

With Good Intentions

Pathfinder was not a happy ship.

Pathfinder's Captain was not a happy man, and made this glaringly obvious.

Young Lieutenant Grimes, newly appointed to the Survey Service cruiser, was also far from happy. During his few years in Space he had served under strict commanding officers as well as easy going ones, but never under one like Captain Tolliver.

"You must make allowances, John," Paymaster Lieutenant Beagle told him as the two young men were discussing matters over a couple or three drinks in Grimes's cabin.

"Make allowances?" echoed Grimes. "I don't know what's biting him—but I know what's biting me. Him, that's what."

"All the same, you should make allowances."

"It's all very well for you to talk, Peter—but you idlers can keep out of his way. We watchkeepers can't."

"But he's a Worrallian," said Beagle. "Didn't you know?"

"No," admitted Grimes. "I didn't."

He knew now. He knew, too, that there were only a hundred or so Worrallians throughout the entire Galaxy. Not so long ago the population of Worrall had been nudging the thirty million mark. Worrall had been a prosperous planet—also it had been among the few Man-colonized worlds of the Interstellar Federation upon which the concepts of race and nationality had been allowed to take hold and develop. "It makes for healthy competition," had been the claim of the Worrallian delegations—three of them—whenever the subject came up at the meetings of the Federation Grand Council. And so they had competed happily among themselves on their little ball of mud and rock and water—North Worrall, and South Worrall, and Equatorial Worrall—until all three nations laid simultaneous claim to a chain of hitherto worthless islands upon which flourished the stinkbird colonies. The stinkbird—it was more of a flying reptile really, although with certain mammalian characteristics—had always been regarded as more unpleasant than useful, and if anybody had wanted those barren, precipitous rocks lashed by the perpetually stormy seas the stinkbird would soon have gone the way of many another species unlucky enough to get in Man's way. The stinkbird—along with everything and everybody else on Worrall—finally was unlucky, this being when a bright young chemist discovered that a remarkably effective rejuvenating compound was secreted by certain glands in its body. Worrall, although a prosperous enough closed economy, had always been lacking, until this time, in exports that would fetch high prices on the interstellar market.

So there was a squabble—with words at first, and then with weapons. In its ultimate stage somebody pushed some sort of button—or, quite possibly, three buttons were pushed. The only Worrallians to survive were those who were elsewhere at the time of the button-pushing.

And Captain Tolliver was a Worrallian.

Grimes sighed. He felt sorry for the man. He could visualize, but dimly, what it must be like to have no place in the entire Galaxy to call home, to know that everything, but everything had been vaporized in one hellish blast of fusion flame—parents, friends, lovers, the house in which one was brought up, the school in which one was educated, the bars in which one used to drink. Grimes shuddered. But he still felt sorry for himself.

Grimes realized that Captain Tolliver had come into the control room. But, as the commanding officer had not announced his presence, the young man went on with what he was doing—the mid-watch check of the ship's position. Carefully, trying hard not to fumble, Grimes manipulated the Carlotti Direction Finder—an instrument with which he was not yet familiar—lining up the antenna, an elliptical Mobius Strip rotating about its long axis, with the Willishaven beacon, finally jotting down the angle relative to the fore-and-aft line of the ship. Then, still working slowly and carefully, he took a reading on Brownsworld and, finally, on Carlyon. By this time he was perspiring heavily and his shirt was sticking to his body, and his prominent ears were flushed and burning painfully. He swiveled his chair so that he could reach the chart tank, laid off the bearings. The three filaments of luminescence intersected nicely, exactly on the brighter filament that marked Pathfinder's trajectory. Decisively Grimes punched the keys that caused the time of the observation, in tiny, glowing figures, to appear alongside the position.

"Hrrmph."

Grimes simulated a start of surprise, swung round in his chair to face the Captain. "Sir?"

Tolliver was a tall, gangling scarecrow of a man, and even though his uniform was clean and correct in every detail it hung on him like a penitent's sackcloth and ashes. He stared down at his officer from bleak grey eyes. He said coldly, "Mr. Grimes, I checked the time it took you to put a position in the tank. It was no less than eleven minutes, forty-three point five seconds. Objective speed is thirty-five point seven six lumes. Over what distance did this ship travel from start to finish of your painfully slow operations?"

"I can work it out, sir . . ." Grimes half got up from his chair to go to the control room computer.

"Don't bother, Mr. Grimes. Don't bother. I realize that watchkeepers have more important things with which to exercise their tiny minds than the boresome details of navigation—the girl in the last port, perhaps, or the girl you hope to meet in the next one . . ."

More than Grimes's ears was flushed now. A great proportion of his watch had been spend reminiscing over the details of his shore leave on New Capri.

"This cross of yours looks suspiciously good. I would have expected an inexpert navigator such as yourself to produce more of a cocked hat. I suppose you did allow for distance run between bearings?"

"Of course, sir."

"Hrrmph. Well, Mr. Grimes, we will assume that this fix of yours is reasonably accurate. Put down a D.R. from it for 1200 hours, then lay off a trajectory from there to Delta Sextans."

"Delta Sextans, sir?"

"You heard me."

"But aren't we bound for Carlyon?"

"We were bound for Carlyon, Mr. Grimes. But—although it may well have escaped your notice—the arm of our lords and masters in Admiralty House is a long one, extending over many multiples of light years. For your information, we have been ordered to conduct a survey of the planetary system of Delta Sextans."

"Will there be landings, sir?" asked Grimes hopefully.

"Should it concern you, Mr. Grimes, you will be informed when the time comes. Please lay off the trajectory."

Lieutenant Commander Wanger, the ship's Executive Officer, was more informative than the Captain had been. Convening off-duty officers in the wardroom he gave them a run-down on the situation. He said, "No matter what the biologists, sociologists and all the rest of 'em come up with, population keeps on exploding. And so we, as well as most of the other survey cruisers presently in commission, have been ordered to make more thorough inspections of habitable planets which, in the past, were filed away, as it were, for future reference."

"Delta Sextans has a planetary family of 10 worlds. Of these, only two—Delta Sextans IV and Delta Sextans V—could possibly meet our requirements. According to Captain Lovell's initial survey IV could be rather too hot, and V more than a little too cold. Both support oxygen-breathing life forms, although V, with its mineral wealth, has greater industrial potential than IV. In any case it is doubtful if IV will be selected as the site for the Delta Sextans colony; Captain Lovell said that in his opinion, and in that of his biologists, at least one of the indigenous species comes into the third category."

"And what is that?" asked a junior engineer.

"Any being in the third category," explained the Executive Officer, "is considered capable of evolving into the second category."

"And what is the second category?" persisted the engineer.

"The likes of us. And the first category is what we might become—or, if we're very unlucky, run into. Anyhow, the ruling is that third category beings may be observed, but not interfered with. And taking somebody else's world is classed as interference. Will somebody pour me some more coffee?"

Somebody did, and after lubricating his throat Wanger went on. "The drill

will be this. We establish a camp of observers on IV—according to the initial surveys there's nothing there that could be at all dangerous to well-equipped humans—and then the ship shoves off for V to get on with the real work. There's no doubt that V will be selected for the new colony—but it will be as well if the colonists know something about their next-door neighbors."

"Any idea who'll be landed on IV?" asked Grimes.

"Haven't a clue, John. There'll be a team of biologists, ethologists, cartographers, geologists, and whatever. If the Old Man abides by Regulations—and he will—there'll be an officer of the military branch officially in charge of the camp. Frankly, it's not a job that I'd care for—I've had experience of it. Whoever goes with the boggins will soon find that he's no more than chief cook and bottle washer—quite literally."

Nonetheless, Grimes was pleased when he was told, some days later, that he was to be in charge of the landing party.

Pathfinder hung in orbit about Delta Sextans IV until the boat was safely down, until Grimes reported that the camp was established. To start with, Grimes enjoyed his authority and responsibility—then found that once the turbulent atmospheric approach had been negotiated and the landing craft was sitting solidly and safely on the bank of a river it was responsibility only. The scientists—not at all offensively—soon made it clear that once they were away from the ship gold braid and brass buttons meant less than nothing. When the stores and equipment were unloaded each of them was concerned only with his own treasures. They cooperated, after a fashion, in setting up the inflatable tents that were living quarters and laboratory. Reluctantly they agreed to defer their initial explorations until the following morning. (The boat, following the Survey Service's standard practice, had landed at local dawn, but by the time that Grimes had things organized to his liking the sun, a blur of light and heat heavily veiled by the overcast, was almost set.)

It was Grimes who cooked the evening meal—and even though the most important tool employed in its preparation was a can opener he rather resented it. Three of the six scientists were women, and if anybody had ever told them that a woman's place is in the kitchen they had promptly forgotten it. He resented it, too, when nobody showed any appreciation of his efforts. His charges gobbled their food without noticing what it was, intent upon their shop talk. The only remark addressed to Grimes was a casual suggestion that he have the flitters ready for use at first light.

The Lieutenant left the surveying party, still talking nineteen to the dozen, in the mess tent, hoping that they would eventually get around to stacking the dishes and washing up. (They didn't.) Outside it was almost dark and, in spite of the heat of the past day, there was a damp chill in the air. Something was howling in the forest of cabbage-like trees back from the river bank, and something else flapped overhead on wide, clattering wings. There were insects, too—or things analogous to insects. They did not bite, but they were a nuisance. They were attracted, Grimes decided, by his body heat. He muttered to himself, "If the bastards like warmth so much, why the hell can't they come out in the daytime?"

He decided to switch on the floods. With this perpetual overcast he might have trouble recharging the batteries during the hours of daylight, but they should hold out until Pathfinder's return. He was able to work easily in the harsh glare and made a thorough check of the alarm system. Anything trying to get into the camp would either be electrocuted or get a nasty shock, according to size. (The same applied, of course, to anything or anybody trying to get out—but he had warned the scientists.) Finally he opened the boxes in which the flitters were stowed, started to assemble the first of the machines. He did not like them much himself—they were flimsy, one-person helicopters, with a gas bag for greater lift—but he doubted that he would get the chance to use one. Already he could see that he would be confined to camp for the duration of the party's stay on IV.

With the camp secure for the night and the flitters assembled he returned to the mess tent—to find that the scientists had retired to their sleeping tents and left him with all the washing up.

Came the dawn, such as it was, and Grimes was rudely awakened by Dr. Kortsoff, one of the biologists. "Hey, young Grimes," shouted the bearded, burly scientist. "Rise and shine! What about some breakfast? Some of us have to work for our livings, you know!"

"I know," grumbled Grimes. "That's what I was doing most of last night."

He extricated himself from his sleeping bag, pulled on yesterday's shirt and shorts (still stiff with dried sweat, but they would have to do until he got himself organized) and thrust his feet into sandals, stumbled out of his tent—and was surrounded by a mob of naked women. There were only three of them, as a matter of fact, but they were making enough noise for a mob. One of them, at least—the red-haired Dr. Margaret Lazenby—possessed the sort of good looks enhanced by anger, but Grimes was not in an appreciative mood.

"Mr. Grimes!" she snapped. "Do you want to kill us?"

"What do you mean, Dr. Lazenby?" he asked meekly.

"That bloody force field of yours, or whatever it is. When we were trying to go down to the river for our morning swim Jenny and I were nearly electrocuted. Turn the bloody thing off, will you?"

"I warned you last night that I'd set it up . . ."

"We never heard you. In any case, there aren't any dangerous animals here . . ."

"Never take anything for granted . . .!" Grimes began.

"You can say that again, Grimes. Never take it for granted, for example, that everybody knows all about the odd things you do during the night when sensible people are sleeping. Setting up force fields on a world where there's nothing more dangerous than a domestic cat!"

"What about some coffee, Mr. Grimes?" somebody else was yelling.

"I've only one pair of hands," muttered Grimes as he went to switch off the force field. . And so it went on throughout the day—fetch this, fix that, do this, don't do that, lend a hand here, there's a good fellow . . . Grimes remembered, during a very brief smoke, what Maggie Lazenby had told him once about the pecking order, claiming that what was true for barnyard fowls was also true for human beings. "There's the boss bird," she had said, "and she's entitled to peck everybody. There's the number two bird—and she's pecked by the boss, and pecks everybody else. And so on, down the line, until we come to the poor little bitch who's pecked by everybody."

"But that doesn't apply to humans," Grimes had demurred. "Doesn't it just, duckie! In schools, aboard ships . . .I've nothing to do with the administration of this wagon—thank all the Odd Gods of the Galaxy!—but even I can see now that poor Ordinary Spaceman Wilkes is bullied by everybody . . . "

Grimes had never, so far as he knew, bullied that hapless rating—but he found himself wishing that the man were here. As he was not, Grimes was bottom bird in the pecking order. There was no malice about it—or no conscious malice. It was just that Grimes was, by the standards of the scientific party, only semi-literate, his status that of a hewer of wood, a drawer of water. He was in an environment where his qualifications counted for little or nothing, where the specialists held sway. And these same specialists, Grimes realized, must have resented the very necessary discipline aboard the ship. Although they would never have admitted it to themselves they were dogs having their day.

The next day wasn't so bad. Six of the flitters were out—which meant that Grimes had the camp to himself. Two by two the scientists had lifted from the camp site, ascending into the murk like glittering, mechanical angels. Carrying a portable transceiver—and a projectile pistol, just in case—Grimes went for a stroll along the river bank. He felt a little guilty about deserting his post, but should any of his charges get into trouble and yell for help he would know at once. He decided that he would walk to the first bend in the wide stream, and then back.

Delta Sextans IV was not a pretty world. The sky was grey, with a paler blur that marked the passage of the hot sun across it. The river was grey. The fleshy-leaved vegetation was grey, with the merest hint of dull green. There was little distinction between blossom and foliage as far as a non-botanist like Grimes was concerned.

But it was good to get away from the camp, from that huddle of plastic igloos, and from the multitudinous chores. It was good to walk on the surface of a world unspoiled by Man, the first time that Grimes had done so. Captain Loveil's survey had been, after all, a very superficial effort and so, thought Grimes, there was a chance that he, even he, would find something, some plant or animal, that would be named after him. He grinned wryly. If any Latin tags were to be affixed to local fauna and flora his own name would be the last to be considered.

He came to the bend in the river, decided to carry on for just a few yards past it. Well, he thought with a glow of pleasure, I have found something—something which the others, flapping around on their tin wings,

have missed . . . The something was an obvious game trail leading through the jungle to the water's edge. But why in this particular spot? Grimes investigated. Elsewhere the bank was steep—here there was a little bay, with a gently shelving beach. Here, too, growing in the shallow water, was a clump of odd-looking plants—straight, thick stems, each a few feet high, each topped by a cluster of globules varying in size from grape to orange. And here, too, something had died or been killed. Only the bones were left—yellowish, pallidly gleaming. There was a rib cage, which must have run the entire length of a cylindrical body. There was a skull, almost spherical. There were jaws, with teeth—the teeth of a herbivore, thought Grimes. The beast, obviously, had been a quadruped, and about the size of a Terran Shetland pony.

Suddenly Grimes stiffened. Something was coming along that trail through the jungle—something that rustled and chattered. As he backed away from the skeleton he pulled out his pistol, thumbed back the safety catch. He retreated to the bend of the river and waited there, ready to fight or run—but curious as to what sort of animal would appear.

There were more than one of them. They spilled out on to the river bank—about a dozen grey, shaggy brutes, almost humanoid. Mostly they walked upright, but now and again dropped to all fours. They chattered and gesticulated. They varied in size from that of a small man to that of a young child—but somehow Grimes got the idea that there were no children among them.

They had not come to drink. They went straight to the plants, started tearing the largest—the ripest?—fruit from the stems, stuffing them into their wide mouths, gobbling them greedily. There was plenty for all—but, inevitably, there was one who wasn't getting any. It was not that he was the smallest of the tribe—but neither was he the largest. Even so, his trouble seemed to be psychological rather than physical; he seemed to be hampered by a certain diffidence, a reluctance to join in the rough and tumble scramble.

At last, when all his mates were busy gorging themselves, he shambled slowly through the shallows to the fruit plants. Glancing timorously around to see that nobody was watching he put out a hand, wrenched one of the spheroids from its stem. He was not allowed to even taste it. A hairy paw landed on the side of his head with a loud thunk, knocking him sprawling into the muddy water. The brute who had attacked him snatched the fruit from his hand, bit into it, spat and grimaced and threw it out into the river. No less than three times there was a roughly similar sequence of events—and then, as though in response to some inaudible signal, the troop scampered back into the jungle, the victim of the bullies looking back wistfully to the fruit that he had not so much as tasted.

That evening Grimes told the scientists about his own minor exploration, but none of them was interested. Each was too engrossed in his own project—the deposit of rich, radioactive ores, the herds of food animals, the villages of the simian-like creatures. Maggie Lazenby did say that she would accompany Grimes as soon as she had a spare five minutes—but that would not be until her real work had been tidied up. And then, after dinner, Grimes was left with the washing up as usual.

That night he set an alarm to wake him just before sunrise, so that he was able to switch off the force fields to allow the women to leave the camp for their morning swim, to make coffee and get breakfast preparations under way. After the meals he was left to himself again.

He was feeling a certain kinship with the native who was bottom bird in the pecking order. He thought smugly: "If Maggie were right, I'd kick him around myself. But I'm civilized." This time he took with him a stun-gun instead of a projectile pistol, setting the control for minimum effect.

The natives had not yet arrived at the little bay when he got there. He pulled off his shoes and stockings, waded out through the shallow water to where the fruit-bearing plants were growing. He plucked two of the largest, ripest-seeming globes. He didn't know whether or not they would be dangerous to the human metabolism, and was not tempted to find out. Even with their tough skins intact they stank. Then he retired a few yards from the end of the trail, sat down to wait.

At almost exactly the same time the gibbering, gesticulating troop debouched from the jungle. As before, the timid member hung back, hovering on the outskirts of the scrum, awaiting his chance—his slim chance—to get some fruit for himself. Grimes got slowly to his feet. The primitive humanoids ignored him, save for the timorous one—but even he stood his ground. Grimes walked carefully forward, the two ripe fruit extended in his left hand. He saw a flicker of interest, of greed, in the creature's yellow eyes, the glisten of saliva at the corners of the wide, thin-lipped mouth. And then, warily, the thing was shambling towards him. "Come and get it," whispered Grimes. "Come and get it."

Was the native telepathic? As soon as he was within snatching distance of the spaceman he snatched, his long nails tearing the skin of Grimes's left hand. Were his fellows telepathic? Growling, the leader of the troop dropped the fruit that he had been guzzling, scampered through the shallows and up the bank towards the recipient of Grimes's gift. That miserable being whined and cringed, extended the fruit towards the bully in a placatory gesture.

Grimes growled too. His stun-gun was ready, and aiming it was a matter of microseconds. He pressed the stud. The bully gasped, dropped to the ground, twitching. "Eat your bloody fruit, damn you!" snarled Grimes. This time the timorous one managed a couple of bites before another bully—number two in the pecking order?—tried to steal his meal. By the time the fruit were finished no less than half a dozen bodies were strewn on the moss-like ground-covering growth. They were not dead, Grimes noted with some relief. As he watched the first two scrambled unsteadily to their feet, stared at him reproachfully and then shambled away to feed on what few ripe fruit were left. Characteristically they did not pluck these for themselves but snatched them from the weaker members of the troop. Oddly enough they made no attempt to revenge themselves on Grimes's protégé.

The next day Grimes continued his experiment. As before, he plucked two tempting—but not to him—fruit. As before, he presented them to Snuffy. (It was as good a name as any.) This time, however, he was obliged to use his



stun-gun only once. Grimes thought that it was the troop leader—again—who was least capable of learning by experience. The third day he did not have to use the weapon at all, and Snuffy allowed him to pat him, and patted him back. The fourth day he did not think that he would be using the gun—and then one of the smaller humanoids, one who had taken Snuffy's place as tribal butt, screamed angrily and flew at Snuffy, all claws and teeth. Snuffy dropped his fruit and tried to run—and then the whole troop was on him, gibbering and hitting and kicking. Grimes—the gun set on wide beam, shocked them all into unconsciousness. When they recovered all of them scampered back into the jungle.

On the fifth day Grimes was all ready for the next stage of his experiment. He was glad that the scientists were still fully occupied with their own games; he suspected that they—especially Maggie Lazenby—would want to interfere, would want things done their way, would complicate an essentially simple situation. It was all so glaringly obvious to the young Lieutenant. Snuffy would have to be taught to defend himself, to protect his own rights.

He picked the two fruits as usual. He used the stun-gun to deter the bullies—and then he used the weapon on Snuffy, giving him another shock every time that he showed signs of regaining consciousness. He realized that the creature—as he had hoped would be the case—was not popular with his troop fellows; when the time came for them to return to their village or whatever it was they vanished into the jungle without a backward glance. Grimes lifted Snuffy—he wasn't very heavy—and carried him to where the skeleton of the horse-like animal lay on the bank like the bones of a wrecked and stranded ship. He felt a tickling on his skin under his shirt, was thankful that he had thought to make a liberal application of insect-repellent before leaving the camp. He deposited the hairy body on the thick moss, then went to work on the skeleton. Using his knife to sever the dry, tough ligaments he was able to detach the two thigh bones. They made good clubs—a little too short and too light for a man's use, but just right for a being of Snuffy's size. Finally he picked some more fruit—there were a few ripe ones that had been missed by the troop.

At last Snuffy came round, making his characteristic snuffling sound. He stared at Grimes. Grimes looked calmly back, offered him what he had come to think of as a stink-apple. Snuffy accepted it, bit into it. He belched. Grimes regretted that he was not wearing a respirator. While the humanoid was happily munching, Grimes juggled with one of the thigh bones. Snuffy finally condescended to notice what he was doing, to evince some interest. With a sharp crack Grimes brought his club down on the skeleton's rib cage. Two of the ribs were broken cleanly in two.

Snuffy extended his hands toward the club. Grimes gave it to him, picking up the other one.

The native was a good pupil. Finally, without any prompting from the spaceman, he was flailing away at the skull of the dead animal, at last cracking it. Grimes looked guiltily at his watch. It was time that he was getting back to the camp to get the preparations for the evening meal under way. Still feeling guilty, he wondered how Snuffy would make it back to his own living place, what his reception would be. But he was armed

now, would be able to look after himself—Grimes hoped.

And then it became obvious that the native had no intention of going home by himself. Still carrying his bone club he shambled along at Grimes's side, uttering an occasional plaintive eek. He would not be chased off, and Grimes was reluctant to use the stun-gun on him. But there was a spare tent that would be used eventually for the storage of specimens. Snuffy would have to sleep there.

To Grimes's surprise and relief the native did not seem to mind when he was taken into the plastic igloo. He accepted a bowl of water, burying his wrinkled face in it and slurping loudly. Rather dubiously he took a stick of candy, but once he had sampled it it soon disappeared. (Grimes had learned from the scientists that anything eaten by the life form of Delta Sextans IV could be handled by the human metabolism; it was logical to suppose that a native of IV could eat human food with safety.) More water, and more candy—and Snuffy looked ready to retire for the night, curling up on the floor of the tent in a fetal posture. Grimes left him to it.

He did not sleep at all well himself. He was afraid that his . . . guest? prisoner? would awake during the hours of darkness, would awaken the whole camp by howling or other anti-social conduct. Grimes was beginning to have an uneasy suspicion that the scientists would not approve of his experiments. But the night was as silent as night on Delta Sextans IV ever was, and after their usual early breakfast the scientific party flapped off on its various occasions.

Grimes went to the spare tent, opened the flap. The stench that gusted out made him retch, although Snuffy did not seem to be worried by it. The native shambled into the open on all fours, and then, rising to an approximately erect posture, went back inside for his previous club. With his free hand he patted Grimes on the arm, grimacing up at him and whining. Grimes led him to where a bucket of water was standing ready, and beside it two candy bars.

The spaceman, fighting down his nausea, cleaned up the interior of the tent. It had been bad enough washing up after the scientists—but this was too much. From now on Snuffy would have to look after himself. He had no occasion to change his mind as the aborigine followed him around while he coped with the camp chores. The humanoid displayed an uncanny genius for getting in the way.

At last, at long last, it was time to get down to the river. Grimes strode along smartly, Snuffy shuffling along beside him, swinging his club. Their arrival at the little bay coincided with that of the troop of humanoids. Snuffy did not hang back. He got to the fruit before the others did. The troop leader advanced on him menacingly. For a moment it looked as though Snuffy were going to turn and run—then he stood his ground, seeming suddenly to gain inches in stature as he did so. Clumsily he raised his club, and even more clumsily brought it crashing down. More by luck than otherwise the blow fell on the bully's shoulder. The second blow caught him squarely on the side of the head, felling him. Grimes saw the glisten of yellow blood in the grey, matted fur.

Snuffy screamed—but it was not a scream of fear. Brandishing the club he advanced on those who had been his tormentors. They broke and ran, most of them. The two who did not hastily retreated after each had felt the weight of the primitive weapon.

Grimes laughed shakily. "That's my boy," he murmured. "That's my boy . . ."

Snuffy ignored him. He was too busy stuffing himself with the pick of the ripe fruit.

When you have six people utterly engrossed in their own pursuits and a seventh person left to his own devices, it is easy for that seventh person to keep a secret. Not that Grimes even tried to do so. More than once he tried to tell the scientists about his own experiment in practical ethology, and each time he was brushed aside. Once Maggie Lazenby told him rather tartly, "You're only our bus driver, John. Keep to your astronautics and leave real science to us."

Then—the time of Pathfinder's return from Delta Sextans V was fast approaching—Grimes was unable to spend much, if any, time on the river bank. The preliminaries to shutting up shop were well under way with specimens and records and unused stores to be packed, with the propulsion unit of the landing craft to be checked. Nonetheless, Grimes was able to check up now and again on Snuffy's progress, noted with satisfaction that the native was making out quite well.

In all too short a time the cruiser signaled that she was establishing herself in orbit about IV, also that the Captain himself would be coming down in the pinnacle to inspect the camp. Grimes worked as he had never worked before. He received little help from the others—and the scientists were such untidy people. There should have been at least six general purpose robots to cope with the mess, but there was only one. Grimes. But he coped.

When the pinnacle dropped down through the grey overcast the encampment was as near to being shipshape and Bristol fashion as it ever could be. Grimes barely had time to change into a clean uniform before the boat landed. He was standing to attention and saluting smartly when Captain Tolliver strode down the ramp.

Tolliver, after acknowledging the salute, actually smiled. He said, "You run a taut shore base, Mr. Grimes. I hope that when the time comes you will run a taut ship."

"Thank you, sir."

Grimes accompanied the Captain on his rounds of the encampment, the senior officer grunting his approval of the tidiness, the neatly stacked items all ready to be loaded into the landing craft and the pinnacle in the correct order. And the scientists—thank the Odd Gods of the Galaxy!—were no longer their usual slovenly selves. Just as the camp was a credit to Grimes, so were they. Maggie Lazenby winked at him when Captain Tolliver was looking the other way. Grimes smiled back gratefully.

Said Tolliver, "I don't suppose that you've had time for any projects of your

own, Mr. Grimes. Rather a pity . . ."

"But he has found time, sir," said the Ethologist.

"Indeed, Dr. Lazenby. What was it?"

"Er . . . We were busy ourselves, sir. But we gained the impression that Mr. Grimes was engaged upon research of some kind."

"Indeed? And what was it, Mr. Grimes?"

Grimes looked at his watch. It was almost time. He said, "I'll show you, sir. If you will come this way. Along the river . . ."

"Lead the way, Mr. Grimes," ordered Tolliver jovially. In his mind's eye Grimes saw the glimmer of that half ring of gold braid that would make him a Lieutenant Commander. Promotions in the Survey Service were the result of Captain's Reports rather than seniority.

Grimes guided Tolliver along the river bank to where the trail opened from the jungle to the little bay. "We wait here, sir," he said. He looked at his watch again. It shouldn't be long. And then, quite suddenly, Snuffy led the way out of the jungle. He was proudly carrying his bone club, holding it like a sceptre. He was flanked by two smaller humanoids, each carrying a crude bone-weapon, followed by two more, also armed. He went to the fruit plants, tore at them greedily, wasted more than he ate. The others looked on hungrily. One tried to get past the guards, was clubbed down viciously. Grimes gulped. In a matter of only three days his experiment was getting out of hand.

"I have studied Captain Loveil's films of these beings," said Tolliver in a cold voice. "Are you responsible for this?"

"Yes, sir. But . . ."

"You will be wise to apply for a transfer, Mr. Grimes. Should you continue in the Service, which is doubtful, I sincerely hope that you discover the legendary fountain of youth."

"Why, sir?"

"Because it's a bloody pity that otherwise you won't be around to see the end results of what you started," said Tolliver bitterly.