

*There are many ways to measure a man's age— and most are pretty meaningless. There's only one important measure of a man.*

STANLEY SCHMIDT

*Illustrated by Leo Summers*

Matthew Kilroy's name was just a lucky coincidence, but the crowd down on the floor of the convention hall remembered the ancient phrase and was taking full advantage of it. Pete Haidrickson watched them on the monitor in Kilroy's suite upstairs and wondered desperately how to make Matt see that they were right. They carried huge placards of Matt's tanned, deeply lined face with the slogan "Kilroy is here!", and though the monitor's sound was turned low Pete could hear them chanting it over and over. There was something down there that he had not seen at a party convention in the last four Presidentials—an ebullience, a genuine sense of impending victory—and Pete didn't want to lose it. Not when they were this close.

He turned to Matt's real face, even more engraved by experience than the one on the placards and surrounded by thick shocks of graying hair. "Matt," he said earnestly, "listen to them. They want you. You can't let them down."

Matt shook his head. "I'm sorry, Pete. I'd like to do it, very much, but I can't. I've said that ever since I got back, but they won't listen. I've been out of touch far, far too long . . ."

"You can, catch up fast. You're a bright boy, Matt."

"And I'm too young."

Pete let his breath out in an exasperated *whoosh*. "Come on, Matt, don't start *that* again!" He opened his attache case, withdrew a document and waved it in front of Matt's face. "A photostat of your birth certificate," he reminded. "Denver, May 9, 2026. You're fifty plus, and the Constitution only requires thirty-five. What more could you ask?"

"We can't think that way any more, Pete," Matt said quietly. "Not with relativistic starflights here for real. I want them to continue as much as you do, and I agree that my election might help. But we have to face the new realities that come with them, even if it means legal complications. Time dilation is real, Pete. I'm only thirty-four, and I'll still be thirty-four at inauguration time. I can't run for President."

"You don't look thirty-four," Pete snapped. He walked across the room and poured himself a drink.

"I *could* look a young fifty," Matt granted. "Or an old thirty-four. Believe me, it's an old thirty-four. It wasn't an easy trip, Pete. It took a lot out of me." He waited for Pete to say something, but Pete didn't. He just toyed with his drink, waiting for Matt to get this out of his system. Matt finished, "You've heard the saying that a man is only as old as he feels. Well, that's going to have a new meaning from now on, and it can't be ignored."

Pete sipped nervously at his drink, trying to think of a new approach. Here was a man who was the party's great hope for revival—a man so idolized by the public that, if nominated, he would virtually guarantee victory at the polls. And a man with clear-cut legal qualifications so well documented that they couldn't possibly be challenged.

And yet, maddeningly, a man who was himself challenging those qualifications on the basis of some academic silliness. A man who had the Presidency within his grasp—within Pete's party's grasp—and was quite prepared to throw it away.

Pete finished his drink and looked at Matt. He didn't really have anything new to say, but he had been silent too long and time was short. "Look, Matt," he began, "you're being stubborn. Look at it this way. What difference does it make whether you *call* it thirty-four or fifty? By *our* records you're fifty, no buts about it, and that's what—"

He broke off, distracted by a thunder of applause from the TV monitor. He glanced at the screen and saw a familiar figure mounting the podium. "Sh-h-h," he whispered, his own speech temporarily forgotten. "Ralston's starting your nomination speech."

"But I don't want—" Matt began. Then Pete glanced sharply at him and he stopped and watched the

monitor.

The crowd had quieted. ". . . A man who needs no introduction," Ralston was chanting. "A man just back from the stars, with word of man's first successful colony beyond this Solar System. A man who personally led the founding of that colony, in the face of great hardships he never expected to be his. A man who joined the Epsilon Eridani expedition as third mate at the tender age of twenty-five—and who led it single-handedly to its destination after the tragic death of his commanding officers in an accident in space. A man who lost his own dear wife to the perils of an alien wilderness—but then stayed on to see the colony through its first precarious months. And a man who has made the long voyage home with a skeleton crew to bring us the good news—that the wide open spaces are there and mankind's baby is alive and kicking. I give you . . . *Matt Kilroy!*"

His voice rose shrilly on the last words, just in time to be heard over the tumult of cheers and stomping of feet from the floor. Pete caught the contagious excitement and succumbed to a wave of deep emotion. Out of the corner of his eye he saw Matt squirming uncomfortably in his chair, but paid that little heed. He settled back to listen with ever-growing excitement as the chairman began the roll-call vote and state after state announced, "Kilroy!" At this rate he would get it on the first ballot . . .

*They don't understand, Matt Kilroy thought, still half incredulous. They just don't understand. They actually think time dilation something that only exists in physics books. They can't grasp that it's the real world the physicists are talking about.*

His appearance didn't help, he realized. The harshness of the trip and the frontier, and the work he had put into them, made it at least as easy to believe he was fifty as thirty-four—made it easy for Pete to ask, "What difference does it make?" And he was the only example they had ever seen.

But he knew. And they were going to have to learn.

He listened to the states' delegates flamboyantly casting their votes, mostly for him. He had to struggle to fully realize *this* was happening. The possibility of hero worship being carried to such a pitch on his return had never even entered his mind—until he landed.

Now they were voting. And he was winning, and Pete Haldrickson wouldn't listen to reason. There wasn't much time left to put an end to it.

"Louisiana . . ."

He had to make them *realize* it wasn't purely academic.

"Maine . . ."

There was a way, he knew. He didn't like it, but maybe it was the only thing that would work.

Cindy.

The public had forgotten her, it seemed, or assumed that she had died with Marta. That was O.K. with Matt—he had been content to keep her out of the public eye. He hated to think what publicity—by journalists who thought they were cute—could do to her.

But maybe he could keep it private. Pete was an old friend from before the expedition. Maybe if Matt made just *him* realize, *he* could take it from there and keep Cindy out of it.

Matt hoped so, anyway. "Maryland . . ."

"Pete," Matt said suddenly, "I don't believe you've met my daughter, have you?"

Pete glanced at him with a frown, mildly annoyed at the distraction, then back at the monitor where things were going so well. "Eh?" he said absently. "I don't think so. What's that got to do with the price of eggs?" A moment later what Matt had said sank in and Pete thought, confused, *Daughter? What daughter?*

Matt went to a closed door across the room, opened it slightly, and called, "Cindy, will you come here a minute?"

Light footsteps came from beyond the door and Pete glanced that way just in time to see a small girl of about nine, with pigtails and freckles, come in and look up at Matt.

"Yes, Daddy?" she said.

"I want you to meet Mr. Haldrickson," Matt said. "Pete, this is my daughter Cindy."

"Hi," Pete grunted, trying to concentrate on the voting. "Can't this wait, Matt? Don't you even care what's going on downstairs?"

"I thought," Matt said offhandedly, "that, if I'm going to run for President, I'd let Cindy be my campaign manager."

Something started to sink in. Pete spun away from the monitor and snapped, "Don't be ridiculous, Matt. She's just a —"

"She's twenty-five," Matt said stoutly, "and as much a citizen as you because she was born in Texas shortly before we left." Cindy looked questioningly up at Matt and he patted her on the head. "Mr. Haldrickson's a little confused about ages," he explained.

The initial shock hit hard and passed quickly. Pete nodded dazedly, staring at the twenty-five-year-old little girl. He remembered, now, that the Kilroys had taken a baby girl with them to Epsilon Eridani. Quite abruptly, and quite forcefully, he realized what Matt had been driving at. A birth certificate wasn't good enough any more. What would it have to be, he wondered—a recording clock built into everyone's body at birth? No. Or

The legal complications were staggering. Pete's head swam as he tried to visualize them.

And then, abruptly, it cleared and he was filled with a new determination. He would win this thing yet.

"Ohio," said the chairman.

"Matt," Pete asked quietly, more serious than he had ever been in his life, "do you really believe that, even if we measure your age your way, those few months should keep you from being President?"

Matt sensed that Pete was going to be difficult. "You'd better go, Cindy," he said. He closed the door after her and turned back to Pete. "You saw her," he said. "You consider her a qualified voter?"

"I don't know," Pete said evenly. "I asked you a question."

"Oregon . . ."

"What I think doesn't matter," Matt said. "The law's written with an age requirement—for the Presidency and a thousand other things."

"The law doesn't say a thing about Einsteinian formulas, Matt. I'm going to say it again, and I want you to listen close. The way the law's written now, your birth certificate proves your age beyond a shadow of a doubt. There's nothing to stop you from being President."

"And there's nothing to stop Cindy from voting for me! Pete, I'm trying to make you realize—the law will have to be changed. It'll have to recognize that when people ride starships, ship's time is what counts."

"Pennsylvania . . ."

"I won't argue with that," Pete said stubbornly. "But the old laws are the ones we have now. O.K., they'll have to change. But are you sure that's the way to change them? Just keep the old age requirements and write in some big ugly formula to figure out what a man's age is?"

Matt frowned. "What are you getting at, Pete?"

"Do you honestly believe a man's age—by *any* clock—is that good a measure of his competence? What we need in a President is not chronology and years—it's leadership. Do you honestly believe that you—with your thirty-four self-measured years of leading people through crisis after crisis and coming out on top—do you believe you're less fit to be President than those other guys with their fifty years of fund-raising dinners and smoke-filled rooms? You *can't* believe that, Matt! And you can't expect me to believe it.

"Look—the law's going to have to get more complicated on this age business, right? So why not take the chance to recognize that maybe the way to complicate it is to scrap the age criterion altogether—anyway for something as important as the Presidency. Give them an incentive to find another yardstick that means *more—after* the election. Because you, Matt, are without a doubt the best Presidential material this country's seen in twenty years. We need you—and under the *present* law your excuse won't hold up."

"West Virginia . . ."

"In principle," Matt admitted, "I agree with you. But—"

"No buts!" Pete interrupted sharply. "May the best man win—no matter how old he thinks he is. And then *after* the election let them find out about Cindy. She can make them then see the law needs

changing; you can make them think twice about how they change it. You can help shape the change. Please, Matt—"

The last delegate's voice was drowned in a tremendous roar from the crowd. Pete and Matt turned toward the screen, toward the sea of cheering people and waving placards. Holding his breath, Pete watched Matt's face as the roar resolved itself into rhythmic applause and a swelling chant of "*We want Kilroy!*"

Then, slowly, the expression on Matt's face changed, and in a minute all hesitation had drained from it. He stood up.

And Pete watched with enormous relief as the next President started downstairs to answer them.

## **THE ANALYTICAL LABORATORY**

Every so often I hear from readers who have joined the ranks since the An Lab operation system was last explained.

Readers' letters and post cards come in and votes on the stories are scored on a tally sheet. When we are about to make up a new issue the votes are counted, added up, and the score determined.

Each reader votes stories into First, Second, Third, et cetera, place. Each vote for the First place nets that story a "1" on the tally; Second place is "2"; Fifth place gets a "5".

Obviously, as in golf, a low score wins the game. We add up the tally on each story, then divide by the number of votes cast to determine the "point-score" the average vote figure for that story. The one with the lowest point-score wins First place. The highest point-score is the outsider in that month's vote.

Next we make out a check—the money kind—for the author of the #1 winner, pay him an additional one cent a word for a total of four cents a word on his winner, The Second place author gets a half cent a word bonus. For a serial that wins First place, this can mean the readers thank the author for a good job of entertaining, and satisfying him with something like an additional \$750.00—which is highly satisfactory to any author. It's not only ego-boo for winning—it's hard cash.

If an author's done a good job of entertaining you, you can help thank him with a post card that can "put your money where your mouth is" with cash. And if you definitely dislike some yarn, you can express that Bronx cheer feeling equally realistically.

The resultant point-score figures and place standings are then published in the Analytical. Laboratory. This month's results worked out thusly: