

Winston Takamira took a deep breath, visibly gathering his strength, then bent forward again over the microphone. Above the ruff of white hair that circled the rear of his head the sallow skin of forehead and bald dome glistened with a pale sheen of perspiration.

"And I conclude, sir, by saying Moon-Eye is *more* than just an observatory, *more* than the first permanent outpost man has established on the infinite frontier of space. In a very true and real way that telescope represents the outward-looking spirit of the human race. In these days of short-range goals, of grasping demands that every dollar spent on science return two dollars at once, Moon-Eye stands as an ongoing commitment to basic scientific research. I ask—I *claim*, sir, from yourself and this committee—our due share of the national science budget. Thank you."

The short, wiry old man pushed the mike away and leaned back in his seat. The committee chairman on the raised platform drummed nervously on the table, a rapid exercise of deeply wrinkled fingers. He turned to whisper a word to a colleague, shuffled once more through the papers before him, and finally laid them aside.

The chairman tilted his lined face toward a microphone. His expression was grave, almost somber. "Dr. Takamira—your eloquence is outstanding, as always. But the Space Sciences Committee has heard it all before. I'll have to check the proceedings, but I think this speech is pretty much a rehash of the one you gave three years ago, when you didn't have anything new or very exciting to talk about. But I've got something new for you, sir. We took your budget, and added to it the full cost of all manned spaceflight past the space station. That's fair enough, isn't it? All manned flight beyond Earth orbit just supports Moon-Eye, now that we've finished up the Mars missions. Know what the total is, sir? A nice, even two billion dollars! Two billion dollars, Dr. Takamira. Know how many homes that will build for the disadvantaged? How many more acres of the Mojave we can reclaim for wheat? You pure scientists can't ever see anything but your own little end of the picture. That's why the people elect politicians to look after their interests."

Two of the committee members smiled slightly. The other two behind the raised table with the chairman looked bored.

The chairman paused to gauge the impact of his words, ever mindful of the watchful eye of the TriD camera. Only the sharpest and most cogent comments were likely to make the evening congressional summary. Samuel McGinnis had been in the House of Representatives for twenty-two years, and in his present powerful post for eight.

He survived by a shrewd ability to guess the true public sentiment on complex issues well ahead of the opinion polls.

"Well, sir, you've sat up on the Moon for eight years now, eating up the public money. Oh I know, all the astronomers in the world support you, our air is too polluted and they might as well shut down Palomar and Wilson and Lick and so on, but just the same—what are we getting out of Moon-Eye? Where's the equivalent of discovering helium in the sun, or learning to understand atomic energy? You spoke about trying to get two dollars out of science for every one spent, as though this was a bad thing. What's bad about it, sir? Science showed us how to make the desert bloom, and that's what people want to see in 2008—a real return for their money, something that puts bread on the table. What can Moon-Eye offer us to compare with wheat from the Mojave?"

McGinnis paused; that had been a telling question, the one he was seeking. Win saw the satisfaction on the other man's face. McGinnis had tried to vote Moon-Eye out of existence for the past two years, and been overruled by the rest of the committee.

The chairman realized he had taken a too obviously partisan stand, and tried for balance. "Well, anyway—thank you for coming down to talk with us. I don't know what the committee is going to recommend, but I can tell you this—I intend to push for all or nothing. Either we shut 'er down and bring you fellows home, or we go to a four-year budget cycle that won't require a committee hearing every September. We'll probably have our report out by the time you get back to the Moon."

"Thank you, Mr. Chairman and committee members," the old astronomer said hastily, as chairs

scraped backward behind the raised table.

Dr. Winston Takamira assembled the papers spread before him and tucked them away in his comfortably worn briefcase. He felt like an actor who has bored his audience. Still, it had been almost as bad two years ago, and all four committee members had voted against then chairman.

It had been shrewd of foxy old McGinnis to recognize Win's speech as a reworked one. He should have forced himself to write a new version. But Moon-Eye had existed long enough to be considered an institution, and Win had become complacent about this annual appearance before Congress. He would have to be more careful in the future.

It took a distinct effort for Win to straighten his stooped shoulders, lift the heavy briefcase, and walk out of the room. He had been on the Moon for ten years, arriving during the first phase of construction. Short stints back on Earth were not enough to adjust. He felt unduly heavy here, as though his slight frame was badly overweight. It was always a physical relief to get back to Moon-Eye.

Outside, he spotted his government steamie waiting at the curb. The driver opened the door for him, and Win sank into the padded seat with a tired sigh.

"I guess it must be hard on you to come back down to the real world, sir," volunteered the driver, as he eased into the congested Washington traffic.

"It's tough on old bones," Win agreed, his mind elsewhere. "Did you get in touch with Len Sterenko?"

"Yes, sir, just like you asked. He'll meet you at Kennedy for the lift-off at ten o'clock tonight."

"Good; thank you."

They had progressed only a few blocks down Pennsylvania Avenue before a commotion in front brought the already creeping traffic to a halt. The driver stopped, then got out and peered ahead. He returned to his seat and said, "Another Food-For-The-Hungry demonstration, sir, coming right at us. We may as well let it go by."

Win glanced at his watch, grumbling under his breath. He had hoped to enjoy a peaceful dinner with his daughter's family in New York before catching the shuttle. He conscientiously tried to see his grandchildren on each trip, though he felt certain the two youngsters were as quickly bored with their grandfather as he with them. And he had never actually been very close to his only child, for that matter. Work had occupied too much of his time when she was small. And wife Mildred had seen to it daughter Ann grew up feeling deeply neglected by her father.

The first marchers reached the car, threading their way through the stalled traffic with banners and placards held high. Win forced himself to sit back and read the often crudely printed but always large words: PLANT MONEY IN THE SAND and FEED THE HUNGRY PEOPLE seemed to dominate. One long banner, carried by two nude young women shivering in a cool autumn breeze, read WHEN A CHILD IS HUNGRY YOUR BELLY SHOULD HURT. Several were variations on the theme, MONEY FOR MOJAVE-BREAD FOR BRAZOS.

"What the hell!" Win said in surprise. "You mean these people want to expand the Mojave Project so we can send food to another *country*?"

"Yes, sir, that they do." The driver, a stout, red-headed freckle-faced man in his late forties, turned to face his passenger. "We got enough wheat in the storage bins to support Brazos for three years, and the Ag guys say they can have the whole Mojave producing by then. All the people are one, and hundreds of thousands are starving down there. Just 'cause they speak Spanish and us English is no reason not to send 'em our surplus food."

"The Brazos people speak Portuguese, not Spanish," Win muttered, watching the laughing, chattering crowd stream by. They were mostly young people, but a few were elderly. All looked well-fed.

The driver turned back to the front. A roll of fat on the back of his neck was red with repressed anger. They waited in silence until the last of the demonstrators passed, and traffic resumed moving.

Amused and a little irritated, Win tried to reopen the conversation. "Feeding the hungry people of Brazos sounds very commendable, but we already give away many billions in food each year—some of it to Brazos. We can't possibly feed the whole hungry world. Don't you think we'd be smarter to devote more of our resources to long-term goals that could benefit *all* mankind? Such as, say, the control of

hydrogen fusion for almost unlimited power?"

"All the people are one," the driver repeated, without turning his head. His voice was sullen and low. "If you love the people of the world, sir, you don't want to see them suffer, see little children dying in the streets."

"No, of course not. And I don't want to see the world power shortage get any worse, or the promising research on further life extension stopped, either. But that's what will happen if we don't devote a large part of our budget to basic science—even if a few of our neighbors do go hungry."

"I don't want to argue with you, sir, 'cause you'd probably report me and get me in trouble."

Win still felt tired, but alert and stimulated. He seldom had discussions of this sort with non-scientists; he was hearing a new point of view. And a faint foreboding warned him this driver could voice the feeling of billions of people.

"No; I'm very interested in what you think, and I certainly wouldn't report you. We're just two grown men discussing the world situation. Speak your mind, by all means. I promise; no complaint."

"OK then, I'll tell you. I'm not ignorant, I know what science can do. But you Moon-men expect little guys like me to spend our whole lives grubbing away so you can work on way-out things that'll never amount to a hill of beans. You can study your quasars and your pulsars for a hundred years, and it won't help a single human on Earth. We've got a right to see our tax money spent on things that will benefit us. We're only going to live out our eighty, and a man wants all the good things he can get while he's alive to enjoy 'em."

That was exactly what McGinnis had been saying, in somewhat more polished words. It was a simple but strong philosophy, one hard to refute. Win tried: "Look, the time-lapse between the findings of basic research and later application isn't as long as you seem to think. As for enjoying everything in life now—what if that enjoyment takes money away from work that might *extend* life? Such as the research on aging retardation that *got* us to eighty?"

The driver refused to answer. The flesh around his neck was red again.

*Or keeping the last clear big eye focused on the stars, or trying to understand why no one's contacted us when we know they must be out there, and what does it all matter to a man who's past his eighty and ready to go anyway?*

But Win did not speak those thoughts aloud.

The driver knew his work, and got them to the tube station on time. Win had less than five minutes to wait before boarding. He strapped in and sat quietly, ignoring the reports he had brought along to read. The long, sleekly rounded metal snake of the tube train pulled out and dropped toward the bowels of the Earth, swiftly accelerating as air was sucked from the tunnel ahead and fed in behind. At top speed they were hurtling through the tight-fitting tube at seven hundred kilometers an hour. But they barely attained that rate before the train was slanting up again, slowing, as Earth's ancient pull and increasing pressure ahead cost it momentum. They crawled the last few meters, into the Newark station on small electric motors.

Win transferred to the metropolitan subways and rode to Grand Central, and from there out to Queens. He walked the last four blocks to Ann's condominium; even that short distance was a strain.

Ann looked her forty-two years. There was a matronly bulge to her hips and waist, and her cheeks were growing round. Win said hello to husband Burl and the two children, Cindy and Jack. The young ones greeted their grandfather with indifferent politeness; they were not impressed by astronomers. Now if he had been even a minor Tri-D star . . .

"Why do you have to keep coming down every year to justify your budget, Dad?" Ann asked, after a surprisingly pleasant dinner. "I know it's hard on you. Why can't you just write to the Space Committee?"

"Yeah, I've often wondered about that myself," said Burl. Win's son-in-law was a big-stomached man, swiftly going to genuine fat, who worked for the State Transportation Commission. He had long ago made it plain he would have preferred a father-in-law with influence of the type that could help him with his career.

"The answer is that the small fame I possess gives me a slightly better chance than anyone else of

getting all we've asked for out of Congress. But this may have been the last hearing, at least for me. McGinnis said they were going to start a four-year budget cycle, and I doubt I'll be down for the next one."

Win looked at his daughter, noting the only two traces of his Japanese ancestry: the black hair and lustrous dark eyes. She looked far more like her mother, who was of Germanic stock. *Even there*, he thought, *I've failed to make any real impression on the world!*

"What's so important about Moon-Eye?" Cindy suddenly asked.

Win turned to his granddaughter, one of the few creatures on Earth he was obligated to love, and realized he felt nothing. She looked very much like Mildred, as though his genes had been shunted aside after one generation. Cindy was a fresh-faced, brown-haired girl of twelve, just swelling into young womanhood.

After a brief pause Win said, "I think I'll tell you, Cindy. I hope you're not too young to understand."

"She makes very good grades in her social consciousness class," Ann said immediately.

"Fine, then she should be able to follow me. Cindy . . . that big scope is our contact with the rest of the universe. There's a trend on Earth to turn away from exploration, to develop what we know at the cost of learning something new. There hasn't been a time since the Middle Ages when people had so little interest in anything but their own personal affairs, cared so little about tomorrow. Each year less and less money gets appropriated for scientific research. And basic science is the engine that pulls the rest of the train. I don't think it's too strong to say we're at a . . . a crisis of the human spirit, a major turning point in our development as a species. We have to revive people's interest in gaining knowledge for its own sake, renew all the old fires of passionate inquiry—or turn on a new track, one that runs in a big circle, with people surrounding the train with their hands out, everybody wanting everything today, with no care for the future. We have to fight this tendency to get fat, to settle for what we have, to stop striving."

Cindy was silent, but her dark eyes were large and bright.

"Oh *Dad!* You're being too intense, you'll frighten the child!" Ann's voice was half-laughing, but serious beneath the froth.

Win glanced away from Cindy, to see a sullen, inwardly angry look on Burl's face. It must have been that remark about getting fat. His son-in-law was dense enough to think Win had been referring to fat of the body.

"We talked about Moon-Eye in Social Con today," Cindy volunteered. "I told them about you coming down and testifying in Congress and all, and guess what? We took a vote . . . and it went three to one to shut Moon-Eye down!"

Cindy turned and ran from the room, holding a hand over her mouth to stifle a shrill giggling. Jack, three years her junior, stared wide-eyed, until his mother motioned vigorously for him to follow his sister.

"My heavens, I don't know what's gotten into her," Ann said as an apology—but her voice lacked conviction.

"I think I do!" The low but angry voice was that of Burl.

"Now don't *you* get started too!" Ann almost begged.

"Cindy hit you with that because she's a very bright young lady, and you talked down to her like you were lecturing a little kid. Only it's even worse than that. You were really talking to Ann and me, to the adults."

Win was silent.

"But you *talked* like you were speaking to little kids," Burl went relentlessly on. "That's the way you always sound, like you're the adult and the rest of us are children."

"Burl," Ann spoke quickly and nervously, "please don't take that tone with my father."

"I'm not saying anything he shouldn't hear. Let me ask you one question, Mr. Big-Name Astronomer, just one question. You don't have long to go anyway. Why do you really care about what happens to Moon-Eye?"

"That's an easy one, Burl. A lot of my life is invested in that observatory. I'd hate to find I've done all that work only to see it wasted. Moon-Eye is much more important than I am; I want to know it will keep working after I'm gone."

"Because you love mankind so much? Because you think you've provided the rest of us poor slobs with some permanent benefit? You're the man who neglected a fine woman like Mildred until she got tired of raising a daughter alone and divorced you. You're the man Ann thinks of as a little god . . . but not a father! You were never a father to your child, Mr. Astronomer!"

"Burl, that's enough!" Ann said sharply.

"Just one thing more, and I'll hush. I've heard this dreck about 'loving mankind' from the scientist types all my life. Know what I think? I think any man who can't love his wife and his own kid can't love anybody! You fellows are as cold as fish. You get your kicks out of big intellectual exercises like trying to figure out the origin of everything, and that's all you're interested in. You love your work and nothing else. That's what I think—and I'd like to see you prove me wrong!"

"I'm afraid I haven't time to do that," said Win, rising.

Ann jumped to her feet. "Dad, don't leave now! Let's talk it out, you know, desensitize the engrams. If Burl feels—"

"Thank you for dinner, Ann," Win firmly interrupted. "My briefcase? . . . yes, thank you. Goodbye, my dear. I recently filed a new will, leaving everything in trust to the children, to be used for their education. Give them my . . . love."

Moving very quickly Win got outside the door, and shut it behind him. He was not in the mood for encounter psychology games.

He set off briskly for the subway entrance, but had to pause less than a block from the condominium and breathe deeply for a moment. Win looked back at the tall, blocky building, and realized he was seeing it for the last time. He couldn't bear to face Ann and the children again.

Because there had been a great deal of truth in Burl's words. Win had married late, past forty, to a woman fifteen years his junior. And after the first few years, when Ann was a baby, he had indeed neglected Mildred. His work—was the true love in his life, and he had returned to it. The marriage had been a mistake. He should have remained a bachelor.

Win straightened his stooped shoulders and set off again for the subway, walking more slowly. His work, at least, had never betrayed him. After Ann was old enough to start school, Mildred often did.

Win had ignored his wife's infidelities, but even his tolerance was not enough. When Ann was twelve Mildred asked for a divorce. Having little use for personal money, Win had turned over most of his salary to his ex-wife until their child was grown. Mildred hadn't married again, saying her responsibility was to Ann. Actually she had continued the romantic life she had started.

It was only a fifteen-minute ride to the Kennedy Air/Space Port, and Win was an hour early. Len Sterenko had already arrived. The tall, sharp-faced younger man—strange, to think of a scientist past fifty as "younger"—looked as tired as Win felt. Five years at Moon-Eye had weakened him also.

The two men exchanged greetings and sat talking in the waiting room until boarding time. Len, chief of the Moon-Eye science staff, was serenely optimistic their budget would be approved. Win leaned that way, but was less certain. The incident of the FEED THE HUNGRY PEOPLE marchers lingered annoyingly in his mind. He did not tell Len about them, or his own fears that man was becoming so preoccupied with looking down at his belly he could no longer raise his gaze to the stars.

The veteran space travelers endured the twenty minutes of being strapped on their backs in the shuttle seats before the lift-off, and the twelve minutes of three-G flight before finally obtaining orbit. The pilot flashed a view of the Bola on the inner viewscreen as they approached the space station. The three cable-connected modules whirling their way around the Earth were a far cry from the gigantic wheel originally envisioned as the space station of the year 2001.

The refueled Nerva tug drifted toward them and attached to the shuttle air lock. At least the passengers did not have to put on the awkward spacesuits. The two scientists and the five other people bound for Moon-Eye transferred, and the two craft separated. After twenty-one hours that included a few snatches of troubled sleep they transferred again, to the lunar lander. Thirty minutes later they were settling toward Khrushchev Crater on the back of the Moon, and the cool white dome of the Hoyle Observatory.

"It's good to be home," said Len, as he followed Win out of the small Lander. Win did not reply, but

he too felt the soothing relief of the lighter gravity.

They discussed the current schedule while walking the kilometer from the underground landing field to the observatory. The dome would slip into shadow in fourteen hours. The first target was an unnamed pulsar which emitted pulsed radiation in the visible light section of the spectrum. They were to obtain data for a comparison with the star's X-ray emission. Win could not help thinking, wryly, that they were very unlikely to learn anything of immediate benefit to mankind. As to what practical applications might appear in the future, neither he nor anyone else could say.

"Welcome back!" said a hearty voice as the two men emerged from the tunnel. Charles Abrams, the engineer who had supervised the design of Moon-Eye and stayed to become its operations manager, was waiting for them. He and Len, between them, actually ran the observatory. Win carried the title of director, but had long ago settled for deciding scientific priorities and working to keep Moon-Eye funded.

Charley Abrams was a big, pink-skinned man with a shining bald forehead and thick glasses, just enough overweight to make returning to Earth extra hard on him. He hadn't been back in four years.

"Did you get that air-bearing leak on the main drive stopped, Charley?" Len asked as they walked toward Win's office.

"Yep; we exercised her through a full cycle with the dome evacuated, and the bearing temperature stayed constant."

Win gave Charley a brief rundown on the Congressional reaction to his presentation, and the three men went over the operations planned for the next two weeks.

Most Moon-Eye personnel were sound asleep. Len and Charley settled a few friendly arguments, and they broke to get some rest before starting the new cycle.

Win slept for a good nine hours. Charley Abrams woke him. The big man was unusually quiet, almost withdrawn, as though suffering from shock. "Just picked this up on the noon news, Win. The Space Sciences Committee voted four-to-one to shut down Moon-Eye. We get three hundred million to close her out, and that's it."

Win sat up in bed. For a moment he felt only numbness; then the death of his life's work sank slowly in. Strangely, it did not hurt. He realized that subconsciously he must have already known, have accepted that this was the way it would be.

"Yes . . . well ... has the word gone out? Does everyone know?"

"Afraid so. A lot of people watch the noon news. Do you want to speak on the PA system? Point out the committee may be overruled by the full House?"

"No." The word was out before Win could stop it. He added, "No point. It would take a miracle for the House to override the committee."

"I didn't realize you'd come back that let-down," said Charley, still quietly. "Anyway, we can finish the two weeks coming up. We have time for an 'orderly shutdown', I think they called it."

"Yes, by all means. Let's open the idome on schedule."

"Evacuation starts in about an hour. I'll tell them to keep going."

Charley turned and left. Win slowly dressed, and then sat for a few minutes on the edge of his bed. His mind seemed curiously blank, as though part of the vacuum waiting outside had crept into his skull. He had no thoughts, felt no emotions ... perhaps this was what it was like to be dead.

As Moon-Eye had been condemned to die.

Actually even more than Moon-Eye would fade away. The deep space transportation system that supported it would die as well. The Bola would be next; and then man would again be confined to his own planetary space.

Win rose and slowly made his way to the central hall. On an impulse he turned and took the first corridor leading to the outer wall. Most of Moon-Eye was underground, constructed by blasting a large hole out of the flat rock and roofing it over. The outer rooms held the life-support equipment and supplies, the inner ones the living and recreation quarters.

Win located a supply room, used his master key, and found a length of rope. He seemed to be acting by rote, without the need for conscious thought. Outside again, he followed the outermost corridor to the

dome itself. It was anchored to bedrock in the northeast corner.

The little-used walkway was deserted. Win saw no one until he reached the intersecting corridor around the dome itself. An inspector was just sealing the nearest door, stamping his number and signing his name.

"All doors closed?" Win asked casually, trying to remember the man's name; he could not. Burl's strong words came back to him, and the argument with the government steamie driver. Both had spoken harsh truths. He claimed to work for the benefit of man, but paid little attention to individual men. He lived only for his work, which this man and ten thousand like him supported with their labor. And the society they represented had withdrawn that support. Win's work had, at last, betrayed him.

The inspector looked curiously at the rope, but answered the question. "Yes, sir, and sealed except the one off F-corridor, which I'll get next. We'll be ready well ahead of time."

"Fine; I suppose you know this will be our last run. We want to make it a good one."

"Yes, sir, I heard. Excuse me, I've got to check that last door."

The inspector hurried away, throwing a look of troubled sympathy over his shoulder. He was young, and could find another job.

As soon as the man was out of sight Win broke his seal, spun the pressure wheel, and opened the door. Inside, he tightened the inner wheel.

When building a base on the Moon with limited funds, economy ruled. On Earth a vacuum chamber would have had elaborate electronic security systems. Here the inspector and his stamp had to suffice. Unless someone rechecked that door, which was highly unlikely, his entry would not be discovered.

It was extremely cold inside, though nothing to what it would be when the dome opened. Win shivered violently, controlled it by relaxing, and hurried up the metal stairs to the overhead catwalk. He followed the familiar path to the narrow track leading to the cage.

No inside operator was required on this run, and the small cage at the prime focus, the only area inside the dome where air was allowed, was empty.

Win tied the line securely to the rail outside the cage, and dropped the free end over the side. It came to rest just above the concave surface of the 160-inch mirror.

With one leg already over the railing Win hesitated, then returned to the catwalk and hastily removed his shoes. He could take no chances on ruining the year's work that had gone into polishing that expensive reflector. And then he realized his clothes would probably out-gas in the vacuum, and spread fibers everywhere; he shed them also. Win threw clothes and shoes into the cage and sealed it shut again.

The cold from the metal catwalk seemed to run up his legs and into his chest, where it changed to fire. He was shivering again, so badly he could hardly hold the rope, but managed to scramble over the railing and lower himself toward the mirror. Despite the weakness of his old muscles the strength derived from a heredity of one gravity enabled him to climb down with relative ease.

Win wondered, as his feet touched the hallowed surface of the only worthwhile telescopic mirror still left to man, if even this would be enough. Not being religious, he could not pray; he could only hope.

He was rapidly growing numb from the cold, but still felt the extra chill from the glass. An internal control system kept it at a constant low temperature. Win glanced at his watch, which he had forgotten to remove; evacuation would start in fifteen minutes. He wondered if he would last even that long. Win slipped off the watch and carefully hurled it into an open area, where it could lie harmlessly forever. Then he took two steps to the hole in the mirror's center, and stood looking down into it. Strange, how large the 32-inch diameter seemed. Very carefully he lay down around the edge. It wouldn't do to have his body tumble in if they moved the scope before finding him; the sensitive instrumentation underneath could be damaged.

Lying on the refrigerated glass surface brought on a fresh fit of shivering, but it soon passed. He was growing numb. After a few minutes Win lost all feeling of contact with the mirror. His mind seemed

divorced from the body that had labored eighty-four years to support it, as though, at the last, declaring its final superiority. But he was still conscious when the first faint throbbing of the evacuation pumps reached his ears.

Win wished, somehow, it would be possible to remain alive until the dome split overhead, allowing one last look at the stars.

He knew, as usual, he was wishing for that which could not be granted.

"*They did it!*" Charley Abrams burst abruptly into Len Sterenko's office, waving a telefax sheet. "They did it, Len! The full House overrode the committee! 'Appropriations to continue at present level of funding for four more years.'" The big man paused, jubilation giving way to sorrow. "If only Win could be here with us, if he hadn't . . ."

"Easy, Charley; don't let it get to you." The acting director of Moon-Eye came swiftly around the desk and clasped his friend's shoulder. "Look, you don't think we had a chance in hell of getting that money before Win's suicide, do you? That was what got us the national headlines, the thousands upon thousands of letters pouring into Congress. Don't you think the old man knew what he was doing?"

A startled look crossed Charley's face. "You mean . . . Oh my God! Of course! And I never thought of it . . ."

"Remember how he took off his shoes and clothes, even threw away the wrist watch, to keep from damaging the mirror?"

"You're right, you're right!" Charley hurried toward the door. "I've got to tell the others . . ."

Len Sterenko watched him go, then slowly returned to his desk. They would never be able to prove it, but—

He asked himself if he truly believed that Winston Takamira, in committing suicide, had guessed that his sacrifice might save Moon-Eye.

He answered that he did.

And he thought: *What will I do four years from now when they try to kill Moon-Eye again?*