

WHEN Professor Tom died he left Jenny and Jim the house he had lived in, the old movies he had loved to watch and the workshop where he had tinkered away the final years of his life.

Jenny and Jim buried him high on the valley slope where the woodbine ran wild each spring and the first wildflowers appeared—where the warm rays of Arcturus struck each springtime morning, heralding the new day. Jim said a few words over the grave and Jenny stood beside him, trying to cry. She couldn't. She had no tears.

"We give to you this man, God," Jim said, "to do with as you must. We give him to you because you are his god. He was ours."

Together they shoveled earth over the crude wooden casket and afterward Jenny placed a handful of spring flowers on the grave. Then she and Jim walked down the slope of the valley and across the fields to where the white prefabricated house stood, the aluminum workshop just behind it.

"Shall we watch a movie tonight?" Jenny asked. "Or do you think it would be disrespectful?"

"I don't think it would be disrespectful," Jim answered. "I don't think Professor Tom would mind."

The movie they decided upon was *Made for Each Other*, starring Carole Lombard and James Stewart. They waited till after the sun went down. Then Jim put the film in the projector, turned out the lights. They sat down on the sofa to watch. They had watched the movie many times with Professor Tom and had hugged and kissed like the actors did, but never when he was looking. They had felt he might disapprove. But it was all right now, not because he was gone, but because they were man and wife. So they sat there on the sofa with their arms around each other, and every time Carole Lombard kissed James Stewart Jenny kissed Jim. And whenever James Stewart kissed Carole Lombard Jim kissed Jenny. Afterward they went outside to sit on the steps and scan the skies. But although they scanned them all night, they saw nothing but stars.

At length morning arrived. Lovely Arcturus rose above the green lip of the valley and songbirds climbed air currents into the sky to drink the nectar of the new day.

Jenny said to Jim, "Maybe we're being in much too much of a hurry—maybe it takes time."

Jim answered, "Maybe it'll come tonight."

JIM had been Professor Tom's gardener and handyman, Jenny his cook and housekeeper. On Earth, before his retirement, Professor Tom had been an engineer in the mechanized-menial field and Jenny and Jim were almost as beautiful as the stars in the old movies. He had loved them both, but it had been Jenny he had loved the most and sometimes tears he did not understand had come into his eyes when he looked at her. He had said on his deathbed, "I never figured on things coming to this so soon. I preached humility all my life, but all the while I was just as arrogant as everybody else. I never thought that death would really step on my heels. But you two will be all right. The supply ship will be here within a year and I've left a note to the captain to take good care of you. He's an old friend of mine."

"Will you marry us?" Jenny has asked and Professor Tom had looked at her and blinked.

"You said," Jim pointed out, "that once you were a justice of the peace. That gives you the authority to make us man and wife."

"That was long ago," said Professor Tom, "but yes, I suppose it does. However—"

"Surely," Jenny had interposed, "you wouldn't want us to live in sin. We're madly in love and there's no telling how we'll carry on without you here to chaperone us."

A tear zigzagged down Professor Tom's sere cheek as he said, "Poor child, what do you know about making love—and what good would the knowledge do you if you had it? But if it will make you happy—"

There was no bible in the house, but the professor had made do without it. He had spoken the beautiful words they had heard so often in the old moves. "In sickness and in health . . . Love, honor and obey . . . I now pronounce you man and wife."

LIFE went on much as it had before. Jim worked in Professor Tom's flower garden in daytime, keeping it free from weeds. There was a kitchen garden, too, and Jim cultivated it as faithfully as he had before, although it would serve no useful purpose now. He and Jenny had already thrown out the food that was moldering in the refrigerator. They had turned off the unit and put away the dishes.

Every day Jenny cleaned the house from front to back, dusting furniture and scrubbing floors. Except for fixing meals for Professor Tom her routine was unchanged. Sometimes, while she was working, she would hum songs from the movie she and Jim had watched the night before. And sometimes in the middle of dusting the living room she would drop the cloth and dance the way Ruby Keeler did in *42nd Street*. *42nd Street* was her favorite movie, but *My Blue Heaven* was her favorite song.

Sitting on the sofa in the light reflected from the screen, the automatic projector whirring behind them, they would embrace and kiss and Jim would say, "Did you have a good day, darling?"

She would answer, "Yes, my sweet."

He would kiss her eyes and ears and nose and she would kiss his chin. They would hold each other as tightly as they could, but nothing ever came of their ardor and the skies remained as empty as before.

"Perhaps tomorrow," Jenny would say.

Jim "would answer, "Yes, I'm sure tomorrow will be the Big Day."

But the Big Day failed to dawn and Happiness continued to hide in the hills, in the woodbine and the wildflowers—in the green bowers of the trees.

PROFESSOR TOM had stored both their memory banks with generous helpings of information, but for the most part these had to do with electronics, mechanical engineering, horticulture and cookery. It was to the old movies that they were indebted for their practical education. Most of the movies were products of the 1930's, but there some from the 'twenties and a handful from the 'forties and 'fifties. The professor had spent a great many years and a great deal of money collecting them and naturally he had taken them with him when he had retired to Arcturus VI to live out his sunset years in solitude and peace in the isolated valley he had bought—"light-years removed," as he had put it, "from the malicious machinations of mankind."

Sitting with Jenny and Jim in the living room one night, watching *The Bells of St. Mary's*, he had said, "That's the way it was in those days—only that wasn't the way it really was at all."

"But how can something be true and yet not be true at all?" Jenny asked and he had laughed.

"I can see, my dear, that despite the perfection of your computerized thought processes—or even more probably because of it—you're incapable of any non-Aristotelian thinking. Many things can be both true and untrue. The worlds we watch upon that magic screen, my dear, are distorted reflections of reality inhabited by the ghosts of people whose real selves were often hidden from their own eyes. A reality powdered and perfumed and with its vitals eviscerated—a reality tailored for people who hadn't outgrown their need to be told fairy tales before they went to bed." Professor Tom sighed. "But I'll take it any day. For all its pious hypocrisies—for all its omissions and its untrue truths—it's a thousand times better than the reality I lived in all my life and finally left behind. I guess when men grow old they like to hide in caves and watch reflections on the walls."

In addition to the old movies, Professor Tom's collection comprised dozens of animated cartoons. Jenny and Jim found them fascinating. Some featured animals drawn to look like men or men drawn to look like animals. Others featured animals that were really meant to be animals but that talked and sometimes lived like human beings. In one way the cartoons were more educational than the movies, for they threw light on a certain mystery the movies were completely mum about. A mystery Professor Tom's books—most of which were devoted to electronics and mechanical engineering—did not even mention. In fact, if it hadn't been for the cartoons Jenny and Jim would never have learned the Secret of Life.

BUT apparently knowing the Secret of Life was not enough. The valley exchanged its green dress for summer's golden gown. The warm days and nights began parading past the prefabricated house. But although Jenny and Jim sat each evening on the sofa, aping the actions of the shadows on the screen, their

embraces and kisses went unrewarded. The dawn of each new day found them sitting disappointed on their doorstep, as lonely as before.

"Maybe it's like that song that Don Ameche sings to Sonja Henie," Jenny said. "You know the one I mean—that only one in a million is lucky in love. Or maybe what we're trying to do is harder than, we think."

"Maybe," Jim answered. "And maybe it's because they do things between scenes that we don't know about."

"Do things such as what?"

"Like maybe they take off their clothes and kiss and hug that way."

"Why would they take their clothes off? What difference would their being naked make?"

"I don't know," said Jim, "but it wouldn't hurt to try."

THAT evening before they sat down on the sofa they removed their clothes. Professor Tom had lost interest in sex even before he retired and Jenny's body, although differently shaped, wasn't a great deal different from Jim's. The movie they watched abounded in love scenes, but although they embraced and kissed every time the two main characters did, their efforts went as unrewarded as before.

During one dawn, as they sat disconsolately on their doorstep, Jim said, "I think I know the reason, Jenny—I think I know why for us it doesn't work. We're different—and this world is different, too. We're going to have to *make* it happen. We've got everything we need to work with, thanks to Professor Tom, and he taught us practically all he knew. Maybe he foresaw a time like this."

They got busy right away. Jim made the blueprint first, after consulting several of Professor Tom's books. Then he made all the parts. Jenny helped him with the assembling. They worked day and night, taking time out only to watch the old movies and to kiss and embrace like the stars. There was hope in them now and they put more and more passion into their kisses.

"I want it to be a boy," Jenny said.

"Yes," Jim answered. "I want a son."

They had begun work in midsummer. Fall was on hand when they finished, and yellow and crimson patterns had begun to show upon the hills. Jim had built a lightweight electric motor to provide the necessary power. He made two light but long-lasting batteries to feed it. Together he and Jenny climbed the valley slope.

"We'll give it all the height we can," he said. "That way it'll have a maximum chance of getting to wherever it has to go and of returning with its bundle."

He turned on the little motor and released the device into the air. Slowly it rose into the sky. It circled the valley once, as he had programmed it to do, then sped off toward the south.

Jenny said, "But suppose the nursery doesn't lie in that direction."

"Then—after it comes back we'll recharge its batteries and send it to the west. And after that, if necessary, to the east and to the north. The nursery *has* to be somewhere."

"Later on, if it's successful, we'll send it for others, won't we?" Jenny said.

"Of course. But first we'll make love—otherwise it won't work."

Hand in hand they walked down the slope and across the fields to the house.

THE captain of the supply ship found them in the living room six months later. They were sitting on the sofa, their bodies covered with dust, their arms around each other, their lips touching in a final kiss. Before them in the shadows an empty screen hung ghostlike on the wall. Behind them stood the automatic projector they had used to project their dreams. The length of copper wire they had used to short themselves out was lying on the floor at their feet.

The captain went all through the house. Professor Tom's note was lying on the bedtable beside his empty bed. The captain read it. Then he returned to the living room and looked once more at the faces of Jenny and Jim. He had known Tom all his life and he had known Tom's long dead wife. In Jenny's face he saw young Tom's beloved bride—in Jim's, he saw young Tom.

When he made them I'll bet he didn't even know ...

His first thought was to repair them, to bring them back to life. Then he found the mechanical stork lying in the back yard. One of its canvas wings was broken, its tiny motor was burned out and its power source had given up the ghost after its fourth and final flight. He guessed the truth.

He had his men search the valley for Professor Tom's grave. After they found it he had them carry Jenny and Jim up the slope and bury them beside it. It was only fitting that they should sleep beside their god.

He spoke a few words to his own: "All of us leave ghosts behind of one kind or another. In a way, we're ghosts ourselves. We haunt ourselves our whole lives through because no matter how hard we try we can never fulfill our dreams. We're a lot like Jenny and Jim, which makes them human in a way. Grant them peace."

When spring came back again, the woodbine reached down from the hills and covered the two new graves and wildflowers appeared to welcome the springtime sun.