## A HAPPY DAY IN 2381

## by Robert Silverberg

The author of this story is one of the most productive writers of science fiction-recent novels are Thorns and Hawkshill Station, a past president of the Science Fiction Writers of America, a non-fiction specialist in archaeological and historical themes-Mound Builders of Ancient America: The Archaeology of a Myth, and sometime world-traveler. He is also a student of social affairs, as this story proves, taking a close look at the untrammeled joys of a happy, productive, crowded, overpopulated world.

Here is a happy day in 2381. The morning sun is high enough to reach the uppermost fifty stories of Urban Monad 116. Soon the building's entire eastern face will glitter like the sea at dawn. Charles Mattern's window, activated by the dawn's early photons, deopaques. He stirs. God bless, he thinks. His wife stirs. His four children, who have been up for hours, now can officially begin the day. They rise and parade around the bedroom, singing:

"God bless, God bless, God bless! God bless us every one! God bless Daddo, God bless Mommo, God bless you and me! God bless us all, the short and tall, Give us fer-til-i-tee!"

They rush toward their parents' sleeping platform. Mattern rises and embraces them. India is eight, Sandor is seven, Mane is five, Cleo is three. It is Charles Mattern's secret shame that his family is so small. Can a man with only four children truly be said to have reverence for life? But Principessa's womb no longer flowers. The medics have said she will not bear again. At twenty-seven she is sterile. Mattern is thinking of taking in a second woman. He longs to hear the yowls of an infant again; in any case, a man must do his duty to God.

Sandor says, "Daddo, Siegmund is still here. He came in the middle of the night to be with Mommo."

The child points. Mattern sees. On Principessa's side of the sleeping platform, curled against the inflation pedal, lies fourteen-year-old Siegmund Kluver, who had entered the Mattern home several hours after midnight to exercise his rights of propinquity. Siegmund is fond of older women. Now he snores; he has had a good workout. Mattern nudges him. "Siegmund? Siegmund, it's morning!" The young man's eyes open. He smiles at Mattern, sits up, reaches for his wrap. He is quite handsome. He lives on the 787th floor and already has one child and another on the way.

"Sorry," says Siegmund. I overslept. Principessa really drains me. A savage, she is!"

"Yes, she's quite passionate," Mattern agrees. So is Siegmund's wife, Mattern has heard. When she is a little older, Mattern plans to try her. Next spring, perhaps.

Siegmund sticks his head under the molecular cleanser. Principessa now has risen from bed. She kicks the pedal and the platform deflates swiftly. She begins to program breakfast. Indra swatches on the screen. The wall blossoms with light and color. "Good morning," says the screen. "The external temperature, if anybody's interested, is 28°. Today's population figures at Urbmon 116 are 881,115, which is +102 since yesterday and +14,187 since the first of the year. God bless, but we're slowing down! Across the way at Urbmon 117 they added 131 since yesterday, including quads for Mrs. Hula Jabotinsky. She's eight-

een and has had seven previous. A servant of God, isn't she? The time is now 0620. *In* exactly forty minutes Urbmon 116 will be honored by the presence of Nicanor Gortman, the visiting socio-computator from Hell, who can be recognized by his outbuilding costume in crimson and ultraviolet Dr. Gortman will be the guest of the Charles Matterns of the 799th floor. Of course we'll treat him with the same friendly blessmanship we show one an-other. God bless Nicanor Gortman! Turning now to news from the lower levels of Urbmon 116-"

Principessa says, "Hear that, children? We'll have a guest, and we must be blessworthy toward him. Come and eat."

When he has cleansed himself, dressed, and eaten, Charles Mattern goes to the thousandth-floor landing stage to meet Nicanor Gortman. Mattern passes the floors on which his broth-ers and sisters and their families live. Three brothers, three sisters. Four of them younger than he, two older. One brother died, un-pleasantly, young. Jeffrey. Mattern rarely thinks of Jeffrey. He rises through the building to the summit. Gortman has been tout-ing the tropics and'now is going to visit a typical urban monad in the temperate zone. Mattern is honored to have been named the official host. He steps out on the landing stage, which is at the very tip of Urbmon 116. A forcefield shields him from the fierce winds that sweep the lofty spire. He looks to his left and sees the western face of Urban Monad 115 still in darkness. To his right, Urbmon 117's eastern windows sparkle. Bless Mrs. Hula Jabo-tinsky and her eleven littles, Mattern thinks. Mattern can see other urbmons in the row, stretching on and on toward the horizon, towers of superstressed concrete three kilometers high, tapering ever so gracefully. It is as always a thrilling sight God bless, he thinks. God bless, God bless, God bless!

He hears a cheerful hum of rotors. A quickboat is landing. Out steps a tall, sturdy man dressed in high-spectrum garb. He must be the visiting sodocomputator from Hell.

"Nicanor Gortman?' Mattern asks.

"Bless God. Charles Mattern?"

"God bless, yes. Come."

Hell is one of the eleven cities of Venus, which man has re-shaped to suit himself. Gortman has never been on Earth before. He speaks in a slow, stolid way, no lilt in his voice at all; the inflection reminds Mattern of the way they talk in Urbmon 84, which Mattern once visited on a field trip. He has read Gortman's papers: solid stuff, closely reasoned, "I particularly liked Dynam-ics of the Hunting Ethic'," Mattern tells him while they are in the dropshaft. "Remarkable. A revelation."

"You really mean that?" Gortman asks, flattered.

"Of course. I try to keep up with a lot of the Venusian journals. It's so fascinatingly alien to read about hunting wild animals." "There are none on Earth?"

'God bless, no," Mattern says. "We couldn't allow that! But I love reading about such a different way of life as you have."

"It is escape literature for you?" asks Gortman.

Mattern looks at him strangely. "I don't understand the ref-erence,"

"What you read to make life on Earth more bearable for your-self."

"Oh, no. No. Life on Earth is quite bearable, let me assure you. It's what I read for *amusement*. And to obtain a necessary parallax, you know, for my own work," says Mattern. They have reached the 799th level. "Let me show you my home first." He steps from the dropshaft and beckons to Gortman. "This is Shanghai. I mean, that's what we call this block of forty floors, from 761 to 800. I'm in the next-to-top level of Shanghai, which is a mark of my professional status. We've got twenty-five cities altogether in Urbmon 116. Reykjavik's on the bottom and Louis-ville's on the top."

"What determines the names?"

"Citizen vote. Shanghai used to be Calcutta, which I personally prefer, but a little bunch of malcontents on the 775th floor rammed a referendum through in '75."

Il thought you had no malcontents in the urban monads," Gottman says.

Mattern smiles. "Not in the usual sense. But we allow certain conflicts to exist. Man wouldn't be man without conflicts, even here!"

They are walking down the eastbound corridor toward Mat-tern's home. It is now 0710, and children are streaming from their homes in groups of three and four, rushing to get to school. Mat-tern waves to them. They sing as they run along. Mattern says, "We average 6.2 children per family on this floor. It's one of the lowest figures in the building, I have to admit High-status people don't seem to breed well. They've got a floor in Prague-I think it?s 117-that averages 9.9 per family! Isn't that glorious?"

"You are speaking with irony?" Gortman asks.

"Not at all." Mattern feels an uptake of tension. "We *like* children. We *approve* of breeding. Surely you realized that be-fore you set out on this tour of-"

"Yes, yes," says Gortman, hastily. "I was aware of the general cultural dynamic. But I thought perhaps your own attitude-"

"Ran counter to norm? Just because I have a scholar's detach-ment, you shouldn't assume that I disapprove in any way of my cultural matrix;"

"I regret the implication. And please don't think I show dis-approval of your matrix either, although your world is quite strange to me. Bless God, let us not have strife, Charles."

"God bless, Nicanor. I didn't mean to seem touchy."

They smile. Mattern is dismayed by his show of irritation.

Gortman says, "What is the population of the 799th floor?"

"805, last I heard."

"And of Shanghai?"

"About 33,000."

"And of Urbmon 116?"

"881,000."

"And there are fifty urban monads in this constellation of houses."

"Yes."

"Making some 40,000,000 people," Gortman says. "Or some-what more than the entire human population of Venus. Remark-able!"

"And this isn't the biggest constellation, not by any means!" Mattern's voice rings with pride. "Sansan is bigger, and so is Boswash! And there are several bigger ones in Europe-Berpar, Wienbud, I think two others. With more being planned!"

"A global population of-"

"-75,000,000,000," Mattern cries. "God bless! There's never been anything like it! No one goes hungry! Everybody happy! Plenty of open space! God's been good to us, Nicanor!" He pauses before a door labeled 79915. "Here's my home. What I have is yours, dear guest" They go in.

Mattern's home is quite adequate. He has nearly ninety square meters of floor space. The sleeping platform deflates; the chil-dren's cots retract; the furniture can easily be moved to provide play area. Most of the room, in fact, is empty. The screen and the data terminal occupy two-dimensional areas of wall that once had to be taken up by television sets, bookcases, desks, file drawers, and other encumbrances. It is an airy, spacious environ-ment, particularly for a family of just six.

The children have not yet left for school; Principessa has held them back, to meet the guest, and so they are restless. As Mattern enters, Sandor and Indra are struggling over a cherished toy, the dream-stirrer. Mattern is astounded. Conflict in the home? Silently, so their mother will not notice, they fight. Sandor ham-mers his shoes into his sister's shins. Indra, wincing, claws her brother's cheek. "God *bless*," Mattern says sharply. "Somebody wants to go down the chute, eh?" The children gasp. The toy drops. Everyone stands at attention. Principessa looks up, brush-ing a lock of dark hair from her eyes; she has been busy with the youngest child and has not even heard them come in.

Mattern says, "Conflict sterilizes. Apologize to each other."

Indra and Sandor kiss and smile. Meekly Indra picks up the

toy and hands it to Mattern, who gives it to his younger son Mane. They are all stating now at the guest Mattern says to him, 'What I have is youis, friend." He makes introductions. Wife, children. The scene of conflict has unnerved him a little, hut he is relieved when Gortman produces four small boxes and distributes them to the children. Toys. A blessful gesture. Mattern points to the deflated sleeping platform."This is where we sleep. There's ample room for three. We wash at the cleanser, here. Do you like privacy when voiding waste matter?"

"Please, yes."

"You press this button for the privacy shield. We excrete in this. Urine here, feces here. Everything is reprocessed, you un-derstand. We're a thrifty folk in the urbmons."

"Of course," Gortman says.

Principessa says, "Do you prefer that we use the shield when we excrete? I understand some outbuilding people do."

"I would not want to impose my customs on you," says Gort-man.

Smiling, Mattern says, "We're a post-privacy culture, of course. But it wouldn't be any trouble for us to press the button if-" He falters. There's no general nudity taboo on Venus, is there? I mean, we have only this one room, and-"

"I am adaptable," Gortman insists. "A trained sociocomputator must be a cultural relativist, of course!"

"Of course," Mattern agrees, and he laughs nervously.

Principessa excuses herself from the conversation and sends *the* children, still clutching their new toys, off to school.

Mattern says, "Forgive me for being overobvious, but I must bring up the matter of your sexual prerogatives. We three will share a single platform. My wife is available to you, as am I. Avoidance of frustration, you see, is the primary rule of a society such as ours. And do you know our custom of nightwalking?"

"I'm afraid I-"

"Doors are not locked in Urbmon 116. We have no personal property worth mentioning, and we all are socially adjusted. At

night it is quite proper to enter other homes. We exchange part-ners in this way all the time; usually wives stay home and husbands migrate, though not necessarily. Each of us has access at any time to any other adult member of our community."

"Strange," says Gortman. "I'd think that in a society where there are so many people, an exaggerated respect for privacy would develop, not a communal freedom."

"In the beginning we had many notions of privacy. They were allowed to erode, God bless! Avoidance of frustration must be our goal, otherwise impossible tensions develop. And privacy is frus-tration."

"So you can go into any room in this whole gigantic building and sleep with-"

"Not the whole building," Mattern interrupts. "Only Shanghai. We frown on nightwalking beyond one's own city." He chuckles. "We do impose a few little restrictions on ourselves, so that our freedoms don't pall."

Gortman looks at Principessa. She wears a loinband and a metallic cup over her left breast She is slender but voluptuously constructed, and even though her childbearing days are over she has not lost the sensual glow of young womanhood. Mattern is proud of her, despite everything.

Mattern says, "Shall we begin our tour of the building?"

They go out Gortman bows gracefully to Principessa as they leave. In the corridor, the visitor says, "Your family is smaller than the norm, I see."

It is an excruciatingly impolite statement, but Mattern is toler-ant of his guest's faux pas. Mildly he replies, "We would have had more children, but my wife's fertility had to be terminated surgically. It was a great tragedy for us."

"You have always valued large familes here?"

"We value life. To create new life is the highest virtue. To prevent life from coining into being is the darkest sin. We all love our big bustling world. Does it seem unendurable to you? Do we seem unhappy?"

"You seem surprisingly well adjusted," Gortman says. "Con-sidering that-" He stops.

"Go on."

"Considering that there are so many of you. And that you spend your whole lives inside a single colossal building. You never do go out, do you?"

"Most of us never do," Mattern admits. "I nave traveled, of course-a sociocomputator needs perspective, obviously. But Prin-cipessa has never been below the 35th floor. Why should she go anywhere? The secret of our happiness is to create self-contained villages of five or six floors within the cities of forty floors within the urbmons of a thousand floors. We have no sensation of being overcrowded or cramped. We know our neighbors; we have hundreds of dear friends; we are kind and loyal and blessworthy to one another."

"And everybody remains happy forever?"

"Nearly everybody."

"Who are the exceptions?" Gortman asks.

"The flippos," says Mattern. "We endeavor to minimize the frictions of living in such an environment; as you see, we never refuse a reasonable request, we never deny one another anything. But sometimes there are those who abruptly can no longer abide by our principles. They flip; they thwart others; they rebel. It is quite sad."

"What do you do with flippos?"

"We remove them, of course," Mattern says. He smiles, and they enter the dropshaft once again.

Mattern Has been authorized to show Gortman the entire urbmon, a tour that will take several days. He is a little appre-hensive; he is not as familiar with some parts of the structure as a guide should be. But he will do his best.

"The building," he says, "is made of superstressed concrete. It is constructed about a central service core two hundred meters square. Originally, the plan was to have fifty families per floor,

but we average about 120 today, and the old apartments have all been subdivided into single-room occupancies. We are wholly self-sufficient, with our own schools, hospitals, sports arenas, houses of worship, and theaters."

"Food?"

"We produce none, of course. But we have contractual access to the agricultural communes. I'm sure you've seen that nearly nine tenths of the land area of this continent is used for food-production; and then there are the marine farms. There's plenty of food, now that we no longer waste space by spreading out horizontally over good land."

"But aren't you at the mercy of the food-producing communes?"

"When were city-dwellers not at the mercy of farmers?" Mat-tern asks. "But you seem to regard life on Earth as a thing of fang and claw. We are vital to them-their only market. They are vital to us-our only source of food. Also we provide necessary services to them, such as repair of their machines. The ecology of this planet is neatly in mesh. We can support many billions of addi-tional people. Someday, God blessing, we will."

The dropshaft, coasting downward through the building, glides into its anvil at the bottom. Mattern feels the oppressive bulk of the whole urbmon over him, and tries not to show his uneasiness. He says, "The foundation of the building is four hundred meters deep. We are now at the lowest level. Here we generate our power." They cross a catwalk and peer into an immense gener-ating room, forty meters from floor to ceiling, in which sleek turbines whirl. "Most of our power is obtained," he explains, "through combustion of compacted solid refuse. We burn every-thing we don't need, and sell the residue as fertilizer. We have auxiliary generators that work on accumulated body heat, also."

"I was wondering about that," Gortman murmurs.

Cheerily Mattern says, "Obviously 800,000 people within one sealed enclosure will produce an immense quantity of heat. Some of this is directly radiated from the building through cooling fins along the outer surface. Some is piped down here and used to run

the generators. In winter, of course, we pump it evenly through the building to maintain temperature. The rest of the excess heat is used in water purification and similar things."

They peer at the electrical system for a while. Then Mattern leads the way to the reprocessing plant. Several hundred school-children are touring it; silently they join the tour.

The teacher says, "Here's where the urine comes down, see?" She points to gigantic plastic pipes. "It passes through the flash chamber to be distilled, and the pure water is drawn off here- follow me, now-you remember from the flow chart, about how we recover the chemicals and sell them to the farming com-munes-"

Mattern and his guest inspect the fertilizer plant, too, where fecal reconversion is taking place. Gortman asks a number of questions. He seems deeply interested. Mattern is pleased; there is nothing more significant to him than the details of the urbmon way of life, and he had feared that this stranger from Venus, where men live in private houses and walk around in the open, would regard the urbmon way as repugnant or hideous.

They go onward. Mattern speaks of air-conditioning, the system of dropshafts and liftshafts, and other such topics.

"It's all wonderful," Gortman says. "I couldn't imagine how one little planet with 75,000,000,000 people could even survive, but you've turned it into-into-"

"Utopia?" Mattern suggests.

"I meant to say that, yes," says Gortman.

Power production and waste disposal are not really Mattern's specialties. He knows how such things are handled here, but only because the workings of the urbmon are so enthralling to him. His real field of study is sociocomputation, naturally, and he has been asked to show the visitor how the social structure of the giant building is organized. Now they go up, into the residential levels.

"This is Reykjavik," Mattern announces. "Populated chiefly by

maintenance workers. We try not to have too much status strati-fication, but each city does have its predominant populations--engineers, academics, entertainers, you know. My Shanghai is mostly academic. Each profession is clannish." They walk down the hall. Mattern feels edgy here, and he keeps talking to covet his nervousness. He tells how each city within the urbmon develops its characteristic slang, its way of dressing, its folklore and heroes.

"Is there much contact between cities?" Gortman asks.

"We try to encourage it. Sports, exchange students, regular mixer evenings."

'Wouldn't it he even better if you encouraged intercity night-walking?"

Mattern frowns. "We prefer to stick to our propinquity groups for that. Casual sex with people from other cities is a mark of a sloppy soul"

"I see."

They enter a large room. Mattern says, "This is a newlywed dorm. We have them every five or six levels. When adolescents mate, they leave their family homes and move in here. After they have their first child they are assigned to homes of their own."

Puzzled, Gortman asks, "But where do you find room for them all? I assume that every room in the building is full, and you can't possibly have as many deaths as births, so-how-?

"Deaths do create vacancies, of course. If your mate dies and your children are grown, you go to a senior citizen dorm, creating room for establishment of a new family unit. But you're correct that most of our young people don't get accommodations in the building, since we form new families at about two percent a year and deaths are far below that As new urbmons are built, the over-flow from the newlywed dorms is sent to them. By lot. It's hard to adjust to being expelled, they say, but there are compensations in being among the first group into a new building. You acquire automatic status. And so we're constantly overflowing, casting out

our young, creating new combinations of social units-utterly fas-cinating, eh? Have you read my paper, 'Structural Metamorpho-sis in the Urbmon Population?'"

"I know it well," Gortman replies. He looks about the dorm. A dozen couples are having intercourse on a nearby platform. "They seem so young," he says.

"Puberty comes early among us. Girls generally marry at twelve, boys at thirteen. First child about a year later, God bless-ing."

"And nobody tries to control fertility at all."

"Control fertility?" Mattern clutches his genitals in shock at the unexpected obscenity. Several copulating couples look up, amazed. Someone giggles. Mattern says, "Please don't use that phrase again. Particularly if you're near children. We don't-ah- think in terms of control."

"But--"

"We hold that life is sacred. Making new life is blessed. One does one's duty to God by reproducing." Mattern smiles. "To be human is to meet challenges through the exercise of intelligence, right? And one challenge is the multiplication of inhabitants in a world that has seen the conquest of disease and the elimination of war. We could limit births, I suppose, but that would be sick, a cheap way out. Instead we've met the challenge of overpopulation triumphantly, wouldn't you say? And so we go on and on, multiplying joyously, our numbers increasing by three billion a year, and we find room for everyone, and food for everyone. Few die, and many are born, and the world fills up, and God is blessed, and life is rich and pleasant, and, as you see we are all quite happy. We have matured beyond the infantile need to place insulation between man and man. Why go outdoors? Why yearn for forests and deserts? Urbmon 116 holds universes enough for us. The warnings of the prophets of doom have proved hollow. Can you deny that we are happy here? Come with me. We will see a school now."

The school Mattern has chosen is in a working-class district of Prague, on the 108th floor. He thinks Gortman will find it particularly interesting since the Prague people have the highest reproductive rate in Urban Monad 116, and families of twelve or fifteen are not at all unusual. Approaching the school door, they hear the clear treble voices singing of the blessedness of God Mattern joins the singing; it is a hymn he sang too, when he was their age, dreaming of the big family he would have:

"And now he plants the holy seed, That grows in Mommo's womb, And now a little sibling comes-"

There is an unpleasant and unscheduled interruption. A woman rushes toward Mattern and Gortman in the corridor. She is young, untidy, wearing only a flimsy gray wrap; her hair is loose; she is well along in pregnancy. "Help!" she shrieks. "My husband's gone flippo!" She hurls herself, trembling, into Gort-man's arms. The visitor looks bewildered.

Behind her there runs a man in his early twenties, haggard, bloodshot eyes. He carries a fabricator torch whose tip glows with heat "Goddam bitch," he mumbles. "Allatime babies! Seven babies already and now number eight and I gonna go off my *head!*" Mattern is appalled. He pulls the woman away from Gortman and shoves the visitor through the door of the school.

Tell them there's a flippo out here," Mattern says. "Get help, fast!" He is furious that Gortman should witness so atypical a scene, and wishes to get him away from it.

The trembling girl cowers behind Mattern. Quietly, Mattern says, "Let's be reasonable, young man. You've spent your whole life in urbmons, haven't you? You understand that it's blessed to create. Why do you suddenly repudiate the principles on which-"

"Get the hell away from her or I gonna burn you too!"

The young man feints with the torch, straight at Mattern's face. Mattern feels the heat and flinches. The young man swipes past him at the woman. She leaps away, hut she is clumsy with girth, and the torch slices her garment. Pale white flesh is exposed with a brilliant burn-streak down it. She cups her jutting belly and falls, screaming. The young man jostles Mattern aside and prepares to thrust the torch into her side. Mattern tries to seize his arm. He deflects the torch; it chars the floor. The young man, cursing, drops it and throws himself on Mattern, pounding in frenzy with his

fists. "Help me!" Mattern calls. "Help!"

Into the corridor erupt dozens of schoolchildren. They are be-tween eight and eleven years old, and they continue to sing their hymn as they pour forth. They pull Mattern's assailant away. Swiftly, smoothly, they cover him with their bodies. He can dimly be seen beneath the flailing, thrashing mass. Dozens more pour from the schoolroom and join the heap. A siren wails. A whistle blows. The teacher's amplified voice booms, "The police are here! Everyone off!"

Four men in uniform have arrived. They survey the situation. The injured woman lies groaning, rubbing her burn. The insane man is unconscious; his face is bloody and one eye appears to be destroyed. "What happened?" a policeman asks. "Who are you?"

"Charles Mattern, sociocomputator, 799th level, Shanghai. The man's a flippo. Attacked his pregnant wife with the torch. At-tempted to attack me."

The policemen haul the flippo to his feet. He sags in their midst. The police leader says, raiding the words into one another, "Guilty of atrocious assault on woman of childbearing years cur-rently carrying unborn life, dangerous antisocial tendencies, by virtue of authority vested in me I pronounce sentence of erasure, carry out immediately. Down the chute with the bastard, boys!" They haul the flippo away. Medics arrive to care for the woman. The children, once again singing, return to the classroom. Nicanor Gortman looks dazed and shaken. Mattern seizes his arm and whispers fiercely, "All right, those things happen sometimes. But it was a billion to one against having it happen where you'd see itl It isn't typical! It isn't typical!"

They enter the classroom.

The sun is setting. The western face of the neighboring urban monad is streaked with red. Nicanor Gortman sits quietly at din-ner with the members of the Mattern family. The children, voices tumbling one over another, talk of their day at school. The eve-ning news comes on the screen; the announcer mentions the un-fortunate event on the 108th floor. The mother was not seriously injured," he says, "and no harm came to her unborn child." Principessa murmurs, "Bless God." After dinner Mattern requests copies of his most recent technical papers from the data terminal and gives them to Gortman to read at his leisure. Gortman thanks him.

"You look tired," Mattern says.

"It was a busy day. And a rewarding one."

"Yes. We really traveled, didn't we?"

Mattern is tired too. They have visited nearly three dozen levels already; he has shown Gortman town meetings, fertility clinics, religious services, business offices. Tomorrow there will be much more to see. Urban Monad 116 is a varied, complex community. And a happy one, Mattern tells himself firmly. We have a few little incidents from time to time, but we're *happy*.

The children, one by one, go to sleep, charmingly kissing Daddo and Mommo and the visitor good night and running across the room, sweet nude little pixies, to their cots. The lights auto-matically dim. Mattern feels faintly depressed; the unpleasantness on 108 has spoiled what was otherwise an excellent day. Yet he still thinks that he has succeeded in helping Gortman see past the superficialities to the innate harmony and serenity of the urbmon way. And now he will allow the guest to experience for himself one of their techniques for minimizing the interpersonal con-flicts that could be so destructive to their kind of society. Mattern rises.

"It's nightwalking time," he says. "I'll go. You stay here . . . with Principessa." He suspects that the visitor would appreciate some privacy.

Gortman looks uneasy.

"Go on," Mattern says. "Enjoy yourself. People don't deny hap-piness to people, here. We weed the selfish ones out early. Please. What I have is yours. Isn't that so, Principessa?"

"Certainly," she says.

Mattern steps out of the room, walks quickly down the cor-ridor, enters the dropshaft and descends to the 770th floor. As he steps out he hears sudden angry shouts, and he stiffens, fear-ing that he will become involved in another nasty episode, hut no one appears. He walks on. He passes the black door of a chute access door and shivers a little, and suddenly he thinks of the young man with the fabricator torch, and where that young man probably is now. And then, without warning, there swims up from memory the face of the brother he had once had who had gone down that same chute, the brother one year his senior, Jeffrey, the whiner, the stealer, Jeffrey the selfish, Jeffrey the unadaptable, Jeffrey who had had to be given to the chute. For an instant Mattern is stunned and sickened, and he seizes a doorknob in his dizziness.

The door opens. He goes in. He has never been a nightwalker on this floor before. Five children lie asleep in their cots, and on the sleeping platform are a man and a woman, both younger than he is, both asleep. Mattern removes his clothing and lies down on the woman's left side. He touches her thigh, then her breast. She opens her eyes and he says, "Hello. Charles Mattern, 799."

"Gina Burke," she says. "My husband Lenny."

Lenny awakens. He sees Mattern, nods, turns over and returns to sleep. Mattern kisses Gina Burke lightly on the lips. She opens her arms to him. He shivers a little in his need, and sighs as she receives him. God bless, he thinks. It has been a happy day in 2381, and now it is over.