whites.

Despite the heavy rain, a fire had broken out. By its increasing light they saw that the flames came from the longhouse. Outlined in the glare were struggling figures. Even as the escapees advanced across the plain, they saw one side break and run toward them. Behind came the victors, whooping and

screaming jubilantly.

“There's Goering,” said Frigate. “His fat isn't going to help him get away, that's for sure.”

He pointed, and Burton could see the German desperately pumping his legs but falling behind the others, “I don't want the Indians to have the honor of killing him,” Burton said. “We owe it to Alice to get him.”

The tall figure of MacDonald was ahead of them all, and it was toward him that Burton threw his spear. To the Scot the missile must have seemed to come out of the darkness from nowhere. Too late, he tried to dodge. The flint head buried itself in the flesh between his left shoulder and chest, and he fell on his side. Before he could rise again he was pushed back down by Burton.

MacDonald's eyes rolled; blood trickled from his mouth. He pointed at another wound, a deep gash in his side just below the ribs. “You . . . your woman . . . Wilfreda . . . did that,” he gasped. “But I killed her . . .”

Burton wanted to ask him where Alice was, but Kazz, screaming phrases in his native tongue, brought his club down on the Scot's head. Burton picked up MacDonald's spear and ran after Kazz. “Don't kill Goering!” he shouted. “Leave him to me!”

Kazz did not hear him; he was busy fighting with several Onondagas. Moreover, Burton saw Alice.

He reached out, grabbed her and spun her around. She screamed and started to struggle. Burton shouted at her; suddenly, recognizing him, she collapsed into his arms and began weeping. Burton would have tried to comfort her, but he was afraid that Goering would escape him. Pushing her away, he ran toward the German and threw his spear. It grazed Goering's head, and he screamed and stopped running and began to look for the weapon. Then Burton was on him. Both fell to the ground and rolled over and over, each trying to strangle the other.

Something struck the Englishman on his head from behind. Stunned, he released his grip. Goering pushed him down on the ground and dived toward the spear. Seizing it, he rose and stepped toward the prostrate Burton. Burton tried to get to his feet, but his knees seemed to be made of putty and everything was whirling. Alice tackled Goering around the legs from behind, and he fell forward. Burton made another effort, found he could at least stagger, and sprawled over Goering. Again, they rolled over and over. Goering began squeezing on Burton's throat just as a shaft slid over Burton's shoulder, burning the skin, and its stone tip drove into Goering's throat.

Burton stood up, pulled the spear from the flesh, and plunged it into the man's fat belly. Goering tried to sit up, but he fell back and died. Alice slumped to the ground and wept.

Dawn saw the end of the battle. By then the slaves had broken out of every stockade. The warriors of Goering and Tullios were ground between the two forces, Onondaga and Israeli-English, like husks between millstones. Afterward, the ex-slaves had continued fighting. The Indians, who had raided only to loot and get more slaves and their grails, retreated. They climbed aboard their dugouts and bamboo canoes and paddled across the lake. Nobody felt like chasing them.

The days that followed were busy ones. A rough census indicated that at least half of the 20,000 inhabitants of Goering's little kingdom had been killed, severely wounded, by the Onondaga, or had fled. The Roman, Tullios, had apparently escaped.



The survivors chose a provisional government. Targoff, Burton, Spruce, Ruach, and two others formed an executive committee with considerable, but temporary, powers.

Alice Hargreaves moved into Burton's hut without either saying a word about the why or wherefore. Later she said, "Frigate tells me that if this entire planet is constructed like the areas we've seen, and there's no reason to believe it isn't, then the river must be at least 20, 000,000 miles long. It's incredible, but so is our resurrection. Also, there may be over 37 billion people living along the river. What chance would I have of ever finding my Earthly husband?"

"Moreover, I love you. Something has changed in me, perhaps all I've been through. I don't think I could have loved you on Earth. I might have been fascinated, but I would also have been repelled, perhaps frightened. I couldn't have made you a good wife there. Here I can—even though there doesn't seem to be any authority or religious instructions that could marry us. That in itself shows how I've changed. That I could be calmly living with a man I'm not married to . . .! Well, there you are."

"We're no longer living in the Victorian age or the 20th century," said Burton. "What would you call this present age—the River Age?"

"Providing it lasts," said Alice.

"It started suddenly; it may end just as swiftly and unexpectedly."

Certainly, thought Burton, the blue river and the grassy plain and the forested hills and the unscalable mountains did not seem like Shakespeare's insubstantial vision. They were solid, real, as real as the men walking toward him now: Frigate, Vlonat, and Kazz. He stepped out of the hut and greeted them.

Kazz began talking. "A long time ago, before I speak English good, I see something. I try to tell you then, but you don't understand me. I see a man who don't have this on his forehead."

He pointed at the center of his own forehead and then at that of the others. "I know," Kazz continued, "you can't see it. Pete and Monat can't either. Nobody else can. But I see it on everybody's forehead. Except that man I try to catch long time ago. Then, one day, I see a woman don't have it, but I don't say nothing to you. Now I see a third person who don't have it."

"**H**e means," said Monat "that he is able to perceive certain symbols or characters on the forehead of each and every one of us. He can see these only in bright sunlight and at a certain angle. But he claims they exist."

"He must be able to see a little further into the spectrum than we," said Frigate. "Obviously whoever stamped us with the sign of the beast, or whatever you want to call it, did not know about the special ability of Kazz's species. Which shows that they are not omniscient."

"Nor infallible," said Burton. "Otherwise I would never have awakened in that place before being resurrected. So who is this person who does not have these symbols on his skin?"

“Robert Spruce,” said Frigate.

“Before we jump to any conclusions,” said Monat, “don't forget that the omission may have been an accident.”

“We'll find out,” said Burton ominously. “But why the symbols? Why should we be marked?”

“Probably for identification or numbering purposes,” said Monat.

“Let's go face Spruce,” said Burton.

“We have to catch him first,” replied Frigate. “Kazz made the mistake of mentioning to Spruce that he knew about the symbols, at breakfast this morning. Spruce turned pale, excused himself — and he hasn't been seen since. We've sent search parties out up and down the river, and also into the hills.”

“His flight is an admission of guilt,” said Burton. He felt anger and frustration rising within him. Was man a species of cattle to be branded for some sinister purpose?

That afternoon, the drums announced that Spruce had been caught.

Three hours later he was standing before the council table in the newly built meeting hall. Behind the table sat the Council. The doors were closed, for the councilmen felt that this was something that could be conducted more efficiently without a crowd. However, Monat, Kazz, and Frigate were present.

“I may as well tell you now,” said Burton, “that we have decided to go to any lengths to get the truth from you. It is against the principles of everyone at this table to use torture. We despise and loathe those who resort to torture. But we feel that this is one issue when principles must be abandoned.”

“Principles must never be abandoned,” said Spruce evenly. “The end never justifies the means. Even if clinging to them means defeat, death, and remaining in ignorance.”

“There's too much at stake,” said Targoff. “I, who have been the victim of unprincipled men; Ruach, who has been tortured several times; the others; we all agree. We'll use fire and the knife on you if we must. It is necessary that we find out the truth.

“Now tell me, are you an agent for those responsible for this resurrection?”

“**Y**ou will be no better than Goering and his kind if you torture me,” said Spruce, his voice beginning to break. “In fact you will be far worse! You are forcing yourselves to be like him in order to gain something that may not even exist — or, if it does, may not be worth the price.”

“Tell us the truth,” said Targ “Don't lie. We know that you be an agent, perhaps one of those directly responsible.”

“There is a fire blazing in that hollowed-out stone,” said Burton. “If you don't start talking at once, you will find yourself suspended over it within a few seconds. The roasting you get will be the least of your pain. I am an authority on Chinese and Arabic methods of torture. I assure you that they had some very refined means for extracting the truth.”

Spruce, pale and sweating, said, “You may be denying yourself eternal life if you do this! It will at least set you far back on your journey, delay the final goal.”

“What is that?” replied Burton.

“You have stumbled on the weakness in me and my kind,” said Spruce. “We cannot endure physical violence; it is difficult for us even to think much about it. So only the strongest are sent among you — and we are weak, compared to you primitives.”

“You will talk?” said Targoff.

“Even the idea of self-destruction is painful and to be avoided except when absolutely necessary,” muttered Spruce. “This despite the fact that I know I shall live again.”

“Put him over the fire,” Targoff said to the two men who held Spruce.

“Just one moment,” said Monat. “Spruce, the science of my people was much more advanced than twenty-first century Earth science. So I am more qualified to make an educated guess. Perhaps we could spare you the pain of the fire, and the pain of betraying your purpose, if you were merely to affirm what I have to say. That way you wouldn't be making a positive betrayal.”

Spruce said, “Speak.”

“It's my theory that you are a Terrestrial. You belong to an age chronologically far past the date of my

landing on Earth. You must be the descendant of those few who survived. Judging by the technology and power required to reconstruct the surface of this planet into one vast river valley, your age must be much later than the twenty-first. Say, the 50th century A.D.?"

Spruce looked at the fire, then said, "Add two thousand more years."

"If this planet is about the size of Earth, it can hold only so many people. Where are the others? Those who were stillborn, the children who died before they were five, and those who lived after the twentieth century?"

"They are elsewhere," said Spruce. Again he glanced at the fire. Then his lips tightened.

"My own people," said Monat, "had a theory they would eventually be able to see into their past. I won't go into the details, but it was possible that past events could be visually detected and then recorded. Time travel, of course, was sheer fantasy.

"But what if your culture was able to do what we only theorized about? What if you recorded every single human being that had ever lived? Located this planet and constructed this river valley? Somewhere, maybe under the very surface of this planet, used energy-matter conversion and the recordings to recreate the bodies of the dead in the tanks? Used biological techniques to rejuvenate the bodies and to restore limbs, eyes, and so on and also to correct any physical defeats?"

"Then," continued Monat, "you made more recordings of the newly created bodies and stored them in some vast memory-tank? Destroyed the bodies? Recreated them again through means of the conductive metal which is also used to charge the grails? These could be buried beneath the ground. Thus the resurrection occurs without recourse to supernatural means.

"The big question is, why?"

"If you had it in your power to do all this, would you not think it was your ethical duty?" said Spruce.

"Yes, but I would resurrect only those worth resurrecting."

"And what if others did not accept your criteria?" said Spruce. "Do you really think you are wise enough and good enough to judge? Would you place yourself on a level with God? No, all must be given a second chance, no matter how bestial or selfish or petty or stupid. Then it will be up to them ..."

He fell silent, as if he regretted his outburst.

"Besides," said Monat, "you would want to make a study of humanity as it existed in the past. You would want to record all the languages that man ever spoke, his mores, his philosophies, biographies. To do this, you need agents, posing as resurrectees, to mingle with the river people and to take notes, to observe, to study. How long will this study take? One thousand years? Two? Ten? A million?"

"And what about the eventual disposition of us? Are we to stay here forever?"

"You will stay here as long as it takes for you to be rehabilitated!" shouted Spruce. "Then, you will be relocated . . ."

He closed his mouth, glared, then opened it to say, "Continued contact with you makes even the toughest of us take on your characteristics. We have to go through a rehabilitation ourselves. Already I feel unclean!"

"Put him over the fire," said Targoff. "We'll get the entire truth out of him."

"No, you won't" cried Spruce. "I should have done this long ago! Who knows what . . ."

He fell to the ground, and his skin began to change to the bluish color of the dead.

Targoff gestured to Doctor Steinborg and said, "Better take him away now; begin the dissection at once. We'll wait here for your report."

"With stone knives, no chemicals, no microscopes, what kind of a report can you expect?" said Steinborg. "I'll do my best."

The body was carried off. Burton said, "I'm glad he didn't force us to admit we were bluffing. If he had kept his mouth shut, he could have defeated us."

"You really weren't going to torture him?" Frigate asked.

"Of course not," said Ruach. "Spruce would have been right. We'd have been no better than Goering. But we could have tried other means — hypnotism, for instance. Burton, Monat, and Steinborg are

experts in that field.”

“The trouble is, we still don't know if we did get the truth,” said Targoff. “Actually he may have been lying. Monat supplied guesses; if these were wrong, Spruce could have led us astray by agreeing with Monat. I'd say we can't be at all sure.”

They agreed on one thing. Their chances of detecting another agent through the absence of symbols on the forehead would be gone. Now that They — whoever They were — knew about the visibility of the characters to Kazz's species, They would take the proper measures to prevent detection that distinguished them as different.

Steinborg returned about three hours later. “There is nothing to distinguish him from any other member of Homo Sapiens except this one little device.”

He held up a black shiny ball that was about the size of a match-head.

“I located this on the surface of the forebrain. It was attached to some nerves by wires so thin that I could see them only at a certain angle, when they caught the light. It's my opinion that Spruce killed himself by means of this device and that he did so by literally thinking himself dead. Somehow, this little ball translated a wish for death into the deed. Perhaps, it reacted to the thought by releasing a poison which I do not have facilities for analysing.” He concluded his report and passed the ball around to the others.

XI

Thirty days later, Burton, Frigate, Ruach, and Kazz were returning from a trip upriver. It was just before dawn.

The cold heavy mists that piled up to six or seven feet above the river in the latter part of the night swirled around them. They could not see in any direction further than a strong man might make a standing broad jump. But Burton, standing in the prow of the bamboo-hulled single-masted boat, knew that they were close to the western shore. Near the relatively shallow depths the current ran more slowly, and they had just steered to port from the middle of the river.

If his calculations were correct, they should be close to the ruins of Goering's hall. At any moment he expected to see a strip of denser darkness, appear out of the dark waters, the banks of that land he now called home. Home, for Burton, had always been a place from which to sally forth, a resting-place, a temporary fortress in which to write a book about his last expedition, a lair in which to heal fresh hurts, a conning tower from which he looked out for new lands to explore.

Thus, only two weeks after the death of Spruce, Burton had felt the need to get to some place other than the one in which he now was. He had heard a rumor that copper had been discovered on the western shore about a hundred miles upriver. The rumor, carried by a runaway slave, was that copper was being mined in large quantities in the mountains of the area near that which he had fled. This was a length of shore of not more than twelve miles, inhabited by 5th century B.C. Sarmatians and 13th century A.D. Frisians.

Burton had listened to the fellow, an 18th century Spanish gypsy. He did not really think the story was true — but it gave him an excuse to travel. So, turning over the management of the new state to Targoff, and ignoring Alice's pleas to take her with him, he had set off.

Now, a month later and after some adventures, not all unpleasant, they were almost home. The gypsy's story had not been entirely unfounded. There was copper but only in minute amounts. So the four had gotten into their boat for the easy trip down current, their sail pushed by the never ceasing wind. They journeyed during the daytime and beached the boat during mealtimes wherever there were friendly people who did not mind strangers using their grailrocks. At night they either slept among the friendlies or, if in hostile waters, sailed by in the darkness.

The last leg of their trip was made after the sun went down. Before getting home, they had to pass a section of the valley where slave-hungry 18th-century Mohawks lived on one side and equally greedy Carthaginians of the third century B.C. on the other. Having slipped through under cover of the fog, they

were almost home.

Burton stood on the prow and scowled against the dark gray swirls.

After a while he became aware that Frigate was standing behind him. Probably he had been there for some time, but had not spoken because he had been hurt too many times by Burton's savage tongue when Burton had resented having his thoughts interrupted.

"Well, Pete, what is it? You having an itch you want scratched?"

"Yes, in my head," the Yank replied. "I was wondering. Suppose Spruce was telling the truth, that we're allowed a thousand years or so in which to pass some sort of ethical test, after which those who are successful will gain some sort of immortality? That's all right for those who survive during the time allotted. But what about the poor bastards who were resurrected only to die a short time later? How can they prove themselves?"

"I think it's quite obvious."

"Sure. They'll be resurrected again, as many times as they die in the valley. But — who has? There's no evidence . . ."

"There have been rumors."

"Rumors, hell! This valley has more rumors than people!"

"Then, I don't know," Burton said. "Did you expect to get any more answers to your questions here than you did on Earth? Anyway, if the river is as long as we think it is, a million people could die every day along its banks and be resurrected the next day, and it might be years before you or I saw it happen in our area."

Abruptly, he said, "There's the bank. Pete, lower the mast! Kaz Lev, back oars! Jump to it!"

A few minutes later, they had landed and had pulled the lightweight craft completely out of the water and upon the gently sloping shore. Now that they were out of the mists they could see the sky paling above the eastern mountains. Soon the sun would be above the towering peaks to the east.

"Dead reckoning come alive!" Burton said, "We're ten paces beyond the grailrock near the ruins!"

He scanned the bamboo huts scattered along the plain and those buildings evident in the long grasses of the hills and under the giant trees of the higher hills at the feet of the mountains.

Not a single person was to be seen. The valley was asleep.

He knew that this was not so. It had better not be so. There were sentinels on platforms in the branches of the iron trees, and the earthen walls at the north and south boundaries were manned by garrisons. A half-mile away from where he stood, on each side, were slender bamboo towers, on the top of which were lookouts. If they, or any of the guards along the ten-mile length of this area, saw anything suspicious, they were to pound on huge signal-drums. The entire state should then come alive; the bamboo structures on the plains and in the hills should vomit forth a horde of armed men and women.

Nevertheless, he was concerned that he and his crew had landed so easily under the cloak of the fog. An army could have slid just as successfully through the mists and even now be racing towards the nearest buildings to slaughter or capture the inhabitants.

Should he build an earthen wall along the entire shore of this area and top it with a fortress of long? What good would it do? To make it an effective defense, the whole population would have to sleep on top of the wall every night. And a host of attackers, concentrated at several places, could pour over the wall and overcome the defenders before they could assemble their strength. No, a wall was not the answer. What then?

Perhaps there was no complete answer to this problem — or to any.

He said to the others, "Don't you think it's strange that no one's up yet? Or that we've not been challenged by the sentinels?"

Frigate pointed toward the lookout tower to their right.

Burton swore and said, "They're asleep, by God, or deserted their post!"

But he knew as he spoke that this was no common case of dereliction of duty. Though he had said

nothing to the others about it, the moment he had stepped ashore, he had known that something was very wrong. He began running across the plain towards the hut in which he and Alice lived. Behind him thudded the feet of the others as they followed.

The entrance to the little one-room house was a curtain formed of bamboo slats tied together by dried long-grass blades. Normally it was let down at night; now it was rolled up. Seeing this, he put on a burst of speed and ran headlong into the hut.

Alice was sleeping on the bamboo-and-grass bed on the right side of the building. Only her head was visible, for she was curled up under a blanket of towels fastened to each other by the magnetic clasps. Burton threw the blanket back, got down on his knees by the low bed, and raised her to a sitting position. Her head lolled forward, and her arms hung limply. But she had a healthy color and breathed normally.

Burton called her name three times. She slept on. He slapped both her cheeks sharply; red splotches sprang up on them. Her eyelids fluttered, then she became as before.

By then Frigate and Ruach appeared. "We've looked into some of the other huts," Frigate said. "They're all asleep. I tried to wake a couple of them up, but they're out for the count. What's wrong?"

Burton said, "There's only one person who might have the power or the need to do this. Spruce! Spruce and his kind, whoever they are!"

"Why?" Frigate said. He sounded frightened.

"They were looking for me! They must have come in under the fog, somehow put this whole area to sleep!"

"A sleep-gas would do it easily enough," Ruach said. "Although people who have powers such as theirs could have devices we've never dreamed of."

"They were looking for me!" Burton shouted.

"Which means, if true, that they may be back tonight," Frigate said. "But why would they be searching for you?"

Ruach replied for Burton. "Because he, as far as we know, wail the only man to awaken in the pre-resurrection phase. Why he did is a mystery. But it's evident something went wrong. It may also be a mystery to them. I'd be inclined to think that they've been discussing this and finally decided to corm here. Maybe to kidnap Burton for observation — or some more sinister purpose."

"Possibly they wanted to erase from my memory all that I'd seen in that chamber of floating bodies," Burton said. "Such a thing should not be beyond their science."

"But you've told that story to many," Frigate said. "They couldn't possibly track all those people down and remove the memory of your story from their minds."

"Would that be necessary? How many believe my tale? Sometimes doubt it myself."

Ruach said, "Speculation is fruitless. What do we do now?"

There was a shriek, "Richard!" And they turned to see Alice sitting up and staring at them.

For a few minutes, they could not get her to understand what had happened. Finally she said, "So that's why it didn't clear up after the rains last night! Instead, the fog seemed to roll in from the river, the first time it's ever done that. I thought it was strange, but of course I had no way of knowing what was really happening."

Burton said, "Get your grail. Put anything you want to take along in your sack. We're leaving as of now. I want to get away before the others awake."

Alice's already large eyes became even wider. "Where are we going?"

"Anywhere from here. I don't like to run away, but I can't stand up and fight people like that. Not if they know where I am. I'll tell you, however, what I plan to do. I intend to find the end of the river. It must have an inlet and an outlet, and there must be a way for a man to get through to the source. If there's any way at all, I'll find it you can bet your soul on that!

"Meanwhile, they'll be looking for me elsewhere — I hope. The fact that they didn't find me here makes me think that they have no means for instantly locating a person. They may have branded us like

cattle —” he indicated the invisible symbols on his forehead — “but even cattle have mavericks: And we're cattle with brains.”

He turned to the three. “You're more than welcome to come along with me. In fact, I'd be honored.”
“I'll get Monat,” Kazz said. “He wouldn't want to be left behind.”

Burton grimaced and said, “Good old Monat! I hate to do this to him, but there's no helping it. He can't come along. He's too distinguishable. Their agents would have no trouble at all in locating anybody who looked like him. I'm sorry, but he can't.”

Tears stood in Kazz's eyes, then run down his bulging cheekbones. In a choked voice, he said, “Burton-*naq*, I can't go either. I look too different, too.”

Burton felt tears wet his own eyes. He said, “We'll take that chance. After all, there must be plenty of your type around. We've seen at least thirty or more during our travels.”

“No females so far, Burton-*naq*,” Kazz said mournfully. Then he smiled. “Maybe we find one when we go along the river.”

As quickly, he lost his grin. “No, damn it, I don't go! I can't hurt Monat too much. Him and me, others think we ugly and scary looking. So we become good friends. He's not my *naq*, but he's next to it. I stay.”

Again he smiled. “I know. I tell Monat where you're going. Then, we wait a while and follow you. Some day we catch up and all go together. You like that? O.K.?”

He stepped up to Burton, hugged him in a grip that forced Burton's breath out in a great whoosh, released him, shook hands with the others as they winced, then turned and shuffled off.

Ruach, holding his paralyzed hand, said, “You're off on a fool's errand, Burton. Do you realize that you could sail on this river for a thousand years and still be a million miles or more from the end? Not me. I'm staying. My people need me. Besides, Spruce made it clear that we should be striving for a spiritual perfection, not fighting those who gave us a chance to do so.”

Burton's teeth flashed whitely in his dark face. He swung his grail as if it were a weapon.

“I didn't ask to be put here any more than I asked to be born on Earth. I don't intend to kowtow to another's dictates! I mean to find the river's end. And if I don't, I will at least have had fun and learned much on the way. Let's go! Ho for the river!”

By then, those in the huts were beginning to stumble out as they yawned and rubbed heavy eyes. Ruach paid no attention to them; he watched the craft, close-hauled to the wind, cutting across and up the river. Burton was handling the rudder; he turned once and waved the grail so that the sun bounced off it in many shining spears.

Ruach thought that Burton was really happy that he had been forced to make a decision. Now he could evade the deadly responsibilities that would come with governing this little state and could do what wanted. He could set out on greatest of all adventures.

“I suppose it's for the best, Ruach muttered to himself. “A man may find salvation on the road, if he wants to, just as well as he may at home. It's up to him. Meanwhile I, like Voltaire's character—what was his name? Earthly things are beginning to slip me — cultivate my own little garden.”

He paused to look somewhat longingly after Burton.

“Who knows? He may some day run into Voltaire.”

He sighed, then smiled slightly. “On the other hand, Voltaire may some day drop in on me!”

END