

In July **FANTASTIC**

IT ALL BEGAN WITH A TRAFFIC PROBLEM



The President of the United States—with an assist from a slightly mad scientist—solves this problem by opening an infinity of private worlds to every American: one driver, one planet. But, as in all stories by Jack Sharkey, unexpected hitches develop—there is **TROUBLE WITH TWEENTY**, and all pedestrians—and readers—will laugh heartily.

AND

A Fantasy Classic: **HE THAT HATH WINGS**—Edmond Hamilton's classic tale is the story of an alien who gives up the gift of great wings in return for the love of an Earth girl—and the penalty he pays for his sacrifice.

You'll be in another world in July Fantastic. On sale June 20th—Only 50¢



Amazing Stories

Fact and Science Fiction

July, 1963 Vol. 37, No. 7

REG. U. S. PAT. OFF.
"FIRST IN SCIENCE FICTION SINCE 1926"

NOVELETS

REDEMPTION By Robert F. Young	6
THE GAME By Neal Barrett, Jr.	52

SERIAL

THE PROGRAMMED PEOPLE By Jack Sharkey (Conclusion)	82
--	----

SHORT STORIES

THE FORMULA By Arthur Porges	46
THE YES MEN OF VENUS By Ron Goulart	73

FEATURES

OR SO YOU SAY	4
EDITORIAL	5
COMING NEXT MONTH	120
THE SPECTROSCOPE	121

Cover: Emish

Illustrating Redemption

SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES: All subscription correspondence should be addressed to **AMAZING STORIES**, Circulation Department, 434 South Wabash Avenue, Chicago 5, Illinois. Please allow at least six weeks for change of address. Include your old address, as well as new, enclosing if possible an address label from a recent issue.

EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS must be accompanied by return postage and will be handled with reasonable care; however, publisher assumes no responsibility for return or safety of art work, photographs or manuscripts.



ZIFF-DAVIS PUBLISHING COMPANY
William B. Ziff, Chairman of the Board
(1946-1953)
William ZIE, President
W. Bradford Briggs, Executive Vice President
Herschel B. Scribn, Vice President and General Manager
M. T. Birmingham, Jr., Vice President and Treasurer
Robert P. Brodberg, Circulation Director
Charles Housman, Financial Vice President
Stanley R. Greenfield, Vice President
Phillip T. Heffernan, Vice President

Editorial Director
NORMAN M. LOBSENZ
Editor
CELE GOLDSMITH

Ziff-Davis Publishing Company
Editorial and Executive Offices
One Park Avenue
New York 15, New York
Oregon 9-7200
Advertising Manager
Martin Gluckman

Midwestern and Circulation Office
434 South Wabash Avenue
Chicago 5, Illinois
WAabach 2-4911

Western Office
5025 Wilshire Boulevard
Beverly Hills, California
CHestview 4-0265

Copyright © 1963 by Ziff-Davis Publishing Company. All rights reserved.

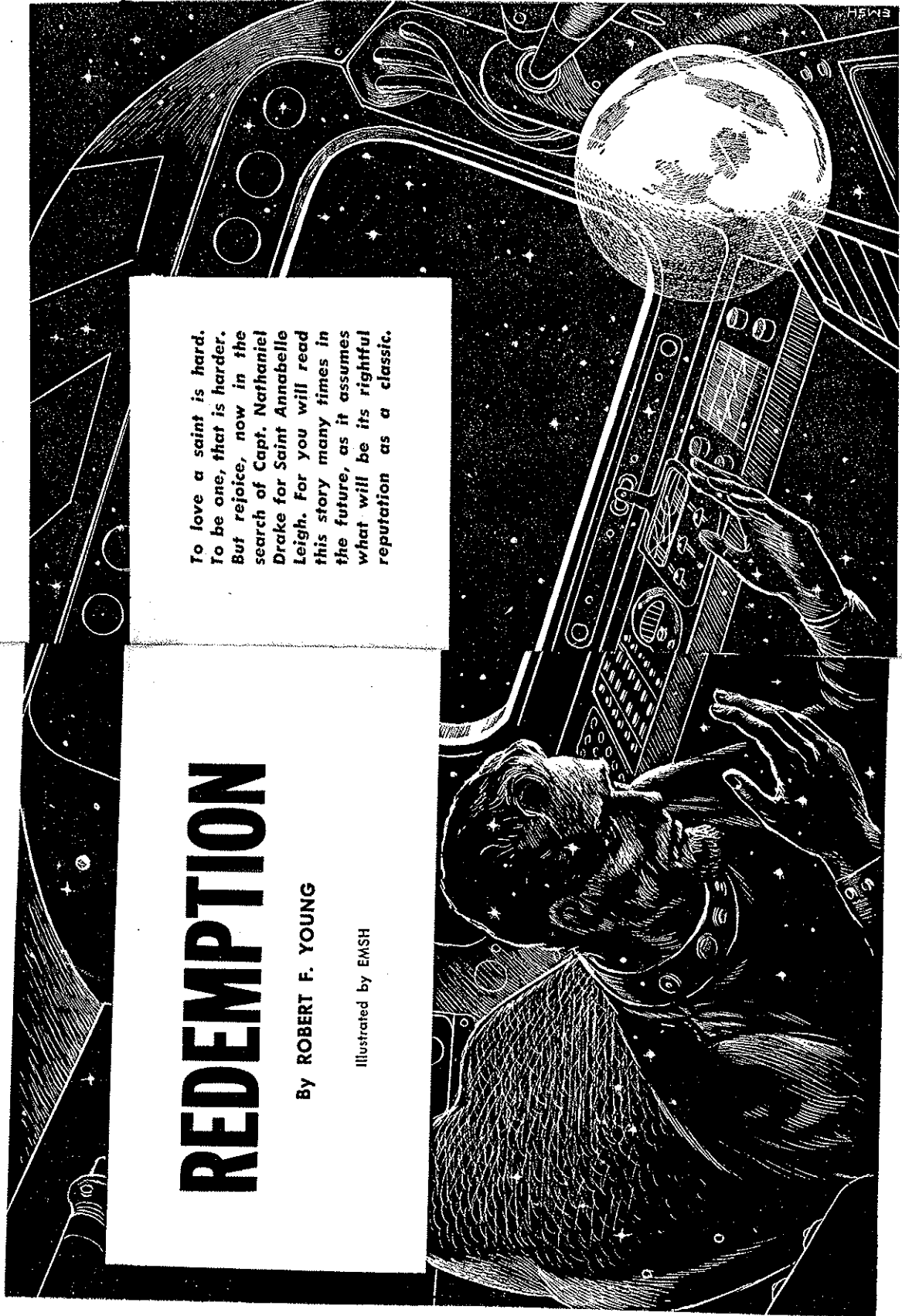
AMAZING STORIES, Fact and Science Fiction, Vol. 37, No. 7, July 1963, is published monthly by Ziff-Davis Publishing Company at 434 South Wabash Avenue, Chicago 5, Illinois. (Ziff-Davis also publishes—Popular Photography, Popular Electronics, Electronics World, HiFi/Stereo Review, Popular Boating, Car and Driver, Flying, Modern Bride, and Fantastic.) Subscription rates: One Year United States and possessions \$4.00; Canada and Pan American Union Countries \$4.50; all other foreign countries \$5.00. Second Class postage paid at Chicago, Illinois and at additional mailing offices.

REDEMPTION

By ROBERT F. YOUNG

Illustrated by EMASH

*To love a saint is hard.
To be one, that is harder.
But rejoice, now in the
search of Capt. Nathaniel
Drake for Saint Annabelle
Leigh. For you will read
this story many times in
the future, as it assumes
what will be its rightful
reputation as a classic.*



THEY called him "The Jet-propelled Dutchman", but he was neither Dutch nor jet-propelled. He was neo-Terran. In common with all interplanetary spacemen of his day, his ship employed the Lamarre displacement-drive. His name was Nathaniel Drake.

Legend has it that whenever he put into port he searched for a certain woman in the hope of redeeming himself through love, but the makers of legends are prone to draw parallels where no true parallels exist. Nathaniel Drake searched for a certain woman—yes; but the woman for whom he searched was even more of a ghost than he was, and it was not love through which he hoped to redeem himself, but hate.

His story begins in a region of space off the orbital shores of Iago Iago, not long after the "Suez Canal" sprang its first "leak." In those days, the Sirian Satrapy was at the height of her industrial career. Her globular merchant ships busily plied her interplanetary seas, and her Suez Canal freighters left Way-out almost daily for the ravenous marts of Earth. Her planets prospered and her peoples dwelled in peace and plenty and her politicians lived high on the hog. Only one of her ten ecosphere worlds knew not the blessings of civilization. This one—

Iago Iago—had been set aside for displaced indigenes in accordance with section 5, paragraph B-81, of the Interstellar Code, and was out of bounds to poet and pillager alike.

Nathaniel Drake was transporting a cargo of pastelsilk from Forget Me Not to Dior. Forget Me Not and Dior, as any schoolboy will tell you, are Sirius VIII and X respectively. Between their orbits lies the orbit of Sirius IX, or Iago Iago. Now at the time of Drake's run, these three planets were in conjunction, and consequently, in order to avoid the gravitic pull of Iago Iago, he had programmed the automatic pilot to swing the one-man ship into a wide detour. Although he did not know it at the time, this detour had already brought the *Fly by Night* into an area of space seldom "trodden by the foot of man."

When the "Suez Canal warp-process" proved impracticable for interplanetary runs, interplanetary spacemen accepted their lot once and for all and adopted three standard measures to combat solitude. In the order of their importance, these measures were (1) girlie realtapes, (2) girlie stereo-comics, and (3) hangoverless gin. Nathaniel Drake had nothing against watered-down voyeurism, but he believed in slaking a thirst, not in tantalizing it;

hence during most of his runs he concentrated on measure number three—i.e., hangoverless gin. The present run was no exception, and he was in the middle of his fifth fifth when the knock sounded on his cabin door.

HE was not a man who took fright easily, and he never panicked. He finished filling the glass he had just emptied, and set the bottle back down on the chart table. He could hear the faint creaking of the hull reinforcing beams and the subdued murmuring of the grav generator in the power room below him. For a while, there were no other sounds. Then the knock came again.

Deliberately Drake got up, removed his ion gun from the rack above his bunk, and laid it on the table. He sat back down again. "Come in," he said.

The door opened, and a girl entered.

She was quite tall. Her hair was light-brown, and her brown eyes were set wide-apart in a thin, rather high-cheekboned face. They were strange eyes. They seemed to be looking both outward and inward at the same time. Atop her head sat a small kepi, its hue strictly in keeping with the blue-grayness of her coatblouse and skirt. Army of the Church of the Emancipation uniforms were noted for their

severity, and hers was no exception. In her case, however, the severity seemed to have been lost in the shuffle, and catching the sweep of her thighs as she moved into the room, Drake guessed why. She was stacked, this girl was—stacked so stunningly that the fact would have been self-evident even if she had been wearing a blanket.

The thoroughness of his scrutiny neither escaped nor disconcerted her. She did seem somewhat taken aback by his appearance, however. Small wonder: he needed a haircut, and the sideburns and chin whiskers that symbolized his captaincy had spread out into an unkempt beard that made him look fifty years of age instead of the thirty-two he actually was. "I—I imagine you're surprised to see me," she said.

Her voice was husky, but rich and full, and lent her words a resonance that words seldom get to know. Drake dug up another glass, poured it half full of gin, and offered it to her. She declined it, as he had known she would. "No thank you," she said.

He drank the gin himself, then sat back in his chair and waited. While waiting, he pondered the why and the whereby of her presence. The whereby gave him no trouble: the starboard storeroom provided sufficient space for a penurious passenger to

stow away, and venality was certainly a common enough ailment among port officials. The why, however, was a horse of a different dimension.

She tethered it herself. "I want you to put me down on Iago Iago," she said. "I'll pay you—pay you well. It would have been impractical for me to take a passenger ship—with so many witnesses, the pilot wouldn't have dared to land me. I—I gambled that a loner like yourself might. Iago Iago's in conjunction now, and you won't lose more than a few hours, and no one will ever know."

He was staring at her. "Iago Iago! Why should you want me to put you down in Iago Iago?"

"The Polysirians are expecting the resurrection of their supreme saint. I—I want to be on hand to witness it."

"Nonsense!" Drake said. "When you're dead, you're dead, and that goes for saints and sinners alike."

Golden flecks danced briefly in her brown eyes. "Does it, Mr. Drake? Then how do you explain the Potomac Peregrination?"

"I don't have to explain it because I don't believe in it. But to get back to specifics: even assuming that there is a resurrection about to take place on Iago Iago, there would be no way for the news to have reached you."

"We have ways. Call it an in-

terplanetary grapevine, if you like . . . The supreme saint prophesied that he would rise from the dead before the passing of a single year and appear in the heavens for all to see, and then descend among the people."

To gain time for reflection, Drake dropped the subject and asked her name. "Annabelle," she said. "Saint Annabelle Leigh."

"And how old are you?"

"Twenty-three. Please put me down on Iago Iago, Mr. Drake."

"You said you were prepared to pay. How much?"

She turned her back on him, did something to her coatblouse, and swung around a moment later with a money belt in her hands. She held it out to him. "It contains two thousand credits. Count them, if you like."

He shook his head. "Put it back on. I wouldn't risk losing my pilot's license for ten times that amount."

"But there isn't any risk. I'm certainly not going to tell anyone that you violated the code."

He regarded her speculatively. "Credits aren't the only form of negotiable cash," he said.

She did not even blush. "I am prepared to pay in that kind of cash too."

He was dumbfounded. Sex was not forbidden to Church of the Emancipation girls, but usually

at the merest hint of it they ran away and hid somewhere. For a moment, remembering the sweep of her thighs when she had entered the room, he was tempted; but only for a moment. Recovering himself, he said, "I'm afraid that kind of cash won't suffice either. My pilot's license is my bread and butter, and I value my bread and butter highly." He stood up. "In my capacity as captain of this vessel I hereby place you under arrest and order you to return to your self-chosen quarters and to remain there for the duration of this voyage."

Disbelief darkened her wide-apart brown eyes. Then golden notes of anger came and chased the darkness away. She made a wild grab for the ion gun on the table. He thwarted her easily, seized her arm and, towering above her, escorted her out of the cabin and down the companion-way to the starboard storeroom. The starboard storeroom adjoined the hull, and in common with all hull compartments, it was equipped with a lock instead of a door. After shoving Saint Annabelle Leigh inside, he adjusted the sealing mechanism so that the lock could be opened only from the outside, then he turned to go.

She ran forward and caught his arm. There was desperation in his brown eyes. "Please put me down on Iago Iago."

He freed his arm, stepped out into the corridor, and closed the lock behind him.

An hour later, his ship passed through a Lambda-Xi field.

At least Drake thought it was a Lambda-Xi field. Certainly its effect upon himself and the *Fly by Night* fitted the hypothetical description given in section 3, chapter 9 of *The Pilot's Handbook*—a prose-work which all spacemen were required to know by heart. The bulkheads "shimmered"; the artificial atmosphere took on a "haze-like aspect"; the deck "desolidified". As for Drake himself, he experienced a "painful prickling of nerve-ends and a slight vertigo". Then translucence—"the prelude to total disintegration" came to ship and master alike.

The handbook went on to state that in view of the fact that no one had ever passed through a Lambda-Xi field and survived, all knowledge pertaining to the preliminary effects of such a passage had had to be extrapolated. It then added reassuringly that since such fields were exceedingly rare, the danger they represented was virtually negligible. The handbook said nothing, however, about any handwriting on the wall. Handwriting there was, though, just the same. Standing in his ship, through the translucent bulkheads and hull of which

he could make out the stars, Drake read the single word:

DEATH.

And yet death did not come. Neither did total disintegration—if a distinction can be drawn. The *Fly by Night* went right on being translucent, and so did Nathaniel Drake.

He took a tentative step. He took another. The deck supported him, even though he could look down through it and through the decks beneath it and through the hull and dimly see the stars—yes, and in the nearer distance, the green globe of Iago Iago. He raised his hand, and found that he could see through his flesh too. He got a mirror and hung it on the wall and stared into his translucent face. He could see right through his reflected eyes to the reflected wall behind him. He could see right through his reflected cheeks and chin. Looking down at himself, he found that he could see through his body. Through his clothes. The translucence was such that the combination of clothes and flesh cancelled out nakedness; nevertheless, his spaceshoes and his spaceslacks and his thigh-length spacecoat were as unquestionably spectral as he was.

And yet he felt whole. His body had solidity. He lived and breathed. His ghostly ship still sped on its way to the distant shores of Dior. Maybe he was

dead, but he did not feel dead. I think, therefore I am . . .

He got out the log and set down the co-ordinates of the field. Abruptly he remembered his passenger, and ran down the companionway to the starboard storeroom. However, he did not throw open the lock. If he had he really would have been dead. Beyond the translucent bulkhead lay the utter airlessness of space. The storeroom was gone. So were all the other starboard compartments. So was the starboard hull.

So was Saint Annabelle Leigh.

NATHANIEL DRAKE sought out Madame Gin, only to find that she too was a ghost of her former self. Nevertheless, she had not lost her sixty-proof personality, and he consulted her at considerable length—throughout the rest of the voyage, in fact—beseeching her to close up the rather raw wound that had appeared in the side of his hitherto impregnable conscience. This, Madame Gin obstinately refused to do.

Between consultation he put his mind to work on a pair of pressing problems. The first problem had to do with his cargo. It had come through, every yard of it, but it had come through the way the ship itself had come through—with the exception, of course, of the starboard side,

which had apparently passed through the center of the field and been disintegrated altogether. It was ironic that a vessel so effective when it came to nullifying theremo-nuclear devices could be so utterly helpless against Lambda-Xi bombardment. Translucent to begin with, the pastelsilk was now virtually transparent and undoubtedly would be rejected by *Dernier Cri* Garments, the New Paris firm that had ordered it. Worse, he was bonded for it, and if the bonding company had to stand the entire loss, his ship would have to be forfeited, and his career as an independent merchant spaceman would be over.

The second problem had to do with his ghosthood. He did not have to ask himself how people would react to his appearance because he knew how he himself reacted to it whenever he looked into the mirror. And it was no good arguing that the mirror was a ghost of its former self too. He had merely to glance down at his hands to prove that the degree of emphasis was negligible.

Invariably his thoughts reverted to the wound in his conscience, whereupon he would rejoin Madame Gin at the chart table. Oh, he had a hundred arguments in his favor. He had not asked Saint Annabelle Leigh to stow away on his ship, had he?

He had not known that the ship was going to undergo Lambda-Xi bombardment, had he? He had not known that the starboard section was doomed, had he? But, while each question could be answered with a resounding "no", the cold cruel truth marched inexorably on: If he had acceded to Annabelle Leigh's request and put in for Iago Iago, she would still be alive, and by not acceding to her request and by locking her in the starboard storeroom, he had afforded Fate a very large assist.

"I wash my hands of it," he told Madame Gin. "I'm no more to blame for her death than Pilate was to blame for the death of Christ the First."

Madame Gin was silent.

"It's not my fault she was a saint," he said. "That's what makes it seem worse than it really is—her being a saint, I mean."

Madame Gin said nothing.

"If she hadn't been a saint, it wouldn't be half so bad," Drake went on. "If she'd been some bum peddling her posterior, it probably wouldn't bother me at all. Why the hell should I care just because she was a saint? It's crazy, I tell you. Hell, she wasn't even a good saint. Good saints don't go around making the kind of proposition she made me, no matter what the cause. Saint Annabelle Leigh isn't quite as noble as you might think."

"Wasn't," said Madame Gin. "All right then, I killed her. I'll even admit it. All I'm trying to say is that her being a saint makes it worse."

"Murderer," said Madame Gin.

Nathaniel Drake seized her around the neck, whereupon she turned into an empty bottle. He smashed the bottle on the edge of the table, and spectral splinters flew in all directions. "I'm not a murderer!" he screamed. "I'm not, I'm not, I'm not."

THE first person to set eyes on "The Jet-propelled Dutchman" was the pilot of the New Paris sewage barge. He saw the ghost ship rather than its ghostly occupant, but this is of small consequence in view of the fact that the same looseness of terminology that marks the original legend also marks the second. He took one long look, then dumped his cargo into orbit posthaste and put back into port. The word spread rapidly, and when Nathaniel Drake put down some fifteen minutes later the New Paris streets and rooftops were jammed with jaded curiosity-seekers hopefully waiting to be scared out of their wits. They were not disappointed.

It is one thing to scare people who have no chestnuts in the fire that frightens them; it is quite another to scare people who have.

The *Fly by Night* had barely settled itself on its anti-grav jacks when a ground car came skimming across the spacestrip and drew up before the cargo dock. Out of the car stepped Thaddeus P. Terringer, president of *Dervier Cri Garments*, Dorrel Numan, vice president of *Dervier Cri Garments*, and the mayor of New Paris, who had his finger in the pie à la mode somewhere but exactly where not even the IRS troopers had been able to find out. Nathaniel Drake did not keep his visitors waiting, but donned his anti-grav belt, opened the ventral lock, and came drifting down to the dock. He had not shaved in two weeks, his unkempt hair hung over his forehead, and he was as translucent as tissue paper. They gaped.

The dock, rising as it did some five feet above the spacestrip, gave him an eminence of sorts, and the eminence, in turn, gave him confidence. "First time I ever rated a welcoming party," he said. "Where's the red carpet?"

Thaddeus P. Terringer was the first of the tongue-tied trio to recover his voice. He was a tall portly man, and he was attired as were his companions in the latest of *Dervier Cri Garments'* creations for the modern male: a pink top hat, a green, form-fitting suit of hand-twilled *therip* fuzz, and high-heeled plastigator

shoes. "Drake," he said, "you're drunk."

"No I'm not—I'm disintegrated,"

Terringer took a backward step. So did Dorrel Numan and the mayor. "You went through a Lambda-Xi field!" Numan exclaimed.

"That's about the size of it."

"Nonsense," Terringer said. "No one could survive Lambda-Xi bombardment."

"You call this survival?" Drake asked.

"The cargo," groaned the mayor. "What about the cargo?"

Drake answered him. "With a little luck, it might make good wrapping material for invisible bread. Put on your belt and go up and take a look."

By this time, the port master had arrived upon the scene. "I don't want anyone to board that ship till I've run a radiation check on it," he said. "Meanwhile Drake, take it up and park it on the five-hundred foot level. I don't know what happened to it and I don't know what happened to you, but I'm not taking any chances."

"Bring back a sample bolt," Terringer said. "We won't be contaminated if we look at it from a distance."

DRAKE nodded, adjusted his belt and guided himself up through the ventral lock. He ex-

tended the anti-grav jacks to five hundred feet, then, after getting a bolt of pastelsilk out of the hold, he drifted down to the dock again. He unrolled the bolt a little ways and held it up so that Terringer, Numan and the mayor, all of whom had retreated to a safer distance, could get a good look at it. It was as tenuous as mist, and owed what little visibility it still possessed to the exquisite blueness which the worms of Forget Me Not had imparted to it. Terringer groaned. So did Numan. So did the mayor. "And it's all like that?" Terringer asked.

Drake nodded. "Every last yard."

"Take it back to Forget Me Not," Terringer said.

Drake stared at him. "Why? They won't make it good."

"Of course they won't. But they may be able to induce their worms to reprocess it, or be able to salvage it in some other way. Meanwhile, we'll just have to order another shipment." He regarded Drake shrewdly. "You'd better hope they *can* salvage it. If they can't, your bonding company will be liable, and you know what that means." He glanced skyward to where the maimed and ghostly *Fly by Night* hovered like an awry balloon. "Although how a ship in that condition can be auctioned off is beyond me."

He turned, and together with Numan and the mayor re-entered the ground car and skimmed away. Drake felt suddenly, desperately sober. "Before you run a radiation check on my ship, run one on me," he told the port master. "I'm going into town and tie a good one on."

The port master grinned sympathetically. "Will do, Mr. Drake. I'll have the doc take a look at you too."

He was as good as his word, and both the *Fly by Night* and Drake checked out satisfactorily. Drake then went to see the port doctor, who gave him a complete physical and finally confessed in a rather awed voice that he could find nothing wrong with him. Afterward, Drake visited the Port Exchange Bank, turned in his translucent credit notes for a less spectral species, and withdrew his savings—a matter of some five hundred Rockefeller dollars. However, he did not tie a good one on. He did not tie any kind of a one on. He had barely set foot outside the port when it all began. People looked at him and ran away, or, even worse, stared at him and followed him wherever he went. The first lush lair he went into emptied almost as soon as he stepped in the door. In the next, the bartender refused to serve him. He said hello to a pretty girl walking down the street, and she

fainted right before his eyes. He had gotten a haircut and a beard-trim by that time in one of the automatic barberbooths scattered strategically throughout the city, but apparently neither concession to propriety had made his appearance any the less ghastly. Finally, in desperation, he visited one of New Paris' leading physicists. The physicist ran a lengthy series of tests on him, stared at him for a long time, then asked, "Are you of Dutch descent by any chance?"

"No," Drake said, and left.

He bought ten fifths of gin and returned to his ship. It had already been recharged and re-provisioned. Repairing it, of course, had been out of the question. He thumbed his nose at the city as he soared spaceward. Soon he was beyond the sewage belt and free among the stars.

Forget Me Not

IN Nathaniel Drake's day, the worms of Forget Me Not were legion. All over Silk City you could hear the sad susurrus of their tiny bodies as they spun their colorful cocoons in the long low sheds thoughtfully provided for them by the good folk of Pastelsilks, Inc. Toward twilight, the whispering would fade away, then, with the timid twinkling of the first star, it would come to life again and build up and up

and up until the night would be one great vast whispering of worms at work—pink worms, green works, blue worms, yellow worms, spinning silk such as had never been known before and will never be known again, for now the worms of Forget Me Not are dead.

Raise one more monument to the onward march of mankind. Place it beside the statue of the buffalo. You know where the statue of the buffalo stands. It stands right next to the statue of the blue whale.

Nathaniel Drake was well acquainted with the whispering. Forget Me Not was his birthplace, and his father had brought him to the fabled city-farm when Drake was a small boy. In his capacity as merchant spaceman, Drake had been there many times since, but it was the first time that stood out the most vividly in his memory. His father had been a grower of multi-pastels, a Forget Me Not plant genus whose mulberry-like leaves formed the worms' main diet, and had occasionally come to Silk City on business. On one of these occasions he had brought the boy Nathaniel with him and taken him through several of the long low sheds, hoping that the experience might help the boy to forget about his mother, who had died the spring before and about whom he had

been brooding ever since. There had been the sad susurrus of the worms working, and the glowing of colorful cocoons in the gloom, and in the processing sheds there had been the relentless turning of the automatic reels and the tiny corpses falling to the floor, one by one, and the boy Nathaniel, obsessed with thoughts of death, had wondered why more of the larvae were not spared the ignominy of the heat-treatment ovens and allowed to attain the apotheosis that was their birthright, not knowing then the senseless selfishness of mankind.

The man Nathaniel had not wondered. The man Nathaniel had not cared. The ghost of the man Nathaniel cared even less.

"Hello," said the ghost to a pretty girl as it passed her on the street.

The girl screamed, and ran away.

An old woman looked at him with horror in her eyes, then looked the other way. An IRS trooper stopped and stared.

Nathaniel Drake went on.

Behind him in the Silk City spaceport, a trio of reluctant techs from Pastelsilks, Inc. were conducting various tests upon his cargo in order to determine whether or not it could be salvaged. As their findings would have to be processed through the executive echelons of the com-

pany and would not be made known to him till later in the day, he had a few hours to kill.

He did not intend to kill them in lush lairs, however. He had a wound to take care of.

IT was the wound that had appeared in the side of his conscience. It had festered on the trip in from Dior, and now it was so painful that he could barely endure it. Madame Gin had only made it worse.

Conscience-wounds are different from physical wounds. In treating physical wounds, you attack the effect. In treating conscience-wounds, you attack the cause. Once the cause is eliminated, the wound automatically closes. This is rarely possible, but quite often the cause can be weakened, in which case the wound, while it will never completely close, will at least be less painful. In Nathaniel Drake's case, the cause was Saint Annabelle Leigh. If he could prove to himself that his suspicions were correct and that she had been something less than her sainthood would seem to indicate, a quantity of his pain might go away, and if he could discredit her sainthood altogether, his wound might close completely.

He proceeded directly to the local headquarters of the Army of the Church of the Emancipation. There, he inquired whether

a Saint Annabelle Leigh were assigned to any of the local chapels. A white-faced clerk replied in the affirmative, and referred him to the Saint Julia Ward Howe chapel on Redemption Street.

In common with all Church of the Emancipation chapels, the Saint Julia Ward Howe chapel was an unpretentious wooden building, long and narrow, with crossed Confederate and Union flags hanging above its entrance. Entering, Drake walked down a narrow aisle between two rows of backless benches and paused in front of a small pulpit upon which a crude lectern stood. Beyond the lectern there was a curtained doorway, and above this doorway two more crossed-flags hung. Presently the curtains parted, and a tall, pale man with a seamed and narrow face and gray and quiet eyes stepped onto the pulpit. "I am Saint Andrew," he began, then stopped in staring consternation.

"I'm Nathaniel Drake, the captain of the *Fly by Night*," Drake said. "I've come about Saint Annabelle Leigh."

Comprehension supplanted the consternation on Saint Andrew's lined face—comprehension and relief. "I am so glad you came, Mr. Drake. I am but just returned from the port, where I was informed that you had just left. I—I refrained from asking them about Saint Annabelle. Tell

me, is she all right? Did you put her down on Iago Iago? I have been half out of my mind ever since I heard what happened to you and your ship."

"I had bad news for you," Drake said. "Saint Annabelle Leigh is dead."

THE whispering of the worms crept into the room. Saint Andrew's immaculate blue-gray uniform seemed suddenly several sizes too large for him. "Dead? Please tell me that's not true, Mr. Drake."

"I can't," Drake said. "But I can tell you how it happened." He did so briefly. "So you can see it wasn't my fault," he concluded. "I *couldn't* put her down on Iago Iago. It would have meant jeopardizing my pilot's license, and piloting a ship is all I know how to do. It isn't fair to ask a man to put his livelihood on the block—it isn't fair at all. She should have contacted me before she stowed away. You simply *can't* hold me responsible for what happened."

"Nor do I, Mr. Drake." Saint Andrew wiped away a tear that had run halfway down his cheek. "She did what she did against my advice," he went on presently. "The information she had received concerning a resurrection on Iago Iago was of dubious origin to say the least, and I was dead set against her stowing

away on board your ship in any event, but she was very set in her ways. None of which in the least alleviates the cruel fact of her death."

"She left much to be desired as a saint then?" Drake asked.

"On the contrary, she was one of the finest persons I have ever indoctrinated. One of the kindest and the gentlest. And in all my years of service in the Army of the Church of the Emancipation I have never seen a more dedicated and selfless soldier than she was. Her—her passing grieves me immeasurably, Mr. Drake."

Drake looked at the floor. He felt suddenly tired. "May I sit down, Saint Andrew?" he said. "Please do."

He sank down on the nearest bench. "Was she a native of For-get Me Not?"

"No. She came from the vineyards of Azure—from a little province called *Campagne Piasie*." Saint Andrew sighed. "I remember vividly the first time I saw her. She was so pale and so thin. And her eyes—I have never seen torture in anyone's eyes that could compare to the torture I saw in hers. She walked in here one morning, much in the same way you yourself walked in, and she knelt down before the lectern and when I appeared, she said, 'I want to die.' I stepped down from the pulpit and raised her to her feet. 'No, child,' I said, 'you

do not want to die, you want to serve—else you would not have come here,' and it was then that she lifted up her eyes and I saw the torture in them. In the two years that followed, much of the torture went away, but I knew somehow that all of it never would." Saint Andrew paused. Then, "There was a quality about her which I cannot quite describe, Mr. Drake. It was in the way she walked. In the way she talked. Most of all, it manifested itself when she stood up here behind the lectern and spread the Word. Would you like to hear one of her sermons? I taped them—every one."

"Why—why yes," Drake said. Saint Andrew turned, parted the curtains behind the lectern, and disappeared into the room beyond. He reappeared a few moments later, bearing an archaic tape-recorder which he placed upon the lectern. "I selected a tape at random," he said, flicking the switch. "Listen."

FOR a while there was no sound save the whispering of the worms, and then above the whispering came her rich, full voice. Sitting there in the dim chapel, Drake pictured her standing straight and tall behind the lectern, her stern, blue-gray uniform trying vainly to tone down the burgeoning of her breasts and the thrilling sweep of her

calves and thighs; her voice rising now in rich and stirring resonance and filling the room with unpremeditated beauty . . ." "I have chosen to speak to you this day of the Potomac Peregrination, of the walking of His ghost upon the land; of the rising of His stone figure from the ruins of the temple where it had sat in silent meditation for three score and seventeen years, and of its coming to life to walk down to the blood-red sea, there to fall asunder on the beach. They will tell you, No, this did not happen, that the broken statue was borne there by men who wished to immortalize Him, and they will supply you with pseudo-scientific data that will seem to prove that the Planet of Peace that hovered above His head and then came down and absorbed His ghost and bore it from the face of the earth was no more than a mass-fragment in the minds of the believers. Yes, they will tell you this, these cynical-minded people will, these fact-stuffed creatures who are incapable of believing that a man can become immortal, that stone can transcend stone; that this kindest of men was the strongest of men and the greatest of men and the most enduring of men, and walks like a giant in our midst even unto this day. Well let it be known by all present, and let it be bruited about, that I believe:

I believe that stone can take on life and that this great man *did* rise from the ruins of His deserted temple to walk upon the land; like a towering giant He walked, a giant with the fires of righteousness burning in His eyes, and He did raise His voice against the bombs falling and He did wipe the incandescence from the hellish heavens with His terrible gaze, and the thunder of His tread did set the very earth to trembling as He walked down the Potomac to the sea. 'Lo, I have arisen,' He proclaimed. 'Lo, I walk again! Look at Me, ye peoples of the earth—I have come to emancipate you from your shackling fears, and I have summoned the Planet of Peace from out of the immensities of space and time to transport My ghost to the stars. Lo, I *force* peace upon you, ye peoples of the earth, and I command you to remember always this terrible day when you drove Kindness from your doorsteps and threw wide your portals to Perdition . . .' Yes, He said these things, I swear unto you He said them as He walked down the Potomac to the sea beneath the brief bright bonfires of the bombs, the Planet of Peace shining high above His head, and if you cannot believe in the walking of His ghost upon the land and in His ascension to the stars, then you are as one dead, without hope,

without love, without pity, without kindness, without humanity, without humility, without sorrow, without pain, without happiness, and without life. Amen."

THE sad susurrus of the worms crept softly back into the room. With a start, Drake realized that he had bowed his head.

He raised it abruptly. Saint Andrew was regarding him with puzzled eyes. "Have you notified her family, Mr. Drake?"

"No," Drake said. "I mentioned the matter to no one."

"I'll radio them at once then, and tell them everything."

Saint Andrew rewound the tape, removed it from the recorder, and started to slip it into his pocket. "Wait," Drake said, getting to his feet.

Again, the puzzled regard. "Yes?"

"I'd like to buy it," Drake said. "I'll pay you whatever you think it's worth."

Saint Andrew stepped down from the pulpit and handed him the tape. "Please accept it as a gift. I'm sure she would have wanted you to have it." There was a pause. Then, "Are you a believer, Mr. Drake?"

Drake pocketed the tape. "No. Oh, I believe that the War of Nineteen Ninety-nine came to a halt on the very day it began all right. What I don't believe is

that the nuclei of the enemy war-heads were negated by the 'terrible gaze' of a second Christ. I've always gone along with the theory that they were negated by the bombardment of a Lambda Xi field that 'slipped its moorings' and wandered into the area—the same kind of a bombardment that nearly negated me."

"And a commendable theory it is too—but basically isn't it as dependent upon divine intervention as the Potomac Peregrination?"

"Not necessarily. Such currencies seem providential merely because we try to interpret the macrocosm on a microscopic scale. Well, I have to be on my way, Saint Andrew. The powers-that-be at Pastelsilks should have come to some decision concerning my transparent cargo by this time. Thank you for the tape, and for your trouble."

"Thank you for bringing me news of Saint Annabelle, Mr. Drake. Even though it was bad. Goodbye."

"Goodbye," Drake said, and left.

* * *

The offices of Pastelsilks, Inc. were as many as they were magnificent, and the building that houses them pre-empted almost an entire acre. The whispering of the worms was absent here, shut out by sound-proof con-

struction or devoured by the sterile humming of air-conditioning units. "Right this way, Mr. Drake," a frightened office girl said. "Mr. Pompton is waiting for you."

The vice president of Pastelsilks, Inc. gave a start when Drake entered, but Drake was accustomed by this time to the reactions his appearance gave rise to and no longer paid them any heed. "Good news or bad news, Mr. Pompton?" he said.

"Bad news, I'm afraid. Please sit down, Mr. Drake."

Drake did so. "But surely my cargo must be worth something."

"Not to us, it isn't. Nor to *Dernier Cri* Garments. And there's no way it can be salvaged. But you just might be able to dispose of it on one of the more backward planets, and to this end Pastelsilks, Incorporated is willing to defer demanding restitution from your bonding company for six months."

"Six months doesn't give me very much time to peddle a thousand bolts of invisible silk," Drake said.

"I consider it a *very handsome* gesture on our part. Of course if you're not interested, we can—"

"I'll give it a try," Drake said.

"Which of the backward planets would you recommend?"

"Marie Elena, Dandelion, Little Sun, Dread—"

"Is Azure a possibility?" "Why yes, Azure ought to provide a potential market. Its people are largely members of the peasantry, and it's conceivable that they might be attracted by bolts of colored mists and pastel nothingness."

"Good," Drake said, getting to his feet. "I'll be on my way then."

"One minute, Mr. Drake. Before you leave, I would like to make a suggestion with regard to your appearance."

Drake frowned. "I don't see what I can do about it."

"There are quite a number of things you can do about it. First of all, you can buy yourself some clothing that is *not* translucent. Secondly, you can buy yourself a pair of skin-tight gloves. Thirdly, you can buy yourself a flesh-colored rubber mask that will align itself to your features. You can, in other words, cease being an apparition in the eyes of everyone you meet, and become a perfectly presentable silk salesman."

Drake shifted his weight from one foot to the other. "I'm afraid I can't do any of those things," he said.

"You can't? In the name of all that's wholesaler, why not?"

The word "penance" came into Drake's mind, but he ignored it. "I don't know," he said. He turned to go.

"One more minute please, Mr. Drake. Will you enlighten me on a little matter before you leave?" "All right."

Mr. Pompton cleared his throat. "Are you of Dutch descent by any chance?" "No," Drake said, and left.

Azure

THE best way to build a mental picture of Azure is to begin with a bunch of grapes. The bunch of grapes is cobalt-blue in hue and it is part of a cobalt-blue cluster of similar bunches. The cluster hangs upon a vine which is bursting with heart-shaped leaves, and the vine is one of many similar vines that form a verdant row, in turn, is one of many similar rows that form a verdant vineyard. You see them now, do you not?—these lovely vineyards rolling away, and the white, red-roofed houses in between?—the intervals of green and growing fields in the blue swaths of rivers and the sparkling zigzags of little streams?—the blue eyes of little lakes looking up into the warm blue sky where big Sirius blazes and little Sirius beams? Now, picture people working in the fields and in the vineyards; picture trees, and children playing underneath them; picture housewives coming out back doors and shaking homemade rugs that look like little rainbows; picture toy-like trains

humming over anti-grav beds from town to town, from city to city, tying in the entire enchanting scheme of things with the spaceport at *Vin Bleu*. Finally, picture a narrow road winding among the vineyards, and a man walking along it. A man? No, not a man—a ghost. A tall gaunt ghost in spectral space-clothes. A ghost named Nathaniel Drake.

He had come many miles by train and he had visited many towns along the way and talked with many merchants, and each time he had unfolded the sample of pastelsilk he carried and held it up for inspection, and each time the word had been no. In the town he had just left, the word had been no too, and he knew by now that wherever he went on Azure the word would be no also, but right now he did not care. Right now he was about to carry out the ulterior purpose of his visit, and the ulterior purpose of his visit had nothing to do with the selling of silk.

He could see the house already. It sat well back from the road. In it, she had grown up. Along this very road, she had walked to school. Between these verdant vineyards. Beneath this benign blue sky. Sometimes during those green years she must have sinned.

Like all its neighbors, the house was white, its roof red-

tilled. In the middle of its front yard grew a Tree of Love, and the tree was in blossom. Soon now, the blossoms would be falling, for autumn was on hand. Already the time for the harvesting of the grapes had come. Had she picked in these very vineyards? he wondered. Clad in colorful clothing, had she walked along these growing banks of green and heaped baskets of brilliant blue? And had she come home evenings to this little white house and drenched her face with cool water from that archaic well over there, and then gone inside and broken bread? And afterward had she come outside and waited in the deepening darkness for her lover to appear? Nathaniel Drake's pulse-beat quickened as he turned into the path that led across the lawn to the small front porch. No matter what Saint Andrew had said, Saint Annabelle Leigh could not possibly have been all saint.

A GIRL in a yellow maternity dress answered the door. She had hyacinth hair, blue eyes and delicate features. She gasped when she saw Drake, and stepped back. "I've come about Annabelle Leigh," he said quickly. "Did Saint Andrew radio you about what happened? He said he would. I'm Nathaniel Drake." The girl's fright departed as

quickly as it had come. "Yes, he did. Please come in, Mr. Drake. I'm Penelope Leigh—Annabelle's sister-in-law."

The room into which he stepped was both pleasant and provincial. A long wooden table stood before a big stone fireplace. There were cushioned chairs and benches, and upon the floor lay a homemade hook-rug that embodied all the colors of the spectrum. A big painting of the Potomac Peregrination hung above the mantel. The marble figure of the Emancipator had been huge to begin with, but over the centuries the minds of men had magnified it into a colossus. Artists were prone to reflect the popular conception, and the artist who had painted the present picture was no exception. In juxtaposition to the towering figure that strode along its banks, the Potomac was little more than a pale trickle; houses were matchboxes, and trees, blades of grass. Stars swirled around the gaunt gray face, and some of the stars were glowing Kometes and Golems and T-4A's re-entering the atmosphere, and some of them were interceptors blazing spaceward. The sea showed blood-red in the distance, and in the background, the broken columns of the fallen Memorial were illuminated by the hellish radiance of the funeral pyre of Washington, D.C. High above the ghastly ter-

rain hovered the pale globe of the Planet of Peace.

"Please sit down, Mr. Drake," Penelope said. "Annabelle's mother and father are in the vineyard, but they will be home soon."

Drake chose one of the cushioned chairs. "Do they hate me?" he asked.

"Of course they don't hate you, Mr. Drake. And neither do I."

"I could have averted her death, you know," Drake said. "If I'd put her down on Iago Iago as she asked me to, she would still be alive today. But I valued my pilot's license too highly. I thought too much of my daily bread."

Penelope had sat down in a cushioned chair that faced his own. Now she leaned forward, her blue eyes full upon him. "There's no need for you to justify your action to me, Mr. Drake. My husband is a Suez Canal tech, and he can't pursue his profession without a license either. He worked very hard to get it, and he wouldn't dream of jeopardizing it. Neither would I."

"That would be Annabelle's brother, wouldn't it. Is he here now?"

"No. He's on Wayout, working on the 'leak'. I say 'working on it', but actually they haven't found it yet. All they know is that it's on the Wayout end of

the warp. It's really quite a serious situation, Mr. Drake—much more serious than the officials let on. Warp seepages are something new, and very little is known about them, and Ralph says that this one could very well throw the continuum into a state of imbalance if it isn't checked in time."

Drake hadn't come all the way to *Campagne Paisible* to talk about warp seepages. "How well did you know your sister-in-law, Miss Leigh?" he asked.

"I thought I knew her very well. We grew up together, went to school together, and were the very best of friends. I *should* have known her very well."

"Tell me about her," Drake said.

SHE wasn't at all an outward person, and yet everyone liked her. She was an excellent student—excelled in everything except Ancient Lit. She never said much, but when she did say something, you listened. There was something about her voice . . .

"I know," Drake said.

"As I said, I *should* have known her very well, but apparently I didn't. Apparently no one else did either. We were utterly astonished when she ran away—especially Estevan Foursons."

"Estevan Foursons?"

"He's a Polysirian—he lives

on the next farm. He and Annabelle were to be married. And then, as I said, she ran away. None of us heard from her for a whole year, and Estevan never heard from her at all. Leaving him without a word wasn't at all in keeping with the way she was. She was a kind and gentle person. I don't believe he's gotten over it to this day, although he did get married several months ago. I think, though, that what astonished us even more than her running away was the news that she was studying for the sainthood. She was never in the least religious, or, if she was, she kept it a deep dark secret."

"How old was she when she left?" Drake asked.

"Almost twenty. We had a picnic the day before. Ralph and I, she and Estevan. If anything was troubling her, she certainly gave no sign of it. We had a stereo-camera, and we took pictures. She asked me to take one of her standing on a hill, and I did. It's a lovely picture—would you like to see it?"

Without waiting for his answer, she got up and left the room. A moment later she returned carrying a small stereo-snapshot. She handed it to him. The hill was a high one, and Annabelle was outlined sharply against a vivid azure backdrop. She was wearing a red dress that barely reached her knees and

which let the superb turn of her calves and thighs come through without restraint. Her waist was narrow, and the width of her hips was in perfect harmony with the width of her shoulders—details which her Church of the Emancipation uniform had suppressed. Spring sunlight had bleached her hair to a tawny yellow and had turned her skin golden. At her feet, vineyards showed, and the vineyards were in blossom, and it was as though she too were a part of the forthcoming harvest, ripening under the warm sun and waiting to be savored.

There was a knot of pain in Drake's throat. He raised his eyes to Penelope's. Why did you have to show me this? he asked in silent desperation. Aloud, he said, "May I have it?"

The surprise that showed upon her face tinged her voice. "Why—why yes, I suppose so. I have the negative and can get another made. . . . Did you know her very well, Mr. Drake?"

He slipped the stereosnapshot into the inside breast-pocket of his longcoat, where it made a dark rectangle over his heart. "No," he said. "I did not know her at all."

TOWARD twilight, Annabelle's parents came in from the vineyard. The mother, buxom of build and rosy of cheek,

was attractive in her own right, but she was a far cry from her daughter. In order to see Annabelle, you had to look into the father's sensitive face. You could glimpse her in the line of cheek and chin, and in the high, wide forehead. You could see her vividly in the deep brown eyes. Drake looked away.

He was invited to share the evening meal, and he accepted. However, he knew that he would not find what he was searching for here, that if there had been another side of Annabelle she had kept it hidden from her family. Estevan Foursons was the logical person to whom to take his inquiries, and after the meal, Drake thanked the Leighs for their hospitality, said good by, and set off down the road.

Estevan Foursons lived in a house very much like the Leighs'. Vineyards grew behind it, vineyards grew on either side of it, and across the road, more vineyards grew. The sweet smell of grapes ripening on the vine was almost cloying. Drake climbed the steps of the front porch, stood in the artificial light streaming through the window in the door, and knocked. A tall young man wearing pastel slacks and a red-plaid peasant blouse came down the hall. He had dark brown hair, gray eyes, and rather full lips. Only the mahogany cast of his skin betrayed his ra-

cial origin—that, and his unruffled calm when he opened the door and saw Drake. "What do you want?" he asked.

"Estevan Foursons?"

The young man nodded.

"I'd like to talk to you about Annabelle Leigh," Drake went on. "It was on my ship that she—"

"I know," Estevan interrupted. "Penelope told me. Nathaniel Drake, is it not?"

"Yes. I—"

"Why are you interested in a dead woman?"

For a moment, Drake was disconcerted. Then, "I—I feel responsible for her death in a way."

"And you think that knowing more about her will make you feel less responsible?"

"It might. Will you tell me about her?"

Estevan sighed. "I sometimes wonder if I really knew her myself. But come, I will tell you what I thought I knew. We will walk down the road—this is not for my wife's ears."

Beneath the stars, Drake said, "I talked with the saint who indoctrinated her. He thought very highly of her."

"He could hardly have thought otherwise."

Estevan turned off the road and started walking between two starlit rows of grapevines. Disappointed, Drake followed. Had Annabelle Leigh never done

anything wrong? It would seem that she had not.

For some time the two men walked in silence, then Estevan said, "I wanted you to see this place. She used to come here often."

They had emerged from the vineyard and were climbing a small slope. At the top of it, Estevan paused, and Drake paused beside him. At their feet, the ground fell gradually away to the wooded shore of a small lake.

"She used to swim there naked in the starlight," Estevan said. "Often I came here to watch her, but I never let on that I knew. Come."

Heartened, Drake followed the Polysirian down the slope and through the trees to the water's edge. Drake knelt, and felt the water. It was ice-cold. A granite outcropping caught his eye. Nature had so shaped it that it brought to mind a stone bench, and approaching it more closely, he saw that someone had sculptured it into an even greater semblance. "I did that," Estevan said from behind him. "Shall we sit down?"

SEATED, Drake said, "I find it difficult to picture her here. I suppose that's because I associate saints with cold corridors and cramped little rooms. There's something pagan about this place."

Estevan did not seem to hear him. "We would bring our lunch here from the vineyards sometimes," he said. "We would sit here on this bench and eat and talk. We were very much in love—at least everybody said we were. Certainly, I was. Her, I don't know."

"But she must have loved you. You were going to be married, weren't you?"

"Yes, we were going to be married." Estevan was silent for a while; then, "But I don't think she loved me. I think she was afraid to love me. Afraid to love anyone. Once, it hurt me even to think like this. Now, it is all past. I am married now, and I love my wife. Annabelle Leigh is a part of yesterday, and yesterday is gone. I can think now of the moments we spent together, and the moments no longer bring pain. I can think of us working together in the vineyards, tending the vines, and I can think of her standing in the sun at harvest time, her arms filled with blue clusters of grapes and the sunlight spilling goldenly down upon her. I can think of the afternoon we were rained out, and of how we ran through the rows of vines, the rain drenching us, and of the fire we built in the basket shed so that she could dry her hair. I can think of her leaning over the flames, her rain-dark hair slowly lightening to bronze,

and I can think of the raindrops disappearing one by one from her glowing face. I can think of how I seized her suddenly in my arms and kissed her, and of how she broke wildly free and ran out into the rain, and the rain pouring down around her as she ran. . . . I did not even try to catch her, because I knew it would do no good, and I stood there by the fire, miserable and alone, till the rain stopped, and then went home. I thought she would be angry with me the next day, but she was not. She acted as though the rain had never been, as though my passion had never broken free. That night, I asked her to marry me. I could not believe it when she said yes. No, these moments give me no more pain, and I can recount them to you with complete calm. Annabelle, I think, was born without passion, and hence could not understand it in others. She tried to imitate the actions of normal people, but there is a limit to imitation, and when she discovered this limitation she ran away."

Drake frowned in the darkness. He thought of the tape Saint Andrew had given him, of the picture that he carried in his left breast-pocket. Try as he would, he could correlate neither of the two Annabelles with the new Annabelle who had stepped upon the stage. "Tell me," he said to Estevan, "when she ran

away, did you make any attempt to follow her?"

"I did not—no; but her people did. When a woman runs away because she is afraid of love, it is futile to run after her because when you catch up to her she will still be running." Estevan got to his feet. "I must be getting back—my wife will be wondering where I am. I have told you all I know."

HE set off through the trees. Bitterly disappointed, Drake followed. In trying to discredit the woman he wanted to hate, he had merely succeeded in vindicating her. The new Annabelle might be inconsistent with the other two, but she certainly was not inconsistent with saintliness, and as for the other two, for all their seeming disparity neither of them was inconsistent with saintliness either. It was a long step from the girl on the hill to the girl he had locked in the storeroom to die, but it was not an illogical step, and therefore it could be made. Two years was more than enough time to transform the surcharged fires of spring into the smoldering ones of fall—

Two years?

That was the length of time she had served under Saint Andrew. In the cabin of the *Fly by Night*, however, she had given her age as twenty-three.

The two men had reached the road. Suddenly excited, Drake turned to Estevan. "How old was she when she left?" he asked. "Exactly how old?"

"In two more months she would have been twenty."

"And when she left, did anybody check at the spaceport? Does anybody know positively that she went directly to Forget Me Not?"

"No. At the time it never occurred to anyone—not even the police—that she might have left Azure."

Then she could have gone anywhere, Drake thought. Aloud, he said, "Thank you for your trouble, Estevan. I'll be on my way."

* * *
He proceeded by anti-grav train to the spaceport at *Vin Bleu*, only to find that the records he desired access to were unavailable to unauthorized personnel. However, by distributing a quantity of his fast-dwindling capital (he had drawn out the second half of his bi-planetary nest egg on Forget Me Not), he managed to bring about a temporary suspension of the rule. Once handed the big departure log, he had no trouble finding the entry he wanted. It was over three years old, and read, *9 May, 3663: Annabelle Leigh via Transspacelines to Worldwellost, class C. Departure time: 1901 hours, GST.*

Hope throbbled through him. There were no Army of the Church of the Emancipation missions on Worldwellost. Worldwellost was a mecca for sinners, not saints.

In a matter of hours, Azure was a blue blur in the *Fly by Night's* rear viewport.

On the chart table in his cabin, Madame Gin sat. Drake regarded her for some time. For all her refusal to help him in his time of need, he still found her presence indispensable. Why, then, did he not go to her at once and enrich his intellect with her fuzzy philosophies?

Presently he shrugged, and turned away. He propped the picture Penelope had given him against the base of the chart lamp; then he incorporated the tape Saint Andrew had given him into the automatic pilot and programmed a continual series of playbacks over the intercom system. He returned to the table and sat down. Ignoring Madame Gin, he concentrated on the girl on the hill—

"I have chosen to speak to you this day of the Potomac Peregrination, of the walking of His ghost upon the land; of the rising of His stone figure from the ruins of the temple where it had sat in silent meditation for three score and seventeen years, and of its coming to life to walk down to the blood-red sea..."

Worldwellost

IN common with Azure, Worldwellost is one of the inner planets of the vast Sirian system. However, it has little else in common with Azure, and in Nathaniel Drake's day it had even less.

Before the commercial apotheosis of its lustrous neighbor, Starbright, it had flourished as a vacation resort. Now, its once-luxurious hotels and pleasure domes had fallen into desuetude, and the broad beaches for which it had once been renowned were catchalls for debris, dead fish, and decaying algae. But Worldwellost was not dead—far from it. The rotteness of logs, once turned over, reveal life at its most intense, and the rotten log of Worldwellost was no exception.

Nathaniel Drake put down in the spaceport-city of Heavenly and set forth upon his iconoclastic quest. Annabelle Leigh's trail, however, ended almost as soon as it began. She had checked into the Halcyon Hotel one day, and checked out the next, leaving no forwarding address.

Undaunted, Drake returned to the port, distributed some more of his fast-dwindling capital, and obtained access to the departure log. He found the entry presently: *26 June, 3664: Annabelle Leigh via Transspacelines to*

Forget Me Not, class A. Departure time: 0619 hours, GST.

Spacetime was synonymous with earth time and, while it was used in calculating all important time periods, such as a person's age, it seldom coincided with local calendars. Therefore, while the month and the year on Worldwellost might seem to indicate otherwise, Drake knew definitely that Annabelle Leigh had left the planet over two years ago, or approximately one year after she had arrived.

Judging from her change in travel-status, she had bettered herself financially during that period.

Had she spent the entire year in Heaven? he wondered.

When all other attempts to obtain information about her failed, he had a photostat made of the stereosnapshot Penelope had given him, presented it to the missing persons department of Heavenly's largest 3V station, and engaged them to flash a daily circular to the effect that he, Nathaniel Drake, would pay the sum of fifty credits to anyone providing him with bona fide information concerning the girl in the picture. He then retired to his room at the Halcyon Hotel and waited for his visiphone to chime.

His visiphone didn't, but several days later, his door did. Opening it, he saw an old man

clad in filthy rags standing in the hall. The old man took one look at him, lost what little color he had, and turned and began to run. Drake seized his arm. "Forget about the way I look," he said. "One hundred of my credits makes a Rockefeller the same as anyone else's, and I'll pay cash if you've got the information I want."

Some of the old man's color came back. "I've got it, Mister—don't you worry about that." Reaching into the inside pocket of his filthy coat, he withdrew what at first appeared to be a large map folded many times over. He unfolded it with clumsy fingers, shook it out, and held it up for Drake to see. It was a stereo-poster of a girl, life-size and in color—the same girl who had had her picture taken on a hill on Azure—

Only this time she wasn't wearing a red dress. She was wearing a *cache-sexe*, and except for a pair of slippers, that was all she was wearing.

Drake could not move. There was a legend at the bottom of the poster. It read:

Mary Legs, now stripping at King Tutankhamen's

ABRUPTLY Drake came out of his state of shock. He tore the poster out of the old man's hands. "Where did you get it?" he demanded.

"I stole it. Ripped it off the King's billboard when nobody was looking. Carried it with me ever since."

"Did you ever see her . . . per-form?"

"You bet I did! You never saw anything like it. She'd—"

"How long ago?"

"Two-three years. Big years. She's the one you want, ain't she? I knew it the minute I saw the picture on 3V. Sure, the name's different, I says to myself, but it's the same girl You should have seen her dance, Mister. As I say, she'd—"

"Where's King Tutankhamen's place?" Drake asked.

"In Storeyville. As I say, she'd—"

"Shut up," Drake said. He counted out fifty credits and placed them in the old man's hand. The old man was regarding him intently. "You're the Jet-propelled Dutchman, ain't you."

"What if I am?"

"You don't look like a Dutchman. Are you?"

"No," Drake said, and reentered the room and slammed the door.

* * *

wink throughout the whole trip, and when he got off the train at the Storeyville station he looked even more like a ghost than he had when he had got on.

His appearance provoked the usual quota of starts and stares. Ignoring them, he made his way to the main thoroughfare. Tall and gaunt and grim, he looked up and down the two rows of grimy façades, finally spotted the neon name he wanted, and started out. A knot of 'teen thieves formed behind him as he progressed down the street. "The Jet-propelled Dutchman," they cried jeeringly. "Look, the Jet-propelled Dutchman!"

He turned and glowered at them, and they ran away.

The exterior of King Tutankhamen's had a rundown mien, but it retained traces of an erstwhile elegance. Within, dimness prevailed, and Drake practically had to feel his way to the bar. Gradually, though, as the brightness of the afternoon street faded from his retina, he began to make out details. Rows of glasses; rows of bottles. Obscene paintings on the wall. A pale-faced customer or two. A bartender.

Outside in the street, the teen thieves had regrouped and had taken up their jeering chant again. "The Jet-propelled Dutchman, the Jet-propelled Dutchman!" The bartender came over

The anti-grav trains of Worldwellost were as rundown as the towns and cities they connected. Drake rode all night and all the next morning. He didn't sleep a

to where Drake was standing. He was fat, his skin was the color of nutmeg, and his hair was white. "Your—your pleasure, sir?" he said.

Eyes more perceptive now, Drake looked at the obscene paintings, wondering if she were the subject of any of them. She was not. He returned his gaze to the bartender. "Are you the owner?"

"King Tutankhamen at your service, sir. I am called 'the King'."

"Tell me about Annabelle Leigh."

"Annabelle Leigh? I know of no such person."

"Then tell me about Mary Legs."

The light that came into the King's eyes had a sublimating effect upon his face. "Mary Legs? Indeed, I can tell you about her. But tell *me* first, have you seen her lately? Tell me, is she all right?"

"She's dead," Drake said. "I killed her."

The King's fat face flattened slightly; fires flickered in his pale eyes. Then his face filled out again, and the fires faded away. "No," he said, "she may be dead, but you did not kill her. No one would kill Mary Legs. Killing Mary Legs would be like killing the sun and the stars and the sky, and even if a man could kill these things he would not do so,

and neither would he kill Mary Legs."

"I did not kill her on purpose," he introduced himself and told the King about the *Fly by Night's* encounter with the Lambda-Xi field, of how he had locked Saint Annabelle Leigh in the starboard storeroom to die. "If I had not been so selfish," he concluded, "she would still be alive today."

The King looked at him pityingly. "And now your hands are bloodied, and you must seek her ghost."

"Yes," said Drake. "Now I must seek her ghost—and destroy it."

The King shook his head. "You may seek it all you want, and you may even find it. But you will never destroy it, Nathaniel Drake. It will destroy you. Knowing this, I will help you find it. Come with me."

HE spoke a few words into an intercom at his elbow, then came around the bar and led the way down a spiral staircase into a subterranean room. Their entry brought vein-like ceiling lights into luminescence, and the room turned out to be a large hall. Cushioned chairs were arranged in rows on either side of a narrow ramp that protruded from a velvet-curtained stage, and to the right of the stage, a chromium piano stood.

"It is fitting that I tell you

about her here," King Tutankhamen said, "for this is where she danced. Come, we will take the best seats in the house."

Drake followed him down the aisle to the juncture of stage and ramp. The King seated him in the chair nearest the juncture and took the adjacent chair for himself. Leaning back, he said, "Now I will begin."

"It was over three galactic years ago when she first walked into my establishment. The tourists had not entirely forsaken Worldwelost in those days, and I was still enjoying prosperity. The bar was bright and bustling, but I saw her nevertheless the minute she stepped upon the premises. Thin, she was, and pale, and I thought at first that she was sick. When she sat down at the table by the door, I went immediately over to her side.

"Wine, would you like?" I asked, knowing as I do the revivifying qualities of the grape. But she shook her head. "No," she said, "I want work." "But what can you do?" I asked. "I can take off my clothes," she replied. "Is there something else I need to know?" Looking at her more closely, I saw that indeed there was nothing else she needed to know; nevertheless, there is an art of sorts to bumps and grinds, and this I told her. "You have other girls who can show me the rudiments," she said. "After that,

it will be up to me." "What is your name?" I asked then. "Mary Legs," she answered. "It is not my real name, however, and you will have to pay me in cash." I took one more look at her, and hired her on the spot.

"It developed that she had no aptitude for bumps and grinds. It also developed that she did not need to have. The first time she danced, only a dozen men sat here in this room and watched her. The second time she danced, two dozen sat here. The next time she danced, the room was packed, the bar was overflowing, and there was a line of men waiting in the street. Some girls dance simply by walking. She was one of them. She had what is called 'poetry of motion', but I think it was her legs, really, that most men came to see. I will let you judge for yourself. Incidentally, the piano which you will hear accompanying her was played by me."

King Tutankhamen leaned forward, slid aside a small panel just beneath the edge of the proscenium, and depressed several luminescent buttons. Instantly the lights went out, and the velvet curtains parted. A stereo-screen leaped into bright life, and a moment later, Mary Legs, nee Annabelle Leigh, appeared upon it. So flawless was the illusion that it was as though she had stepped upon the stage.

Perfume reminiscent of the vineyards of Azure infiltrated the room. Drake found breathing difficult.

She was wearing a standard stripper's outfit that could be removed piece by piece. Hardly had she "appeared" upon the stage when the first piece fluttered forth and disappeared. Three more followed in swift succession. A fifth went just as she stepped, seemingly, out upon the ramp.

"She was always that way," the King whispered. "I told her that she should be coy, that she should tease, but she paid no attention. It was as though she couldn't get her clothes off fast enough."

Drake barely heard him.

MARY LEGS was moving down the ramp now, and now another garment drifted forth and winked out of sight. He saw her breasts. Chords sounded in the background. A progression of ninths and elevenths. Her face was glowing; her eyes were slightly turned up. Glazed.

Drake watched the final garment disappear into the mists of time. She was down to sandals and *cache-sexe* now. Her slow walk down the ramp continued.

There was poetry in the play of light upon her flesh, there was poetry in her every motion. The

flabby pectorals of beauty queens, she knew not. Here was firmness; depth. Her hair burned with the yellow fires of fall. An arpeggio like the tinkling of glass chimes leaped up and formed a brief invisible halo over her head. At the base of the ramp she went through a series of contemptuous bumps and grinds, then returned casually the way she had come. Now there was a subtle difference in her walk. Sweat broke out on Drake's face. His breath burned in his throat. Eyes turned up, she saw no one, then or now; knew no one, knew nothing but the moment. Her body writhed obscenely. Notes fell around her like cool rain. Suddenly Drake realized that she had not been flaunting her sex to the audience, but to the worlds.

She began a second series of bumps and grinds. While it lacked finesse, it was obscene beyond belief, and yet, in another sense, it was somehow not obscene at all. There was something tantalizingly familiar about it, so tantalizingly familiar that he could have sworn that he had seen her dance before. And yet he knew perfectly well that he had not.

His mind ceased functioning, and he sat there helplessly, a prisoner of the moment. Presently she began a series of movements, a dance of sorts that had



in it the essence of every orgy known to mankind, and yet simultaneously possessed a quality that had nothing whatsoever to do with orgies, a quality that was somehow transcendent . . . and austere. She paused transiently just above him, and her legs were graceful pillars supporting the splendid temple of her body and her head was the rising sun, then she stepped back into the screen, the lights went on, and the curtain closed.

I am a wall, and my breasts

like the towers thereof:

Then was I in his eyes as
one that found peace.

IT was some time before either man spoke. Then Drake said, "I'd like to buy it."

"The realtape? Why—so you can destroy it?"

"No. How much do you want?"

"You must understand," said the King, "that it is very precious to me, that—"

"I know," Drake said. "How much?"

"Six hundred Rockefeller's."

The amount came perilously close to the figure to which Drake's capital had dwindled. Nevertheless, he did not haggle, but counted the hundred-credit notes out. The King removed the realtape from the proscenium projector, and the exchange was made. "You are getting a bargain, Mr. Drake," the King said.

"For a collector's item like that, I could get twice six hundred Rockefellows."

"When did she leave here?" Drake asked.

"About a year after she arrived. A big year. I went to her room after one of her dances and found her gone. Her clothes, everything. . . . For all her willingness to exhibit herself, she was never really one of us. She would never permit any of us to get close to her in any sense of the word. There was something tragic about her. She said once that she could not bear children, but I do not think that this had very much to do with her unhappiness. She *was* unhappy, you know, although she was very careful never to let on." The King raised his eyes, and Drake was dumfounded to see tears in them. "You have told me that after she left Worldwellost she became a saint. Somehow this does not surprise me. There is an exceedingly thin line between good and evil. Most of us manage to walk this line with a greater or lesser degree of equilibrium, but I think Mary Legs could not walk it at all: with her, I think it had to be one side or the other. Evil, she found intolerable after a while, and she ran away, crossing the line to good. But good, she eventually found intolerable too, and she ran away again. She told you that she wished to be put

down on Iago Iago to witness a resurrection. This, I do not believe. Real or not, the resurrection was an excuse for her. I believe that she was searching for a way of life that would combine the two extremes of good and evil and that she hoped to find it among the primitive Polysirians. And I think that she also hoped to find a man who would understand her and accept her for what she was. Do you think I may be right, Nathaniel Drake?"

"I don't know," Drake said. Abruptly he stood up. "I'll be on my way now."

King Tutankhamen touched his arm. "The question which I am about to ask is an exceedingly delicate one, Nathaniel Drake. I hope you will not take offense?" Drake sighed wearily. "Ask it then, and get it over with."

"By any chance, are you of Dutch descent?"

"No," Drake said, and left.

THREE of the six months which Pastelsilks, Inc. had given Drake to sell his cargo had now passed, and his cargo was undiminished by so much as a single bolt of blue. His capital, on the other hand, was virtually exhausted. Even *Der Fliegende Holländer* had never had it so bad.

Drake had not expected to be able to sell any of the pastelsilk on Worldwellost, nor, he realized

in retrospect, had he expected to be able to sell any of it on Azure. It was imperative, however, that he sell it somewhere and sell it soon, for, unredeemed or not, he still intended to go on living, and in order to go on living he needed a means by which to make his daily bread, and while a ghost-ship left much to be desired, it was better than no ship at all. He had known all along that there was one place in the Sirtian Satrapy where the people were naive enough to barter worthwhile goods for "bolts of blue and pastel nothingness", and that place was Iago Iago. However, he had deferred going there for two reasons. The first reason had been his eagerness to discredit Saint Annabelle Leigh, and the second had been his fear that fencing the goods he procured on Iago Iago might get him into trouble with the authorities and lead to the loss of his pilot's license. But for all his seeming success in blackening the face of the woman he wanted to hate, he had failed so completely to evoke the desired emotion that he knew by now that the cause was hopeless; and in view of the fact that his pilot's license would be worthless if he lost his ship, the second objection was no longer valid. It had been in the books all along for him to go to Iago Iago.

He lifted up from Heavenly

and found the stars again, and the stars were good. Madame Gin, he left behind. After turning over the ship to the automatic pilot, he got out the realitape he had purchased from King Tutankhamen and fitted it into the girlie realitape projector. Presently Mary Legs stepped out of the past. He propped the stereosnapshot Penelope had given him against the base of the chart lamp, then he turned on the intercom. "I have chosen to speak to you this day of the Potomac Peregrination, of the walking of His ghost upon the land," said Saint Annabelle Leigh. Mary Legs cast her final garment into the mists of time and walked lewdly down the ramp. Perfume reminiscent of the vineyards of Azure permeated the room. Cancelling out the background music, Drake discovered that her dance blended with the words Saint Annabelle Leigh was uttering. No, not Saint Annabelle's words exactly, but the rhythm and the resonance of her voice. What the one was trying to express, the other was trying to express also. *Look at me, they "said" in unison. I am lonely and afraid, and full of love. Yes, yes! cried the girl on the hill. Full of love, full of love, full of love! . . .* And in the cabin, vineyards blossomed, flowers bloomed; there rose a blue-bright sun, and in its radiance

the boy and the girl walked, the boy Nathaniel and the girl Annabelle Leigh, and the wind blew and the grass sang and the trees put their heads together in rustling consultations . . . and all the while, the hull-beams creaked and the grav generator murmured, and the spectral *Fly by Night* sped on its way to Iago Iago.

It was fitting that a ghost should fall in love with a ghost.

Iago Iago

IAGO IAGO is like a massive ball of yarn left lying in the hall of the universe by some capricious cosmic cat. It is emerald in hue, and when it is viewed from a great distance its atmosphere lends it a soft and fuzzy effect. This effect diminishes as the distance decreases, finally ceases to be a factor, and the planet emerges as a bright green Christmas-tree ornament hanging upon the star-bedight spruce of space.

The Polysirians were expecting Nathaniel Drake. They had been expecting him for many months. "I will arise and come back to you, he had said. "I will appear in your sky, and come down to you, and you will know then that His ghost did truly walk, and that it did not walk in vain." Nathaniel Drake did not know that they were expecting him, however, nor did he know

that he had said these words.

He brought the *Fly by Night* down in a grassy meadow, parked it on extended anti-grav jacks, and drifted down to the ground. He heard the shouts then, and saw the Polysirians running toward him out of a nearby forest. He would have re-boarded his ship and closed the lock behind him, but the tenor of their shouts told him that he had nothing to fear, and he remained standing in the meadow, tall and gaunt and ghostly, waiting for them to come up.

They halted a dozen yards away and formed a colorful semicircle. They wore flowers in their hair, and their sarongs and lap-laps were made of pastelsilk. The pastelsilk was decades-old. Had another trader come down out of the heavens in times past and defiled this virgin ground?

Presently the semicircle parted, and an old woman stepped into the foreground. Drake saw instantly that she was not a Polysirian. Her Church of the Emancipation uniform stood out in jarring contrast to the colorful attire of the natives, but it was not one of the mass-produced uniforms worn by her compeers in the civilized sections of the satrapy. It had been spun and cut and sewn by hand, and in its very simplicity had attained a dignity that its civilized cousins could never know. Some-

how he got the impression that she was wearing it for the first time.

She began walking toward him through the meadow grass. There was something tantalizingly familiar about the way she moved; something nostalgic. The brim of her kepi kept her eyes in shadow, and he could not see into them. Her cheeks were serene and thin, yet strangely lovely. She stopped before him and looked up into his face with eyes into which he still could not see. "The people of Iago Iago welcome you back, Nathaniel Drake," she said.

The heavens seemed to shimmer; the terrain took on an unreal cast. The semicircle knelt and bowed its be-flowered heads. "I don't understand," he said. "Come with me."

HE walked beside her over the meadow, the ranks of the people parting, and the people falling in behind; over the meadow and through the park-like forest and down the street of an idyllic village and up a gentle hill that swelled like a virgin's breast into the sky. The people began to sing, and the tune was a thrilling one, and the words were fine and noble.

On top of the hill lay a lonely grave. The old woman halted before it, and Drake halted beside her. Out of the corner of his eye

he saw a tear flash down her withered cheek. At the head of the grave there was a large stone marker. The marker was intended for two graves, and had been placed in such a way that when the second grave was dug the stone face would be centered behind both.

"*Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord;*" the Polysirians sang. "*He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored; HE hath loosed the fearful lightning of his terrible swift sword, His truth is marching on.*"

Nathaniel Drake looked at the marker's stone face. One half of it was blank. On the other half—the half that overlooked the grave—the following letters had been inscribed:

SAINT NATHANIEL DRAKE

Drake knew the answer then, and knew what he must do—

What, in a sense, he had done already . . .

He turned to the old woman standing beside him. "When did I first come here?" he asked.

"Fifty-two years ago."

"And how old was I when I died?"

"You were eighty-three."

"Why did I become a saint?"

"You never told me, Nathaniel Drake."

Gently, he touched her cheek. She rasped her eyes then, and this time he saw into them—saw

the years and the love and the laughter, the sorrow and the pain. "Were we happy together?" he asked.

"Yes, my darling—thanks to you."

He bent and kissed her upon the forehead. "Good by, Mary Legs," he said, and turned and walked down the hill.

"*Glory, glory hallelujah,*" the Polysirians sang, as his ship rose up into the sky. "*Glory, glory, hallelujah. Glory, glory, hallelujah, his truth is marching on.*"

TO what may a warp seepage be likened?

It may be likened to a leak in the roof of a twentieth-century dwelling. The roofs of twentieth-century dwellings were supported by rafters, and whenever a leak occurred, the water ran along these rafters and seeped through the ceiling in unexpected places. While the "rafters" of man-made spacewarps are of a far more complex nature than the rafters of such simple dwellings, the basic analogy still holds true: the spatio-temporal elements that escape from spacewarps such as the Suez Canal never emerge in the immediate vicinity of the rift.

Even in Nathaniel Drake's day, the Suez Canal techs knew this, but what they did not know was that such seepages do not

pose a threat to the continuum, but only to whoever or whatever comes into contact with their foci. Neither did the Suez Canal techs—or anyone else, for that matter—know that the effect of these foci varies in ratio to the directness of the contact, and that in the case of partial contact, the effect upon a human being or an object is seemingly similar to the hypothetical preliminary effect of a Lambda-Xi bombardment. Hence it is not surprising that no one, including Drake himself, had tumbled to the true cause of his "ghosthood": i.e., that he and the major part of his ship, in coming into partial contact with a focus, had been partially transmitted into the past. Simultaneously, the rest of the ship—and Annabelle Leigh—had come into direct contact with the focus and had been totally transmitted into the past.

Here then was the situation when Drake left Iago Iago: Part of himself and part of his ship and all of Saint Annabelle Leigh were suspended in a past moment whose temporal location he knew to be somewhere in the year 3614 but whose location, although he knew it to be within displacement-drive range of Iago Iago, he could only guess at, while the preponderance of himself and the preponderance of his ship hurtled to-

ward the region of space that was responsible for his "ghosthood" and whose co-ordinates he had jotted down in the *Fly by Night's* log over three months ago. In the light of the knowledge with which his visit to Iago Iago had endowed him, he quite naturally assumed that once he and the ship made direct contact with the force that had partially transmitted them, the rest of the transmission would automatically take place—as in a sense it already had. But what Drake did not know, and had no way of knowing, was that spatio-temporal inconsistencies must be balanced before they can be eliminated, and that before total transmission could be effected, his three months-plus sojourn in the future had to be compensated for by a corresponding sojourn in the past, the length of said sojourn to be in inverse ratio to the spatio-temporal distance he would be catapulted. Consequently he was shocked when, following the *Fly by Night's* coincidence with the focus, he emerged, not in the spatio-temporal moment he was prepared for, but in the war-torn skies of a planet of another era and another system.

At the instant of emergence, every warning light on the ship began blinking an angry red, and the scintillometric siren began wailing like an *enfant ter-*

rible. Drake's conditioned reflexes superseded his shock to the extent that he had the antifission field activated before the automatic pilot had finished processing the incoming sensoria. Although he did not know it at the time, the shield that the ship threw out cleansed nearly an entire hemisphere of radioactivity and engulfed half an ocean and a whole continent. All of which brings up another aspect of time that was undreamed of in Drake's day: Expansion.

NEANDERTHAL man stood knee-high to a twentieth-century grasshopper, and the woolly mammoth that he hunted was no longer than a twentieth-century cicada. The universe expands on a temporal as well as a spatial basis, and this expansion is cumulative. Over a period of half a century, the results are negligible, but when millennia are involved, the results are staggering. Look not to fossils to dispute this seeming paradox, for fossils are an integral part of the planets they are interred upon; and do not point with polemic fingers to such seemingly insuperable obstacles as mass, gravity, and bone tissue, for the cosmos is run on a co-operative basis, and all things both great and small co-operate. Nor are there any discrepancies in the normal order of events. A six-foot man of

a past generation is the equivalent of a six-foot man of a future generation: it is only when you lift them from their respective eras and place them side by side that the difference in relative size becomes manifest. Thus, in the eyes of the inhabitants of the planet he was about to descend upon, Nathaniel Drake would be a figure of heroic proportions, while his ship would loom in the heavens like a small moon—

Or a small planet . . .

Beneath him lay the ruins of a once-magnificent structure. Not far away from the ruins, a pale river ran, and across the river, a city burned brightly in the night. Nathaniel Drake knew where he was then—and when. Looking down upon the ruins, he had an inkling of his destiny.

What I do now, he thought, has already been done, and I cannot change it one iota. Therefore, what I do I am destined to do, and I am here to fulfill my destiny.

He still wore his anti-grav belt. He parked the *Fly by Night* on extended jacks, and drifted down to the ground.

Here, cherry trees grew, and the cherry trees were in blossom. Towering above the pink explosions, Nathaniel Drake knew his heroic proportions.

He approached the ruins he had seen from above. The noble

columns lay broken; the stately roof had fallen in. The walls, blasphemed not long ago by the hate-steeped scrawls of segregationists, were rivened. Was that a marble hand protruding over there?

A hand. A marble arm. A shattered white-marble leg. Drake knew his destiny then, and began to dig.

No one saw him, for men had become moles, and covered in dark places. Above him in the sky, missiles struck the antifission shield and winked out like gutted glowworms. Interceptors blazed up, then blazed back down again, and died. The flames of the burning capital painted the Potomac blood-red.

He continued to dig.

A fallen column lay across the broken marble body. He rolled the column aside. The noble head lay broken on the floor. He picked it up with gentle hands and carried it out and laid it on the spring-damp ground. Piece by piece, he carried the broken statue out, and when he was sure that not a single fragment remained among the ruins, he brought his ship down and loaded the pieces into the hold. Lifting, he set forth for the sea.

SOME distance inland from the shores of Chesapeake Bay, he left the ship and drifted down to the bank of the river and began

walking along the river to the sea. Above him, the automatic pilot held the ship on the course.

He felt like a giant, Nathaniel Drake did, walking down the Potomac to the sea, and in this long-ago age a giant he was. But all the while he walked, he knew that compared to the giant he was impersonating, he was a pygmy two feet tall.

. . . and if you cannot believe in the walking of His ghost upon the land and in His ascension to the stars, then you are as one dead, without hope, without love, without pity, without kindness, without humanity, without humility, without sorrow, without pain, without happiness, and without life . . .

"Amen," said Nathaniel Drake.

He came to a village untouched by the destruction around it, and saw people crawling out of underground shelters. Looking down upon them, he proclaimed "Lo, I have arisen. Lo, I walk again! Look at Me, ye peoples of the earth—I have come to emancipate you from your shackling fears, and I have summoned the Planet of Peace from out of the immensities of space and time to transport My ghost to the stars. Lo, I force peace upon you, ye peoples of the earth, and I command you to remember always this terrible day when you drove

(Concluded on page 51)

man could have hoaxed him again, in spite of all the precautions, but Larsen was obviously unhappy.

Finally the tenth reading was given and recorded, and Larsen called his helpers in. When the two lists were compared, they stood as follows:

Number	Corman's Estimate	Ther-mometer
1.	82	80.6
2.	82	80.9
3.	75	75.4
4.	75	74.8
5.	74	74.2
6.	71	71.5
7.	76	77.3
8.	71	72.0
9.	71	71.7
10.	70	70.6

I think Lambert was more crestfallen than Larsen; the latter half expected it, I felt, and no longer hoped to win against the old man. Lambert loudly derided the ESP explanation, and tried to make Corman give the true one, but all he got was a gentle comment: "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio—pardon me; I mean Ken—but you know the quote. What I can't understand is why Larsen is so opposed to the ESP theory; usually, he's always plumping for it!"

Larsen gritted his teeth, but said nothing.

For the first time, I had no inkling of the solution, myself but meant to find out. And I did, by cornering the old man a few days later, and blocking his way to the water cooler.

"I'm thirsty as hell," Corman said, "so you've got me over a barrel. Now if I were twenty years younger, my lad, I'd flip you over that desk! Not that I'd hoped to keep the secret much longer. There must be *somebody* around here who knows some thing besides physical science."

"Meaning?" I prompted him.

"Meaning that biology can be useful, too. I had help on the outside—a thousand to one against Larsen's two."

I gaped at him.

"It's not very well known," he went on, "at least among mathematicians, astronomers, and physicists, but there are simple formulas connecting air temperature with the chirping frequency of certain species of crickets. For one kind here, it's merely this: Count the number of chirps in fifteen seconds, and add forty. The sum is the temperature in degrees Fahrenheit. You'll find it in Lutz, and also in Pierce's book, 'The Songs of Insects.'"

"As simple as that," I said. Then, puzzled: "But you couldn't see the clock."

"I'm surprised at you," he told me reproachfully. "Forget-

ting Galileo and his pendulum so easily. A man's pulse, once he's checked it out, is an ideal timer. My own, for example, beats at a steady rate of seventy per minute—at least, in the early evening. In other words seven beats every six seconds."

I reflected for a moment.

"For eighty degrees, then, you must have counted forty chirps in fifteen seconds—isn't that hard to do?"

"Not with practice. Anybody can count aloud faster than that."

"So that's why you clasped your hands—you were taking your own pulse!"

"Naturally."

"What if Larsen had plugged your ears?"

"It's not easy to keep out those shrill chirps; you noted, subconsciously, I'm sure, how they came right through the walls, even. Now, if he'd tied my hands behind me; or if the temperature had dropped below seventy . . ."

"Below forty, the formula must fail; you'd have to subtract, instead of add. But why seventy?"

He grinned.

"Biology again. Most crickets won't sing when the temperature goes below seventy. Larsen would have had me—ah—cold!"

THE END

REDEMPTION
(Continued from page 45)

Kindness from your doorsteps and threw wide your portals to Perdition."

On the shore of Chesapeake Bay he halted, and when the automatic pilot brought the ship down, he removed the fragments of the statue from the hold and laid them gently on the beach . . . And the *Planet of Peace absorbed His ghost and bore it from the face of the earth.*

A moment later, complete transmission occurred.

* * *

The cabin was a lonely place.

He left it quickly and hurried down the companionway to the starboard storeroom. The bulkheads no longer shimmered, and the deck was solid beneath his feet. His translucence was no more. He opened the storeroom lock and stepped across the threshold. Mary Legs, nee Annabelle Leigh, was huddled on the floor. She looked up when she heard his step, and in her eyes was the dumb and hopeless misery of an animal that is cornered and does not know what to do.

He raised her gently to her feet. "Next stop, Iago Iago," he said.

THE END

FANTASTIC

STORIES OF IMAGINATION

OCTOBER 1963
Volume 12 Number 10

REG. U. S. PAT. OFF

ZIFF-DAVIS PUBLISHING COMPANY
William B. Ziff, Chairman of the Board
(1946-1963)
William Ziff, President
W. Bradford Belges, Executive Vice
President
Herschel B. Sarbin, Vice President and
General Manager
M. T. Birmingham, Jr., Vice President
and Treasurer
Robert P. Breeding, Circulation Di-
rector
Charles Housman, Financial Vice
President
Stanley B. Greenfield, Vice President
Phillip T. Hefferman, Vice President

Editorial Director
NORMAN M. LOBSENZ

Editor
CELE GOLDSMITH

Ziff-Davis Publishing Company
Editorial and Executive Offices
One Park Avenue
New York 16, New York
O'Regon 9-7200
Advertising Manager,
Harold Cyme

Midwestern and Circulation Office
434 South Wabash Avenue
Chicago 5, Illinois
WAhash 2-4911

Western Office
3025 Wilshire Boulevard
Beverly Hills, California
CHestview 4-0265



Copyright © 1963 by Ziff-Davis Publishing Company. All rights reserved.

NOVELETS

THE SCREEN GAME

By J. G. Ballard 6

LET THERE BE NIGHT

By Robert F. Young 68

SHORT STORIES

THE WOLF WOMAN (Fantasy Classic)

By H. Bedford-Jones 30

KING SOLOMON'S RING

By Roger Zelazny 49

THE MATING SEASON

By Wilton G. Beggs 99

A NIGHT WITH HEKATE

By Edward W. Ludwig 110

FEATURES

EDITORIAL 5

COMING NEXT MONTH 124

ACCORDING TO YOU 126

Cover: Emsh

Illustrating *The Screen Game*

SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE: All subscription correspondence should be addressed to FANTASTIC, Circulation Department, 434 South Wabash Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. Please allow at least six weeks for change of address. Include your old address, as well as new—enclosing if possible an address label from a recent issue.

EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS must be accompanied by return postage and will be handled with reasonable care; however publisher assumes no responsibility for return or safety of art work, photographs or manuscripts.

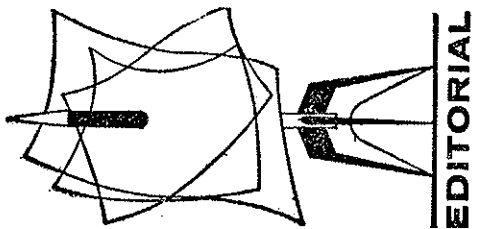
APPLYING the fruits of science for the benefit of the female of the species has lately been the theoretical concern of a British scholar-scientist, Prof. M.W. Thring. To him, the true aim of applied science should not be to raise living standards, but to increase human happiness. (Note: the two are not always—indeed, usually rarely—synonymous.)

Addressing himself to the problem of robots for housewives, the good professor feels that while most women enjoy such creative domestic functions as cooking and decorating, they despise the boring routine of peeling potatoes, sweeping floors and making beds. His objective: to get the domestic revolution to the point where robots will perform these mechanical household operations. When this is reached, he said, the housewife should be able to turn a switch and instruct the robot to make the beds, change the sheets, dust, vacuum, clear and lay the table, and run the dishwasher and washing machine.

The operational set-up for such a robot is theoretically simple. According to Thring, the biggest problem is to enable a domestic robot to differentiate among a large number of objects—lest the baby on the floor be put into the dishwasher, and the dirty dish into the crib. The final obstacle, says Thring, is to house-train the robot so that it would not only be able to recognize different things, but would also know where they are, where they ought to be, and where to find them if they are in neither place.

We have news for the good professor: housewives have for generations been trying to train their present mechanical slaves to do just such a thing.

Oh, yes—the name of the present device? Husbands.—NL



EDITORIAL

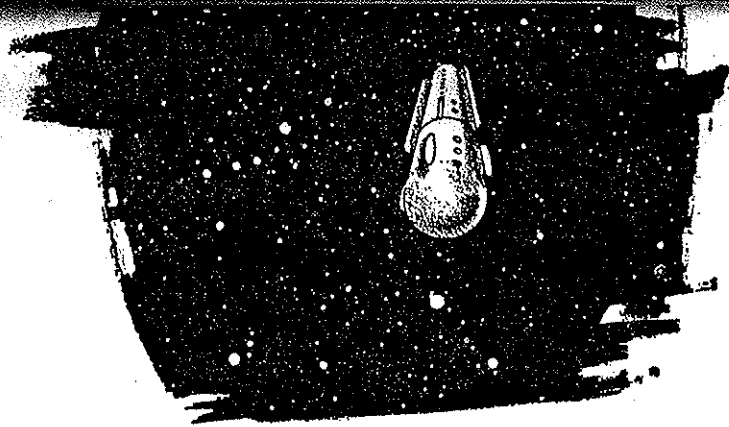
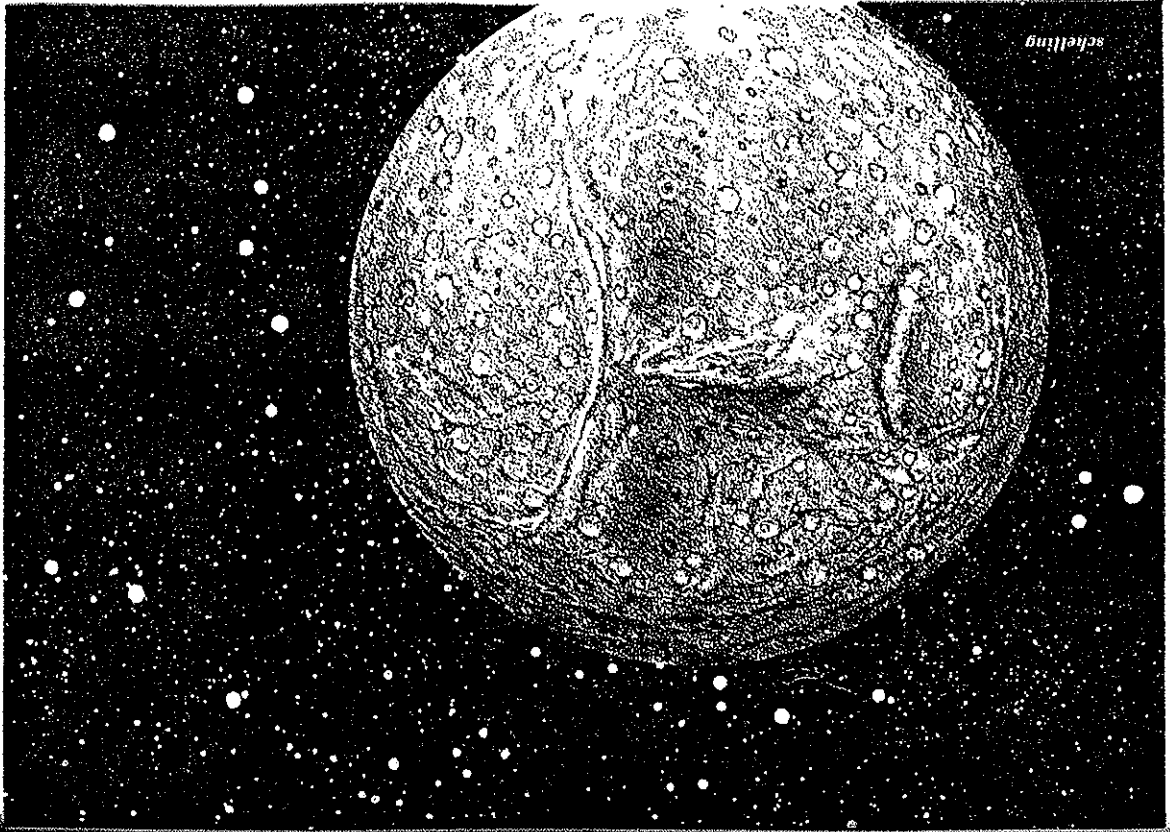
*Which answers mankind's
problems better: a stern
god or a tolerant one?
And what do you do if
you have the power to
decide it either way?*

LET THERE BE NIGHT

By ROBERT F. YOUNG

Illustrator SCHELLING

DEEP-SPACE undertows are rare, but when you get caught in one you may as well say farewell to your family and your friends, because you're never going to see any of them again.



The deep-space undertow that grabbed my one-man projectile-torpedo boat during the 2324 space maneuvers off Procyon 16 must have dragged the craft halfway across the galaxy. At any rate, when I re-emerged in normal space I couldn't spot so much as a single familiar constellation. For the record, my N.E.S.N. serial number is 44B-6507323, my rank is PT-boat pilot, second class, and my name is Benjamin Hill. Once upon a time I was a schoolteacher.

My undertow must have had a conscience of sorts, for it had permitted the PT-boat to surface near a star with a family of six planets. For lack of a better designation I dubbed the system "System X", and homed in on it in hopes of finding an amenable world on which I could live out the remainder of my years. X-4 looked pretty good. It had an inclination of 2.3 degrees, which meant seasons, and a spectroanalysis revealed an earth-type atmosphere. There was a moon, too—a great big one that moved in an orbit similar to the one maintained by Old Earth's moon. However, I wasn't interested in moons, and after a cursory glance at this one I dropped the PT-boat down closer to the planet in order to get a better look at my potential home-to-be.

Seas covered about four-fifths of the surface, and there was only

one habitable continent—a small land-mass with four long promontories stretching out from its main body somewhat in the manner of arms and legs. The other continents—if you want to call them that—were distributed in the arctic and the antarctic regions, and except for their northern and southern littorals were about as hospitable to warm-blooded life as a bunch of icebergs.

Well, one continent was better than none. I began orbiting in. Almost as though it had been waiting for me to come to my decision, the ion drive burned out. Apparently my undertow had not had a conscience after all.

All that saved me were my retros and my drag chute. The retros enabled me to bring the PT-boat down on the habitable planet, albeit on a rugged mountainside, and the chute enabled me to bring the boat down gently enough to avert an accidental detonation of my payload of projectiles. Planetfall took place in the twilight belt, and when I stepped through the locks, the moon was just beginning to rise.

DID I say "moon"? I shouldn't have, because even though the term is technically correct it wasn't the word that came into my mind when the satellite rose above the horizon. "Man" was the word. Or maybe "god". Think-

ing back now, it's hard to tell. "The man in the moon" is a familiar enough phenomenon to anyone who has ever visited Old Earth, and satellites with "faces" in them are no more unusual than comets with "tails". If a person looks hard enough and long enough, he can find a face in anything. But this face wasn't in the moon—it *was* the moon. Or, more accurately, it was that hemisphere which had been hidden from me during my approach and which I have been too preoccupied to notice while orbiting in for a landing. The moon, in toto, was a "head".

Unlike Old Earth's famed satellite, this satellite was young; its face, however, was anything but. It was the face of an old, old man—a cantankerous old man who hated planets, who hated people, who hated light and laughter; who hated, in short, just about anything or anyone you could think of. The frown embodied in that countenance was so intense that it was almost tangible, and it pervaded the very moonlight in which I stood.

I re-entered the PT-boat and aligned and focused one of the telescopic projectile-sights. The "forehead" was a vast plateau. The "eyebrows" were forested littorals. The "eyes" were seas. The "nose" was a mountain range. The "lips" were a pair of barren ridges. The "bearded"

"cheeks" were forested lowlands. The "chin" was a tundra. The "ears" were mesas, while the plateau that constituted the "forehead" extended up and back into a gleaming, "hairless" pate. The atmosphere softened the visage somewhat, but not nearly enough appreciably to affect its austerity.

A plateau, a pair of seas, a mountain range, two ridges, two mesas, a Paleozoic forest, and a tundra—interesting topography, certainly, but nothing to get particularly excited about for all its realistic physiognomic pattern. Nothing for a member of sophisticated society to get particularly excited about, that is. But how about a member of a naive society? Specifically, how about the race of people that had built the primitive village I had glimpsed in the distance while coming down on the mountainside? What would be, or rather, what had been, its reaction to such a phenomenon?

It was a discomfiting question, the more so because I couldn't answer it. Presently I gave up trying and went to bed. All through the night I lay half awake and half asleep, trying to put the life I once had known, and would never know again, behind me. In the morning I got together the few essentials I would need to see me to the village, pocketed a small ion pistol

just in case, secured the PT-boat's locks, and started down the mountainside. There are some people who do not need the presence of other people in order to live a rich and satisfying life. I am not one of them.

LIKE Zarathustra, I went down my mountain alone, meeting no one. In the forest below, however, I did not come upon an old man looking for roofs. I came upon a girl bathing in a brook.

This is considerably simpler in the telling than it was in the actual doing. The half trek-half climb down that mountainside had taken me three days—twenty-six hour ones—and I had been in the forest the better part of the fourth.

The girl had long auburn hair that looked darker than it really was because it was wet. She had big, almost luminous, gray eyes, an attractive nose, and rather full lips. A dimple dotted the center of her chin. There had been some doubt in my mind whether the natives of X-4 would turn out to be human—there are some recorded cases of planets of the genus Old Earth giving birth to nonhuman intelligences—but as I watched the girl, the doubt was dispelled. If anything, she was more than human, physically at least, and glimpsing the flash of her long symmetrical legs and the white gleamings of her grace-

ful arms and shoulders I felt like Adonis spying on Venus. If the analogy doesn't quite come off, I alone am to blame, because while I failed to qualify as Adonis, the girl in the brook was on a par with Venus, and then some.

I made myself comfortable in the underbrush and waited till such time as she should come out of the water, dress, and start for home. At length I saw her climb dripping up on the bank and start drying herself with a coarse cotton towel, shivering all the while in the cold spring wind that wafted through the forest. The drying operation completed, she slipped into several cotton undergarments, after which she spread out a rug-like length of some indeterminate material, lay down, and rolled herself up in it in such a way that only her arms, shoulders, and head protruded from one end, and her legs, from the knees down, from the other. When she stood up she was about as sexy as an animated stovepipe, and you would have thought that no further affront to her feminine dignity was possible. It was, though. The gray dress she proceeded to get into covered her from her neck to her ankles and was stayed so that it formed an upright cone. The animated stovepipe had now become an animated tepee.

Finally, after slipping her feet into a pair of clodhopper shoes,

she produced a comb from the voluminous interior of her dress and proceeded to comb her hair. It fell all the way to the small of her back, and how she managed to comb it straight back from her face and forehead and compress it into a bun no bigger than a billiard ball I'll never understand, but comb and compress it she did, after which she donned a bonnet that matched her dress and that hid not only all of her hair but half of her face as well. Looking at her, I saw no vestige whatsoever of the girl I had seen bathing in the brook, but fortunately—or unfortunately, as the case may be—I have a good memory.

A PATH bordered the opposite bank of the brook, and presently she started along it in the direction of the village. I waited till the trees hid her from view, then I forded the brook at a point where the waters ran relatively shallow, and detoured around her at a brisk dogtrot. Emerging on the path, I laid down on the ground and made like I had dropped in my tracks. It wasn't a particularly difficult subterfuge to bring off, for my three days on the mountainside and my three-quarters of a day in the forest had taken just about all the starch out of me, and the brisk dogtrot had decimated the modicum there was left.

I kept one eye on the alert in case the sight of me lying helplessly on the path failed to evoke the reaction I was gambling on and evoke a diametrically different one instead. I needn't have worried: the minute she rounded a turn in the path and saw me, she became a veritable engine of concern and bore down upon me in a flurry of feminine tenderness. Kneeling beside me—no small accomplishment in that outfit she had on—she felt my forehead. Next, she lay her head upon my chest and listened for my heartbeat. All this while I had been watching her with one slitted eye; now, I opened both eyes, raised my head, and looked full into her face. We were so close, our noses almost touched. "*Pervitu es Uren?*" she asked, straightening abruptly.

I propped myself into a sitting position. Getting across the phony background I had decided upon—i.e., that I had suffered a total loss of memory, had wandered away from my own village (if there was one, there had to be others), and become lost in the forest—was no easy matter with nothing to work with except a series of improvised signs, but at length I managed, and was rewarded by a warm look of sympathetic understanding. Helping me to my feet, she pointed down the path in the direction of the village and indicated by means of

several improvised signs of her own that I was to accompany her to her home, where I would be suitably cared for. She even professed her shoulder for me to lean on. I didn't avail myself of it, however, I may be an opportunist, but I draw the line when it comes to taking undue advantage of trusting females.

As we walked slowly along, she kept glancing curiously at my torn and begrimed space figures. I hoped they weren't too radically different from the garments worn by the menfolk of her village, and apparently they weren't, for after a while her interest waned and her glances petered out. The trail widened gradually into a rutted road. The ruts spelled wagons, and hoof-marks in between them spelled some manner of equine beast of burden. The brook purred along beside the road, and occasionally I glimpsed small game in the underbrush bordering the opposite bank. Some of the trees had some kind of letters carved in their trunks. There were birds everywhere, and the way was sweet with their evening songs. In several sheltered places, pale patches of snow lingered. Certainly, I reflected, it was rather early in the season for a girl to be bathing in a brook.

Shadow lengthened around us, and I could tell from the way my companion kept trying to step up

our pace that she wanted to make it home before darkness fell. Noticing the increasing coolness of the air, I thought I knew why, but I didn't really till darkness actually did fall. Then, when she knelt down in the middle of the road and bowed her head, I realized that she was afraid.

Afraid of that silly satellite rising into the sky.

I made haste to kneel down beside her. I couldn't of course join her in the little prayer that she uttered—I learned afterward that it was a prayer beseeching forgiveness for being out after dark with a man to whom she was not betrothed—but obviously my compartment left nothing to be desired for, several moments later when she got to her feet and looked down at me, I saw gratitude shining in her eyes.

I stood up beside her. Before we started on our way again, I stole a look at old mountain-nose. I had already figured out his habits—that is to say, his orbital velocity and his trajectory—and knew that during each twenty-six hour period he rose and set at the same time and consequently underwent no phases. The look he gave me back seemed even dirtier than the previous looks I had rated. Now that I came to think of it, there was something familiar about that somber frown of his. Somewhere or other I had encountered it before. Suddenly I

remembered. I had seen it on the face of Michelangelo's Yahweh in the Sistine Chapel.

THE village began without preamble. It was situated near the shore of a small lake, and consisted of a cluster of perhaps three thousand buildings crisscrossed by avenues and side streets just wide enough for two medium sized wagons to pass comfortably. With the exception of a half dozen large, factory-like structures standing in a sizable clearing on the outskirts, the buildings were all alike, so a description of the one the girl led me to should suffice. The ground floor measured something like 35X35X12 feet and was constructed of heavy planking. Two square windows and a thick rectangular door distinguished the façade from the other three sides, and there was a small plot of ground separating it from the street. At first glance, the second floor seemed to be nothing more than a set of shingleless rafters rising steeply into a series of individual peaks; at second glance, however, the glass roofing material became visible, and you realized that you were confronted with a large second-story room, the walls and ceiling of which were one enormous skylight. Rising along the rear wall and protruding from the transparent peak was a stone chimney, and

from its mouth issued a thin trail of smoke.

The girl opened the door and we went inside. Like the second floor, the ground floor consisted of but one room. It was commodious enough, however, and functioned as living room, dining room, and kitchen. The kitchen was located along the rear wall and featured a big stone hearth in which an anemic wood-fire was burning. Next to the hearth, a ladder climbed the wall to a trap door in the ceiling. The dining room was little more than a round wooden table, several wooden chairs, and a box-like affair that functioned as a sort of buffet and cupboard combined. The living room was about as cozy as a third-class spaceport waiting room. There was a long wooden bench, a wooden arm-chair, and a small wooden table. On the table burned the source of the room's sole illumination—a primitive oil lamp with a glass chimney. Attached to the table's legs a few feet above the bare plank floor was a rack, and on this rack lay a thick book bound in black leather. No one needed to tell me what kind of a book it was, and no one needed to tell me who—or rather, what—its subject matter concerned.

"In" the kitchen stood a woman. She was wearing a camouflage-bonnet and a tepee dress, and she was engaged in stirring

the contents of a large cast-iron kettle that was suspended over the anemic flames of the hearth-fire. "In" the living room sat a man. He was wearing skin-tight black trousers and a black frock coat that came all the way to his knees, and he was engaged in making entries in a large ledger that lay on his lap.

Both the man and the woman looked up when the girl and I came in, and when the girl spoke several words to them they came hurrying over to my side. The man was tall and thin and bearded, and about twice my age (I was twenty-nine at the time). He looked as though he had lost his last friend. The woman was somewhat younger than he was, almost as thin, and she looked as though she too had lost her last friend. Glancing at the girl, I saw the melancholy in her eyes for the first time, and realized that she also looked as though she had lost her last friend. I began to wish that I had remained on my mountain.

THE man indicated that I should lie down on the wooden bench, and after I did so he left the house. While he was gone, the girl brought forth a small basket of greens from the interior of her tepee-dress—her excuse, no doubt, for getting out of the house—and set it conspicuously on the buffet-cupboard; then she

got a bowl, spooned some of the iron kettle's contents into it, brought it over to the bench and, kneeling down on the floor, began to spoon-feed me. I sat up a little guiltily then and took the bowl and the spoon from her and began feeding myself. The food was plain, but compared to the PT-boat rations I had been living on for the last four days it was delicious, and I ate every morsel of it. By this time, the man had returned with another man who was also tall and thin and bearded and who also wore skin-tight black trousers and a black, knee-length frock coat. There was a leather sack slung from his neck somewhat in the manner early-American frontiersmen used to carry their powder horns, but the sack didn't have powder in it, it had dried roots. He handed several of them to the woman and she got another, smaller, iron kettle, pumped some water into it from a pump that stood in a corner of the kitchen, added the roots, and hung the kettle beside the big one. Unless I missed my guess, I was in for a dose of spring tonic, X-4 style, that would put iron in my blood.

All of which led me willy-nilly to a rather discomfiting question—to wit, had the medical component of this quaint little culture reached that phase in its development wherein phlebotomy was practiced? Apparently it had

not, for, after sitting down beside the bench in a chair provided him by my host, the newcomer confined himself to a few taps on my forehead, a look into each of my eyes, and a squint into each of my ears, after which he reslung his sack, said a few words to the man and the woman, and departed. I lay back on the bench with considerable relief.

The dining-room table was set, and husband, wife, and daughter—for such I had concluded their relationship to be—sat down to eat. Well no, they didn't sit down to eat exactly, although eating did play a small role in the proceedings: they sat down to pray.

The husband acted as spokesman, and what he had to say took the better part of half an hour and all the while he was saying it he and the two women kept their eyes fixed steadfastly on the round tabletop. I didn't know it at the time, but I found out later that the tabletop symbolized the face of the moon; nevertheless, I did know that the prayer was directed toward none other than the deity whom the moon embodied, and I could tell from what little I could see of their expressions that husband, wife, and daughter were momentarily afraid that the three bowls of stew growing cold on the table before them would be snatched mysteriously away before they had a chance to get busy with

their spoons. Judging from the way they finally gobbled down their food, the fear still remained even after the prayer was over.

The meal finished, the woman cleared the table and started washing the dishes, the man returned to the living room and his ledger, and the girl bustled herself stirring the contents of the second kettle. At length she spooned a quantity of the mixture into a cup, brought the cup over to where I was lying, and indicated that I should drink from it. I did so reluctantly. The stuff tasted like boiled crabgrass flavored with hickory bark.

THE next item on my evening's agenda was bed. The girl got another lamp, lit it, and led the way up the ladder to the second floor. Talk about your crazy rooms! This one looked for all the world like a big greenhouse. True, there weren't any plants or flowers, but there wasn't any furniture either. All the place contained, so far as I could see, were three mattresses and a big wooden box. However, the girl dug a fourth mattress out of the box and spread it at the base of one of the transparent walls; then, from the same receptacle she procured two blankets, plus a pillow that looked as though it was stuffed with cornucobs, and handed the three items to me.

The pillow *was* stuffed with

corncocks. So was the mattress. But I was tired enough to sleep on anything, and after the girl departed down the ladder with the lamp, closing the trap door behind her, I sprawled out on the mattress with a sigh of contentment and pulled one of the blankets up to my chin. Looking up through the glass ceiling, I saw old mountain-nose looking down on me. The old boy had climbed quite high in the sky by this time, but obviously the additional elevation hadn't helped his disposition any, for the look he gave me was just as dirty as usual. Good lord! I thought suddenly, he can see into every bedroom in the whole village and see everything that goes on in them! Is that why the walls and ceilings are made of glass?

I laughed aloud. "You really have got these poor sheep scared out of their wits, haven't you old man?" I said. "You don't scare me, though—not one bit—so go ahead and glare all you want to, and be damned!" I closed my eyes then, and the next thing I knew, the old boy was gone, and his grandfather the sun was climbing into the sky.

MY host relegated the task of "restoring my memory" to his daughter, an eventually that provided me with an even pleasanter setup for learning the language and more than I had hoped

for. So you see, a little discretion sometimes pays respectable dividends. Sure, I could have come barging into the village discharging my ion pistol and proclaiming myself the Leader of the People by virtue of my technological godhood, and I might even have gotten away with it; but I never would have been accepted by the people I presumed to lead, and, more important, I never would have truly understood them. The only way truly to understand a race of people is by finding out what makes its culture tick, and the only way to find out what makes a culture tick is by examining it from the inside. People never reveal the innermost secrets of their way of life to a foreigner, regardless of how deeply he may impress them. In the present case, by posing as a member of the race I wanted to understand I had removed this formidable barrier, and nothing would be withheld from me for the simple reason that to all apparent intents and purposes nothing was really being revealed to me. And I wanted to know everything there was to know, because no matter how superior an individual may be to any given culture, he cannot operate in it effectively unless he thoroughly understands it. Conversely, once he does thoroughly understand it, he can, by remaining within the framework of its

mores, gain virtually any end he wants.

The first thing I learned was that the girl-of-the-brook's name was Uglá Fyrrenha. I am not going to refer to her by any such uncomely combination of letters, however. "Uglá", roughly translated into English, becomes "Chastity", while "Fyrrenha", similarly translated, becomes "smithy" or, taking a logical step forward, "Smith". Neither am I going to refer to any of the other inhabitants of X-4 by their original names, and the same goes for place-names. If you think I'm taking undue liberty in this matter, consider several place-names chosen at random: *Tittikenottifungilikibus Renla*, *Sedisfoppentotten Hærgg*, and *Freddirapropopolandis*. Now consider their English equivalents: "Cape Celestial", "Blue Lake", and "Purity".

Purity was the name of the village where Chastity lived, and this was the second thing I learned. It was one of the four major inland towns of the continent (to the natives, the term was "the world") of Perfection. The three other towns were Righteousness, Integrity, and Transcendence. In addition to the four major inland towns, there were six major coastal towns: Truth, Prudence, Straight-and-Narrow-Path, Discretion, Virtue, and Humility. The inland towns

served as hubs for farming, lumbering, mining, and manufacturing, while the coastal towns served as hubs for the fishing industry.

An X-4 year consisted of some 320 days. Perfection's monetary standard was platinum. Chastity's father's name was Upright. Her mother's name was Dutiful. Upright operated a smithery on the outskirts of the town, and in addition to his regular duties served, as did the rest of the married males of the community, as a sort of patriarch-parson whose duty it was to teach, preach, and, on the rare occasions when it became necessary, to administer justice. Most of the time his activities along these lines did not extend beyond the walls of his own home, but he was responsible along with his fellow patriarch-parsons for the spiritual, moral, and intellectual level of Purity as a whole, and shared with them the task of administering to the husbandless families of the community; consequently there were evenings when he was absent from his own household. On such occasions supper, the one and only formal meal of the day, was held up until he returned, since eating at the table of the Divine Overseer was unthinkable without first reciting the Prayer of Permission, a function which only a patriarch-parson could perform.

ALL of which brings us to the subject of that evil-minded old man up there in the sky. The story, as told to me by Chastity after I learned the language, runs pretty much as follows: Millenia ago, the Divine Overseer had had it made up there among the clouds with nothing much to do save gaze benevolently down on the Great Sea he had created in order that he might see the reflection of his face. He had had his body then, and it had been a splendid body indeed, and the Divine Overseer had been tremendously proud of it, lavishing upon it the best of care in order that it would remain eternally resplendent in the radiance of the Great Lamp he had created and hung high in the sky. Then, one day, along came the Divine Overseer's archenemy, He-Who-Had-No-Right-To-Be, and there ensued in the heavens a great battle the like of which had never been known before and would never be known again. He-Who-Had-No-Right-To-Be was armed with a mighty sword, but the Divine Overseer disdained the use of weapons and fought with his bare hands. For years, the battle raged. For centuries. Finally realizing that he had met his match, He-Who-Had-No-Right-To-Be resorted to trickery and canted his sword in such a way that the radiance emanating from the Great Lamp ricocheted from

the blade into the Divine Overseer's eyes, temporarily blinding him. Around and down came the mighty sword, half severing the Divine Overseer's head from his shoulders, and for a moment it looked as though the battle was over. Not so. A lesser being might have thrown in the towel, but not a being of the Divine Overseer's caliber. With his head threatening momentarily to fall off, he closed in on He-Who-Had-No-Right-To-Be and, seizing the entity's body with his cyclopean hands, tore it to pieces and flung the pieces into the deep distances all around, where they became stars. He-Who-Had-No-Right-To-Be's sword, the Divine Overseer broke across his knee, after which he flung one piece into the east and the other into the west so that for all eternity the blood he had shed would be visible in the sky each time the Great Lamp rose and each time it set. This final herculean deed, however, proved to be the Divine Overseer's undoing, and his head, which all the while had been dangling by no more than a tendon or two, at last detached itself from his shoulders. Then a strange thing happened: instead of his head falling into the Great Sea and floating thereon, his body did, while his head remained in the sky. The second it struck the water, the body lost its resplendence and turned to clay, while the

head on the other hand became more resplendant than before because in it was concentrated the entire essence of the Divine Overseer. He looked down in sorrow at his once-magnificent body and resolved to keep surveillance over it for the rest of time, and in order to make certain that no harm befell it he created tiny creatures in his former image and made them custodians of his flesh. One of these creatures was the Divine Overseer's favorite, and this creature was called the Little Overseer. Working with the Divine Overseer, he drew up a contract wherein the Divine Overseer agreed to let the people live and prosper on his flesh provided they never kept their activities concealed from his watchful eyes and provided they could live and prosper without sin, which was defined as any act detrimental to the dignity of the Divine Overseer's sacred and sexless body. The people agreed to the terms, and the Little Overseer signed the contract.

I COULDN'T help wondering what kind of a religious cosmogony and what kind of a covenant the Little Overseer and his henchmen would have dreamed up if there had been a smile instead of a frown on that celestial countenance. But you can bet your spaceboots that I didn't share my speculations with Chas-

tity. Instead, I let on that the story was familiar to me—which was true, in a way—and that I thought my memory was finally beginning to come back.

We were returning from the little swimming hole where I had first seen her, and we had been gathering edible greens. As you can well imagine, I had made no reference to her previous visit to the hole, nor to my presence in the underbrush while she had been splashing around in her birthday suit. "It is good that your mind is clearing, Benjamin," she said. (I had broken down my first name to its literal meaning and had translated it along with my last into "Perfection".) "Father has mentioned several times that he would be glad to take you on as an apprentice at the smithery were it not for your befuddled memory. He is waiting eagerly for the news of your complete cure."

This was strictly in keeping with my plans. "Even though I haven't been able to recall which of the ten towns I came from," I said, "and even though there are a few other odds and ends that still elude me, I think he should take me on at once so that I can start paying him back for his hospitality. You can continue with my ed—my cure evenings."

"Of course, Benjamin." At this point, a wagon drawn by a team of small but sturdy

horses came down the rutted road, and as it passed on, Chastity made a quaint little curtsy for the benefit of the driver, a lean, bearded man in his late thirties or early forties with dark hair and shrewd brown eyes. He smiled warmly at her, glared at me, and drove on. "Someone you know?" I asked her.

Her bonnet didn't afford a very extensive view of her cheeks, but just the same I got the definite impression that they had turned pink. "He is Strongwill Dimity. I—I am betrothed to him."

I stared at her. "But he's old enough to be your father!"

"Which makes the honor even greater, does it not? It should be every young woman's wish to marry a man above and beyond her years who can provide for her as well as if he were her own father. Truly, Benjamin, there are still many things you have not yet recalled."

There sure were. "How long have you been betrothed to him?" I asked.

"Since he asked my father for my hand when I was nine years old."

I had been wondering all along how the men in this society ever managed to spot the particular woman they wanted to marry when custom commanded that all girls from the age of ten on up wear rolled rugs, tepees, and cam-

ouflage-bonnets. Now I knew. "And how much longer must you be betrothed to him before he can marry you?" I went on.

"For yet another year. I shall become of marriageable age then."

"And nothing can change all this?"

"Only a setback in Strongwill's success in his chosen business, which is the manufacturing of women's garments. And this would not change it either unless the setback were sufficiently severe to reduce his financial status to a level inferior to that of my father's."

"H'm'm," I said. And then, "I take it he's been quite successful. Strongwill, I mean."

"He is one of the richest men in Purty, and of course one of the most devout and pure, since only upon those who walk righteously in the light of the Divine Overseer does financial fortune fall."

The good old Protestant Ethic, I thought. Aloud, I said, "Tell me the truth, Chastity—do you really want to marry him?"

She seemed inordinately interested in a patch of wild flowers that bloomed beside the road. "I—I consider it to be a fitting and auspicious arrangement."

"That's what I thought," I said. "Well, I guess the sooner I go to work for your father, the better."

NOT knowing my plans, she quite naturally took it for granted that I had changed the subject, and the matter of her marriage was not brought up again during our walk back to the town. I went to work in the smithery the next morning. It was a big plank building with open areas in the roof for the heat and the charcoal fumes to escape through and it stood in a large clearing in the forest a little distance back from the shore of the lake. The forges were primitive affairs, and the *modus operandi* was downright ridiculous. Now, it's no trick at all for an average man from a technologically mature society to advance himself in a society in which technology is in the embryo stage; nevertheless, I didn't try to introduce modern techniques into Upright's smithery overnight. Instead, I contented myself with making this minor change and that, with Upright's approval of course, and in each instance I let on that I was as surprised as he was when the change resulted in higher production and better products. There was one other apprentice besides myself—a bright young fellow named Stanch Meadows—and it wasn't very long before we were getting out our work in half the time Upright had allotted for it. This state of affairs afforded me the psychological opportunity

which I had been patiently waiting for, and I discreetly suggested to Upright that it might be a good idea to make use of the time we had saved by putting Stanch and myself to work building a wing, with the object in mind of turning the smithery into a combination smithery and foundry and producing our own iron. What I had in mind was a small steel mill and foundry combined, but I didn't say so, for steel—true steel, that is—was unknown in Perfection. Anyway, Upright went for the idea and ordered the necessary materials, and Stanch and I went to work.

I don't pretend to be much of a carpenter or much of a mason, nor do I pretend to be an engineer; but, having been exposed to what is known on New Earth as an all-purpose education, I knew enough about the two trades and the profession to be able to build a primitive steel mill without too much trouble. When it came time to build a furnace—the most important phase of the project—I didn't try for anything fancy, not only because I was incapable of building an advanced electric hearth, but because I hadn't "invented" electricity yet and didn't intend to for some time to come. The people of Perfection were still too unsophisticated to be able to accept so radical an innovation, and if I had come up with it out of a clear blue sky,

the feat could very well have been construed as being magical in nature and have inspired comment to the effect that I just might be in league with He-Who-Had-No-Right-To-Be, whose *disjecta membra*, it was said, sometimes exerted influence on certain individuals who did not walk quite righteously enough in the light of the D.O. No, rather than stick my neck out, I settled for a small Bessemer Converter, and I must say, it filled the bill quite nicely. Next, I doubled back and got to work on a small blast furnace, and afterward, a number of small ladies, following which I tried my hand at a modest rolling mill, the materials for which I manufactured myself with Stanch's able assistance, and a soaking pit. Finally, again with the able assistance of Stanch, who had turned out to be an ideal right-hand man, I built a simple, hand-hoist operated stamping press and made several reasonably accurate dies. Meanwhile, I had gotten in a supply of raw materials, and a week later, Upright Smith & Co., to the consternation of its owner, started turning out stainless-steel pots and pans that made the cast-iron ones on the market look sick. The old man came through with a ten-percent partnership, and I was on my way.

Getting Strongwill Dimity out of the picture was only a

minor part of my over-all plan; nevertheless, I decided that the sooner I took care of the matter, the better. Hence the next item on my industrial agenda was a textile mill. After I built it, I installed the most modern equipment I could devise. Although my machines fell far short of being modern by New Earth standards, they were downright *avant-garde* by Perfection standards, and once I got a steady supply of cotton coming in from Straight-and-Narrow-Path, the southernmost of the inland towns, I was turning out women's wear at half the existent market-price and had one-third of the women of Purity, including Chastity, working for me. Old Strongwill didn't have a chance, and Dimity & Co. closed down lock, stock, and barrel. I met him on the street not long afterward, and I still bear the scars left by the two holes his eyes burned through me as we passed each other.

WITH three months still to go, Upright Smith himself broke the betrothal, saying that no daughter of his was going to marry a pauper. The action was tantamount to condemning Chastity to spinsterhood—or would have been under ordinary circumstances—since it was highly improbable that any of the town's eligible bachelors would propose to a girl whose physical qualifica-

tions were an unknown quality. And in the event that there might be one or two who could remember what Chastity had looked like before donning the rolled-rug, tee-pee-dress, and camouflage-bonnet of maidenhood, the odds were one hundred-to-one that they were already betrothed. So, as you can see, I had a pretty clear field.

I didn't take advantage of it right away, however: I had a number of other things I wanted to do first. You might think that owning ten percent of a booming steel mill and one hundred percent of a thriving textile mill would have been enough to satisfy me. But such was far from being the case. Men are never mediocre because they lack the will to power: they are mediocre because they cannot forge ahead of their civilizations. On my own world, I had been small potatoes indeed; on this one, thanks to my fortuitous advanced-knowhow, I could easily become king of the hill. So maybe in my own civilization I *had* had to settle for an ill-paying teacher's post, and afterward, when war threatened and the draft caught up to me, a second-class pilotship in the New Earth Space Navy: in *this* civilization I didn't have to settle for anything. In *this* civilization I could climb right up to the top of the ladder, provided I kept my nose clear on the way and provided I kept my operations well

within the framework of the religious structure.

Religious structures like the Sacred Trust of the Divine Overseer are made to order for opportunistic people like myself. The procedure for forging ahead is simple. First, you establish yourself as a devout, god-fearing citizen, then you hang a religious connotation on everything you do, all the while keeping strictly on the path of righteousness. You save every cent you can, pay your employees as little as possible, and conspicuously hand out pennies to kids. People who worship selfish gods like to be treated like dirt, and they love nothing better than to have a self-made rich man walk all over them, provided said rich man's feet are free from sin. I made sure mine were.

I "invented" the gasoline engine, and not long afterward I brought forth Perfection's first automobile—the Hill Roamer. Again, I didn't try for anything fancy, but settled for a compact job that could be feasibly operated on the existent streets and avenues, and that could generally be depended upon to start up when you wanted it to and to stop when you wanted it to. I had a dozen assistants working for me by this time under the supervision of Stanch, and they in turn had assistants of their own; consequently it wasn't very long before I had a stamping plant in ac-

tion, and an assembly plant to go with it. The lack of electrical power was a handicap of course, but the people of Perfection still weren't sufficiently sophisticated to take it in their stride, and I had decided to wait a while longer before "inventing" it. Let them get used to my automobile first, then I would give them electricity—and all that went with it.

MY next project was a highway construction company. Ideally, I should have built my highways before I manufactured and sold my automobiles, but in order to build highways you need to exact taxes from the people who are going to use them, and in order to get the people to suffer such an ignominy you have to make them want the highways. Hence you sell them automobiles first. To obtain the tax money I would need, I instigated with the help of Upright Smith the establishment of the "Ten Town Council". Each of the ten towns elected a patriarch-parson to represent it, whereupon Upright, whom I had helped win the Purity seat, convened the group in the capitol building which I had built in Integrity, the most centrally located of the ten towns. It was no trick at all to sell the ten representatives on the idea of connecting the towns with "hard-topped roads", but selling them on the idea of financing the venture by

exacting taxes from their constituents was something else. Just the same, though, I had them beat before I even started, because they knew as well as I did that if the people wanted to drive their automobiles outside of town they were going to have to pay for the privilege out of their own pockets. The measure was enacted into law, and a tax structure was set up to levy and collect the necessary revenue.

I ran my first highway from Purity to Righteousness, then I linked Righteousness with Integrity, and Integrity with Transcendence. From Integrity, I ran a real super-duper of a job to Straight-and-Narrow-Path, after which I linked all of the coastal towns together. Finally I doubled back from Truth and Humility, the easternmost and westernmost coastal towns, to Righteousness and Transcendence respectively, and as a finishing touch I ran a six-lane turnpike from Transcendence to Purity and extended it into the forest in the direction of my mountain to a thickly wooded area where I planned on opening a lumber mill sometime in the future.

You should have seen those people take to the road. For a while I thought I was going to have another late-twentieth century U.S. on my hands—or perhaps I should say "hoped", because that was the sort of setup I

was aiming for—but such did not prove to be the case. The people of Perfection never drove for pleasure per se. They drove only when they needed to transport themselves from point A to point B, and vice versa, or only when they needed to transport goods and materials between the two points. It was this final development that opened my eyes to an aspect of my brave new world that I had thus far overlooked: the need for mechanical freight-carriers. Getting my assistants together, I made a few changes in my road-building equipment plant and began turning out tractors and trailers. To light the way, I went into the trucking business myself, cleaning up a modest fortune, and after that, I couldn't manufacture tractors and trailers fast enough. No problem there: I simply built another plant. Before long, the highways started to go to pot. No problem there, either: I merely notified the Ten Town Council and started building new ones. I started an automobile factory in Righteousness, one in Prudence, and one in Discretion. I organized a petroleum refining company to replace the catch-as-catch-can arrangement I had with an oil-well drilling outfit in Transcendence. I began stringing service stations, roadside restaurants, and motels all over the land. The technological sun had

at last risen over Perfection and the technological millennium was on hand. If you doubted it, all you had to do was to look at the sky over Purity during the morning and afternoon rush-hours and see the smog.

The time had come to "invent" electricity. I "invented" it.

WELL, I got into just about every industry you can think of before I finally got around to asking for Chastity's hand. I was thirty-two by then, and the richest man in Perfection. Upright and Dutiful raised no objections—indeed, they virtually threw their darling daughter on my lap—and after a special betrothal period of six months, the marriage ceremony was performed by none other than Upright himself in the Smith homestead. By this time I had of course gotten around to building a house of my own—a slightly larger version of the standard Perfection dwelling complete with skylight-roof. After the marriage ceremony, Chastity and I retired to the woods, as was the custom, and spent the major part of our wedding night wrapped snugly in her rug-petticoat beneath the camouflaging branches of a big tree. Toward morning, we carved our initials in the trunk, reserving the tree as ours so that it should be available to us in the future; then, hand in hand, we walked through

the forest to our new home. There, we spread our mattresses on opposite sides of the sleeping room and slept the rest of the night. Several times I awoke, and each time, I saw that evil-minded old man up there in the sky glaring down at me through the skylight-roof as though he knew exactly what had gone on beneath the concealing branches of "our" tree.

We had been married for almost a year when the recession set in. There was nothing mysterious about this new turn of affairs: the people had bought just about everything they needed, and the in-built obsolescence of my products had yet to manifest itself. Nor would it for at least another year. However, I wasn't worried, for I had anticipated just such an impasse and had gone into the production of luxury items to assist my brave new world over its first economic hurdle. In less than a week I had the establishments of my various retail merchants stocked with every manner of electrical appliance and fun product you can think of and was sitting back in my executive easy-chair waiting to enjoy the fruits of my foresight.

The fruits were not forthcoming.

I couldn't believe it at first when my merchants began phoning me (I had thrown in the telephone as a sort of bonus when I

had given electricity to my brave new world) and telling me that my new products weren't moving. It is an established economic fact that consumers will buy luxuries even when doing so deprives them of the means to buy necessities, and yet these consumers of mine, all of them reasonably prosperous, all of them well-stocked up on the things they needed, and all of them unaware that their possessions were foredoomed to go on the fritz, were refusing to buy so much as a single nonessential item. What in the world had gone wrong?

I WENT on a survey trip and interviewed a dozen retail merchants chosen at random. None of them threw any light on the mystery until, quite by accident, I asked the last one I visited if he had bought any of the new products. To my astonishment, he replied, "No, of course not!"

"What do you mean, 'no, of course not'?" I asked. "Is there something wrong with the new products?"

"Oh no, Mr. Hill. Their excellence is in keeping with the excellence everybody has come to expect in all your products."

"Then why haven't you bought any of them?"

"Because I don't need them."

"But you don't have to need something in order to buy it. All you have to do is want it."

"Oh, but I couldn't buy something simply because I wanted it, Mr. Hill. To do so would involve self-indulgence, and you know as well as I do that those who indulge themselves fall into disfavor with the Divine Overseer."

So that was it! "Then you've known all along why the new products weren't moving!" I said. "Why didn't you tell me in the first place?"

"But I didn't know, Mr. Hill. I only knew why I myself couldn't buy any of them. I'm a merchant, not a customer."

"But when you contemplate buying something, even when you contemplate buying it from yourself, you automatically become a customer—or at least a potential customer. Can't you see that?"

His mouth fell slightly ajar. "Why, I never thought of it that way before, Mr. Hill. You're right, of course. But what are we going to do?"

It was a good question. Driving back to Purity that night along one of my fine new highways, I tried desperately to answer it. The recession—or depression, to call a spade a spade—would last for at least a year, and my brave new world simply wasn't resilient enough to endure such a prolonged ordeal. Before the year was up, the people would reject the technological blessings that I had bestowed upon them

and go back to their old way of life, and I, Benjamin Hill, would be out in the cold.

Well no, not out in the cold exactly. I'd be able to save some of my fortune. Nevertheless, my chances of realizing my rightful destiny would be doomed.

It was midsummer, and the night was warm. All of the stars were out. The D.O. was nearly at zenith. How he managed it, I don't know, but when I looked up at him I got the impression that he was sneering at me.

Well he might. He had won after all.

Or had he?

Pulling over onto the shoulder, I parked the car and gazed up into that frowning face. At the plateau-forehead and the littoral-eyebrows. At the sea-eyes and the mountain-range nose. At the ridge-lips and the forest-checks. At the tundra-chin. If the corners of that grim mouth could be lifted just a hair . . . If the contour of that brooding brow could be softened ever so little.

If, indeed! "Well what are you waiting for, Benjamin Hill?" I asked. "The Fourth of July?"

I STOPPED off in Purity just long enough to pick up a few supplies and to tell Chastity that I would be gone for several more days; then I drove on through to the site of my intended lumber mill, parked my car, and set out

for my mountain on foot. My mountain and my PT-boat . . . and my projectiles.

You see what had happened, don't you? I had said, "Come," and my brave new world had followed—up to the point where following had involved changing the image of its god. Then it had balked, and for good reason: it hadn't been able to change the image of its god.

It hadn't been able to because, unlike the images most civilizations have of their gods, this image wasn't mental. It wasn't, in the strict sense of the word, an image at all, but a concrete fact.

If you can't alter your god's visage, you can't alter his attitude either.

The people of Perfection were no different from any other kind of people. They would gladly have altered their divinity's expression to fit the changing times—if they only could have. As a matter of fact, they would have done the job some time ago, and the sociological change that was trying to take place would already have taken place, and the dark ages would have been no more. But the job, even if they had known how to go about it, was utterly beyond their capabilities.

It wasn't beyond mine.

It took me three days to reach my PT-boat. It took me two more to calculate my trajectories and

to align my projective tubes. On the dawn of the sixth, I launched my projectiles. Four of them. The D.O. wasn't in the sky then, of course, but when he climbed up among the stars that night he got his comeuppance but good. A medium-megaton, thermo-nuclear warhead doesn't create much of a visual display when you're watching the show from a distance of some three hundred thousand miles, and all I saw were four tiny mushrooms rising up from the Erobbingnagian face, two in the region of the eyebrows and two in the regions of the corners of the mouth. But that was enough: I knew that I had scored four direct hits.

Pretty soon, a smile appeared on the old boy's lips—not a broad smile, but a sort of Gioconda smile. The brooding aspect of the brow became rapidly less acute, and gradually the austere expression transmuted to one of gentle firmness. It was exactly the sort of change I had wanted—one subtle enough to escape the people's awareness on the conscious, but not on the unconscious, level. My brave new world was saved.

Standing on the mountainside, I looked out over the promised land and raised my arms. "Let there be light!" I said.

THREE more days passed before I got back to Purity. I

drove through the evening streets and avenues, wondering if my face-lifting job had had any effect yet. The town was bright with the radiance of the electric street lamps that I had had installed on every corner, but save for an occasional married couple on their way to the forest, I saw no one.

I wasn't disappointed. I knew it was too soon to expect results. *Zeitgeists* die hard.

Still and all, though, I reflected, there ought to be some sign somewhere that this one was on its way out.

There was, but I didn't find it in the streets. I shouldn't have looked for it there in the first place. I found it in my own house. On the buffet-cupboard. In the form of a combination electric can-opener and knife-sharpener.

"I—I saw it in Affable Gray's store this morning and I just couldn't resist buying it," Chastity said. "I—I hope you don't mind, Benjamin."

I cupped her face in my hands and kissed her through the narrow opening of her bonnet. "Mind? Sweetheart, I love you for it!" I said.

* * *

The next morning, my Righteousness distributor phoned and told me that my new line of merchandise was beginning to move. I received a similar call that afternoon from my Discretion dis-

tributor. Checking on the Purity end of the business, I learned that Chastity had been far from the only consumer to succumb to the temptation of my irresistible items, and that sales were increasing by the hour. The depression, clearly, was being put to rout.

I had already "invented" radio. Now, the psychological moment had arrived for my greatest "invention" of all: television. I got busy and "invented" it.

Naturally, I had to set up a TV station, but this proved to be no problem. Once I had it in operation, I put Stanch in charge of popular programming and handed over the educational programming to Upright, with the suggestion that he choose several of Perfection's most capable patriarch-sons and let them disperse their knowledge on a country-wide, rather than on a familial, scale. He was amenable to the idea, and he even agreed to plug an experimental technological institute that I had recently begun building in Prudence.

Chastity bore me a son. A year later, she bore me a daughter.

As more and more people bought automobiles and began driving them for pleasure, traffic increased, and as a consequence, more highways had to be built, not to mention more service stations, more motels, and more roadside restaurants. To keep the

economic ball rolling, I instituted seven annual fun days and timed them so that they appeared at regular intervals on the Gregorian-based calendar which I had previously introduced, and calculated their occurrence in such a way that they always fell either on a Friday or on a Monday. Thus far, I had functioned as a sort of one-man progress-concern; now, however, as the Perfectionists began to shed their naïveté, I began to have competition. An eponymous patriarch-parson named Forward Townson opened a country-wide chain of roadside restaurants; a young man named Goodwill Furrow business and began turning out tractors and combines; and Strongwill Dimity made a comeback in the women's garment industry by employing the same mass-production techniques that had brought about his downfall. This was only the beginning.

The Ten Town Council functioned effectively enough for a while, enacting this piece of legislation and that as the need arose; but, as time passed and the socio-economic structure grew more and more complex, it became increasingly apparent that a larger governing body under the guidance of a single individual was needed. In a word, the moment had arrived for me to get myself elected president. I

set up the necessary political machinery and got myself voted into office for a term of six years.

BENJAMIN, Jr. was nine by this time, and Little Chastity was eight. Chastity was a mature and beautiful woman of thirty-two. I built a White House in Integrity, and the four of us moved into it. After we were settled, I convened the representatives whom I had gotten elected along with me, and the cabinet leader whom I had appointed; then I called in my presidential advisor, Stanch Meadows, and the bunch of us got busy and enacted the legislation and set up the judicial system necessary to keep our lusty young society from hoisting itself by its own petard. In addition, we streamlined Perfection's cumbersome monetary system and levied sufficient taxes to balance the new federal budget. I had grown a beard quite some time ago, and now I was glad that I had, for it lent me the dignity that my new position called for. In fact, it even made me look a little bit like Abraham Lincoln.

Benjamin, Jr. liked living in the White House. So did Little Chastity. As for Chastity, she adored the place. I hadn't tried for an exact facsimile of the pre-WW-III U.S. job; nevertheless, there was a striking resemblance between the two structures, just as there was a striking resem-

blance between my brave new civilization and the civilization that had existed in late twentieth-century U.S. prior to the War and the Interregnum. However, as I've stated earlier in these memoirs, this was the sort of setup I was aiming for. Nor was I sticking my neck out, as you might at first think. I had "invented" electricity and I had "invented" the gasoline motor—yes—and I had even "invented" gun powder; but there was one form of power which I had not "invented" and which I had no intention of "inventing", and that was atomic energy. My brave new world had no Achilles' heel.

One thing that had bugged me for a long time was the matter of fashions. Women still dressed exactly the way they had dressed before the technological revolution, and so did men. Prior to my election to the presidency, I had been powerless to do anything about this stubborn adherence to the past; now, however, I was powerless no longer. "Chastity," I said one day, "take that ridiculous bonnet off your head and do something about your hair!"

At first she was shocked, but after I explained to her that as the wife of the President of Perfection she had a moral obligation to establish precedence, she was enthusiastic about the idea—so enthusiastic, in fact, that I

had to tone down some of her suggestions and rule out others. The change, I told her, would have to be gradual—the abandonment of the camouflage-bonnet first, and the creation of a conservative coiffeur; then slight alterations in the tepee-dress, and so on. "And while you're subtly influencing women's fashions," I added, "I'll be subtly influencing men's."

We couldn't miss. Oh, there were a few diehards who clung to the old ways—there always are; but the vast majority of the people imitated us like chimpanzees. Bonnets disappeared. So did knee-length frock coats. Tepees went off the market, and so too, eventually, did rolled-rug petticoats. People began looking like people, and the garment industry boomed. Ironically, Strongwill Dimity profited the most, broadening out into men's clothing and becoming a millionaire almost overnight. But that was all right—he had as much right to make money as anyone else had. What annoyed me was his going into the distillery industry soon afterward and flooding my brave new world with cheap whiskey. Some people are never satisfied no matter how much money they make.

Otherwise, matters proceeded smoothly. My extra-official activities paid off handsomely and my popularity increased. At the end of my first six-year term, I was

re-elected with only a token of resistance, and my brave new world took another giant step forward in the direction of the Millennium.

The Millennium indeed! Sometimes when I look back on my hopes and expectations, I am tempted to laugh.

At other times, I am tempted to cry.

THE fact that a person of Strongwill Dimity's puritanical character had invoked the Demon Rum in order to make a fast buck should have cued me quite as perfect as it once had been. So should the fact that the crimes now being committed by the citizenry could no longer be classified as minor misdemeanors as had been the case in less sophisticated times, and the concomitant fact that the Righteousness Penitentiary—Perfection's only prison—was not large enough to keep pace with the mounting crime-wave. None of these inconsistencies, however, rang a bell, nor did the need of my judicial system to enact legislation relative to divorce proceedings, nor the appearance upon the scene of juvenile delinquency. What finally pulled my head down from the clouds and brought me face to face with reality was venality in my cabinet, and probably even this

wouldn't have done the trick if the offender had been someone other than my Secretary of Health and Education—old Upright Smith himself. A construction-company operator feathered the old man's nest to the tune of two hundred thousand credits, in return for which Upright handed the company a contract to build four new technological institutes at a cost far in excess of what the job was worth. When I heard about the transaction, I couldn't believe at first that my informer was telling me the truth.

Well, I hushed the matter up. What else could I do? When you go in for nepotism, you have to go in for it all the way. As for Upright, I gave him a good talking to, and I think that right there was when I really tumbled to the fact my brave new world was on the sick list. For, instead of hanging his head and showing contrition, the old man looked me straight in the eye as though his conscience was as clear as could be, and just before he left the room, he gave me a knowing wink.

I was tempted to follow him and make it clear that I hadn't said what I'd said merely because my position had demanded that I say it, but because I had meant it, but for the life of me, I couldn't get up out of my chair. I was stunned.

I don't know how long I sat

there before volition returned, but it must have been a good hour, because late afternoon had been in attendance when I had called Upright in, and now, darkness lay upon the White House lawn. A pair of French windows opened onto the patio, and I slipped outside, hopeful that a deep breath or two of the wintry air would clear my mind and enable me to isolate the cause of my father-in-law's illogical abandonment of the pedestal of righteousness upon which he had posed for over three-quarters of a century. But the wintry air did nothing for me whatsoever, and I stood there on the patio as numbly as I had sat behind the presidential desk.

I don't know what made me look up at the D.O., unless it was the striking pattern which the sharp shadows of the trees had cut upon the argent, snow-covered grounds. Since inflicting my "face-job" on him, I hadn't looked at him a dozen times, and even on those occasions I hadn't really seen him. I saw him this time, though. He was beaming warmly down at me, and his lips were curved in a big friendly grin. "Go to it, pal," his expression seemed to say, "do anything you want to. I'll forgive you for it, no matter what it is." I nearly fell off the patio.

You see what had happened, don't you? In making their al-

terations on the old boy's physiognomy, my projectiles had precipitated a tectonic revolution, and the revolution had continued, and was still continuing, the alterations which the projectiles had begun. The process hadn't been, and wasn't, rapid—at least from the standpoint of an observer stationed three hundred thousand miles away, and as a consequence none of the Perfectionians had noticed any change at all—consciously, that is. And as for myself, I had noticed the change now only because my indifference to the old boy had resulted in my virtually ignoring him for years.

No wonder my brave new world had developed stomach ulcers. No wonder old Upright had stepped voluntarily down from his pedestal. No wonder husbands and wives were facing up to the fact that they no longer liked each other and were doing something about it. No wonder crime was on the rise. No wonder punishment was not being exacted. The frown on that face up there had been everybody's conscience. It had been the policeman around the corner. It had represented authority, and no man-made authority could ever take its place.

The "plastic-surgery" which I had performed had tempered that authority somewhat, but it hadn't destroyed that authority. Granted, the D.O.'s face had developed

an expression of gentleness immediately after my Projectiles had done their work; nevertheless, it still had retained sufficient firmness to keep the people in line. "Indulge yourselves a little," the new face had said. "Live it up a little. *But don't forget,*" it had added, "*that I'll still be watching you.*"

And now, it said—Well, I've already told you what it said. I went back into the White House and got a bottle of Strongwill Dimity's whiskey out of the kitchen cupboard. I poured myself a stiff jolt and drank it off. "So what do you do now, Benjamin Hill?" I asked. I didn't answer.

BUT I didn't give up either. I tried all sorts of measures. I instituted a togetherness campaign in an attempt to cut down on the divorce rate. The divorce rate multiplied. I started girls' clubs, boys' clubs, and youth hostels in each of the ten towns in an attempt to keep the kids off the streets. Juvenile delinquency doubled. I added specially designed courses of study to the curricula of my technological institutes in the hope of cutting down on promiscuity. Promiscuity tripled. I established the Perfection Bureau of Investigation in an endeavor to curb crime. Crime cre-scendoed. And all the while I did these things, that indulgent old

man up there in the sky grinned ever more widely and ever more forgivingly.

As time passed, my inability to cope with the monster I had innocently created reduced me to a state of comatose bewilderment, and after a while I began to wonder which was the potter and which was the pot—whether the change in the D.O.'s expression was affecting the morality of the people, or whether the change in the morality of the people was affecting the D.O.'s expression. Regardless of which viewpoint I chose to take, the end result remained the same: moral decay.

I had planned on serving a third term, and then retiring. However, the third term never materialized. Strongwill Dimity, who had shed his political naïveté with more alacrity than his contemporaries had, organized a party called the Poor People's Protectorate and got himself elected on a platform that promised social security, parity, unemployment insurance, lower taxes, higher wages, and free medical care. Chastity, "Little" Chastity, Benjamin, Jr., and myself moved out of the White House and returned to our home in Purity. Stanch came with us, while Upright and Dutiful Smith moved into the big mansion which the old man had built in Righteousness with the taxpayers' money.

I began writing my memoirs.

In order to enable myself to get down on paper a first-hand account of the new *Zeitgeist*, I left my family in Stanch's care and set out on a tour of the ten towns. A single example of what I found in each instance should suffice to point up the general *status quo*:

In Righteousness, a fifty-two year old patriarch-parson was convicted of raping a twelve-year old girl and given a two-year suspended sentence.

In Truth, a blind woman was stoned to death by her neighbors because she accused them of behaving like swine. None of the neighbors were indicted.

In Prudence, three teenage girls were arrested for soaping obscene pictures on automobile windshields and were taken into night court. The judge reprimanded the arresting officer for being too strait-laced, dismissed the charge, slipped the girls a credit apiece, and told them to go out and have a good time.

In Straight-and-Narrow-Path, a fisherman turned his boat into a bawdy house and made more money in one month than he had made in all the previous months of his life put together.

In Discretion, a patriarch-parson murdered another patriarch-parson whom he found in bed with his wife. The judge who tried the case sentenced him to twenty-years, and then suspended it.

In Virtue, eight women clubbed a taxi-driver to death with their spiked heels because he couldn't fit all of them into his cab. Each of them received a suspended six-month sentence.

In Humility, two youthful scientists used a five-year old boy in a dissection experiment that cost him his life. They were given a year apiece in the Righteousness Penitentiary.

In Integrity, Strongwill Dimity and his fellow-"protectors" voted themselves a handsome raise in salary and augmented it with an equally handsome increase in their expense accounts.

In Transcendence, a woman neglected her three children to the extent that two of them died of malnutrition. The case never came to court.

In Purity, a young man named Benjamin Hill, Jr. broke into A-fable Gray's store, sprung the strong box, and took off with nine thousand credits for parts unknown.

I HEADED straight for home the minute the chief of police told me the news. I threw open the door. "Chastity!" I called. Chastity didn't answer, but

"Little" Chastity did. She was entertaining her latest boy friend on the living room bench, and both of them were stoned. It made me sick just to look at her. "You're out of luck, dad-buddy,"

she said. "She ran away with Stanck."

I seized her shoulders and shook her. "That's not true!"

"Oh, but it is true, dad-buddy. And why shouldn't it be? It's high time you came down out of the clouds and looked around. I slapped her. She laughed at me. I ran out of the house.

I looked up at the face of the D.O. It bore a pronounced leer now, and the right eye was contracted in such a way that the old boy seemed to be delivering a knowing wink. The over-all expression suggested complete corruption. All I could think of was the picture of Dorian Gray.

Spades should be called spades. This was not the picture of Dorian Gray. This was the picture of Perfection—and the "artist" was Benjamin Hill. Fortunately, the "artist" still had a quantity of "pigment" left.

* * *

I was growing old. It took me four days to reach my PT-boat

(Continued from page 67)

time that will be allotted me; the choice, though, of a short and magnificent life selling igloos on Mercury has its appeal. I believe that you, also, are fascinated by impossibilities. (And remember what happened to Troy?)

Therefore, I shall time the solid postal transmissions in a few moments and transport my-

this time. Two more to get ready. Three to go . . .

Look, I'm not saying that a stern god is the answer to mankind's problems. I don't know the answer to mankind's problems. I only know that a stern god comes closer to being the answer than a tolerant god does.

I let the remaining projectiles loose, and they wailed up from the mountainside like four angry banshees. I waited all day. Evening came, and that old roué climbed up into the sky. One, two, three, four. The smile disappeared. The wink was no more. Volcanic action took over, seas squirmed. Ridge-lips turned downward into a dour line. A frown so deep and dark and brooding that it bordered on being a scowl settled on the vast face, and it settled there for keeps. Chastity would be back in no time. So would my son.

So would the dark ages.

I didn't care. I raised my arms. "Let there be night!" I said.

self accordingly. By the time you have read this far I shall be but moments away.

Please consider the future, and please be afraid. In a few moments you too, shall meet the Butcher. He is probably outside now, with a ring for you.

Open the door and let him in. Love and kisses, Solomon/Scarle

MATING SEASON

By WILTON G. BEGGS

Arnalla was a violent world.

But no more so than the violence that

remained hidden in the

hearts of men—and women.

IN less than a month," Mary when the females' screams pervaded the jungles from pole to pole.

Gibbs whispered, hating the circling beasts. "Thank God I won't be alive to see it again." Mary had awaked only moments before, but the twin Arnalla suns were already hot above the jungle fronds. The sky was harsh and metallic, a billious green inverted over a rank world of silence. Through a window Mary watched the gray creatures wheeling in the distance.

Their movements had a nightmarishly somnolent quality. The huge, leathery wings flapped so slowly that it seemed the beasts would lose momentum, and fall into the smoking lake beneath them. There were no placid cries, no calling to one another. The animals of Arnalla had not risen above a semireptile stage of evolution. They were voiceless, except during the mating season,

awed by the raging hor-

gressors?" Mary had asked her husband that first year, ten years ago, while the colonists were still living in the wrecked spaceship that had brought them to Arnalla. She had covered with the others, awed by the raging hor-

FANTASTIC

STORIES OF IMAGINATION

SEPTEMBER 1963
Volume 12 Number 9

REG. U. S. PAT. OFF

ZIFF-DAVIS PUBLISHING COMPANY

William B. Ziff, Chairman of the Board
(1946-1953)

William Ziff, President

V. Bradford Briggs, Executive Vice
President

Hershel B. Sarbin, Vice President and
General Manager

M. T. Birmingham, Jr., Vice President
and Treasurer

Robert F. Breeding, Circulation Di-
rector

Charles Housman, Financial Vice
President

Stanley R. Greenfield, Vice President

Phillip T. Hoffeman, Vice President

Editorial Director

NORMAN M. LOBSENZ

Editor

CELE GOLDSMITH

Ziff-Davis Publishing Company
Editorial and Executive Offices

One Park Avenue

New York 16, New York

ORegon 9-7200

Advertising Manager,
Martin Gluckman

Midwestern and Circulation Office

434 South Wabash Avenue

Chicago 5, Illinois

WAbash 2-4911

Western Office

9025 Wilshire Boulevard

Beverly Hills, California

CRestview 4-0265



Copyright © 1963 by Ziff-Davis Publishing Company. All rights reserved.

NOVELETS

THE HOUSE THAT TIME FORGOT

By Robert F. Young 6

THE DEMON OF THE NORTH

By C. C. MacApp 86

SHORT STORIES

THE SUDDEN AFTERNOON

By J. G. Ballard 38

THE SINGING SANDS OF PRESTER JOHN

(Fantasy Classic)

By H. Bedford-Jones 52

VANITY, THY NAME IS

By Ron Goulart 72

ADJUSTMENT

By Wilton G. Beggs 120

FEATURES

EDITORIAL 5

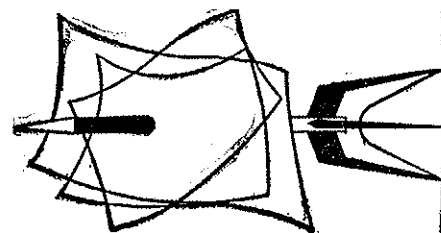
COMING NEXT MONTH 71

Cover: Paula McLane

Illustrating The House That Time Forgot

SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE: All subscription correspondence should be addressed to FANTASTIC, Circulation Department, 434 South Wabash Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. Please allow at least six weeks for change of address. Include four old addresses, as well as new—enclosing if possible an address label from a recent issue.

EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS must be accompanied by return postage and will be handled with reasonable care; however publisher assumes no responsibility for return or safety of art work, photographs or manuscripts.



EDITORIAL

IT'S funny, but although the so-called hard-headed people in this world are always denying the possibilities of extra-sensory perception, they are also always cautiously experimenting with it. It's a sort of schizophrenic, "I-don't-believe - it - exists - but - let's - check - on - it - because - if - it - does - we - want - to - control - it." If ESP ever really becomes fact, it may be necessary to mount a campaign: "ESP for Supernormals Only."

The latest development has been a large-scale research investigation into ESP by the U.S. Air Force. Nearly 50 volunteers worked for about a year at the Air Force's Cambridge Research Laboratories in such areas as precognition, clairvoyance and telepathy. The object of the study was not to see whether such ESP talents existed, but to develop an objective test of the phenomena, to provide a basis of "authoritative" knowledge. Presumably the many years of experimentation by Dr. Rhine and others at Duke University are not considered "authoritative" by our military.

The research centered around tests made with Veritac, a computer which generated random numbers from zero through nine, and recorded responses and reaction times of the subjects. The subjects were asked either to predict the number which would next be generated (precognition) or to identify a number generated in another room (clairvoyance or telepathy). According to the Air Force, the year's work showed that none of the 45 subjects had any unusual ESP ability, or, indeed that any such thing as psi power exists.

The Air Force did say it got some interesting information on "de-cision-making as a function of the personality makeup"—which sounds to us just a bit more far-out, as a concept, than ESP itself. It also said research would continue. Other psi research is going on at universities in America, Europe and significantly?—Russia. There has never been any intent to use psionics (if it exists) in military operations, the Air Force sources said.

Wanna bet?—NL.

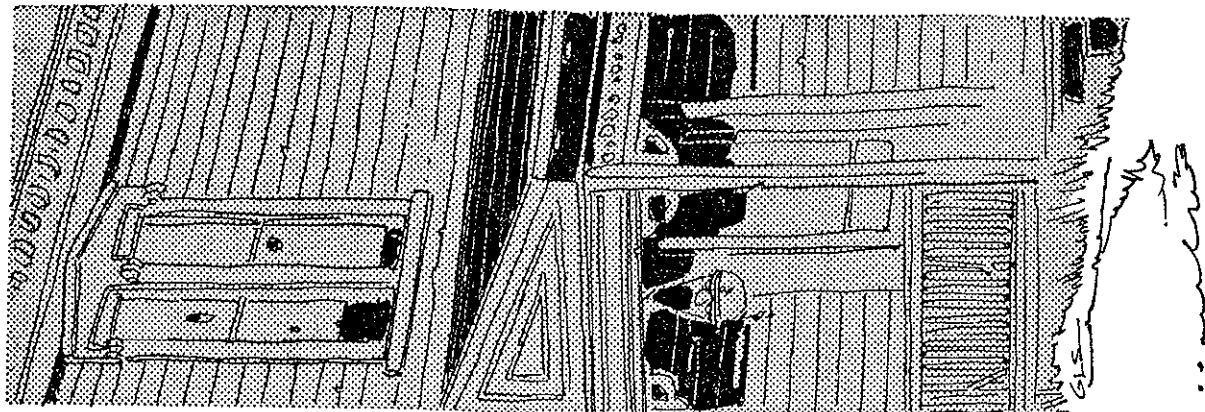
The House That Time Forgot

By ROBERT F. YOUNG

Illustrator SCHELLING

For want of a better name, she called them "Obbly-Gobbles". Thus far, the only evidence of their presence in the house had been an occasional flapping of their wings, but just the same she was certain that the term fitted them.

NODDING in the wing-back chair before the brightly blazing fire, she heard the flapping again—the dismal sweep of leathery tissue against stagnant, overheated air. "Come," she said, "I know you don't like me, but you are my guests you know, so the very least you can do is reveal yourselves and sit down and keep me company while you're deciding how to dispose of me."



She had a hunch that her hospitality disconcerted them, because no sooner had she spoken than the flapping faded away. Probably, she reflected, they were accustomed to people who shivered in their shoes at the mere thought of death, or maybe they were so used to being hated that not being hated hurt their feelings. No doubt it was difficult for them to go about their dirty work in a congenial atmosphere.

Opening her eyes, she regarded the emptiness of the room. When you live in emptiness long enough, you can see it. Elizabeth Dickenson could, anyway. Of recent years she had become quite an expert in the field of emptiness. She put on the horn-rimmed spectacles which, when her eyes had started to go bad, she had resurrected from an old chest that had once belonged to her grandmother. They didn't entirely correct her presbyopia, but they were better than no spectacles at all. Picking up the book she had been reading, she chose a page at random and let her eyes rest briefly on its all-too-familiar words—

*The face of all the world is
changed, I think,
Since first I heard the foot-
steps of thy soul
Move still, oh, still, beside
me, as they stole
Betwixt me and the dreadful
outer brink*

*Of obvious death, where I,
who thought to sink,
Was caught up into love.*

WEARILY, she closed the book and let it drop to the floor beside her chair. She removed her spectacles and laid them on the yellow lap robe which she had drawn over her legs. She had heard *his* footsteps in the dim and distant future, and had let them go unanswered. She had never heard them again.

Flap-flap! went the melancholy wings.

She returned her gaze to the emptiness of the room. All of the furniture was gone now except her chair and her footstool, and her spool bed upstairs; but the emptiness had been there even when the rest of the furniture was present. In the beginning, she had sold the various pieces to pay her taxes; after that, she had burned them to keep warm. She had burned her books, too—save for the one that lay beside the chair. As for her bridges, she had burned them long ago. Now that the house had finally found itself, plenty of cordwood was available, but she couldn't order cordwood and expect to pay for it by means of a checking account that hadn't come into existence yet, and the same objection applied to the trees that stood in the yard. Presumably, she owned them, but

she could hardly burn them in the fireplace or in the wood stove without first hiring someone to cut them down and saw and split them into appropriate dimensions. And besides, even assuming that she could manage to keep from freezing to death, what was to keep her from starving to death after her meager food-supply gave out? No wonder the obbly-gobbles had come!

On the mantel, a clock without hands stood. None of the other clocks in Elizabeth's house had had hands either, before they disappeared. As for calendars, she had dispensed with them almost from the start. In a way, the house was more of a time-ship than it was a house—a time-ship in which she had set sail for the islands of the past. But the sea of time had turned out to be a dark and treacherous river, and the river had been unkind. Equally as distressing, rats of memory had crawled on board before she had cast off, and down through the years she had heard them scrabbling in the darkness of long and lonely nights. But the obbly-gobbles were going to change all that. She liked the obbly-gobbles, Elizabeth Dickenson did.

The dismal flapping of their wings had faded away again. But she knew that they were still in the room. She could sense their presence. What were they wait-

ing for? she wondered. She had known the minute she first heard them in the house that they had come to do her in. Why, then, did they not get on with the grisly task and have done with it? . . . She leaned back in the wing-back chair and closed her eyes. The flapping intensified. *Now I lay me down to sleep, she thought, I pray the obbly-gobbles my soul to keep. And if I die before I wake, I pray the obbly-gobbles my soul to take . . .*

THE house had an interesting history. In the phase we are concerned with here (in a different phase he was to build it), Theodore Dickenson discovered it when he came to Sweet Clover in 1882 to establish the Dickenson Grain-Machinery Company, and he fell in love with it at first sight. It was large and Victorian and built of red brick, and it stood all alone about a quarter of a mile outside the village on a dirt road that would someday be known as Linden Street. On the first floor there was a spacious living room, a huge library, a majestic dining room, a commodious kitchen, and a compact pantry; on the second floor there were six big bedrooms. The cellar was roomy and dry, and the untouched grounds—there was neither driveway nor walk—would lend themselves readily to landscaping.

THE HOUSE THAT TIME FORGOT

FANTASTIC

Upon making inquiries with a view to purchasing the place, Theodore learned a number of disconcerting facts: all of the villagers were familiar enough with the house, but none of them could remember who had built it, or when; apparently no one had lived in it for years, a circumstance which strongly suggested, to the majority of the villagers at least, that it was haunted; in the absence of either owner or heirs, the village of Sweet Clover had legally confiscated it and was eager to sell it for a song, provided the buyer could pay cash. Needless to say, this final fact was not nearly as disconcerting as the two previous ones, and Theodore, the recent recipient of a deceased uncle's modest fortune, wasted no time in taking advantage of the opportunity. He bought the house, plus a large lot on either side, and shortly afterward moved in with his wife Ann.

They went to work immediately on the desolate and dingy place, hiring painters, masons, and carpenters to refurbish it inside and out. Generally speaking, Victorian furniture was already losing its popularity in the year 1882, but in small towns like Sweet Clover it was still very much in vogue. Accordingly, Theodore and Ann furnished the entire house with the best Victorian pieces they could buy, supplementing them with *objets*

d'art endemic to the era. Out of sentimentalism they retained the several pieces that had come with the house, and refinished them with loving care. In addition Theodore bought an imported harpsichord, hoping that his wife would take up music. Ann, however, gave the instrument a wide berth, and it was left all to itself in an unfrequented corner of the living room, there to gather dust and desuetude.

The Dickenson Grain Machinery Company, let it be said forthwith, was left to gather neither. Under Theodore's shrewd generalship and despite the depression then in progress, the factory grew from an infantile sprawl of shed-like structures into a proud young plant and brought a prosperity to Sweet Clover such as the little town had never known. In 1888, as though by way of reward, Ann bore him a son, whom they named Nelson and whom Theodore began grooming to take over the business almost from the moment the child began to walk. This process continued through puberty and adolescence, and meanwhile DGM survived three more depressions and matured into one of the most stable firms in the state.

NELSON turned out to be as shrewd a businessman as his father. In 1917, he married Nora James, a reticent girl two years

his senior, but, as Theodore put it, "of good aristocratic stock." It was said around Sweet Clover that the main reason Nelson married her was to enhance his chances of not being conscripted under the newly-enacted Selective Service Act, but this was unjust to say in the least. Had Theodore desired to, he could have kept all of the young men in Sweet Clover out of the army, to say nothing of his own son. In any event, Nelson did not go to war, and in 1919, when his father died suddenly of a stroke, he took over both the House of Dickenson (as it was now referred to by the villagers) and DGM. A few months later, his mother died, bringing to a close a way of life that had endured in the house for thirty-seven years.

But only partly to a close. Nelson had inherited both his father's and his mother's sentimentalism, and as a result he was reluctant to disturb the atmosphere of their somewhat antiquated way of living. At the same time he was reluctant to go on staying in the house without investing it with some evidence of his own existence. Theodore and Ann had resisted change insofar as it involved furniture, and for the most part the House of Dickenson was still furnished with the same Victorian pieces they had bought when they first moved in. These pieces, however,

had never been allowed to fall into disrepair, and, well-built to begin with, were in as good condition now as they had been originally. Nelson loved them, each and every one, but fortunately—or unfortunately, as the case may be—there was a limit to his love. New furniture was being manufactured every day, and he and Nora certainly had as much right to buy it as their less encumbered neighbors did. Moreover, there was no real reason why they shouldn't: it was perfectly possible to bring in the new and still retain the old, provided you used a reasonable amount of good taste and provided you weren't afraid to be a little bit unconventional. So he and Nora began replacing some, although by no means all, of the Victorian pieces with post-WW I furniture, in each case blending in the new with the old to the maximum extent possible. The result, when they completed the project, both surprised and enchanted them. Here was not heterogeneity, but charm—the charm of two worlds tied tastefully and unobtrusively together.

In 1920, Nora gave birth to a son whom they named Byron, after her favorite poet. Byron, too, turned out to be an only child, but here any and all similarity to his father ended and similarity to his namesake began. He even looked like George

Gordon, Lord Byron; certainly, he acted like him. In fact, the only thing that disqualified him for total identification was his disinclination to write poetry. Possibly it was this sole dissimilarity that heartened Nelson; in any event, despite the depression years that presently came along he saw to it that his son learned everything there was to know about the anatomy of DGM. WW II interfered considerably with his over-all plans, but did not completely dash them to the ground. Byron, as might have been expected, became a war hero; he also, as might have been expected, became involved in a fly-by-night wartime marriage that resulted in a baby girl whose custody became his and his alone when, at the end of the war, his wife left the child in a basket at the gate of the separation center where he was being processed for discharge and ran off with another man. Undaunted, Byron brought the child to the House of Dickenson and dared his parents not to love and adore it as much as he did, after which he settled down grimly and went to work at DGM, channeling his wild ways into souping up specimens of the new cars that presently began appearing on the post-war scene.

THE child's name was Elizabeth. From the beginning she was shy and sensitive, and, ex-

cept for her father's, preferred no one's company to her own. Her father, she revered. It was not surprising that, living in an atmosphere predominated by antique furniture, Currier & Ives prints, and grandfather's clocks, she should come to prefer the old to the new; nor was it surprising that she should insist on taking lessons on the harpsichord which still stood in its unfrequented corner in the living room. She took to Bach the way a duck takes to water, and she came to love both Couperin and Scarlatti. Music, however, was far from being the major passion in her young life. She had begun to read almost as soon as she had begun to talk, and at the age of nine she had penned her first poem. Twelve found her with the three heroines who were to remain with her down through the years and upon one of those lives she was to model her own: Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Christina Georgina Rossetti, and Emily Dickenson. Laughingly—and lovingly—her father bestowed upon her the nickname of "Elizabeth Georgina Dickinson".

Byron did his level best at DGM, but it was obvious from the beginning that he had inherited neither his father's nor his grandfather's business acumen. However, this did not prevent him from inheriting the factory when, in the summer of '60, both

Nelson and Nora drowned when Nelson's cruiser capsized in an abrupt Lake Erie storm. Byron and sixteen-year old Elizabeth sat solemnly through church services and afterward stood solemnly in the cemetery beneath the tent that shrouded the two caskets, and when it was all over they rode solemnly back to the large and empty house. But neither of them grieved long. Byron had DGM on his shoulders now, and the unaccustomed responsibility sapped his mental and physical energies to a degree where all else seemed unreal; and as for Elizabeth, while she had loved her grandparents, the major part of her love had been—and still was—focused on her father, and she found that she could not carry her regret over their passing beyond penning a long poem in their memory. The poem finished, she penned others about more immediate subjects, and soon the summer was over and she was off to finishing school.

She had never liked regular school, and she liked finishing school even less. For one thing, it deprived her of the privacy she had come to take for granted in the House of Dickenson. There, her room had been her *sanctum sanctorum*, and having to share a room with two other girls was repugnant to her. However, she put up with it as best she could,

FANTASTIC

penning her poetry in the dark with the aid of a small pocket torch which she flicked on after getting into bed and pulling the blankets up over her head. She wrote brief, sensitive stanzas for the most part, imagining them to be in the manner of Emily Dickenson. *Happiness*, she wrote one night—

*I came upon you of a summer's day
When I was dancing with
my shadow.*

IN the summer of '62, she met Matthew Pearson, the young engineer whom her father had hired to expedite production at DGM. Although young with reference to his profession, he was still ten years older than Elizabeth, and while he was an eligible enough bachelor, he wasn't at all the sort of person someone who didn't know her very well would have dreamed she would fall in love with. Nevertheless, fall in love with him, she did. It was her first love, and her last, and she commemorated it on the very night of their meeting with the lines,

*Breasting life's foothills I
came upon him
Standing in the sun.
I had seen his eyes in the
azure of autumn skies;
I had seen his hair in the
blackness of winter woods.*

12

THE HOUSE THAT TIME FORGOT

13

*Autumn, winter—father-
seasons:
Spring, I would bend thine
ear!*

For some time, things had been going badly at DGM. Since settling down after the war, Byron had kept his wildness steadfastly channeled into the driving of faster and faster automobiles, and recently he had found an ideal outlet for it in the racing of his new Ferrari in the hills beyond the town. But a lack of wildness does not necessarily imply a good business head, and Byron was but little more adept in industrial strategy now than he had been the first day he had taken DGM over. The company was a victim of technological change. Before Byron hired Matthew Pearson on the recommendation of Curtis Hannock, the company's lawyer, every operation was performed precisely as it had been performed in Nelson Dickinson's day, and as a result, the factory was unable to compete with its modernized cousins. The necessary changes should have been instituted ten years ago, and brought about gradually; the fact that they had not been owing not so much to Nelson's inclination to cling to old, traditional ways as it was to Byron's failure to lend the initiative and to come up with the new ideas which the situation had required. Now, the changes needed

to be made all at once, and the company's finances were unequal to the expense. Matthew Pearson had been able to expedite operations somewhat, but, as Byron refused to act on Curtis Hannock's advice to borrow enough money to buy and install the necessary new equipment, the firm had to limp along as best it could, picking up whatever contracts its competitors dropped in their eagerness to snare larger and more lucrative ones. The limp was rapidly becoming a shamble, and more and more employees were being laid off, and Byron could be seen racing his Ferrari in the hills at more and more frequent intervals.

Elizabeth's romance with Matthew Pearson, a one-sided affair at first, with one party penning inspired imagery and the other party totally unaware of the affair's existence, kindled suddenly into a full-fledge flame. This came about when Matthew called at the House of Dickinson one evening to discuss a contemplated changeover at the plant with Byron. Quite by accident, he happened to be standing at the foot of the open stairway in the living room just as Elizabeth, wearing a girlish white dress, was coming down. She did not know it, for all her poetic lore, but there are times when, given the right lighting, the right moment, and the right mood, a tall, slender

girl with no other claim to beauty than strong yet sensitive features and a natural grace of deportment can undergo a sort of transcendental transfiguration in the eyes of the beholder. It was so now. Matthew Pearson, newly come in out of a dismal rainy night, the warmth of the House of Dickinson rising reassuringly around him, the furniture of the House of Dickinson, its collective charm but little dimmed by the occasional modern atrocities that Byron had inserted here and there, spread out on either hand, saw a vision of loveliness that, however subjective it may have been, was destined to remain with him for the rest of his life.

After that, he became a frequent visitor at the house. What with the production problems that were continually arising at the factory he was never wanting for an excuse, and after he made his intentions known to Elizabeth late in '63, he did not need an excuse. He had never really needed one anyway, had he but known it; but Elizabeth, never demonstrative even in ordinary matters, had kept her love as deep and as dark a secret as she kept the poems she wrote in her room at finishing school. She graduated in the spring of '64, and she and Matthew announced their engagement. The announcement appeared in the *Sweet Clover Gazette* on the same day

Byron Dickinson ran his Ferrari into a bridge abutment, impaled himself on the steering column, and neatly sheared off the top of his head.

THE flowers were the worst. Elizabeth loved wild flowers, but she hated domesticated blooms. She hated the chrysanthemums most of all. There were mums in every bouquet, in every wreath. The floral piece which she had ordered over the phone and which said "DAUGHTER" in ugly gilt letters was thick with them. It should have been woven of violets and forget-me-nots; of gentians and hepaticas and wood-sorrels; of lupines, foxgloves, cinquefoils, and Queen Anne's lace. *How can I say how much I love thee when I have naught but stereotyped words at my command? I need the traceries of morning glories on a summer hill, or the gentle blueness of morning sun. . . .*

It was raining when the line of solemn cars filed into the cemetery, and the casket was set in place in the cement-block shelter which the modern-minded cemetery officials had had constructed in order that death could be con-summated with a minimum of discomfort to its beholders. The shelter was painted grass-green, both inside and out, and had a damp, musty smell. People, some of whom had been Byron's friends

standing eyes that I shall never see again—

Matthew was standing beside her. "Elizabeth, are you all right?"

"Yes." She looked up into his eyes. "Your eyes—they're like bluebells, too."

He took her arm. "Come, Elizabeth. It's time to go."

The House of Dickenson stood silently in the rain. Byron and Elizabeth had dispensed with the regular servants some time ago, and a cleaning woman came twice a week to do the rooms. Matthew helped Elizabeth out of the car and walked with her as far as the front door. "I hate to go running off to the city at a time like this," he said, "but it wouldn't be fair to the company if I didn't attend the Schwartz and Burghardt auction."

"Why can't you send someone else?"

"Because there isn't much money to play around with, and I've got to buy exactly what we need. Cheer up—it'll only be for a couple of days."

"Two days," she said. "Two centuries." She essayed a brave smile, almost brought it off. "Well, if you must, you must, I suppose."

"I'll tell you what. I'll ask Mrs. Barton to come over and keep you company. It's not her day to clean, but—"

"You'll do nothing of the sort!

and some of whom had been his enemies, crowded in and lined up behind the two chairs that stood before the casket. In one of the chairs, Elizabeth sat, in the other, Matthew Pearson. Byron had left friends and enemies, but in addition to his daughter the only relatives he had left was a scattering of cousins who lived too far away to make attending the funeral practicable.

Elizabeth sat silently, listening to the minister intone his time-worn words. She had not known about the shelter; she had expected to stand beneath a dripping tent. She would have liked to stand in the rain itself, to have felt it on her face. There was poetry in the rain, solace. Here in the shelter there was only indifference and death.

"—dust to dust—"
No, not dust. My father will never be dust. My father will be the wind. When you drive in the hills at night you will hear his voice. He will speak to you through the rolled-down windows of your cars, and he will say a thousand wondrous things. My father will be the wind! . . .

The flower that the minister had handed her was a chrysanthemum. She stood up and laid it gently on the casket. This is a bluebell, father. I found it in the meadows south of town. I picked it because it made me think of your eyes—those gentle, under-

If I want to hear banalities, I'll turn on TV. Go now, quickly,—I'm not a little girl."

"All right. I'll be staying at the Wilton Hotel—if you need me, don't hesitate to call." He kissed her. "Eye"

"Good by," Elizabeth said.

The trouble was, she was a little girl . . .

She watched him drive away, then she entered the house and removed her coat and hat. Looking neither to left nor to right, she walked into the living room and climbed the stairs to her room. The windows were raised, and the curtains were wet with rain. The modern little desk on which she wrote her poems and in which she hid them stood forlornly by an antique spool bed that was older than the house itself. Opened on her pillow lay a slender volume that was older than the house, too—*Sonnets by E.B.B.* She sat down on the bed, reached out and touched the faded words—

I lift my heavy heart up solemnly,

As once Electra her sepulchral urn,

And looking in thine eyes, I overturn

The ashes at thy feet. Behold and see

What a great heap of grief lay hid in me

And how the red wild sparkles dimly burn—

She could cry then. Afternoon darkened to dusk as she lay there on her silken coverlet, and presently night tiptoed into the room. Toward midnight, the rain stopped, and the stars came out. Lying on her back now, she could see them through the window by the bed. She counted the jewels of Orion's belt. She traced the little dog's tail. She marveled at the misted magic of Berenice's hair. At long last, she slept.

THE answer lay in the warmth and the brightness of the morning sunlight; in the sweetness of the morning wind. She put yesterday from her mind. *I will arise from my morning bed and go forth into the day. To the city will I go, to the canyons of the sun. Shower, spray and spangle; needles on my skin. Rude awakenings are for those who gather dust in sad retreats and admit the myth of death.*

Down the street she walked in the morning shade of maples that sang sweet songs in the morning wind. At the station she caught the 9:45, and early-afternoon found her in the city. However, she did not go directly to the Wilton as she had planned. She would go there later on, after he returned from the auction. That would be better than waiting for him in his room like a frightened little girl. After all, she knew her way around the city, didn't she?

of course, quite well, thank you.

She stopped in a little restaurant and had a cheeseburger and a glass of milk, then she took in a double-feature matinee. The first feature was about a girl who found love on a south Pacific island. The second was about Moses. She liked them both very much. When she got outside, she found that it was night already. Well no, not really night; traces of daylight still lingered in the eastern sky. Just the same, she had no business being all alone in the big city at such an hour.

She remembered where the Wilton was, and hadn't the least trouble finding it. She had been there with her father once before. For years, the Dickenses had patronized it whenever business brought them to the city, and it had become traditional for the executives of DGM to patronize it, too. She remembered the lobby as a dignified room with thick rugs and big velvet armchairs. Now, even though the rugs and the chairs were still there, it seemed dingy and cheap, and somehow out of date. It was as though many years instead of only a few had passed since she had last been there.

The lobby was empty. So was the space behind the counter where the clerk should have been. Well, no matter, she knew where the register was kept. She would peek, that was what she would

do. The name puzzled her for a moment when she first found it. It didn't seem quite right. And yet it must be. After it were the numerals 304.

An elevator bore her aloft, and soon she was walking down a carpeted hall. The carpet was frayed, and the walls were badly in need of paint. The door she wanted was at the very end. Just before she reached it, it opened, and a girl came out.

She was a bright-haired girl who looked as though she had just come off a production line where girls like herself were turned out like new Fords and Chevrolets. Elizabeth felt gawky and out of place just looking at her, and shrank back against the wall. When she thought of the moment in later years, she invariably pictured herself as a sort of anachronistic Emily Dickenson taken unawares by a neatly packaged product she had not dreamed existed, and perhaps, in the back of her mind where her little-girl masquerade had not taken effect, she pictured herself that way then, because the pattern must have begun somewhere, and at what more logical place could it have begun than at the beginning?

The girl did not look at her. As a matter of fact, she did not even see her. Elizabeth might just as well have been a painting hanging on the wall, a painting of a

tall, thin girl with deceptively strong features and blue eyes that had in them the look of a bewildered child. But if the bright-haired girl did not see her, the man standing in the doorway of 304 did—the man who was—And yet wasn't—the man she had come to see. Gray-suited, concerned of countenance, the rouge-remnants of a kiss blazing brightly on his cheek, he stepped into the hall. "Elizabeth, I never dreamed you'd—" he began, and stopped. "Elizabeth, are you all right? You look strange."

The painting of Elizabeth Dickenson did not move.

Matthew paused helplessly before it. "Liz, this is one of those crazy things that happen to people when they're not looking," he said. "I saw the Wilton letterhead on some old correspondence at the shop and automatically took it for granted that it was a respectable place. I didn't find out that it had turned into a dive till after I'd registered and paid two days rent in advance. One of the bellboys told me then that no one from DGM has stayed here for years, but I decided to stick it out anyway. I—I never dreamed they'd send up a girl."

Still, the painting did not move.

"Come in, and sit down, Liz. You're as white as a ghost. This whole thing had no business happening to us—no business at all."

The painting turned back into an animate girl then, and the girl whirled, and ran down the hall. Matthew followed her to the elevator, argued desperately while it rose to her summons; and all the while, the smear of lipstick burned more and more vividly. When the elevator arrived, Elizabeth stepped inside and watched the closing doors devour his anguished face. Boarding the train for Sweet Clover an hour later, she left the little girl she once had been forever behind her.

THE ship of the House of Dickenson, its doors closed tightly against the world, lay at anchor in the river of time.

Inside the house, young Elizabeth Dickenson sat in a wing-back chair before a fireless fireplace. For the dozenth time that day, the phone rang. For the dozenth time, she let it ring.

After a while, it stopped; then it began ringing again. She went on sitting where she was.

Before her on a small footstool, a tray rested. On it were the remnants of the piece of toast she had had for breakfast, and a cup half full of cold coffee. The hour was 4:16 P.M.; the day, the day after the day of the bright-haired girl.

Tires squealed in the driveway, the slam of a car door followed. The phone had finally fallen silent, and now, the doorbell commenced to ring. It rang

and rang and rang. "I know it's you, Matt," Elizabeth whispered. "Go away—go away, please!"

Presently the ringing stopped, and the sound of the big brass knocker took over. Part of Elizabeth sprang to her feet, ran into the hall, and tried desperately to turn the knob that controlled the lock. But she was not strong enough. *Help me, help me!* she called to the rest of herself. *In a moment he'll be gone, and it'll be too late!*

The preponderance of herself did not move from the chair.

Are you going to let him go because what he did seemed twice as bad because you confused him with your father? Or are you going to let him go because deep down in yourself you were looking for an excuse all along to shut yourself away from the world and write poetry?

Elizabeth Georgina Dickinson did not answer.

Present the knocking stopped. A car door slammed. Once again, tires squealed.

Silence. Elizabeth got up, went over to the Sheraton sofa table on which the phone stood, and dialed Curtis Hannock's office number.

"This is Elizabeth Dickenson," she told the girl who answered. "Have you by any chance been trying to get in touch with me today?"

"Why yes, Miss Dickenson. All

afternoon, as a matter of fact. Hold the line a moment, please—Mr. Hannock wants to speak with you."

"Elizabeth? Where in blazes have you been, girl?"

"It—it doesn't matter. What was it you wanted, Mr. Hannock?"

"To see you, of course, so that I can read you your father's will. How will it be if I drop around at two-thirty tomorrow afternoon?"

"... All right. Should I get in touch with anyone else?"

"No. It concerns you, and you alone. Two-thirty then—right? Take care of yourself, girl."

AFTER hanging up, she stood for a while, staring at the wall. It was time to fix dinner, she supposed. She went out into the big kitchen and fried herself bacon and eggs and made a pot of coffee. The kitchen, with its plethora of modern appliances, was like another world—a world she didn't in the least appreciate. In remodeling it, Byron had gone all the way, but it could be said to his credit that he had junked none of the old equipment, some of which dated from Theodore Dickenson's day. Instead, he had stored it in the basement along with the various other period-pieces which both necessity and common sense had forced him to replace.

Dinner over, she washed the dishes, dried them and put them away. Afterward, she watched TV in the library with all the lights out, ignoring the occasional ringing of the phone. Once, the doorbell rang. She ignored that, too. At ten-thirty, she went to bed and lay dully in the darkness of her room. Toward three o'clock in the morning, exhaustion at last caught up to her, and she fell asleep.

Curtis Hannock showed up promptly at 2:30 P.M. Thinning of hair, sharp of eye, he faced her across the big Chippendale table in the library. "Matt asked me to give you this," he said, tossing sealed envelope toward her, "and to tell you that if he doesn't get an answer, he won't bother you any more. Do you want to read it now, or would you rather wait till later?" She let the envelope lie where it had fallen. "I'll wait till later."

"Very well." Hannock opened his brief case, spread out several papers on the table, and proceeded to read one of them. "All of which means," he said when he had finished, "that your father left you everything, or, to be more specific, the house and the factory. I'm sorry to say that his savings account is exhausted." Hannock raised his eyes. "Now, as to the house, there are no outstanding taxes, no mortgages, and the title seems to be clear

enough, so you've no worries on that score. The factory, however, is a horse of a different nature."

"I want you to sell it," Elizabeth said.

"Hold your fire, now, girl. Wait till you hear the rest, and then make up your mind. Now, as you probably know, the plant's been in trouble for some time, and, as you probably also know, your father hired Matt in the hope of rejuvenating the place to a point where production would come somewhere near being on a par with other grain-machinery plants. But the trouble was, the company's finances wouldn't permit him to give Matt enough of a free hand, and although Matt's done the best anyone could have done under the circumstances, it hasn't been anywhere near enough. I advised your father to borrow the money that was needed for new equipment, but he wouldn't listen to me. I'd advise you to do the same, Elizabeth, and without the slightest hesitation; but fortunately I don't need to. After funeral expenses, and even after the bite which inheritance tax is going to take, the total of your father's life-insurance policies, of which you are the sole beneficiary and all of which contain double indemnity clauses, will be something like twenty thousand dollars. Sink every red cent of it into DGM girl—give Matt the free hand

he needs. Take my word for it, it's the soundest investment you can possibly make, and the best and the cheapest security you'll ever be able to buy. It's downright foolishness even to think of selling out!"

"That may be, Mr. Hannock, but I want to sell out just the same, and the sooner, the better. And I want whatever profit that accrues from the sale to be set up, along with the insurance money, in an annuity certain, and the payments credited to my checking account at the Sweet Clover National Bank."

Hannock's face grew red, and the nostrils of his thin nose quivered slightly. "Dammit, Elizabeth, you're a bright and intelligent girl. You could even run DGM yourself, if you had to, and with Matt working for you, you couldn't go wrong. Take my advice and hang on to the place and give him free rein. It'll give you a healthy interest in life and take you out of yourself. You're too withdrawn, girl—you've always been too withdrawn. And now you're going to go whole hog and pull out of the picture altogether. I don't know what Matt did to hurt you, but I'll bet it doesn't amount to a hill of beans and I'll bet you've magnified that hill into a mountain. Take it from me, girl—forgive him. Forget about what he did, and then go on from there."

Elizabeth stood up. "I'm sorry, Mr. Hannock. I can't."

Sweeping his papers into his brief case, he got to his feet. "Matt'll probably quit, you know that, I suppose." Abruptly, he shrugged his shoulders. "I'll be in touch with you, girl."

She accompanied him to the door. As he was about to depart, she touched his arm. "Will—will Matt be able to get another job all right?"

Hannock faced her. "It's kind of late in the day to be worried about that, isn't it?" Suddenly, pity came into his eyes. "Yes, yes, of course he'll be able to get another job." He turned away. "Take care of yourself, girl."

"Good by, Mr. Hannock."

After he drove off, she returned to the library. The envelope still lay on the Chippendale table. She looked at it for some time; then, resolutely, she picked it up, tore it into bits, and flung the bits into a nearby wastebasket. For a moment she thought she smelled smoke. It was an olfactory hallucination, of course, but in a sense the smoke was real. It was the smoke thrown out from the bridges that were burning behind her.

IN the first month of her expedition, Elizabeth ordered a marker for her father's grave. But she did not go near the grave even after the marker was in

place. Her groceries, she ordered over the phone. All of her bills, she paid by check, giving the letters to the mailman when he brought mail. She discontinued all of her magazine and newspaper subscriptions. She stopped listening to the radio. She no longer watched TV. Her contact with the world narrowed down to an occasional phone call from Curtis Hannock, an occasional letter (never answered) from one or another of her former acquaintances, an hello and a goodbye from the boy who delivered her groceries, and the peripatetic gossip provided by Mrs. Barton, who still came biweekly to clean the house.

As more months passed, her days acquired a flexible routine. She would arise at six-thirty in the morning, fix breakfast, eat, tidy up the kitchen, and then return to her room and write poetry till noon. At noon, she would prepare herself a meager lunch, after which she would go outside and work on the grounds, operating her father's power-mower when the height of the grass warranted, trimming the hedge that effectively shut out the sight of the street, or weeding the small kitchen garden which she had planted next to the garage. Around four o'clock, she would go back inside and start preparing her evening meal. There were days, of course, when she fixed

baked beans or a roast, and on these occasions the dish would have been put into the oven some hours before, making the preparation of the rest of the meal relatively simple. Evenings, she spent for the most part playing Bach or Couperin or Scarlatti on the harpsichord, becoming more and more proficient as the days passed. Sunday was her day off. She would arise at eight or eight-thirty, go downstairs, fix herself a light breakfast, and linger over a second and sometimes a third cup of coffee; then she would get whatever main course she had decided on for Sunday dinner into the oven, after which she would retire to the wing-back chair in the living room and read her bible until noon. She would eat dinner around one o'clock, do the dishes, and then go into the library, select a book, and retire once more to the wing-back chair. She read indiscriminately, choosing whatever volume her mood of the moment dictated, and most of the time she was in the process of reading half a dozen books at once. In this way she browsed through such diverse fare as *The Charterhouse of Parma*, *Moby Dick*, *Das Schloss*, *Little Men*, *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*, *Ulysses*, and *Swann's Way*. Some of these literary pilgrimages had made before, but all of them, new and old alike, provided her with the companionship which

she was wise enough to know she could not get along without.

SUMMER faded into fall. Elizabeth was shocked when she got her school tax. The village tax had already bled her for \$364.65, and now she was confronted with the prospect of being bled for \$502.19 more. For a furious moment she was tempted to sell the house; then she remembered all the cherished old things it contained, and sold Byron's other car—a '61 Chrysler that was gathering dust in the garage—instead. Curtis Hancock took care of the transaction, and the price took care of the tax nicely and left her with a few hundred dollars to spare. She had Hancock set the amount aside for the state and county tax, which would show its ugly face come January 1st.

The first snow fell, and Elizabeth made arrangements to have her driveway kept open for the rest of the winter. Not that she expected company—her acquaintances had long since given up ringing her doorbell, and, while she had finally gone back to answering her phone, most of the calls she now received were "wrong numbers"—but there was the grocery boy to be considered, not to mention the milkman and Mrs. Barton. The latter's "news-service" grew more and more extensive with each

successive visit, and sometimes when the old woman got in the door Elizabeth despaired of ever getting her back out. *Item:* Amelia Kelly had just had another baby, which made four to date, and her husband not working and them living on his unemployment-insurance checks! *Item:* The new owners of the Dickenson Grain-Machinery Company had shut down the factory till after the holidays, and all those poor employees with no money for Christmas! *Item:* Sid Westover, whose weather predictions had never been wrong yet, was down with lumbago again, so everybody might just as well resign themselves to a long, cold winter. *Item:* It was said that Matt Pearson, who had quit DGM when the new owners had taken over and returned to his home town to work in a new factory being opened there, was keeping steady company with his boyhood sweetheart, and any day now wedding bells were expected to ring. *Item:* Wasn't it just awful about the Gilbert boy running his father's car into the tailend of a semi and killing himself? In the middle of January, Elizabeth paid the old woman off and told her that because of mounting taxes and the ever-climbing cost of living she had decided to economize by doing her own housework. "Humph!" Mrs. Barton said, and stamped out.

In mid-March, Elizabeth received a phone call from Curtis Hancock. He would have called sooner, he told her, but he had just heard the news himself: on March 4th, while helping to unload a vertical lathe at the Valley-Ville branch of Fulcrum Industries, Inc., Matt Pearson had been crushed to death when the machine slipped off its rollers, overturned, and pinned him to the floor.

LET us take the years, the long and lonely years, and watch their slow, sad passage. There are two times—remember that. The time of the world and the time of the house—the present, and the past.

Elizabeth rising, Elizabeth dressing, Elizabeth descending the stairs. Elizabeth writing poetry, Elizabeth playing Bach, Elizabeth crying in her room at night . . . Elizabeth Georgina Dickinson growing old.

The grounds, once so meticulously maintained, become more riotous with the passing of each spring. Paint peels from once-bright cornices and sills. Bricks darken with dampness and with grime. Each week, groceries are delivered, and deposited on back-porch steps that have seen far better days, there to be picked up by Elizabeth and taken hurriedly inside. Elizabeth no longer knows

the sun or the rain; she runs at the sound of the milkman's tread, starts at the barking of dogs. Her only meetings with the night are the trips she takes in winter from the house to garage to bring in fireplace wood, two cords of which are split and delivered each year by a farmer she has never seen.

Nor has Elizabeth seen the city in which she lives. Oh yes, Sweet Clover is part of a city now. It was a part of a city before, although no one was aware of it—part of a vast megalopolis that spread all the way from Cleveland, Ohio to Buffalo, New York. Now, the megalopolis has come into its own and eaten Sweet Clover up, and all the green land around Sweet Clover, and the flowers and the trees. It would surprise Elizabeth to know that the farmer who delivers her cord-wood is not in the strict sense of the word a farmer at all, but a "general supplier" who left his name with the "Bureau of Services" whose number "information" gave her when she dialed and asked where she might obtain wood to burn in her fireplace.

There is one thing, though, that Elizabeth knows: she knows that her property has tripled in value. Innumerable strange voices over the phone have importuned her to sell—in vain, of course—and her taxes have

soared into the stratosphere. So high into the stratosphere, in fact, that it requires the better part of her income to pay them. She thinks that the house itself is responsible for this state of affairs, but she is wrong. The land on which the house stands is responsible. It is the only green land left in the city, and the city officials want to buy it and turn it into a public park. It is perhaps better that Elizabeth does not know this, because turning the land into a public park would mean tearing down the house, and the house is her world. And then again, perhaps it would be better if she did know it. She might change her mind about dying intestate then, and see to it that her property falls into less iconoclastic hands. But in the long run, none of this will matter. In the long run, a slightly different scheme of things will exist, and no doubt the city will get its park without even half trying.

THAT fall, Elizabeth's school tax came to \$1540.19. She scrimped for four months, but by the time she accumulated enough to pay it the state and county tax—now called the "megalopolis tax" came in with the amount of the unpaid school tax added on. The over-all amount was a demoralizing \$2536.21.

Somehow, she had to raise the

money. If she didn't, the next tax would put her so far behind that she would never be able to catch up. Her one contact with the world, Curtis Hannock, had been dead these many years, so she could not turn to him for help; and since her annuity was fixed, the only way she could raise money as far as she could see (other than by mortgaging the House of Dickenson, which was unthinkable) was by selling some of her possessions. The question boiled down to a matter of which of them she cared for least, and she had no trouble arriving at the answer: the "newest" ones, of course.

She took an inventory of the furniture, the appliances, the pictures, the dishes, the bric-a-brac, and the books, jotting down the approximate age of each item. Then she made a chronological list, after which she grouped the items into general age-categories. They fell naturally into four groups: the "pre-Dickensonian" period, the "Theodore and Ann" period, the "Nelson and Nora" period, and the "Byron and herself" period. It went without saying that the latter group must be the first to be sacrificed.

She went through the house, inspecting each item individually. With rare exceptions, everything that she and her father had bought had by this time degenerated into junk. She had

known of course that some of it was junk—the refrigerator, for one example, which had given up the ghost decades ago, and the television set, for another, which had conked out less than a year after the beginning of her experimentation and which she had never bothered to have fixed. But she had had no idea that the "modern" furniture had reached quite the sad state of affairs she found it in. Would she be able to get anything at all for such a sorry collection of keepsakes? she wondered. She would see.

"Seeing" involved doing something she had not done for years—coming face to face with another human being. But she had no choice, and when the collector to whom the Bureau of Services relayed her phoned request came around, she met him stanchly at the door. It is difficult to say which of them was the more taken aback. The collector saw a tall, gaunt woman, strong of features and silver of hair, clad in clothing that for all its immaculateness was at least half a century old. Elizabeth saw a short, pumpkin-bellied man, round of face and grass-green of hair, clad in a hair shirt with the hairside turned outward, leaf-green, calf-length trousers, and a pair of black shoes with long, snaky toes that brought to mind the roots of a small tree. In any event, it was the collector who recovered

first. The minute Elizabeth ushered him into the living room, he headed straight for the harpsichord and said, "I'll buy this, two hundred dolla."

Elizabeth shook her head. "That isn't one of the items that's for sale. I'll show you those which you may buy."

SHE did so, conducting him from room to room, steering him away, with ever-increasing difficulty, from the Theodore-and-Ann and the Nelson-and-Nora pieces. When they got back to the living room, he said, "For the junk in the kitchen, two dolla, for the trash-furniture in this room, six dolla, for the pile books in the next room, ten dolla. . . . For the harpsichord, two hundred dolla, for the Victorian, Sheraton, and Empire beds, two hundred dolla, for the copper-clock upstairs, fifty dolla, for the grandpop clock downstairs, fifty dolla, for the Hepplewhite sideboard in the eating room, two hundred dolla, for the copper-strip bookcase in the hall, one hundred dolla—"

"But those pieces aren't for sale," Elizabeth objected. "Besides, the prices you're quoting are much too low."

The collector shrugged. "They're standard twenty-first century prices, lady. Antiques don't sell high-wise no more."

An inspiration struck Eliza-

both. "I just remembered—there are some other things in the basement. Would you care to look at them?"

"Show me."

He offered her "one hundred dolla" for the lot, magnanimously exempting an ancient pre-Dickensian stove and an ancient pre-Dickensian sink, both of which he agreed to have his "haulaway boys" set up in the kitchen for her. The offer, however, was contingent upon her selling him the other items he had enumerated, plus a collection of Tarentum glassware which he had spotted in one of the kitchen cupboards. Elizabeth sighed. "I don't seem to have much choice, do I?" she said. She stood up straighter. Very well—but the spool bed in my room is excepted, and I must have enough for the glassware to bring the over-all amount to a minimum of one thousand dolla—dollars. If you like, I'll throw in the livingroom rug."

The collector made a face. "All right—one thousand dolla."

The house seemed naked after the "haulaway boys" had done their work and departed. There were poignant ellipses in the furniture, empty, and half empty rooms. The worst emptiness of all was the corner where the harpsichord had stood . . . Wearily, Elizabeth endorsed the check which the collector had left, made

up the difference with a check of her own, and enclosed both checks in an envelope along with her tax receipts. She addressed the envelope, laid it, along with a third check—this one for twenty cents to cover postage—atop the mailbox outside the door, and weighed both items down with a small stone which she kept on hand for such purposes. The gas bill was due any day now, and when the mailman delivered it he would pick up the letter and mail it. She still thought of "him" as the "mailman", even though she knew that a purple-haired woman wearing a yellow uniform that looked like a scuba outfit and riding in a scotter-like cart now did the delivering. She had glimpsed her once through the hall window, put-putting up the walk, and once had been enough. Elizabeth seldom looked out her windows anyway. Even in winter the trees and the overgrown shrubs that surrounded the house effectively concealed the world that lay beyond her boundary lines, and that was as it should be. It was a world she wanted even less part of than the world she had left behind her nearly half a century ago.

THE idea of traveling into the past had never occurred to her, and it did not occur to her now in precisely those words. She merely noted as the days

went by that the house, bereft now of virtually all its tie-ins with the "future", had a new and refreshing flavor. This flavor grew on her, and to bring it out in greater purity she began carrying the various odds and ends that did not jibe with it out to the garage. Gradually, this weeding-out process became an obsession with her, and hardly a night passed that she did not dispose of at least one "anachronistic" object. She excepted the "modern" desk in her bedroom at which she still wrote her poetry, and there were of course certain aspects of the "future" that defied elimination. The "modern" electrical fixtures, for example.

The house had been wired in Nelson and Nora's day, but it had been rewired since, and none of the original fixtures remained. For a while she considered tearing the new ones out, but fortunately she still had enough common sense left to dissuade her, and she got around the incongruity by ordering a gross of candles and burning them instead of the electric lights. Some nights she would even dispense with candles, having discovered that she could read equally as well by firelight as she could by candlelight. Afterward, she would light a candle and climb the stairs to her room, pretending that the comfortable warmth of the house emanated, not from

the automatic electric furnace which she herself had had installed circa 1990 when the gas furnace had breathed its last, but from the fire she had just left.

Reading one February night in her wing-back chair, she became obsessed with the notion that all was not quite as it should be. Something in the house (aside from the writing desk in her room, the light fixtures, and the telephone on the Sheraton sofa table) did not quite tie in with the Nelson-and-Nora atmosphere she had recreated. Her gaze roamed the shadows, lingered in this dark corner and that, and returned presently to the book lying on her lap. The name of it was *Bohls of Melody; New Poems of Emily Dickinson*. Surely the poems of Emily Dickinson belonged in the world of Nelson and Nora. Yes—generally speaking, they did; but these particular poems bore a 1945 copyright and had not previously been published. Therefore, they did *not* belong. Even if they had belonged, the book itself wouldn't have. It would simply have to go.

So would the other books Elizabeth had overlooked. There proved to be ten of them altogether. One by one, she threw them into the fire. She saved *Bohls of Melody* till the last, and a tear glistened evanescently on her cheek as she laid the treasured volume on the flames. The

cover darkened, curled. The pages turned red, then black. Ashes rose like small gray ghosts, and drifted up the chimney—

SUDDENLY the house shuddered, and simultaneously the room filled with warm radiance. The light came from old-fashioned tasseled lamps and from a ridiculous chandelier consisting of painted cardboard candles with flame-like bulbs. In the empty spaces between the furniture, other furniture had appeared—furniture that matched the Nelson-and-Nora pieces and blended with the Theodore-and-Ann pieces; that went well with the lamps and the chandelier. The brown discoloration of the walls had been supplanted by flowery wallpaper; the once-lustered woodwork gleamed. A young man sat reading a newspaper on a mohair sofa that a month ago had not existed. A not-quite-so-young woman, bearing a tray on which stood a small teapot and two quaint cups, entered the room. Both the man and the woman wore clothing that dated from the early post-WWI period. Elizabeth stood transfixed, for the man was her grandfather and the woman was her grandmother—Nelson and Nora, happy in the home that was now theirs, the home they had just tastefully furnished with the new while still retaining the old.

The illusion—if illusion it was—faded away. Lights dimmed, went out, disappeared. The “new” furniture turned back into empty spaces; the walls resumed their brown discoloration, the woodwork lost its sheen. Nelson and Nora dissolved into empty air. It was as though a moment had come—and gone.

Looking at the walls, Elizabeth saw that the electrical fixtures were missing. Looking at the clock on the mantel, she saw that it had no hands.

She lit a candle and went through the downstairs rooms. None of the clocks had hands and some of them—the new ones which she had overlooked in her weeding-out operation—had disappeared. So had the cupboards that Byron had had built when he remodeled the kitchen. So had the inlaid linoleum on the kitchen floor. She went upstairs. So had the writing desk that contained every poem she had ever written.

At least her bed was still there, and her sheets and blankets and pillows. The bed, being pre-Dickensian, would have been exempt in any case, but the sheets and blankets and pillows were relatively new. Maybe what had happened to the house had affected only those articles that were an integral part of the house. Frightened, broken-hearted, she undressed and slipped beneath the covers. She blew out

the candle and closed her eyes. Lying there, she tried to reassure herself. She had been living alone too long—that was it. She had let her obsession with the past get the best of her common sense. In the morning, her common sense would be back at the helm, and everything would be back to normal again.

But morning did not come.

SHE could not believe it at first when she awoke to total darkness. She had slept for at least eight hours, and daybreak should have been on hand. She lit her candle, got out of bed, and went over to the window. Blackness lay beyond the panes, blackness unrelieved by the faintest gleam or sparkle or particle of light.

Standing there, she became aware of the intense cold. Had the furnace gone out? Slipping into her blue dressing gown, she hurried downstairs. The living room was like an ice box, the kitchen was like a deepfreeze. Holding her candle before her, she descended the basement stairs. The electric furnace had vanished. So had the electric hot-water tank. So had the water pipes and the wiring.

Well anyway, her teakettle was full.

She was trembling now, partly from fright, but mostly from the cold. Returning to the kitchen, she built a fire in the wood stove

and when it was going good she went into the living room and built another one in the fireplace. As warmth rose around her, some of her confidence returned. Remembering that there was snow on the ground, she found a pan in the kitchen and stepped out onto the back porch. Instantly, the candlelight shrank into a tiny sphere of wan light and she found that she couldn't see beyond a radius of two feet. The cold was unbearable, the blackness terrifying. She had a sudden, horrible conviction that the house no longer rested on solid earth and that if she were to step down from the porch, she would step into nothingness. Shuddering, she went back into the kitchen and closed the door.

The cordwood, she thought numbly. *If I can't get to the garage, how am I going to keep my fires going?*

There could be only one answer, and presently it came to her: *By burning the furniture.*

Thus far, she had not reacted to the situation the way a normal person would have reacted. Living alone for so long, she had failed to consider the possibility that the catastrophe that had overtaken her might have overtaken others as well, that it might, in fact, have overtaken the entire world. When the thought finally occurred to her, she hurried back into the living

She closed her eyes. Maybe she could visualize the situation symbolically.

At first, she "saw" nothing. Then, gradually, a river took form. It was a wide river, flowing evenly between indeterminate banks, and in the middle of it there was a large rock. The part of the rock that rose above the surface was damp, indicating that the river had recently washed over it, and then leveled off. Elizabeth waited for more details to manifest themselves, but the image remained the way it was. At length she opened her eyes, no wiser than she had been before.

The fire was dying down, and she added more wood. She remembered that she hadn't had breakfast yet, and went into the kitchen and made a small pot of coffee. Raising one of the grids of the ancient wood stove, she toasted a slice of bread over the flames. She had enough food on hand to keep her going for a week—two, if she rationed it—and there were a couple of dozen quarts of fruit juice with which she could eke out her water supply. Of course she couldn't make coffee with fruit juice, but it wouldn't hurt her to go without coffee. "Why am I thinking like this?" she asked herself suddenly. "I act as though it really matters whether I live or die."

That afternoon, she found an

ancient hatchet in the basement, brought it upstairs, and began breaking up enough furniture to see her through the night. As always, she saved the old at the expense of the new, and when she decided to supplement her fuel supply with books, the ones she brought in from the library were, like the furniture, directly related to the Nelson-and-Nora period. She hesitated over Emily Dickinson's *Further Poems*, but ultimately decided that it, too, must go, and piled it with the other doomed volumes.

She looked at the wing-back chair and the footstool. She would never burn them. Nor would she ever burn the bed in her room. The three pieces, along with the handleless clock on the mantel and the wood stove in the kitchen, were the oldest items in the house. They were the house, in a way . . .

The books and the broken-up furniture stacked neatly beside the fireplace, Elizabeth fixed herself a frugal dinner. Afterward, she settled down before the fire with *Sonnets by E.B.B.* She spent the "night" in the wing-back chair, augmenting the heat from the fire, to which she periodically added books and wood, with a yellow lap robe. The cold neither intensified nor lessened. There was no wind, or if there was, she could not hear it; no sound at all save for the crackling of the

flames. When she thought it was morning, she went out into the kitchen and fixed breakfast. During the next three "waking periods", as she came to call them, she broke up the rest of the Nelson-and-Nora furniture and burned it along with the Nelson-and-Nora books. It was with a feeling of vast regret that she cast the last volume into the flames. She felt as though she was destroying an entire age, a whole way of life; and the destruction was made all the more poignant by the fact that the last volume was Emily Dickinson's *The Single Hound*.

SHE watched the cover curl, saw the pages blacken. *Words, words, she thought. Your life, like mine, Emily, was words, words—words written in our lonely rooms, in secret and in silence and in pain, while without our windows birds sang, and lovers walked beneath the trees. Oh Matt, Matt, words are not enough to fill a person's life; as sustenance, they feed the soul, but starve the heart; and the patterns that we form with them are patterns, and nothing more. Pointless patterns falling like the leaves of life upon the dusty lap of death.*

The pages crinkled, turned to ashes; the cover crumbled away. The flames died down, and the room darkened . . . then grew

room, hungry for the first time in years for the sound of a human voice. However, her hunger was not appeased. There wasn't even an outline in the dust on the Sheraton sofa table to show where the phone had been.

She stood very still and clenched her hands into fists. "I won't scream," she said. "I won't."

Maybe somewhere in the house there was a transistor radio which she might have overlooked and which might still have enough power in its batteries to enable her to pick up a nearby station. It was a bright and shining hope while it lasted, but it didn't last long. She knew without even having to think that if there had been such a radio, it no longer existed any more than the phone did, any more than anything else that was endemic to the house and in the least incongruous with the Nelson-and-Nora period. Besides, even if one did exist and even if its batteries still had power in them, what good would it be to her? Radio waves couldn't penetrate where light waves couldn't.

PENETRATE? Penetrate what? She frowned, trying to think. Did she understand unconsciously what had happened and was her unconscious mind reluctant to release the facts because they were too unpleasant?

FANTASTIC

THE HOUSE THAT TIME FORGOT

abruptly bright with gaslight as the House of Dickenson shuddered. A Victorian side table with a marble top materialized along an empty wall. On it stood a Gothic wax light. In a poignant corner, a familiar harpsichord appeared. Gaily-patterned hooked rugs came into being on the barren floor. A fantastic chandelier appeared hanging from the suddenly immaculate ceiling, and walls and woodwork took on a brighter hue. A Victorian rosewood sofa sprang into existence where only dust and desuetude had been, and on it sat a young woman in a gay-nineties dress, crocheting in the radiance of a Pickle-jar lamp. Tantalizing aromas emanated from the kitchen, and somewhere in the house a music box was playing Brahms's *Lullaby*.

The moment was as transient as the first moment had been. In a sense, it was a picture glimpsed while riffling through the pages of a book. Now, the pages had come together, and the room was as it had been before, shadow-filled, pale with the radiance of fainting flames, inhabited only by an old woman sitting in a wing-back chair—an old woman whose resurrected spectacles did little for her fading vision, but who nevertheless had peered back through the pages of time and seen her own great-grandmother.

HALF dreaming, half awake, Elizabeth became aware of the awesome cold that had crept into the room. It was time to break up the rest of the furniture; time to burn the rest of the books.

She broke up all of the remaining pieces, all except the wing-back chair, the footstool, and her bed, and piled the remaining books by the fireplace, exempting only *Sonnets by E.B.B.* She wound the clock on the mantel in order that she might hear its rhythmic voice. "Tick-tock, tick-tock," it said, and chimed the hour of nothing.

The third and final shudder came two "waking-periods" later while the fire was burning bright and nothing remained to be consumed but the remnants of a Chippendale highboy. This time, there was no sudden brightness, only a gradual paling of the shadows as twilight tiptoed into the room. Going to the front door, Elizabeth opened it and looked out.

Night was falling swiftly. However, there was still enough light to see by. Upon the ground, snow lay; but it wasn't the same snow that had lain there before. Nor was the ground quite the same. The trees, too, had changed, and the shrubbery had disappeared. As for the street, it was a street no more, but a country road. Across it rose a stand

of basswoods; some distance down it the buildings of a small village showed. Elizabeth heard the sound of sleighbells. She knew who she was then, who she had been all along. *Before I was born, I died, she thought. Before I knew the light of day, I breathed the breath of night. My sun had already set before I even saw it. And it was I and I alone who instigated this travesty of time.*

She stepped back into the House of Death and closed the door behind her. She listened in the silence, and presently she heard their wings. She was glad that they had come.

WHAT is a generation-house if it is not the sum of the generations that have lived in it, and what is that sum if it is not the sum of the possessions those generations have left behind? Let us take the quantity "8" and assume that it has been arrived at by the following process:

$$2+2=4; 4+2=6; 6+2=8$$

In the case of the House of Dickenson, there had been the time of Theodore, the time of Nelson, the time of Byron, and before those times there had been the time of the old woman in the wing-back chair. Let the time of the old woman equal 2, the time of Theodore equal 4, the time of Nelson equal 6, and the time of Byron equal 8. Now, the sum of a tree is the number of its rings,

and by those rings, its years can be computed. It follows logically that if those rings could be removed one by one, the tree would grow progressively younger. In the case of a tree, this is manifestly impossible; but a generation-house is not a tree. The "rings" of a generation-house are the marks left by the people who have lived in it—the chairs and the sofas and the clocks and the books which those people left behind. Such "rings" as these can be removed, not entirely perhaps, but to an extent where the "ring" loses its identity and ceases to be; and if the house is ideally constituted, the forces of time themselves can be fooled. Now, let us reverse the process used to obtain 8:

$$8-2=6; 6-2=4; 4-2=2$$

Consider: What binds a composite object such as a generation-house to present? Is it not the presence in that house of objects belonging to the present? Is it not the presence of people in that house who *live* in the present? When a house is abandoned and allowed to fall into desuetude, it eventually acquires the reputation of being haunted, does it not? And because of this do we not consider it as being detrimental to our neighborhood and start taking the necessary steps to get rid of it? Thus do we cooperate with the forces of time, for the forces of time do not like

abandoned houses either. Such houses are too easy to forget, and they are haunted in order that our attention will be drawn to them. Moreover, they are haunted, not by apparitions out of the past, but by apparitions out of the future; by the supernatural minions of time.

There are cases, however, when a house loses its tie-in with the present without being abandoned, and this is the kind of house that the forces of time invariably forget. Once forgotten, the house slips back into a more appropriate moment, conforms completely to that moment, and remains in abeyance till that moment passes; then the time-paradox factor goes into action and the house is automatically relegated to a timeless limbo where, in ordinary cases, it remains forever, all memory of it wiped from the minds of men. But the House of Dickenson did not constitute an ordinary case: owing to the individual character of its "rings" and to the precision with which they were removed, it slipped back into the past, not once, but three times, and on the third occasion it outraged the laws of cause and effect by precluding its own beginning. At this point, the forces of time awoke to the fact that a cycle had been set in motion underneath their very proboscides, and they dispatched their minions to elim-

inate it. The trick was to make 2=8, thereby forcing the law of probabilities to cause Theodore to build the house, and to cause the original contents of the house to be acquired at a later date. The key factor was an old woman sleeping in a wing-back chair.

* * *

OPENING her eyes, old Elizabeth Dickenson glimpsed lavender flutterings in the firelit room. "Come," she said impatiently. "Do what you have to do, and have done with it. Why do you keep an old woman waiting?"

Silence, then the dismal *flap-flap* of leathery wings. Elizabeth dozed again. Beside her, the flames crackled briskly as they consumed the last of the Chipendale highboy. Something cold and silken touched her cheek, but she neither stirred, nor opened her eyes. "Dress me in my burial gown if you must," she murmured. "Hang the grave damps round my head. But get on with your loathesome business."

The flapping crescendoed. There was a soporific quality about it. "I'm sorry, Matt," she whispered. "Unknowingly I held your life in my hands. Unknowingly I let you die." She sank down deeper into the chair. It was warm and restful there. *Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the obbly-gobbies my soul to keep. And if I die before I wake, I pray*

the obbly-gobbies my soul to take—
There was a knocking at the door.
The clatter of brass striking upon brass.
Young Elizabeth Dickenson opened her eyes.

A silvery web encased both her and the wing-back chair she sat in. She brushed the web away, and it was like wiping film from her eyes. The clock on the mantel said 4:19.

Matt, she thought. Matt, come to apologize. Part of her sprang to her feet, ran into the hall, and tried desperately to turn the knob that controlled the lock. But she was not strong enough. *Help me, help me!* she called to the rest of herself. *In a moment he'll be gone, and it'll be too late!*

Elizabeth did not move.
Suddenly a vista of long and

empty years opened in her mind; long and empty years leading down, down, back, back, into darkness, into cold. She saw an old woman sitting by a fire. She saw two winged and hideous shapes.

Still, she did not move.
The image of the old woman faded from her mind, and the image of a man lying crushed beneath a ponderous machine took its place. "Matt, no!"

She was on her feet then, and running into the hall. She tore wildly at the knob, threw open the door. He was standing there in the late-afternoon sunlight, eyes hungry for the sight of her. In a moment, she was in his arms—

*The face of all the world is changed, I think,
Since first I heard the footsteps of thy soul . . .*

THE END



If you've recently changed your address, or plan to in the near future, be sure to notify us at once. We'll make the necessary changes on your mailing plate, and see to it that your subscription continues without interruption. Right now—print the information requested in the spaces at the right and mail it to: FANTASTIC, 434 So. Wabash Ave., Chicago 5, Illinois.

Name	Please PRINT!
* Account No.	
Old Address	
City	State
New Address	
City	Zone State

Mail copies to new address starting with Issue.
* (Your Account Number appears directly above your name on the mailing label.)