

Down To A Sunless Sea

High, oh, high, oh, they jingle in the sky oh!
Bright how bright the light of those twin moons of Xanadu, Xanadu the lost, Xanadu the lovely, Xanadu the seat of pleasure. Pleasure of the senses, body, mind, soul. Soul? Who said anything about soul?

Where they were standing the wind whispered softly. From time to time Madu in an ageless feminine gesture tugged at her tiny silver skirt or adjusted her equally nominal open sleeveless jacket. Not that she was cold. Her abbreviated costume was appropriate to Xanadu's equable climate.

She thought: "I wonder what he will be like, this Lord of the Instrumentality? Will he be old or young, fair or dark, wise or foolish?" She did not think "handsome or ugly." Xanadu was noted for the physical perfection of its inhabitants, and Madu was too young to expect anything less.

Lari, waiting beside her, was not thinking of the Space Lord.

His mind was seeing again the video tapes of the dancing, the intricate steps and beautiful frenzy of movement of the group from ancient days of Manhome, the group labeled

"Bawl-shoy."

"Someday," he thought, "oh, perhaps someday I too can dance like that. . ."

Kuat thought: "Who do they think they're fooling? In all the years I've been governor of Xanadu this is the first time a Lord has been here. War hero of the battle of Styron IV indeed! Why, that's been over substantive months ago. . . . He's had plenty of time to recover if it's really true he was wounded. No, there's something more. . . they know or suspect something. . . Well, we'll keep him busy. Shouldn't be hard to do here with all the pleasures Xanadu has to offer. . . and there's Madu. No, he can't complain or he'll blow his cover. . . ."

And all the while, as the ornithopter neared, their destiny was approaching. He did not know that he was to be their destiny; he did not intend to be their destiny, and their destiny had not been predetermined.

The passenger in the descending ornithopter reached out with his mind to try to perceive the place, to sense it. It was hard, terribly hard. . . there seemed to be a thick cloud-like cover a mist between his mind and the minds he tried to feel. Was it himself, his mind damage from the war? Or was it something more, the atmosphere of the planet something to deter or prevent telepathy?

Lord bin Permaiswari shook his head. He was so full of self-doubt, so confused. Ever since the battle. . . the mind scarring probes of the fear machines... how much permanent damage had they done? Perhaps here on Xanadu he could rest and forget.

As he stepped from the ornithopter Lord bin Permaiswari felt an even greater sense of bewilderment. He had known that Xanadu had no sun, but he was unprepared for the soft shadowless light which greeted him.

The twin moons hung, seemingly, side by side, while their light was reflected by millions of mirrors. In the near distance li after li of white sand beaches stretched, while farther on stood chalk cliffs with the jet-black sea foaming on their bases. Black, white, silver, the colors of Xanadu.

Kuat approached him without delay. Kuat's sense of apprehension had diminished appreciably at the first glimpse of the Space Lord. The visitor did indeed look ill and confused; correspondingly, Kuat's amiability increased without conscious effort on his part.

"Xanadu extends you welcome, oh Lord bin Permaiswari.

Xanadu and all that Xanadu contains is yours." The traditional greeting sounded strange in his rough tones. The Space Lord saw before him a huge man, tall and correspondingly heavy, muscles gleaming, his longish reddish hair and beard showing magenta in the light of the moons and mirrors.

"It gives me pleasure. Governor Kuat, merely to be in Xanadu, and I return the planet and its contents to you," replied Lord Kemal bin Permaiswari.

Kuat turned and gestured toward his two companions.

"This is Madu, a distant relative, and so my ward. And this is Lari, my brother, son of my father's fourth wife she who drowned herself in the Sunless Sea." The Space Lord winced at Kuat's laugh, but the young people appeared not to notice it.

Gentle Madu hid her disappointment and greeted the Lord with becoming modesty. She had expected (hoped for?) a shining figure, a blazing armor, or perhaps simply an aura which proclaimed

"I am a hero." Instead she saw an intellectual-looking man, tired, looking somehow older than his substantive thirty years. She wondered what he had done, how this

man could be the talk of the Instrumentality as the savior of human culture in the battle of Styron IV.

Lari, because he was a male, knew more of the facts of the battle than Madu, and he greeted Lord bin Permaiswari with grave respect. In his dream world, second only to dancers and runners of easy grace, Lari looked up to intelligence. This was the man who had dared to pit himself, his living mind, his intellect against the dread fear machines ... and won! The price was evident in his face, but he had WON. Lari placed his hands together and held them to his forehead in a gesture of homage.

The Lord reached out in a gesture which won Lari's heart forever. He touched Lari's hand and said,

"My friends call me Kemal." Then he turned to include Madu and, almost as an afterthought, Kuat.

Kuat did not notice the near omission. He had turned and was walking toward what appeared to be a huge lump of yellow and black striped fur. He made a peculiar hissing sound, and at once the lump separated into four enormous cats.

Each cat was saddled, and each saddle was equipped with a holding ring, but there was no apparent means of guiding the cats.

Kuat answered Kemal's question.

"No, of course there's no way to guide them. They're pure cat, you know, unmodified except for size. No under people here! I think we're the only planet in the Instrumentality that doesn't have under people except for Norstrilia, of course. But the reasons for Norstrilia and Xanadu are at the opposite ends of the spectrum. We enjoy our senses . . . none of that nonsense about hard work building character like the Norstrilians believe. We don't believe in austerity and all that malarkey. We just get more sensual pleasure out of our unmodified animals. We have robots to do the dirty work."

Kemal nodded. After all, wasn't that what he was here for?

To allow his senses to repair his damaged mind?

Nonetheless, the man who had faced the fear machines with scarcely a tremble did not know how to approach the cat which was designated as his.

Madu saw his hesitation.

"Griselda is perfectly friendly,"

she said.

"Just wait a minute till I scratch her ears; she'll lie down and you can mount."

Kemal glanced up and caught an expression of disgust in Kuat's eyes. It did not help in his search for self-mending.

Madu, oblivious to Kuat's displeasure, had coaxed the great cat to kneeling position and smiled up at Kemal.

Kemal felt something like pain stab him at her glance. She was so beautiful and so innocent; her vulnerability wrenched at his heart. He remembered the Lady Ru's quotation of an ancient sage: "Innocence within is armor without," but a web of fear settled on his mind. He brushed it aside and mounted the cat.

The As he lay dying nearly three centuries later, he remembered that ride. It was as thrilling as his first space jump. The leap into nothingness and then the sudden realization that he was traveling, traveling, traveling without volition, with no personal control over the direction his body might take. Before fear had the opportunity to assert itself it was converted into a visceral, almost orgasmic excitement, a gush of pleasure almost too strong to bear.

Lank dark hair flying in his face, the Lord bin Permaiswari would have been unrecognizable to the Lords and Ladies who gathered at the Bell on Old Earth in time of crisis. They would not have recognized the boyish glee in a face which they were accustomed to seeing as grave and preoccupied. He laughed in the wind and tightened his knees against Griselda's flanks, holding the saddle ring with one hand as he turned

back to wave at the others who were somewhat behind.

Griselda seemed to sense his pleasure at her long effortless bounds. Suddenly the ride took on a new proportion. Overhead the ornithopter which had brought the Space Lord to Xanadu passed by on its way back to the spaceport. At once Griselda left the pride and leapt futilely after the ascending ornithopter.

As she attempted to bat at it, Kemal was forced to use both hands on the holding ring in order not to fall off ignominiously.

She continued to leap and bat hopelessly in its direction until it disappeared from sight. Then she sat down to lick herself and, inadvertently, her passenger.

Lord Kemal found her sandpaper tongue not unpleasant, but he winced as her fang brushed his leg. At some distance Kuat sat laughing. Madu's face, even in the distance, showed concern, however, which cleared as the Lord waved to her.

Lari, confident in the powers of the hero of Styron IV, was gazing dreamily at the distant city.

Slowly now, Griselda joined the rest of the pride, her attitude apparently one of some embarrassment at having performed such a kittenish prank when she had been entrusted with the welfare of the distinguished visitor.

In the distance the domes and towers of the city gleamed nacreous in the soft shadowless light of the moons and mirrors.

Lord Kemal had his sense of unreality reinforced. The city looked so beautiful and so unreal that he had the feeling it might vanish as they approached. He was to learn that the city and all it stood for were all too real.

As they neared the city walls, Kemal could see that the stark whiteness of the city from afar was an illusion. The shimmering white walls of the buildings were set with gemstones in intricate patterns, flowers, leaves, and geometric designs all heightening the beauty of the incredible architecture. In all the worlds he had visited Lord Kemal had seen nothing to equal this city; Philip's palace on the Gem Planet was a hovel compared to these buildings.

Formal gardens with fountains and artificial pools separated the buildings. Shrubbery in an artful plan which gave the appearance of being natural was planted here and there.

Suddenly the Space Lord realized another strange aspect of the planet: he had seen no trees.

Dogs yipped at them from safe distances as they entered the city, but this time Griselda refused to be tempted. Now that she was in the city she had assumed a certain dignity; it was as if she wanted to forget her previous dereliction. She headed straight for the palace steps.

Lord Kemal could feel the muscles of Griselda's haunches tighten as she prepared to hurdle up the steps and through the open door. It would be a tight squeeze for the two of them.

Fortunately Kuat reached the steps first and hissed his command to her. Kemal could feel her reluctance. She would much have preferred bounding up the steps, but she obeyed.

She lay belly down, back feet crouched, front feet stretched forward; the Lord Kemal dismounted easily but with reluctance, a regret almost as great as Griselda's that the ride was over. He reached over to scratch the cat's ears.

Madu smiled approvingly.

"That's right. When you make friends with your cat, she'll obey you much more readily."

Kuat grunted.

"I have my own way for making them obey if they get too many ideas of their own." For the first time the Space Lord noticed a small barbed whip tucked into Kuat's belt, to which Kuat pointed now.

"Kuat, you wouldn't," Madu protested.

"You never have . . .

."

"You haven't seen me," he said. Then as her face clouded he added as if reassuringly "Up to now I haven't needed to. But don't think I wouldn't."

Kemal noticed that Kuat's reassurance was not quite adequate. A gauze of doubt or wonder seemed to obscure the open brightness of Madu's face. Once more the Lord Kemal felt a stab of fear for her and once more dismissed it.

It was her innocence he feared for. He found that her eyes reminded him of D'irena from the ancient days of his true youth before he had been made wise in the ways of mankind, before he had been made to know that under persons and true men could not mix as equals. D'irena with the fawn like grace, the soft gentle mouth, the innocent eyes of the doe she was derived from. What had happened to her after he left? Did her eyes still hold that candid ingenuousness which he saw mirrored in Madu's eyes? Or had she mated with some gross stag and had some of his grossness transferred itself to her?

He hoped, remembering her fondly, that she had mated with a fine

The buck who had given her does as gentle and as graceful as she was in his memory. He shook his head. The fear machines had stirred up all kinds of strange memories and feelings. Absently, he petted the cat.

Servants came forward to unsaddle the cats. With a renewed start the Space Lord realized that these were true men, not under persons doing work, and he remembered Kuat's statement about enjoying the sensuality of animals. There was something else, something he had almost thought of, but he could not quite think... it was as if he tried to catch the tail of an elusive animal as it disappeared around the corner.

Led by Kuat and trailed by Madu and Lari, the Lord Kemal threaded his

way through a maze of rooms and corridors. Each seemed more amazing than the last. The only time the Space Lord had seen anything similar had been on videotapes a reconstruction of old Manhome as it had been before Radiation III. The walls were hung with tapestries and paintings based on reproductions of those from Earth; couches, statues, rugs of color and warmth brought here by Xanadu's founder, the original Kahn. Yes, Xanadu was a return to pleasure of the senses, to luxury and beauty, to the unnecessary.

Kemal felt himself beginning to relax in this atmosphere of enchantment, but the spell was broken when, upon reaching the main salon, Kuat unceremoniously flung himself into the nearest couch. As he stretched full length, he vaguely waved a hand to the rest of the party.

"Sit down, sit down," he said. Candles flickered and glowed; low tables and couches stood about invitingly.

For the first time since the introduction on the Space Lord's arrival Lari spoke spontaneously.

"We welcome you to our home," he said, "and hope that we can do all possible to make your visit enjoyable."

Kemal realized that he had paid little attention to the youth because he had been so absorbed in new impressions, and (he had to admit it to himself) the girl Madu had fascinated him.

Lari, in his own way, was as physically perfect as Madu. Tall, slender, lightly muscled, a golden boy. And, like Madu, he had a curious air of openness, of vulnerability. It seemed strange to the Lord Kemal that these two should grow up so innocent under the guardianship of a man as coarse and boorish as Kuat seemed.

Kuat interrupted his reverie.

"Come! The djudi!"

Madu immediately moved toward a table on which rested a copper-colored tray with silvery highlights. On the tray sat a dual-spouted pitcher of the same material and eight small matching goblets. A lid covered the top of the pitcher. As Madu picked up the pitcher, Kuat gave one of the grunts which the Space Lord was finding increasingly distasteful.

"Just be sure you put your thumb over the right hole."

Her answering tone was indulgent but as nearly scornful as Kemal could imagine her being.

"I've been doing this since childhood. Is it likely I'd forget now?"

In after years it seemed to Kemal bin Permaiswari that this night was one of the important turns that his life took in its convoluted passage through time. He seemed removed from events as they occurred; he seemed a spectator, watching the actions, not only of the others but of himself, as if he had no control over them, as if in a dream . . .

Madu knelt gracefully and placed a thumb over one of the two holes at

the top of the pitcher. Candlelight played over the light silvery dusting of powder which covered the entire area of her bare skin. As she poured the reddish liquid into four of the little goblets, Kemal noticed that even the nails of her small hands were painted silver.

Kuat raised his goblet. The first toast by the rules of politeness should have been to the guest of honor, or at the very least to the Instrumentality, but Kuat went by his own rules.

"To pleasure," he said, and drank the contents with one gulp.

While the rest of the party slowly sipped their drinks, Kuat roused himself to pour another cupful. He had swallowed the second cupful before the others had finished their first.

The Lord Kemal savored the taste of the djudi. Unlike anything he had ever tasted before, neither sweet nor sour, it was more like the juice of pomegranate than any other flavor he had tasted, and yet it was unique.

As he sipped he felt a pleasant tingling sensation pervade his body. By the time he had finished the cup he had decided that djudi was the most delicious thing he had ever tasted.

Instead of muddling his wits like alcohol or conferring nothing but sensual pleasure like the electrode, djudi seemed to heighten all his senses, his awareness. All colors were brighter, background music of which he had been only dimly aware was suddenly piercingly lovely, the texture of the brocaded couch was a thing of joy, perfumes of flowers he had never known overwhelmed him. His scarred mind rejected Styron IV and all its implications. He felt a glow of comradeship, momentarily even toward Kuat, and suddenly felt he had come against a Daimoni wall.

Then he knew. His inability to sense or to read the other minds on this planet did not lie within himself or any defect incurred through the fear machines but was directly connected to Kuat, to some non authorized barrier which Kuat had erected.

The barrier was imperfect, however. Kuat had not been able merely to keep his own thoughts from being read; he had had to set up a universal barrier. This was obvious from the fact that Kuat showed no indication that he could sense the Space Lord.

"And what," thought Kemal, "do you have to hide? What is so much

against the laws of the Instrumentality that you have had to set up a universal mind barrier?"

Kuat, relaxed, smiled pleasantly.

For the first time since Styron IV the Lord Kemal bin Permaiswari felt that he might in truth recover completely. It was the first time he had felt really interested in anything.

Madu brought him back to his present situation.

"You like our djudi?" It was hardly a question.

Kemal nodded, blissful and still absorbed in the puzzle he had

encountered.

"You may have one more," she said, "but that is all that is good for you. After that, one begins to lose one's senses, and that, after all, is not pleasurable, is it?"

She poured the second cup for Kemal, for Lari and herself.

Kuat reached for the pitcher, and she slapped playfully at his hand.

"One more and you might pour yourself pi sang by accident."

He laughed.

"I am bigger than most men and can drink more than they."

"At least let me pour it then," she said, and proceeded to do so.

She turned again to the Space Lord with a playful gaiety which did not ring quite true.

"He is one whom we must all indulge; but, really, it is dangerous to have too much. You see how this pitcher is made?"

She took off the lid to demonstrate the division of the pitcher.

"In one half is djudi; in the other there is pi sang which is identical in taste to djudi, but it is deadly. One cup kills anyone drinking it within eefunjung." Involuntarily Kemal shuddered. The unit of time she mentioned was so small as to be almost instantaneous.

"No antidote?"

"None."

Lari, who had been sitting quietly, now spoke.

"It is the same thing, really. Djudi is the distilled pi sang. They come from a fruit which grows here, only on Xanadu. Galaxy knows how many people must have died eating the fruit or drinking the fermented but undistilled pi sang before the secret of djudi was discovered."

"Worth every one of them," Kuat laughed. Any remaining warmth engendered by the djudi which the Space Lord might have felt toward the Governor of Xanadu was dissipated. His curiosity regarding the duality of the pitcher, however, was aroused.

"But if you know that pi sang is poison, why do you keep it in the same container with djudi? For that matter, why do you keep it in its undistilled state at all?"

Madu nodded agreement.

"I have often asked the same question, and the answers I get make no sense."

"It's the excitement of danger," Lari said.

"Don't you enjoy the djudi more knowing there's the element of chance

you'll get pi sang

"That's what I said," Madu repeated.

"The answers make no sense."

At this point Kuat broke in. His speech was slightly slurred, but he spoke intelligently enough.

"In the first place, there is tradition. In the old days, under the first Kahn and before Xanadu came under the jurisdiction of the Lords of the Instrumentality, there was a great deal of lawlessness on Xanadu. There were power struggles for leadership. People came here from other planets to plunder our richness. There had to be some simple way of eliminating them before they knew they were being eliminated. The double pitcher is copied, so they say, from a Chinesian one brought by the first Kahn. I don't know about that, but it has become traditional here. You won't find a djudi holder on Xanadu without its corresponding pi sang holder." He nodded wisely, as if he had explained everything, but the Space Lord was not satisfied.

"All right," he said, "you make the pitchers in the traditional way, but why, by Venus's clouds, must you continue to put pi sang in them?"

Kuat's answer, when it came, was in even more slurred tones than his previous speech; the effects of too much djudi began to make him sound intoxicated, and the Space Lord made mental note to heed Madu's injunctions not to exceed two cupfuls of the drink. Kuat gave a rather leering smile and wagged a finger admonishingly at Lord Kemal.

"Strangers mustn't ask too many questions. Might still be enemies around and we're all prepared. Anyway, that's the way we execute criminals on Xanadu." His laugh was uninhibited.

"They don't know what they're getting. It's like a lottery.

Sometimes I tease them a little. Give them djudi first, and they start to think they're going to be freed. Then I give them another cup, and they don't suspect a thing. Drink it happily because nothing happened with the first cup. Then when the paralysis hits them ha! you should see their faces!"

For an instant the latent dislike which the Space Lord had conceived for Kuat sprang full grown. But the man's intoxicated, in effect, he thought. And then: But is this the real man speaking?

"No, no, Kuat, you don't mean that!"

Realization seemed to return to Kuat. He gave his brother's knee a reassuring pat.

"No, no, course don't. Think I'll go to bed. You'll take care of guest, won't you?"

He staggered slightly as he stood up but managed to walk fairly steadily from the room.

Suddenly the barrier was down slightly. He could not read Kuat's mind, but the Space Lord could sense, somewhere on the planet, something

evil, strange, unlawful. A coldness seemed to replace the warmth of the djudi in his veins.

596 The Across the white dunes the wind was beginning to rise. Far from the city, protected by the ancient crater lake of the sunless sea, the laboratory had a deceptive exterior placidity. Within, the illegal die hr-dead, not yet quite sentient, stirred in their am biotic fluid; outside, trees bearing their deadly fruit seemed to quiver as if in dread anticipation.

Madu sighed.

"I knew he shouldn't have had that last one, but he would do it." She turned toward Lari, oblivious of the Space Lord, and said reassuringly: "Of course he didn't mean what he said about teasing the prisoners. He's been so good to us all these years ... nobody could be so kind to us and cruel in other ways, could he?"

Once more the Space Lord glanced in Lari's direction. The handsome young face, vital but young, so young, held a look of uneasiness.

"No, I suppose not, and still I've heard tales...." He broke off, remembering the presence of the Space Lord.

"Of course it's all nonsense," he concluded, but Lord Kemal had the feeling that he was trying as much to reassure himself as to erase the bad impression his brother had made.

"We will eat now," Madu said brightly, and stood up to go into the dining salon. Again the Space Lord felt as if the subject were being changed.

II

In after years the Space Lord remembered. Thoughts raced through his mind. Oh, Xanadu, there is nothing with which to liken you in all the galaxies. The shadowless days and nights, the treeless plains, the sudden rainless blasts of thunder and lightning which somehow add to your charm. Griselda. The only pure animal I ever knew. The great rumbling purr, the soft pink nose with the black spot on one side, the eyes which seemed to look beyond the features of my face into my very being. Oh, Griselda, I hope that somewhere you still bound and leap . . .

But now: the first few days of the Lord Kemal bin Permaiswari on Xanadu passed quickly as he was introduced to the infinite pleasures of Xanadu.

On the day following Kemal's arrival a footrace had been scheduled in which Lari was to run. The element of competition which had been brought back to Xanadu was part of a deliberate return to the simpler joys which mankind in its mechanization had forgotten.

Crowds at the stadium were gay and bright. Most of the young girls wore their hair loose and flowing; the women, old and young alike, wore the typical costume of Xanadu: tiny short skirt and open sleeveless jacket. On most worlds the older women would have looked grotesque or at least

ludicrous in this costume, and the younger women would have seemed lewd. But on Xanadu there was a basic innocence and acceptance of the body, and almost without exception the women of Xanadu, irrespective of age, seemed to have retained their lovely lithe figures, and there was no false modesty to call attention to their seminudity.

Most of the young people, male and female alike, wore the shimmering body powder which the Space Lord had first noted on Madu; some matched the powder to their clothes, others to their hair or eyes. A few wore a colorless luminescent dusting. Of them all, the Space Lord thought Madu the loveliest.

She radiated excitement, a portion of which communicated itself to Lord Kemal. Kuat seemed unemotional.

"How can you sit there so calmly?" she asked.

"The boy'll win, you know. Anyway horse racing is more exciting."

"For you, maybe. Not for me."

Lord Kemal was interested.

"I have never seen this racing," he said.

"What is it? The horses all run together to see which is the fastest?"

Madu nodded agreement.

"They all start at a given signal and run a predetermined path. The one who reaches the goal first is the winner. He," she nodded her head playfully in Kuat's direction, "likes to bet, that is to wager, that his horse will win.

That is why he likes horse races better than human races."

"And you have no wager on the human races?"

"Oh, no. It would be degrading to human beings to wager on their abilities or accomplishments!"

There were three races that day, each one narrowing the field of contestants. It became evident that there was no real competition; Lari so far outdistanced the others that it was almost embarrassing. If he had not been so obviously a superb runner, it would have been easy to assume that the others had held back in order to allow the brother of the governor of Xanadu to win.

Kuat went off to the center of the stadium to participate in a copy of an ancient ritual from old Manhome in which a crown of golden leaves was set on Lari's hair.

In his absence, Lord Kemal heard various whisperings behind him in which he caught the words "dance with the aroi," "old governor will not be pleased," "too bad his mother. .." Madu seemed not to be listening.

After the celebrations, when the Governor and his party had returned to the palace, Lord Kemal remembered the curious phrases; in particular he

was puzzled by the present or future tense of "old governor will be (not would have been) pleased." It stuck in his mind and fretted there, like a splinter in a sore finger.

His mind was only just recovering from the

wounds of the fear machines, and he decided he could not risk a further infection.

While Kuat was having his second goblet of djudi. Lord Kemal said, most casually,

"How long have you been governor of Xanadu, Kuat?"

The latter glanced up, sensing something beneath the casualness of the immediate question.

Lari interrupted.

"I was a small baby " Kuat's gesture silenced him.

"For many years," he said.

"Does it matter how many?"

"No, I was curious," said the Space Lord, deciding on modified candor.

"I thought that the governorship of Xanadu was hereditary, but I heard something today which made me believe that the governor your father was still alive."

Again Lari, before Kuat could silence him, rushed to answer.

"But he is. He's with the aroi... that's why my mother " Kuat's frown silenced him.

"These are not matters for the Instrumentality. These are matters of Xanadu's local customs, protected by Article #376984, sub-article a, paragraph 34c of the instrument under which Xanadu agreed to come under the protection of the Instrumentality. I can assure the Lord that only domestic matters of purely autochthonous origin are concerned."

Lord Kemal nodded in ostensible agreement. He felt that he had somehow uncovered another small portion of the mystery which intrigued him, interested him as nothing else had done since Styron IV.

III

On the fourth "day" of his stay on Xanadu, Lord Kemal went out with Madu and Lari for his first experience beyond the walls of the city since his arrival. By this time, the Space Lord had become quite fond of the cat Griselda. It pleased him inordinately when she gave a great purr of pleasure and lay down for him to mount without awaiting a command.

He saw animals in a new light. With poignancy he knew that under persons modified animals in the shape of human beings, were truly neither one thing nor the other. Oh, there were under persons of great intelligence and power but... he let the thought trail off.

They raced across the plains with a singular joy. Windswept, treeless, the small planet had a wild beauty of its own. The black sea lashed at the foot of the chalk cliffs. Kemal, watching the li of sand, felt the strangeness of the place once more. In the distance he saw a great bird rise, falter, then fall.

Later, much later, the song the computer wrote when he fed it the facts of time and place became known throughout the galaxies: On a dark mountain Alone in the cloud The eagle paused And the wind shrieked aloud The thunder rolled And the mist of the cloud Formed the eagle's shroud As it fell to the ground Wings battered and torn.

And the surf At the foot Of the cliff Was white That night , And bright The wing s Of the fallin g Bird.

I heard The cry.

Perhaps it was testimony to the depth of his feeling that the Lord Kemal fed these facts to the computer in such a way that some of his agony was expressed.

Madu and Lari watched also as the bird fell, their bright joy overcast by something they could not quite comprehend.

"But why?" Madu whispered.

"It flew along as freely as we were riding, we bounded as it soared, all free and happy. And now . . ."

"And now we must forget it," said the Space Lord, of a wisdom born of endless endurance and a wariness he wished he did not feel. But he himself could not forget it. Hence the computer.

"On a dark mountain . . ."

More slowly now, chilled by the death of beauty, of life, they proceeded, each involved in thought.

"What waste!" the Space Lord thought. What waste of beauty.

The bird had soared free as a dream. Why? A strange current of air? Or something more deadly?

"What did my mother feel?" thought Lari.

"What were her feelings and thoughts when she walked into the warm deep dark sea and knew she would never return?"

Madu felt confused and lonely. It was the first time that she personally had ever confronted death in any form. Her parents were unreal to her; she had never known them. But this bird she had seen it alive and free, flying, concerned with nothing more important than its graceful glides and soaring; and now, suddenly, it was dead. She could not reconcile the two thoughts in her mind.

It was Lord Kemal who, because of his age and experience, recovered first.

"You haven't told me," he said, "where we are going."

Madu's smile was a feeble echo of her usual glow, but she made the effort.

"We're going to ride around the edge of the crater up there by the peak. It's a beautiful view, and when you stand there you can almost get the idea that you can see the whole planet."

Lari nodded, determined to participate in the conversation despite the dark thoughts which had clouded his mind.

"It's true,"

he said.

"You can even see the grove of buah trees from there. It's from the fruit of the buah trees that we get pi sang and djudi."

"I was curious about that," the Space Lord said.

"I haven't seen a tree since I landed on the planet."

"No," said Madu and Lari simultaneously. It created a small diversion, and they both laughed spontaneously, acting more naturally than they had since the death of the bird. Unconsciously they communicated their more cheerful attitude to the cats, which now began to bound forward once more at increased speed.

The Space Lord's happiness at the upswing in spirits of his young companions was tempered with chagrin that the conversation, which had started to be interesting, could not continue while their steeds were proceeding at this breakneck speed.

As they continued uphill, however, the cats gradually began to slow. The change was imperceptible at first, but as the long climb continued, Lord Kemal could feel Griselda's increasing effort. He had begun to think that nothing could tire her, but the climb to the edge of the crater was considerably longer than it looked from below.

That the other cats were also feeling the strain was evident from their decreased pace.

The Space Lord reopened the conversation.

"You were going to tell me about the trees," he said.

It was Lari who answered first.

"You are quite right about not having seen any trees," he said.

"The only trees which grow on Xanadu except the buah trees are the Kelapa trees, and they grow down in the craters of the

smaller volcanoes. You can see some of them too when we get to the crater rim. But the buah trees always grow in groves there must be both male and female to bear fruit, and the fruit can only be approached at certain times. Otherwise, even to inhale the scent is deadly."

Madu gravely concurred.

"We must always keep at a distance from the buah grove until Kuat has consulted with the aroi, and when he tells us the time is right, then everyone on Xanadu participates in the harvest. The aroi dance, and it is the best time of all... ."

Lari shook his head, disapprovingly.

"Madu, there are things we don't talk about to outsiders."

Her face suffused, eyes suddenly welling, she stammered, "But a Lord of the Instrumentality ..."

Both men realized her unhappiness, and each in his own way hastened to remedy it. The Space Lord said,

"I'm good at not remembering things I shouldn't."

Lari smiled at her and put his right hand hard on her shoulder.

"It's all right. He understands, and you didn't mean any harm. We won't either of us say anything to Kuat."

As he lay in his room after dinner, the Space Lord tried to reconstruct the afternoon. They had reached the rim of the crater and it had been as Madu said: one could feel as if the horizon were infinite. The Space Lord had felt an overwhelming sense of the magnitude of infinity, something he had never quite experienced to this degree before in all of his trips through space or time. And yet there had been a small nagging feeling that something was not quite right.

Pan of the feeling was associated with the grove of buah trees. He was sure that he had glimpsed a building as the uncertain, sometimes gusting, sometimes gentle wind blew the buah branches. He had not mentioned this observation to the young people. It was probably something else autochthonous and therefore forbidden to discussion, or surely one of them would have mentioned it.

He searched his memory (yes, he felt, his mind was definitely recovering) for a person among the servants at the palace who might be willing to talk to a Lord of the Instrumentality.

Suddenly he remembered something of which he must have made subliminal note at the time without being consciously aware. One of the men in the cat stable. What was it now? He had drawn a fish in the cat sand and then, glancing at the face of the Space Lord, had casually brushed it over. Later he had caught the gleam of metal at the man's neck. Could it have been a cross of the God Nailed High? Was there a member of the Old Strong Religion here on Xanadu? If so, he had a subject for blackmail.

Or did he? The man had been trying to communicate to him.

Now that

he thought of it, he was sure. Well, at least he had a possible colleague. Now all he had to do was remember the man's name.

He gave his mind free association; the face came to him; the man's hand fumbling at the chain at his neck... yes, certainly the cross, he could see it now . . . why hadn't he noticed it before? ... but there it was, recorded on his mind . . .

and, yes, the man's name: Mr.-Stokely-from-Boston. The unlikely suspicion that there was, after all, an under person on Xanadu crossed his mind, Mr.-Stokely-from-Boston did not look as if he were animal-derived, but the name indicated something odd in his background.

Lord Kemal bin Permaiswari felt he could not wait until "morning" to try to further his acquaintance with Mr.-Stokelyfrom-Boston. What excuse could he have to go down to the cat stables at this hour? The gates of Xanadu were closed for the next eight hours. Then he realized that he had been thinking as an ordinary human being. He was a Lord of the Instrumentality.

Why should he have to have an excuse for anything he chose to do? Kuat might be Governor of Xanadu, but in the schema of the Instrumentality he was a very small speck.

Nevertheless, the Space Lord felt it best to be circumspect in his movements. Kuat had demonstrated his ruthlessness, and certain of these "autochthonous" practices seemed very peculiar. A Space Lord who "accidentally" drank pi sang while of a disordered mind might be written off. And there was the well-being of Mr.-Stokely-from-Boston to be considered.

Griselda. That was the answer. He had noticed that she was sneezing this afternoon ... he had even mentioned it to Madu and Lari... and they had passed it off as dust or pollen. But it would serve as an excuse. He had become so obviously fond of Griselda as to be the subject of teasing of a mild sort on her behalf. Certainly no one would find his concern for her out of the ordinary.

The corridors seemed strangely deserted as he strode through on his way to the cat stable. He realized that he had not ventured from his living area after the final meal of the day since his arrival on Xanadu. Apparently everyone retired after this meal, servants and masters alike. He wondered if the stables would also be deserted.

It was his incredible good fortune to find Mr.-Stokely-from Boston alone. At least, at the time, he assumed that the meeting was fortuitous. Later he questioned the bird-man. Mr.-Stokelyfrom-Boston had proved to be, as the Space Lord had wildly surmised, an under person

Mr.-Stokely-from-Boston's smile was wise and kindly.

"You see, Governor Kuat has no suspicion at all that I am an under person And, of course, the universal mind barrier has no operative effect on me. It was a

little difficult, but I see I did manage to get through to you. I was somewhat worried when my mind probe showed all the leftover scar tissue from Styron IV, but I've been using the latest methods to try healing your mind, and I'm sure we're succeeding very nicely."

The Space Lord felt an odd momentary resentment that this

animal-derived person had such an intimate acquaintance with his mind, but the anger was short-lived because he quickly equated the empathy he had built up with Griselda to the mental communication he was having with the bird-man.

Mr.-Stokely-from-Boston smiled even more broadly.

"I was quite right about you, Lord bin Permaiswari. You are the ally we have been needing here on Xanadu. You look surprised?"

Lord bin Permaiswari nodded.

"The governor was so firm that there were no under persons on Xanadu "Getting through has not been without its difficulties," Mr.-Stokely-from-Boston acknowledged, "but I am not alone. And we have other human families, of course, but none so powerful as a Space Lord up to now.

Lord Kemal found that he did not resent the assumption that he was an ally. Again the bird-man read his thoughts and smiled at him. He had a curiously winning smile, assured but kindly. He looked trustworthy, and Lord Kemal felt himself ready to accept whatever the bird-man might say.

Their thoughts locked.

"Let me introduce myself properly,"

spieked the bird-man.

"My real name is E'duard, and my progenitor was the great E'telekeli, of whom you may have heard."

Lord Kemal found the false modesty of this statement rather touching. He bowed his head momentarily in respect; the legendary bird-man, the E'telekeli, was known throughout the Instrumentality as the acknowledged leader and spiritual advisor of the under persons This egg-derived under person could be a most helpful ally in carrying out the work of the Instrumentality or an opposition of fearful proportions. The Lords and Ladies who ruled the Instrumentality were anxious for his cooperation.

Many under persons were known to have extraordinary medical and psychic powers, and it comforted the Space Lord to know that the animal-derived person who had been manipulating his mind was a descendant of the E'telekeli. He found that he was spieking his thoughts because E'duard could obviously hier them.

It would certainly make the process of solving Xanadu's mystery simpler for the Space Lord if they cooperated, but first he wanted to know if their peculiar alliance violated any of the laws of the Instrumentality.

"No." E'duard was emphatic.

"In fact, it is a correction of matters

which are in direct conflict with he laws of the Instrumentality, with which we have to deal."

"Something 'autochthonous'?" asked the Space Lord shrewdly.

"Native culture is involved," E'duard agreed, "but it's really being used as a screen for something far more evil and I use the word 'evil' not only in this sense" (he held up the cross of the God Nailed High) "but in its sense of the basic violation of the rights of the living. I mean the right of an entity to exist, to exist on its own terms provided they do not violate the rights of others, to come to its own terms with life, and to make its own decisions."

For a second time Lord Kemal bin Permaiswari nodded in respect and agreement.

"These are inalienable rights."

E'duard shook his head.

"They should be," he spieked, "but on Xanadu, Kuat has found a way around that inalienability. You are, of course, familiar with the die hr-dead?"

"Of course.

"And the'er a life of their own . . ." " he quoted from an ancient song.

"But what does that have to do with the rights of the living? The die hr-dead are grown from the frozen bits of flesh of remarkable achievers long dead. It's true that in regenerating the physical person of the dead one we have sometimes had extraordinary results with the die hr-dead in their second lives; but sometimes not their achievements seem to have been a combination of circumstances and genes, not of genes alone...."

Again E'duard shook his head.

"It's not of the legal, scientifically controlled die hr-dead I speak, although I sometimes feel very sorry for them. But what would you think of die hr-dead grown from the living?"

The Space Lord looked his wonder and horror as E'duard continued.

"Diehr-dead who are controlled like puppets by Kuat, die hr-dead who are substituted for the originals, so that in truth neither the die hr-dead nor the original has a life of its own. . . ."

With quick realization the Space Lord knew what was in the building he had glimpsed in the grove of buah trees.

"That's the laboratory, isn't it?"

E'duard nodded.

"It's a perfect location. Kuat has spread the rumor that the scent of the buah tree is deadly except when, after consultation with the aroi, he pronounces it safe to harvest the fruit. So nobody dares approach the laboratory. All nonsense.

There is only a very short period, just before harvest, when the scent of the buah fruit is deadly ... in other words, just enough truth to

the rumor to give it currency. You saw our scout killed this morning " Lord Kemal looked uncomprehending.

"The unmodified eagle you saw fall from the skies this morning on your ride. He was scouting the

laboratory for us. He was shot with a pi sang dart. It's things like that which make people believe they must stay away from the grove."

"You could communicate?"

For the first time the Space Lord thought that the smile of the bird-man was a little smug.

"Of course." Then his face fell and his eyes became old and sad.

"He was a brother of mine; we were hatched in the same nest, but I was chosen for genetic coding as an under person and he was not. Our feelings are somewhat different from those of true persons, but we are capable of love and loyalty, and sadness as well...."

Lord Kemal saw again in memory the handsome soaring bird of his morning's ride, and he felt E'duard's sadness. Yes, he could believe in the feelings of the under persons E'duard touched his hand with a tentative finger.

"I could tell that you grieved for him without knowing any of the circumstances. It is one of the reasons I willed you to come tonight.

"There was a quick change in his mood.

"We must deal first with the aroi."

"I have heard the word, but I don't know its meaning," the Space Lord acknowledged.

"I'm not surprised. The aroi lead a life of pleasure: they sing, they dance, they entertain, and they serve as a kind of priesthood.

Both men and women make up the aroi, and they are respected and honored. But there's a singularly ghastly requirement for joining the aroi."

The Space Lord looked his question.

"All living descendants of the current mate of the person joining the aroi must be sacrificed. Or the mate must die, and if there is more than one offspring of that union, an equivalent number of other volunteers must also die."

Lord Kemal comprehended.

"So that is the reason that Lari's mother drowned herself in the sunless sea to save her infant son. But why did the old Governor join the aroi?"

"Don't you see? With Kuat as governor and the old Governor with the aroi, that pair of conspirators wields a power over this planet so absolute " "So it was a conspiracy from the beginning."

"Of course. Kuat was the son of the first wife, when the governor was in his first youth. In his old age he wanted to continue the power but with the help of a viceroy, as it were."

"And the die hr-dead in the laboratory?"

"That is the reason that the matter is urgent. They are fullgrown and almost sentient. They must be destroyed before they are substituted for the originals and the originals killed."

"I suppose there is no other way, but it seems almost like murder."

of Man E'duard disagreed.

"The substitution is both physical and spiritual murder. These die hr-dead are like robots without soul " He saw the Space Lord's faint smile. " I know you do not believe in the Old Strong Religion, but I think you know what I mean."

"Yes. They are not, in the sense you mean, living beings. They have no will of their own."

"The aroi are two villages away, about one hundred li. After they have performed their entertainment in those villages, they will proceed here. That will be the signal for the harvest of the buah fruit and the substitution of the die hr-dead for their living counterparts. Then there will be no opposition to Kuat on the planet, and he can give his cruelty full rein . . . and plan for the conquest of other worlds. His brother Lari is one of the planned victims because he fears the boy's popularity with the crowds."

The Space Lord was almost incredulous.

"But the two persons he has seemed to be truly fond of are Lari and the girl Madu."

"Nevertheless one of the die hr-dead in the laboratory is a replica of the boy Lari."

"Won't the old Governor, the father, object?"

"Possibly, although the mere fact that he joined the aroi when he knew what the cost would be in human terms argues against his interference."

"And Madu?"

"He will keep her as she is, for the time being, and try to mold her to his will. He so little respects individuality that if he cannot, he will obtain some bit of her flesh and eventually she too will be replaced by a die hr-dead. He could be satisfied with a physical replica without caring that the person was missing."

The Space Lord felt his tired mind attempting to ingest more than was possible at one time. Immediately E'duard was sympathetic.

"I have kept you too long. You must rest. We will be in touch."

And don't worry; Kuat's mind barrier applies to him too; only under persons and animals are exempt, and we are all in league."

As he made his way back to his living quarters. Lord bin Permaiswari was again aware of the silence, the absence of any human activity anywhere in the palace. He wondered how long it had been since he had left his room to seek Mr.-Stokely-from Boston in the cat stables. He wished he had remembered to ask E'duard how he had acquired that unlikely name. Immediately he was aware of E'duard's voice spieking in his mind: "It was bestowed upon me for some small service I rendered the Instrumentality on old Manhome." The Space Lord started with surprise. He had forgotten that there were no space barriers to spieking if he left his mind open. He spieked

"Thank you," then closed his mind.

IV

When he awoke from a dream-tormented sleep, the Space Lord felt a weariness which he knew E'duard would have termed a tiredness of the soul. There was no way in which he could communicate with the Instrumentality. The next scheduled spaceship for the spaceport above Xanadu was too far in the future to be of any use in the matter of the illegal die hr-dead.

E'duard was right. The substitution must be stopped before it began. But how? He felt it somehow belittling to his position for a Space Lord to have to rely on an under person the only consolation was that the under person involved was a descendant of the great E'telekeli.

As they ate their first meal of the day, Madu seemed subdued; Lari was not present. Lord Kemal, making his voice as pleasant as he could, queried Kuat about the boy.

"He's gone down to Raraku to dance with the aroi," Kuat said.

Then, apparently, he realized that the Space Lord would not know the word "aroi." "It's a group of dancers and entertainers we have here on Xanadu," he explained kindly. Kemal felt a coldness about his heart.

He could hardly wait to communicate with E'duard.

"Lari is missing," he spieked, as soon as he was sure that Kuat would not notice his expression.

"All the die hr-dead are still in place, our scouts report,"

E'duard spieked back.

"We will try to locate him and communicate with you."

But time passed; the only things the under persons were able to assure Lord Kemal were that Lari was not with the aroi at Raraku and that the die hr-dead replica of him was still in place in the laboratory. He seemed to have vanished from the planet.

Madu had taken Kuat's statement at its face value; she was much quieter now, but she apparently believed that Lari was dancing with the aroi. The Space Lord tried a gentle probing: "I had gathered from what I

heard that the aroi was a closed group which one had to join in order to participate."

"Oh, yes, to participate fully," Madu said, "but near harvest time the best dancers are allowed to dance with the aroi whether they are members or not. It will not be so long now. The aroi have moved from Raraku to Poike. Then they will come here. I will be so glad to see Lari again; I always miss him when he goes off to run or to dance."

"He has gone away before to dance?" the Space Lord asked.

"Well, no. Not to dance. To run, but not to dance before. But he is very good. He really hasn't been quite old enough before."

"And do you have other entertainment at the harvest besides the dancing?" the Space Lord asked, still seeking a clue as to the whereabouts of the vanished Lari.

Her smile had some of its old radiance.

"Oh, yes. That is when we have the horse racing I told you about. It is Kuat's favorite sport. Only," her face clouded, "this time I'm afraid his horse doesn't have much chance of winning. Gogle has really been raced too long and too hard; his back legs are wearing out.

The vet was talking about doing a muscle transplant if they had a suitable donor, but I don't think they've found one."

At the prospect of seeing Lari soon again, however, she seemed happier with some of the joy the Space Lord associated with her. They went for a cat ride, and Lord Kemal felt again the overwhelming sense of wonder and pleasure as he and the cat Griselda became as one being. Their feelings were in such close communication that he did not have to tighten his knees or hiss at her to obey his slightest wish. For the first time in days Lord bin Permaiswari was able to forget about E'duard and the die hr-dead, about his concern for Lari and his worry as to whether the Instrumentality would approve his cooperation with the bird-man.

For the first time, also, the Space Lord began to wonder to what extent Madu and Lari were committed to each other. Now that he had Madu to himself, he felt more than ever the strong attraction she held for him. He had never, in all the worlds he had known, felt such an attraction for a woman before. And, such was his honor, he began to feel it all the more imperative to restore Lari safely before he could express his feelings to her. He tried speaking to E'duard.

"Nothing," said the bird-man.

"We have found no trace of him. The last time he was seen by one of our people was on the outskirts of the palace, headed in the direction of the stables.

That is all."

On the day of the festival before the harvest the Space Lord, using Griselda as a pretext, once more went to the cat stables.

E'duard as Mr.-Stokely-from-Boston was hard at work. He looked gravely at the Space Lord, but his mind remained closed. He did not speak.

Lord bin Permaiswari found himself annoyed. He opened his mind and spieked,

"Animals!"

E'duard winced slightly but did not speak.

The Space Lord, apologetic, spieked,

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean that."

This time E'duard spieked back.

"Yes, you did. And we are, but why so much contempt? We are each what we are."

"I was annoyed that your mind was closed to me, a Space Lord. You have the right to close your mind to anyone. I apologize."

E'duard accepted the statement graciously. He said,

"There was a reason that my mind was closed to you. I was trying to decide how to tell

you something. And I needed to know your full feelings about the girl Madu and the boy Lari before I can speak freely."

Lord bin Permaiswari felt a sense of shame; he had behaved, not as a Space Lord, but as a child. He tried to speak with complete frankness.

"I am truly worried about the boy Lari. As to Madu, you must know that there is a strong attraction, but I must first find out about the boy and see what her feelings are."

E'duard nodded.

"You speak as I hoped you would. We have found Lari. He is crippled for life."

Lord Kemal's intake of air hurt his throat.

"What do you mean?"

"Kuat had his vet take the boy's calf muscles and transplant them to his favorite horse, Gogle. The horse will be able to run one more race at top speed, thus fooling all those who bet against Kuat. It's improbable that any surgery will enable the boy to walk again, much less to run or dance."

The Space Lord found his mind a blank. He realized that E'duard was still spieked.

"We will have the boy in his wheelchair at the horse race tomorrow. You will need Madu's help. Then you can decide what to do."

Until the time of the race next day Lord Kemal found himself moving as if in a dream, dispassionately observing his movements. E'duard spieked to him only once.

"We must kill off the die hr-dead at once," he said.

"After the race tomorrow, when everybody is celebrating, will be the time. Keep Kuat busy and I will take care of the matter."

Fearful, unhappy, feeling weaker than he had since Styron IV, Lord Kemal bin Permaiswari accompanied Madu and Governor Kuat to the horse race. At their box sat Lari, white-faced, thin, much older, in a wheel-chair.

"Why?" speak-shrieked the Space Lord.

E'duard's voice came through much more calmly.

"Kuat actually thought he was being kind. With the boy crippled, he can't be the racer-hero he has been to the people of Xanadu. Kuat thought that way he wouldn't need to substitute the die hr-dead. He didn't realize he's taken the boy's chief reason for wanting to live; he might almost as well have substituted the die hr-dead."

Madu was sobbing. Kuat, in what he intended as rough kindness, stroked her hair.

"We'll take care of him. And, Venus!

Will we fool the bettors today! They think Gogle can't run anymore. Will they be fooled! Of course, it's only for this one race, but it'll be worth it!"

"Be worth it," the Space Lord thought. Be worth the rest of Lari's life, spent crippled, unable to do what he loved most.

"Be worth it," Madu thought. Never to dance again, never to run, to feel the wind in his hair as the crowds cheered.

"Be worth it," Lari thought. What does anything matter anymore.

Gogle won by half a track. Kuat, his mood expansive, said to the others,

"See you in the main salon of the palace. Have to collect my wagers.

"Madu's face was carved of marble as she wheeled Lari toward a special two-cat cart brought up beside the stadium. Lord Kemal, without a word, mounted Griselda. He felt the need, for a little while, at least, for solitude. They loped, in silent communication, away from the walls of the city. Lord Kemal heard a cry from the city gate, but he paid no attention. His mind was on Lari. Again the cry.

Another lope. Suddenly Griselda faltered, stumbled, fell. At once the Space Lord was down, beside her face. Her eyes were glazing. He saw, then, the dart piercing her neck. Pisang. She tried to lick his hand; he petted her, his eyes filled with tears. She gave one great wrenching sigh, looked into her being, shuddered, and died. Part of him died with her. When he reached the gate he queried the guard. No one was supposed to leave the city between the end of the races and the harvesting of the buah fruit. Griselda was the victim of an error of administrative oversight. No one had remembered to tell the Space Lord. Silently he walked back through the pathways of the city. How

beautiful it had seemed to him a short while ago. How empty and how sad it seemed now. He reached the main salon shortly after Madu and Lari in his wheel-chair arrived. It was strange how all the budding desire for Madu had withered like a flower in the frost. Kuat entered, laughing. Lord Kemal would be tortured for more than two centuries by a question. When did the end justify the means? When was the law absolute? He saw in his mind's eye Griselda bounding over dunes and plains a Madu innocent as dawn Lari dancing under a sunless moon.

"Djudi!" demanded Kuat. Madu moved gracefully toward the low table. She picked up the two-holed pitcher. Lord Kemal saw, through E'duard's spiech, that the pi sang flow was being let into the am biotic fluid of the die hr-dead. Soon they would be truly dead. Kuat laughed.

"I won every bet I made today.

"He looked away from Madu toward the Lord Kemal. Almost imperceptibly Madu's thumb moved from one hole to the other. Lord Kemal did nothing in the endless night.