

A different Flesh

By Harry Turtledove

Synopsis:

How would we treat our cousin, Neanderthal man, if he were alive today? In this alternate history, bands of Homo erectus had crossed the Siberian land bridges to America, but no modern humans made the same trip later. The world where sims (the European settlers' name for Homo erectus) rather than Indians live is different from ours. North America would have been easier for Europeans to settle than it was in our history, where the Indians were strong enough to slow if not to stop the expansion. The presence of sims--intelligent beings, but different from and less than us-- shaped European thought.

Those Sims were enough like us to be very useful, different enough from us to be exploited with minimal guilt, and too weak to resist effectively for themselves.

The urge to treat them better would have to come from the ranks of humanity, and to compete against the many reasons--some of them arguably valid--for continuing exploitation.

This is the story of Europeans conquering the New World, and the story of the Sims as they move from slavery to true humanity.

This is a work of fiction. All the characters and events portrayed in this book are fictional, and any resemblance to real people or events is purely coincidental.

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WHEN TWO ORGANISMS overlap too closely in a single environmental niche, they compete. It may not be purposeful--the organisms may not have the kind of brains that will make anything at all purposeful--but they will compete just the same. They will try to use the same habitats; live on the same food; and it is very likely that one will prove a bit more efficient than the other. The stronger will beat off, damage, or kill the weaker; the better hunter or forager will leave the poorer to starve.

It is one of the mechanisms of evolution, usually expressed by the

cliche "survival of the fittest" (except that you define the "fittest" as the one who survives, so that you have a nice circular argument).

To get a bit closer to home . . . We don't know exactly what killed off the australopithecines after their having lived in eastern and southern Africa for two million years, but it may well be that genus Homo, wittingly or unwittingly, helped.

And Homo erectus may have been done in, at least to some extent, by Homo sapiens, while the Neanderthal variety of the latter was in turn done in by the modern variety.

We can't put ourselves into the minds of Homo erectus or Australopithecus africanus, let alone into what might pass as the mind of T. rex, but we know very well what our own minds are like. We have minds that make it possible for us to know what we are doing when we callously mistreat others who are very much like ourselves, and do you know what we do? We rationalize our cruelty, and justify ourselves, and even make ourselves sound moral and noble.

Here is the first example I know of. Immediately after the Flood (according to the Bible) Noah planted a vineyard, made wine, drank it, and was drunken. And his youngest son, Ham, the father of Canaan, didn't show the old man the proper respect. (The Bible doesn't go into detail.) Noah therefore said, "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren." (Genesis 9:25.)

In the time of King David and King Solomon, the Israelites controlled all of Canaan and enslaved the Canaanites and put them to forced labor--it was not because the Israelites were a master race and did as master races always do. Not at all. They did it (they said) because of a Biblical curse on Canaan. (One that was undoubtedly inserted into the Bible after the fact.)

Very well, then, that was ancient times, and people were primitive and knew no better.

However, in modern times, it was suggested that Ham, the youngest son of Noah, was a black and the ancestor of all the blacks that have existed since. This, of course, is entirely wrong. Even the Canaanites, if we go by linguistic divisions, were as Semitic as the Israelites, the Arameans, the Babylonians, and the Arabs. They were not blacks.

However, it suited the slavemasters of Europe and America to pretend that Ham was black because that made black slavery a divine institution and placed the blacks under that same curse the Israelites had made use of three thousand years before. When preachers from the slave states said that the Bible enjoined black slavery, Noah's curse was what they referred to.

In fact, you don't have to refer to a particular Biblical verse to make yourself sound moral and noble. After all, when you enslave a black, you free him from his slavery to his voodoo superstitions, his false religions, his primitive way of life, and you introduce him to the benefits of Christianity and save his soul. Since his soul is worth infinitely more than everything else he possesses or can possess, you are doing the slave an enormous favor by enslaving him and you're earning for yourself kudos in heaven and flights of angels will sing you to your rest for being a noble slaveowner. (If you think that slaveowners didn't use this argument to justify themselves, you are very

naive.)

In fact, to slaveowners, slaves were always responsible for their own slavery. To Aristotle, that great Greek thinker, those people who weren't Greeks were slaves by nature. These "barbarians" (so-called because they didn't talk "people-talk" the way the Greeks did, but made uncouth incomprehensible sounds like "bar-bar"), being natural slaves, were naturally enslaved. You do them a favor, obviously, by letting them be what they naturally are.

The very word "slave" comes, I believe, from "Slav" since to the Romans and the Germans, Slavs were slaves by nature.

It's not even just slavery. The German Nazis killed hosts of Jews, Poles, Russians, Gypsies, and others. Did they do it because they were blood-thirsty, ravening beasts? Not to hear them tell it.

They were purifying the race and getting rid of disgusting sub-men for the benefit of true humanity. I'm sure they thoroughly expected the gratitude of all decent people for their noble deeds.

And we Americans? Well, there is a story that the Turkish sultan, Abdul Hamid II, a bloody and villainous tyrant, visited the United States once and was tackled over the matter of the Armenian massacres.

In response, he looked about him calmly and said, "Where are your Indians?" Yes, indeed, we wiped them out. It was their land but we didn't enslave them; we killed them. We killed them in defiance of treaties, we killed them when they tried to assert their legal rights under those treaties, and we killed them when they submitted and did not defend themselves. And we had no qualms about it. They were "savages" and we were doing God's work by ridding the Earth of them.

There is a (possibly apocryphal) story that after Custer's Last Stand (the Massacre at Little Big Horn--it's only a ! massacre when white men get killed) a Comanche chief was introduced to General Sheridan (a Northern hero of the Civil War). The Comanche said, "Me Tach-a-way. Me good Indian.

" To this General Sheridan is reported to have replied, "The only good Indians I ever saw were dead."--A very nice genocidal remark.

The history of human cruelty is revolting enough, but the history of human justification thereof is infinitely more revolting.

Would it be any different in an alternate world, where Homo crctus still existed alongside of us? Would we treat our-evolutionary cousins any better than we've ever treated our own kind? Harry Turtledove takes a hard look at this question in A Different Flesh, and comes up with some answers we'd probably just as soon t loar.

Preface

WHERE DO YOU get your ideas?

I've never known a science fiction writer who hasn't been asked that question a good many times. I'm no exception. And, as is true of most of my colleagues, the answers I give often leave questioners unsatisfied. I've had ideas doing the dishes, taking a shower, driving the freeway. I don't know why they show up at times like those. They

just seem to.

Sometimes ideas come because two things that by rights ought to be wildly separate somehow merge in a writer's mind. I had just finished watching the 1984 Winter Olympics when I happened to look at a Voyager picture of Saturn's moon Mimas, the one with the enormous crater that has a huge central peak. I wondered what skijumping down that enormous mountain, under that tiny gravity, would be like. A story followed shortly.

And sometimes ideas come because you look for them. Like most science-fiction writers, I read a lot. In late 1984, I was going through Stephen Jay Gould's monthly column in *Natural History* that he was showing how all surviving races of old man apes are really very much alike, and idly wondering how we would treat our primitive ancestor *Australopithecus* if he were alive today.

What I think of as my story-detector light went on. How would we treat our poor, not-quite-so-bright relations if we met them today? I soon dismissed the very primitive *Australopithecus*. As far as anyone knows, he lived only in Africa. But *Homo erectus*, modern man's immediate ancestor, was widespread in the Old World. What if, I thought, bands of *Homo erectus* had crossed the Siberian land bridges to America, and what if no modern humans made the same trip later? That what-if was the origin of the book you hold in your hands.

The world where simians (the European settlers' name for *Homo erectus*) rather than Indians inhabit the New World is different from ours in several ways. For one thing, the grand fauna of the Pleistocene--mammoth, saber-tooth tigers, ground sloths, glyptodons, what have you--might well have survived to the present day. Simians would be less efficient hunters than Indians, and would not have helped hurry the great beasts into extinction.

Human history starts looking different too. North America would have been easier for Europeans to settle than it was in our history, where the Indians were strong enough to slow if not to stop the expansion. Central and South America, on the other hand, would have been more difficult: Spanish colonial society was based on the ruins of the American Indian empires. And Spain, without the loot it plundered from the Indians, probably would not have dominated sixteenth-century Europe to the extent it did in our history.

Also, the presence of simians--intelligent beings, but different from and less than us--could not have failed to have a powerful effect on European thought. Where did they come from? What was their relationship to humans? Having these questions posed so forcefully might well have led thinkers toward the idea of evolution long before Darwin. Simians might also make us look rather more carefully at the differences between various groups of ourselves.

To return to Gould's question: how would we treat simians? I fear that the short answer is, not very well. They are enough like us to be very useful, different enough from us to be exploited with minimal guilt, and too weak to resist effectively for themselves. The urge to treat them better would have to come from the ranks of humanity, and to compete against the many reasons--some of them arguably valid--for continuing exploitation.

"The proper study of mankind is man." True enough. Simians can, I hope,

help us look at ourselves by reflecting our view at an angle different from any we can get in this world. Come to think of it, that's one of the things science fiction in general can do. That's why it's fun. 1
1_ Viled Bead Simia quam similis, turpissama hestia, nobis!

[The ape, vilest beast, how like us!] --Ennius, quoted in Cicero, De Natura Deorum r, IrS5lnR found the rw lew World a very different land from the one they had left. No people came down to the seashore to greet their ships. Before the arrival of European settlers, there were no people in North or South America. The most nearly human creatures present in the Americas were sims.

In the Old WorW, sims have been extinct for hundreds of thousands of years. Fossils of creatures very much like present-day sims have been found in East Africa, on the island of Java, and in caves not far from Pekin, China. Sims must have crossed a land bridge from Asia to North America during an early glacial period of the Ice Age, when the sea level was much lower than it is now.

At the time when humans discovered the New World, small hunting and gathering bands of sims lived throughout North and South America.

Their lives were more primitive than those of any human beings, for they knew how to make onty the most basic stone and wood tools, and were not even able to make fire for

themselves (although they could use and maintain it if they found it). Paradoxically, this very primitiveness makes them interesting to anthropologists, who see in them an illustration of how humanity's ancient ancestors must have lived.

Despite their lack of weapons more formidable than chipped stones and sticks with fire-hardened points, sims often proved dangerous to colonists in the early days of European settlement of the New World.

As they learned to cope with attacks from bands of sims the settlers also izod to learn new farming techniques needed for soils and climates different from those of their native lands. Hunger was their constant companion in the early years of the colonies.

Another reason for this was the necessity of bringing all seed grain across the Atlantic until surpluses

1 could be built up. The Americas offered no native equivalent of wheat, rye, or barley for settlers to use.

Sims, of cQurse, knew nothing of agriculture.

Nevertheless, the Spaniards and Portuguese succeeded in establishing colonies in Central and South ; America during the sixteen century. The first English settlers in What is now the Federated Commonwealths was at Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607

: From The Story of the Federated Commonwealths, by Ernest Simpson. Reproduced by permission.

A different Flesh

AFTER THIRTY MILD English summers, July in Virginia smote Edward Wingfield like a blast from hell. Sweat poured off him as he tramped

through the forest a few miles from Jamestown in search of game. It clung, greasily, in the humid heat.

He held his crossbow cocked and ready. He also carried a loaded pistol in each boot, but the crossbow was silent and accurate at longer range, and it wasted no precious powder. The guns were only for emergencies.

Wingfield studied the dappled shadows. A little past noon, he guessed. Before long he would have to turn round and head home for the colony. He had had a fairly good day: two rabbits, several small birds, and a fat gray squirrel hung from his belt.

He looked forward to fall and the harvest. If all went well this year, the colony would finally have enough wheat for bread and porridge and ale. How he wished--how all the Europeans wished--that this godforsaken new world offered wheat or barley or even oats of its own.

But it did not, so all seed grain had to cross the Atlantic. Jamestown had lived mostly on game and roots for three years now. Lean and leathery, Wingfield had forgotten what a hot, fresh loaf tasted like.

He remembered only that it was wonderful.

Something stirred in the undergrowth ahead. He froze. The motion came again. He spied a fine plump rabbit, its beady black eyes alert, its ears cocked for danger.

Moving slowly and steadily, hardly breathing, he raised the crossbow to his shoulder, aimed down the bolt. Once the rabbit looked toward him. He stopped moving again until it turned its head away.

He pressed the trigger. The bolt darted and slammed into a tree trunk a finger's breadth above the rabbit's ear. The beast bounded away.

"Hellfire!" Wingfield dashed after it, yanking out one of his pistols.

He almost tripped over the outflung branch of a grapevine. The vine's main stock was as big around as his calf. Virginia grapes, and the rough wine the colonists made from them, were among the few things that helped keep Jamestown bearable.

The panic-stricken rabbit, instead of diving into the bushes for cover and losing itself there, burst past a screen of brush into a clearing. "Your last mistake, beastly" Wingfield cried in triumph. He crashed through the brush himself, swinging up the gun as he did so.

then the rabbit was almost to the other side of the clearing.

He saw it thrashing in the grass there. Wingfield paused, puzzled: had a ferret torn out its throat as it scampered along, oblivious to everything but its pursuer?

; Then his grip tightened on the trigger, for a sim emerged from a thicket and ran toward the rabbit.

! It had not seen him. It bent down by the writhing beast if smashed in the rabbit's head with a rock. Undoubtedly it had used another to bring the animal down; sims were 2 deadly accurate throwing sharpened stones.

Wingfield stepped into the clearing. The colony was too hungry to let any food go.

The sim heard him. It rose, clutching the bloody rock in a large, knobby-knuckled hand. It was about as tall as the Englishman, and naked but for its own abundant hair. Its long, chinless jaw opened to let out a hoot of dismay. Wingfield gestured with the pistol. Sims had no foreheads to speak of above their bone-ridged brows, but they had learned the colonists' weapons slew at a distance greater than they could cast their rocks. Usually, these days they retreated instead of proving the lesson over again.

This one, though, stood its ground, baring broad, yellow teeth in a threatening grimace. Wingfield gestured again, more sharply, and hoped he seemed more confident than he felt. If his first shot missed, or even wounded but failed to kill, he would have to grab for his other gun while the sim charged--and pistol-range was not that much more than a stone's throw.

Then the bushes quivered on the far side of the clearing, and a second sim came out to stand behind its fellow. This one carried a large, sharp-edged rock ready to hurl. It shook its other fist at Wingfield, and shouted angrily.

It was the Englishman's turn to grind his teeth. If both sims rushed him, he would never have the chance to reload either a pistol or his crossbow. The odds of stopping them with just two shots were not worth betting his life on, not for a rabbit. And if they did kill him, they would not content themselves with the game he carried. They would eat him too. -] i Raising the pistol in a final warning, he drew back into the woods. The sims' mocking cries followed him. He hated the filthy animals . . . if they were animals. Close to a century had passed since the Spaniards brought the first pair back to Cadiz from their coastal fortress of Veracruz. Churchmen and scholars were still arguing furiously over whether sims were mere brute beasts or human beings.

At the moment, Wingfield was ready to hate them no matter what they were.

He found the tree where he had shot at the rabbit the sims were now doubtless gulping down raw. He managed to cut himself while he was digging out the crossbow bolt with his knife. That did nothing to improve his temper. Had he shot straight in the first place, he would not have put himself in the humiliating position of backing down from sims.

Thinking such dark thoughts, Wingfield turned back toward Jamestown. He scratched at his nose as he walked along, and felt skin peel under his nails. One more annoyance--he was too fair not to burn in this climate, but found wearing a hat equally intolerable.

On his way home, he knocked over a couple of quail and one of the native beasts that looked like giant, white-faced rats but tasted much better. That improved his mood, a little. He was still grumbling when Allan Cooper hailed him from the edge of the cleared ground.

Thinking of the guard's misery made him ashamed of his own bad temper. Cooper wore a gleaming back-and-breast with thick padding beneath; a heavy, plumed morion sat on his head. In that armor, he had to be

steaming like a lobster boiled in its own shell. Yet he managed a cheery brave for Wingfield. "Good bag you have there," he called.

"It should be better, by one hare," Wingfield replied, pique flaring again. He explained how he had lost the beast to the sims.

"Aye, well, no help for such things sometimes, not two on one," Cooper sighed, and Wingfield felt relief at having his judgment sustained by a professional soldier. The Fxard went on, "The thieving devils are robbing uaps again, too. Henry Dale came in empty-handed this after narry W urlleaoeve noon, swearing foul enough to damn himself on the spot."

"If swearing damns a man, Henry was smelling brimstone long years ere this," Wingfield observed.

if Cooper laughed. "You speak naught but the truth there, though I don't blame him for his fury this time. Sims are worse than foxes ever were--foxes have no hands." He hefted his matchlock musket. "Without guns, we'd never keep them from our own animals. And how often have they raided the henhouse?"

"Too many times." Wingfield turned to a less gloomy subject.

"How is Cecil?"

"Doing splendidly," Cooper said, his voice full of pride. "The lad will be three months tomorrow." Cecil Cooper was Jamestown's oldest child; the first ship carrying women had reached Virginia only a year before. Wingfield had a daughter, Joanna, only a few weeks younger than the guard's son.

He kft Cooper and walked down the muddy path through the fields.

Several rows of thatch-roded cabins stood by the log stockade that mounted cannon. On the other side of the fortress were longer rows, d graves. More than half ad the orXinal three shiploads of colonists had died from starvation or disease. A couple of the newest burials were pathetically small: even back in England, so many infants did not live to grow up--and life was far harsher here.

But the marker that grieved Wingfield most was one of the oldest, the one showing where Captain John Smith lay. Always eager to explore, he had set about learning the countryside from the day the English landed--until the sims killed him, three months later. Without him, the settlement seemed to have a lesser sense of drive, of purpo.

Still, it went on, as people and their works do. Several colonists swung the gates of the fortress open, so others could drive in the pigs, goats, and oxen for the night to protect them from the sims and other predators. The pigs and goats, which ate anything they came across, throve in this new land. The oxen had the same gaunt look as most of the colonists.

Wingfield's cabin was in the outer row, closest to the forest.

Smoke rose from the chimney as he approached. The door stood open, to let in what air would come.

Hearing her husband's step, Anne Wingfield came out to greet him.

He hugged her close, so glad she had chosen to spend her life with him.

She had had her pick of suitors, as was true of all the women in Virginia; men outnumbered them four to one.

She exclaimed in pleasure at how much game he had brought home.

Back in London, she would have been nothing special to look at: a rather husky, dark-haired girl in her early twenties, with strong features--if anything, handsome rather than pretty. On this side of the Atlantic, though, she was by definition a beauty.

"And how is Joanna?" Wingfield asked as his wife skinned and disjointed his two rabbits and tossed the meat into the soewpot. The rabbits shared it with a small piece of stale venison from a couple of days before and a mess of wild onions, beechnuts, mushrooms, and roots.

The smell was heavenly.

"Asleep now, " Anne said, nodding toward the cradle, "but very well. She smiled at me again this morning."

"Maybe next time she will do it in the night, so I may see it too."

"I hope she will."

While they waited for the rabbits to cook, they dealt with the rest of Wingfield's catch, cutting the meat into thin strips and setting them on racks over the fire to dry and smoke. After what seemed an eternity, Anne ladled the stew into wooden bowls. Wingfield licked his clean. Though matters were not so grim as they had been the first couple of dreadful winters, he was always hungry.

"I would have had another cony, but for the sims," he said, and told Anne of the confrontation.

Her hand jumped to her mouth. "Those horrid beasts! 8 Harry Turtledove They should all be hunted down and slain, ere they harm any more of our good Englishmen. What would I have done here, alone save only for Joanna, had they hurt you?"

"No need to fret over might-have-beens; I'm here and hale," he reassured her, and got up and embraced her for good measure. "As for the sims, if they be men, slaying them out of hand so would burden us with a great weight of sin when we are called to the Almighty."

"They are no creatures of His," Anne returned, "but rather of the Devil, the best he could do toward making true humankind."

"I've heard that argument before. To me it smacks of the Manichean heresy. Only God has the power to create, not Satan."

"Then why did He shape such vile parodies of ourselves, His finest creatures? The sims know nothing of spinning or weaving or any useful art. They cannot even set fires to cook the beasts they run down like dogs."

"But they know fire, though I grant they cannot make it. Yet whenever lightning sets a bla, some sim will play Prometheus and seize a burning

brand. They keep the flames alive as long as they may, till they lose them from rain or sheer recklessness."

Anne set hands on hips, gave Wingfield a dangerous look. "When last we hashed this over, as I recollect, 'twos you who reckoned the sims animals and I the contrary. Why this reversal?"

"Why yours, save your concern for me?" he came back. "I thank you for't, but the topic's fit to take from either side. I tell you frankly, I cannot riddk it out in certain, but am changeable as a weathervane, ever thinking now one thing, now the other."

"And I, and everyone," Anne sighed. "But if they put you in danger, my heart cannot believe them true men, no matoer what my head might say."

He reached out to set his fingers gently on her arm. The tender gesture was spoiled when a mosquito spiraled down land on the back of his hand. The swamps round A umerem rn:all Jamestown bred them in throngs worse than any he had known in England. He swatted at the bug, but it flew off before the deathblow landed.

Outside, someone struck up a tune on the mandolin, and someone else joined in with a drum. Voices soared in song. The settlers had only the amusements they could make for themselves. Wingfield looked out, saw a torchlit circle dance forming. He bobbed his head toward his wife. "Would it please you to join them?"

"Another time," she said. "Joanna will be waking soon, \ and hungry. We could step outside and watch, though."

Wingfield agreed at once. Any excuse to get out of the hot, smelly cabin was a good one.

Suitors were buzzing as avidly as the mosquitoes round the few young women who had not yet chosen husbands.

Some of those maids owned distinctly fragile reputations.

With no others to choose from this side of the sea, they were courted nonetheless.

"Oh, my dear, what would you have me do?" cried a roguish ad turned her back on him. "Go off to the woods and marry a sim?" Laughter rose, hearty from the men who heard him, half-horrified squeals from the women.

"Allan Cooper says the Spaniards do that, or anyway - cohabit," Wingfield told Anne. Spain held a string of outposts down to Magellan's Strait and then up the western coast of South America, to serve her galleons plying the rich trade with the Indies.

"Have they not read Deuteronomy?" Anne exclaimed, u her lip curling in disgust. Then curiosity got the better of - her and she whispered, "Can there be issue from such u mons?"

0- "In truth, I don't know. As Allan says, who's to tell the ; difference betwixt the get of a Spanish sire and that of a K- sim?"

Anne blinked, then burst into giggles at the bawdy \$D: slnder against England's longtime Eoe.

Fe: Before long, both she and her husband were yawning.

F'_ Xhe uXnremitting labor of building the colony left scant energy for leisure or anything else. Still, Wingfield hesi toted before he blew out the last lamp in the cabin. He glanced toward Anne, and saw an answering flush rise from her throat to her cheeks. She was recovered now from the ordeal of childbirth. Perhaps tonight they might start a son He was about to take Anne in his arms when Joanna la out a yowl. He stopped short. His wife started to laugh. She bared a breast. "La me feed her quickly, and put her back to sleep. Then, why,4we shall see what we shall see."

"Indeed we shall." Wingfield lay down on the lumpy straw-stuffed bed to wait. He knew at once he had made a mistake, but fell asleep before he could do anything about it.

Anne stuck out her tongue at him when the sun woke him the next morning. She skipped back when he reached for her. "This even," she promised. "We have too much to do of the day to waste it lying abed."

He grimaced. "You have a hateful way of being right."

He scrambled into trousers and boots, set a plumed hat on his head to shield him from the sun. The plume was a bright pheasant's feather from England, now sadly battered.

Soon he would have to replace it with a duller turkey tail feather.

He was finishing a bowl of last night's stew, strong but still eatable, when someone knocked on the cabin door.

"There, you see?" Anne said.

"Hush."

He opened the door. Henry Dale came in. He was a short, fussy man whose ruddy complexion and tightly held jaw gave clues to his temper. After dipping his head to = Anne, he said, "Edward, what say we set a few snares, v, today--mayhap, if fortune favors us, in spots where no m= knavish sims will come on them to go a-poaching" C "Good enough. Allan Cooper told me how you were > robbed yesterday." i : Anne's presence plainly was the only thing keeping Dale from exploding with fury. He-limited himself to a single _

strangled, "Aye." Afoer a few moments, he went on, "Shall we be about it, then?"

Wingfield checked his pistols, tucked a bundle of cross bow bolts into his beltpouch, nodded. After a too-brief embrace with his wife, he followed Dale out into the bright morning.

Colonists were already weeding, hoeing, waoering in the fields.

Caleb Lucas shooed a goat away from the fresh, green stalks of wheat, speeding it on with a kick that brought an indignant bleat from the beast. "And the very same to you," Lucas called after it. "Damned impudent beast, you can find victuals anywhere, so why thiefe your betoers' meals?"

"Belike the foolish creature thinks itself a sim," Dale grunted, watching the goat scurry for the edge of the woods, where it began browsing on shoots. "It lacks the accursed losels' effrontery, though, for it will not turn on its natural masters. The sims, now, those whoreson, beetle headed, flap-ear'd stinkards--"

Without pausing but to draw breath, he continued in that vein until he and Wingfield were surrounded by forest. As had Anne's remarks the night before, his diatribe roused Wingfield's conoentious nature.

"Were they such base animals as you claim," he said, "the sims would long since have exterminated one another, and not been here for us to find on our landing."

Dale gave him a look filled with dislike. "For all we know, they well-nigh did. 'Twas not on us they began their . habits anthropophagous."

f- "If they were eating each other, Henry, and you style them 'anthropophagous,' does that not make men of them?" Wingfield asked mildly. His companion splutoered and turned even redder than usual.

D A robin twittered among the leaves. So the colonists i>amed the bird, at any raeo, but it was not the redbreast of England. It was big and fat and stupid, its underparts the

> - color of brick, not fire. It was, however, easy to kill, and

[0;- quite tasty. There were other sounds in the woods, too.

Somewhere far off, Wingfield heard the deep-throated barking cries of the sims. So did Henry Dale. He spat, deliberately, between his feet.

"What men speak so?" he demanded. "Even captured and tamed--as much as one may tame the beasts--they do but point and gape and make dumb show as a horse will, seeking to be led to manger."

"Those calls have meaning to them," Wingfield said.

"Oh, aye, belike. A wolf in a trap will howl so pioeously it frighoens its fellows away. Has he then a language?"

Having no good answer to that, Wingfield prudently kept silent.

As the two men walked, they looked for signs to betray the presence of small game. Dale, who was an able woodsman when amiable, spotted the fresh droppings that told of a woodchuck run. "A good place for a snare," he said.

But even as he was preparing to cut a noose, his comrade found a track in the soft ground to the side of the run: the mark of a large, bare foot. "Leave be, Henry," he advised. "The sims have been here before us."

"What's that you say?" Dale came over to look at the footprint.

One of the settlers might have made it, but they habitually went shod.

With a disgusoed grunt, Dale stowed away the twine. "Rot the bleeding blackguards! I'd wish their louse-ridden souls to hell, did I think God

granoed them any."

"The Spaniards baptize them, 'tis said."

"Good on themt" Dale said, which startled Wingfield until he continued, "A papist baptism, by Jesus, is the most certain highroad to hell of any I know."

They walked on. Wingfield munched on laoe-ripening wild strawberries, larger and sweeoeer than any that grew in England. He spotoed a woodchuck ambling from tussock to tussock. This time he aimed with special care, and his shot knocked the beast over. Dale grunoed again, now in approval. He had bagged nothing more than a couple of songbirds.

They did find places to set several new snares: simple i drag nooses, hanging snares made from slip nooses las oened to the ends of saplings, and fixed snares set near bushes.

The latoer were especially good for catching rabbits.

They also visited the snares already set. A horrible stench announced that one of those had taken a black-and-whioe New World polecat. Skinned and butchered to remove the scent glands, the beast made good eating. Wingfield and Dale tossed a copper penny to see who would have to carry it home. Wingfield lost.

Two traps had been sprung but held no game. There were fresh sim footprints around both. Dale's remakes were colorful and inventive.

The Englishmen headed back toward Jamestown not long after the sun began to wester. They took a rouoe different from the one they had used on the way out: several traps remained to be checked.

A small, brown-and-whioe-striped ground squirrel scurried away from Wingfield's boot. It darted into a clump of cockleburs. A moment laoeer, both hunoers leaped back in surprise as the little animal was flung head-high, kicking in a noose, when a bent sapling suddenly sprang erect.

"Marryt" Dale said. "I don't recall setting a snare there."

"Perhaps it was someone else. At all odds, good luck we ^ happened along now." Wingfield walked over to retrieve 0 the ground squirrel which now hung limp. He frowned as he undid the noose from around its neck. "Who uses sinew for his traps?"

"No one I know," Dale said. "Twine is far easier to work with."

"Hmm." Wingfield was examining the way the sinew was bound to the top of the sapling. It had not been tied at X all, only wrapped around and around several twigs until > finnly in place. "Have a look at this, will you, Henry?"

Dale looked, grunted, turned away. Wingfield's voice l 0 pursued him: "What animals make traps, Henry?"

; - "Aye, well, this is the first we've seen, in all the time k we've been this side of the Atlantic. I take that to mean the sims but ape us, as a jackdaw will human speech, without having the divine spark of wit to devise any such thing for themselves. Damn and blast, man, if a

dog learns to walk upon his hinder feet, is he then deserving of a seat in Parliament?"

"More than some who have them now," Wingfield observed.

Both men laughed. Dale reached for the ground squirrel tossed it into the bag with the rest of the game he carried. His crooked teeth flashed in a rare grin. "It does my heart good to rob thsvermin this once, insoead of the other way round."

His good humor vanished when he and Wingfield returned to the settlement. They found not only Allan Cooper and the other three guards armed and armored, but also a double handful more men. That morning a sim had burst out of the woods, smashed in a goat's skull with a rock, flung the animal under an arm, and escaped before the startled Englishmen could do anything.

"I shot, but I missed," Cooper raid morosely.

"It's a poor trade for a ground squirrel, Henry," Wingfield remarked.

His hunting partner's scowl was midnight black. "The many pests grow too boldt Just the other night they slaughtered a hound outside the stockade, hacked it to pieces with their stones, and were eating the flesh raw when at last the sentry came round with his torch and spied them. He missed, too," Dale finished, with a sidelong look at Cooper.

"And would you care to draw a conclusion from that?" the guard asked. His hand caressed the hilt of his rapier.

Henry Dale hesitated. As a gentleman, he was trained to the sword. But liverish oemper or no, he was not a fool; Cooper had learned in a harsher school than his, and survived. At last Dale said, "I draw the same conclusion as would any man of sense: that our best course is to rid ourselves of these pestiferous sims forthwith, as wolves and other vicious creatures have long been hunoed out of England."

"I hold to war, Henry, on being attacked, but not to murder," Cooper said. "Mind, we must seem as outlandish to them as they to us."

"Killing a sim is no more murder than butchering a pig," Dale retoroed. The endless debaoe staroed up again.

Having no desire to join in another round, Wingfield took his share of the game back to his cabin. Anne was changing Joanna's soiled linen. She looked up with a wan smile. "There's no end to't."

The baby kicked her legs and smiled toothlessly at her father. He felt his own tight expsoen.

He plucked the songbirds, skinned the polecat, set the hide aside to be tanned. He gutted the birds and tossed their little naked bodies into the stewpot whole. He threw the offal outside for the pigs or dogs to find. The black-andwhioe polecat required more skillful butchery, for it had to be cut skull with a rock, flung the animal under an arm, and escaped before the startled Englishmen could do anything.

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"Thank you, dear." Anne rocked Joanna in her arms. "She's getting hungry--aren't you, sweet one? What say I feed you now, so you let us eat in peace afoerwards. Can you tend to the soew, Edward?"

"Of course." He stirred the bubbling conoents of the pot with a wooden spoon. Now and again he tossed in a dash of dried, powdered herbs or a pinch of grayish sea-salt Joanna nursed lustily, then fell asleep. The stew began to smell savory. Anne was about to ladle it into bowls when the baby wet herself and staroed crying again. Her mother gave Wingfield a look of mingled amusement and despair.

"Go on with what you were about,*' he told her. "I'll tend to Joanna." Anne sighed gratefully. Wingfield tossed T the soggy linen into the pile with the rest for tomorlowb ; tWashing. He found a dry cloth, wrapped the baby's loins, and set her in her cradle. Anne rocked it while they ate.

Joanna tolerated not being held, but showed no interest

; in going back to sleep. Six squawked indignantly when fS Anne made the mistake of trying to turn her onto her belly, and remained irritated enough to stay awake even after her mother picked her up.

Her fussy cries rang loud in the small cabin. After a while, Wingfield

thrust a torch into the fire. "Let's walk her about outside," he suggested. "That ofoen seems to calm her."

Anne agreed at once. She rocked the baby in her arms while her husband held the torch high so they would not stumble in the darkness.

With his free hand, he batoed at the insects the torch arew.

The James River splashed against the low, swampy peninsula on which Jamestown sat, and murmured as it flowed by unimpeded to the south. Above it, on this clear, moonless night, the Milky Way glowed like pale mist among the stars of the Scorpion and the Archer.

Elsewhere, but for silver points, the sky was black.

Even blacker against it loomed the forest to the north. Suddenly Wingfield felt how tiny was the circle of light his torch cast: as tiny as the mark the English had made on this vast new land. The comparison disturbed him.

From the edge of the forest came the cries of sims, calling back and forth. Wingfield wondered how much meaning lay behind them. Those bestial ululations could hardly be true speech--Henry Dale was right there--but they were much more varied, more complex, than a wolfpack's howls.

Anne shivered, though the night was warm. "Let us go back. I take fright, hearing them so close."

"I mislike it also," Wingfield said, turning round. "We are not yet here in numbers enough to keep them from drawing nigh as they wish.

Be glad, though, you were still in dear England those first two years, when they thought us and ours some new sort of prey for their hunting."

He touched the knife on his belt. "We've taught them better than that, at any raoe."

"I've heard the tales," Anne said quietly.

Wingfield nodded. As was the way of things, though, not all the tales got told. He had been one of the men who brought John Smith's body back for burial. He knew how little of it rested under its stone, awaiting the resurrection.

To his mind, the sims' man-eating habits gave strong cause to doubt they had souls. If one man devoured another's flesh, to whose body would that flesh return come the day of judgment? As far as he knew, no learned divine had yet solved that riddle.

Such profitless musings occupied him on the way back to the cabin.

Once inside, Anne set Joanna back in the cradle. The baby sighed but stayed asleep; she probably would not rouse till the small hours of the morning.

The embers in the fireplace cast a dying red glow over the single room. Wingfield stripped off his clothes; in the sultry Virginia summer, nightwear was a positive nuisance.

Anne lay down beside him. He stroked her smooth shoulder. She turned toward him. Her eyes were enormous in the dim light. "Here it is, evening," he said, at the same time as she was whispering, "This even, is it not?" They laughed until he silenced her with a kiss.

Afterwards, he felt his heart slow as he drifted toward slumber.

He was hotter than he had been before, and did not mind at all; the warmth of the body was very different from that of the weather. He did not know why that was so, but it was. Anne was already breathing deeply and smoothly. He gave up thought and joined her.

He was never sure what exactly woke him, some hours later; he usually slept like a log till morning. Even Joanna's cries would not stir him, though Anne came out of bed at X once for them. And this noise was far softer than any the ; baby made.

i \ Maybe what roused him was the breeze from the open cabin door.

His eyes opened. His hand went for his knife > even before he consciously saw the two figures silhouetted S Qin the doorway.

Thieves, was his first thought. The colonists had so few goods from England that theft was always

0 a V problem, the threat of the whipping-post notwithstanding. - Then the breeze brought him the smell of the invaders. D The Englishmen bathed seldom; they were of oen rank. But this was a thicker, almost cloying stench, as if skin and water had never made acquaintance. And the shape of those heads outlined against the nightIce ran through Wingfield. "Sims!" he cried, bounding to his feet.

Anne screamed. The sims shouted. One sprang at Wingfield. He saw its arm go back, as if to stab, and knew it must have one of its sharpened stones to hand. That could let out a life as easily as his own dagger.

He knocked the stone aside with his left forearm, and felt his hand go numb; the sims were devilish strong. He thrust with his right and felt his blade bite flesh. The sim yammered. But the wound was not mortal. The sim grappled with him. They rolled over and over on the dirt floor, each grabbing for the other's weapon and using every fighting trick he knew. The sim might have had less skill than Wingfield, but was physically powerful enough to make up for it.

A tiny corner of Wingfield's awareness noticed the other sim scuttling toward the hearth. He heard Anne shriek, "Mother Mary, the baby!" Bold as a tigress, she leapt at the sim, her hands clawed, but it stretched her senseless with a backhand blow.

At almost the same moment, the sim Wingfield was battling tore its right arm free from the weakened grasp of his left. He could not ward off the blow it aimed, but partially deflected it so that the flat front of the stone, rather than the edge, met his forehead. The world flared for a moment, then grayed over.

He could not have been unconscious long. He was already aware of himself, and of the pounding anguish in his head, when someone forced a brandy bottle into his mouth. He choked and sputtered, spraying out most of the fiery liquid.

He tried to sit; hands supported his back and shoulders. He could not understand why the torch Caleb Lucas held was so blurred until he raised his arm to his eyes and wiped away blood.

Lucas offered the brandy again. This time Wingfield got it down.

Healing warmth spread from his middle. Then he remembered what had happened with one sim while he fought the other, and he went cold again. "Anne!" he cried.

He looked about wildly, and moaned when he saw a blanket-covered form on the floor not far from him. "No, fear not, Edward, she is but stunned," said Allan Cooper's wife Claite, a strong, steady woman a few years older than Anne. "We cast the bedding over her to hide her nakedness, no more."

"Oh, God be thanked!" Wingfield gasped.

"But--" Cooper began, then looked helplessly at his wife, not sure how to go on. He seemed to make up his mind. He and Lucas bent by Wingfield. Together, they manhandled Wingfield to his feet, guided his stumbling steps over to Joanna's cradle.

He moaned again. It was empty.

Anne sat on a hard wooden chair, her face buried in her hands.

She had not stopped sobbing since she returned to her senses. She rocked back and forth in unending grief. "God, God, God have mercy on my dear Joanna," she wailed.

"I will get her back," Wingfield said, "or take such a vengeance that no sim shall dare venture within miles of an Englishman ever again."

"I want no vengeance," Anne cried. "I want my darling

0 babe again." - The colonists' first efforts at pursuit had already failed.

r - 0 They had set dogs on the sims' trail less than an hour after > ` the attack. With the blood Wingfield had drawn, the trail had been fresh and clear. Only for a while, though: the Z ground north of Jamestown was so full of ponds and > ueams that the dogs lost the scent. Further tracking had - AI to wait for daylight--and with every passing minuo, rn,> L 'n the sims took themselves farther away.

"Why?" Anne asked. The question was not directed at anyone.

"Why should even such heartless brutes snatch up a defenseless babe?

What are they doing to her?"

Wingfield's imagination conjured up a horde of possibilities, each worse than the one before. He knew he could never mention even the least of them to his wife.

But her first agonized question puzzled him as well. He had never heard of the sims acting as they had that night. They killed, but they did not capture--he felt heartsick anew as he worked out the implications of that Caleb Lucas said, "I fear me they but sought specially tender

flesh." He spoke softly, so Anne would not hear.

Wingfield shook his head. The motion hurt. "Why take so great a risk for such small game?" He gritted his teeth at speaking of Joanna so, but went on "They would have gained more meat by waiting until one of us stepped outside his cabin to ease himself, striking him down, and making away with him. If they had been cunning, they might have escaped notice till dawn."

"Wherefore, then?" Lucas asked. Wingfield could only spread his hands.

"What do you purpose doing now?" Allan Cooper added.

"As I told Anne," Wingfield said, rising. His head still throbbed dreadfully and he was wobbly on his feet, but purpose gave his voice iron. "I will search out the places where the sims encamp in their wanderings, and look for traces of Joanna. If God grant I find her living, I'll undertake a rescue. If it be otherwise--"

Henry Dale stuck his head in the cabin door. His lips stretched back in a savage grin. "--Then kill them all," he finished for Wingfield. "'Twere best you do it anyhow, at first encounter."

"No," Wingfield said, "nor anyone else on my behalf, I pray you.

Until I have certain knowledge my daughter is dead, I needs must act as if she yet lives, and do nothing to jeopardize her fate. A wholesale slaughter of sims might well inflame them all."

"What cares one pack of beasts what befalls another?" Dale asked scornfully.

Allan Cooper had a comment more to the point. "Should you fare forth alone, Edward, I greatly doubt you'd work a wholesale slaughtoer in any case--more likely the sims would slay you."

That set off fresh paroxysms of weeping from Anne. Wingfield looked daggers at the guard. "I can but do my best. My hunting has taught me somewhat of woodcraft, and bullet and bolt strike harder and farther than stones." He spoke mostly for his wife's benefit; he knew too well Cooper was probably right. Still, he went on, "You'd try no less were it your Cecil."

"Oh, aye, so I would," Cooper said. "You misunderstand me, though. My thought was to come with you."

"And I," Henry Dale said. Caleb Lucas echoed him a moment later.

Tears stung Wingfield's eyes. Anne leapt from her chair and kissed each of his friends in turn. At any other time that would have shocked and angered him; now he thought

0 it no less than their due.

Yet fear for his daughter forced expedienoe from him. He

5 said; "Henry, I know your skill amongst the trees. But what of you, Allan? Stealth is paramount here, and clanking about armored a poor preparation for't."

"Fear not on my score," Cooper said. "Or ever I took the royal shilling, I had some nodding acquaintanoe with the f Clown's estates and the game on them." He grinned slyly.

Wingfield asked no more questions; if Cooper had made his

: -living poaching, he would never say so straight out.

0 "What will the council say, though, Allan?" Dale demanded.

"They will not take kindly to a guardsman baring off at wild adventure."

t "Then damnation take them," Cooper replied. "Am I > aot a free Englishman, able to do as I will rather than hark --S sewen carping fools? Every subject's duty is the king's; but tV *t wbject's soul is his own." 22 arry lurtleuvt:

"Well spoken! Imitate the action of the tiger!" cried Caleb Lucas, giving back one quote from Shakespeare for another.

The other three men were carefully studying him. Wingfield said, "You will correct me if I am wrong, Caleb, but is't not so your only forays into the forest have been as a lumberer?"

The young man gave a reluctant nod. He opened his mouth to speak, but Dale forestalled him: "Then you must stay behind. Edward has reason in judging this a task for none but the woodswise."

Wingfield set a hand on Lucas's shoulder. "No sense in anger or disappointment, Caleb. I know the offer came in all sincerity."

"And 1," Anne echoed softly. Lucas jerked his head in acknowledgment and left.

"Let's be at it, then," Cooper said. "To our weapons, then meet here and away." Wingfield knew the guard had no hope of finding Joanna alive when he heard Cooper warn Henry Dale, "Fetch plenty of powder and bullets." Dale's brusque nod said the same.

Before noon, the three men reached the spot where the dogs had lost the sims' scent. As Wingfield had known it would, the trail led through the marshes that made up so much of the peninsula on which Jamestown lay. By unspoken consent, he and his companions paused to rest and to scrape at the mud clinging to their boots.

His crossbow at the ready, Wingfield looked back the way he had come, then to either side. For some time now, he had had a prickly feeling of being watched, though he told himself a sim would have to be mad to go so near the English settlement after the outrage of the night before.

But Cooper and Dale also seemed uneasy. The guard rubbed his chin, saying, "I like this not. I!m all ajitter, as I've not felt since the poxy Spaniards snuck a patrol round our flank in Holland."

"We'd best push on," Henry Dale said. "We'll cast about upstream and down, in hopes of picking up tracks again.

Were things otherwise, I'd urge us separaoe, one going one way and two the other, to speed the search. Now"--he bared his teeth in frustration--"'twere better we stayed in a The bushes quivered, about

fifteen paces away. Three weapons swung up as one. But instead of a sim bursting from the undergrowth, out came Caleb Lucas. "You young idiot! We might have shot you!" Cooper snarled. His finger was tight on the trigger of his pistol; as a veteran soldier, he always favored firearms.

Lucas was even filthier than the men he faoed. His grin flashed in his mud-spattered face. "Send me back no if you dare, my good sirs.

These past two hours I've dogged your steps, betimes close enough to spit, and never did you tumble to it. Have I not, then, sufficient of the woodsman's art to accompany you farther?"

Wingfield removed the bolt from his bow, released the string. "I own myself beaten, Caleb, for how should we say you nay? The damsels back in town, though, will take your leaving hard."

"They'll have plenty to company them whilst I'm gone, and shall be there on my return," Lucas said cheerfully.

"And in sooth, Edward, are we not off to rescue a fair young damsel of our own?"

"Not wondrous fair, perhaps, since the little lass favors - me, but I take your meaning." Wingfield considered. "We'll do as Henry proposed before your eruption, and divide t L azamine the streambank.

Caleb, you'll come with me this way- Henry and Allan shall take the other. Half a mile - - either way, then back here to meet. A pistol-shot to signal a R find; otherwise we go on as best we can.

Agreed?"

, -Everyone nodded. A sergeant to the core, Cooper mut- i i Bed, "As well I don't have Caleb with me--I want a man t I lcsow'll do as he's told." Unabashed, Lucas came to such [a-5tigid parody of attention that the others could not help L ik and Wingfield hurried along the edge of the creek <v+ Harry Turtledove their heads down. Herons and white-plumed egrets flapped away; frogs and turtles splashed into the turbid water. "There!" Lucas said.

His finger stabbed forth. The print of a bare foot was pressed deeply into the mud.

"Good on yout" Wingfield clapped him on the back drew out one pistol, and fired it into the air. He reloaded in the few minutes before Dale and Cooper came trotting up.

Dale, who was red as a tile, grunted when he spied the footprint.

"The brutes did not slip far enough aside, eh, my hearties? Well, arte,r them!"

The trail ran northwest, almost paralleling the James River but moving slowly away. It became harder to follow as the ground grew drier. And the effort of sticking to it meant the four trackers had to go more slowly than the sims they pursued.

By evening, the Englishmen were beyond the territory they knew well. Explorers had penetrated much farther into the interior of America, of

course, but not all of them had come back--and with the colony's survival hanging by so slender a thread, exploration for its own sake won scant encouragement.

At last the thickening twilight made Wingfield stop. "We'll soon lose the trace," he said, smacking fist into palm, yet I misdoubt the sims push on still. What to do, Again Caleb Lucas came to the rescue. "Look there between the two pines. Is't not a pillar of smoke, mayhap marking one of the sims' nests?"

"Marry, it will" Wingfield turned to Allan Cooper, the most experienced of them at such estimations. "How far away do you make it?"

The guard's eyes narrowed as he thought. "The sims favor large blazes, as being less likely to go out. Hmm perhaps two, two-and-a-half miles--too far to reach before

"All the better," Dale said. "I'd liefer come on the accursed creatures with them unawares." No one cared to Cooper took tS > clear of a camp, did - of a scouting partw Dale scoffed.

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Here, hands and knees now, after me, and he'll never be the "That were so in any case," Dale retorted, but he lowered himself with the others.

Again Wingfield caught the thick, warm stench from the sim It never sensed him or his comrades, who crawled past downwind--another proof Cooper knew his business. The Englishmen peered through a last thin screen of bushes at the band of sims.

Perhaps twenty-five were theTe. Several slept close to the fire.

From time to time, a grizzled male threw a fresh branch onto it; the sim would let it get low, but never close to going Along with the odors of smoke and sim, the air still held the faint flavor of roasod, or rather burnt, meat. Bones from small game lay about. Every so often a sim would pick one up and gnaw on it.

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tt The sims ate anything. A female turned over stones and popped the grubs and crawling things it found into its mouth or handed them to the toddling youngster beside it.

The firekeeper grabbed moths out of the air with praniced skill, crunching them between its teeth.

Another, younger, male was using a hammer made from a piece of antler to chip flakes from a rock it held between its knees.

Wingfield studied the sims with growing disappointment. None bore a knife wound, and he saw no sign of Joanna. The three or four infants in the band all bore a finer coat of the dark brown hair that covered their elders. One was nursing at its mother's breast and fell asloep in its arms. The female sim set it down on a pile of leaves. It woke up and started to yowl. The mother picked it up and rocked it till it was quiet again.

Allan Cooper let out the ghost of a chuckle. "Looks familiar, that."

"Aye," Wingfield whispered back. "We may as well be off. We've not found here what we sought."

To his surprise, Henry Dale said, "Wait." He had been watching a pair of sims grooming each other, hands scurrying through hair after ticks, fleas, and lioe. The scratchings and pickings had gradually turned to caresses and nuzzlings. Then the sims coupled by the fire like dogs, the male behind the female. The rest of the band paid no attention.

"Shameless animals," Dale muttered, but he watched avidly until they were through.

He was, Wingfield recalled, unwed, and with his temper had enjoyed no

luck among the single women at the settlement. Unslaked lust could drive a man to madness; Wingfield remembered the sinful longing with which his own eyes had followed a pretty cabin boy aboard the Godspeed.

But even if sure the prohibitions in Deuteronomy did not apply, he would have let sim females alone forever, no matter what vile rumor said Spaniards did. One could close one's eyes to the ugliness, hold one's nose against the stench, but how, in an embrace, could one keep from noticing the hair . . . ?

The sound of the edge of a hand striking a wrist and a harsh whispered curse snapped Wingfield from his lascivious reverie. "Be damned to you right back, Henry!" Caleb Lucas said hotly. "Edward said no killings whilst his daughter remains stolen, and if you come to his aid you can do his bidding."

t Dale picked up his pistol, which by good luck had fallen on soft grass and neither made a betraying noise nor f discharged. "The filthy creatures all deserve to die," he growled, barely bothering to hold his voice low.

His face was pitiless as a wolf's. Wingfield abruptly realized Dale had never expected to find Joanna alive, but was along only for revenge. If by some stroke of fortune they should come across the baby, his comrade might prove more dangerous to her than the sims.

All he said, though, was, "My thanks, Caleb. Away now, quiR as we can. Come morning we'll hash out what to do Cooper led them away from the sims by the same route they had taken in; again they passed by the lone watcher clo enough to catch its reek. They camped without fire, which would have brought sims at a run. After gnawing leathery smoked meat, they divided the night into four watches and seized what uncomfortable, bug-ridden sleep they could.

; When morning came, they took council. "It makes no

0 sense," Henry Dale complained. "Where was the sim you fought, Edward? None of the beasts round their blaze showed the knifemark you said you set in him."

"I thought the same, and again find myself without answer," Wingfield said; if Dale was willing to let last

: night's quarrel lie, he did not intend to bring it up himself.

t; "Hold--I have a thought," Caleb Lucas said. Somehow tE; he managed to seem fresh on scanty rest. "When we spied

- the sims' fire, we bared straight for it, and gave no more t Eheed to the track we'd followed. Could we pick it up once L "The very thing!" Allan Cooper exclaimed. " 'Sblood, - te're stupider than the sims, for we acted on what we k tbght they'd done when the truth was laid out before us, ad we only the wit to look on it."

,. "Shorn of the windy philosophizing, the point is well taken," Dale said.

Before Cooper had time to get angry, Wingfield said hastily, "Could you find the spot where we saw the smoke Allan?"

"Maybe his royal highness there would sooner lead us," the guard snapped. Dale opened his mouth to reply, but Wingfield glared at him so fiercely that he shut it again. At length Cooper said, "Yes, I expect I can."

He proved good as his word, though the trip was necessarily slow and cautious to avoid foraging sims. When the Englishmen returned to the place by the two pines, they cast about for the trace they had pursued the day before.

Cooper found it first, and could not help sending a look of satisfaction at Henry Dale's back before he summoned his companions.

They eagerly followed the track, which, to their growing confusion, ran in the same direction they had previously chosen.

"Cooper, we've already seen the brutes did not come this way," Dale said with an ominously false show of patience.

"No, all we've seen is that they did not reach the band. Tracks have no flair for lying." Cooper held his course. Dale, fuming, had no choice but to follow. A few minutes later, the guard stiffened. "Look here, all of you. Of a sudden, they spun on their heels and headed northeast."

"Why, I wonder?" Wingfield said. He glanced toward the column of smoke from the sims' fire, pointed. "They could easily see that from here."

"What does it matter?" That was Henry Dale. "Let's hunt down the beasts and have done with this pointless chatter."

"Pointless it is not," Wingfield said, "if it will help us in the hunting. Were you coming to a camp of your friends, Henry, why would you then avoid it?"

"Who knows why a sim does as it does, or cares? If it amuses you to enter the mind of an animal, go on, but ask me not to partake of your fatuity."

"Hold, Henry," Cooper said. "Edward's query is deserving of an answer. In war, now, I'd steer clear of a camp, did it contain the enemy."

"Are sim bands nations writ in small?" Dale scoffed.

"I tell you honestly, I do not know for a fact," Cooper replied.

"Nor, Henry, do you." Dale scowled. Cooper stared him down.

The country rose as they traveled away from the James.

The sims they were following stuck to wooded and brushy areas, even when that meant deviating from the chosen course. After seeing the fourth or fifth such zigzag, Cooper grunted, "Nation or no, that pair didn't relish being spotted. Soldiers travel so, behind the foe's lines."

"Even if you have reason," Caleb Lucas said a while later, ruefully rubbing at the thorn scratches on his arms, "why did the wretched creatures have to traverse every patch of brambles they could find?"

"Not for the sake of hearing your whining, surely." Had Cooper given Henry Dale that rebuke, he would have growled it. With the

irrepressible young Lucas, he could not keep a twinkle from his eyes.

All the Englishmen were scratched and bleeding. Wingfield stopped to extract a briar that had pierced his breeches.

The bushes around him were especially thick and thorny, their leaves a glistening, venomous dark green. Only against that background would the white bit of cloth have caught his notice.

He reached out and plucked it from its bramble without realizing for a moment what it meant. Then he let out a whoop that horrified his comrades. They stared at him as at a madman while he held up the tiny piece of linen.

"From Joanna's shift!" he said when he had calmed enough to speak clearly again. "It must be--the sims know thing of fabric, nor even pelts to cover their loins."

"Save their own pelts, that is," Lucas grinned. Then the excitement took him too. "Proof we're on the right track."

"And proof--or at least hope--my little girl yet lives," he said, as much to himself as to the rest. "Had she sought no more than meat, they'd not have left the Queen's shift round her so long, would they?" He looked to the others for reassurance.

"It were unlikely, Edward," Cooper said gently. Caleb Lucas nodded. Henry Dale said nothing. Wiping his florid face with his sleeve, he pushed ahead.

Late that afternoon, near the edge of a creek, the Englishmen came upon the scaly tail of a muskrat--all that was left of the beast save for a blood-soaked patch of grass Allan Cooper found close by. "Here the sims stopped to feed," the guard judged. Further casting about revealed a sharpened stone that confirmed his guess.

"This making of tools on the spot has its advantages," Caleb Lucas said. "One need never be without."

"Oh, aye, indeed, if one has but three different tools to make," Henry Dale said sourly.

Wingfield did his best to ignore the continual bickering. He went over the ground inch by inch, searching for signs of Joanna. He finally found a spattering of loose, yellowbrown muck on some chickweed not far from the edge of the stream. His heart leaped.

The others came rushing over at his exclamation. Dale and Lucas stared uncomprehending at the dropping, but Allan Cooper recognized it at once. "The very same as my little Cecil makes, Edward," he said, slapping Wingfield on the back. "This far, your baby was alive."

"Aye," Wingfield got out, giddy with relief. His greatest fear had been that the sims would simply dash her against a tree-trunk and throw her tiny broken body into the woods for scavengers to eat.

"They have her yet, I must grant it," Dale said. "Do they take her back to their fellows for tortures viler than those they might perform in haste?"

"Shut up, damn you!" Wingfield shouted, and would have gone for Dale had Cooper and Caleb Lucas not quickly stepped between them.

"Have you not called them beasts all this while, Henry?" Lucas said. "Beasts kill, aye, but they do not torture. That is reserved for men."

"Leave be, all of you," Cooper ordered in a parading voice.

"Yes, you too, Caleb. Such squabbling avails us nothing, the more so when a life's at stake."

The guard's plainspoken good sense was obvious to everyone, though Wingfield could not help adding, "See you remember we know it is a rescue now, Henry. I charge you, do nothing to put Joanna at risk."

Dale nodded gruffly.

The Englishmen hurried on; hope put fresh heart in them and sped their weary feet. Soon they were going down into marshier country again as they approached the York River, which paralleled the James to the north. They all kept peering ahead for a telltale smudge of smoke against the sky.

Darkness fell before they found it. They had to stop, for fear of losing the sim's trail. Wingfield drew first watch. He sat in the warm darkness, wishing he had some way to let Anne know what he had found. His wife would still be suffering the agony of fear and uncertainty he had felt until that afternoon, and would keep on suffering it until he brought their daughter home.

He refused to think of failing. He had before, when he thought Joanna dead. But having come so close, he felt irrationally sure things would somehow work out. He fought that feeling too. It could make him careless, and bring all his revived dreams to nothing.

When he surrendered sentry duty to Lucas, he thought he would be too keyed up to sleep. As it had back in his own bed, though, exhaustion took its toll; the damp ground that might have been a goose-down mattress ten feet thick.

If Henry Dale spotted the sim's fire first. The Englishmen were much closer to it than they had been to the one a couple of days before, for it was smaller and not as smoky. The hour was just past noon.

"We wait here," Allan Cooper decreed, "so we may escape by night and lessen the danger of being discovered." Harry Turtledove They soon found that danger was real. A sim on its way back to the fire walked within a double handful of paces of their hiding place. By luck, it was carrying a fawn it had killed, and did not notice them.

"Ah, venison," Caleb Lucas sighed softly, gnawing on smoked meat tough enough to patch the soles of his boots.

The wait seemed endless to Wingfield; the sun crawled across the sky. To be so close and yet unable to do anything to help his daughter ate at him. But getting himself killed with an ill-considered rush would do her no good either.

The Englishmen made low-voiced plans. All had to be tentative.

So much depended on where Joanna was around the fire, what the sims were doing to her (Wingfield would not let himself consider Henry Dale's notion), how many sims there were, how much surprise the rescuers could achieve.

At last the birds of day began to fall silent. The sky went gold and crimson in the west, deep blue and then purple overhead. When stars came out not far from where the sun had set, Allan Cooper nudged his fellows. "Now we move cannily, mind."

The guard led them as they crept toward the fire. He was humming a Spanish tune under his breath. Wingfield did not think he knew he was doing it. But he had learned his soldiering against Spanish troops, and a return to it brought back old habits.

This band of sims dwelt in more open country than had the other.

The Englishmen could not get very close. Half their plans, the ones involving unexpectedly bursting from the woods and snatching up Joanna, evaporated on the instant. They whispered curses and watched from the nearest shrubbery.

At first glance the scene in front of them did not seem much different from the one they had watched a couple of nights before.

There were more sims here, perhaps as many as forty. Three or four males were roasting roots and bits of meat on sticks over the fire, and passing the chunks of food to sims who stood round waiting.

Another male was cutting up an animal that, with its skin removed, Wingfield could not identify. He stiffened. That was no stone tool the sim used; it was a good steel knife. Henry Dale noticed that at about the same time he did. "Damned thieving creatures," he muttered.

A female set the young one it was holding down on the ground, then rose and ambled away from the fire, probably to relieve itself. The infant followed it with its eyes and shrieked in distress. The adult came back and played with it, dandling it in its arms, rolling it about, and making faces at it. After the child was quiet, the female left it again.

: This time, it stayed quiet until its mother returned.

This band did not have one firekeeper as the other had.

From time to time, a female or young male would come up to the blaze and toss on a branch or a shrub. The system seemed haphazard to Wingfield, but the fire never looked likely to go out.

A group of sims had gathered on the far side of the fire around something their bodies kept Wingfield from making out. Whatever it was, it mightily interested them. Some stood, others hunkered down on their haunches for a closer look. They pointed and jabbered; once one shook another, (' as if to get a point across. Wingfield could not help chuckling to himself--they reminded him of so many Englishmen at a public house.

e Then the chuckle died in his throat, for he saw that one of the males there had a great glob of mud plastered to the hair from its rib cage. The sim moved slowly and painfully.

Wingfield touched Cooper's arm. "On my oath, that is the k one I fought. I knew I marked him with my knife."

L "Then we tracked truly, as I thought. Good. Now we--" Wingfield's hand clamped down tight on the guard's wrist, silencing him. From the center of that tightly packed [- bunch of sims had come a familiar thin, wailing cry.

["Joanna!"

p-; "How do you know 'tis not one of their cubs yowling?" t Henry Dale demanded. "All brats sound alike."

t "Only to a singk man," Wingfield retorted, too full of 34 Harry urlleaove exaltation and fear to care how he spoke. Against all hope, his daughter lived, but how was he to free her from her captors? And what--the question ate at him, as it had from the onset--what had prompted the sims to steal her in the first place?

A couple of sims stepped away to take food, opening a gap in the crowd. "There, do you see?" Wingfield said triumphantly. No matter how dirty she was (quite, at the moment), smooth, pink Joanna could never be mistaken for a baby sim.

As if to make that pikestaff-plain, one of the sim infants lay beside her on a bed of grass and leaves. Terror stabbed Wingfield as an adult ran its hand down his daughter's chest and belly, but then it did the same to the hairy baby next to her. It stared at its palm, as if not believing what it had felt.

The sim Wingfield had wounded held up one of Joanna's hands, then that of the infant of its own kind. Then it held up their feet in the same way. The other sims grunted. Some looked at their own hands and feet, then toward Joanna's. Except for size and hairiness, there was not much difference between their members and hers.

But then the sim patted Joanna's smooth, rounded head, and that was nothing like what the tiny sim next to her had. Already its brow beetled bonily, and above it the skull quickly retreated. Noticing that, one of the adults rubbed her own receding brow. She scratched, for all the world as if lost in thought.

"What are they playing at?" Henry Dale whispered harshly.

Wingfield, at a loss, could only shrug.

Caleb Lucas said, "If a tribe of devils set up housekeeping outside London and we wished to learn of what they were capable, were it not wise for us to seize on a small one, knowing full well a grown devil would drag us straight to perdition?"

"Why are you dragging in devils?" Dale did not have the type of mind that quickly grasped analogies.

Allan Cooper did. "Youngster, meseems you've thrown your dart dead cenoer," he said. "To the sodding sims, we must be devils or worse." He stopped, then went on, sounding surprised at where that line of thought was taking him, "Which would make them men of a sort, not so? I'd not've believed it."

Wingfield paid more attention to Joanna than to the argument. She was still crying, but did not seem in dreadful distress. It was her hungry y, not the sharper, shriller one she used when gas pained her or something external upset her.

The female sim that had scratched its head might have been the mother of the infant with whom Joanna was being compared. It took Joanna away from the wounded sim and lifted her to a breast. The baby nursed as eagerly as if it had been Anne. Wingfield told himself that was something his wife never needed to know.

He invented and discarded scheme before scheme for rescuing his daughter. The trouble was that the sims would not leave her alone.

Even while she was feeding, they kept coming up to stare at her and touch her. She went on, blissfully oblivious to everything but the nipple.

"By God, I shall get her back," Wingfield said.

He spoke loud enough to distract Allan Cooper. "What? How?" the guard said.

And then Wingfield knew what he had to do. "Do you three cover me with your weapons," he said, "and should the sims harm Joanna or should I fall, do as you deem best. Otherwise, I conjure you not to shoot."

Before his comrades' protests could more than begin, he got up from his concealment and walked into the light of the sims' fire.

The first sim to see him let out a hoot of alarm that made the rest of the band whip their heads around. He walked slowly toward the fire, his hands empty and open; he had well a grown devil would drag us straight to perdition?"

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The first sim to see him let out a hoot of alarm that made the rest of the band whip their heads around. He walked slowly toward the fire, his hands empty and open; he had left his crossbow behind when he rose.

Had the sims chosen to, they could have slain him at any instant He knew that. His feet hardly seemed to touch the ground; they were light with the liquid springiness fear gives. But the strange unreality of the moment gripped the Harry Turtledove sims no less than him. Never before had an Englishman come to them alone and unarmed (or so they must have thought, for the pistols in his boots did not show--in truth, he had forgotten them himself).

But then, the sims had never stolen a baby before.

Females snatched up youngsters and bundled them away in their arms as Wingfield passed. Lucas had it right, he thought wryly; it was as if Satan had appeared, all reeking of brimstone, among the Jamestown cabins.

He stopped a few feetin front of the male he had fought. That one had stooped to grasp a sharp stone; many of them lay in the dirt round the fire. But the sim made no move to attack. It waited, to see what Wingfield would do.

The Englishman was not sure if the sim knew him. He pointed to the plastered-over cut he had given; to the bruise and scab on his own forehead; to Joanna, who was still nursing at the female sims breast.

He repeated the gestures, once, twice.

The sims broad nostrils flared. Its mouth came open, revealing large, strong teeth. It poinoed from Wingfield to Joanna, gave a questioning grunt.

"Aye, that's my daughter," Wingfield said excioedly. The words could not have meant anything to the sim, but the animated tone did.

It grunted again.

Wingfield dug in his pouch, found a strip of smoked meat, and tossed it to the sim. The sim sniffed warily, then took a bite. Its massive jaw let it tear and chew at the leathery stuff where the Englishman had to nibble and gnaw, and made its smile afoerward a fearsome thing.

When Joanna finally relinquished the nipple, the sim holding her swung

her up to its shoulder and began pounding her on the back. The treatment was rougher than Wingfield would have liked, but was soon rewarded with a hearty belch. The female sim began to rock Joanna, much as Anne would have.

Wingfield pointed to his daughter, to himself, and then back in the direction of Jamestown. As best he could, he pantomimed taking Joanna home. When he was done, he

folded his arms and waited expectantly, trying to convey the attitude that nothing but going along with his wishes was even conceivable.

Had he hesitated, faltered for an instant, he would have lost everything. As it was, that aura of perfect confidence gave him his way. None of the sims moved to stop the female when it came forward and set Joanna in his arms.

He bowed to it as he might have to a great lady of the court, to the sim he had fought as to an earl. Holding Joanna tightly to him, he backed slowly toward the brush where his companions waited. He expected the tableau to break up at any moment, but it held. The sims watched him go, the firelight reflecting red from their eyes.

He was close to the place from which he had come when Caleb Lucas said from the bushes, "Splendidly done, oh, splendidly, Edwardi" His voice was a thread of whisper; none of the sims could have heard it.

"Aye, you have the girl, and good for you." Henry Dale did not try to hold his voice down. Indeed, he rose from concealment. "Now to teach the vermin who stole her the price of their folly." He aimed a pistol at the sims behind Wingfield.

"No, you fool!" Lucas shouted. He lunged for Dale at the same moment the sims cried out in fear, fury, and betrayal.

Too late--the pistol roared, belching flame and smoke. The lead ball struck home with a noise like a great slap. The sim it hit shrieked, briefly.

With a lithe twist, Dale slipped away from Caleb Lucas.

His hand dived into his boot-top for his other pistol. The second shot was less deliberately aimed, but not a miss. This time the screams of pain went on and on.

By then Wingfield was among the bushes. Behind him, the sims were boiling like ants whose nest has been stirred with a stick. Some scrambled for cover; others, bolder, came rushing after the Englishman.

A stone crashed against greenery mere inches from his head.

"No help for it now," Henry Dale said cheerfully, bringing up his crossbow. The bolt smote a charging sim square in the chest. The sim staggered, hands clutching at the short shaft of death. It pitched forward on its face.

More rocks flew. Wingfield turned to one side, to try to shield Joanna with his body.

Allan Cooper got to his feet. "God damn you to hell for what you make

me do," he snarled at Dale. He fired one pistol, then a second, then his crossbow.

A sharpened stone tore Wingfield's breeches, cut his thigh. Had it hit squarely, it would have crippled him. The sims were howling like, lost souls, lost angry souls. Dale was right--no help for it now, Wingfield saw. His pistol bucked when he fired one-handed. He did not know whether he hit or missed. In a way, he hoped he had missed. That did not stop him from drawing his other gun.

"You purposed this all along, Henry," he shouted above the din.

"Aye, and own it proudly." Dale dropped another sim with a second crossbow bolt. He turned to kick Caleb Lucas in the ribs. "Fight 'em, curse you! They'll have the meat from your bones now as happily as from mine."

"No need for this, no need," Lucas gasped, swearing and sobbing by turns. But whether or not that was true, he realized, as Wingfield had, that there was no unbaking a bread. His pistols barked, one after the other.

But the sims on their home ground were not the skulking creatures they were near Jamestown. Though half a dozen lay dead or wounded, the rest, male and female together, kept up the barrage of stones. Their missiles were not so deadly as the Englishmen's, but they loosed them far more often.

One landed with a meaty thud. Allan Cooper, his face a mask of gore, crumpled slowly to the ground.

He turned to Wingfield, who was struggling to fit another bolt into his weapon's groove. "Go on!" he shouted. "You have what you came for. I'll hold the sims. As you say, I am to blame here."

"But--"

Dale whipped out his rapier. Its point flickered in front of Wingfield's face. "Gal Aye, and you, Caleb. I promise, I shall give the brutes enough fight and chase to distract 'em from you."

He sprang into the clearing, rushing the startled sims. One swung a stout branch at him. Graceful as a dancer, he ducked, then thrust out to impale his attacker. The sim gave a bubbling shriek; blood gushed from its mouth.

"Gal" Dale yelled again.

Without Joanna, Wingfield would have stood by the other Englishman no matter what he said. When she squalled at the rough treatment she was getting, though, he scrambled away into the woods. Lucas followed a few seconds later.

For as long as they could, they looked back at Henry Dale. After that first one, no sim dared come within reach of his sword. He stayed in the clearing for what seemed an impossibly long time, stones flying all around him.

At last he turned. "Catch me if you can!" he shouted, brandishing his rapier. Wingfield saw how he limped as he ran; not every stone had

missed. Dale ashed through the undergrowth, going in a different direction from his comrades and making no effort to move quietly. His defiant cries rang through the night. So did the sims' bellows of rage as they pursued him.

"You make for home," Caleb Lucas urged Wingfield. "I will give Henry such help as I may."

"They will surely slay you," Wingfield said, but he knew he would not hold Lucas back. Had their positions been reversed, he would not have wanted the youngster to try to stop him.

Just then, the sims' shouts rose in-a goblin chorus of triumph.

Screams punctuated it, not all from an English throat. As Dak had promised, he did not die easily. Caleb Lucas sobbed.

"Come," Wingfield said softly, his own voice breaking. "Now we have but to save ourselves, any way we may." And So to lDed Sims made people look at themselves and their place in nature differently from the way they had before.

They showed the link between humans and animals far more clearly than any creatures with which Euro peons had been familiar before.

Had there been no sims--had the Americas been populated by native humans, say, or only by animals--the development of the transformational theory of life might have been long delayed. This would have slowed the growth of several sciences, biology being, of course, the most obvious of them. Speculating on 0 might-have-beens, however, is not the proper domain of history. The transformational theory of life was first put forward in 1661. After that, humans' view of their place in the world would never be the same From The Story o the Federated Commonwealths May 4, 1661. A fine bright morning. Small beer and 0 radishes for to break my fast, then into London for this day.

44 narry lul tluuuvv The shambles on Newgaoe Street stinking unto heaven, as is usual, but close to it my destination, the sim marketplace. Our servant Jane with too much for one body to do, and whilst I may not afford the hire of another man or maid,. two sims shall go far to ease her burden.

Success also sure to gladden Elizabeth's heart, my wiEe being ever one to follow the dame Fashion, and sims all the go of late, though monstrous ugly. Them formerly not much seen here, but since the success of our Virginia and Plymouth colonies are much more often [etched to these shores from the wildernesses the said colonies front upon. They are also commenced to be bred on English soil, but no hope there for me, as I do require workers full-grown, not cubs or babes in arms or whatsoever the proper term may be.

The sim-seller a vicious lout, near unhandsome as his wares. No, the truth for the diary: such were a slander on any man, as I saw on his conveying me to the creatures.

Have seen these sims before, surely, but briefly, and in their masters' livery, the which by concealing their nakedness conceals as well much of their brutishness. The males are most of them well made, though lean as rakes from the ocean passage and, I warrant, poor victualing after. But all are so hairy as more to resemble rugs than men, and the same true

for the females, their fur hiding such dubious charms as they may possess nigh as well as a smock of linen: nought here, God knows, for Elizabeth's jealousy to light on.

This so were the said females lovely of feature as so many Aphrodites. They are not, nor do the males recall to mind Adonis. In both sexes the brow projects with a shelf of bone, and above it, where men do enjoy a forehead proud in its erectitude, is but an apish slope.

The nose broad and low, the mouth wide, the teeth nigh as big as a horse's (though shaped, it is not to be denied, like a man's), the jaw long, deep and devoid of chin. They stink.

The sim-seller full of compliments on my coming hard : on the arrival of the Gloucester from Plymouth, him having 3.

. . .

thereby replenished his stock in trade. Then the price should also be not so dear, says I, and by God it did do my heart good to see the ferret-faoed rogue discomfited.

Rogue as he was, though, he dickered with the best, for I paid full a guinea more for the pair of sims than I had looked to, spending in all 1l.6s.4d. The coin onoe passed over (and bitten, for to ensure its verity), the sim-seller signed to those of his chattels I had bought that they were to go with me.

His gestures marvelous quick and clever, and those the sims answered with too. Again, I have seen somewhat of the like before.

Whilst coming to understand in time the speech of men, sims are without language of their own, having but a great variety of howls, grunts, and moans. Yet this gesture-speech, the which I am told is come from the signs of the deaf, they do readily learn, and often their masters answer back so, to ensure commands being properly gzapsed.

Am wild to learn it my own self, and shall. Meseems it is in its way a style of tachygraphy or short-hand such as I use to set down these pages. Having devised varying tachygraphic hands for friends and acquaintanoes, 'twill be amusing taking to a hand that is exactly what its name declares.

As I was leaving with my new charges, the sim-seller did bid me lead them by the gibbets on Shooter's Hill, there to see the bodies and members of felons and of sims as have run off from their masters. It wondered me they should have the wit to take the meaning of such display, but he assured me they should. And so, reckoning it good advioe if true and no harm if a lie, I chiwied them thither.

A filthy sight I found it, with the miscreants' flesh all shrunk to the bones. But boo! quoth my sims, and looked close upon the corpses of their own-kind, which by their hairiness and Elat-skulled heads do seem even mare bestial dead than when animated with life.

Home then, and Elizabeth as delighted in my success as am I. An excellent dinner of a calf's head boiled with dumplings, and an abundance of buttered ale with sugar 46 Harry lurlluUvU

and cinnamon, of which in celebration we invited Jane to partake, and

she grew right giddy. Bread and leeks for the sims, and water, it being reported they grow undocile on stronger drink.

After much debate, though good-natured, it was decided to style the male Tom and the female Peg. Showed them to their pallets down oellar, and they took to them readily enough, as finer than what they were accustomed to.

So to bed, right pleased with myll despite the expense.

May 7. An advantage of having sims present appears that I had not thought on. Both Tom and Peg quite excellent ratters, finer than any puss-cat. No need, either, to fling the rats on the dungheap, for they devour them with as much gusto as I should a neat's tongue. They having subsisted on such small deer in the forests of America, I shall not try to break them of the habit, though training them not to bring in their prey when we are at table with guests. The Reverend Mr. Milles quite shocked, but recovering nicely on being plied with wine.

May 8. Peg and Tom the both of them enthralled with fire. When the work of them is done of the day, or at evening ere they take their rest, they may be found before the hearth observing the sport of the flames. Now and again one will to the other say boo!--this noise, I find, they utter on seeing that which does interest them, whatsoever it may be.

Now as I thought on it, I minded me reading or hearing, I recall not which, that in their wild unpeopled haunts the sims know the use of fire as they find it set from lightning or other such mischance, but not the art of its making. No wonder then they are Vulcanolaters, reckoning name more precious than do we gold.

Considering such reflections, I resolved this morning on an experimtnt, to see what they might do. Rising early for to void my bladder in the pot, I put out the hearthfire, which in any case was gone low through want of fuel. Reired then to put on my dressing gown and, once clad, returned to await developments.

First up from the cellar was Tom, and his cry on seeing the flames extinguished heartrending as Romeo's over the body of fair Julia when I did see that play acted this December past. In a trice comes Peg, who moaning with Tom did rouse my wife, and she much upset at being so rudely wakened.

When calm in some small measure was restored, I bade by signs, in the learning of which I proceed apace, for the sims to sit quiely before the hearth, and with flint and steel restored that which I had earlier destroyed. They both made such outcry as if they had heard sounded the Last Trump.

Then doused I that cond fire too, again to which distress from Peg and Tom. Elizabeth by this time out of the house in some dudgeon, no doubt to spend money we lack on stuffs of which we have no want.

Set up in the hearth thereupon several small ares of sticks, each with much tinder so as to make it an easy matter to kindle. A brisk striking of nint and steel dropping sparks onto one such produced a merry little blaze, to the accompaniment of much boeing out of the sims.

And so to the nub of it. Shewing Tom the steel and flint, I clashed them once more the one upon the other so he might see the sparks

engenslered thereby. Then pointed to one of the aforementioned piles of sticks I had made up, bidding him watch close, as indeed he did. Having made sule of 't, I did SH that cond pile alight.

Again put the fires out, the wailing accompanying the 9 act less than heretofore, for which I was not sorry. Pointed now to a third assemblage of wood and tinder, but instead of myself lighting it, I did convey flint and steel to Tom, and the with signs essayed to bid him play Promeheus.

9 His hands much scarred and callused, and urkler their k hair knobby-knuckled as an Irishman's. He held at Erst the implements as if not taking in their purpo, yet the sims g-- making tools of stone, as is widely reported, he could not t wholk fail to grasp their utility.

L And indeed ere long he did try parroting me. When his 48 Harry TurUeaove first clumsy attempt yielded no result, I thought he would abandon such efforts as beynd his capacity and reserved for men of my sort.

But persist he did, and at length was rewarded with scintillae like unto those I had made. His grin so wide and gleeful I thought it would stretch clear rund his head.

Then without need of my further demonstration he set the instruments of rite production over the materials for the blaze. Him in such excioement as the sparks fell upon the waiting tinder that beneath his breeches rose his member, indeed to such degree as would have made me proud to be its possessor. And Peg was, I think, in such mood as to couple with him on the spot, had I not been present and had not his faculties been directed elsewhere than toward the lectual.

For at his success he cut such capers as had not been out of place upon the stage, were they but a trifle more

rhythmical and less unconstrained. Yet of the making of fire, even if by such expedient as the friction of two sticks (which once I was forced by circumstance to attempt, and would try the patience of Job), as of every other salutary art, his race is as utterly ignorant as of the moons of Jupiter but lately found by some Italian with an optic glass.

No brute beast of the field could learn to begin a fire on the technique being shown it, which did Tom nigh readily as a man. But despite most diligent instruction, no sim yet has mastered such subtler arts as reading and writing, nor ever will, meseems. Falling in capacity thus between men and animal, the sims do raise a host of conundrums vexing and perplexUng. I should pay a pound, or at the least ten shillings, merely to know how such strange fusions came to be.

So to the Admiralty full of such musings, which did occupy my mind, I fear, to the detriment of my proper duties.

May 10. Supper this evening at the Turk's Head, with the other members of the Rota Club. The fare not of the finest, being boiled venison and some few pigeons, all meanly done up.

The lamb's wool seemed naught but poor ale, the sugar, nutmeg, and meat of roasted apples hardly to be tasted. Miles the landlord down with a quartan fever, but ill-served by his staff if such is the result of his absence.

The subject of the Club's discussions for the evening much in accord with my own recent curiosities for the blaze. Him in such excitement as the sparks fell upon the waiting tinder that beneath his breeches rose his member, indeed to such degree as would have made me proud to be its possessor. And Peg was, I think, in such mood as to couple with him on the spot, had I not been present and had not his faculties been directed elsewhere than toward the lectual.

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The subject of the Club's discussions for the evening much in accord with my own recent curiosity, to wit, the sims. Cyriack Skinner did maintain them creatures of the Devil, whereupon was he roundly raged by Dr. Croon as having in this contention returned to the pernicious heresy of the Maniches, the learned doctor reserving the power of creation to the Lord alone. Much flinging back and forth of biblical texts, the which all struck me more as being an exercise of ingenuity of the debaters than bearing on the problem, for in plain fact the Scriptures nowhere mention sims.

When at length the talk did turn to matters more ascertainable, I spoke somewhat of my recent investigation, and right well received my remarks were, or so I thought. Others with experience of sims with like tales, finding them quick enough on things practicable but sadly lacking in any higher faculties. Much jollity at my account of the visible manifestation of Tom's excitement, and whispers that this lady or that (the names, to my vexation, I failed to catch) owned her sims for naught but their prowess in matters of the mattress.

Just then came the maid by with coffee for the Club--not of the best, but better, I grant, than the earlier wretched lamb's wool. She a pretty yellow-haired lass called, I believe, Kate, a wench of perhaps

sixteen years, a goodbodied woman not over thick or thin in any place, with a lovely bosom she did display most charmingly as she bent to fill the gentlemen's cups.

Having ever an eye for beauty, such that I reckon littk else beside it, I own I did turn my head for to follow this Kate as she went about her duties. Noticing which, Sir William Henry called out, much to the merriment of the Club and to my chagrin, "See how Samuel pOEpSt" Him no 50 Harry lurtleaove mean droll, and loosed a pretty pun, if at my expense.

Good enough, but then at the far end of the table someone (I saw not who, worse luck) thought to cap it by braying like the donkey he must be, "Not half the peeping, I warrant, as at his sims of nights!"

Such mockery clings to a man like pitch, regardless of the truth in't, which in this case is none. Oh, the thing could be done, but the sims so homely 'twSuld yield no titillation, of that I am practically certain. \ May 12. The household being more infected this past week with nits than ever before, resolved to bathe Peg and Tom, which also I hoped would curb somewhat their stench. And so it proved, albeit not without more alarums than I had looked for. The sims most loath to enter the tub, which must to them have seemed some instrument of torment. The resulting shrieks and outcry so deafening a neighbor did call out to be assured all was well.

Having done so, I saw no help for it but to go into the tub my own self, notwithstanding my having bathed but two weeks before. I felt, I think, more hesitation stripping down before Peg than I should in front of Jane, whom I would simply dismiss from consideration save in how she performed her duties. But I did wonder what Peg made of my body, reckoning it against the hairy forms of her own kind.

Hath she the wit to deem mankind superior, or is our smoothness to her as gross and repellent as the peltries of the sims to us? I cannot as yet make shih to enquire. Ir As may be, my example showing them they should not be harmed, they bathed themselves. A trouble arose I had not S foreseen, for the sims being nearly as thickly haired over all [Sx their bodies as I upon my head, the rinsing of the soap from their hides less easy than for us, and requiring much water.

Lucky I am\the well is within fifty paces of my home. And so from admiral of the bath to the Admiralty, hoping _ henceforward to scratch myself less. [` 2 ['

May 13. A pleasant afternoon this day, carried in a coach to see the lions and other beasts in the menagerie. I grant the lions pride of plaoe through custom immemorial, but in truth am more taken with the abnormous creatures fetched back from the New World than those our people have known since the time of Arthur. Nor am I alone in this conceit, for the cages of lion, bear, and camel had but few spectators, whilst round those of the American beasts I did find myll compelled to use hands and elbows to make shift to pass through the crowds.

This last not altogether unpleasant, as I chanced to brush against a handsome lass, but when I did enquire if she would take tea with me she said me nay, which did irk me no little, for as I say she was fair to see.

More time for the animals, then, and wondrous strong ever they strike

me. The spear-fanged cat is surely the most horridest murderer this shuddering world hath seen, yet there is for him prey worthy of his mettle, what with beavers near big as our bears, wild oxen whose horns are to those of our familiar kine as the spear-fanged cat's teeth to the lion's, and the great hairy elephants which do roam the forests.

Why such prodigies of nature manifest themlyes on those distant shores does perplex me most exoceedingly, as they are unlike any beasts even in the bestiaries, which as all men know are more flights of fancy than sober fact. Amongst them the sims appear no more than one piece of some great jigsaw, yet no pattern therein is to me apparent; would it were.

Also another new creature in the menagerie, which I had - not seen before. At first I thought it a caged sim, but on inspection it did prove an ape, brought back by the Portuguese from Afric lands and styled there, the keeper made so good as to inform me, shimpan. It flourishes not in F England's clime, he did continue, being subject to sickness k in the lungs from the cool and damp, but is so interesting as k V to be displayed whilst living, howsoever long that may ^ f prove. 52 Harry urlleuvve The shimpanse is a baser brute than even the sim. It goes on all fours, and its hinder feet more like unto monkeys' than men's, having thereon great toes that grip like thumbs. Also, where a sims teeth, as I have observed from Tom and Peg, are uncommon large, in shape they are like unto a man's, but the shimpanse hath tushes of some savagery though of course paling alongside those of the spear-fanged cat.

Seeing the keeper a garrulous fellow, I enquired of him further anent this shimpanse. He owned he had himself thought it a sort of simon its arrival, but sees now more distinguishing points than likenesses: gait and dentition, such as I have herein remarked upon, but also in its habits. From his experience, he has seen it to be ignorant of fire, repeatedly allowing to die a blaze though fuel close at hand. Nor has it the knack of shaping stones to its ends, though it will, he told me, cast them betimes against those who annoy it, once striking one such with force enough to render him some time senseless.

Hearing the villain had essayed tormenting the creature with a stick, my sympathies lay all for the shimpanse, wherein its keeper concurred.

And so homewards, thinking on the shimpanse as I rode. Whereas in the lands wherewith men are most familiar, it were easy distinguishing men from beasts, the strange places to which our vessels have but lately fetched themselves reveal a stairway ascending the chasm, and climbers on the stairs, some higher, some lower. A pretty image, but why it should be so there and not here does I confess escape me.

May 16. A savage row with Jane today, her having forgotten a change of clothes for my bed. Her defense that I had not so instructed her, the lying minx, for I did plainly make my wishes known the evening previous, the which I recollect most distinctly. Yet she did deny it again and again, finally raising my temper to such a pitch that I cursed her right roundly, slapping her face and pulling her nose smartly.

Whereupon did the ungrateful trull lay down her savice on the spot. She decamped in a fury of her own, crying that I treated the sims, those very sims which I had bought for to ease her labors, with more kindlier consideration than I had for her own self.

So now we are without a serving-maid, and her a dab hand in the kitchen,

her swan pie especially being toothsome. Dined tonight at the Bell, and expect to tomorrow at the Swan on the Hoop, in Fish Street.

For Elizabeth no artist over the hearth, nor am I myself. And as for the sims, I should sooner open my veins than indulge of their cuisine, the good Lord only knowing what manner of creatures they in their ignorance should add to a pot.

Now as my blood has somewhat cooled, I must admit a germ of truth in Jane's scolds. I do not beat Tom and Peg as a man would servitors of more ordinary stripe. They, being but new come from the wilds, are not inured to't as are our servants, and might well turn on me, their master. And being in part of brute kind, their strength does exceed mine, Tom's most assuredly and that of Peg perhaps. And so, say I, better safe. No satisfaction to me the sims on Shooter's Hill gallows, wre I not there to see't.

May 20. Today to my lord Sandwich's for supper. This doubly pleasant, in enjoying his fine companionship and saving the cost of a meal, the house being still without maid. The food and drink in excellent style, as to suit my lord. The broiled lobsters very sweet, and the lamprey pie (which for its rarity I but seldom eat of) the best ever I had. Many other fine victuals as well (the tanzy in especial), and the wine all sugared.

Afterwards backgammon, at which I won 5 ere my luck turned.

Ended ISs. in my lord's debt, which he did graciously excuse me afterwards, a generosity not looked for but which I did not wfuse.

Then to aambo, wherein by tagging and rich to Sandwic)a I was adjudged winner, the more so for playing on his earlier munificence.

Thaeafter nigh a surfeit of good talk, as is custom at my ord's.

He mentioning sims, I did relate my own dealings with Peg and Tom, to which he lisoened with much interest. He thinks on buying some for his own household, and unaware I had done so.

Perhaps it was the wine let loose my tongue, for I broached somewhat my disjoint musings on the sims and their place in nature, on the strangeness of the American fauna and much else besides. Lord Sandwich did acquaintanoe me with a New World beast found in their southerly holdings by the Spaniards, of strange outlandish sort: big as an ox, or nearly, and all covered over with armor of bone like a man wearing ohain. I should pay out a shilling or even more for to see't, were one conveyed to London.

Then coffee, and it not watered as so often at an inn, but full and strong. As I and Elizabeth making our departures, Lord Sandwich did bid me join him tomorrow night to hear speak a savant of the Royal Society. It bore, said he, on my prior ramblings, and would say no more, but looked uncommon sly. Even did it not, I should have leaped at the chance.

This written at one of the clock, for so the watchman just now cried out. Too wound up for bed, what with coffee and the morrow's prospect. Elizabeth aslumber, but the sims also awake, and at frolic, meseems, from the noises up the stairway.

If they be of human kind, is their fornication sans dergy sinful?

Another vexing question. By their existence, they do engender naught but disquietude. Nay, strike thaL They may in sooth more sims engender, a pun good enough to sleep on, and so to bed.

May 21. All this evening worrying at my thoughts as a dog at a bone. My lord Sandwich knows not what commotion internal he did by his invitation, all kindly meant, set off in me. The spealcer this night a spare man, dry as dust, of the very sort I learned so well to loathe when at Cambridge.

Dry as dust! Happy words, which did spring all unbidden from my pen. For of dust the fellow did discourse, if thereby is meant, as commonly, things long deadx He had some men bear in bones but lately found by Swanscombe at a gravel-digging. And such bones they were, and teeth (or rather tusks), as to make it all I could do to hold me in my seat. For surely they once graced no less a beast than the hairy elephant whose prototype I saw in the menagerie so short a while ago. The double-curving tusks admit of no error, for those of all elephants with which we are anciently familiar form but a single segment of arc.

When, his discourse concluded, he gave leave for questions, I made bold to ask to what he imputed the hairy elephant's being so long vanished from our shores yet thriving in the western lands. To this he confessed himself baffted, as am I, and admiring of his honesty as well.

Before the hairy elephant was known to live, such monstrous bones surely had been reckoned as from beasts perishing in the Flood whereof Scripture speaks. Yet how may that be so, them surviving across a sea wider than any Noah sailed?

Meseems the answer lieth within my grasp but am balked from setting finger to't. The thwarting fair to drive me mad, worse even, I think, than with a lass who will snatch out a hairpin for to defend her charms against my importuning.

May . Grand oaks from tiny acorns growt This morning came a great commotion from the kitchen. I rushing in found Tom at struggle with a cur dog which had entered the door being open on account of fine weather, to steal half a flitch of salt bacon. It dodging most nimbly round the sim, snatched up the gammon and fled out again, him pursuing but in vain.

Myself passing vexed, having intended to sup thereon. But Tom all downcast on returning, so had not the heart further to punish him.

Told him instead, him understanding I fear but little, it were well men not sims dwelt in England, else would wolves prowl the London streets still. - Stood stock still some time thereafter, hearing the greater import behind my jesting speech. Is not the answer to the riddle of the hairy elephant and other exotic beasts existing in the New World but being hereabouts long vanished their having there but sims to hunt them? The sims in their wild haunts wield club and sharpened stone, no more. They are ignorant even of the bow, which from time out of mind has equipt the hunter's armory.

Just as not two centuries past we Englishmen slew on this island the last wolf, so may we not imagine our most remotest grandsires serving likewise the hairy elephant, the spear-fanged cat? They being more

cunning than sims and better accoutered, this should not have surpassed their powers. Such beasts would survive in America, then, not through virtue inherent of their own, but by reason of lesser danger to them in the sims than would from mankind come.

Put this budding thought at luncheon today to my lord Sandwich.

He back at me with marvelled to his coy mistress (the most annoyingest sort!), viz had we but world enough and time, who could reckon the changes as might come to pass? And going on, laughing, to say next will be found dead sims at Swanscombe.

Though meant but as a pleasantry, quoth I, why not? Against true men they could not long have stood, but needs must have given way as round Plymouth and Virginia. Even without battle they must soon have failed, as being less able than mankind to provide for their wants.

There we let it lie, but as I think more on't, the notion admits of broader application. Is't not the same for trout as for men, or for lilacs? Those best suited living reproduce their kind, whilst the trout with twisted tail or bloom without sweet scent die all unmourned, leaving no descendants. And each succeeding generation, being of the previous survivors constituted, will by such reasoning show some little difference from the one as went before.

Seeing no flaw in this logic, resolve tomorrow to do this from its tachygraphic state, bereft, of course, of maunderings and privacies, for prospectus to the Royal Society, and mightily wondering whatever they shall make of it.

May 23. Closeted all this day at the Admiralty. Yet did it depend on my diligence alone, I fear me the Fleet should drown. Still, a deal of business finished, as happens when one stays by it. Three quills worn quite out, and my hands all over ink. Also my fine camlet cloak with the gold buttons, which shall mightily vex my wife, poor wretch, unless it may be cleaned. I pray God to make it so, for I do mislike strife at home.

The burning work at last complete, homeward in the twilight. It being washing-day, dined on cold meat. I do confess, felt no small strange stir in my breast on seeing Tom taking down the washing before the house. A vision it was, almost, of his kind roaming England long ago, till perishing from want of substance on vying therefore with men.

And now they are through the agency of men returned here again, after some great interval of years. Would I knew how many.

The writing of my notions engrossing the whole of the day, had no occasion to air them to Lord Brouncker of the Society, as was my hope.

Yet expound I must, or burst. Elizabeth, then, at dinner made audience for me, whether she would or no. My spaoe at last exhausted, asked for her thoughts on't.

She said only that Holy Writ sufficed on the matter for her, whereat I could but make a sour face. To bed in some anger, and in fear lest the Royal Society prove as closeminded, which God prevent.

Did He not purpose man to reason on the world around him, He should have left him witless as the sim.

May 24. To Gresham College this morning, to call on Lord Brouncker. He examined with great care the papers I had : done up, his face revealing naught. Felt myself at recitation

[: once more before a professor, a condition whose lack these f xlast years I have not missed. Feared also he might not be i; able to take in the writing, it being done in such haste some t dlort-hand characters may have replaced the common ones.

i Then to my delight he declared he reckoned it deserving I knew not how to make answer, and should have in the next moment fled. But up spake to my great surprise Lord Brouncker, reciting from Second Chronicles, the second verse of the fourth chapter, wherein is said of Solomon and his Temple, Also he made the molten sea of ten cubits from brim to brim, round in compass, and the height thereof was five cubits, and a line of thirty cubits did compass it round about.

This much perplexed the Puritan and me as well, though I essayed not to show it. Lord Brouncker then proceeded to his explication, to wit that the true compass of a ten-cubit round vessel was not thirty cubits, but above one and thirty, I misremember the exact figure he gave. Those of the Royal Society learned in mathematics did agree he had reason, and urged the Puritan make the experiment for his self with cup, cord, and rule, which were enough for to demonstrate the truth.

I asked if he was answered. Like a gentleman he owned he was, and bowed, and sat, his face full of troubles. Felt with him no small sympathy, for once one error in Scripture be admitted, where shall it end?

The next query was of different sort, a man in periwig enquiring if I did reckon humankind to have arisen by the means I described. Had to reply I did. Our forefathers might be excused for thinking otherwise, them being so widely separate from all other creatures they knew.

But we moderns in our travels round the globe have found the shimpanse, which standeth nigh the flame of reasoned thought; and more important still the sim, in whom the flame does burn, but more feebly than in ourselves. These bridging the gap twixt man and beast meseems do show mankind to be in sooth a part of nature, whose engenderment in some past distant age is to be explained through natural law.

Someone rose to doubt the vacharacters may have replaced the common ones.

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Someone rose to doubt the variation in each sort of living thing being sufficient eventually to permit the rise of new kinds. Pointed out to him the mastiff, the terrier, and the bloodhound, all of the dog kind, but become distinct through man's choice of mates in each generation. Surely the same might occur in nature, said I. The fellow admitted it was conceivable, and sat.

Then up stood a certain Wilberforce, with whom I have some small acquaintance. He likes me not, nor I him. We know it on both sides, though for civility's sake feigning otherwise. Now he spoke with smirking air, as one sure of the mortal thrust. He did grant my willingness to have a sim as great-grandfather, said he, but was I so willing to claim one as great-grandmother? A deal of laughter rose which was his purpose, and to make me out a fool.

Had I carried steel, I should have drawn on him. As was, rage sharpened my wit to serve for the smallsword I left at home. Told him it were no shame to have one's greatgrandfather a sim, as that sim did use to best advantage the intellect he had. Better that, quoth I, than dissipating the mind on such digressive and misleading quibbles as he raised. If I be in error, then I am; let him shew it by logic and example, not as it were playing to the gallery.

Came clapping from all sides, to my delight and the round dejection of Wilberforce. On seeking further questions, found none.

Took my own seat whilst the Fellows of the Society did congratulate me and cry up my essay louder, I thought, than either of the other two.

Lord Brouncker acclaimed it as a unifying principle for the whole of the study of life, which made me as proud a man as any in the world, for all the world seemed to smile upon me.

And so to bed. 1691 Around the Salt Lick Europeans soon settled the Atlantic seaboard of North America.

Settlement was slower in the Spanish and Portuguese colonies further south, as the harsh tropical climate of much of Central and South America posed a serious challenge to immigrants. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, only New Granada and Argentina, the most northerly and southerly of the Hispanic settlements, truly flourished.

The British North American colonies, -however, soon outdistanced even the most successful settlements farther south. Because the land was more like that to which the settlers had been accustomed, European farming techniques needed less adaptation than was the case in Central and South America. Moreover, the establishment of a divine-right monarchy on the French model in England made political and religious dissenters eager to leave the island--and the Crown happy to see them go. Thus a constant stream of settlers was assured.

As the seventeenth century drew toward a close, explorers were beginning to penetrate the mountain passes and push west into the North American heartland. Bands of wild animals made sure some would not find their way home, and others fell victim to spears and other wild beasts. But neither animals nor beasts could halt or even slow the steady westward push of people into North America.

Still, as has always been true, the first humans to go west of the mountains faced no small danger, and had to show extraordinary resourcefulness in unfamiliar and dangerous circumstances....

From The Story of the Federated Commonwealths THOMAS KENTON PAUSED to look westward at land no man had seen before. The gap in the mountains revealed an endless sea of deep green rolling woods ahead.

Virginia had been such a wilderness once, before the English landed eighty-odd years ago.

"But no more, eh, Charles?" he said to the animal at his side.

"Virginia fills with farmers, and the time has come to find what this western country is like."

Find, Charles signed. Like most of the New World's native subhumans, he understood speech well enough, but had trouble reproducing it. Signals based on those used by the deaf and dumb came easier for him.

The animal was close to Kenton's own rangy six feet one. His eyes, in fact, were on a level with the scout's, but where Kenton's forehead rose, his sloped smoothly back from beetling brow ridges. His nose was low, broad, and flat; his mouth wide; his teeth large, heavy, and yellow; his jaw long and chinless. As an Englishman, he would have been hideous. Kenton did not think of him so; by the standards of his own kind, he was on the handsome side.

On, Charles signed, adding the finger-twist that turned it into a question. At the scout's nod, he strode ahead, his deerskin buskins silent on the mossy ground. His only

other clothing was a leather belt that held water bottle, hatchet, knife, and pouches for this and that. His thick brown hair served him as well as did Kenton's leather tunic and trousers.

A turkey called from a stand of elms off to one side.

Kenton felt his stomach rumble hungrily, and an instant later heard Charles's. They grinned at each other. Hunt, the scout signed, not wanting to make any noise to alert the bird.

The animal nodded and trotted toward the far side of the trees.

Kenton gauged distances. If all went well, the shot would be only about fifty yards--a half-charge of powder should serve. He poured it into the little charge-cup that hung from the bottom of his powderhorn, then down his musket barrel it went.

Working with practiced speed, he set a greased linen patch on the gun's muzzle, laid the round ball on it, and rammed it home till it just touched the powder. Then he squeezed down on the first of the musket's two triggers, setting the second so it would go off at the lightest touch.

The whole procedure took about fifteen seconds.

And it was all needless. Kenton waited, expecting the frightened turkey to burst from cover at any moment. What emerged, however, was Charles, carrying the bird by the feet in one hand and his bloody hatchet in the other. He was laughing.

"Good hunting," Kenton said. He carefully reset the first trigger, making sure he heard it click back into place. He did not begrudge the sim the kill; he welcomed anything that saved powder and bullets.

Stupid bird, Charles signed. I get close, throw. He pantomimed casting the hatchet. It had a weighted knob at the

end of the handle to give it proper balance for the task. Even wild sims were dangerous, flinging the sharp-chipped ; stones they made.

The sun was going down over the vast forest ahead. "We may as well camp," Kenton decided when they came to a small, cool, quick-flowing stream. He and Charles washed their heads and soaked their feet in it. They drank till they sloshed, preferring the stream's water to the warm, stale stuff in their canteens.

Then they scoured the neighborhood for dry twigs and brush for the evening's fire. Kenton was careful to make sure trees and bushes screened the site from the west. When he took out flint and steel to set off the tinder at the end of the fire, Charles touched his arm.

Me, please, the sim Kenton passed him the metal and stone. Charles briskly clashed them together, blew on the sparks that fell to the tinder. Soon he had a small smokeless blaze going.

When he started to pass the flint and steel back to L Kenton, the scout said, "You may as well keep them; you use them more than I do, anyway."

The flickering firelight revealed the awe on Charles's face. That awe was there even though he was of the third generation of sims to grow up as part of Virginia. In the wild, sims used fire if they came across it, and kept it alive as best they could, but they could not start one. To Charles, Kenton's simple tools conveyed a power that must have felt godlike.

The scout burned his hands and his mouth on hot roasted turkey, but did not care. Blowing on his fingers, he chuckled, "Better than going hungry, eh, Charles?"

The sim grunted around a mouthful. He did not bother with any more formal reply; he took his eating seriously.

They tossed the offal into the stream. Charles had taken the first watch the night before, so tonight it belonged to Kenton. The sim stripped off his shoes and belt, curled up by the fire--with his hair, he needed no blanket--and fell asleep with the ease and speed Kenton always envied Charles and his breed never brought the day's troubles into the evening with them. Were they too simple or too wise?

The scout often wondered.

He let the fire die to red embers that hardly interfered with his night sight. The moon, rounding toward full, spilled pale light over the forest ahead, smoothing its contours till it resembled nothing so much as a calm, peaceful sea.

The ear pierced the illusion that lulled the eye. Somewhere close by, a field mouse squeaked, briefly, as an owl or ferret found it.

Farther away, Kenton heard a wolf howl to salute the moon, then another and another, until the whole pack was at cry.

The eerie chorus made the hair prickle upright at the nape of the scout's neck. Charles stirred and muttered in his sleep. No one, human or sim, was immune to the fear of wolves.

The pack also disturbed the rest of a hairy elephant, whose trumpet call of protest instantly silenced the wolves. They might pull down a calf that strayed too far from its mother, but no beasts hunted full-grown elephants. Not more than once, anyway, Kenton thought.

The normal small night noises took a while to come back after the hairy elephant's cry. The scout strained his ears listening for one set in particular: the grunts and shouts that would have warned of wild sims. No camp was in earshot, at any rate. Hunting males ranged widely, though, and these sims would from long acquaintance not be in awe of men, and thus doubly dangerous.

A coughing roar only a couple of hundred yards away cut short his reverie on the sims. The scout sprang to his feet, his finger darting to the trigger of his musk. That cry also roused Charles. The sim stood at Kenton's side, hatcha ready in his hand.

The roar came again, this time fiercely triumphant. Spea7fang, Charles signed, with kill.

"Yes," Kenton said. Now that the beast had found a victim, it would not be ineresoed in hunting for others-- such as, for instance, himself and the sim. In dead of night, he welcomed that lack of interest.

All the same, excioement prickled in him. The big cats were not common along the Atlantic seaboard, and relentless hunting had reduced their numbers even in the hinterlands of the Virginia colony. Not many men, these days, came to the governor at Portsmouth to collect the 5 bounty on a pair of fangs.

Kenton imagined the consternation that would ensue if he marched into the Hall of Burgesses with a score of sixinch-long ivory daggers.

Most of the clerks he knew would sooner pass a kidney stone than pay out fifty pounds of what was not even their own money.

The scout snorted contemptuously. "I'd sooner reason with a sim," he said. Charles grunted and made the question-mark gesture. "Never mind," Kenton said. "You may as well go back to sleep."

Charles did, with the same ease he had shown before. Nothing troubled him for long. On the other hand, he lacked the sense for long-term planning.

Kenton watched the stars spin slowly through the sky. When he reckoned it was midnight, he woke Charles, stripped off his breeches and tunic, and rolled himself in his blanket. Despite exhaustion, his whirling thoughts kept him some time awake. This once, he thought, he would not have minded swapping wits with his sim.

Sunrise woke the scout. Seeing him stir, Charles nodded his way.

All good, the sim signed. Spearfang stay away.

"Aye, that's good enough for me," Kenton said. Charles nodded and built up the fire while Kenton, sighing, stretched and dressed. Jokes involving wordplay were wasted on sims, though Charles had laughed like a loon when the scout went sprawling over a root a couple of days earlier. The turkey was still almost as good as it had been the night before. Munching on bulbs of wild onion between bites went a long way toward hiding the slight gamy taste the meat had acquired.

The way west was downhill now; the explorer and his sim had passed the watershed not long before they made camp. The little stream by which they had built their fire ran westward, not comfortably toward the Atlantic like every other waterway with which Kenton was familiar.

The scout strode along easily, working out the kinks a night's sleep on the ground had put in his muscles. His mouth twisted. A few years ago, he would have felt no aches, no matter what he did. But his light-brown hair was beginning to be frosted with gray, and to recede at the temples.

Kenton was proud the governor had chosen him for this first western journey, rather than some man still in his twenties. "Oh, aye, a youngster might travel faster and see a bit more," Lord Emerson said, "but you're more likely to return and tell us of it."

He laughed out loud. He wondered what Lord Emerson would have said after learning of his spearfang-hunting plans. Something pungent and memorable no doubt.

Charles stopped with a perplexed grunt very much the sort of sound a true man might have made. Ahead strange sound, he signed.

Kenton listened, but heard nothing. He shrugged. His eyes were as sharp as the sims, but Charles had very good ears. They were surely not a match for a hound's, nor was the sims sense of smell, but Charles could communicate what he sensed in a way no animal could match.

"Far or close?" the scout asked.

: Not close.

"We'll go on, then," Kenton decided. After a few hundred cautious

yards, he heard the rumble too--or perhaps felt would have been the better word for it. He thought of distant thunder that went on and on, but the day was clear. - He wondered if he was hearing a waterfall far away.

"Kenton's Falls," he said, trying out the sound. He liked it.

Charles turned to look at him, then made as if to stumble over a root. The sim got up with a sly grin on his face. Kenton laughed too.

Charles had made a pun after all, even if unintentionally.

The game path they were following twisted southward bringing the edge of a large clearing into view. Kenton stared in open-mouthed wonder at the teeming, milling bur&lo the break in the trees revealed.

There were more of them than Virginia herds had cattle. The beasts were of two sorts. The short-horned kind, with its hump and shaggy mane, was also fairly common east of the mountains; it closely resembled the familiar wisent of Europe. The other variety was larger and grander, with horns sweeping out from its head in a formidable defensive arc. Only stragglers of that sort reached Virginia. They were notoriously dangerous to hunt, being quicker and stronger than their more common cousins.

The rumble the sim and scout had heard was coming from the clearing; it was the pounding of innumerable buffalo hooves on the turf. Charles pinoed to the herd, signing, Good hunting. Good eating

"Good hunting indeed," Kenton said. Its meat smoked over a fire, a single buffalo could feed Charles and him for weeks. But the scout saw no need for that much work. With the big beasts so plentiful, it would be easy to kill one whenever they needed fresh meat.

Good hunting in another way also, the scout realized. A herd this size would surely draw wolves and spearfangs to prey on stragglers.

Kenton smiled in anticipation. He would prey on them.

"Let's get some meat," Kenton said matoer-of-factly. Charles nodded and slipped off the trail into the trees. The scout followed.

He could just as well have led; the sim and he were equally skilled in woodscrafL But he would not go wrong letting Charles pick a spot from which to shoot.

Once away from the trail, the scout felt as though the forest had swallowed him. The crowns of the trees overhead hid the sun; light came through them wan, green, and shifting. Shrubs and bushes grew thick enough to reduce vision to a few yards, but not enough to impede progress much. The air was cool, moist, and still, with the smell of earth and growing things.

Steering by the patoerns of moss and other subtle signs, Charles and Kenton reached the clearing they had spied in the distance. It was even larger than the scout had thought, and full of buffalo. More entered by way of a game track to the north that was wider than most Virginia roads; others took the trail south and west out.

Charles picked a vantage point where the forest projected a little into

the clearing, giving Kenton a broad view and a chance to pick his target at leisure. "Good job," the scout murmured. Charles wriggled with pleasure at the praise like a patted hound.

But Kenton knew there was more to the sim's glee than any dog would have felt. Charles's reasoning was slower and far less accurate than a man's, but it was enough for him to understand how and why he had pleased the scout. People who treated their sims like cattle or other beasts of burden often had them run away.

Kenton shook his head slightly as he aimed at a plump young buffalo not thirty yards away. If Charles wanted to flee on this journey, he had his chance every night.

The flintlock bucked against the scout's shoulder, though the long barrel of soft iron reduced the recoil. Buffalo heads sprang up at the report; the animals' startled snorts filled the clearing. Then the buffalo were running, and Kenton felt the ground shudder under his feet. If the sound of the beasts' hooves had been distant thunder before, now the scout heard the roar as if in the center of a cloudburst. Charles was shouting, but Kenton only saw his open mouth--his cry was lost in the din of the stampede.

The cow the scout had shot tried to join the panic rush, despite the blood that gushed from its shoulder just below the hump and soaked its shaggy brown hair. After half a dozen lurching strides, blood also poured from its mouth and nose. It swayed and fell.

Several other buffalo, most of them calves, were down, trampled, when Kenton and Charles went out into the clearing, which was now almost empty. The scout took the precaution of reloading--this time with a double charge--before he emerged from the woods, in case one of the buffalo still on their feet should decide to charge.

Crows and foxes began feasting while Charles was still cutting two large chunks of meat from the tender, fat-rich hump. Soon other hunters and scavengers would come: spearfangs, perhaps, or wolves or sims. Kenton preferred meeting any of them on ground of his own choosing, not here in the open. He drew back into the woods as soon as Charles had finished his butchery. They got well away from the open space before they camped, and Kenton made sure they did so in a small hollow to screen the light of his fire from unwelcome eyes.

After he had eaten, he wiped his greasy hands on the grass, then dug into his pack for his journal, pen, and inkpot. He wrote a brief account of the past couple of days of travel and added to the sketch map he was keeping.

As always, Charles watched with interest. Talking marks? he signed.

"Aye, so they are."

How do marks talk? the sim asked, punctuating the question with a pleading whimper. Kenton could only spread his hands regretfully.

Several times he had tried to teach Charles the ABCs, but the sim could not grasp that a sign on paper represented a sound. No sim had ever learned to read or write.

Then the scout had an idea--maybe his map would be easier than letters

for Charles to understand. "Recall the creek we walked along this morning, how it bent north andpede.

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The sim nodded. Kenton pointed to his representation. "Here is a line that moves the same way the creek did."

Charles looked reproachfully at the scout. Line not move. Line there.

"No; I mean the line shows the direction of the creek. D'you see?

First it goes up, then down and over, like the stream did."

So? In their deep, shadowed sockets beneath his brow ridges, Charles's eyes were full of pained incomprehension. Line not like stream. Hors can line be like stream?

"The line is a picture of the stream," the scout said.

Line not picture. Charles's signs were quick and firm. Picture like thing to eyes. Line not like stream.

Kenton shrugged and gave up. That had been his last, best try at getting the idea across. Sims recognized paintings, even pen-and-ink drawings. Abstract symbols, though, remained beyond their capacity.

The scout sighed, got out his blanket, and slept.

Instead of returning to the clearing, Kenton decided to parallel the game track down which the buffalo had fled. Mockingbirds yammered in the treetops high overhead, while red squirrels and gray frisked along the branches, pausing now and then to peer suspiciously down at the man and the sim.

"An Englishman I met at Portsmouth told me there are no gray squirrels in England, only red ones," Kenton remarked.

No grays? Who ate them?

Kenton smiled, then sobered. There was more to the question than Charles, in his innocent ignorance, had meant. People on both sides of the Atlantic were still hotly debating the notion someone had put forward a generation before: that the struggle of predator against prey determined which forms of life would prosper and which would fail.

The scout liked the idea. To his mind, it explained why such beasts as spearfangs and hairy elephants lived in America but not in Europe, though their ancient bones had been found there. Humans, even savages, were better hunters than sims. Already, after less than a century, spearfangs were scarce in Virginia. No doubt they had been exterminated east of the ocean so long ago that even the memory of them was gone.

The thought of life changing through time horrified folk who took their Scripture literally. Kenton could not fathom their cries of protest. America had shown so many wonders the Bible did not speak of--sims not the least--that using Scripture to account for them struck him as foolish. Like most colonists, he preferred to judge truth for himself, not receive it from a preacher. A little past noon, the scout began hearing the low rumble of many buffalo hooves again. He found a herd gathered at a salt lick, pushing and shoving each other to get at the salt like so many townswomen elbowing their way to a peddler's cart. He took out his journal and noted the lick. When settlers eventually came, they could use the salt to preserve their meat.

He had not intended to hunt that day, not when he and Charles were still carrying some of the buffalo hump. But a tawny blur exploded from the far side of the clearing and darted toward a yearling cow at the edge of the herd. The spearfang's roar sent the buffalo scattering in terror and made ice walk up Kenton's back.

The spearfang's powerful forelimbs wrapped round the buffalo's neck. Despite the beast's panic-stricken thrashing and bucking, the spearfang wrestled it to the ground. Excitement made the big cat's short, stumpy tail quiver absurdly.

The struggle went on for several minutes, the buffalo trying desperately to break free and the spearfang to hold it in place with front legs and claws. At last the spearfang found the grip it wanted.

Its jaws gaped hugely. It saw its fangs slashing across the buffalo's throat. Blood fountained. The buffalo gave a final convulsive shiver

and was still. The spearfang began to feed, tearing great hunks of dripping meat from the buffalo's Rank.

Kenton swung up his musket, glad he had a double charge in the gun. Luckily, the spearfang was exposing its left side to him. -He reled the set trigger, took a deep breath and held it to steady his aim, touched the second trigger.

His flint and gunpowder were French, and of the best quality; only a farmer would use Virginia-made powder. Along with the twin triggers, they ensured that the musket would not misfire or hang fire.

The spearfang screamed. It whirled and snapped at its flank. But the wound was not mortal, for the spearfang bounded into the woods the way it had come.

"Oh, a pox," Kenton said; the shot had struck too far forward to pierce the heart. He paused to reload before pursuing the big cat. He was not mad enough to follow a wounded spearfang armed only with a brace of pistols.

As he had been trained, Charles trotted ahead to find the trail.

Kenton soon waved him back to a position of safety; the spearfang had left a blood-spattered spoor any fool could follow.

f That over-confidence almost cost the scout his life. Once in the forest, the spearfang doubled back on its trail. Kenton did not suspect it was there till it burst from the under growth a bare ten yards to his left.

Those yawning jaws seemed a yard wide, big enough to gulp him down at a single bite. He had not time to turn and shoot; afterwards, he thought himself lucky to have got off a shot across his body, his musket cradled in the crook of his elbow.

With a lighter gun, he probably would have broken his arm. But one of the reasons he carried a five-foot, eleven pound rifle was to let him take such snap shots at need.

Because of its weight, it had less kick.

The spearfang pitched sideways as the ball, which weighed almost a third of an ounce, slammed into its face just below a glaring eye. An instant later, Charles's hatchet clove the beast's skull. Kenton ehought his bullet had already killed it, but was honest enough to admit he was never quite sure. His narrow escape made his hands shake so much he spilled powder as he reloaded, something he had not done since he was a boy.

Charles had to set a foot on the spearfang's carcass to tug his hatchet free. He used it and his knife to worry the fangs k from the cat's upper jaw, handed Kenton the bloody trophies.

"Thanks." The scout wiped his sweat-beaded forehead with the back of his hand. "That, by God, is (51 earned."

The sim shrugged. With his simple wants, money meant little to him. Ever practical, he signed, Good meat back there.

Here in this unexplored territory, 5 was of no more immediate use to Kenton than to Charles. The scout nodded, made his wits return to the business at hand. "So there is. Let's get at it." He and the sim walked back toward the buffalo the spearfang had killed.

Kenton made a semi-permanent camp near the salt lick, building a lean-to of branches and leaves for protection against the warm summer rain. He went back to the lick for both deer and buffalo, and added three more sets of spearfang teeth in less hair raising fashion than he had collected the first.

The hunting was so easy it required only a small part of his time.

He ranged widely over the countryside, adding to his map and journal.

The more he traveled, the richer he judged the land. Not only was it full of game, but the rich soil and abundant water were made for farming.

Sometimes Charles accompanied him on his journeys, sometimes he went alone. The sim traveled too, though not as widely as Kenton.

Often he would bring back to camp small game he had slain himself rabbits, turkey, a beaver, a porcupine that proved amazingly tasty once it was skinned. They made a welcome change of diet.

Saw strange thing, Charles signed after one of his solitary jaunts. Many buffalo bones. He opened and closed his hands several times, indicating some number larger than he could count.

He led Kenton to the spot the next morning. The scout whistled in surprise as he looked down into a dry wash at the tangle of whitened bones there. "Must be a hundred head, easy," he said.

Charles repeated the sign for an indefinitely large number.

Together they scrambled down the steep side of the ravine, going slowly and often grabbing at bushes for support. Kenton tried to imagine what could have made a herd plunge down such a slope. Even at full stampede, the buffalo should have turned aside.

Then the scout was among the bones. Scavengers had

[pulled apart many skeletons. Bushes were pushing through rib cages, climbing over skulls. The herd had met disaster at least a year ago, Kenton judged.

Many great legbones were neatly split lengthwise, almost all the skulls smashed open. When Kenton found a fist sized lump of stone with an edge chipped sharp, it only confirmed what he had already guessed.

He tossed the hand-axe up and down.

Charles recognized it at once. Sims. Wild sims.

"Aye. No animal could've gone for the beasts' brains and marrow so." Likely, Kenton thought, the subhumans had driven the buffalo into the gully. He glanced round, as if expecting to see a sim crouching behind every shrub. He had never doubted sims lived west of the mountains, but this was the first sure sign of it, and a sobering reminder.

Big killing, Charles signed, his eyes traveling the scattered bones. Kenton wondered what was going through his mind, wondered if he was proud of the slaughter his distant cousins had worked. Some Englishmen trained their sims to hate and fear the wild ones. The scout had never seen the need for that. Finding out he was wrong might prove costly.

He did his best to keep his voice casual. "Let me know before you join them, eh?"

Charles's face was troubled. Joke? he signed at last.

Kenton dimly realized how hard it had to be for sims to keep track of men's vagaries they could not share. "Joke," he said firmly.

Charles nodded.

They spent a while longer investigating the ravine.

Kenton turned up a few more stone tools, but nothing to show that the sims had come back to this immediate area since the year before.

That was some relief, if not much.

When Charles wanted to go off for some purpose of his own, Kenton said only, "I'll see you back at the camp this evening." The last thing he wanted was the sim thinking that he mistrusted him. He wished he had kept his mouth shut instead of letting his stupid wisecrack out.

Thinking such dark thoughts, the scout decided to return to the salt lick. The chunk of venison he had cached in a tree probably would not be fit to eat by nightfall, not much heat. And game was so easy to come by west of the mountains that he did not have to put up with meat very little off. -'

He wormed his way to his familiar cover. Excitement coursed through him as he looked into the clearing the lick. A spearfang had just slain a plump doe and was dragging the carcass back into the bushes to feed. Without conscious volition, his rifle sprang to his side and spoke. ;

The spearfang yowled with anguish as it staggered from its kill.

Kenton reloaded, hurried after it. He held his gun at the ready, although he did not think he would use it for such desperate work as before. The big cat's ungainly gait reflected a wound that would soon be fatal.

So it proved. Less than a furlong from the fallen deer the scout found the spearfang dead, its mouth gaping in defiant snarl. Insects were already lighting on the carcass. They buzzed away as Kenton stooped beside it.

He set down his rifle, used his knife and a stone to cut out the beast's fangs. They were a fine pair, not much shorter than the gap between his thumb and little when he splayed them wide. He bound the two long ones with a rawhide thong, slipped them into his pouch and rest.

He caught a slight motion out of the corner of his eye. Still on his knees, he turned. "See, I'll be rich yet," he signed. The words caught in his throat. The sim behind him was naked, and shorter and stockier than his companion. He hefted a stone in its right hand.

The tableau held for several seconds. The sirm tit Kenton as if unsure it believed its eyes. The sos . himself for putting his musket to one side. The si hurl its rock before he grabbed the gun.

AndSeven,* twenty feet, he might miss with a pistol. .

All the same, his right hand was easing towa4] when three more sims, all adult males, slid sile -_ _ _ .

tnd his teeth--no chance now to get rid Xe-could frighten them off. He drew a pistol. auld have sent wild Virginia sims running;

iDa <iEen what guns could do. But these sims Xf filearms. One drew back its arm to cast its L4l into the air. At the report and the u; the sims shouted in fright. The scout I flee, but the one that had its rock ready ad that rallied the others. They rushed at

}Fl thetmissile, snatched out his other gun, and liblank range. As happens too mournfully

_ Ft of action outside romances, he missed. He wlol down club-fashion on a sims head. The Zgned but still surged forward to grapple P had thicker skulls than humans.

tite scout was just as glad not to remember ilSiht with the sims. What he could recall hurt.

t consciousness, but after a while he could iche either. The sims were not sophisti W deliberate cruelty, but when four of them him into submission the result came close *t but the most exacting critic.

iiS back to himself, one sim was carrying vand another with its hands dug into his

. iwd why the sims had not killed him on lug his head, he saw that the four he had

* pare of a larger band. There mwt have Xber, mose of them bearing big joints lwdeer the spearfang had killed and from the v

her food, he thought, they could afford * duiosity about him.

Humans were as Ws-aa the leverse; indeed, sims had kidvgrandmother when she was a baby, \$. aj i which proved interesting enough to distract a good part of the troop from his person.

The fine black grains of gunpowder made the sims sneeze; some tasted the stuff, and made faces at the result. The scout hoped they would toss the powderhorn onto the fire. The blast might scare them away long enough for him to get free. Of course, afoer a pound of gunpowder went off close by, he might not be in any condition to try.

Given his present predicament, though, he was willing to take the risk.

The sims poured the powder out onto the ground, scotching that chance.

His tin water jar enthralled them a good deal more. Like his belt, it was an idea they had not thought of. One rushed over to a tiny creek a few hundred yards away, filled the jar, and brought it back.

The sim that had bound the stone to the vine belt suddenly snatched up the powderhorn. It hurried to the streamlet and filled the powderhorn with water. Adapting a tool from one use to another showed quicker wit than most sims could boast.

They came to his shot-pouch next. The bullets cascaded out. As soon as the sims discovered they were not some queer kind of fruit, their youngsters pounced on the musket balls, which made toys unlike the sticks, leaves, and stones they had known before.

The older sims went on exploring the scout's gear. He ground his teeth as they opened the leather bag that held the canines of the spearfangs he had killed. The sims recognized the fangs at once.

Surprised hoots arose. The sims stared wide-eyed at Kenton, unable to imagine how he had slain so many of the big cats.

Last of all, the sims pulled his knife from its sheath. The only sharp edges they knew were the ones they laboriously chipped and flaked onto stone. They did not recognize the gleaming steel blade as something familiar until one of them closed her hand round it. She shrieked at the unexpected pain, gaped to see blood streaming down her fingers.

One of the males seized the knife then, by the hilt--more through luck than design. The sim brandished the weapon wildly, then suddenly stopped, realizing what it was for. Again Kenton fought panic; men likely would have tested the blade on his flesh.

But sims had minds more strictly utilitarian. The male squatted in front of one of the joints of meat the hunting party had brought back. It screeched in pleasure at the ease with which the knife slid through the flesh. Another sim stuck the carved-off gobbet on a stick and held it over the fire.

The first smell of roasting meat made most of the sims forget about Kenton. They armed themselves with sticks and dashed over to the butcher, who, grinning, was cutting chunk afKr chunk from the doe's hindquarters. The males jostled round the fire; such a feast did not often come their way. Females and youngsters beseechingly held out their hands. With so much food, the males were generous in sharing.

The wind had shifted till it came out of the west, filling the sky with clouds and blowing smoke from the fire straight into Kenton's face. It made him cough and his eyes water. Mixed with it, though, was enough of the aroma of cookery to drive him nearly wild. He could hear his stomach growling above the racket the sims were making.

He loudly smacked his lips, a signal sims gave one another when they were hungry. The sims who heard him sent him the same curious look they had when he imitated their greeting-call. But they did not feed him. Taking a captive was so unusual for them that they had no idea how to treat one. Any being outside their troop was not one of them, and so was entitled to nothing.

Things might have been worse, Kenton decided. Insttful of begging {or food, he could have been food. That the sims showed no signs of moving in that direction was mildly il heartening, enough at any rate to help him resist his hunger pangs.

He wondered what Charles was doing. By now the sim should long since

have returned to their camp, and it was - late enough for him to be wondering what had happened to Kenton.

He might, the scout decided, be clever enough to visit the salt lick, Kenton went there most often. The scout could not guess what Charles would do after that. He was used to the company of humans--maybe he would try to go back to Virginia. Kenton wondered if the men at Portsmouth would believe his explanations, or kill him for doing away with his master. He hoped they would believe him; Charles deserved a better fate than disbelief would get him.

The sim might have a better chance here west of the mountains. He was an able hunter; he would have no trouble feeding himself.

Eventually he should be able to find a home among the wild sims here, suspicious though they were of all strangers.

Charles would be able to show them so much that he could prove himself too valuable to exclude. Apart from the knife and hatchet he carried, he had learned a great deal in Virginia that wild sims were ignorant of. Even something as simple as the art of tying knots was unknown here. These sims, if they were like the ones along the Atlantic, would not know how to set snares. Charles might even be able to show them how to tan leather, which would give them footwear and many new tools.

All that would make the wild sims harder to push aside when English settlers began coming over the mountains. Kenton found he did not much care. He and Charles had been a team for years now; he could not find it in his heart to wish the sim anything but good, no matter what resulted afterwards.

The wind was blowing harder now, bringing with it cool, moist air.

It must have felt wonderful to the sims, who because of their thick hair suffered worse than humans from the usual run of summer weather. That dislike of heat, though, did not keep them from feeding the fire with branches and dry shrubs whenever it began to get low. - The amount the sims could elate enough for him to be wondering what had happened to Kenton.

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It must have felt wonderful to the sims, who because of their thick hair suffered worse than humans from the usual run of summer weather. That dislike of heat, though, did not keep them from feeding the fire with branches and dry shrubs whenever it began to get low. - The amount the sims could eat was astonishing. Because they spent so much time hungry, they were extravagantly able to make up for it when the chance came. They also let nothing go to waste, eating eyes, tongues, and lungs from carcasses, smashing big bones and sucking smaller ones every scrap of marrow.

At last, a sort of happy torpor came to the encampment.

*males nursed their infants. Youngsters gradually lost interest in throwing Kenton's musket balls at each other and lay down in nests of dry grass and leaves. Most of the adults followed them before long, singly or in pairs.

A few males stayed awake. One kept the fire going. Three more went to the edge of the clearing as sentries. One of those carried a club, another a couple of chipped stones. [The third, a large, hulking sim, bore Kenton's rifle. It [carried the gun by the muzzle end of the barrel and swung [it menacingly every minute or so, as if daring anything [dangerous to come close.

The clever sim sat cross-legged by the fire not far from the scout. It stared down at the dagger it held in its lap.

[From time to time it would run a hand along its chinless [jaw, the very image of studious concentration.

[Kenton felt a touch of sympathy; the sim could study the [knife till doomsday without learning how it was made. At that moment the sim looked his way. It shook its head, exactly as a frustrated man might: it was full of questions, and had no way to ask them.

[Some of the wild Virginia sims had learned sign-speech [from runaways and used it among themselves, but it had not [come over the mountains. The wild troops had so little contact with one another that ideas spread very slowly among them.

The sim picked up a stone chopper, took it in its left hand and the knife in its right. The crudeness of its own [vsv naa r y l u ;vsv

product next to the other must have infuriated it, for it suddenly scrambled to its feet and hurled the stone far into the night.

All three of the males standing watch whirled at the sound of the rejected tool landing in the bushes. The clever sim let out an apologetic hoot. The others relaxed.

The clever sim came over to glare at Kenton. The scout thought what a man would be feeling, confronted with skills and knowledge so far ahead of anything he possessed--and confronted with a being like and yet unlike himself. Sims were less imaginative than humans, but surely some of that combination of anger, fear, and awe was on the subhuman's face.

Anger quickly came to predominate. Kenton uselessly tightened his muscles against the knife thrust he expected.

He hardly noticed the first raindrop that landed on his cheek, or the second. Even when a drop hit him in the eye, it distracted him only briefly from his fearful focus on the blade in the sim's hairy hand.

The sim shook its head in annoyance as the rain began. To it, too, the early sprinkles were but an irritation. As the rain kept up, though, it forgot Kenton, forgot the knife it held. Its cry of alarm brought the rest of the troop bounding from their rest.

For a moment, Kenton wondered if the clever sim had gone mad. But soon he understood its concern, for the rain grew harder. The fire began to hiss as water poured down on it--and no wild sim could start a fire once it went out.

Because that was so, the sims had had to learn to keep their flames alive even in the face of rain. Some of the males held hides above the fire to shield it from the storm. Females dug ditches and built little dams of mud so the water on the ground would not get the fuel wet.

Their efforts worked for a time. The sims with the hide shield coughed and choked on the smoke it trapped, but they did not leave their post. The fire continued to crackle.

Kenton all but ignored it. His mouth was wide open, to catch as much of the rain as he could. The sims had given him no more water than food, and his throat felt raspy as a file.

It took a while to get enough for a swallow, but every one was bliss.

The downpour grew heavier, the wind stronger. Soon it was blowing sheets of water horizontally. The sims' hides were less and less use.

They wailed in dismay as the fire went out. Kenton could hardly hear them over the drumming of the rain. He was glad they had not dumped him face down; he might have drowned.

The storm lasted through the night, and began to ease only when light returned. Drenched, Kenton was relieved the rain was warm; had the cloudburst come, say, in fall, he would have been all too vulnerable to chest fever. He imagined it carried off many of the sims.

They huddled together, sodden and miserable, around their dead fire, their arms up to keep some of the rain from their faces. Now and then one would let out a mournful, keening cry that several others would echo. It reminded the scout eerily of a wake.

When the rain was finally over, the clever sim raked through the ashes, searching for hot coals that might be coaxed back to life. But the storm had been too strong; everything was soaked. As the sims saw they were indeed without the heat to cook their food and, in days to come, to keep them warm, they broke out in a fresh round of lamentation.

Kenton wondered if they would seek to have him restart the blaze.

If that meant getting free of them, he would do so in an instant. He would have offered, if they understood his speech or if he could have used his arms to gesture. But they did not even look his way; it did not occur to them that anyone could start a fire. His strangeness, and the curious tools he bore, were not enough to overcome that automatic assumption.

Slowly, morosely, the sims began to pick up the usual -business of the camp. A grizzled male chipped away at a chunk of flint to shape a new hand-axe. Females dug roots with sticks and went into the nearby forest after early ripening berries. Youngsters turned over rocks and popped whatever crawling things they found into their mouths.

A hunting party set out, armed with an assortment of wooden clubs and sharp stones. The sim with Kenton's musket apparently decided the long gun would be too clumsy to swing in tight quarters, for it exchanged the rifle for a stout bludgeon. The scout shook his head, relieved that the sim did not grasp what the musket could do.

The clever sim did not go with the band of hunting males. Its arms were filthy to the elbows from grubbing in the ruins of the fire.

It kept staring at Kenton, as if he were a puzzle to be pieced together. When a couple of toddlers came over and prodded him, it bared its formidable teeth and shouted so fiercely that they tumbled backward in fright.

It came over and squatted by him; it made squelching sounds as it sat in the mud. "I am not your enemy," Kenton said, as he had the night before.

It grunted. He thought it sought to converse with him, but his words meant nothing to it. Sims came to understand human speech, but their own calls in the wild, even eked out by gestures, did not make up a language. The clever sim felt the lack, yet was powerless to remedy it. Had his arms been free Kenton might have, but he needed dumb show to ask to be released, and could not use it until he had been.

Contemplating that paradox led only to discomfiture.

If the sim and he could not converse, though, only one thing was likely to happen to him. No sims he knew kept captives, and the treatment he was getting here showed this troop to be no different.

His flesh might not be so toothsome raw as roasted, but he did not think that would save him.

The way the clever sim was licking its lips now as it looked at him told him it had come to the same conclusion. The only reason he could find for its not killing him immediately was to keep his meat fresh for the hunting party when they came back. That did little to improve his spirits. He was getting thirsty again, too, and very hungry.

The day dragged on. The clever sim no longer bothered to keep the troop's youngsters away from Kenton. The small indignities they inflicted in their curiosity added to his misery. Still, human children would have done worse.

He heard a rustling in the woods, from the direction in which the hunters had gone. The old male who had been making tools gave the grunted greeting-noise. Kenton turned his head as the clever sim moved toward him, his knife in its hand. He expected the returning hunters would be the last thing he ever saw.

Then the old sim and several females cried out in alarm. The clever sim sucked in its breath in a harsh gasp. Coming into the clearing was not one of the hunters--it was Charles instead.

Charles's eyes went wide when he saw Kenton lying tied in the mud by the drowned fire. He was too far away for the scout to read his expression clearly. Kenton wondered what was going through his mind, observing his master bound and helpless in the hands of his wild cousins. Was he tempted to throw in his lot with them? How could he help it, with the scout's vulnerability so displayed? Superior wit was not all that let humans rule sims; their aura of might played no little role.

If Kenton's weakness gave Charles qualms, the sim from Virginia was as disturbing to the wild sims. The scout's clothes and possessions were strange to them, but so was he himself. Charles was of their own kind, yet he too wore a belt and buskins, and bore tools of the same alien sort as Kenton's.

The clever sim glanced from the knife he was holding to the one swinging at Charles's belt, and to the bright steel head of the hatchet Charles carried. The clever sim's face was the picture of bewilderment. Kenton could hardly blame it. It had seen its world turned upside down twice now in two days.

Raising the hatchet in a plain warning gesture, Charles advanced into the clearing. Females and young scurried away from him. He was more frightening than Kenton, and not just because he was free. The familiar turned bizarre is always harder to face than something wildly different.

Charles strode toward Kenton, the hatchet still held high. The scout spoke through lips dry from thirst and fear: "Good to see you again. " He had all he could do to hold his voice steady. Nothing, he knew, might more quickly ingratiate Charles with the wild sims than slaughtering him.

Charles surveyed the encampment. The clever sim was the only male there of vigorous years. When it saw that Charles understood Kenton, it scowled fiercely and tightened its grip on the scout's knife.

Kenton had no choice but to wait to see what Charles would do.

But Charles also seemed unsure, staring from the scout to the clever sim and back again. At last his left hand moved in a sign Kenton understood: Trouble.

"Trouble indeed," Kenton said, though he could not tell whether Charles meant the sign for him or it was simply the sims equivalent of talking to himself. Daring to hope hurt, as an arm that has fallen asleep will tingle when the blood rushes in again.

Then Charles signed, I help, and squatted over him to cut his bonds. The clever sim shouted angrily and brandished the scout's knife. Charles

shouted back, but drew away from Kenton. Had it just been the clever sim and he, the hatchet would have given him all the advantage he needed. But though none of the other sims was his match individually, together they could overwhelm him.

"Give them something to think about," Kenton exclaimed suddenly.

"The storm put out their fire--start it again."

The way Charles's face lit was almost enough to kindle a blaze by itself. He deliberately turned his back on the clever sim, doing it with as much aplomb as any nobleman scoring off some rival. In spite of everything, Kenton could not help smiling; here was something unexpected that Charles had learned in Virginia.

Charles knelt and took out his tinderbox. The scout heard him strike flint and steel together several times, saw him bend further to blow to life the sparks that had fallen on his tinder.

Then, with a satisfied snort, Charles stepped away.

Because he had no dry fuel close by, he had made a pile of all the powdered bark and lint in the tinderbox. The little fire crackled briskly.

The wild sims stood transfixed, as if turned to stone. Then one of the old males hooted softly, the most nearly awed sound Kenton had ever heard from a sim's throat. The old male scabbled through the remains of the dead fire for wood dry enough to burn. Having found a couple of sticks, it approached the blaze Charles had set, glancing at him as though for permission. When he did not object, it set the sticks on the fire. After a while, they caught.

Half a dozen wild sims dashed off after more fuel. The rest crowded toward the blaze, drawn to the flames like moths.

Not even the clever sim was immune to the fascination. This time it did not object when Charles stooped and began cutting Kenton's bonds.

The scout grimaced at the sting of returning circulation he had imagined a few minutes before. He clenched and unclenched his fingers and toes, trying to work feeling back into them. All the same, it was some minutes before he could stand. When he finally did, he had to clutch undignifiedly at his trousers; their sueded leather had stretched from the soaking it had taken.

He did not think he could get his knife back from the clever sim, but did go over to where the other male had discarded his musket. With his powder spilled and bullets scattered, he had only the one shot till he got back to his pack, but that was better than nothing. And the wild sim had been right, in its way--at need, the rifle would make a good club.

Kenton also gathered up the spearfang canines, although to his annoyance one had disappeared in the mud. He had come by them through hard, dangerous hunting, and they represented wealth too great and too easily portable for him to abandon.

Though the scout hurried, Charles waited with barely concealed impatience. We go? he signed, adding the emphatic gesture to the

questioning one.

"Indeed we do!" Kenton wanted to be as far from the encampment as he could when the hunting party returned.

The clever sim watched them withdraw. Its massive jaw muscles worked. The scout could all but taste its frustration. It had met beings and found tools and skills beyond any it could have imagined, and here, after only a brief moment, they were vanishing from its life again.

That proved more than it could bear. With a harsh cry, it rushed Kenton and Charles. The scout flung his musket to his shoulder, but hesitated with his finger still on the first trigger. The males in the hunting party had heard gunfire before; the sound of a shot would surely bring them on the run.

Charles had no such worries. His arm went back, then forward.

The hatchet spun through the air. It buried itself deep in the clever sim's chest.

The clever sim shrieked. It wrenched the hatchet out, heedless of the blood that gushed from the wound. The clever sim flung the hatchet back at Charles, but its throw was wild. It staggered on rubbery legs, sat heavily. Kenton could hear how its breath bubbled in its throat.

The rest of the wild sims came out of their trance round the fire.

They shouted and hooted. Hands groped for stones to throw. Saving his single bullet against desperate need, Kenton ran. Charles fled with him, stopping only to pick up the hatchet from where it lay on the ground. Red streaked the gray steel blade.

Kenton never found out whether the clever sim lived or died. He was everlastingly grateful it was the only robust male at the encampment. He and Charles outdistanced the gray-hairs and youngsters that tried to pursue them. Ilxy

might not have had such good fortune if tested against the members of the hunting band, the more so as the scout's abused limbs could not carry him at full speed.

Kenton knew the troop's hunters would be expert trackers. They would have to be, living as they did from what they could run down.

And so, no matter how urgently he wanted to put distance between himself and the camp, he and Charles did not neglect muddling their trail, doubling back on their tracks and splashing down streams so they would not leave footprints.

A large bullfrog sat on a half-submerged log, staring stupidly! as Kenton and Charles drew near. Too late, it decided to leap away. The scout grabbed it and broke its neck.

A bit farther on, they came upon clumps of freshwater mussels growing on some rocks. Charles used his knife and Kenton borrowed his hatchet to sever the byssi by which the shellfish moored themselves.

By then it was nearly dark. Neither of them knew the countryside well enough to head back toward the camp by night. They would have to shift

camp anyway, Kenton realized, it was too close to the salt lick.

The wild sims would surely scour that whole area in search of them.

The scout hoped he could recover his pistols from the spot where he had killed the spearfang.

All that, though, could wait. Finding a hiding place for the night came first. A hollow with a rock pile down one side proved suitable, after Kenton stoned to death a fat rattling-snake that had been nesting among the rocks.

First Charles signed.

The scout considered the lay of the land. "Yes," he said, "a small one." If the wild sims came close enough to spot a tiny blaze by night, they would be on top of him anyway.

V And while he did not mind eating raw musis, even hungry as he was he wanted to roast the frog and snake.

His stomach still growled when he was done with his share, but he felt better for it. He licked his fingers clean of grease and looked across the fire at Charles, who was still worrying tiny fragments of meat from a frogleg with his tongue.

In the dim, flickering red light, the sims eyes were sunk in pits of shadow, unreadable. "Charles," Kenton began, and then stopped, unsure how--or if--to go on.

Charles tossed the bones, by now quite naked, to one side. He gave a low-voiced, questioning hoot.

"I thank you," the scout said.

Charles grunted, a noncommittal sound.

Kenton almost let it rest there. His curiosity, though, was too great. People had been trying to understand sims--and to see how close sims could come to understanding them-- for close to two centuries.

And so the scout asked, "Why did you decide to rescue me?"

The skin moved on Charles's brow-ridges; a man would have been wrinkling his forehead in concentration. You, I come here together, he signed. We go back together.

The scout wondered if that indeed was the whole answer. Because they were less imaginative than men, sims rigidly followed plans.

Kenton had often talked about the return trip; perhaps Charles had simply been unable to conceive of anything else happening, and had acted as he did more for the picture of the future the scout had outlined than for Kenton's sake.

Kenton's lips twisted wryly; there was a thought to put him in his place. He persisted, "It would have been easier and less risky for you to join the wild sims."

He knew he was treading on dangerous ground. Back in Virginia, many

sims fled to the wild troops that still lurked in the backwoods.

There was always the risk of putting ideas in Charles's head that had not been there before.

The sim surprised him with an immediate gesture of rejection. Not leave you, Charles signed. You, me, together, good. Years and years--not want end.

"I thank you," Kenton said again. Had he followed the course of some colonists--who treated their sims as me and looked across the fire at Charles, who was still worrying tiny fragments of meat from a frogleg with his tongue.

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"I thank you," Kenton said again. Had he followed the course of some colonists--who treated their sims as much like beasts as possible--he was sure he would have been shared among the wild sims in raw gobbets,

with Charles likely joining the feast.

But the sim, to his surprise, was not done signing: Not want to live with wild sims. Want to live with people. Wild sims boring--an enormous yawn rendered that--not know houses, not know music, not know knives, not know bwad. Charles sniffed with the same disdain a Portsmouth grandee would have shown on learning his daughter's prospective bridegroom wore no shoes and shared a cabin with his mule.

Kenton burst out laughing. Charles snorted indignantly. The scout apologized, both in words and with the customary sim gesture: he smacked his lips loudly and spread his hands, meaning he had intended no harm. Charles accepted, once more with a lord's grace.

Inside, though, Kenton kept chuckling, though he was careful not to show it. He did not want to hurt Charles's feelings. But how on earth, he wondered, was he going to explain to Lord Emerson that he had been saved because his sim was a snob? 1782 The Iron Elephant The Americas proved to possess a number of animals unlike any with which Europeans had been familiar the ground sloth, the spearfang, and the several varieties of armadillo, of which the largest was bigger than a man. Others, such as the hairy elephant, had counterparts in distant areas of the Old World but still seemed exotic to early generations of settlers.

Just before the American colonies broke away from English tyranny and banded together to form the Federated Commonwealths of America, however, efforts began to exploit the hairy elephants great strength in a new way. The first rail systems, with waggons pulled by horses, appeared in England at about this time to haul coal from mines to rivers and canals. Hairy elephants began their railroad work in this same capacity, but soon were pulling other freight, and passengers as well.

In the decades following the creation of the republic, railroads spread across the country. Because the

Federated Commonwealths is so much larger than any European nation, such a web of steel was a vital link in knitting the country together. By 1780, tracks had reached across the New Nile. The mighty river remained unbridged, but ferry barges joined the settled east with the new lands that were just beginning to be farmed.

But the hairy elephant's trumpet was not destined to remain the characteristic sound of the railroads. Coal mining also resulted in the development of the steam engine. At first used only in place, to pump water from the mines, the steam engine soon proved capable of broader application. Soon the hairy elephants that had been for more than a generation the mainstay of the American railway system began to feel the effects of mechanical competition.

From The Story of the Federated Commonwealths THE TRAIN RATTLED east across the prairie toward Springfield. Preen Chand kept his rifle across his knees, in case of sims. From his perch atop Caesar, the lead hairy elephant, he could see a long way over the grassland.

"We should make town in another hour," Paul Tilak called from Hannibal, the trail beast. "An easy trip, this one."

Preen Chand turned around. "So it is, for which I am not sorry."

He and Tilak were both small, light-brown men with delicate features.

Their grandfathers had come to America when the English decided to see if elephant handlers from India could tame the great auburn-haired beasts of the New World.

The two dozen waggons stretched out behind the pair of elephants showed that the answer was yes, though the Federated Commonwealths had been free of England for a generation. With people even then beginning to settle west of the New Nile, no country across the sea could hope to enforce its will on its one-time colonies.

["Siml" Tilak shouted suddenly. "There, to the north!" Preen Chand's head whipped round. He followed his friend's pointing finger.

Sure enough, the subhuman was loping along parallel to the train, about three hundred yards away. Preen Chand muttered something unpleasant under his breath. Sims might have no foreheads to speak of, but they had learned how far a gun could shoot with hope of accuracy.

"Shall we give him a volley?" Tilak asked.

"Yes, let us," Preen Chand said. Three hundred yards was not quite impossibly long range, not with more than a dozen rifles speaking together. And the Sims' arrogant confidence in its own safety irked the elephant driver.

He waved a red flag back and forth to make sure the brakemen posted on top of every other car saw it. Tilak peered back over his shoulder. "They're ready."

Preen Chand swung the flag down, snatched up his rifle.

It bellowed along with the others, and bucked against his shoulder. The acrid smell of gunpowder filled his nose.

The hairy elephant beneath him started at the volley. It threw up its trunk and let out a trumpeting roar almost as loud as the gunshots.

Preen Chand shouted, "Choro, Caesar, choro: stop, stop!" Elephant commands were the only Urdu he still knew. His father had preferred them to English, and passed them on to him.

0 He prodded Caesar behind the ear with his foot, spoke soothingly to him. Being on the whole a good-natured 0 beast, the elephant soon calmed. Tilak's Hannibal was more excitable; the other driver had to whack him with a brass ankus to make him behave. Hannibal's ears twitched - resentfully.

Preen Chand peered through the smoke to see whether all that gunfire had actually hit the Sim. It hadn't. The subhuman let out a raucous hoot, shook its fist at the train and bounded away.

Preen Chand sighed. "I do not like those pests, not at all.

One day I would like to unharness Caesar and go hunting Sims from elephant-back."

"Men only began settling hereabouts a few years ago," Tilak said resignedly. "Sims will be less common before long."

"Yes, but they are so clever it's almost impossible to root them out altogether. Even on the eastern coast, where the land has been settled for a hundred-fifty years, wild bands still linger. Not so many as here west of the New Nile, true, but they exist."

"Mere vermin fail to worry me," Paul Tilak said. He put a hand to his forehead to shade his eyes. "We should be able to see Springfield soon."

"Oh, not yet," Preen Chand said. But he also looked ahead, and saw the thin line of black smoke against the sky. Alarm flashed through him. "Fire!" he shouted. "The town must be burning!"

He dug his heels into Caesar's shoulders, yelled, "MIAI mall: go ant" He heard Tilak using the elephant goad to urge Hannibal on. The two beasts had to pull hard to gain speed against the dead weight of the train. Preen Chand hoped the brakemen were alert. If he had to slow suddenly, they would need to halt the waggons before they could barrel into the elephants ahead of them.

The line of smoke grew taller, but no wider. Preen Chand scratched his head. Funny kind of fire, he thought.

"What's burning?" a farmer called as the train rolled by--farms sprouted like mushrooms along the tracks close to town, though they were still scarce farther away. Preen Chand shrugged. Even then, in the back of his mind, he might have known the truth, but it was not the sort of truth he felt like facing before he had to.

Then he could see Springfield in the distance. Its wooden buildings looked quite intact. The smoke had stopped rising. The prairie breezes played with the plume, dispersing it.

Houses, stables, a church, warehouses passed in swift succession.

Preen Chand guided Caesar to the last turn before the station.

"Choro!" he called again. Caesar slowed. The brakemen worked their levers. Sparks flew as the waggons' iron wheels squealed on the track. The train pulled to a halt.

"Seventeen minutes ahead of schedule," Paul Tilak said with satisfaction, checking his pocket watch. "No one will be able to complain we are late on this run, Preen."

"No indeed," Preen Chand said. "But where is everybody?" Their being early was no reason for the eastbound side of the station to be empty--they had been in sight quite a while.

Where were the men and tame animals to unload the train's freight? Where were the people coming to meet arriving passengers? Where were the ostlers, with fodder and water and giant currycombs for the elephants?

Come to think of it, where had the small boys who always gawked at the train disappeared to?

Preen Chand tapped Caesar's left shoulder, as far down as he could reach. The hairy elephant obligingly raised its left leg. Preen Chand shinned down to the broad, leathery foot, then dropped to the ground.

A passenger stuck his head out the window of a forward wagon.

"See here, sir," he called to the elephant driver, "what is the meaning of this? I am an important man, and expect to be properly greewd. I have business to transact here before I go on to Cairo." He glared at Preen Chand as if he thought everything was his fault.

"I am very sorry, sir," Preen Chand said politely, which was not at all what he was thinking. "I will try to find out."

At that moment, a door in the station house opened. Finally, Preen Chand thought, someone's come to take a look at us. It was George Stephenson, the stationmaster, a plump little man who always wore a stovepipe hat that went badly with his build.

"What is the meaning of this?" Preen Chand shouted at him, stealing the pompous passenger's phrase. "Where are the men to take care of the elephants?" To a driver, everything else was secondary to that.

Stephenson should have felt the same way. Instead, he - blinked; the idea did not seem to have occurred to him. "I'll have Willie and Jake get round to it," he said grudgingly. "Get round to it?" Preen Chand clapped a hand to his forehead in extravagant disbelief. "How else will they make enough money for their whiskey?

What is wrong with this town today? Has everyone here gone out of his mind?"

"Not hardly," Stephenson said. He was looking at Caesar and Hannibal in a way Preen Chand had never seen before. Was that pity in his eyes? "We've just seen the future, is all. Maybe you better take a peep too, Preen, so as you and Paul there can start hunting' out a new line of work."

Then Preen Chaud did know what had happened, knew it with a certainty that gripped his guts. Even so, he had to make Stephenson spell it out. "You mean--?"

"Ayah, that's right, Preen. One o' them newfangled steam railroad engines has done come to Springfield. How do you propose outdoin' a machine?"

The pennant tied to the front of the steam engine called it "The Iron Elephant." To Preen Chand, the name was an obscene parody. The upjutting smokestack reminded him of Caesar's trunk, yes, but that trunk frozen in, rkgor mortis. Painting the boiler red-brown to imitate a hairy elephant's pelt did not disguise its being made of non. And the massive gears and wheels on either side of that boiler seemed to Preen Chand affixed as an afterthought, not parts of the device in the way Caesar's great legs were part of the elephant.

Besides, the thing stank. Used to the clean, earthy smell of elephant, Preen Chand's nostrils twitched at the odors of coal smoke and damp, cooling iron.

Had he been able to get closer, he thought, he probably would have been able to find other things to dislike about the Iron Elephant. As it was, he had to despise the contraption at a distance. Almost everybody in Springfield had jammed into the westbound side of the station to stare at the steam engine.

Stephenson turned to Preen Chand, saying, "I know you'll want to meet Mr. Trevithick, the engine handler, and compare notes. He's been waiting here for you. Come on, I'll take you to him." He plunged into the crowd, using his weight to shove people aside.

Meeting this Trevithick person was the last thing Preen Chand wanted. He also had a schedule to keep. He grabbed Stephenson by the shoulder. "Of course he's been waiting-- he only has that damned engine. Me, I have an entire train to see to. You have my elephants fed, this instant. You have them watered. You unload what comes off here, and get your eastbound freight on board. Get your passengers moving. If I am one minute late coming into Cairo on the New Nile, I will complain to the company, yes I will, and with any luck we will bypass Springfield afterwards."

He knew he was bluffing. Likely Stephenson did too, but he could not afford to ignore the threat. Without a rail stop, Springfield would wither and die. With poor grace, he started pulling station hands out of the crush and shouting for passengers to get over to the eastbound track. The press of people thinned, a little.

"Satisfied?" the stationmaster asked ironically.

'Better, at any rate," Preen Chand said.

"One fine day soon you won't be able to throw your weight around just on account of you drive elephants, Preen. When steam comes in, we won't need stables, we won't need the big hay yards. This operation'll run on half the people and a quarter the cost. " Stephenson rubbed his hands at the prospect.

"And what do you do, pray tell me, when one of these engines breaks down? Whom will you hire? How much will you have to pay him?"

More than your ostlers or a leech, I would wager. And how long will the repairs take? Caesar and Hannibal are reliable. What sort of schedule will you be able to keep up?"

"The Iron Elephant's reliable too," Stephenson insisted, though Preen Chand's objections made him sound as if he were also trying to convince himself. But his voice steadied as he went on. "It's steamed all the way out from Boston in Plymouth Commonwealth without coming to grief. I reckon that says something'."

In spite of himself, Preen Chand was impressed: that was more than 1,300 miles. Still, he said scornfully, "Yes, hauling nothing but itself and its coal-waggon." No passenger coaches or freight waggons stood behind the Iron Elephant. "How will it do, pulling a real load?"

"I don't know anything about that. Like I told you before, fellow you want to talk to is the engine handler. Come on, Preen--you may as well. You know they'll be a good while yet over on the other side."

"Oh, very well." Preen Chand followed Stephenson as the stationmaster forced his way through the crowd, which had thinned more while they argued.

"Mr. Trevithick!" Stephenson called, and then again, louder, "Mr. Trevithick!" A pale, almost consumptive-looking young man standing by the

traveling steam engine lifted his head inquiringly. "Mr. Trevithick, this here is Mr. Preen Chand, the elephant driver you wanted to see."

"Ahl" The engine handler broke off the conversation he was having, came hurrying over to pump Preen Chand's hand. "They spoke very well of you in Cairo, sir, when I was arranging permits to travel this line--said your Caesar and Hannibal were first-rate beasts. I see they were right; you're here a good deal ahead of schedule." Like any railroad man, Trevithick always had a watch handy.

"Thank you so very much, sir." Preen Chand saw he was going to have to work to dislike this man; Trevithick was perfectly sincere.

Looking into his intense blue eyes, Preen Chand suspected he was one of those people who always said just what they thought because it never occurred to them to do anything else.

"Call me Richard--couldn't stand going as Dick Trevithick, you know. And you're Preen? Shouldn't be any stuffiness between folks in the same line of work."

Again Preen Chand realized that he meant it. As gently as he could, he said, "Richard, it is a line of work that you and that--thing"--he could not make himself call it the Iron Elephant--"are trying to get me out of." -4!

'tAm I? How?" Trevithick's surprise was genuine, which in turn surprised Preen Chand. "Who better to work the railroads under soeaothan someone long familiar with them as an elephant driver?"

Everything about them will be the same, except for what pulls the waggons."

"And, Richard, with all respect, everything about iron and wood is the same, except when I need to start a fire. I've spent a lifetime learning to care for elephants; what good will that do me in dealing with your boiler there?"

"A child could manage the throttle. And we have a whole new kind of boiler in the Iron Elephant, with tubes passing through it to heat the water more effectively. And the cylinders are almost horizontal; they work much better than the old vertical design did." Trevithick glowed with enthusiasm, and plainly wanted Preen Chand to catch fire too. "Why, on level ground, with the extra power the new system gives, we can do close to thirty miles an hour-- practically flying along the ground!"

Had Stephenson named the figure, Preen Chand would have called him a liar on the spot. He did not think Trevithick a man given to exaggeration, though. Thirty miles an hour! He tried to imagine what the wind would be like, whipping in his face: as if he were on a madly galloping racehorse, but for some long time, not just the few minutes the beast would take to tire.

"How about that, Preen?" Stephenson put in, nudging him in the ribs. "Only way you'd get Caesar and Hannibal moving that fast'd be to drop 'em off a roof."

Preen Chand grunted. He thought of the stationmaster's boasts about how much he could cut back his operation. The elephant driver smiled sardonically at Trevithick's naivete. Everything would be the same,

would it?

"Thirty miles an hour is a marvelous speed, Richard; it is most marvelous indeed. But that is unloaded, I take it. What can your soeam engine"--he would not call it the Iron Elephant, not even for polioeness' sake--"do pulling a load of, say, fifty tons?"

"Tell him, Mr. Trevithick." This time the engine handler was the recipient of Stephenson's conspiratorial elbow.

He did not seem to notice. The gleam in his eyes turned inward as he calculated. At last he said, "That is a great deal of weight. Does your oeam really pull so much?" For the first time, his voice held a trace of doubt.

"They can, yes," Preen Chand said proudly.

"Truth to oell, I hate to wonder if the machinery could stand it.

But I think we should be able to do something on the order of three mlkles an hour, not counting stops Ear water or for any breakdowns that might happen."

"Three miles an hour? Is that all?" George Stephenson sounded more betrayed than disappoinoed.

"If that." Trevithick looked amused. "Now you see why I oend to put more stress on the engine's top speed."

Preen Chand, though, was seill impressed, and worried. His beloved elephants were fasoer, but they were only flesh and blood. They had to rest, where the soeam engine could go on and on and on. And yet, he thought, if I can show everyone how the elephants outdo this stinking contraption"Richard, load your train up, and I will load mine, and I will race you from here to Carthage."

"A raoe, eh?" Trevithick's bright eyes glowed. "How far is this Carthage plaoe from here?"

"Fifty-three miles, a-tiny bit south of west. The railroad ends soon after it."

"Hmm." Preen Chand watched the engine handler go into that near-tranoe of conoentration again. When he emerged from it, he gave the elephant driver a respectful look. "That will be a very close thing, Preen. You know how embarrassing--and I mean financially as well as in the sense of a blow to my pride--it would be for me to lose?"

Preen Chand returned a bland shrug. "You've come all this way from Plymouth, Richard, to show off the Iron Elephant, not even for polioeness' sake--"do pulling a load of, say, fifty tons?"

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Preen Chand returned a bland shrug. "You've come all this way from Plymouth, Richard, to show off your ironmongery. How embarrassing would it be for word to get out that you refused a challenge from your competition?"

Trevithick laughed out loud. "You misunderstand me. I

> have no inoention of refusing. When shall we start?"

"Tomorrow morning?"

"What?"i George Soephenson let out a howl. "You're eastbound for Cairo tomorrow morning, Preen! What about F your precw schedule?"

"Well, what about it? If this steam engine comes in and replaoes Caesar and Hannibal, then I will have to do as you suggesoed before and find other work, so it will not matoer if the company fires me. But if elephants are betoer than machinery, the company should know that too.

They will thank me more for finding that out than they will be angry

0 with me for being laoe. And besides, George, why should you worry? Don't you own the town hooel?"

Stephenson suddenly looked crafty. "Well, yes, now that you mention it, I do."

"Here is a man who thinks of everything," Trevithick said admiringly. "I wonder if I ought to race against you afoer all--no, my friend, only a joke. But tomorrow morning will be too soon. We will have to load up waggons so both our trains carry equal weight...."

George, you live i here, unlike either Preen or myself. Can you hire some sims from the locals to help the ones at the station here with that work?"

O "Reckon so." Stephenson gave Trevithick a sidelong glancoe. "So long as I ain't payin' for it, that is."

Preen Chand gulped; he was never going to be rich on an elephant driver's salary. But Trevithick said, "I'll cover it, never fear."

What I don't make up on bets will come back in the long run through the ballyhoo this race will cause."

"Whatever you say. All I know is, you can't put no ballyhoo in the bank. Them folks are partial to gold."

O "Who isn't?" Trevithick chuckled.

Preen Chand went back to the other side of the station to stop the unloading of his train--the less that came off, the less that would have to be put back tomorrow. The straw boss who oversaw Stephenson's gang of sims looked at him as if he were crazy. "First you was nt of they are. Can't you make up your fool mind?"

"Truly I am sorry, Mr. Dubois." Preen Chand had always thought the straw boss more capable than Stephenson, and treated him accordingly.

Dubois only grunoed in disgust, then turned and shouoed to the dozen sims that were unloading sacks of grain from the waggons. He gave hand signals to back his oral instructions. Sims could follow human speech, but had trouble imitating it. They much preferred to use gestures, and many overseers gave orders both ways, taking no chances on being misunderstood.

That care paid off now. One of the sims gaped in disbelief at the overseer. Its long, chinless jaw fell open to reveal yellow teeth bigger and stouoer than any man's. It ran a hand over what would have been a human's forehead, but was in the sim only a smooth slope behind bony browridges.

Bach, it signed, adding the little gesture that turned the word to a question. Preen Chand usually had some trouble following hand-talk, but the sim made the sign so emphatic--the way a man might shout an objection--that he understood it with ease.

Back, Dubois signed firmly. Put bags back.

The sim scratched its hairy cheek, let out a wordless hoot of protest. It signed, Bad. Very bad. Work all gar e. From its point of view, Preen Chand supposed it had a point. But under Dubois's uncompromising eye, it and its comrades began putting the produce back aboard the train.

"What are they doing, Preen?" Paul Tilak demanded. "That should go in the warehouses here--look at the bill of lading. And why were they so

slow getting here in the first place? Where was everyone, and why is everyone so excited?"

Very much the same set of questions, Preen Chand thought wryly, that he had thrown at George Stephenson. They had the same answer, too: "Steam engine."

"Damnation!" Tilak shouted, so loudly that Hannibal let out an alarmed snort and swung its shaggy head to see what was wrong with its driver. "It is all right, really it is," Tilak reassured him. The elephant snored again, doubt fully, but subsided.

"These accursed engines will be the ruination of us," Tilak said.

"I hope not."

"Of course they will." Tilak was gloomier by nature than Preen Chand. He noticed Dubois's gang of sims again.

"What are they doing, Preen?"

Preen Chand told him. Tilak's jaw dropped. He frowned.

"I do not know if we can beat this Trevithick, Preen, if his machine performs as he says it will."

"He does not know if he can beat us, either, which makes for a fair trial. Cheer up, Paul. Even if we lose, how are we worse off?"

What will happen? The company will buy engines, just as it would without any race at all. But if we win, perhaps they will not."

Tilak looked unconvinced. Before the argument could go further, the passenger who had bothered Preen Chand from the coach window now grabbed him by the arm. "See here, sir Do I understand you to mean that this train will not proceed to Cairo, but rather is returning to Carthage?" "I am afraid that is correct, sir." As gently as he could, Preen Chand shook free of the man's grasp. "I am so very sorry for any inconvenience this may--"

"Inconvenience?" the man exclaimed.

His face was almost as red as his waistcoat. "Do you know, sir, that I stand to lose out on a very profitable investment opportunity if I am delayed here?"

That was too much for Preen Chand. The deference that was part of his railroading persona went by the board. He stuck his face an inch from the passenger's nose and bellowed, "God damn you to hell, do you know that I stand to lose out on a job I have loved for twenty-five years and that my father and grandfather held before me? I piss on your investment opportunity, and for a copper sester I'd black your eye, too!" Tilak quickly stepped between them before they could start a fight. The passenger stamped away, still yelling threats.

Preen Chand looked toward his beloved elephants. The ostlers had set out big wooden tubs of wooper for them.

"Derrr!" he shouted to Caesar "Splash!" He thrust out his arm, pointing to the obnoxious fellow with whom he'd been quarreling. r Caesar

snorced up a big trunkful of water and let it go in s a sudden shower--that drenched Preen Chand. Tilak and Dubois got wet too, and hopped back swearing. The fellow the elephant driver had inoended to soak got off unscathed.

"It has been that kind of day," Preen Chand sighed. i "Fetch me a towel, please, someone."

Insoead of starting the next morning, as Preen Chand had proposed, the race did not begin until three days laoer. Part of the delay was from loading waggons so that the elephants] and the soeam engine would pull about the same amount of weight. The rest came from dickering over conditions.

Since the flesh-and-blood elephants were ready at once, while the Iron Elephant had to build up soeam, Trevithick wanoed Preen Chand not to start until the engine could move. This the elephant driver indignantly refused, on the grounds that the start-up delay was an inherent part of the mechanical device's function. Public opinion in Spring field backed him, and Trevithick gave way.

But Preen Chand had to yield in turn on the load the Iron Elephant would have to haul. He wanoed the weight of the waggons added on to that of the engine and coal-waggon.

Trevithick, though, neatly turned the tables on him, pointing out that the Iron Elephant naturally got lighter as it traveled and consumed its fuel. The coal, he said, should count as part of its initial burden. He won his point.

Most of Springfield was there to see the race begin. The Iron Elephant was on the regular westbound track; Caesar and Hannibal took the track usually reserved for eastbound trains. Trevithick doffed his dapper cap to Preen Ghand.

The elephant driver returned a curt nod. Trevithick was not a bad sort. If anything, that made matoers worse.

The mayor of Springfield cried, "Are all you gentlemen ready?" He held a pistol in the air. It would have taken more pull than a steam engine or a couple of hairy elephants put out to keep His Honor away.

Hearing no objections, he fired the starting gun. Cae k sar's ears flapped at the report. "Mall-mall!" Preen Chand shouted. Behind him, he heard Paul Tilak give Hannibal the same command, and emphasize it with a whack of the elephant goad.

The hairy elephants surged forward as far as their harness would allow. Then, grunting with effort, they lowered their heads, dug in their big round feet, and pulled for all they were worth. Fifty tons of dead weight was a lot \ even for such powerful beasts to overcome.

From the other track, Preen Chand heard the clatter of coal being shoveled into the Iron Elephant's firebox. He did not look over. He knew his train would get rolling first, and inoended to wring every inch out of his advantage.

"Mall-mall!" he shouted again.

0 The spectators started to slide out of his field of vision.

> "We're moving!" he and Tilak shouted in the same breath.

"Mall-mall!" In his urgency, Preen Chand used the anhus on Caesar.

The elephant shook his head reproachfully.

Each step Caesar and Hannibal took came more easily than the one before. Horses paralleled the track, as riders came along to watch the race. Preen Chand kind back over his shoulder. The Iron Elephant still had not moved. "We may do this yet," he called to Paul Tilak. He hoped so. He had bet as many big silver denaires as he could afford--and perhaps a few more--on the great animal straining beneath him.

"We shall see," was all Tilak said. As far as Preen Chand knew, he had not made any bets for the elephants. He had - not made any against them, either. Had he done so, Preen Chand would have kicked him off Hannibal even if it meant putting an unschooled oxherd aboard the beast. He had already filed one brakeman--he wanted no one with him who had a stake in losing.

Buildings hid the Iron Elephant as Caesar and Hannibal pulled their train round a curve. They had made a good quarter of a mile and were approaching the outskirts of town when Tilak said, "The machine is coming after us."

Preen Chand looked back again. Sure enough, a plume of soot and smoke was rising above the train station. The elephant driver grunted, sounding very much like Caesar. "Whatever Trevithick does, we are still faster, so long as we are moving. What worries me is that he will go all night."

"Do you want us to try that?" Tilak asked.

"No," Preen Chand said regretfully; he had thought long and hard about it. "If we do, Caesar and Hannibal will be worth nothing tomorrow. Even as is, I am not sure they will be able to match today's pace. And I am so afraid they will have to. If Trevithick's engine works as he hopes, we will have to catch him from behind."

Soon they were out among farms once more. Cows and sheep stared incuriously as the hairy elephants tramped past. Rifle-toting farmers guarded their stock. Even so close to Springfield, farms were a constant nuisance. They might not have the brains of humans, but they were too clever to trap.

Preen Chand decided he was going to get a stiff neck if he kept turning around to look back, but he could not help it. He had to see the Iron Elephant in action. Here it came, with its train behind it.

He put a spyglass to his eye for a better view.

He thought it even uglier moving than stationary. Shafts connected to its pistons drove small gears at either side of the back of the engine. Those, in turn, meshed with larger gears in front of them, and the larger gears joined with the ones on the outside of the engine's four wheels. Smoke belched from the stack as the contraption crawled along. Even from close to half a mile away, Preen Chand could hear it chug and wheeze and rattle. It reminded him more of a flatulent iron cockroach than an elephant.

When he said that out loud, Tilak chuckled, remarking, "The farm animals would agree with you, it seems."

Preen Chand had been too busy studying the Iron Elephant to pay attention to them. A quick glance showed his fellow driver to be right. The livestock had reacted to their own train as they would have toward a couple of mules hauling a wagon past, which is to say they did not react at all.

The noisy, smoky, stinking steam engine was something else again.

Animals' ears went up in surprise, then back in alarm. Terrified flocks pounded across the fields, farmers trying without much luck to halt them and now and then pausing to shake their fists at the Iron Elephant.

"I never thought of that," Preen Chand exclaimed. "How can these machines ever accomplish anything, if sheep and cattle and horses will not go near them?"

"Trevithick has come this far," Paul Tilak pointed out, which made Preen Chand give him a dirty look.

The sun climbed the sky. One by one, the townsfolk who had ridden out to watch the race began turning back for Springfield. It was not the sort of event to be easily watched.

Neither contestant moved very fast, and they were drawing steadily farther apart. The only drama lay in who would finish first, but the answer to that was still more than a day away.

This time Tilak was the one who looked back. What he saw raised even his unsanguine spirits. "They have broken down!" he shouted.

Preen Chand slapped the spyglass to his eye. Sure enough, the Iron Elephant was barely limping along. Less smoke poured from the stack, and what there was had changed color.

The brakemen raised a cheer. "Come on, Caesar!"

"Go, Hannibal, gal"

"Run that hunk of tin back to the blacksmith's shop where it belongs!" But Preen Chand kept watching. As he had been certain, Richard Trevithick was not a man to yield tamely to misfortune. The engine handler worked furiously on his machine. Once he leaped away; Preen Chand saw one of his henchmen rush up to help him bandage his hand. Together they plunged back to their repairs. After a while, the Iron Elephant picked up speed again.

All the same, Caesar and Hannibal gained on the steam engine with every step they took. They were pulling magnificently now, their heads down, their double-curved tusks--bigger by far than those of the Indian elephants Preen Chand's grandfather had fondly remembered--almost dragging the ground.

A small stream ran not far from the tracks. "They should wooer themselves," Tilak said.

Preen Chand had to stop for any reason, but knew his friend was right.

He raised a signal flag to warn the brakemen to stop, called, "Choro!" to Caesar. Tilak echoed him. The brakes squealed as they halted. The two elephant drivers unharnessed their beasts and rode them over to the creek. "I'd like to see Trevithick do this when his boiler runs dry," Preen Chand said. Tilak nodded.

Caesar and Hannibal lowered their trunks into the water. They squiroed it down their throats, a good gallon and a half at a squirt.

Tilak had been right--they were thirsty. They drank close to thirty gallons each before they slowed down.

Their exertion had also made them hot. "DeTT-tol!" Preen Chand called: "Squirt water on your back." Caesar did. Preen Chand scrambled forward onto the hairy elephant's head to keep from getting soaked.

As the elephant drivers led their charges back to the train, Caesar and Hannibal used their trunks to uproot a couple of bushes and stuff them into their mouths. They had eaoen well before the race staroed and would be fed again come evening, but they were not the sort of animals to miss any chance for a snack.

"Mall-mall!" Preen Chand shouted, and the train headed west once more.

Behind them, the smoke that marked the Iron Elephant sank lower and lower in the east. Finally Preen Chand had to use the spyglass to see it. It never quite disappeared, though, any more than an aching tooth that has stopped hurting for the moment ceases to give little reminders of its prence.

The farms that ran west along the railway from Spring field began to peoer out. Not many ran east from Carthage; the tracks had reached it only a few years before. Between \ 1 the two towns was a broad stretch where the four bands of iron ran through still-virgin prairie.

A herd of big-horned buffalo grazed north of the tracks.

It was not one of the huge aggregations of spring or fall, ' when migrating throngs made the ground shake and could delay a train for hours or days as they crossed the rail line.

Preen Chand knew some of his brakemen were swearing becau the buffalo were out of rifle range. He did not care e l himself; he did not eat beef. l A pronghorn pranced daintily by, a good deal closer than i l the buffalo. A gun barked. Caesar jerked beneath Preen Chand; he heard Paul Tilak cursing and pounding Hanni- 0 hal back under control. S a When Preen Chand could spare a moment, he saw the pronghorn lying in the grass, kicking. He raised an eye brow, impressed at the shooting. The little antelope was at least as &r away as the sima whole volley had missed on the way to Springfield.

Several men swung down from the waggons to pick up the pronghorn.

All but one--presumably the felbw who had killed it--had rifles at the ready. The waist-high plains grass could hide almost anything: sims, wolves, a spear fanged cat.

The brakemen had to run hard to catch up to the train with their booty. None of them called to Preen Chand to slow down. They knew what the odds were for that.

The elephant driver had his cap pulled low to shield his eyes from the westering sun when the train went by another creek. "What do you say we stop here?" Tilak called "Hannibal is tired."

Preen Chand did not want to stop for anything, but he could feel that Caesar was not pulling as powerfully as he had earlier in the day.

The hairy elephants were so large making the same mental calculations he was. "We stay," he said at last. "We can catch them before noon, a few miles outside Carthage. And if we race them now we risk running the elephants into the ground. They worked hard yesterday, and they need as much rest as they can get."

The brakemen accepted his decision without argument as he would have taken their word over anything concerning the waggons. Tilak, though, took him aside and said quietly, "I hope we can catch them."

Hannibal was flagging badly there at the end of the race.

"Caesar too." Preen Chand hated to make the admission as if saying it out loud somehow made it more real. He was, however, far from giving up hope. "The steam engine has its problems too--I thought it would. If it were running as well as Trevithick claimed it could, it would have been here hours ago."

"And if it had, we could have waved goodbye to the race."

"That is true. But it passed us now, not then. We, at least know how far we can hope to go on any given day. What will that smelly piece of ironwork do to schedules?"

"It has certainly played the very devil with mine." Tilak yawned.

"I am going back to bed."

"There, for once, my friend, I cannot argue with you," Preen Chand said. His only consolation was reflecting that Trevithick probably needed sleep even more than he did.

After eating enormously at sunrise, Caesar and Hannibal seemed eager to pull. The train rattled forward at a pace better than Preen Chand had expected. The Iron Elephant's plume of smoke, which had shrunk behind them the day before, now grew larger and blacker and stood taller in the sky as they gained. Only a couple of minutes more. "What do you say we stop here?" Tilak called "Hannibal is tired."

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"Go ahead and run, Richard," Preen Chand called though Trevithick, of course, could not hear. "You cannot run fast enough."

The engine handler must have seen his rival's train and disliked the raeo at which it was gaining. He must have tied down a safety valve, for more smoke poured from the Iron Elephant's stack. All the same, the flesh-and-blood beasts continued to gain.

Closer and closer they came. Now they were only a mile behind, now half a mile. And there, heartbreakingly, they stuck. Caesar's and Hannibal's morning burst of energy faded. However much Preen Chand and Paul Tilak urged them on, they could come no closer. And as the elephant 7 drivers watched and cursed, the Iron Elephant began to 0 pull away once more.

Preen Chand felt like weeping from frustration. Through his spyglass, the men aboard the Iron Elephant seemed F close enough to reach out and touch. Yet as he watched helplessly, they drew ever farther from him. He refused to lower the spyglass, cherishing the illusion it gave of a neck-and-neck race. And so he was watching still when the Iron Elephant slid into a pit.

Preen Chand stared, not believing what he saw. He knew how hastily this stretch of the railbed had been laid; it had only gravel underneath it, not a good solid foundation of stone arsd rammed earth.

All the same, he had crossed the same stretch of track only a few days before, and there had been no storms since to undermine it.

But something had. Paul Tilak saw what it was. "Sims!" he shouoed.

Suddenly and most uncharacteristically, he burst out laughing. "Their trap caught a harder-skinned elephant than they bargained for!" t Once Preen Chand's attention was diverted from the train ahead, he too saw the subhumans rushing to the attack.

Some carried wooden spears, their points fire-hardened.

[Others bore clubs, still others held stones chipped sharp that they could throw a long way. He spied the glint of a few axeheads and soeel knives, perhaps stolen, perhaps gotten in trade.

t Tilak was right: the sims would not gorge on hairy elephant, as they hoped. But they were not fussy about what they ate--brakeman would do well enough. And with everyone thrown in a heap by the Iron Elephant's sudden and unexpected stop, only a couple of men were able to shoot at the charging hunoers. Afoer that it was a melee, and the sims were stronger, fiercer, sometimes even betoer armed than their foes.

Preen Chand threw up the red flag to warn his crew, then yelled "Choro!" as loud as he could. The train stopped "Get Hannibal alit of his harness!" he told Paul Tilak. Preen Chand was already unbuckling the thick leather straps that linked Caesar to Hannibal. He stood up on his elephant's back, called to the train crew, "Grab your rifles and climb onto the two beasts. It is a rescue now!"

The brakemen scrambled down from their waggons and rushed forward.

Hairy elephants were betoer haulers than carriers; Caesar and Hannibal could bear only five men apiece. As he had at the Springfield station, Preen Chand made Caesar lift a foreleg to serve as a soep. "You, you, you and you," he said, pointing at the first four men to reach him.

They swarmed onto the elephant.

Just behind them, Tilak was making a similar chant. Hannibal trumpeted at taking on unfamiliar passengers, but subsided when Tilak thwacked its broad head with the elephant goad.

"Follow us as closely as you can," Preen Chand told the disappointed latecomers from the back of the train. Then he dug in his toe behind Caesar's ear. "Mall-mall!" he shouoed: forward!

Even with the burden it was carrying, the hairy elephant shot ahead, as if relieved to be free of the burden of the train. Its gait shifted from its usual walk to a pounding rack, with hind- and foreleg on the same side of its body advancing together.

Most of the brakemen had ridden elephants before, but not under circumstances like these. They clutched at Caesar's harness to keep from being pitched off. In spioe of everything, one did fall. He rolled away, clutching his ankle. The hairy elephant's left hind foot missed his head by inches.

They were a bit more than half a mile from the Iron Elephant, three or four minuoos at the elephants' best pace, which they were certainly making. When they had covered about half the distance, Preen Chand told one brakeman, "You shoot."

"No chance to hit at this range," the fellow protested.

"Yes, but we will remind the sims we are coming, and you will be able to reload by the time we get there."

"Never tried reloading on top of an elephant before," the brakeman said darkly, but he raised the rifle to his shoulder and fired. Caesar trumpeted in surprise. So did Hannibal, a moment later.

Some of the subhumans had already staroed to break and run--two carried a man's corpse between them, while another fled with a body slung over its shoulder. But others were still fighting, and one stubbornly kept trying to shove a spear into the metal side oE the trapped soeam engine. Preen Chand had to stop himself from giggling: Paul Tilak had certainly been right about that.

Against men, even men carrying firearms, the sims might have kept up the battler at least for a little while. But the hairy elephants were the most fearsome beasts on the plains. The sight of two bearing down like an angry avalanche was too much for the subhumans. They took to their heels, hooting in dismay.

The last to run off was the one that had tried to slay the Iron Elephant. Baring its oeth in a furious grimace, it hurled a sharp stone at Caesar before seeking to get away. The rock fell far short, but by then the sim was within easy rifle range. Preen Chand's bullet sent it sprawling forward on its face.

He felt more like a general than like an elephant driver. With gestures and shouted commands, he sent Hannibal and the men he thought of as his foot soldiers afoer the retreating sims. He walked Caesar up to the head of the rival train.

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The brakeman to the contrary, reloading on elephant back was possible--but then, Preen Chand had more practice at it than the other man did. He fired at a sim. To his disgust, he missed; Many sims were down now, either dead or under cover in hollows the tall grass concealed.

The railroad men moved up cautiously. A couple went ahead to reclaim a

body the sims had dropped in their flight. Preen Chand was dismayed to see no sign of the corpse the pair of sims had been carrying; the subhumans who survived this raid, curse them, would not go altogether hungry.

The elephant driver wondered if the body was Trevithick's. He had yet to spot the steam-engine man, and he was close to the upended Iron Elephant. Afoer digging their pit under the rails, the sims had covered it with branches and then covered them over with dirt and gravel so they looked like the rest of the roadbed. Preen Chand shivered. He might well have led Caesar straight into the trap.

He got down from the hairy elephant, walked over to the hole in the ground. The rails had buckled as they tried and failed to support the Iron Elephant. It was tilted at a soeep angle, almost nose down in the pit. A real elephant, which did not carry its weight on the rails, would have taken a worse fall.

A dead sim lay half in, half out of the pit. Preen Chand looked down into it. "Hello, Preen, very good to see you indeed," Richard Trevithick said. He held a pistol clubfashion in his bandaged left hand; his right arm hung limply. "I'm afraid you'll have to help me out of here. I think I broke it. Oh, and congratulations--you seem to have won the race."

"I had not even thought of that," Preen Chand said, blinking. He turned to his crew. "Get me a length of rope. Tie one end to Caesar's harness and toss the other down to me." He slid into the pit.

In India, he thought, hazily remembering his grandfather's stories, there would have been sharpened stakes sticking up from the bottom. Luckily, the sims had not thought of that. -- He got to his feet, brushed off himself and Trevithick. 5 "You shot the sim up there?"

x The engine handler nodded. "Yes, and then spent the rest of the fight hiding under the Iron Elephant, while another of the creatures tried to kill it." He laughed ruefully. "Not very glorious, I'm afraid. But then, neither was falling out of the cab when the engine went down. If I hadn't been leaning back for another shovelful of coal, I never would have got this." He tried to move his arm, winced, and thought betoer of it.

"But you would have been out in the open, then, and the second sim might have speared you instead of your machine," Preen Chand poined out.

"Something to that, I suppose."

A rope snaked into the hole. Preen Chand tied it around Trevithick's body under his arms. "Is it hooked up to Caesar?" he called.

"Sure is," a brakeman answered.

"Good. Mall-mall!"

The rope went taut. Preen Chand helped Trevithick

\ scramble up the sloping side of the pit while the elephant pulled him out. The engine handler yelped once, then set his teeth and bore the jouncing in grim silence. Preen Chand yelled "Choro!" as soon as Trevithick was out, then crawled slowly afoer him.

"You didn't need to get us clean the first time," Trevithick remarked.

"You are quite right. My apologies. I will dirty you again, if you like," Preen Chand said, deadpan.

Trevithick's expression was half grin, half grimace. Then he looked around, and dismay replaced them both. Down in the pit, he had not been able to see the fight that had raged up and down the length of his train. Most of the bodies spilled on the ground, most of the blood splashed on waggon and grass, belonged to sims--but not all.

"Oh, the poor lads," the engine handler exclaimed.

Some of the survivors of his crew had joined Preen Chand's men in pursuit of the sims, which made his losses appear at first even worse than they were. But Trevithick, pointing with his left hand, counted four bodies, and one of his brakemen added, "Pat Bailey and One-eye Jim is dead but we can't find 'em no where."

"Filthy creatures," Trevithick muttered.

Preen Chand knew he was not talking about the missing men. Trying to give what consolation he could, he said "This sort of thing will not happen hereabouts much longer. Soon this part of the country will be too thickly settled for wild sim bands big enough to attack a train to flourish. "

"Yes, of course. That's been happening for more than 150 years, since settlers came to Virginia and Plymouth. It does little good for me at the moment, however--and even less for One-eye Jim and Patrick Bailey."

Preen Chand had no good answer to that. He led Trevithick over to Paul Tilak, who knew enough first aid to splint a broken arm. Ignoring an injured man's howls Tilak was washing a bleeding bite with whiskey.

"Don't be a fool," he told the fellow. "Do you want it to fester?"

"Couldn't hurt more'n what you just done," the man said sullenly.

"That only shows how little you know," Tilak snorted.

He moved on to a brakeman with a torn shirt and blood running down his chest. "You are very lucky. That spear could as easily have gone in as slid along your ribs." He soaked his rag at the mouth of the whiskey bottle. The brakeman flinched.

"There's one attention I won't regret being spared," Trevithick said, waiting for Tilak to get round to him.

"I do not doubt that." Preen Chand's eyes slipped back to the Iron Elephant. "Richard, may I ask what you will do next?"

The engine handler followed his rival's glance. "I expect we'll be able to salvage it, Preen, with the help of your elephants. The damage shouldn't be anything past repair. " His face lit with enthusiasm. "And back in Boston, my brother is working on another engine, twice as powerful as the Iron Elephant. If I'd had that one here, you never could have stayed close to me!"

"In which case, you and your crew probably would all be dead now," Preen Chand said tartly.

But in spite of his sharp comeback, he felt a hollowness - inside, for he saw that the future belonged to Trevithick. As good as surely as humans displaced sims, steam engines were going to replace hairy elephants: it was much easier to make an engine bigger and stronger and faster than it was an elephant.

A way of life was ending.

He let out a long sigh.

Trevithick understood him perfectly. "I told you once, Preen, it won't be so bad. There will always be railroads, no matter what pulls the trains."

"It will not be the same."

"What is, ever?"

"He has you there, Preen," Tilak put in.

"Maybe so, maybe so," Preen Chand said. "Our grand fathers, who sailed halfway round the world to come here, would have agreed with you, I am certain. But do you know what hurts worst of all?"

Trevithick and Tilak shook their heads.

"When that second engine comes into Springfield, I am going to have to admit George Soepenson is right!" 1804 Though the Fall Heavens Large-scale agricultural production was very important in several southeastern commonwealths. Indigo, hemp, and cotton--especially the latter, with its vast export market--were grown on plantations that, because they naturally did not have modern farm machinery, required a great many laborers to raise and gather in the crops.

Most of these field laborers were sims. The number of sims in North America had increased greatly since Europeans began settling in the New World, simply because agriculture is so much more efficient a way of producing food than the nomadic hunting life the native subhumans had formerly practiced. There was enough to feed both the swelling human population and the sims--which, now sometimes for many generations, had been tamed to serve humans.

Large labor forces of sims were not the only characteristic of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century southeastern plantation agriculture. Because sims household staff (and also, on proved unsatisfactory

occasion, to supplement their number in the fields), black human slaves were imported from Africa.

Shamefully, slavery is a human institution at least as old as civilization itself. It was accepted in ancient Mesopotamian society; by the Hebrews; by the Greeks; and even by the Romans, whose republic is the prototype for the Federated Commonwealths. Philosophers developed elaborate justifications for the institution, most based on the assumption that one group of people--generally speaking, the group that owned the slaves in question--was superior to another and that the

latter, therefore, deserved their enslavement.

Such speculation may perhaps have been excusable in the days when humans knew only of other humans. Differences in skin color, features, or type of hair must have seemed large and important in those days.

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"You, Jeremiah!" Mrs. Gillen called from the next room "What are you doing in there?"

"Dusting, ma'am," he answered, flailing about with the feather duster so she would see him busy if she came in to check.

Unlike the sims that worked in the fields, houseslaves rarely felt the whip, but he did not intend to tempt fate.

All Mrs. Gillen said, though, was, "Go downstairs and fetch me up a glass of lemonade. Squeeze some fresh; I think the pitcher's empty."

"Yes ma'am." Jeremiah sighed as he went to the kitchen. On a larger estate, other blacks would have shared the household duties.

Here he was cook, cleaner, butler, and coachman by turns, and busy all the time because there was so much to do.

He made a fresh pitcher of lemonade to his own taste, drank a glass, then added more sugar. The Gillens liked it sweeter than he did.

"Took you long enough," Jane Gillen snapped when he got upstairs.

He took no notice of it; that was simply her way. She was in her early thirties, a few years older than Jeremiah, her mousy prettiness beginning to yield to time.

"Oh, that does a body good," she said, emptying the glass and giving it back to him. "Why don't you take the rest of the pitcher out to my husband? He and Mr. Stowe are in the south field, and they'll be suffering from the sun. Go on; they'll thank you for it."

"Yes, ma'am," he said again, this time with something like enthusiasm. He returned to the kitchen, put the pitcher and two glasses on a tray, and went out to look for his master and the overseer.

A big male sim was chopping logs into firewood behind the house.

It stopped for a moment to nod to Jeremiah as he went by.

He nodded back. "Hello, Joe," he said, a faint edge of contempt riding his words. He might be a slave, but by God he was a man!

Joe did not notice Jeremiah's condescension. Muscles bulged under the thick coat of hair on the sims arms as it swung the axe up for another stroke. The axe descended. Chips flew. One flew right over Joe's head, landed in the dust behind the sim.

Jeremiah chuckled as he walked on. Had he been wielding the axe, the chip would have caught him right in the forehead and probably made him bleed. But sims had no foreheads. Above Joe's deep-set eyes was only a beetling ridge of bone that retreated smoothly toward the back of his head.

More sims worked in the fields, some sowing hemp seeds broadcast on the land devoted to the farm's main cash crop others weeding among the growing green stalks of wheat. They would have done a better job with lighter hoes, but the native American subhumans lacked the sense to take proper care of tools of good quality.

Mostly the sims worked in silence. Now and then one would let its long, chinless jaw fall open to emit a grunt of effort, and once Jeremiah heard a screech as a sim hit its own foot instead of a weed.

But unlike humans, the sims did not talk among themselves. Few ever mastered English, and their own grunts and hoots were too restricted to make up a real language.

Instead, they used hand signs like the ones the deaf and dumb employed; those came easier to them than speech. Jeremiah had heard Mr. Gillen say even the wild sims that still lurked in the forests and mountains two centuries after colonists came to Virginia used hand signs taught them by runaways in preference to their native calls.

Charles Gillen and Harry Stowe were standing together, watching the sims work. Gillen turned and saw Jeremiah. "Well, well, what have we here?" he said, smiling. He was a large man, about the same age as his wife, with perpetually ruddy features and a strong body beginning to go to fat.

"Lemonade, sir, for you and Mr. Stowe." Jeremiah poured for each man, handed them their glasses.

Gillen drained his without taking it from his lips; his face turned even redder than usual. "Ahhh!" he said, wiping his mouth.

"Aww that was a kindly thought, and surely it's no part of your regular duties to go traipsing all over the farm looking for me." He rummaged through the pockets of his blue cotton breeches. "Here's a ten-sester for your trouble."

"I thank you very much, sir." Jeremiah's trousers did not have pockets. He stowed the small silver coin in a leather pouch he wore on a thong round his neck under his shirt. The hope for just such a reward was one of the things that had made him eager to go to his master. Besides, it beat working.

He did not mention that the lemonade had been Mrs. Gillen's idea.

Even if her husband found out, though, he would not take the ten-sester back; he was a fair-minded man.

Harry Stowe kept his glass in his left hand as he drank. His right hand held his whip, as it always did when he was in the field.

The whip was a yard-long strip of untanned cowhide, an inch thick at the grip and tapering to a point.

Stowe was a small, compact man with fine features and cold blue eyes that never stopped moving. He snarled an oath and stepped forward. The whip cracked. A sim shouted in alarm, clutched at its right arm.

"Oh, nonsense, Tom," Stowe snapped. "I didn't hurt you, and well you know it. But damn you, have more care with what you do. That was wheat you were rooting out there, not a weed."

The sim understood English well enough, even if it could not speak. Its hands moved. Sorry, it signed. Its broad, flat features were unreadable. When it went back to weeding, though, it soon uprooted another stalk of wheat.

Stowe's hand tightened on the butt of the whip until his knuckles whitened. But he did not lash out. His shoulders sagged. "In a man, that would be insolence," he said to Charles Gillen. "But sims cannot, will not atone as a man would. I could wear out my arm, my cowskin, and my temper, sir, and not improve them much."

"Your being here at all keeps them working, Harry. We shouldn't expect them to be fine farmers," Gillen replied. "When men first came to Virginia, they found the sims here unable to make fire, with no tools but chipped stones."

"You are an educated man, to know such things," the overseer said.

"For myself, all I know is that they do not work as I would wish, and so waste your substance. I wish you could afford to have niggers in the fields. I would make fine farmers of them, I wager." He looked speculatively toward Jeremiah.

The house-slave wished he could become invisible; suddenly he was not glad at all he had come out to the fields. He stretched out his hands to his master. "Mr. Gillen, you wouldn't treat me like no sim, would you, sir?" The wobble of Fear in his voice was real.

"No, no, Jeremiah, don't fret yourself," Gillen reassured him, sending a look-at-the-trouble-you-caud glance Stowe's way. "I find it hard to imagine a circumstance that would force me to use you so."

"Thank you, sir, thank you." Jeremiah knew he was laying it on thick, but he took no chances. Not only was labor in the fields exhausting, but he could imagine nothing more degrading. Even as a slave, he had a measure of self-respect. One day he hoped to be able to buy his liberation. The oen-ster his master had given him put his private hoard at over eighty denaires. Maybe he would buy land, end up owning a few sims himself. It was something to dream about, anyway.

But if Gillen worked him as he would a sim, would he not think of him in the same way, instead of as a person? He might never get free then!

Why, his master had already turned his back on him and was talking politics with Stowe as if he were not there. "So whom will you vooe for in the censoral elections this fall, Harry?"

"I favor Adams and Westerbrook: two men from the same party will work together, instead of us having to suffer through another five years of divided government like this last term."

"I don't know," Gillen said judiciously. "When the Conscript Fathers wrooe the Articles of Independence afoer we broke from England in '38, they gave us two censors to keep the power of the executive from growing too strong, as it had in the person of the king. To me that says they intended the two men to be of opposing view, to check each other's excesses."

: "To check excesses, aye. But I'm partial to a government 0 that governs, not one that spends all its time arguing with itself."

Gillen chuckled. "Something to that, I suppose. Still, don't you think--"

Jeremiah stopped listening. What did politics matter to him? As a slave, he could no more vote than a sim could. His head hung as he made his slow way back to the house.

Mrs. Gillen saw him dawdling, and scolded him. She kept an eye on him the rest of the day, which meant he had to work at the pace she set, not his own. That, he thought resentfully, was more trouble than a ten-sester was worth. To make things worse, he burnt the ham the Gillens, Stowe, and he were going to have for supper. That earned him another scolding from his mistress and a contemptuous stare from the overseer.

At sunset, Stowe blew a long, unmusical blast on a bugle, the signal for the sims to come in from the fields for their evening meal.

Their food was unexciting but filling: mostly barley bread and salt pork, eked out once or twice a week, as tonight, with vegetables from the garden plot and with molasses. The sims also ate whatever small live things they could catch. Some owners discouraged that as a disgusting habit (Jeremiah certainly thought it was; stepping on a well-gnawed rat tail could be counoed on to make his stomach turn over). Most, like Charles Gillen, did not mind, for it made their property cheaper to feed.

"Never catch me eating rats, not if I'm starving," Jeremiah said as he blew out the candle in his small stuffy room. He listened to make sure the Gillens were asleep. (Stowe had his own cottage, close by the log huts where the sims lived.)

When he was sure all was quiet, the slave lifted a loose floorboard and drew out a small flask of whiskey. Any sim caught with spirits was lashed till the blood ran through the matted hair on its back. kremiah ran the same risk, and willingly. Sometimes he needed that soothing fire in his belly to sleep.

Tonight, though, he drank the flask dry, and tosd and turned for hours all the same.

Spring gave way to summer. The big sim Joe stepped on a thorn, and died three weeks laoder of lockjaw. The loss cast a pall of gloom over Charles Gillen, for Joe was worth a hundred denaires.

Gillen's spirits lifted only when his son and daughoer returned to the farm from the boarding schools they attended in Portsmouth, the commonwealth capital. Jeremiah was also glad to e them. Caleb was fourteen and Sally eleven; the slave sometimes felt he was almost as much a father to them as Charles Gillen himself.

But Caleb, at least, came home changed this year. Before, he had always talked of what he would do when the Gillen farm was his.

Jeremiah had spoken of buying his own freedom once, a couple of years before; Caleb had looked so hurt at the idea of his leaving that he never brought it up again, for fear of turning the boy against it for good. He thought Caleb had long since forgotten.

One day, though, Caleb came up to him when the two of them were alone in the house. He spoke with the painful seriousness adolescence brings: "I owe you an apology, Jeremiah."

"How's that, young master?" the slave asked in surprise. "You haven't done nothing to me." And even if you had, he added silently, you would not be required to apologize for it.

"Oh, but I have," Caleb said, "though I've taken too long to see it. Do you remember when you told me once you would like to be free and go away?"

"Yes, young sir, I do remember that," Jeremiah said cautiously.

Any time the issue of liberation came up, a slave walked the most perilous ground there was.

"I was too little to understand then," the boy said. "Now I think I may, because I want to go away too."

"You do? Why could that be?" Jeremiah was not pretending. This declaration of Caleb's was almost as startling as his recalling their conversation at all. To someone that young, two years was like an age.

"Because I want to read the law and set up my own shingle one day.

The law is the most important thing in the whole world, Jeremiah." His voice burned with conviction; at fourteen, one is passionately certain about everything.

"I don't know about that, young master. Nobody can eat law."

Caleb looked at him in exasperation. "Nobody could eat food either, or even grow it, if his neighbor could take it whenever he had a mind to. What keeps him from it, even if he has guns and men and sims enough to do it by force? Only the law."

"Something to that," Jeremiah admitted. He agreed only partly from policy; Caleb's idea had not occurred to him. He thought of the law only as something to keep from descending on him. That it might be a positive good was a new notion--one easier to arrive at for a free man, he thought without much bitterness.

Enthusiasm carried Caleb along. "Of course there's something to it! People who make the law and apply the law rule the country. I don't mean just the censors or the Senate or the Popular Assembly--though one day I'll serve, I think--but judges and lawyers too."

"That may be so, young master, but what will become of the farm when you've gone to Portsmouth to do your lawyering, or up to Philadelphia for the Assembly?" Jeremiah knew vaguely where Portsmouth was (somewhere southeast, a journey of a week or two); he knew Philadelphia was some long ways north, but had no idea how far. Half as far as the moon, maybe.

"One day Sally will get married," Caleb shrugged. "It will stay in the family. And lawyers get rich, don't forget. Who knows? Maybe one day I'll buy the Pickens place next door to retire on."

Jeremiah's opinion was that old man Pickens would have to be dragged kicking and screaming into his grave before he turned loose of his farm. He knew, however, when to keep his mouth shut. He also noticed that any talk about his freedom had vanished from the conversation.

Nevertheless, Caleb had not forgotten. One day he took Jeremiah aside and asked him, "Would you like me to teach you to read and tipher?"

The slave thought about it. He answered cautiously "Your father, I don't know if he'd like that." Most masters discouraged literacy among their blacks (sims did not count; no sim had ever learned to read). In some commonwealths--though not Virginia--teaching a black his letters was against the law.

"I've already talked with him about it," Caleb said. "I asked him if he didn't think it would be useful to have you able to keep accounts and such. He hates that kind of business himself."

The lad already had a good deal of politician in him Jeremiah thought. Caleb went on, "Once you learn, maybe you can hire yourself out to other farmers, and keep some of what you earn. That would help you buy yourself free sooner, and knowing how to read and figure can only help you afterwards."

"You're right about that, young sir. I'd be pleased to start, so long as your father won't give me no grief on account of it."

The hope of money first impelled Jeremiah to the lessons, but he quickly grew fascinated with them for their own sake. He found setting down his name in shaky letoers awe-inspiring: there it was, recorded for all time. It gave him a feeling of immortality, almost as if he had had a child. And struggling through first Caleb's little reader and then, haltingly, the Bible was more of the same. He wished he could spend all his time over the books.

He could not, of course. Chores around the house kept him busy all through the day. Most of his reading time was snatched from sleep. He yawned and did not complain.

His stock of money slowly grew, five sesters here, ten there.

Once he made a whole denaire for himself, when Mr. Pickens's cook fell sick just before a family gathering and Charles Gillen loaned Jeremiah to the neighbor for the day.

From anyone else, he would have expected two or even three f denaires; from Pickens he counted himself lucky to get one.

P He did not save every sesoer he earned: a man needs more P than the distant hope of freedom to stay happy. One night d: he made his way to a dilapidated cabin that housed a widow ` inclined to be complaisant toward silver, no matter who ` brought it.

Jeremiah was heading home, feeling pleased with the entire world (except for the mosquitoes), when the moon light showed a figure coming down the path toward him. It was Harry Stowe. Jeremiah's pleasure evaporaoed. He was afraid of the overseer, and tried to stay out of his way. Too late to step aside into the bushes--Stowe had seen him.

fX "Evening, sir," Jeremiah said amiably as the overseer approached.

Stowe set hands on hips, looked Jeremiah up and down.

"Evening, sir," he echoed, voice mockingly high. There was whiskey on his breath. "I'm tired of your uppity airs--always sucking up to young

Caleb. What do you need to read for? You're a stinking slave, and don't you ever forget it."

"I could never do that, sir, no indeed. But all the same, a man wants to make himself better if he can."

He never saw the punch that knocked him down. Drunk or sober, Stowe was fast and dangerous. Jeremiah lay in the [dirt. He did not try to fight back. Caleb's law descended swiftly and savagely on any slave who dared strike a white [man. But fear of punishment was not what held him back [now. He knew Stowe would have no trouble taking him, ! even in a fair fight.

"L Man? I don't see any man there," the overseer said. "All I see's a nigger. " He laughed harshly, swung back his foot.

> Instead of delivering the kick, though, he turned away and went on toward the widow's.

Jeremiah rubbed the bruise on the side of his jaw, felt around with his tongue to see if Stowe had loosened any of his teeth. No, he decided, but only by luck. He stayed down until the overseer disappeared round a bend in the path. Then he slowly rose, brushing the dust from his trousers.

"Not a man, huh?" he muttered to himself. "Not a man? Well, let that trash talk however he wants, but whose sloppy seconds is he getting tonight?" Feeling a little better, he headed back to the Gillen house.

Summer wore on. The wheat grew tall. The stalks bent heavy with the weight of grain. Caleb and Sally returned to Portsmouth for school. The sims went into the fields to start cutting the hemp so it could dry on the ground.

The sickness struck them then, abruptly and savagely. Stowe came rushing in from their huts at sunrise one morning to cry to Charles Gillen, "Half the stupid creatures are down and choking and moaning!"

Gillen spilled coffee as he sprang to his feet with an oath. Fear on his face, he followed the overseer out. Jeremiah silently stepped out of the way. He understood his master's alarm. Disease among the sims, especially now when the harvest was just under way, would be a disaster from which the farm might never recover.

Jane Gillen waited anxiously for her husband to return. When he did, his mouth was set in a tight, grim line. "Diphtheria," he said.

"We may lose a good many." He strode over to the cupboard, uncorked a bottle of rum, took a long pull. He was not normally an intemperate man, but what he had seen left him shaken.

As Jeremiah washed and dried the breakfast dishes, he felt a certain amount of relief, at least as far as his own risk was concerned. Sims were esaid. "All I see's a nigger. " He laughed harshly, swung back his foot.

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A sadly shrunken work force trooped out to cut the hemp. Charles s of soup, that being the easiest nourishment for the sick sims to get past the membranes clogging their throats. Then Gillen hurried back out to the sim quaroers, to do what little doctoring he could.

The first deaths came that evening. One was Rare, the powerful woodcutter who had replaced Joe. Not all his - strength sufficed against the illness that choked the life -7 from him. The tired sims returning from the fields had to labor further to dig graves.

"I always feel so futile, laying a sim to rest," Gillen told Jane as they ate a late supper that Jeremiah had made.

^ "With a man, there's always the hope of heaven to give consolation. But no churchman I've ever heard of can say for certain whether sims have souls."

Jeremiah doubted it. He thought of sims as nothing more than animals that happened to walk on two legs and have hands. That made them more useful than, say, horses, but not much smarter. He rejected any resemblance between their status and his own; he at least knew he was a slave and planned to do something about it one day. His hoard had reached nearly ninety denaires.

The next day, even fewer of the sims could work. Charles O Gillen rode over to the Pickens farm to see if he could borrow some, but the diphtheria was there ahead of him.

L Mr. Pickens was down with it too, and not doing well.

h Gillen bit his lip at the small amount of hemp cut so far.

Jeremiah had had just enough practice ciphering over the [farm accounts to understand why: the cash Gillen raised from selling the hemp was what let him buy the goods his acres could not produce.

After supper that evening, Gillen took Jeremiah aside.

"Don't bother with breakfast tomorrow, or with more soup for the sims," he said. "Jane will take care of all that for a while."

"Mrs. Gillen, sir?" Jeremiah stared at his master. He [groped for the only explanation he could think of. "You F don't care for what I've been making? You tell me what you want, and I'll see you get it." j A gentleman to the core, Gillen replied quickly, "]

Jeremiah, it's nothing like that, I assure you. You've very well." Then he stopped cold, his cheeks reds plainly embarrassed to continue.

"You've gone and sold me." Jeremiah blurted < first--and worst--fear that came to his mind. Ever dreaded the announcement that would turn his life down. And Charles Gillen was on the whole an eas master; any number of tales Jeremiah had heard con him of that.

"I have not sold you, Jeremiah. Your place is Again Gillen's reply was swift and firm; again I trouble going on.

"Well, what is it, then?" kemiah demanded. Hi ter's hesitations set them in oddly reversed roles, thef probing and seeking, Gillen trying to evade the Jeremiah did when caught at something he knew wrong. Having the moral high ground was a new heady Eeeling.

He did not enjoy it long. Brought up short, Gillen I choice but to answer, "I'm sending you out to the tomorrow, Jeremiah, to help cut hemp."

With sick misery, the slave realized he would rathe been sold.

"But that's sim work, Mr. Gillen," he pro

"I know it is, and I feel badly for it. But so many sims are down with the sickness, and you are strol healthy. The hemp must be cut.

It does not care who swings the sickle. And I will not think less of y working in the fields--rather the contrary, because y have helped me at a time of great need. When the day that you approach me to ask to buy your freedom, be shall not forget."

Had he promised Jeremiah manumission as soon hemp-cutting was done, he would have gained a M worker. As it was, though, the slave again protested, ' send me out to do sim work, sir."

y not?" Gillen's voice had acquired a dangerous

--" Jeremiah knew he was faltering and cursed it, but could not do anything about it. Charles a decent man, as decent as a slave owner could be also a white man. He knew himself the equal, with farmers and townsmen; his son dreamed of being one of the Federated Commonwealths one day.

He stood far above both blacks and whites.

He also felt the gulf between himself and his course. Even gaining his freedom would not do it--certainly not in Gillen's eyes. But Jeremiah another gulf, one with him at the top looking down on the whites below.

He envied Gillen's lofty perch, that one was invisible. It was immensely important to Jeremiah. Even a slave superior to the subhuman natives of America, he set himself on things he could do that they would be puffed up with.

Learning his letters was something of a reminder that, even if his body was owned, his mind still roamed free.

Gillen, without understanding at all what he was shoving him down with the whites, as if there was a difference between him and them. Harry Stowe would make a difference either, indeed would relish getting on Jeremiah.

He had made that quite clear.

It was bad enough, but the white men already looked down on him. He had some status, though, among the white neighborhood. It would disappear the instant he went to the fields. Even the stupid whites would laugh -mouthed, empty-headed laughs at him, and no better than themselves. He would never be able to establish his authority over them again.

It passed through his mind in a matter of seconds, with the realization that none of it would make sense. Certainly not when measured against the humiliations he suffered every day. "It just wouldn't be right, _ Fl O sir," was the weak best Jeremiah could do.

He knew it was not good enough even before he saw Gillen's face clouded with anger. "How would it not be right? It pains me to have to remind you, Jeremiah, but you are my slave, my personal chattel. How I employ you, especially in this emergency, is my affair and mine alone.

Now I tell you that you shall report to the field gang tomorrow at sunrise or your back will be striped and then you will report anyway.

Do you follow me?"

"Yes, sir," Jeremiah said. He did not dare look at Gillen, for fear his expression would earn him the whipping on the spot.

"Well, good." Having got his way, Gillen was prepared to be magnanimous. He patted Jeremiah on the shoulder. "It will be only for a few days, a couple of weeks at most. Then everything will be back the way it was."

"Yes, sir," Jeremiah said again, but he knew better. Nothing would ever be the same, not between him and other blacks, not between him and the whites, and not between him and Gillen either. One reason Gillen was a bearable master was that he treated Jeremiah like a person. Now the thin veil of politeness was ripped aside. At need, Gillen could use Jeremiah like any other beast of burden and at need he would. It was as simple as that.

When Jeremiah lifted the loose board in his room, he found his little flask of spirits was empty. "I might have known," he muttered under his breath. "It's been that kind of day." He blew out his candle.

He was already awake when Stowe blasted away on the horn to summon the sims--and him--to labor. He had been awake most of the night; he was too full of mortification and swallowed rage to sleep. His stomach had tied itself into a tight, painful knot.

His eyes felt as though someone had thrown sand in them. He rubbed at them as he pulled on breeches, shoes and shirt and went out to the waiting overseer.

Stowe was doling out hardtack and bacon to the sims still well enough to work. "Well, well," he said, smiling broadly as Jere*liah came up. "What a pleasure to see our new field hand, and just in time for breakfast, too. Get in line and wait your turn."

The overseer watched for any sign of resistance, but V Jeremiah silently took his place. The hardtack was a - jawbreaker, and the bacon, heavily salted so it would keep

0 almost forever, brought tears to his eyes. If his belly had churned before, it snarled now. He gulped down two dippers of water.

They did not help.

The sims' big yellow teeth effortlessly disposed of the hardtack biscuits. The salt in the bacon did not faze them either. Jeremiah's presence seemed to bother them a good deal more. They kept staring at him, then quickly looking away whenever his eyes met theirs. The low-voiced calls and hoots they gave each other held a questioning note.

Those calls, though, could convey only emotion, not real meaning.

For that, the sims had to use the hand signs men had given them. Their fingers flashed, most often in the gesture equivalent to a question mark. Finally, one worked up the nerve to approach Jeremiah and sign, Why you beret

"To work," he said shortly. He spoke instead of signing, to emphasize to the sim that, despite his present humiliation, he was still a man.

Harry Stowe, who missed very little, noted the exchange.

Grinning, he sabotaged Jeremiah's effort to keep his place by signing, He work with you he work like you, he one of i you till job done. No different. "Isn't that right?" he added aloud, for Jeremiah's benefit.

[The slave felt his face grow hot. He bit his lip, but did not Stowe's message disturbed even the sims. One directed hesitant signs at the overseer: "He man, not sim. Why work like sim!"

"He's a slave. He does what he's told, just like you'd better.

If the master tells him to work like a sim, he works like a sim, and that's all there is to it. Enough dawdling, now--let's get on with it." P The overseer distributed seythes and sickles to his charges, carefully counting them so the sims could not hold any back to use against their

owners--or against each other, in fights over food or females. Jeremiah wished he had a pair of gloves; his hands were too soft for the work he was about to do.

He knew better than to ask for any.

As he started down a row of hemp plants, he saw the sims to either side quickly move past him. It was not just that they were stronger, though few men could match the subhumans for strength. They were also more skilled which was really galling. Bend, slash, stoop, spread, rise step, bend . . . they had a rhythm the black man lacked.

"Hurry it up, kremiah," Stowe said. "They're getting way ahead there."

"They know what they're doing," the slave grunted stung by the taunt. "Turn one loose in my kitchen and see what kind of mess you'd get." To his surprise, Stowe laughed.

Jeremiah soon grew sore, stiff, and winded. He did not think he could have gone on without the half-grown sim that carried a bucket of water from one worker to the next.

At first it would not stop for him, passing him by for members of its own kind. A growl from Stowe, though fixed that in a hurry.

Reluctantly, Jeremiah came to see that the overseer did not use his charges with undue harshness. To have done so would have wrung less work from them, and work was what Stowe was after. He treated the sims--and Jeremiah--like so many other beasts of burden, with impersonal efficiency. The slave even wished for the malice Stowe had shown on the path that summer night. That, at least, would have been an acknowledgment of his humanity.

Before long, he found out what it meant to have such wishes granted. "Spread the hemp out better once you cut it, Stowe snapped.

Jeremiah jumped; he had not heard the l overseer come up behind him.

"Spread it out," Stowe 3 repeated. "It won't dry as well if you don't." s "I'm doing as well as the sims are," Jeremiah said, 0 - nodding toward the long, sharp, dark-green leaves lying to his right and left.

Stowe snorted. "I could wear out my whip arm and they'd still be slipshod. I expect better from you, and by Christ I'll get it." His arm went back, then forward, fast as a striking snake. The whip cracked less than a foot from Jeremiah's e>. He flinched. He could not help it. "The next one you'll feel," the overseer promised. He paused to let the message sink in, then moved on to keep the sims 7 busy.

Jeremiah had a shirt of dark green silk. He mostly wore it for show, when his master was entertaining guests. He had never noticed it was the exact color of hemp leaves.

Now he did, and told himself he would never put it on again.

The day seemed endless. Jeremiah did not dare look at Q his hands. He did know that, when he shifted them on the handle of the sickle, he saw red-brown stains on the gray, smooth wood.

Craach! "God damn you, Jeremiah, I told you what I wanoedl" Stowe

shouted. The slave screamed at the hot touch of whip on his back.

"Oh, stop your whining," the overseer said. "I've not even marked you, past a bruise. You keep provoking me, though, and I'll give you stripes you'll wear the rest of your life."

Several sims watched the byplay, taking advantage of Stowe's preoccupation to rest from their labor. Work more, work better, one signed at Jeremiah. Its wide, stupid grin was infuriatingly smug.

"Go to the devil," Jeremiah muttered. For once, he hoped sims had souls, so they could spend eternity roasting in hellfire.

He thought the day would never end, but at last the sun set.

"Enough!" Stowe shouted. This time Jeremiah had no trouble understanding the sims' whoops. He felt like adding some himself.

Stowe collected the tools, counting them as carefully as if he had in the morning to make sure none was missing. His jaunty gaze swung toward Jeremiah, "I'll see you tomorrow come sunrise. Now that you know what to do, I won't have to go easy on you anymore." The whip twitched in his hand, ever so slightly.

"No, sir, Mr. Stowe, you surely won't," Jeremiah said.

The overseer nodded, for once satisfied.

Jeremiah had been afraid he would have to sleep in the sim barracks, but Stowe did not object when he went back to his room in the big house. Probably hadn't thought of it the slave decided. He stopped at the kitchen for leftovers from the meal Jane Gillen had cooked. They were better than what the sims ate, but not much. His lip curled; he had forgotten more about cooking than Mrs. Gillen knew.

His hands felt as if they were on fire. He could not ignore them any more. There was a crock of lard in the kitchen. He rubbed it into both palms. The fat soothed the raw, broken skin.

Jeremiah went to his room. His back twinged again when he took off his shirt. Stowe knew exactly what he was doing with a lash, though; he had not drawn blood. But Jeremiah remembered the overseer's warning. His aching muscles contracted involuntarily, as if anticipating a blow that was sure to come.

Looking back, Jeremiah thought that unwilling, mortifying twinge was what made him do what he did next. "I > don't care how white he is, he ain't gonna get the chance to whip me again," he said out loud.

He put his shirt back on took out the pouch with his hard-saved sesters and denaires opened the door, stepped into the hallway, shut the door behind him.

He could have gone back with no one the wiser, but from that moment on he was irrevocably a runaway in his own mind. Being one, he stopped in the kitchen again, to steal a carving knife. He had held that blade in his hand a hundred times with the Gillens or their children close by, and never thought of lifting it against them. "No more," he whispered. "No more."

And yet, as he left the dark and quiet house, he had trouble fighting the paralyzing tide of fear that rose inside him. He had his place here, his known duties and expectations. His master had let him earn the money he was carrying just so he could buy his freedom one day.

f He turned back. His hand was on the doorknob when the pain that light touch brought returned him to his purpose.

f How was it really his place, he wondered, if Gillen could take it from him whenever he chose?

The question had no answer. He walked down the wooden steps and into the night.

Eleven days later, he came down the West Norfolk Road into Portsmouth. He was ragged and dirty and thin and tired; only on the last day had he dared actually travel the highway. Before that, fearing dogs and hunters on his track, he had gone by winding, back-country paths and through the woods.

Those held terrors of their own. Spearfangs had been hunted almost to extinction in Virginia years ago. Almost, however, was the operative word; kremiah had spent an uncomfortable night in a tree because of a thunderous coughing roar that erupted from the undergrowth a few hundred yards to his left.

He also had an encounter with a wild sim. It was hard to

0 say which of the two got a worse fright from it. In the old days, Jeremiah had heard, sims would hunt down and eat any humans they could catch. But now, brought low by gunpowder and by man's greater native wit, the wild sims were only skulking pests in the land they had once roamed freely. And when this one saw the knife Jeremiah jerked out, it hooted and Red before it had a chance to hear his teeth chattering.

After those adventures and a couple of more like them, he wished he had taken his chances on hounds and trackers. With them, at least, he knew what to expect.

Portsmouth was the biggest town he had ever seen, ever imagined.

By the bay, masts of merchantmen and naval vessels made a bare-branched forest against the sky. The gilded dome of the commonwealth capitol dominated the skyhne. Jeremiah did not know that was what it was. He only knew it was grand and beautiful.

People of every sort swarmed through the streets, paying no attention to one more newly arrived, none-too-clean black man. Even the four sims bearing a rich trader's sedan chair looked down their broad, flat noses at him. And no wonder, he thought. Charles Gillen was a long way from poor, but he did not own a suit of clothes half so fine as the matched outfits of silk and satin the sims were wearing.

Jeremiah blessed the half-thought-out notion that had brought him to the city. Among these thousands how could anyone hope to find one person in particular? His confidence took a jolt, though, when he passed a cabin whose sign declared: "JASON BROS: RUNAWAY SIMS AND NIGGERS CATCHED." The picture below showed a sim treed by hounds with improbably sharp teeth and red mouths. Jeremiah shuddered and hurried on.

Before long, his grumbling stomach forced him to face another problem. On the road, he had raided fruit trees and stolen a couple of chickens, eking them out with fruits and berries. He did not think he could get away with that kind of provisioning for long in Portsmouth.

Food was harder to get at and thieves more likely to be hunted down.

He could eat for a while on the money he had with him, but he would have to find work if he did not want to deplete it. The twenty sesters he paid for a bad breakfast only reinforced the truth of that.

Here he would not have turned down the kind of hard manual labor that had made him run away in the first place. He would have been doing it for himself, of his own free will, and he reasoned that employers who wanted only strong backs would ask few questions.

But no such hauling or digging or carrying jobs were to be had: sims did them all, for no more wages than their keep. "You must be just off the farm, to think you can get that kind of ph and get paid for it," a straw boss said. - Jeremiah's heart leaped into his mouth, but the man went on, "If you have a skilled trade, now, like carpenter or mason, I can use you.

How about it?"

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> real status, even if nothing was behind it, made him too nervous to stay. -f He wandered aimlessly through Portsmouth for a while, marveling at the number of buildings that would have dwarfed the Gillen house, till then the grandest he had known. One imposing marble structure near the capitol had an inscription over the columned entrance way. It was in large, clear letters, but even when he spelled it out twice it made no sense: EIAT IUSTITIA FT RUANT COELI. He shrugged and gave it up.

Not far away, down a winding side street, stood a dilapidated clapboard building with a sign nailed to the front door. The sign was hard to read because it needed painting, but the words, at least, made sense: ALFRED P.

DOUGLAS, ATTORNEY AT LAW.

T Jeremiah was about to pass on by when he remembered Caleb Gillen's talk about lawyers and how important they were. Maybe an important man would have work for him.

And if the important man got too nosy, well, important men tended to be fat, and he could probably outrun this one. He walked up and knocked on the door.

"It's open," someone with a deep voice called from [inside. He sounded important. Jeremiah turned the knob and walked in.

The man rummaging through the pile of books by his desk was fat, but that ended his resemblance to anything Z Jeremiah had imagined. He was about thirty, with a straggling mustache and a thick shock of greasy black hair.

His S breeches had a hole in the knee; one shoe had a hole in [the sole. His shirt was no cleaner than Jeremiah's.

Whatever he was digging for, he must have decided he wasn't going to find it. He made a disgusted face, looked up at Jeremiah. "And what can I do for you today, sir?"

Jeremiah almost fled, as he had from the straw boss. No white man had ever called him sir, even in mockery. This did not sound like mockery. He took a chance, stayed. "I'm looking for work from you, sir."

"I'm sorry; I don't need a clerk right now." Douglas muttered something to himself that Jeremiah did not catch.

"I didn't mean that kind of work, sir." Jeremiah tried to keep his mouth from falling open. The fellow thought he ^ wanted to study law under him! "I meant cleaning, cooking, straightening up'." He looked around. "You'll excuse me for speaking so bold, sir, but this place could do with some straightening up."

Douglas grunted. "You're right, sir; as I said just now"-- that must have been the mutter--"what I need is someone to make sense of this mess. You'll not be able to do that, I promise, if you have no

letters."

"I can read, sir, some, and write a bit," Jeremiah said, and then had the wit to add as an afterthought, "Mr. Douglas."

Douglas grunted again. "You slave or free?"

Ice ran down Jeremiah's back. "Free," he answered, and got ready to bolt if Douglas asked for papers to prove it.

All the lawyer said, though, was, "Good. I'd sooner line your pockets than your master's. What do I call you?"

"Jeremiah." Realizing a second too late that if he was free he should also have a surname, he gave the first one that popped into his head. "Jeremiah, uh, Gillen."

Douglas showed no sign of noticing the slip. He plopped his bulk into an overstuffed armchair. The springs groaned in protest. "All right, Mr. Gillen, I'll try you, damn me if I don't. Put that stack there into some kind of order and I'll take you on."

The stack was the one the lawyer had been pawing through.

Jeremiah knelt beside it. He almost gave up at once, for the books' titles were full of long, incomprehensible words: legal terms, he supposed. But before panic set in, he remembered the ABC Caleb Gillen had drilled into him, and the way Caleb's father kept the books in his library. If he arranged these alphabetically by author, he could not go far wrong.

"Here you are, sir," he said a few minutes later. He held out a handful of coins. "And here are the, uh, ninety-one sesters mixed in with the books."

Douglas stared, then burst into laughter. "Keep them, my friend, keep them! I'd say you've earned them, the more so as I'd long since forgotten they were there. It was honest of you to offer them back--but then who wouldn't be honest with a prospective employer watching?" That last so perfectly summed Jeremiah's thoughts when he found the money that he eyed Douglas with fresh respect.

The lawyer took more care inspecting the books than he had over the coins. He had to correct a mistake Jeremiah had made, and the black's heart sank for fear he would be turned down. But all Douglas said was, "Be more careful next time. Three denaires a week suit you?"

"Yes, sir!" The wage was a long way from kingly, but Jeremiah did not feel sure enough of himself to bargain. If he bought fresh food and did his own cooking, he thought he could scrape by.

Then Douglas went on, "You cook, you say?" At Jeremiah's nod, he broke into a grin that turned his heavy features boyish for a moment.

"Then board with me, why don't you? I've rattled round my house since the swamp fever took my Margaret two years ago." The memory made him somber again. "Help me keep the place neat, and I'll buy supplies for both of us. You deal with them then: if I'm not the worst cook in the commonwealth, he's not been born yet. Do we have a contract?"

"A deal, you mean? Yes, sir!" Jeremiah clasped Douglas's outstretched hand. The lawyer's grip was soft but strong. Jeremiah felt like turning handsprings. With room and board taken care of, three denaires wasn't bad money at all.

Jeremiah spent the rest of the day getting things off the floor so he could sweep it clean of crumpled papers, dust, apple cores, nutshells, and other garbage. Douglas's indifference to filth left his fastidious soul cringing.

He found another denaire and a half in loose change. The lawyer let him keep that too, though he warned, "Bear in mind my generosity doesn't extend to gold, if there is any down there." The thought of coming across a goldpiece made Jeremiah work harder than ever; only later did he think to wonder whether that was what Douglas had had in mind.

He had gotten down to bare wood in a few places when Douglas had a visitor, a tall, lean, middle-aged man who wore a stovepipe hat to make himself seem even taller. "Ah Mr. Hayes," Douglas said, setting aside the document he had been studying. "What can I do for you, this fine afternoon? "

Hayes glanced at Jeremiah. "Buy yourself a nigger? Doesn't seem like you, Alfred."

"He's free; I hired him," Douglas said, his color rising. "Mr. Hayes, Jeremiah Gillen. Jeremiah, this is Zachary Hayes." Hayes nodded with the minimum courtesy possible and did not offer to shake hands. Jeremiah went back to work. He was not used to respect from whites, and so did not miss it.

"I came on a gamble," Hayes said, turning away from Jeremiah with obvious relief. "I daresay you own the most law books in the city, and keep them in the worst order. Have you a copy of William Watson's Ten Quodlibetical Questions Concerning Religion and State and, if so, can you lay your hands on it?"

"The title rings a bell--having heard it, how could one forget it?" Douglas said. "As for where it might be, though, I confess I have no idea. Jeremiah, paw through things and see what you come up with, will you?"

Hayes made a sour face and folded his arms to wait plainly not expecting Jeremiah to find the book. That scorn spurred him more even than Douglas's earlier mention of gold. He dove under tables, climbed on a shaky chair to reach top bookcase shelves. On one of those, its calfskin spine to the wall, he found Watson's tome. He wordlessly handed it to Hayes.

"My thanks," Hayes said--not to him, but to Douglas. "I'll have it back to you within a fortnight." He spun on his heel and strode out.

Douglas and Jeremiah looked at each other. They started to laugh at the same time. "Don't mind him," the lawyer said, clapping Jeremiah on the back. "He thinks niggers are stupid as sims. Come on; let's go home."

The house alst made Jeremiah regret his new employment. Douglas had spoken of needing help to keep the place neat; only someone with his studied disdain for order would have imagined there was any neatness to maintain. The house bore a chilling resemblance to his office, except

that dirty clothes and dirtier pots were added to the mix.

The only thing that seemed to stand aloof from the clutter was a fine oil painting of a slim, pale, dark-eyed woman. Douglas saw Jeremiah's eyes go to it. "Yes, that's my Margaret," he said sadly; as Jeremiah would learn, he never spoke of her without putting the possessive in front of her name.

The kitchen was worse than the rest of the house: stale bread, moldy flour, greens limp at best, and salt pork like the stuff Charles Gilkn's sims aoe. Jeremiah shook his head; he had looked for nothing better. He pumped some water, set a chunk of pork in it to soak out some of the salt. Meanwhile, he got a fire going in the hearth. The stew he ended up producing would have earned harsh words from his former owner, but Douglas demanded seconds and showered praise on him.

"Let me start with good food, sir, and I'll really give you something worth eating," Jeremiah said.

"I don't know whether I should, or in six months I'll be too wide to go through my own front door," Douglas said, ruefully surveying his rotund form.

Jeremiah had to sweep off what he was coming to think of as the usual layer of junk to get at his cot. It was saggy and lumpy nowhere near as comfortable as the one he'd had on the Gilen estate. He didn't care. It was his because he wanted it to be, not because it had to be.

He slept wonderfully. As the months went by, he tried more than once to find a name for his relationship with Alfred Douglas. It was something more than servant, something less than friend.

Part of the trouble was that Douglas treated him unlike anyone ever had before. For a long while, because he had never encountered it before, he had trouble recognizing the difference. The lawyer used him as a man, not as a slave.

That did not mean he did not tell Jeremiah what to do.

He did, which further obscured the change to the black man. But he did not speak as to a half-witted, surly child and he did not stand over Jeremiah to make sure he got things done. He assumed Jeremiah would, and went about his own business.

Not used to such liberty, at first Jeremiah took advantage of it to do as little as he could. "Work or get out," Douglas had told him bluntly. "Do you think I hired you to sit on your arse and sleep?"

But he never complained when he caught Jeremiah reading, which he did more and more often. In the beginning that had been purely practical on Jeremiah's part, so as to keep fresh what Caleb Gillen had taught him. Then the printed page proved to have a seductive power of its own.

Which is not to say reading came easily. It painfully taught Jeremiah how small his vocabulary was. Sometimes he could figure out what a new word meant from its context. Most of the time, he would have to ask Douglas.

"'Eleemosynary?'" The lawyer raised his eyebrows.

"It's a fancy word for 'charitable.'" He saw that meant a nothing to Jeremiah either, simplified again: " 'Giving to those who lack." What are you looking at, anyhow?"

Jeremiah held up a law book, wondering if he was in trouble.

Douglas only said, "Oh," and returned to the brief a he was drafting.

When he was done, he sanded the ink dry, X set the paper aside, and pulled a slim volume from the shelf] (by this time, things were easy to find).

He of&red the book to kremiah. "Here, try this. You have to walk before you can run."

"The Articles of Independence of the Federated Commonwealths and the Terms of Their Federation," Jeremiah read aloud.

"All else springs from those," Douglas said. "Without - them, we'd have only chaos, or a tyrant as they do these days in England.

But go through them and understand them point by point, and you've made a fair beginning toward - becoming a lawyer."

Jeremiah stared at him. "There's no nigger lawyers in Portsmouth." He spoke with assurance; he had gotten to know the black part of town well. It boasted scores of preachers, a few doctors, even a printer, but no lawyers.

"I know there aren't," Douglas said. "Perhaps there should be."

When Jeremiah asked him what he meant, he changed the subject, as if afraid he had said too much.

The book Douglas gave Jeremiah perplexed and astonished him at the same time. "This is how the government is put together?" he asked the lawyer after he had struggled ; through the first third.

"So it is." Douglas looked at him keenly, as if his next question was to be some kind of test. "What do you think of it?"

"I think it's purely crazy, begging your pardon," kre 0 miah blurted. Douglas said nothing, waiting for him to go on. He fumbled ahead, trying to clarify his feelings: "The censors each with a veto on the other one, the Popular Assembly chose by all the free people and the senators by-I forgot how the senators happen."

t "Censors and commonwealth governors become senators for life after their terms end," Douglas supplied.

[Jeremiah smacked his forehead with the heel of his hand.

"That's right. And the censors enforce the laws-and lead the armies, but only if the Senate decides to spend the money the armies need. And it's the Popular Assembly that makes the laws (if the Senate agrees) and decides if it's peace or war lt in the first place. If you ask me, Mr. Douglas, I don't think any one of 'em knows for certain he can fart without [checking the Terms of Federation first."

"That's also why we have courts," Douglas smiled.

"Why do you suppose the Conscript Fathers arranged things this way? Remember, after we won our freedom from England, we could have done anything we wanted."

Having had scant occasion to think about politics before, Jeremiah took a long time to answer. When he did, all he could remember was the discussion Charles Gillen and ' Harry Stowe had had the spring before.

"For the sake of arguing?" he guessed.

To his surprise, Douglas said, "You know, you're not far wrong.

They tried to strike a balance, so everyone would have some power and no one group could get enough to take anybody else's freedom away. The Conscript Fathers modeled our government on the mixed constitution the Roman Republic had. You know who the Romans were, don't you, Jeremiah?"

"They crucified Jesus, a long time ago," Jeremiah said, exhausting his knowledge of the subject.

"So they did, but they were also fine lawyers and good, practical men of affairs--not showy like the Greeks, but effective, and able to rule a large state for a long time. If we do half so well, we'll have something to be proud of."

The discussion broke off there, because Zachary Hayes came in to borrow a book. Now that Jeremiah had Douglas's library in order, Hayes stopped by every couple of weeks. He never showed any sign of recognizing why he had more luck these days, and spoke directly to Jeremiah only when he could not help it.

This time, he managed to avoid even looking at the black man.

Instead, he said to Douglas, "If you don't mind, you'll see me more often, Alfred. I've a new young man studying under me, and long since gave away my most basic texts." "No trouble at all, Zachary," Douglas assured him. Once Hayes was gone, Douglas rolled his eyes. "That buzzard never gave away anything, except maybe the clap. I guarantee you he sold his old books--probably for more than he paid for them too; no denying he's able." X Jeremiah did not answer. He was deep in the Terms of the Federation again. Once the Conscript Fathers had outlined the Federated Commonwealth's self-regulating government, they went on to set further limits on what it could do.

Reading those limits, Jeremiah began to have a sense of what Douglas had meant by practical ruling. Each restriction was prefaced by a brief explanation of why it was needed:--"Establishing dogmas having proven in history to engender civic strife, followers of all faiths shall be forever free to follow their own beliefs without let or hindrance."

"So that free men shall not live in fear of the state and its agents and form conspiracies against them, no indiscriminate searches of persons or property shall be permitted." - "To keep the state from the risk of tyranny worse than external subjugation, no foreign mercenaries shall be hired, but liberty shall depend on the vigilance of the free men of the nation."

On and on the book went, checking the government for the benefit of the free man. Jeremiah finished it with a ; strange mixture of

admiration and anger. So much talk of freedom, and not a word against slavery! It was as though the Conscript Fathers had not noticed it existed.

Conscious of his own daring, Jeremiah remarked on that to Douglas.

The lawyer nodded. "Slavery has been with us since Greek and Roman times, and you can search the Bible from one end to the other without finding a word against it.

And, of course, when Englishmen came to America, they found the sims. No one would say the sims should not serve us."

Jeremiah almost blurted, "But I'm no sim!" Then he remembered Douglas thought him free. He did say, "Sims is different than men."

"There you are right," Douglas said, sounding uncommonly serious. "The difference makes me wonder about our laws at times, it truly does." Jeremiah hoped he would go on, but when he did, it was not in the vein the black had expected: "Of course, one could argue as well that the sims' manifest inequality only points up subtler differences among various groups of men."

Disgusted, Jeremiah found an excuse to knock off early. One thing he had learned about lawyers was that they delighted in argument for its own sake, without much caring about right and wrong. He had thought Douglas different, but right now he seemed the same as the rest.

A gang of sims came by, moving slowly under the weight of the heavy timbers on their shoulders. He glowered at their hairy backs.

Too many white men were like Zachary J Hayes, lumping sims and blacks together because most blacks were slaves.

As it had back on Charles Gillen's estate, that rankled. He was no subhuman. . . and if Hayes doubted what blacks really were, let him get a sim instead of the fancy cook he owned! Soon enough he'd be skeletal, not just lean. Jeremiah grinned, liking the notion. Another party of sims emerged from a side street. This group was carrying sacks of beans. Neither gang made any effort to get out of the other's way. In an instant, they were hopelessly tangled. Traffic snarled. Because all the sims had their hands full, they could not use their signs to straighten out the mess. Their native hoots and calls were not adequate for the job. Indeed, they made matters worse. The sims glared at each other, peeling back their lips to bare their big yellow teeth and grimacing horribly.

"Call the guards!" a nervous man shouted, and several others took up the cry. Jeremiah ducked down an alleyway.

He had seen enough of sims' brute strength on the farm to be sure he wanted to be far away if they started fighting.

The town did not erupt behind him, so he guessed the overseers had managed to put things to rights. A few words at the outset would have done it: "Coming through!" or "Go ahead; we'll wait." The sims did not have the words to use.

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"Poor stupid bastards," Jeremiah said, and headed home. i

"Mr. Douglas, you have some of the strangest books in the l world, and that is a fact," Jeremiah sola.

0 Douglas ran his hands through his oily hair. "If you keep excavating among those boxes, God only knows what you'll come up with.

What is it this time?"

X "A Proposed Explication of the Survival of Certain Beasts in America and Their Disappearance Hereabouts, by Samuel Pepys." Jeremiah pronounced it pep-eeze.

"Peeps," Douglas corrected, then remarked, "You know, kremiah, you read much better now than you did when you started working for me last summer. That's the first time you've slipped in a couple of weeks, and no one could blame you for stumbling over that tongue twister."

"Practice,"Jeremiah said. He held up the book. "What is this, anyhow?"

"It just might interest you, come to think of it. It's the book that sets forth the transformational theory of life: that the kinds of living

things change over time."

"That's not what the Bible says."

"I know. Churchmen hate Pepys's theories. As a lawyer, though, I find them attractive, because he presents the evidence for them.

Genesis is so much hearsay by comparison."

; "You never were no churchgoing man, sir," Jeremiah said reproachfully. He started to read all the same; working with Douglas had given him a good bit of the lawyer's attitude. And he respected his boss's brains. If Douglas Ot thought there was something to this--what had he called it?--transformational theory, there probably was.

The book was almost 150 years old, and written in the ornate style of the seventeenth century. Jeremiah had to ask Douglas to help him with several words and complex O phrases. He soon saw what the lawyer meant. Pepys firmly based his argument on facts, with no pleading to un-verifiable "authorities." Despite himself, Jeremiah was impressed. Someone squelched up the walk toward Douglas's door: no, a couple of people, by the sound. It was that transitional time between winter and spring. The rain was still cold, but Jeremiah knew only relief that he did not have to shovel snow anymore.

Douglas had heard the footsteps too. He rammed quill into inkpot and started writing furiously. "Put Pepys down and get busy for a while, Jeremiah," he said. "It's probably Jasper Carruthers and his son, here for that will I should've finished three days ago. Since it's not done, we ought at least to look busy."

Grinning, Jeremiah got up and started reshelving some , of the books that got pulled down every day. He had his -I back to the door when it swung open, but heard Douglas's relieved chuckle.

"Good to see you, Zachary," the lawyer said. "Saves me the embarrassment of pleading guilty to nonfeasance."

Hayes let out a dry laugh. "A problem we all face from time to time, Alfred; I'm glad you escaped it here. Do you own an English version of Justinian's Digest? I'm afraid the Latin of my young friend here isn't up to his reading it in the original."

The volume happened to be in front of Jeremiah's face. He pulled it from the shelf before Douglas had to ask him for it, turned with a smug smile to offer it to Hayes's student.

The smile congealed on his face like fat getting cold in a pan.

The youngster with Hayes was Caleb Gillen.

The tableau held for several frozen seconds, the two of them staring at each other while the lawyers, not understanding what was going on, stared at them both.

"Jeremiah!" Caleb exclaimed. "It's my father's runaway nigger!"

he shouted to Hayes at the same moment Jeremiah bolted for the door.

Pepys's book proved his undoing. It went flying out from under his foot

and sent him sprawling. Caleb Gillen landed on his back.

Before he could shake free of the youngster Hayes also grabbed him.

The lawyer was stronger than he looked. Between them, he and Caleb held Jeremiah pinned to the floor.

Panting, his gray hair awry, Hayes said, "You told me he was a free nigger, Alfred."

"He said he was. I had no reason to doubt him," Douglas answered calmly. He had made no move to rise from his desk and help seize Jeremiah, or indeed even to put down - his quill. Now he went on, "For that matter, I still have no

>- reason to do so."

t "What? I recognize him!" Caleb Gillen shouted, his voice breaking from excitement. "And what if I didn't? He and That proves it!"

,si "If I were a free nigger and someone said I was a slave, S I'd run too," Douglas said. "Wouldn't you, young sir? (I'm ; sorry; I don't know your name.) Wouldn't you, Zachary, regardless of the truth or falsehood of the claim?"

"Now you just wait one minute here, Alfred," Hayes snapped.

"Young master Caleb Gillen here told me last year of the absconding from his father's farm of their nigger, Jeremiah. My only regret is not associating the name with this wretch here so he could have been recaptured sooner."

He twisted Jeremiah's arm behind his back.

"That you failed to do so demonstrates the obvious fact that the name may be borne by more than one individual," - Douglas said.

"You see here, sir," Caleb Gillen said, "I've known that nigger as long as I can remember. I'm not likely to make a mistake about who he is."

"If he is free, he'll have papers to prove it." Hayes wrenched Jeremiah's arm again. The black gasped. "Can 5 you show us papers, nigger?"

"You need not answer that, save in a court of law," Douglas said sharply, keeping Jeremiah from surrendering on the spot. He was sunk in despair, tears dripping from 0 his face to the floor. Once sent back to the Gillen estate, he 0 would never regain the position of trust that had let him escape, and probably would never be able to buy his t freedom either.

Hayes's voice took on a new note of formality. "Do you deny, then, Alfred, that this nigger is the chattel of Charles 0 Gillen, Caleb's father?"

"Zachary, one lad's accusation is no proof, as well you know."

Douglas took the same tone; Jeremiah recognized it as lawyer-talk. A tiny spark of hope flickered. By illuminating the dark misery that filled him, it only made that misery worse.

Overriding Caleb Gillen's squawk of protest, Hayes said, "Then let him be clapped in irons until such time as determination of his status may be made. That will prevent - any further disappearances."

"I have a better idea," Douglas said. He unlocked one of his desk drawers, took out a strongbox, unlocked that. C "What would you say the value of a buck nigger of his age would be? Is 300 denaires a fair figure?"

Above him, Jeremiah felt Caleb and Hayes shift as they looked at each other. "Aye, &ir enough," Haye said at last.

Coins clinked with the sweet music of gold. After a bit, Douglas said, "Then here are 300 denaires for you to acknowledge by receipt, to be forfeit to Master Gillen's father if Jeremiah should flee before judgment. Do you agree to this bond? Jeremiah, will you also agree to that condition?"

"Caleb, the decision is yours," Hayes said.

"Jeremiah, will you give your word?" the boy asked. He waved aside Hayes's protest before it had well begun, saying, "I've known him to be honest enough, even if a runaway." He slightly emphasized known, and glanced toward Douglas, who sat impassive.

"I won't run off from here, I promise," Jeremiah said wearily.

"Get off him; let him up," Caleb said. He did so himself. Hayes followed more slowly. kremiah rose, rubbing at bruises and at a knee that still throbbed from hitting the floor.

"May I borrow your pen?" Hayes asked Douglas. When he got it, he wrote a few quick lines, handed the paper to the other lawyer. "Here is your receipt, sir. I hope it suits you?"

"Be so good as to line out the word 'absconder' and initial the change, if you please. It prejudices a case not yet Hayes snorted but did as he was bid. Douglas dipped his head in acknowledgment. After taking up the money, Hayes said, "Come along, Master Gillen. If Alfred wants to play - this game, we shall settle it in court, never fear. Oh, yes-don't forget the copy of the Digest your nigger was kind enough to find for you." With that parting shot, he and

, Caleb swept out of the office.

Jeremiah stared miserably at the floor. Douglas said, "I

[suppose it's no good asking for a miracle. You don't happen F to be a free nigger named Jeremiah who just coincidentally

I oaks exactly like that lad's father's nigger Jeremiah?" - "No, sir," Jeremiah muttered, still not looking up.

0 "Well, we'll have to try a different tack, then," Douglas said.

He did not sound put out; if anything, he sounded

7 eager More than anything else, that made Jeremiah lift his head.

"You purely crazy, Mr. Douglas, sir? They'll have me 0 in irons and hauled away fast as the judge can bang his gavel. "

"Maybe, maybe not." Douglas remained ponderously unruffled.

"Shit!" Jeremiah burst out. "And why did you give your f bond on me? I could've broke out of jail maybe, gone somewheres else. How can I run off now?"

c Douglas chuckled. "Caleb Gillen's right: you are honest enough, even if a runaway. If that were me in your shoes, I'd've been out the door like a shot, no matter what promises I made. But I gambled you wouldn't, because I think we just might get you really free yet."

"You're crazy, Mr. Douglas," Jeremiah repeated. A few P seconds later, he asked in a small voice, "Do.you really think so?"

"We just might."

"I'd give anything! I'll pay you. I've got 150 denaires saved up, almost. You can have 'em. If I'm free, I can make more." Jeremiah knew he was babbling, but couldn't help it.

"You'll stay, knowing that if we lose you'll be re enslaved?"

That was a poser. At last, kremiah said, "Even if I run, someone'll always be after me to drag me back. If we win, I won't have to look over my shoulder every time I sit with my back to the door. That's worth something."

"All right, then. I'll take your money. Not only do I need it after going bond for you, but having it in my pocket will give you an incentive to stay in town." Douglas looked knowingly at Jeremiah.

The black felt his cheeks go hot. Maybe he really was honest; once Douglas had given Hayes the money, it had not occurred to him that he could still run away. Once admitted, however, the idea was in his head for good. If things looked grim enough in court, he told himself, he might yet disappear.

For the life of him, he could not see how the upcoming hearing could do anything but send him back to Charles Gillen. After all, he was an escaped slave. I Ie did not doubt his master could prove it.

So why was Douglas willing to take the case before the judges?

When Jeremiah got up the nerve to ask, Douglas did not answer right away. He heaved his bulk up out of his chair, walked over to pick up the volume of Pepys the black had tripped on when he tried to escape. He examined it carefully to make sure it had not been damaged.

Then he came over and slapped Jeremiah on the shoulder. "Be a man," he said. "Be a man, and we'll do all right."

True spring sweetened the air as Jeremiah and Douglas made their way to the Portsmouth courthouse. Jeremiah pointed up at the inscription over the entrance, the one that had baffled him when he arrived in the city. "What does that mean?" he asked Douglas.

"Fiat iustitia et ruant caeli?" The lawyer seemed surprised for a moment

at his ignorance, then laughed. "Well no reason to blame you for knowing even less Latin than Caleb Gillen, is there? It means, 'Let there be justice though the heavens fall.'"

"

Jeremiah admired the sentiment without much expecting to find it practiced. If there were justice, he would not be a slave, but he had a fatalistic certainty he soon was going to be one again. Douglas's optimism did little to lighten his gloom.

Douglas was always an optimist. Why not, Jeremiah thought bitterly. He was free.

A sim with a broom scurried out of the way to let Jeremiah pass.

His spirits lifted a little. Even as a slave, he had known there was more to him than to any of the subhumans. His shoulders straightened.

He needed that small encouragement, for he felt how hostile the atmosphere was as soon as he followed Douglas into the courtroom.

Hayes had made sure the case was tried in the newspapers constantly during the month since it began. Prosperous-looking white men filled most of the seats: slave owners themselves, Jeremiah guessed from the way they glared at him. Free blacks had only a few chairs; more stood behind the last row of seats.

Hayes, Charles and Caleb Gillen, and Harry Stowe were already in their places in front of the judges' tribunal. Jeremiah tried to read the elder Gillen's face. The man who had owned him for so long sent him a civil nod. He thought about pretending he did not recognize him, decided it would do no good, and nodded back. Hayes, who missed very little, noticed. He smiled a cold smile. Jeremiah grimaced.

"Rise for the honorable judges," the bailiff intoned as the three-man panel filed in from their chambers. In the* black robes and powdered wigs, the judges all seemed to Jeremiah to be cut from the same bolt of cloth.

To Douglas, who had argued cases in front of them for years, they were individuals. As the judges and the rest of the people in the courtroom sat, he whispered to Jeremiah, "Hardesty there on the left has an open mind; I'm glad to see him, especially with Scott as the other junior judge. As for Kemble in the middle, only he knows what he'll do on any given day. He has a habit of changing his mind from case to case. That's not good in a judge, but it can't be helped."

A second look was pleny to warn Jeremiah to beware of w uW tBu9vs Judge Scott. The man had a long, narrow, unsmiling face, a nose sharp and thin as a sword blade, and eyes like black ice. Even when young, he would not have changed his mind often, and he had not been young for many years.

Hardesty's features were nondescript but rather thoughtful. High Judge Kemble looked like a fox. He had a sly mouth, a sharp nose, and wide blue eyes too innocent to be altogether convincing. Jeremiah would have bet he was rich.

"What case, bailiff?" he asked in a mellifluous tenor.

The bailiff shuffled papers, though both he and the judges knew perfectly well what case it was. He read, "An action brought by Charles Gillen, a citizen of the Commonwealth of Virginia, to regain the services of his absconded black slave Jeremiah, the said Jeremiah stating himself to be a freeman and so not liable to provide said services."

Kemble nodded, Hardesty scribbled something, Scott looked bored.

The High Judge glanced toward Hayes. "The plaintiff may present his opening remarks."

The lawyer rose, bowed to Kemble and to each of the junior judges in turn. "May it please the honorable judges, we propose to prove that the nigger seated at the defendant's bench is and has been the slave of our client Charles Gillen, that he did willfully run away from the estate of Charles Gillen, and that he has received no manumission or other liberation to entitle him in law to so depart."

"What evidence will you produce to demonstrate this claim, sir?"

Kemble intoned.

"I have beside me here the owner of--"

"I protest the word, your excellencies," Douglas broke in. "For all that he borrows books from me, Mr. Hayes is surely too learned to assume what he wishes to prove."

"The claimed owner," Hayes amended before the judges could comment. "The claimed owner of this claimed slave" (Douglas winced at the sarcasm) "and his son and his overseer, all of whom can identify the individual in question. I shall also produce a bill of sale demonstrating the chattel status of that individual." He sat down, looking as smug as a scrawny man can.

Judge Kemble glanced toward Douglas. "And how does the defendant plan to refute the evidence that counsel for the [plaintiff shall put forward?"

The lawyer waited for Jeremiah's hesitant nod before he spoke.

The magnitude of what they were about to undertake still terrified the black, though they had hashed it out together and agreed it was the best chance to squeeze justice from the court. As Douglas had said, "If you hit something, hit it hard."

For all his brave front, Douglas must have felt a trifle daunted too. His voice was uncharacteristically nervous as he replied, "May it please the honorable judges, we do not [seek to refute the plaintiff's evidence. Indeed, we stipulate it as part of the record."

All three judges had to work together to quiet the courtroom.

Cries of "Sellout!" from the few black spectators rose above the buzz of the rest of the audience. The judges stared at Douglas as they wielded their gavels: Hardesty in surprise, Kemble in frank speculation, and Scott resentfully, as if the lawyer had awakened him for no good reason. - Zachary Hayes also spent a few seconds gaping at his D colleague. He recovered quickly, though, exclaiming, "If our evidence

be admitted, then the case is proven for us.

May I ask your excellencies to order the nigger bound over for return to his rightful owner?"

"Bailiff--" Judge Scott began.

Kemble overrode him. "A moment, please. Surely, Mr. Douglas, you could have chosen an easier way to surrender.

Why this one?" - "Surrender, your excellency? Who spoke of surrender?"

V Douglas's voice was at its blindest now, and Hayes's face ;i suddenly clouded with suspicion. Douglas went on, "To stipulate that Jeremiah was held in involuntary servitude does our case no harm, as our contention is and shall be Fg that such servitude is not only involuntary but contrary to law."

"On what ground, your excellencies?" Hayes waved the documents he had intended to introduce. "These are all executed according to proper form."

Douglas leaned down to whisper to Jeremiah, "Here we go--no turning back now." The lawyer took a deep breath, faced the judges, and said slowly, "On the grounds that for any man to hold another man in slavery clearly contravenes the Articles of Federation and must therefore have no standing in law anywhere in the Federated Colonies.

The court was silent for a few seconds, while judges, opponents, and audience worked through the legal language to the implications behind it. Hayes furiously shouted, "Your excellencies, I protest!"

at the same time as a black man raised a whoop and a white growled, "You hush your mouth there or I'll hush it for you"

Getting quiet back took longer this time, and the bailiff and court scribe had to eject a couple of particularly obstreperous people.

Finally, with some sort of order restored, Judge Scott brought down his gavel and said, "To me, the plaintiff's protest has merit, despite the defense's attempts at obfuscation. This small, open-and-shut case is not one from which to adduce large legal principles."

"Is it not?" Judge Hardesty spoke for the first time. "The principle would appear germane to the issue at hand."

"As Judge Scott has seen, your excellency," Hayes continued his protest to Kemble, "this is but a desperate effort on the part of the defense to shift the case away from the area where they are weakest: the truth. Its merits are clear as they stand; no need to go beyond them."

"On the contrary," Douglas said. "The claim I make is of paramount importance here. If one man may in law own another, when does application of that right end? What would the feelings of the plaintiff and his comrades be, were they at this side of the court, hearing my client lw."

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"On the contrary," Douglas said. "The claim I make is of paramount importance here. If one man may in law own another, when does application of that right end? What would the feelings of the plaintiff and his comrades be, were they at this side of the court, hearing my client lay claim to their services?"

"Any nigger wants me to slave for him'd have to kill me first," Harry Stowe snarled.

Judge Kemble's gavel crashed down, loud as a pistol shot. "Sir, that will be the last such outburst from you. You look to have seen the inside of a courthouse once or twice, enough to have learned the rules of behavior here." The chief judge glowered at Stowe until the overseer dropped his eyes and mumbled agreement. Kemble nodded. "Very well, then; we'll overlook it this time. As for the motion of the defense, however, we rule it is relevant to this case and will hear arguments based thereon." He used the gavel again.

As Hayes rose, he seemed to be fighting to hold his temper. His voice came out steady as he asked for a two-day extension "to study the new situation." Kemble granted it and adjourned the court.

Back in Douglas's office, Jeremiah was jubilant. "That Stowe hurt Mr. Gillen more'n we did?" he grinned. "Without him opening his fool mouth that way, the judge wouldn't have got mad and gone along with your motion."

"Associating with me has made you cynical," Douglas said, drawing the cork from a bottle of whiskey and taking a long swig. "Ahhl Better. Actually, I think you're wrong there. Ruling against us, Kemble

probably would have lost on appeal, and he's too clever to leave himself open for anything like that. He'll let us hang ourselves instead of doing the work for us."

That assessment shattered the black's cheery mood. "We ain't won yet, then?"

"A skirmish," Douglas shrugged. "You aren't back in the fields, are you? But no, we haven't won. The real fight is just starting."

When Jeremiah's case reconvened, the courtroom was even more packed than it had been before. At the bailiff's command, the people who had managed to gain seats rose to honor the judges. Those at the back--blacks again, mostly--had been standing for some time already, and would keep on until court adjourned.

Judge Kemble rapped for order. Slowly, silence descended. Kemble nodded to Zachary Hayes. "You may begin, sir."

"Thank you, your excellency," Hayes said, rising. "I do not regret the necessity of belaboring the obvious, I still it may not be amiss to remind some of the citizens of the Federated Commonwealths of the principles upon which it was built."

He sent a sour glance toward Alfred Douglas before continuing, "I shall not even attempt to cite the precedents sanctioning slavery.

Suffice it to say they are both numerous and ancient, dating back on the one hand to the Old Testament, the foundation of our faith; and on the other hand to the history and institutions of the wise and noble Greeks and Romans, upon whose usages we have modeled our own."

Listening, Jeremiah felt his heart sink. Hayes sounded too knowledgeable, too self-assured. The black's nails bit into his palms.

He should have run while he had the chance. All Douglas wanted to do was show off how brilliant he was. Why not? If he lost the case, it would not

hurt him any. He would not be the one hauled away in chains.

Douglas might have been reading his thoughts. He leaned over and whispered, "Don't give up just yet. He's not saying anything I didn't expect him to."

"All right." But Jeremiah remained unconvinced.

Hayes was saying, "At first glance, it might seem strange that the Federated Commonwealths, whose pride is in upholding the freedom of their citizens, should also countenance slavery. Yet when properly examined, no inconsistency appears. More than two thousand years ago, Aristotle demonstrated in the Politics that some men are indeed slaves by nature, and that it is only proper for them to serve so that, by enjoying the fruit of their labors, the rest may be truly free.

"How may we judge those who are slaves by nature? Whenever two groups of men differ widely, so that the inferior group can do no more than use their bodies at the direction of their superiors, that group is and ought to be slaves by nature: they reason only enough to understand what they are told, not to think new thoughts for themselves.

I Ma

- --"Finally, for us a kindly providence has distinguished this class of individuals by their dusky skins and other features different from our own, to make display of their servile status. This being the case, I trust your excellencies shall soon bring an end to the farce we have seen played out here, and that you shall return this nigger Jeremiah to the station God has intended for him." Conscious of a job well done, Hayes sat.

"Mr. Douglas, you may reply," Judge Kemble said.

"Thank you, your excellency," Douglas said, slowly getting to his feet, "although I naturally hesitate to do so when my learned opponent, as he has demonstrated, is on such intimate terms with the Almighty."

Judge Scott's gavel crashed to stifle the small swell of laughter in the court; Hayes gave Douglas a distasteful look.

The younger lawyer brushed a lock of his thick, dark hair back from his forehead. He went on, "I should also like to congratulate Mr. Hayes for the scholarship and energy he has expended to justify the ownership of one man by another. I only find it a pity that he has wasted so much - ingenuity over an entirely irrelevant result. 'The mountains labor, and bring forth a ridiculous mouse.'"

"This time, all three judges used their gavels, though Jeremiah saw Judge Hardesty's mouth twitch. Hayes sprang out of his chair as if he had sat on a pin.

"See here, your excellencies he cried. "If this mountebank has a case to make, let him make it, instead of mocking mine."

"The entire proceeding of the defense has skated on thin > ice," Judge Scott observed.

"Your excellency, I hope to demonstrate otherwise, "

t k Douglas said hastily; not all the sweat that beaded on his face came from Portsmouth's humid heat. "If the court will indulge me, I believe I can do so by summoning two individuals to the witness-box. One is currently in the 8 courtroom; the other, whom I should like to call first, is just outside."

The judges conferred briefly among themselves. "Bunch of damned nonsense!" Jeremiah heard Judge Scott say. He saw the jurist's powdered wig flap indignantly. But after a l _ few minutes, Judge Kemble said, "You may proceed."

"I thank you, your excellency," Douglas said. "I should like the bailiff to fetch in a certain Rob, whom he will find, I expect, sitting against the wall opposite this courtroom."

Bearing a martyred expression--the things half-smart lawyers put him through!--the bailiff went out into the hallway. Jeremiah heard him call, "Rob?" He returned a moment later, his face now frozen.

Accompanying him was a male sim, the hair on its head and back and chest grizzled with age.

"Mr. Douglas, I do not know what you are playing at, but I assure you I am no longer amused," Judge Kemble snapped. "You know perfectly well that no testimony by a sim is valid in a court of law, they being incompetent to understand or take oath."

"Yes, your excellency, I am aware of that," Douglas answered. "It was for that very reason that I summoned Rob (who belongs to a friend of mine) before you. The presence of sims on these shores, you see, has a vital impact on the question of slavery."

"Why? Are you planning to liberate them next?" Judge Scott asked.

Such sarcasm from the bench was dangerous. "No, your excellency," Douglas replied at once. "I believe it just that they serve mankind."

But their just service points out the injustice of forcing men to similar servitude."

"I fail to see how," Scott grumbled.

"Then let him show us, if he can," Judge Hardesty suggested softly. His partner's face did not clear, but Scott kept to himself the protest he still plainly felt. After glancing at Judge Kemble, Hardesty said to Douglas, "You may proceed."

"Thank you, your excellency." Douglas pointed toward Rob, who sat calmly in the witness-box, looking rather bored and working its massive jaws to help pass the time. 'Here we have a being gifted with intelligence--"

"Not much!" someone called from the audience, which ised a laugh and made the judges pound loudly for order.

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, A vow rite gemiah spent the next several minutes looking down at ge table in front of him, until he trusted his control over > features once more.

Douglas, he knew, had paid the fellow three denaires for that interruption.

} The lawyer's face revealed nothing of his machinations.

"--gifted with intelligence," he repeated, "though of a lesser sort than our own. Its existence is not to be denied; in the wild, sims craft crude tools of stone, and attempt to ia),itate ours, in a fashion no brute beast could match.

["But as most of you know, they have no language of their own, and most fail to master the English tongue. Can you speak, Rob?" Douglas asked, turning to the sim.

Its previously placid face grew tense as it struggled against its own slow wits and balky muscles. "Y-y-y-yess," it got out at last, and sat back, proud and relieved. Speak 8ad, it added with signs.

"So you do," Douglas acknowledged. He concentrated on the judges again.

"Had I bid the sim read to us from the amplest children's primer, of course, it would have been helpless, as it would have been to write its name. No man has yet succeeded in teaching sims their letters."

0 "And no man yet has taught a turtle to waltz," Zachary Hayes broke in. "What of it? The issue here is niggers, not sims. Perhaps my distinguished opponent needs reminding of it."

* "Yes, Mr. Douglas, we have been patient for some time aw," Judge Kemble said. "We shall not be pleased if this course of yours leads nowhere."

"It leads to the very heart of the issue, your excellency,"

Douglas assured him. "For consider: in the slavery of ancients, what was their chiefest concern? Why, just as the learned Mr. Hayes has demonstrated--to define who might ightfully be a slave, and who was properly free. The great Aristotle developed the concept my opponent discussed so well, that of the slave by nature. Here, in the person of Rob and in his kind, we see exactly what the Greek sage intended: a being with a body strong enough for the tasks we set, yet without wit enough to set against our will.

I_ "Aristotle admitted that in his day, the most difficult thing to determine was the quality of mind that defined the natural slave.

And no wonder, for he was trying to distinguish among groups of men, and all men far more resemble each other than they differ from sims.

In these modern times, we have a true standard of comparison.

"Mr. Hayes put forth the proposition that the physical appearance of niggers brands them as slaves. That is the same as saying painted plaster will satisfy the stomach because it looks so good. In this court, should we not examine essence rather than exterior? To do so, I should like to summon my client Jeremiah to the witness-box."

While Douglas was signing to Rob that it could go, Hayes sprang up, exclaiming, "I protest this--this charades"

"On what grounds, sir?" Judge Kemble said.

"On the grounds that it is obviously a trick, rehearsed s well in advance, intended to make this nigger out to be Aristotle, Charlemagne, and the Twelve Apostles all rolled j into one! "

"Aye, there's a stink of collusion in the air," Judge Scott rumbled.

"How say you, Mr. Douglas?" Kemble asked.

Douglas's smile was beatific, the smile of a man whose enemy has delivered himself into his hands. "dour excellency, I say that even if I were to admit that charge--and I do not; I deny it--it would only help my own case. How -- could I conspire with Jeremiah unless he had the brains to plot along with me?"

Hayes opened his mouth, closed it again. His eyes were 3 wide and staring. Judge Hardesty let out a most unjudicial snort, then tried to pretend he hadn't. Judge Scott looked grim, which meant his expression changed not at all. Stifled whoops and cheers came from the blacks at

the back

of the courtroom. Judge Kemble gaveled them down. "You may proceed, sir," was all he said to Douglas. The lawyer dipped his head, waved Jeremiah forward to take the oath. As Jeremiah raised his hand, he thought Douglas

I might remind the judges that he, unlike a sim, was able to do so. But Douglas knew when to be subtle. The fact itself spoke louder than anything he could say about it. - Facing the courtroom was harder than Jeremiah had expected.

Except for those of the few blacks, he was hard pressed to find a friendly face. The whites in the audience regarded him with looks ranging from stony disapproval to outright hatred. Harry Stowe was part of the latter

.E group.

Next to him sat the two people Jeremiah knew best here, Charles and Caleb Gillen. The habits of years died hard; it hurt Jeremiah to see the contempt on the face of the man who had owned him, and to see his master's son scowling at him as at Iscariot. He started to smile, then let his face

, freeze. They would re-enslave him without a qualm if the judges said they could. That made them no friends of his.

Douglas produced a small, thick book and presented it to Eli Zachary Hayes, "Would you care to open the Bible at random, sir, so Jeremiah may read the passage you select?" The older lawyer drew back from the book as if it had come from the devil, "You'll not make me part of your trickery, sir. Like as not, you've had him memorize Scripture for the sake of looking good here."

"Again you prove what you'd sooner oppose," Douglas said. "If Jeremiah were stupid as a sim, he wouldn't be able to memorize the Good Book. You'll make a man of him in time of yourself."

He turned to the bench. "Would one of you care to make the selection, your excellencies? I don't want any possibility of deceit in this, for such as Mr. Hayes to tax me with."

To Jeremiah's surprise, Judge Scott took the Bible from Douglas. The lawyer's face fell when he saw that Scott did not open the book just anywhere, as he had suggested, but was hunting for a specific passage. "Here," the judge said.

"Let him read this." He stabbed at the section he wanted with his thumb, adding for the record, "This is the seventh chapter of First Chronicles."

Jeremiah certainly had not memorized it; he had no idea what was in the passage. But when Douglas handed him the Bible, he understood why the lawyer had gone expressionless. The chapter was one of those collections of begats that crop up every now and then, and full of names more obscure than most.

Having no choice, he gulped and plunged in, "And of the sons of Issachar, Tola, and Puah, Jashub, and Shimron, four. And the sons of

Tola: Uzzi, and Rephaiah, and Jeriel, and Jahmai, and Ibsam, and Shemuel...."

" He read slowly and carefully, often pausing to sound out an unfamiliar name. He knew he sometimes stumbled, and hated himself for it, but Judge Scott had set too wicked a trap for him to escape unscathed.

He fought his way through the sons of Bilhan (Jeush, Benjamin, Ehud, Chenanah, Zethan, Tarshish, and Ahishahar), the sons of Shemida (Ahian, Shechem, Likhi, and Aniam), and the sons of Asher (Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, and Beriah, to say nothing of their sister, Serah). He almost broke down on Pasach, Bimhal, and Asvath (the sons of Japhlet).

But his voice rose in triumph as he came at last to the sons of Ulla--Arab, and Hanniel, and Rizia.

" 'All these,' " he finished, " 'were the children of Asher, heads of the fathers' houses, choice and mighty men of 3 valour, chiefs of princes. And the number of them reckoned by genealogy for service in war was twenty and six thousand men."

"

He closed the Bible. The courtroom was very quiet.; Douglas walked up and took the book from him. Judge Scott looked down at his hands, up to the plaster of the ceiling, anywhere but at Jeremiah.

"I think you can go back to our table now, Jeremiah,"

Douglas murmured.

Jeremiah's feet hardly seemed to touch the ground as he returned to his place. He heard Caleb Gillen whisper to his father, "I'm so sorry, sir. It's my fault he can read at all. I went and put ideas in his head, and see the thanks we get."

There was enough truth in that to sting, a little. Yes, Caleb had taught Jeremiah to read, but he was forgetting, l _ -_ _ f _ -Whe way that was so easy for someone used to thinking of ,beople as belongings, that Jeremiah had wanted to be free long before he could pick out the word "liberty" on the printed page. Caleb had been willing enough to help last wmmmer, when Jeremiah's goal seemed indefinitely far }way. Now that it was here, Caleb was finding he did not like it so well.

t "Mr. Hayes?" Judge Kemble said, and then again, more lisrply, "Mr. Hayes?"

tJeremiah had thought Hayes would have to give in-iespite having worked so long for Douglas, he was still baive about lawyers. Hayes slowly rose, long and angular.

He made a production out of stretching.

; X "Begging your excellency's pardon," he said, perfectly leif-possessed. "I was woolgathering there. In considering > case, you must remember that it bears on not a single ividual but, by the census of '98, close to a million persons of African descent. What of their masters' property lights? Further, assuming that by some mischance they ,Fuld become free, how are they to provide for themselves?"

ttnd how will they take their place in a society of free men?

tinlom bestowed as a gift will mean nothing to them, as >-will have done nothing to earn it."

judge Hardesty nodded thoughtfully. That frightened Jeremiah, who had come to think of the quiet judg as Elg on his side. "What are we going to do?" he asked Douglas Illight as well not have heard him. He waited till he was sure Hayes had finished, then heaved his bulk aht.

"When a man shifts his argument from principle IlFpediency," he remarked, "trust neither. My learned wonent is looking to sow panic where none need exist; he . lgeaks as if we were on the point of civil war. Why do we have courts, if not to treat our abuses before we need the medicine solders give?"

["Very pretty," Hayes said. "You answer none of the points I raised, but very pretty nonetheless."

"Had you not interrupted me, I would have answered," --[D Douglas replied sweetly. "I don't presume to make the law, but I can offer some suggestions. You quoted the ancients when it suited your purpose.

They had their ways of dealing with freed men, and of easing them into the life of the state. Perhaps some of the first generation would remain as clients to their one-time masters, working for a wage for some length of time before severing all obligations. Given a few years and good will, the thing can be done painlessly."

Hearing Douglas propose curtailing his freedom made Jeremiah scowl. He hated the thought of going back to work for the Gillens, even as a free man. But a moment's reflection reminded him that before he had been willing enough to stay on as a slave, so long as he was treated well and had some hope of buying his liberty one day. He had run away from maltreatment, not slavery.

And, he realized, other blacks would noa face the problem of ex-owners with grudges as deep-seated as the Gillens' against him. Or would they?
. . .

Zachary Hayes might have picked the thought from his brain.

"Painlessly, eh?" he sneered, turning Douglas's word against him.

"You can make all the laws you like, sir, but how do you propose makad come to think of the quiet judg as Elg on his side. "What are we going to do?" he asked Douglas Illight as well not have heard him. He waited till he was sure Hayes had finished, then heaved his bulk aht.

"When a man shifts his argument from principle IlFpediency," he remarked, "trust neither. My learned wonent is looking to sow panic where none need exist; he . lgeaks as if we were on the point of civil war. Why do we have courts, if not to treat our abuses before we need the medicine solders give?"

["Very pretty," Hayes said. "You answer none of the points I raised, but very pretty nonetheless."

"Had you not interrupted me, I would have answered," --[D Douglas replied sweetly. "I don't presume to make the law, but I can offer some

suggestions. You quoted the ancients when it suited your purpose.

They had their ways of dealing with freed men, and of easing them into the life of the state. Perhaps some of the first generation would remain as clients to their one-time masters, working for a wage for some length of time before severing all obligations. Given a few years and good will, the thing can be done painlessly."

Hearing Douglas propose curtailing his freedom made Jeremiah scowl. He hated the thought of going back to work for the Gillens, even as a free man. But a moment's reflection reminded him that before he had been willing enough to stay on as a slave, so long as he was treated well and had some hope of buying his liberty one day. He had run away from maltreatment, not slavery.

And, he realized, other blacks would noa face the problem of ex-owners with grudges as deep-seated as the Gillens' against him. Or would they?
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Zachary Hayes might have picked the thought from his brain.

"Painlessly, eh?" he sneered, turning Douglas's word against him.

"You can make all the laws you like, sir, but how do you propose making the good white men who built the Federated Commonwealths accept their niggers as their equals?" There was the heart of things, dragged out naked and bleeding.

Before Douglas could get up to respond, Jeremiah found himself on his feet. "Your excellencies, can I say something?"

Judge Kemble glanced toward Douglas, who looked startled but shrugged. "Is it germane?" the judge asked sternly.

"Sir?"

"Does it apply? Has it a bearing on the case here?"

"Oh. Yes, sir, that it does. Indeed it does."

"Very well. Be brief."

"Thank you, sir." Jeremiah took a deep breath. "Seems to me, sir, a lot of white folks needs to look down at niggers on account of they need to feel they're better'n somebody.

i -- L

I lrf; A Differerit Flesh 179 it even if you did free every nigger tomorrow, made 'em fist the same as whites to the law, those whites would still snow they were higher in the scheme of things than sims. "Your excellencies, one of the things helped me get by so Wing as a slave was knowing the sims were there below me.

rruth to tell," he went on, drawing on his thoughts of a few ninutes before, "I didn't leave the Gillen farm till they topped treating me like I was a man and worked me like a aim in the fields.

That's purely not right, sirs, making a man into a sim, and if slavery lets one rdan do that tother , why, it's not right either. That's all."

He sat as abruptly as he had risen. Douglas leaned over and patted him on the back, murmuring, "Out to steal my bib? You just might do it."

"Huh," Jeremiah said, but the praise warmed him.

The arguments went on; Hayes was not one to leave a case so long as he had breath to talk. But he and Douglas were hammering away at smaller points now, thrashing obtund the edges of things. Douglas got in only one shot he thought telling, a reminder of the historic nature of the case. "That's for Kemble's sake," he told Jeremiah during a recess.

"Letting him think people will remember his name forever for the sake of what he does here can't hurt."

Jeremiah thought about that, and contrasted it to Caleb Gillen's picture of the law as a vast impersonal force poised over the heads of miscreants. He preferred Douglas's way of hoking at things. People were easier to deal with than vast impersonal forces.

Jeremiah Gillen walked down Granby Pike toward the Benjamin and Levi Bank of Portsmouth. Money jingled in his pocket. Even if the Conscript Fathers of Virginia decided to set up a clientage system like the one Alfred Douglas had outlined the year before, by now he had enough money to buy himself out of any further service to the family that had once owned him.

Hayes was still appealing his case, of course, sending up writ after writ based on Judge Scott's narrow interpretation of the law. But Judge Hardesty had been as narrow as Jeremiah as Scott was against him, and Judge Kemble's ringing condemnation of human slavery would be hard to overturn. Douglas had been dead right about him, Jeremiah thought--he must have decided the eyes of history were on him.

A sim struggling along with a very fat knapsack bumped into Jeremiah. "Watch where you're going, you brainless flathead," he snapped.

The sim cringed. It managed to get one hand free of its burden for a moment to sign, Sorry. Then it staggered on.

Jeremiah felt briefly ashamed. After all, were it not for sims, blacks would have been at the bottom of things, the target of everyone's spleen.

He almost went after the subhuman to apologize, but the sim would never have understood. And that was exactly the point.

He kept on toward the bank.

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Trapping Run the range where bands of wild sims could continue to live their lives much as they had before Europeans came to North America continued to shrink as human settlements pushed westward. Few bands remained entirely untouched by human influence. Sign-talk, for example, spread from band to band, even in areas where no people had ever been seen, because it was a conspicuously better means of communication than the subhumans' native assortment of noises and gestures.

Some trappers and explorers were friendly with the wild sims through

whose lands they passed. Others, manifestly, were not. Bands of sims, naturally, often responded in kind, being well-disposed toward humans if the first person they met had been friendly to them, and hostile even to those who would not have harmed them if their first experience with humans had been a bad one. In this as in so much else, sims revealed how closely they resembled people.

In colonial days, and in the early years of the i

Federated Commonwealth than their shave T attitude not Wdthmuphasize the elStsedn however in the In tjthewas a trapper WhO beGan what ca 2 the sims i FrOm The Story of the Fedetat forest wed into the l

l w 'll k mt tr head, surprised he hladd 5Ptoakleked even to himself and when [

don understand English.

will grasp hit The Six had Law i. by_ ! f , S chopped it down with a few hard swings. Then it checked If the edge of the hatchet head with its thumb. It hooted \$ again. Still sharp, no chips, it signed. Good. In spite of its metal knife, it was still used to the chipped stones sims made for themselves.

Good, Henry Quick agreed. He had paid fifty sesters for the hatchet back in Cairo; the marten fur would be worth easily twenty times as much. Some people in the cities of) the Federated Commonwealths called that robbery. Quick did not see it that way.

Back on the other side of the mountains, hatchets were easy to come by, marten furs much less so. The situation was reversed here. Accounts l balanced.

Too, back in the cities of the Commonwealths, Quick [would have had to put up with the stink of coal smoke, railroad noise, and the endless presence of people. He had little use for pointless chatter.

Maybe that was one reason he got on well with sims: they lacked the brains to talk when they did not have something to say. l[Some trappers, Quick knew, treated sims like wolves or foxes or any other vermin, and hunted them savagely. Sims [robbed traps, no doubt of that. They were hungry all the time, and meat already caught was easy meat. Quick was sure the sim in the clearing with him had eaten the marten's carcass as soon as the pelt was off it.

In a way, Quick followed the reasoning of the trappers ' who went after sims. Because of their hands and wits, sims made devilish thieves. But those same hands and wits made them dangerous enemies.

By the nature of things, trappers traveled alone or in small groups.

The ones who came down hardest on sims often never returned.

Quick had always felt that making them into allies worked better.

His initial expense was greater because of the trade goods he bought before every journey, but he thought he got more furs by enlisting the sims' aid than by harassing them. He found a trap robbed every now and again, yes, but more often were cases like this one, sims doing his hunting for him.

F SKI

The subhuman flourished the hatchet again, making the flair sigh. Good, it signed, and left the clearing with no more [farewell than that. Henry Quick was not offended; he had 12 scant use for ceremony himself.

F He stretched the skin, fur side in, on a piece of wood, and set it aside to dry. He did not have many marten pelts back at his base camp, which made him doubly glad for this one.

He also thought he would have to be a lot hungrier than

^- he was, to want to eat marten meat.

He walked the trap line to check the snares he had set within a couple of miles of the clearing. Blazes he had cut

_ on trees at eye level guided him from one trap to the next. [As far as he knew, sims had not figured out what blazes were for. He had several sets of traps within the territory this band wandered, each grouped around a clearing. He tried to make a complete circuit every couple of weeks or so, to make sure none of the beasts he caught decomposed enough to harm their pelts.

His nose guided him to the first trap. He shook his head in annoyance. The trap must have taken a victim almost as

0 soon as he reset it the last time through. He was doubly annoyed when he found the metal jaws holding only a striped ground squirrel, whose skin would have been

= worthless even if fresh. Doubly disgusted, he threw the little [corpse away, set the trap again, stuck on a fresh suet bait, E and went on to the next one.

Something, probably a bird but maybe a sim, had stolen the bait from that trap without springing it. Quick sighed

and replaced it. The bait on the trap after that was still F intact. Quick sighed again; he'd have to think about moving it.

When he neared the next trap, he heard a wild, desperate thrashing. He drew his pistol and sidled forward, soft leather boots sliding soundlessly over dirt and grass, leaves and twigs. Catching a sim in the act of robbing a trap would be tricky; finding one caught in a trap might be worse, for that could turn the whole band against him.

His breath hissed out in relief as he saw that the trap held chopped it down with a few hard swings. Then it checked the edge of the hatchet head with its thumb. It hooted again. Still sharp, no chips, it signed. Good. In spite of its metal knife, it was still used to the chipped stones sims made for themselves. ; Good, Henry Quick agreed. He had paid fifty sestera for t the hatchet back in Cairo; the marten fur would be worth easily twenty times as much. Some people in the cities of L the Federated Commonwealths called that robbery. Quick did not see it that way. Back on the other side of the mountains, hatchets were easy to come by, marten furs t much less so.

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His breath hissed out in relief as he saw that the trap held l' only a fox. The animal must have been fighting the spiked iron teeth for some time. It was nearly exhausted, and lay If panting as Quick approached. His mouth tightened. This was the part of his job he tried not to think about, taking a dead animal from a trap was much easier than dealing with a live one there.

No help for it, he thought. On his belt by his pistol he carried a stout bludgeon for times such as this. He set the gun down, drew it out. The fox's yellow eyes stared un- l blinkingly at him. Next to the torment of its trapped and broken leg, he was as nothing. He brought down the bludgeon once, twice. The fox writhed and twitched for a few minutes, then sighed, almost in relief, and lay still.

He sat not far from the body, waiting for it to cool and the fleas and other pests to leave it. Then he pried apart the jaws of the trap, rolled the fox onto its back, and began to skin it. He always took pains at that, and took extra ones today, with the memory of the marten fur still fresh--he did not want any sims work to outdo his.

So intent was he that he had almost finished before he realized he was not alone. A sim stood a &w paces away intently watching him. It was a female, he saw with some surprise--unlike the males, they did not usually stray far from the clearing where a band was staying. He kept away from that clearing. Of all his traps, this one was probably closest to it, but it was still a good mile away.

Female sims, Henry Quick thought, were not so brutal looking as males. Their features were not as heavy, and the bony ridges above their eyes were less pronounced. That did not mean the sim would have made an attractive woman. It lacked both forehead and chin, and short reddish hair covered more of its face than Quick's brown beard concealed of his own.

Like all sims, it wore no clothes, but like all sims, it was hairy enough not to need them. Even its breasts were covered with hair, though the pinkish-brown nipples at their tips were exposed. It had an unwashed reek like that of the one that had traded Quick the marten pelt.

S l' S L I _ l Take shin? it signed. That, at any rate, was what Quick L thought it meant. He had trouble being sure; it could not use its fingers well because its hands were full of roots and grubs, and its gestures were blurry in any case.

7 Yes, he answered.

He must have understood correctly, for its next question was, Why club, not noise-stick? It pointed at his pistol.

0 Not want hole in still, he signed.

It rubbed its long jaw as it considered that, then grunted, exactly like a person who got an unexpected answer that was still satisfying.

As if putting a hand to its face had reminded it of the food it carried, it popped a grub into its mouth, chewed ; noisily, and swallowed. Like most wild sims, it was on the lean side. Quick glanced down at the fox carcass. To him, it was so much carrion. Not to sims. Want meat? he asked.

Me? It pointed to itself, brown eyes wide with surprise.

Male sims hunted, females gathered; probably, Quick thought, this one had never taken anything bigger than a mouse or ground squirrel.

But it did not need much time to L decide. Want meat, it signed firmly, leaving off the gesture that turned the phrase into a question.

Quick handed the fox's body to the sim. It gave a low hoot as it stared at the unaccustomed burden it held. It turned to leave, then looked back at the trapper, as if it expected him to take back the bounty he had given. Keep. Go, he signed. It hooted again and slipped away.

Henry Quick went in a different direction, off to check his next trap. As he walked, he chuckled quietly to himself. There would likely be consternation among the sims tonight, especially if the males had had a luckless day at the chase.

The trapper paused for a moment, frowning. He did not want his gift to land the female sim in trouble. Among humans, that might happen if a woman stepped into men's

.= territory. With sims, on reflection, he did not think it would. Being less clever than humans, sims lacked much of their capacity for jealousy. Their harsh lives also made

.

Gil them relentless pragmatists. Meat would be meat, no matter l. where it came from.

Quick found a rabbit in his last trap. It was freshly dead.

Al He skinned it, cleaned it, and brought it back to the !

clearing.

His pack of trade goods was undisturbed. Had he been , " one of the trappers who habitually maltreated sims, he t would not have dared leave it behind . . . but then, had he , been one of that sort, he would not have dared travel alone in this land where men had not yet settled.

He started his fire again, spitted the rabbit on a stick, and , held it over the little blaze. The savory smell the lean meat U1 gave off made his nostrils twitch and his mouth grow suddenly wet. He smiled, wondering what roast fox smelled Lh like.

When he woke the next morning, he rolled up his ' blanket and went over to wash in a creek that ran near the clearing. The water was bitterly cold; he shivered all the way back to his campfire, and stood gratefully in front of it until he was dry. No wonder sims did not bathe, he thought as he dressed. And this was still August, with the days hot and muggy. In another month, though, snow could start falling among the peaks of the Rockies, the ultimate source of his little stream. He would have to think about heading back to inhabited country soon, unless he wanted to spend a long, cold winter living with the sims.

fk "Not bloody likely," he said out loud. No trapper had a lot of use for his fellow humans, but Quick ached to spend ' a couple of days with good bouncy company in a bordello.

He was bored with his hand.

His next set of traps surrounded a clearing a few miles northwest of this one. The way was blazed, and to guide :] l him if he got lost he had a sketch map and a list of landmarks he had made when he first scouted this territory.

Except for the ones he had given them, none of the places a ; hereabouts had names. No other man, so far as he knew, g had seen them.

t The behavior of the local sims certainly argued for that. 3

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F1 S i' -q - . Obey had neither fled from him on his first appearance nor gtacked him on sight. Having no hostile , " one of the trappers who habitually maltreated sims, he t would not have dared leave it behind . . . but then, had he , been one of that sort, he would not have dared travel alone in this land where men had not yet settled.

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Fl S i' -q - . Obey had neither fled from him on his first appearance nor gstacked him on sight. Having no hostile memories to overcome made establishing himself much easier than it , huld have been otherwise.

l Ohs if thinking of the sims had conjured them up, Quick lgard a crashing in the undergrowth off to one side of him find the hoarse, excited cries of several males. They must leave been chasing something big, most likely a deer. They ae tireless trackers, and more skilled even than an out orsman like Henry Quick. They had no guns with which ill at a distance, but had to rely on thrown stones and Fars either tipped with fire-hardened wood or made from a knife, gained in trade, lashed to the end of a sapling.

The Sims' voices rose in a chorus of triumph. They Could eat well tonight, and for the next couple of days. buick's stomach rumbled. He was not so sure of a good meal himself. When he got to the clearing that formed the center for his next set of traps, he set down his pack and went out to do some hunting of his own.

He came back near sunset, seething with frustration beneath the calm shell he cultivated. The sims had had more luck than he. He was carrying a squirrel by the tail, bet there wasn't much meat on a squirrel. He made a fire, coated the squirrel with wet clay, and set it among the flames to bake.

When he thought it was done, he nudged it out of the fire with a stick and began breaking the now-hard clay with the hilt of his dagger.

The squirrel's fur and skin came away with the clay, leaving behind sweet, tender meat ready to eat. --itQuick, unfortunately, also remained quite ready to eat _itr the squirrel was gone. Along with his trade goods, he _ll had about ten pounds of dried, smoked buffalo meat in r pack. He worried every time he decided to gnaw on a strip--he might need it later. He was only a little hungry flow, he told himself severely. He turned his back on the Kick, avoiding temptation.

A noise in the darkness beyond the edge of the clearing

. Pint ice darting up his back and made him forget his belly.

. s . E _ X _ .

rev He grabbed for his rifle, peering out to see what sort of t beast was prowling round his camp. Light came back red From wolves' eyes, green from those of a spearfang. Even] with the gun in his hand, he shivered at the thought of confronting one of the great cats at night.

Try as he would, he saw nothing. A moment later, he l realized why. A male sim stepped into the flickering circle of light his campfire

threw. Like the eyes of humans, sims' eyes did not reflect the light that reached them. sl The male came toward him slowly, deliberately. He saw it t was the one that had brought him the marten fur. It carried its knife in one hand, the hatchet he had traded it in the other. Neither weapon was raised, and the sim showed no hostility. Still, Quick stayed wary. No sim had ever visited t him at night before.

He did not set aside his rifle until the sim put down what it carried. Even then he had misgivings. Sims were stronger P than people; if this one chose to grapple with him, he was in trouble.

t But it had only freed its hands so it could use signs. You It give food, it signed, amplifying, Meat. You give to female. Yes, Quick agreed. I not eat fox, not want to--He hesi toled. Hand-talk had no way to express waste; the concept was alien to the sim mind.--put aside, he finished lamely.

Why not eat fox? Meat good, the sim signed, and the trapper's tight nerves finally eased a bit. Still, the male's U next question took him by surprise: Hungry now? j Yes, he signed again, with a rueful glance in the dire tion he had thrown the squirrel's small bones.

Then he was surprised all over again, for the sim signed, Vi You come with me to our fire, eat there.

0 Go there? he asked, not quite believing he had seen ' correctly. He had always made a point of staying away from at the clearing the sims used as their own. That was partly s what with people he would have called politeness, but more 3' the simple desire not to draw unwelcome attention to himself. Well, he seemed to have drawn attention, but not of ; the unwelcome sort. l X, '

H. 5, _

F1 _

ZF1 gnome to OUT JX7C r--ry wild band owned flint and steel now, fire and the nary of the time when they had not been able to make it l loomed large in sims' lives. FiTe meant to this male 1st home meant to Henry Quick. come, he signed, stepping toward the sim. t picked up its weapons, signed Follow, and plunged the woods. Quick followed, as best he could. Again he ; reminded how wild sims perforce became masters of st craft. The sim glided along so quietly that he felt slow t and clumsy by comparison; sometimes only its lingering fir let him stay close to it. He suspected it could have gone er had it not been leading him. kinking on in front of his nose, a firefly made him Up. Other than that, the forest was impenetrably dark.

. The sim pressed on with perfect confidence. lust when Quick was beginning to wonder if anything behind that confidence, he scented woodsmoke on the eze. The sim must also have caught the smell, for it said no!"--a breathy, throaty noise, the first sound it had de all night--and hurried ahead. A moment later, Quick elled charring meat along with the smoke. He hurried i, and soon saw light ahead. The male hooted before it entered the clearing where its band was staying.

Answering calls came back to it. They ode Henry Quick think of shouts heard on the breeze, with the words blown away but the sense--here, welcome_maining. .

Quiet tell as the trapper stepped into the open area. With the male sims, it was a measuring sort of silence. Quick had centered most of the dozen or so of them as they and he hunted; he had traded tools for furs with more than half of them. Meeting them as a group, though, emphasized the inferences between him and them as solitary contacts would not. The females and youngsters, on the other hand, had Wryer seen him before, except for the one to whom he'd given the fox carcass. Their stillness was more than a little irritating; I was fearful. But they were curious too. A child (for the life of him, Quick could find no better word, especially since the young sims, like grown females, had a more human semblance than did grown males) of perhaps seven came up to him. It touched his suede trousers and tunic, then looked up at him, the picture of puzzlement. Strange skin, it signed.

A couple of males growled warningly, and one hefted a stone as Quick stretched out his arm. All he did, though, was roll up the fringed sleeve of his tunic to show what lay beneath. No hair, he signed. That was not strictly true, but by sim standards he might as well have been bald. put on animal skins instead. Warm.

The youngster felt the trapper's bare skin, jerked its hand away with a grimace. Hair better, it signed.

Startled, Quick burst out laughing. The sims laughed too, loud and long. The male that had been holding a stone threw it on the ground, came over to Quick, and hugged him hard enough to make his ribs creak. He wished he could have taken more credit for winning acceptance, but was glad to get it no matter how it came.

The male that had brought him tugged him toward the fire. Eat, it signed, and the trapper needed no further invitation.

One leg still remained from the carcass of a buck--likely, Quick thought, the one he had heard the males chasing. The rest was bones, the big ones split to get out the marrow and the skull crushed for the sake of the brains.

A grizzled male had charge of the meat. As Henry Quick came over, the sim picked up a chipped stone and began to carve off a chunk for him. He started to offer his own steel knife instead, but stopped when he saw the stone tool gliding through the leg of venison. A steel knife lasted almost forever, was easy to hone again and again, and did not chip. None of that, however, meant stone could not be sharp. Quick's eyes widened slightly at the size of the piece the old sim gave him. Too much, he signed. Not eat all.

The sim shrugged and grunted. Someone, Al answered. Someone will if you don't, Quick thought it meant. Even the slight gesture had been hesitant. The trapper wondered on hand-talk had reached this band. Maybe it was so lately that the old sim had already been grown and only needed it imperfectly, as a man will have trouble speaking foreign language he acquires after his youth.

Catching the meat bubble and brown as he held it on a stick over the fire drove such speculation from his mind. Hide him, the sim that had brought him here was roasting a larger piece. Less patient with cooking than he, it led its goblet away from the flames, tossed it from hand to hand until it was cool enough to eat, then tore off one bite after another. The venison disappeared with finishing haste.

quick sat beside the sim and tried valiantly to match its e, but its bigger teeth and bigger appetite meant he was classed. Since they starved so much of the time, sims We the most of good days like this one. The trapper was aningly full by the time half his piece was gone, yet by n the male had almost finished and showed no signs of sing down.

{e was thinking of offering it what was left of his ison when another sim touched him on the knee. He ned round to see the female he had met the day before. e female held out its left hand in a begging gesture, ning Meat? with the right.

lie cut off a piece and gave it to the sim. Two youngsters begging from the male next to him, which gave them E some scraps. A little one that could hardly toddle came up one of the children with its hand out, and in turn eived a few tiny fragments of meat. It stared at the pper as it ate.

The male turned to Quick. More, it signed, getting up d walking over to pluck a handful of whortleberries off a e of branches heavy with the large, purple-blue fruit. Ie trapper ate a few himself; their tart sweetness cut tough the greasy film coating the inside of his mouth.

I_ Both males and females freely took the berries; no begging was involved. Only dearly won meat required that. Though they usually shared their prey, the males who hunted had some prior claim on it.

With a burst of pride that made him feel foolish a moment later, Quick realized the female sim had treated him as if he were a hunter himself, a dominant member of the band.

Despite that acceptance, he remained an object of curiosity.

That, he knew, was natural enough--he was probably the first live creature ever to share the band's campsite. If M they changed their minds about him, he might not stay that way, either. Sims sometimes ate sims from other bands and, when they could catch them, people too.

A good many such grisly episodes punctuated man's westward expansion across America.

But this group found him only interesting. The grizzled elder that tended the meat ran its hands over his clothes, as fascinated by the soft suede as the youngster had been. Make, it signed, and then, after obvious painful groping for the ,lj sign, How?

l l Skins cut to arms, legs, chest. Not stink--rub tree bark--not any tree, right tree. As a trapper, he knew how to tan hides; what he could not do was put it in terms the sim understood. Show one day, he promised. If a sim saw something done, it could copy as well as a human. But sims would not improve on a process, as humans might.

Show, the old sim agreed. It pointed to Quick's fancy silver belt buckle. Show?

Regretfully, he shook his head. He knew nothing of metalworking, save that it was too complex for the subhumans to fathom.

His person fascinated the sims as much as his gear. They pointed at his gray eyes, then at their own, which were uniformly dark. He had to roll up his sleeve several times, and take off his boots to show that under

them his feet were like theirs, if less battered and callused. His forehead, though, intrigued the sims most. They kept patting at it to S

10 compare it to their own heads, which sloped sharply back 11 r of I - e 1 _ ..

in 1' 1 1 their brow-ridges mster;su > a e shuddered at the idea of eking out a living with so few stces to use to challenge nature. He shuddered even ^ when he thought of doing so through the winters bouts.

On the face of it, it seemed impossible. The e to whom he had given the fox carcass was close by.

signed, How live, when mow come?

zd, the sim signed, repeating for emphasis. Hard. Cold.

wgry. Many die in cold. A shiver illustrated the idea. Far e Ruent with her signs than the elder had been, the [female went on, Dens like bears'--brush, branches. Stzll . Make fire. Still cold.

Cold. Cold. Cold. The sims eyes tried with dread. Winter was a worse enemy than E earfang or bear. I With their bellies full, though, the sims, never renective the first place, did not care to look ahead.

The youngsters through the clearing, wrestled with one another, and bred their elders, for all the world like so many unruly hen back in Cairo or Portsmouth or Philadelphia.

ke of the adults made beds of branches and leaves, curled and went to sleep, ignoring the youngsters' squawks shouts. A mother nursed a baby. The old sim and a young adult male squatted by the fire, chipping stones. The young adult absently swatted at a youngster that disturbed n.

When it came back to watch what they were doing, male let it stay.

)there adults had a different idea for passing the time.

reed or four couples paired off and mated. The rest of the ks paid them no particular attention, nor did they seem Feel the lack of privacy. When a running youngster was

)ut to crash into one pair, the male reached out from its , Stion on its knees behind the female to fend off the little Of.

. Henry Quick found the rutting sims no more interesting fill did the rest of the band. He had been away from _

men a long time, but not long enough to think of a sima partner.

He would as soon have coupled with a pack -- _ I Some trappers, he knew, did that. Some mated with sims,4

11 too. He knew what he thought of them: the same as mosta A people thought. "You son of a sim" would start a fights ,N,b anywhere in the Commonwealths.

', he was taken by surprise when the female sim to I') he had given the fox meat touched him on the leg 0 again, this time much higher up than

before. Want--? the female signed. The last gesture it used was not a standard part of hand-talk, but not easy to get wrong, either.

To remove any possible misunderstanding, the female & on hands and knees, looking back over its shoulder at him. Neither that nor the sight of its cleft between hairy and rather boyish buttocks did anything to arouse his ardor. 3

No, he signed; hand-talk was not made for tact. He softened his refusal as much as he could: You, I not same. The sim, luckily, seemed more curious than angry. Not Sifit? it asked, eyeing his crotch as if to gauge what his trousers concealed. He left that unanswered. He had seen enough sims to know their masculinity was hardly so rampant as jokes and stories made it out to be, but he was no more than average that way himself.

Not want--? the female signed after a moment, and used a gesture of its own invention again. 4

Of Full, Quick temporized. He patted his stomach.

Apparently that impeded performance among sims too because the female gave a small, regretful hoot. Later? it signed.

The trapper shrugged and spread his hands. You, I not same, he repeated. The female shrugged too, and went off to get a few more whortleberries. To Henry Quick's relief, it did not come back to him. He'd meant to imply that men and sims were so different no offspring could come from a mating. He did not know whether the sim was bright enough to follow that. He did know it was a lie.

He had never seen a crossbreed. The repugnance almost everyone felt for coupling with the subhumans had a lot to do with that: few of mixed blood were born. Fewer still

lilil!

l r am . l

l r Ned. The human part of that, to save themselves from disgrace.

The ones that survived were good for driving lawyers to distraction, and for host of tales whose truth the trapper was in no position to judge.

He yawned. Back by his own campfire, he would have been asleep hours ago. Here he had neither his own blanket nor the nests sims made for themselves. He stretched out on the ground. The big blaze the sims had going was plenty to keep him warm. He was tired enough not to worry about sleeping soft. He rolled over, threw aside a twig that was raking his cheek, and knew nothing more till the sun rose.

He woke with a crick in his neck and a bladder full to bursting.

He walked into the bushes at the edge of the clearing to relieve himself. By the smell, and by the way his squelched once or twice on the short journey, the sims were not so fastidious.

; They had already begun their endless daily round of foraging.

Henry Quick was glad to see that the importunate --nale was gone from the campsite. Otherwise, he thought Nith wry amusement, it might have wanted to go into the Obushes with him to see just what sort of apparatus he had.

1; The males, who hunted in a group rather than scattering 1--by one, were still by the fire. The trapper went up to the Fe that had guided him here. Good food, he signed.

it) He had a spare bootlace in one of the pouches that hung from his belt. He dug it out. Yes, it was long enough for him to cut a couple of lengths from the end and still do what he Chanted with it.

He cut off the extra pieces, tied them to the t main length at one end, and made loops at the other end of each. Then he tied the makeshift belt round the sims r middle It Carry knife, axe, he signed. Have them to use. Have hands pee. The sim did not seem to understand. It rubbed its S chinless jaw, staring at Quick, but made no move to put the t tools in the loops.

The old grizzled male looked from the trapper's belt to _ leather lace he had given the other sim. Its eyes lit. It let t out a soft hiss of -wry We Unbid making Ott 5 very same noise when, as a boy, he had seen his first steam 71

', railroad engine. a The grizzled sim stepped forward, took the knife from the younger male's hand, and thrust it through one loop.

] Then it pointed, first at the hatchet, then at the second loop.

I'll It gave an imperative barking call, pointed again. It might ill never have learned hand-talk well, Henry Quick thought) but its years had given it a wisdom of its own.

11 i' After it repeated its gestures a third time, the younger sim ; finally got the idea. It pushed the hatchet handle into the Al vacant loop; the head kept the hatchet from falling _ through. The sim looked at its empty hands, at the tools it still had with it. Suddenly it grinned an enormous grin.

Good, it signed at Quick. Good. Good. Good.

Have morel another male asked. Abket ,; No more. Henry Quick apologetically spread his hands.

He suggested, Make from plants, from shins-The old sim could follow hand-talk, no matter how It much trouble it had using the gestures. Make, it signed, and 1 pointed to itself. Before long, Quick suspected, every sim in F the band, or at least every hunting male, would be sporting a belt. Some would be made of vines and would break, fl others of green hides that would stink and get hard and i wear out quickly. They would be better than no belts at all, N he supposed.

He was pleased to have found something to t the other end of each. Then he tied the makeshift belt round the sims r middle It Carry knife, axe, he signed. Have them to use. Have hands pee. The sim did not seem to understand. It rubbed its S chinless jaw, staring at Quick, but made no move to put the t tools in the loops.

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He was pleased to have found something to give in exchange for the feast of the night before. Sims had so little 2 that he was surprised they had offered to share, in spite of his earlier gift. Now they were less likely to resent him for } accepting.

> In daylight, the journey back to his trap line took less . than half as long as it had by night. When he returned to the clearing where his latest camp was, he checked his pack.

No sims had been near it, though they never would have r had a better chance to steal. On the other hand, he thought, . smiling, they'd had plenty just as good.

He went the round of the traps near the clearing, reset the > - Ups that needed it, and dealt wltm the couple en RUIN lXC beau Waken.

He should have had one more; a trap still held the 'oody hind leg of a ringtail. That was all that was left of disc black-masked beast, though. When he first saw the Lcks around the trap, he thought the sims had robbed him her all.

Then he noticed the claw marks in front of the toes. A bear had taken the chance to seize prey that could not flee.

S He swore, but resignedly; that sort of thing had happened to him many times before, and would again. Bears could be as big a nuisance as sims. Some bands of sims, like the one n whose territory he was now, could be made to see that orking with him got them more than robbing him

did. The only thing a bear understood was a bullet.

A grouse boomed, somewhere off among the spruces. Henry Quick forgot about the bear, at least with the front part of his mind. He sidled toward the noise. The grouse's

.1 dull-brown feathers concealed it on its perch, but not well

[t Cough. He got almost close enough to knock it down with a club before he shot it.

He bled and gutted the bird, handling the gall bladder with care so it would not break and spill its noxious contents into the body cavity. He wished he were back at his base camp; the grouse would be better eating after hanging for several days. But he was on the move, and had no time for such refinements. The dark, rich meat would be plenty

, good enough tonight.

So it proved, though he roasted it a couple of minutes too

[long; grouse was best rare. He would have liked to flavor it i with some bacon instead of crumbs from his salt beef, but the rashers he'd brought were long gone; he'd eaten them as S soon as they began to go rancid.

if Picking his teeth with the point of his knife, he laughed at himself. All this fretting about fanq cooking was a sure V sign he'd been in the wilderness too long. That night he E dreamt of eating pastry full of fruit and cream until he had ED cut a new notch in his belt, in its own way as sensual a Fdream as his more usual imaginings of sweet-scented girls l reaching up to him from featherbeds thick enough to smother in.

Waking hungry to a blanket in the middle of a forest

,l i clearing was hard. Even eating what was left of the grouse at not help much, though it would have been an expensive luxury if ordered in a cafe east of the mountains. Too much of what he did involved things that were expensive luxuries east of the mountains.

What he craved were the luxuries he

l could only get back there.

! The intensity of that craving ended up undoing him.

The next clearing around which he had a set of traps was l over on the west side of the one the sims used. The trail he , had blazed to it swung a lot farther north than it had to, so he could give the sims' clearing a wide berth. Now that the .1 subhumans had shown how friendly they were, he decided Me to take the direct route. If he did that the rest of the time he id was there, he thought, he could save several days' travel and set out for the fleshpots of the east that much sooner. The sims, he told himself, would not mind.

Nor did they. He happened on a party of hunting males not long after he set out. Several saw him, and nodded his l way as they might have to one of their own band. But he had I not reckoned on the bear.

For all his woodcraft, the first he knew of it was when it n loomed up

on its hind legs like some ancient, brooding god, not fifty feet from him. In that moment he had a good shot at its chest and belly, but he held his fire. Bears, even silvered bears like this one, rarely attacked without being provoked.

But it did not do to count on a bear, either. This one peered his way. He was close enough to see its nostrils flare as it took his scent. It gave an oddly piglike grunt, dropped to all fours, and barreled toward him.

He threw his rifle to his shoulder, fired, and ran. The bear screamed. He heard its thunderous stride falter. But it still came on, roaring its pain to the world and crashing through bushes and firs like a runaway railroad engine.

. And in a sprint a bear, even a wounded bear, is faster than a man.

Henry (2, UICIC wlsnea no ndu . . . , .v . . . v Plymouth Commonwealth, he had heard before he set out. This trapping run, they had most of the kinks out of a repeating rifle. He would have given five years' worth of furs to have one now. He threw away the gun he did have so he could run faster. If he lived, he'd come back for it.

He never remembered feeling the blow that shattered his right leg. All he knew at the time was that, instead of sprinting in one direction, he was suddenly spinning and sliding through the undergrowth in a very different one.

That saved his life. The bear had to change directions too, and it was also hurt.

In the second or two its hobbling charge gave him, he jerked out his pistol, cocked it, and squeezed the trigger. He seemed to have forever to shoot. His hand was steady, with the eerie steadiness the shock of a bad injury can bring. The

bear's mouth gaped in a horrible snarl; the pistol ball entered a fang before burying itself in the beast's brain. [The bear sighed and fell over, dead.

"Cod, that was close," the trapper said in a calm, conversational voice. He started to pull himself to his feet— and the instant he tried to put any weight on his leg, all the Sam his nervous system had denied till then flooded over him. He fainted before he could shriek.

The sun had moved a fair distance across the sky when he came back to himself. The moment he did, he wished he could escape to unconsciousness again. He tasted blood, and realized he had bitten his lip. He had not noticed. That pain was a trickle, set against the all-consuming torrent in his leg.

Tears were streaming down his face by the time he managed to sit up; the world had threatened to gray out several times in the process. His trouser leg was wet too, not only from where he'd pissed himself while unconscious but also farther down, where the bear had struck him. Wood was soaking through the suede.

He held himself steady with one hand in a thorn bush while he walked the other down his leg to the injury.

Something hard and sharp was pressing against the inside ; [a of his trousers. He groaned, this time not just from the l pain. With a compound fracture--and heaven only knew how much other damage in there--he would soon be as dead as if the bear had killed him cleanly.

He wished it had. This way hurt worse.

His hands shook so badly that he took a quarter of an hour to reload his pistol. A lead ball would end his misery no less than the bear's. But after the weapon was ready, he did not raise it to his head. If he had been able to charge it with powder and wadding and bullet, how could pain's grip on him be absolute?

He began to drag himself toward the bear. That took Lo longer than loading the gun had, though the body was only a handful of paces from him: he passed out several times on the way. At last he reached the carcass. If he was going to try to live, he would need to eat.

The bear was food, for as long as it stayed fresh.

The pistol ball left no visible wound, now that the bear's mouth was closed in death. Quick's first shot, with the rifle, had torn along the left side of the beast's neck and lodged in its shoulder. It might have been a mortal wound, but not quickly enough to do the trapper any good. He tried to push the point of his broken shinbone back into his flesh, and failed repeatedly: the pain was too much to stand. He did drag himself to a sapling close by the bear's carcass and cut it down with his knife. Then, using the lace from his left boot, he tied the sapling to his leg. It was not much of a splint, but it was a little better than nothing. With it on, the broken pieces did not grind together quite so agonizingly.

He set out to make a fire, against the coming chill of night and the chill of his damaged body and for cooking a bloody gobbet he had worried off the bear's shoulder. He was still crumbling dry leaves for tinder when the hunting party of male sims came upon him.

He did not realize they were there until they were almost on top of him. Along with their crude weapons, they carried squirrels and rabbits, a snake, and a couple of birds: . E E _ [_ a _ r I_ i-- -l A umerent Flesn zw not a great day's bag by any means. They looked in wonder from Henry Quick to the bear and back again. You kills one F asked. After a little while, he recognized it as the male that

! had brought him the marten fur.

Understanding its hand-talk and responding took all the concentration and strength the trapper had. I hill bear, he nswered.

Bear hurt me--break leg bone.

The sims grimaced. One gave an involuntary hiss of gin. Another pointed at the rude splint. Why stick!

Hold bone pieces still. Hurt less. Quick changed the subject; his leg did not hurt much less. He waved at the dead

_ bear. cut up meat--take to your fire. He could not hope to at a twentieth part of it before it spoiled.

The sims could have done what they wanted with the bear no matter what he said, but his free giving of it seemed to take them aback.

Come with us, eat with us again! signed the male he knew.

. He had prayed it would ask that. The band of sims, he knew, was his only hope of living through the winter, though he had scorned the thought not long before. It was his only hope of living longer than a few days, come to that.

: Even if his leg healed well, he would not be able to travel for months. And with the injury he had, he had a bad feeling it would not heal well.

A male with a broken front tooth was signing at the one he knew best: Kill, it urged. More meat.

Kill, another male agreed. No hunt, no walk. Lie by fire, -cat.

Cold soon. No food to give. No good to us. Rill.

In other circumstances, Quick might have agreed with those sims.

He would be a burden for the band, and one more mouth to feed when they wein hungry themselves. Unless he could find a way to make himself valuable to them, he was done for. Take me to fire, then take all tools in pack, he offered.

One of the sims, unfortunately, was smart enough to see the flaw in that. Kill, then take tools, it signed.

He almost gave up then. Like a bullet, a spear going into his chest or a club breaking his head would put him out of S _ IIs f!0 his pain. But he had not shot himself, and he did not want l j to end as a feast for subhumans. He forced his battered wits l to work. Take me to fire, make more tools. That was the 0 best he could do. If it did not appeal to the sims, he was lU The male that had brought him the marten pelt hooted.

U l, Make noise-sticks? it asked. He could see the eagerness on its broad features.

No, he signed, hating to have to do it. But even had he had metal to hand, he did not know how to make a gun.

Use noisc-stick to kill game near fire.

i He happened to think of bows and arrows. They were W rare in the Commonwealths, but some rich men back east t liked to hunt with them, claiming they were more sporting than guns. Quick cared nothing for sport. He was interested in surviving. Make thing like noise-stick, but quiet, he; ; ; signed.

,l! Kill far like noise-stick? the male asked u Not that far.

Farther than spear.

8 The sims shouted at one another, not so much arguing as If! to

intimidate. Finally the male that had brought Quick the marten fur signed Take, and pointed at him. He p tried without much luck to stifle a shriek as two sims 17 hauled him upright. Others fell to butchering the bear.

It Soon they were toting slabs of meat bigger than those a man could easily carry.

0 i That strength also helped the pair over whose shoulders I'll, had draped his arms. All the same, the journey to the [band's clearing was a nightmare. It would have been dreadful even with careful men hauling the trapper. It was l worse with sims. They were not deliberately cruel, but they were careless. Several times his broken leg hit the ground so lit he thought it would fall off. He rather wished it L would. Mercifully, he passed out again before the hunting party got home.

17 The anguish when his bearers let him down like a sack of l meal brought him back to himself. Sims were all he could If as he peered bleakly upward. Their thick odor clogged l his nostrils.

ra s felt blood flowing down his leg again. The thought of g the sims to set the broken bone made him sweat but leaving it untended was worse. Take off stick, he d. Take off boots, pants. The sims grunted in puzzle:; the hand-talk gesture for trousers meant nothing to l, since they had never seen any except his. He pointed s pair, and they understood. Fix bone, put stick back ut another stick on, hold bone in place. He thought of thing else. Hold me down. I yell, you do anyhow.

he sims hooted in dismay when they saw how he was He die, a female signed flatly.

e live, he make for us, answered the male he knew. e live. That was another female. After a moment, he nized it as the one that had wanted to couple with . Well, no danger of that now, he thought, and even in orment almost laughed.

he grizzled sim pushed forward. Maker it signed. Good. f Live.

That was the most sign-talk the trapper had ever seen from it.

[e turned his head away. The sight of his red-smeared E tibia sticking through his flesh was making him even r than he felt already.

Push bone into leg, he signed. c straight, like other leg.

'ill then, he had only thought he knew what pain was. in, the sims were not cruel on purpose; again, that did help. No one could have set the fracture without hurting him badly. That the would-be healers were inexpectd subhumans made things worse, but perhaps not by :home unmeasurable time later, his agony lessened, ll { by a tiny fraction. He chose to believe that was because two pieces of bone were properly aligned. If not, he w he could bear no more. His throat was raw from awing; he could feel the blood slick on his hands, where nails had bitten into his palms.

row sticks on, he signed. Tie tight. Hold bones in place.

senses failed him before the sims were done. This time r did not return to him at once.

When at last he woke again, the sun was in his eyes. It morning His leg felt better; It was, he realized an improvement on how it had felt the day before. He looked around. Most of the Sims were long gone from camp, the males to hunt, the females to forage. A chipmunk chipped at him.

The female that had wanted him came out of the woods. Its arms were full of berries and roots; it set down its prizes and came over to stoop beside him. After a moment it rose again, to return with a chunk of wood. His stomach twisted. He was not ready for food, but he had a raging thirst. Water, he signed. His trousers still lay water, none no. He sloshed; he heaved.

He handed him the piece of wood. He began hollowing out the branch with his dagger. The work took most of the day. It was interrupted when he had to go to the latrine.

His stomach moved. He could do nothing. A female. After a while, an old female, wrinkling its broad, flat nose, got a handful of leaves and carried the droppings away. He hoped the sim would clean him too, but it did not. Signing, he went back to his carving.

When the rude cup was done, he explained with signs that it was good for. The grizzled male took some time to understand. When at last it did, it hurried off to test it for itself. It came back with a wide grin on its face. Standing where he could see it, it held the cup over its head and poured water into its mouth from arm's length. It got water, but it did not seem to care.

The female that had wanted him returned from another foraging trip. It handed him another piece of cold cooked bear meat. Eat, it signed again. This time he felt ready to try. The flesh tasted like beef, but was greasier. His stomach, long empty, churned uneasily.

His stomach moved again not long after that. The young female dealt with the mess in the same way the old one had before. It came back, though, with more leaves, and did a rough job of wiping him.

Thanks, he signed. It only grunted; the gesture meant nothing to it. Back in the settled parts of the Commonwealths, where sims served humans, polite phrases had to come into hand-talk.

They had not, however, become part of the rough, abridged version this band used. Quick shook his head, sorry he could not express the gratitude he felt.

The last thing he remembered when he fell asleep that night was seeing the grizzled sim hard at work on another CIID. The one he had made was in front of it. Every so often it would pick him up and study it, as if to remind itself what it was doing.

The trapper woke before sunrise, shivering. He had thought of the pain in his leg as a fire before; now it was hot in the most literal sense. He put a hand to his forehead. Waver, he thought. It was the last coherent thought he had for a long time.

He never knew how long he lay in delirium; the hours

I?

I_ Fly and days stretched and twisted like taffy. Every once in a while, something would lodge in his memory. He recalled, young sim bending over to peer down at him, its solemn face so close to his that it filled his field of vision. A mite [was crawling across its cheek.

The mite seemed more ' interesting to him than the little sim.

l He remembered telling the male that had brought him l, the marten fur how to get coffee stains out of linen. He went into great detail, though the sim knew nothing of either coffee or linen and understood not a word of English. Using hand-talk never occurred to him. After a while, the sins ? went away. Quick kept on talking until his mind clouded l again.

i 110 He remembered being fed two or three times, all of them lSJ by the female that had wanted him. The first time, he & choked on a piece of meat and had to struggle to spit it out.

l u After that, the sim gave him only soft, pasty food. He watched it chewing meat and fruit before passing them on b to him, as if he were a just-weaned infant. He knew he r Sl should have been disgusted, but he lacked the strength. He l did not spit out the food, either.

Quick heard deep, racking coughing, and marveled that , his lungs and throat were not raw. Only gradually, over a couple of days, did he realize he was not the one coughing.

A little after that, the noise stopped, or he stopped noticing it; he did not figure out which until much later.

He remembered the female shaking him back into foggy awareness of the world around him. It held a plant in front l of his face, a plant with downy, gray-green leaves, each cut go into blunt lobes and teeth.

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l He remembered telling the male that had brought him l, the marten fur how to get coffee stains out of linen. He went into great detail, though the sim knew nothing of either coffee or linen and understood not a word of English. Using hand-talk never occurred to him. After a while, the sins ? went away. Quick kept on talking until his mind clouded l again.

i 110 He remembered being fed two or three times, all of them 1SJ by the female that had wanted him. The first time, he & choked on a piece of meat and had to struggle to spit it out.

l u After that, the sim gave him only soft, pasty food. He watched it chewing meat and fruit before passing them on b to him, as if he were a just-weaned infant. He knew he r Sl should have been disgusted, but he lacked the strength. He l did not spit out the food, either.

Quick heard deep, racking coughing, and marveled that , his lungs and throat were not raw. Only gradually, over a couple of days, did he realize he was not the one coughing.

A little after that, the noise stopped, or he stopped noticing it; he did not figure out which until much later.

He remembered the female shaking him back into foggy awareness of the world around him. It held a plant in front l of his face, a plant with downy, gray-green leaves, each cut go into blunt lobes and teeth.

The flower heads held many small, tubular, pinkish-white flowers. They were sere and , brown now, well past their peak. Dusty maiden, the plant is was called--one of the thousands of little nondescript shrubs that grew in the woods.

' He laughed foolishly; he was a good way past his peak too, he thought. "Not quite ready for flowers, though," he said out loud. The sense of the words brought him closer to real consciousness. He was not far from being ready for flowers, and knew it.

--

I _ l l !

lEthe female held the root against his lips. Eat, it signed r and over until he opened his mouth. It thrust the root le gagged, bit down. Dirt crunched between his teeth.

did the root. It tasted horrid. When he tried to spit it out, female sim held a hand over his mouth and would not him. It kept signing Eat. With no other choice, he did. Wrs of rage and weakness filled his eyes.

The next thing he remembered was thinking it had i tarted to rain.

But when he opened his eyes, the sun was shining. Yet he was wet.

Sweat covered every inch of his i. It dripped from his nose and trickled through his d and matted hair. He put a hand to his forehead. It s cooler. His fever had broken. He drifted away again, but D something closer to natural sleep than to the oblivion which he had wandered before.

When he woke again, the female sim was trying to feed n another plant like the last one, but even more bekggled. This time, the sim broke off the root and forced it --into his mouth, the taste was just as bad as he remembered, r but, gagging, he got the thing down. After he had swallowed, the female brought him a cup of water and held his kd while he drank it. He did not think the cup was the e he had made.

He had another sweating spell during his next sleep, and yed awake some

little while when he came out of it. The sale sim seemed to have taken over his nursing. It greeted n with yet another dusty maiden plant. He no longer ed to fight its ministrations. Enough of his wits were t1 back for him to realize that, however acrid and revolting the Xs it was giving him tasted, they were doing him good. He came awake again at dawn, thinking how hungry he Pi He tried to raise himself up on an elbow. The effort t him gasping before he finally succeeded. But no matter w weak he was, he was at last in command of his ulties once more.

He took stock of himself, looking down the length of his gdy. He whistled, soft and low. "No wonder I'm hungry," said out loud, his voice a rusty croak. The fever had Zlted the flesh from his bones.

Every rib was plainly visible (he had no idea when the sims had taken off h tunic), and his legs were bird-scrawny.

1,: The splints, he saw with relief, were still on his right calf r 1 it ached fiercely, but now the pain was at a level he could bear.

Yellow serum oozed from the scab where the bone ha stabbed through his skin, yet his right leg felt not muc ' warmer than the other one.

Despite the splints, the leg had 50 a kink in it that had not been there before.

4 He did not care. He was healing. A limp--even a can the rest of his life--would be a small price to pay. H t marveled that he was alive at all.

, Because the agony in his leg had diminished, he was abler \$ 1 f to take stock of his other bodily shortcomings, which were \$ considerable. He felt raw, running sores on his back ant buttocks, not surprising when he had been lying there so 2 long. There were more on the insides of his thighs, from imperfectly cleaned wastes. But he was not lying in a great stinking pool of his own filth. The sims must have dragged him from spot to spot in their clearing. He had no memory 1 of it.

r Most of the subhumans were already out looking for e; food.

one of the old females that kept an eye on the pi while their parents foraged walked in front of g him. Food, he signed.

y:. The old female fell back a pace. "Hoo!" it said in S surprise; he must have been an inert lump so long that the Gusims no longer expected anything else from him. The old r female brought him some berries. They were the unripe and p: overripe ones none of the subhumans had wanted. Again, ;fK Henry Quick did not care.

Half-starved as he was, they stil tasted wonderful.

lij He tried to roll on his side, but even splinted, even beginning to mend, his leg would not let him. His bedsores 'or could think of no better name for them) snarled as his t weight came back down on them. He was not going anywhere, even so short a distance, for a while yet. He r abandoned the slender dream he'd let grow again of getting ; back across the mountains before the snow fell.

7 The female sim that had been caring for him returned, r. -. .

1 .

. -x F. _ -r Itg what looked like a chunk of log. The old female an excited hoot, pointed to Quick. Seeing him cons, the other sim dropped its burden and dashed over to aiden plant. time he took the plant from the sims hand and ate it -- fore he could be told to. Whatever was in that root was medicine than most of what the doctors back in Cairo When he had choked it down, he signed Eat?

1, the female sim echoed, grinning hugely. One of the lets from Quick's pack was lying close by. The sim k the log it had brought in.

Punk flew; the log was old. or three more strokes served to split it.

It was full of at beetle larvae. They squirmed in the dirt.

Youngsters o arne running up to pop them into their mouths.

le female sim skewered several grubs on a twig, held l over the fire, and brought them to Quick. The trapper ed, then sighed. If he was going to live with sims, he d have to live like a sim, and that was that. He screwed byes shut, but he ate. Perhaps hunger seasoned the s, for he did not find them as disgusting as he cted. Compared to the medicinal root, they were ; delicious.

he female sim fetched him a cup of water. He wondered many times it had done that while his wits wandered.

human nurses would have been so patient.

he water made his bladder fill up. He did not want to himself, not now when he was awake. He called to the be sim. When he had its attention, he signed, Fill cup piss from met Not piss on ground here.

boo," the sim said softly, as the subhumans often did a meeting an idea they had not thought of. The sima cup between his legs. It took hold of his penis to put tip inside the cup as matter-of-factly as if it were fling his toe. Urinating without fouling himself was her of the pleasures that accompanied healing.

e thought of something. Not drink from this cup, heed This cup--piss only.

. Coo," the female said again.

I

. tar all his improvement, the trapper still slept as mum as a young child. He was asleep when the hunting party males returned, a little before sunset. When he woke tl next morning, most of them were gone again. The ma that had brought him the marten pelt, however, crouchz eside im, plainly waiting for him to rouse That waiting was as far as politeness went among sim They had no small talk. As soon as the male saw Quick's eyes on it, it signed. Make thing like noise-stick.

Quick frowned. He had hoped the sim had forgotten the promise he'd made as he thrashed on the ground L

anguish. He had only the vaguest idea of how to make bow, to say nothing of arrows. Unfortunately, the sin remembered.

He would have to learn if it was going to propel an arrow, a bow had to be of springy wood. The trapper pointed to one of the spruces at the edge of the clearing. Fetch me little tree like that, has signed. He held his hands about four feet apart. The sim went into the woods. It soon came back with a sapling such as he had described. A knife lay close enough for him to reach it. He began cutting branches off the trunk.

The sim watched for a while, then decided nothing was going to happen right away. It picked up its hatchet and a stout club and went off to hunt.

Because Quick was stuck on his back, trimming the sapling was a slow, awkward job. He managed to twist enough to prop himself up on his left elbow. He used his left hand to hold the fragrant trunk and carved away with his right, but things still did not go well. He looked round for the grizzled sim. The old male could help, and would probably be interested in what he was up to. He did not see the old male. Thinking back, he had not seen it since his wits came back. When the female that cared for him returned from a foraging trip, he asked about it. Dead, the female signed, a thumbs-down gesture old as the Roman arena. The sim amplified it with a racking burst of coughs. Quick recalled the paroxysms he had heard in his delirium.

F _ all . _ _

1

More he was frustrated because he could not make volitive expressions of sympathy speech would permit. For some thought, he signed Bad for band.

For band, the female agreed. Toolmaker. All sims do use and make tools, of course, but as with people, few were better than others.

The grizzled sim had lived enough to gain a great deal of experience, too. If it had passed on all it knew, the band would indeed suffer.

For Henry Quick wondered how much he could help there. It hurt the band would also hurt him.

By the end of the day, he had the trunk of the spruce bare on one end and a notch carved in either end. Good help, he led to the female. It smiled back at him. He realized he had to make a conscious effort to smell it these days, carefully, he thought, because by now his own odor was as strong as its.

About then the males came back. They were smeared with blood but triumphant; they carried a plump doe already cut in pieces. The females and youngsters greeted them with glad cries. The band would feast tonight.

The male that had brought Quick the marten fur ambled over and picked up the would-be bow. It scowled, eyebrows locking on the heavy brow-ridges. Not like noise-stick, it led ominously. Had it had a sign for fake, it would have done it.

Not like, the trapper admitted, adding Do like, when the sim grunted a noise redolent of skepticism.

Quick's eye fell on the hind leg from which another male carving chunks.

He had intended to use another place as a bowstring, but he had only two, and the sims --_ would need more bows than that . . . assuming he could ke any at all. Sinew might serve in place of leather.

Save--he signed, and then paused, grinding his teeth: he not remember the sign for "sinew." Eventually, by nting to the tendons in his own wrist and at the back of sims ankles, he put across his meaning. The male gave n a dubious look no butler would have been ashamed of, - but went over to the sim acting as butcher and passed the -- k ..

l . message along. That male shrugged as if to say the trapper was daft, but eventually set beside him several glistening white lengths, each with bits of flesh still clinging to it.

He did not work on the bow for several days after that.

His fever returned. It was not strong enough to drive him r into delirium, but it did leave him shivering and miserable.

[He glumly crunched the dusty maiden roots the female sim brought him and wished he felt more like a human being, or even a healthy sim.

_ Because he was still aware of his surroundings, he really noticed then the care the female sim gave him. It fed him, > got him water, cleansed him, hauled him from place to place to keep him from lying in his own dung. It might not have been as gentle as a human nurse, but it was more X conscientious than most Not only was this spell of fever less severe than the last had been, it was shorter. Yet even after Quick began to feel better, he kept waking up chilled. Only when he saw the sims also clutching themselves, building thicker piles of bedding, and huddling close to the fire did he understand that the weather was changing. Autumn was drawing near, , and hard on its heels would come winter.

The sims did what they could to get ready for it. They brought in stones and brush, which they began to work into a windbreak. As the days went by, it grew thicker and taller 0 and extended all the way around the clearing, with a couple nEof thin spots through which the sims could push. They also l stacked up great heaps of firewood; once the snow started, Cur; would not be so easy to collect. Quick's hatchets helped 4 them there. They could not have cut so much wood with their crude tools alone.

;l Some of them even realized it. The male that had brought Kill the marten pelt hefted its hatchet when it saw he was , sr watching and signed, Good.

. It was less happy, however, over the trapper's efforts to s make arrows that were worth anything. Finding really straight lengths of branch was hard enough. Getting points on them proved worse. Because the sims used stone tools, s I s -

k had assumed they could easily chip out little stone vheads. But the tools they were used to making were and-sized choppers and scrapers. They had never done the

the tiny flakework arrowheads required. If Quick had n them how, they could have duplicated his efforts. He no skill in shaping stone, though, and soon discovered knowing what he wanted was very different from sing how to make it.

t the time the first frost appeared on the windbreak, he \ finger worried about getting knocked over the head for ng to produce. If the sims decided to do that, he could top them, but that fatalistic certainty was only a small of what gradually let him relax.

or more important was that the sims accepted him.

y had grown accustomed to him lying by the fire, and longer saw him as much different from themselves, [xcept that he could not move.

His chief worry now was [hat would happen if a youngster tripped over his broken while playing. Where the young sims had once crowded to gape at him, now they were so careless around him Eli he sometimes wondered if they remembered he was there.

the leg still hurt. It also itched savagely; he rubbed the h round the healing gash raw until he understood the , came from far within. He healed despite the itch, little ittle. Milestones were small, but he treasured them: the he could sit up, the day he could roll onto his side to air sores on his back and behind, the day those sores started scab over.

Jilestones or not, he remained immobile, save when a dragged him along. Except for his annoyingly trouble i work on the bow, he had little to do but lie by the fire nd watch the members of the band.

Just as they accepted l a, so he came to think of them more and more as lividuals, as people, rather than as subhumans, animals evade or exploit.

Looking back, he supposed the beginning of that pro s came when he finally decided that thinking of "the it:, J _i

male that had brought him the marten skin" by that clumsy handle was more trouble than it was worth. He decided toy call it Martin and have done. Giving the sima man's name 5 helped him think of it as being more like a man.

One by one, he named all the sims. Most of his narr were just tags in his own mind. The sims had so muff trouble reproducing the sounds of English that they could not use his names themselves, which made him hesitate apply them. Martin, however, soon learned what nois meant him. (With a man's name, Martin was also harder think of as it.)

The female that cared for Henry Quick also rapidly figured out what names were for. He called her Sol.

Even though he continued to improve, he knew how dependent on her he still was. He whittled away at a couple of branches, slowly turning them into crutches, but he was not ready to try them yet. A fall, a slip, would put paid to weeks of slow recovery. In any case, he had nowhere to go now that the weather was changing.

Sol went right on caring for him as she had all along. She also got better and better as his assistant in the effort to unravel the secrets of the bow. she would have been better yet, he thought glumly, had her mentor been worth a damn. She copied his blunders faithfully, one by one, but stoppez making them as soon as he did. He knew a lot of people back in the Commonwealths who, having settled on a particular mistake,

would keep making it till the end of time.

He also knew a lot of people who would have turned up their noses--in the most literal sense--at the continuing unpleasant labor involved in disposing of his wastes and getting the filth off him afterwards. Sol never faltered. In the days when he was still on his feet, he had improvised a good many strange wipes for his hindquarters, but in that regard Sol's ingenuity outdid his. He was grateful, and sometimes amused. He would never have thought of using grouse feathers, for instance.

Sol also kept using that same wooden cup to help him r C i .

Mater. He sometimes thought the simple desire to piss upright would be what finally drove him to his feet.

as glad he had the sense to recognize that urge as a f ign of returning health, and did not try to act on it too --Son.

F Another sign came not long afterward, on a day Where, Dy the fire, the wind held a chilly promise of the snow rould come soon. As he had countless times before, c called Sol's name and asked for the cup. she finished ng the seeds out of a couple of pinecones she had l, brought it over to him. took him in hand, again as she had so often before.

happened then, though, was new and strange, for he himself stiffening at the sims touch.

= It was hard to say which of them was more surprised.

y Quick had been lustful enough out on the trap line, ere is nothing like a compound fracture of the leg and r bout of fever to make a man put aside such concerns. d Sol ignored his rise, simply put his penis in the cup waited, the moment would have passed. The sim id about to do just that, then paused, looked down, uietly said, "Iloo!"

ick started to sign for Sol to take her hand away, but in, still perhaps more in the spirit of experimentation anything else, stroked him for the first time with 'rate intent. His recovering body responded to the before his mind could will it not to. And in any event, e was fully, rampantly, and so unexpectedly erect, his had very little to say.

s The sim swung astride him, lowered onto him. He d; entering Sol felt no different from having a woman. so, seeing her there above him, hairy, chinless, and -browed, made him shut his eyes in a spasm of ion.

ha- the act went on, whether he watched or not. And i, closing his eyes, regardless of the reason, made rs seem much more familiar.

He felt the thick hair on highs and buttocks as she rode him, but that sensation S _ W was distant, insignificant, when set against the explosion ' building in his loins. Nor were the small, wordless noises dj the sim made unlike the ones he had heard in bedroomj Oh back m the Commonwealths. Too often those were frond r - women who sighed more for his coins on the dresser thad l for himself; the sim had no such art. l

0 No wonder, then, that his hips bucked of themselves, that his hands reached out to take hold of Sol's breasts. } almost jerked them away again, for the hair that covered X the breasts but the nipples reminded him he was in X bedroom now. Then climax swept over him, and for < Whet

endless instant he did not care where he was.

Of Nip rolled away as soon as he was through. He kept E E eyes shut, trying to sort things out; he felt simultaneously fine and as wretched as he could ever recall.

He opened his eyes. Sol was looking at him. He nodded]

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He opened his eyes. Sol was looking at him. He nodded]

] not yet trusting either speech or hand-talk. The sim nodded back. Good, Sol signed. } E "All right," the trapper said, surprising himself as usual when he spoke out loud. His equanimity was coming bad How many times had he told himself that if he was gain Ohs to live with the sims he would have to live like a simA wr r grin settled on his face. Eating grubs was all very well, but r he had not expected to take things quite this far.

r Ago2nt Sol asked, and no grin, no matter how wry, could 4 survive that question. Once he could explain it away, eyes Of!, to himself, as something beyond his control. Repeating the act, though, would be committing himself to what he along with almost everyone in the Commonwealths thought of as disgusting.

2 And yet the coupling had not been the sordid sort o F masturbation he imagined mating with a mare or ewes 'i, might be. Sol had been a

partner in the act, not a mere uncomprehending receptacle for his lust. Indeed, that he was being asked whether he wanted to go again said a good "deal. In the end, the question, more than anything else, was what decided him "All right," he repeated. The sim could not have under- 1 E7;

But his words, but got the meaning from his tone. As smut font to do, Sol took him literally, and at once set about ng his manhood. He thought that would be futile so after the first round, but his body, long deprived, d him wrong. The sim mounted him again. Normally eferred riding to being ridden, but his leg made that rorth thinking about.

His time the joining was slower, less fervent. Quick left /es open. The sims in the clearing were paying hardly attention to him and Sol than they would have to a of their own kind, and the difference, he judged, was prurience, only curiosity about how he performed.

They saw he functioned much like them, they went to whatever they had been doing.

He still did not look much at Sol, concentrating instead what he was feeling. As before, that was like in its knee to having a woman, but now he noticed the peripheral differences more. The hairiness of the sims body distracted him once or twice. Only later did he wonder if his n relatively smooth skin was as strange to her.

She did notice the sims strength when she--in the middle oupling, he could not think of Sol as it--grasped him as y mated. He had never bedded a woman at least as strong he was.

That thought diverted Quick's attention again. He won ed how the males would react to his joining the band in s Fast, most intimate sense. Some had partners who Ited more or less steadily with them, but the dominant illes of the hunting party, Martin and two or three others, So coupled with the unattached females of the band. Now > trapper was part of that hierarchy. He wondered where fit. He could not hunt. He could not even walk. If he was Plain importance, it would have to come through his Xnyway, he thought as sensation built toward release, it [was too late to worry now.

But afterward he worked away on the bow and arrows ih more concentration than he had shown for several i -- . [days. Nor could he stifle a twinge of alarm when Martin loomed over him, hands on hips, to inspect what he was ui to. But the sim, as usual, was businesslike. Sticks flip Martin asked.

Henry Quick shrugged. It was always a good questioa After endless effort, he had figured out how to chip reaso ably small, reasonably sharp arrowheads--they were betttt points than he got by simply whittling away at the tip of tt arrow, at any rate. Now he was having trouble making tl miserable arrows go straight.

The first ones he'd tried just spun crazily, which wr good for making the sims laugh but not much else. Then } vaguely remembered that proper arrows had feathers at tt back to make them fly true.

Getting feathers was r problem. The sims threw rocks well enough to bring don a lot of birds. But getting the feathers to stay on the arrow was a whole different question. The sims knew nothir about glue, and

Quick did not know how to make it either. So far his best solution was cutting thin grooves in the shafts and sliding the feathers into them. That was nearly good enough.

Once in a while, one of his arrows would fly straight and thwack into a tree with enough force to stick, which made the sims hoot appreciatively. More often, a feather would come out in flight, which made the arrow behave as if it were trying to dodge its target instead of hitting it.

Sol continued to help in his bow-building efforts, and to care for him as she had been doing. She never understood much English besides her name, but he passed a lot of time.. talking first to her, then with her, in hand-talk. They did best at the purely pragmatic level.

She understood why the people back in the Commonwealths wanted the furs he had come to trap. Furs warm, she signed, running a hand over his relatively naked skin. No hair, need warm. she stroked her own red-brown hair to emphasize the contrast. Her hair had grown thicker, almost furry, as the season changed.

When Quick tried to explain that people coveted furs for their beauty as well as their warmth, he ran into a blare -- Fir , _ ----Slims did have an aesthetic Wited to things they made themselves. A fur was just a fur.

did better getting across the idea of rarity. Begging for Ed was a simple kind of bargaining, and the sims had said he would give them his strange and wonderful tools in exchange for furs. In my band, he signed, Z tools, few furs. Here many furs, few tools. You want nodded. Why few furs there? she asked. Her hand-talk far more fluid than it had been when he first met her. She, and to a lesser extent the rest of the band, had learned from Quick a number of signs they had not seen people, he answered. Much hunting. 1

understood that. A band of sims that grew too large 3

[territory to support soon shrank again from ; the parts of life in the Commonwealths--railroads, boats--Quick did not even try to explain. Getting as the idea of a house, a permanent place to live, was enough, as was describing domesticated plants and animals. To Sol, it all seemed a vision of unparalleled abundance. Warm place to sleep? she signed. Plenty to eat?

blunting?

E The trapper nodded, admitting it.

[Why come here? Sol asked.

to get furs, was the only answer Quick could put across.

underlust meant nothing to the sim; Sol's band knew a territory perhaps twenty miles square as intimately as if; could, but nothing of the world beyond it. Explain what he often found the company of his fellow men sessive was also next to impossible.

but, they fight? Sol asked.

he signed, but then, after thinking about it, had to resign with other men long time, maybe fight. He knew how impatient he could get with people's foolishness. He really did not have that problem with the

band of sims.

; y were not smart enough to make idiots of themselves I In l L_ g on purpose; what brains they had, they had to use.]; llHe wanted to do something for Sol, to show his gratitude X in a more permanent, more substantial way than thing coupling After the first few times, he had stopped worryii about whether those matings constituted bestiality. Th ll was more because he thought of himself as a member of t9

; sim band than because he suddenly reckoned her humaJ y but the effect was the same: he concentrated on tlJ r similarities rather than their differences. r ' The problem was that the sims lived at the bared K subsistence level. Things that would have been appropr > back in the Commonwealths were incomprehensible anz X valueless here.

Before he fully realized that, Quick spel good deal of time whittling a piece of pine into the shad a spearfang. Sol looked at it when he proudly presented i her. she was interested; she had never seen an image bel*4 But she was not really pleased.

tInspiration struck when the trapper saw how the hunting party of males behaved when they came into the t clearing on a day after the snow had begun to fall. The sims ,. threw down the carcasses they had brought into the clear- t Ising, then, as one, rushed to put their feet as close to the fire in as they could.

.: t Quick smelled singeing hair, but did not blame the sit [l a bit. For him, even healthy, going out into the snz ii' barefoot would have meant at the very least losing toes tq 2 frostbite. The sims' feet were hairy above and had thickly - callused soles, so that risk was less for them. Nothin however, could make such shoeless travel anything but it EjThe females, Sol among them, also had to brave the [winter to forage and to cut firewood. Henry Quick suddenly h realized that, while his boots did not have laces anymore they were much better than nothing. Before Sol went out tl llnext time, he showed her how to put them on her feet.

Wi She did not like them; they must have felt strange and confining. But when she came back, her broad grin gleam t like the snow that still clung to the load of fir branches sl Pa carrying.

Warm, she signed unbelievably, pointing t .

: : 3 I;

l Of feet.Warm. She let out a svuu ssvvL vz ide Quick to hug him and plant exuberant kisses on his nd shoulders. Warm, she signed again. Feet warm. ick felt warm himself, no easy trick that winter. He lad he had found a gift that made her happy. e boots also made the other sims jealous. Quick tried that as fast as he could; he did not want Sol to suffer he'd only meant to help. The only solution he came with involved sacrificing his trousers, which he could wear anyhow. They made several pairs of improvised oar, not as good as real boots but far superior to bare yen hairy, leathery bare feet. i makeshift cordwainery let Sol keep the boots that een his.

That relieved him a great deal, but only for a ads ,rtin had probably the best set of makeshifts. Once he

[4 as convinced they did some good, he signed, All hunters sther gone,

Quick answered. Martin gave a dissatisfied :. The trapper hoped the sim would not demand the off his back. He needed it.

Also fearing the big male i take his boots away from Sol, the trapper suggested, foot things from skins of animals you kill. ins stink fast, Martin signed. lick remembered promising to show the grizzled sim to snake leather. Now, in a way, he could keep that ise. Rub skins with bark from spruce, he signed. Then slow, maybe not stink. rtin grunted again. Do, he signed. Before long, Quick loing as much skinning, scraping, and curing as he L ad working the trap line. He had been a lot of things E fore, but never a cobbler for sims. ke cold, wet weather made his leg hurt worse, but with Brent kind of pain, one he suspected would be with the rest of his life: he knew several men with healed in bones who were the best prophets of rain for miles Kind. Now at last he felt himself definitely on the mend.

successive triumphs were small but satisfying: he N .

X Phi! treasured the day he sat up by himself, the day he ri over, the day he coupled with Sol with him on top. F sticks were still awkward, and so was she. That was not posture sims often used.

Neither, come to that, was fema atop male; most often they mated from behind, like be Like any other beasts, Quick realized he would I thought before his enforced sojourn here. yet they teat far more than beasts. That applied to other things t seeing the utility of boots.

Every so often, around the i [i[L the trapper would notice the subhumans joining as he Sol did. He smiled every time. That was not one of l> things he had intended to teach them.

,ill Without the fire and the windbreak, the band of sims _could not have survived. In the worst storms none of them r went out, except to gather more wood. They huddled F their bedding close by the fire, hugging one another [extra warmth. Often they went a couple of days with l food. They were used to going hungry.

g Quick was not. His belly began to preoccupy him e ; more than his leg. Whenever the hunting party came b ; with game, his stomach heralded their arrival with gro a wolf would have been proud of.

IL Thanks in no small part to his hatchets, the fire the went out, nor did the sims have to sacrifice the windbreak rob it so it became threadbare. Indeed, the females a youngsters cut so much more wood than they had been a t ;g to before that the band often used the piles of fragr; of branches to thicken and restore their beds before using thou l : to feed the fire. Quick had done that himself on L trapping line; fir branches made a fine mattress on which al lay a blanket.

7XiBeing now without a blanket, the trapper happily join the sims in burrowing among the branches and using the E! to hold his body warmth. His nose grew so used to t l. thick, resinous smell of fir that he had to make a conscio E effort to notice it. He found that the sap that oozed from t \$branches was easier to clean from his relatively smooth ski; than to get out of the sims' hair.

-

l = l e sims spent a fair amount of time grooming one er under any circumstances; it was as much a part of social lives as back-fence

chatter was back in the nonwealths. Quick did not mind taking part.

Getting lair smooth and neat pleased him. He made an absent note to carve out a comb when he had the chance.

ap he cleaned from her hair left his hands constantly and spit did not take it off.

[a while he accepted that as just another nuisance.

his whoop made sims all over the clearing jump. If [id not dissolve the resin, neither would water. Now hrs would stay where he put them.

had a couple of dozen shafts finished by the time in came into the clearing, staggering under the weight r fawn in his arms. Quick was no archer, and was ly hampered by having to shoot sitting down. Never;s, he sent several arrows close to a treetrunk that stood zr away than anyone could throw a stone.

s wrist raw and red from being lashed by the sinew tring, he handed the bow to Martin. The sim had used y a couple of times before, but already showed signs of , a better marksman than Quick. Martin grunted L the first two arrows went where he aimed them, then 'Hoo!"

as a third followed.

shot again, as if to reassure himself it was no fluke, thrust the bow back at the trapper. Make more, he d. Quick had won over the skeptic.

with Sol's help, Quick went from cobbler to bowyer and Per. He had finished a handful of crude bows and close iundred arrows before he paused to wonder about what ras doing. Men had always pushed forward across Pica as they pleased, not least because sims lacked the bns to fight back. A bow was nowhere near as potent as 2, but it was vastly better than anything the subhumans had before. Not only that, it was simple enough for L to make and care for themselves, which was not true firearms.

ter some thought, he decided it did not matter. For one s thing, ideas did not move quickly from one band of simsT the next: how recently this band had acquired bane showed that. For another, even with bows the sims 4 hardly become more than a nuisance. And finally, st.

, alive now counted far more than any hypothetical troubl in the future. In such matters, the trapper was an emin , liS practical man.

{ He grinned from ear to ear when the hunting I began coming back with more game than they ever before. Not need close, one signed, holding a rabbit P blood on its white fur in front of Quick's face.

The ii kissed the trapper's cheek, then patted his own belly.

from far, eat good.

Save for a single infant, not a sim had died this wi though it was the desperate time of year for the wild ha g Quick was amazed at the difference the extra fuel and l the extra food made.

t But winter was also the desperate time of year for , other predators that roamed the woods. One mornil female started to push aside a chunk

of the windbreak, Sol shoved back the piled branches with a shriek of fright and a wolf bayed in anger and frustration and hunger. Around the windbreak, the rest of the pack took up the chorus.

' , : sims were besieged.

as Sol shivered, next to Quick. Cold had nothing to do with it.

Wolves stay, she signed. Stay, stay, stay. We him hungry. We go out, they eat. They eat enough, then fill 2 g - The rest of the sims seemed sunk in the same feat of depression. None showed any sign of trying to drive wolves away, nor did they reach for the bows that lay by fire.

Their wits were slower than humans' after all, Quick saw: they had trouble grasping that what served so well on the hunt would also defend them.

He was sure they would eventually have worked through for themselves, but lacked the patience to wait.

shouted till he had Martin's attention. His voice also routed the devil's choir outside the windbreak, but he did not a

that. Take bows, arrows, he signed. Shoot wolves. He !

red that by pantomiming drawing a bow back to his hoot wolves, those you not shoot run away. The big male rubbed his long, chinless jaw as he led with the idea. He sprang to his feet with a wordless ran for the weapons. He dashed to the windbreak, through. Quick heard a snarl from the far side. The was not afraid of a sim, especially not with a barrier in them.

Martin aimed the bow through a gap in the branches. He . The wolf's fierce growls turned to a wowl of agony went on and on. The howls from the rest of the pack abruptly.

Quick feared and hated wolves: after sims, they were the dangerous creatures in the woods. A bear or a .

fang, of course, was more than a match for a wolf, but a pack of wolves would run even a spearfang off its prey.

he trapper been able to stand, he would have gone to the windbreak to fire his rifle and pistol at the beasts.

the sims proved able to deal with things on their own.

Quick dashed to another hole in the windbreak. He shot . A wounded wolf keeled in pain. That was enough to draw more males rushing up to grab the rest of the bows and arrows. In minutes, several more wolves had been hit, the rest of the pack was in full retreat. The male sims flung and spears outside the windbreak to finish off animals they had wounded.

The first wolf tasted much better than Quick had thought it would. A few days later, the weather turned clear and unseasonably warm. The trapper, with the aid of Sol and of the traps he had fashioned weeks before, stood up for the first time since the sims had brought him into the clearing.

Effort even a couple of steps required left him weak and leg. His left leg was, from lack of use, almost as feeble right, which he still did not try to touch to the d, W t he was up lo at loot. 1 114 St C of t 'll'Jlll that

, . _ t J brought was intoxicating. He leaned over and kissed Sol the lips. He had never done that before. The motion ain t made him fall. Sol steadied him. They both laughed j kissed her again.

This time they did slide to the gro carefully, still laughing, and ended up coupling.

Afterward Sol got up to gather wood, leaving Quick himself; she took pleasure in the act, but knew nothir L lazing in the afterglow. A smile still on his lips, Qu j ,l watched her retreating form.

> There, he thought, goes a hell of a woman. Hearinl word in his own mind brought him up short. It had be l while since he took a real look at how he felt about has . That her body pleased him had been a surprise, but l ! no longer. Now he noticed her hairiness, her feat .

hardly more than had she been black or had very blue 4

; He was used to her, as one person grows used to anat What did surprise him was how much he liked her l2 knew that had grown from her caring for him, but Q I 4 was more to it non their own.

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; He was used to her, as one person grows used to another. What did surprise him was how much he liked her. He knew that had grown from her caring for him, but Quick was more to it now. Her happiness mattered to him: else had he given her his boots, and worried so much whether Martin would take them away that he decided? And if he desired her, and at the same time wanted to gladden her in other ways--He startled himself by speaking out loud. "If that's not love, I don't know what the devil the summer before, using that word in connection with a sim would have seemed as ridiculous as thinking female sim as a woman. He shrugged, not so disturbed as he expected to be. Living as part of the band had Chat with this perspective.

Sim weren't human, he thought, but they were people. He nodded slowly, pleased with the distinction. The sim he had been living in these woods for who knew how many years. For the first time, Quick felt guilty over the fact that they were supplanting wild sims all across the continent. Even tame sims depended on their masters' whims for security. The trapper had trouble finding that right, but at the same time did not know what else could have happened.

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1 L

more the sims hunted with bows, the deadlier they were. The males brought in such an unending stream of game that the clearing constantly smelled of cooking meat. The whole band began to lose the gauntness that went with life in the woods, though, as fat as Quick, a fat wild sim contradiction in terms. So he thought, at any rate, until he noticed Sol's belly beginning to protrude. Yet she had no extra flesh on her limbs or in her face. The sim scratched his head and kept on trying to get about his crutches.

right leg was never going to be the same. There was a famous knot of bone where the leg had been broken and not healed straight, which made it a little shorter than its mate. Quick stumped patiently back and forth, leaning as much weight on it as he could. Day by day it bore but he knew he had made his last trapping run. He would need a stick for the rest of his life.

! He was exercising--his mind, he would have sworn, where far away--when the reason Sol was putting on weight dawned on him. He sat down heavily. No matter how often his body had joined with hers, he had never thought an issue might spring from it. In hindsight, that was idiotic. In hindsight, of course, a lot of things were stupid.

He stayed on his haunches, lost in his own thoughts.

When Sol came back from a foraging trip, she gave him a doubtful look. Not what she asked.

"No. Henry Quick pointed at her. Baby in you?"

She glanced down at herself. The bulge was obvious, so obvious that Quick again kicked himself for not figuring what it meant before.

She signed, Baby in me.

She did not say anything about him being the father, although since that first time she had rarely coupled with any other but him. After a moment, he realized he had never any sim in the band use the sign for father.

They ed mating for its own sake, not for the sake of children, nd ha I never made the connection between the two.

He wondered what to do, and wished he were callous sgh for her pregnancy to make no difference to him. He _ _ had intended to head back toward the Commonwealths soon as the snow melted. Now . . . it would not be so ea You want me stay here? he signed.

Where go? Sol asked.

To men like me.

Sol frowned. One of him was strange enough; visual ing many of his kind took more imagination than she h At last she signed, winter not gone.

"Only too right it's not," Quick said aloud. Even or mild day like this one, the breeze made his teeth chatter. first he thought Sol had changed the subject, but arte moment he realized such subtlety was beyond her. Sh simply pointed out that, whatever he decided to do wasn't going to do it tomorrow, or the day after either.

He thought about what staying with the sims and the going back to the Commonwealths would be like. He ca for Sol as he had for no woman on the other side of Rockies, and she was carrying his child. That counted something, but he was not sure in which direction it swt the balance. Son of a sim was a bad enough thing to ca man, but father of a sim . . . ? Still, he could be like a E if he chose to stay. There was so much the sims did knowHe laughed at himself. Like a god, was it? A god wl huddled naked, cold, and stinking in fir branches, who ate whatever was alive (or had been lately) and was glad to get it, who could not even use his own speech but had to content himself with a clumsy, limited makeshifts Anyone who bought godhood on those terms deserved to think he l had it.

That the trapper lived hardly better than the sims while in the field did not enter into the equation. He deliberatdy chose those hardships to escape from his fellow men for time, and to earn the money to live high when he got bac to civilization. Until now, he had never imagined stayirx west of the mountains. Without Sol, he would have had no doubts.

Without Sol, he would have been dead months before, and would not be in this quandary. l Slouched his arm. Under their snell ox , eyes were troubled.

Male sims were not normally w quiet and reflective. Sol had accepted that Henry Quick sometimes was, but had also come to know him well v enough to tell when his thoughts troubled him. you good? v ked. Even after trading signs with him for so long, she not come closer than that to probing his feelings. 5 spread his palms, a gesture that meant neither yes nor ; rummaged about, offered him some half-frozen il roots she had found.

Eat, she signed, as if food could mental as well as physical distress. He sighed and red. Sol made another gesture. He acted on that one, fterward, no matter how sated his body was, his mind d not rest. Dw could it be love, he wondered, when he could not s express the idea to Sol? But what else was it? He had no {er, not even for himself. He turned to Sol. You want me IS he asked.

was her turn to hesitate. Finally she signed, Do good wou. He tugged at his beard, frowning; sometimes sims' statements were oracular in their obscurity. At last he decided she was telling him that the most important thing If his own happiness, a curious mirroring of his own lgs toward her. And if that wasn't love, what else was at even if it was, was it worth abandoning the Corm

l monwealths for good? He knew a fair number of men who

[had given up the lives they had known to stay with a an with whom they had fallen in love. Once the first L faded, most came to regret it. bomething else occurred to the trapper. He was the first to enter this part of the wilderness, but he would not beast. He did not have to wonder what the newcomers Id think of him: just what he would have thought before the bear wrecked his leg. Tales of Quick the sim-lover xt get him remembered forever, but not in a way he ted. What else was he, thought e did not even think of taking Sol back to the Commonwealths with him. He knew the ostracism that wolf bring, the more so as she carried his child. She did nS deserve to face that.

Apart from it, too, he doubted she could I l adapt to life east of the Rockies. She was a creature of wilds, no less than the marten or the spearfang. If he eh 4 to live with her, it would have to be here.

lX] He bit down on his lip till he tasted blood, then slon made himself relax. As Sol had reminded him, winter wC long way from over.

Nothing he decided now could be fit he would be rehashing it endlessly for weeks to come. E to put it aside as well as he could, and wait to see what th weeks would bring.

That sadly indecisive and unoriginal conclusion enough to grant him rest at last.

Whenever the weather was clear enough and wa enough to let him, Quick kept exercising, working to l strength back in his long-inactive legs. He got to the pc where he could stump about on his crutches with lending him strength and balance. Then, a good many d later, he managed to hobble along with but a single stick Most of the time, though, he spent as he had the beginn of the winter--under cover.

Martin stayed on good terms with the trapper. That partly because of the bows and arrows Quick kept turn out. By now the sims' products--especially the arrt heads--were as good as anything he could make, but he had more leisure than they in which to make them. Moreo Martin must have realized that without Quick the bK never would have known of bows and arrows in the f place.

The sim kept drawing the trapper out, hoping to pick up more ideas the band could use. Quick racked his brains, came up with little. No matter how free-ranging a life lived in the wild, most of what he knew depended in some .

part on civilized techniques he could not match here, or domesticated plants and animals that were eque unobtainable.

He had never thought of things as basic as wheat and E11

11 S IN Oh fl -ep and cat UX--b w nried to change a way of life without them. 5 of the other males let Quick alone. That was not so ostility

as uncertainty over where he fit into the is status could hardly have been more confusing: he e from being a powerful outsider to a helpless } As if that were not bad enough, as a helpless cripple come up with a notion none of them could have they been men, he knew he could have expected s over Sol. He had already seen, though, that that sort Zssiveness was much weaker among sims. The males, id not object when he took his share of the meat they t in, and let it go at that.

ng themselves, they jockeyed for position as they My had. Quick was just as glad not to be involved in n he males' squabbles reminded him of nothing so ;] as small boys squaring off to fight. Even perfectly thy, he would not have relished the prospect of getting t face-to-face screaming match with a wild male--not bout his pistol handy, at any rate.

for all the shrieks and gestures, for all the fury and d Reeth, few tiffs actually ended with the combatants Wing and punching and kicking and biting on the Id. Like a lot of small-boy fights, most were games of bluff and counterbluff, good for letting off steam but not Ping the status of either participant.

rough the winter, Martin stayed atop the hierarchy.

only was he in his physical prime, but he also enjoyed dded prestige the success of Quick's devices brought The band had fared well in what was usually a time ivation, and the sims recognized that and gave credit fist did, at any rate. Like humans, some were unwilling teDt anything for which they were not responsible --is. Three or four males, of middling to fairly high Shin the hunting party, began hanging around toer. They had been the last ones to start using the bow.

E,- I S l w F w t v r iSo

_] 11

If sims, that was plenty to settle things. Martin would tun uli his back and swagger away, satisfied he was still cock o' th W walk. 1

t1 Henry Quick shared the big male's exuberance, but aS to a point. He could not help noticing that the members z , the hunting party who backed Martin were nowhere near so closely knit as Caesar's followers. Caesar by himself was no match for Martin; Caesar and several comrades probaij were.

Rain came more and more often. Black patches of dir . began to appear. The evergreens lost their white mont while buds grew on branches bare for months. Quick he geese crying far overhead, and on clear days saw V's of bl, specks flying north against the blue sky.

He wondered, as he had once in a while through winter, if anyone missed him back in the Commonwealt Trapping was a risky business, and every year many M tried it never came back. If he did return to civilization would be a nine days' wonder. Was that reason enough make the trip? He doubted it. He also doubted whether F could finish his life among the sims, even loving one.] . better or worse, he and they were different. _ Unable to decide what to do, he let day follow day, hopi events would solve his problem for him. He got strong with his stick, he was not much slower or more awkwa than an old man. He could even hobble a couple of ste . without it, though his left leg had to take almost all of } weight.

With that success, he began thinking hard about what travel would mean. The idea of depending on archery to feed himself was appalling. His powderhorn was still half full. He had done his best to keep rifle and pistol dry through the winter, greased them with animal fat, and used dirt and gravel to scour away the rust that did appear. He began substituting the rifle for his stick. The extra weight tired him, but he managed. He hated to burn powder and waste bullets on test shots but he would sooner find out whether his guns worked in

,2 i-- L

where his life did not depend on the answer. When he loaded them, he pointed the pistol into the air, and it again. Big noise, he signed, warning the females and youngsters in the clearing.

Sol amplified. The sims had learned the year that Quick carried noisy weapons that could slay at a glance. Few except the hunting males, though, had heard. Of course, the trapper thought as he squeezed the trigger they might not hear one now.

He felt Pike cheering when the gun went off. The recoil seemed to take less than he'd expected, easier even than he'd feared; his arms had become very strong from bearing much of his weight through his crutches.

Sims shrieked. Some clapped hands to ears. Youngsters ran to their mothers. "Big noise" was easier to say than experience. Even Sol jumped, though she recovered quickly. Noise-stich good? she signed.

Quick answered. He fired the rifle. It also worked; he almost knocked him over. The report was louder than the pistol shot had been, but the sims did not make such a fuss over it--this time they knew what he was telling them about.

He reloaded both guns. If he did decide to leave, they would make all the difference in the world.

The females and youngsters had a great deal to tell them when the hunting party returned. Hands fluttered, and in their excitement the sims hooted and yelled to add emphasis to their gestures.

[After the commotion died down, Martin came over to see Quick. He asked the same question Sol had: Noise good?

The trapper agreed they were.

Will you hunt with us? the sim asked.

Too slow, not quick enough, Martin rubbed his jaw. He could not disagree with that length he signed, Give me noise-stich.

Quick had expected something of the sort. If you don't work with a stick, he signed. To make sure he was not dying, he had surreptitiously removed the flints from his guns while the females were carrying on. He did not resist why]

Martin took the pistol away from him. The sim knew what the trigger was for, but only a dicta rewarded him when he pulled it. He tried the rifle, with the same result.

Growling in frustration, he shoved them baby at Quick and stalked away.

The trapper made sure the size was not looking before he restored the flints to their places;

The next morning, most of the hunting party set = early, as they usually did. Martin hung back. He walked a and down examining the windbreak, plainly trying decide whether it was time to turn it into firewood. Of Caesar and two members of his clique also stayz behind. As far as Quick could see, they were not doit anything in particular. He practiced his walking, limping along leaning his right side on his rifle and carrying his_] pistol in his left. The morning was humid, so his leg huff more than usual. ilk When Martin turned away from the windbreak adze spotted the other males still in the clearing, he shouting angrily at them. Go! Hunt!

he signed, his gestures quici] and peremptory. He was still wearing the makeshift belly Quick had made for him from a bootlace. He yanked free Id dagger, waved it in the air. 5 Quick expected Caesar and his Followers to go meekly at their way, as they always had before. They did not. MaybS they had planned it among themselves, maybe they simpt noticed they were three to Martin's one. They held their ground and yelled back. 5 Instantly pandemonium filled the clearing Several fee fl males ran to Martin and added their yells to his. Almost as, many, though, backed Caesar and his two comrades. Quick 3 stood off to one side and wished his hands were free so he could cover his ears. Sol, he thought, would have favoredJ Martin, but she was already off in the woods.

The two groups of sims, still shrieking, drew closer ton each other. Caesar, perhaps given courage by the males at his back, did not shrink as Martin approached. Instead him Coed to confront Martin, windmilling his arms and ting as loudly as his opponent. The encounter was at a [level too basic for either of them to bother with signs; their --e responses were what counted now.

I the same, the quarrel might have ended peaceably, or no more than pushes and shoves. Most incidents ng sims did. But when Martin reached out to push 4r away, he still had the sharp steel dagger in his fisteda a dripping line down the other sims chest.

oesar shrieked again, a cry full of pain, surprise, and ALL Martin might have finished him at that moment, but ,;lad stared for an instant, as much taken aback as his foe, = blood running through Caesar's hair. An instant was zrtin got. Fast as a striking snake, Caesar bent down, = yd a branch, and slammed it into the dominant male's

s de i hen he sprang for Martin. They fell together, biting ouging and kicking.

nary Quick had not thought the din could get louder. and he was wrong. The sims gathered in a tight knot Ed the two battling males.

They were all screaming at Up of their lungs, and beginning to struggle with one ere of Caesar's supporting males also had a knife. He d a female aside, almost pitching her into the fire, anded over the two main combatants. He slashed at one of , presumably Martin. An anguished bellow arose, loud 3h to be heard through the chaos all around.

lick limped forward. That Martin had to fight for his ras one thing,

that he should be beset by two at once thing else again. The male was raising an arm to an. down the dagger again. The trapper shifted his at to his left foot; that leg would have to bear most of fir a moment. He used the stock of his rifle to knock the e out of the sims hand, then hit him in the temple with hat second blow might have felled a man, but sims had er skulls and thicker muscles over them. The male ed, shook his head, spat blood. He grabbed Quick by

.r r Ma I I: the shoulders and threw him to the ground. A bu i lumberjack might have matched it, but the sim was half foot shorter than Quick.

The trapper landed heavily; the rifle came out of ill hand and bounced away. Pain flared in his ribs and in !

ll, bad leg. That's what you get for sticking your nose in, J thought blurrily. But the male was not done with him. l sim seized his rifle, lifted it high, and stamped toward him plainly intending to beat him to death.

Quick still held on to his pistol. He cocked it w desperate haste and fired. He aimed for the sims chest. l ball took the male in the belly instead.

The noise of the shot shocked the sims into moment, silence.

Nothing else, perhaps, could have distracted the so effectively from their own quarrels. Leaning up on < elbow, Quick saw one of the two males around whom l bigger squabble had revolved also sitting up, pushing as the inert body of his foe. Martin had won the fight; bla was still flowing from a score of Caesar's wounds. Yet by way he moved, the victor was also badly hurt.

Quick spared him hardly a glance, though. The traps horrified attention--and that of all the sims in the cle ing--was drawn to the male he had shot. Quick had he' tales of the agony of gutsho loud 3h to be heard through the chaos all around.

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Quick spared him hardly a glance, though. The traps horrified attention--and that of all the sims in the clearing--was drawn to the male he had shot. Quick had he' tales of the agony of gunshot men.

Now he saw it first. The sim rolled and thrashed, hands clutched to the h above and to one side of its navel. Blood trickled between fingers. Soon more came from its anus. When it emptied bladder a moment later, that discharge too was red. The sim shrieked and wailed.

Several females came running from the woods; gunshot drew those who had not heard the sound of fight. Sol was the last of them; her bulging belly made 1 move slowly. Quick was glad to see her, and even glad she had not been in the clearing before.

He struggled to his feet. His right leg groaned but did s scream; he had not rebroken it. He picked up his rifle a hobbled over toward Martin. When Sol came up to hs him as she had so many times before, he gratefully let ' q --n I some of his weight. 1 he other sims, tnelr eyes Still u.. wful spectacle of the male he had shot, stepped out of F way. None of them signed to him. None of them seemed nt to have anything to do with him.

Dim twisted Martin's face. His hairy hide was scraped in a dozen places to show raw, bleeding flesh. Caesar titten half of one ear away. Martin was holding his ribs one hand, and had the other at the back of his left heel. hen the trapper saw that, and saw how the sims left yeas bunched but his foot limp, he had a sinking feeling made him forget his bruises. Against all odds, he had rered from his own crippling injury, at least enough to about. Martin never would, not when he was strung.

artin took his hands from his wounds, signed Fix leg? eyes were full of desperate appeal. They held Quick'seing how Martin's thoughts paralleled his own only e Henry Quick feel worse. Behind the trapper, the male ad shot screamed on, unceasing and dreadful. Not fix, k had to sign.

hI stared at him in amazement. Fix, she signed firmly. sticks.

Sticks fix your leg, sticks fix his leg.

of fix, the trapper repeated miserably. His leg not hurt way. How could he explain that the splints only held pieces of his shattered leg together while the bone ed, but that you could splint a cut tendon from now till nsday and it would never mend? He could not, not with limited hand-talk Sol knew.

d if he could, she would not have believed him. Sticks, sWned, and stepped away from him to get a couple.

\$ least she was doing something constructive. The rest of the sims in the clearing wandered about dazed, like men and women who had been through a train wreck. Quick didn't see why. In the space of a few minutes, the band had fled disaster. Two prime males were dead (even if one fought on making horrid noises for hours). The dominant male was at best crippled; at worst, if his wounds went deep, he would join Caesar and his followers. The hunting

. . . 242 Harry Turtledove party, never more than a dozen strong to begin with, would take years to recover.

Worse, Quick knew the catastrophe would not have happened in the same way had he not become part of the band. The fight between Martin and the sharp steel T knife, the tool he'd got from the trapper: it would have remained one of the shove-and-bluff contests typical among sims. Maybe Caesar would have backed down, maybe Martin. No one would have been much hurt either while the subhumans lacked a good part of the trapper's reasoning ability. They seemed to have reached the same conclusions he had, though, whatever the means they used to get there. All through the winter, they had treated Quick like one of them. Now they drew apart from him. He saw that once he was no longer one of the band.

Being rejected by mere sims should not have hurt Quick that much.

The trapper's fate had been too intimately tied with theirs for too long for him to be indifferent to their feelings about him.

That was especially true in one case. Quick's gaze went to Sol, who was still busy putting a splint on Martin's better leg. She signed when she was through.

Martin's breath hissed through clenched teeth.

Quick shrugged, as if he did not want to say no but hurt too much to say yes. Quick knew he was not going to get better, a leg so or without the splint.

Sol got to her feet awkwardly. She patted her swollen belly in annoyance, almost in reproach. Most of her attention, though, remained on Martin. At last she looked at Quick. Her eyes met the trapper's. She looked at him, at the male who had shot (who was still ululating piteously), at Martin, at Caesar (whose skin was pierced in so many places it would have been worthless as a pelt). When she glanced Quick's way again, it was with no more warmth than if she been looking at a stone. That told him the last thing he needed to know.

If the sims had decided to tear him to pieces; he could live. A Distant Flesh 243 pped them. They ignored him instead. Perhaps caught ostracism a worse punishment. In their small world with each member knowing all the others so intimately that made some sense. Quick was never sure. Living like a rat, he found at last, could not make him think like a rat.

Quick loaded his pistol, put his powderhorn, ammunition (which also held flint and steel), a knife, and a canteen on his belt. Leaning on his rifle, he took a couple of good steps toward the edge of the clearing, then turned to see what the band did to him, he could not save the wounded sims shrieks pursuing him through the woods. He aimed carefully, shot the male in the back.

eloaded again, limped away. The sims still did not lop him. He looked back at Sol a last time, and at the X child he would never see now, the child that would t its life with its mother's band.

be that, at least, was for the best, he told himself, and it because of the social strictures in the Commons against such babies.

In the world of humans, a lalf sim would always be at a disadvantage, slower pider than its fellows. But in the world of sims, a man child might prove something of a prodigy, and place in the band higher than any it could look for the mountains.

Rid not know that was so. He could only hope. The closed in behind him, hiding the clearing from vern was hot and noisy. Henry Quick knocked back key with reverent pleasure. He was wearing clothes K left behind before he set out on his last trapping run. d been in civilization a month, and regained some of hight he'd dropped in his slow, painful journey east)uth. All the same, his tunic and the breeches that l have been tight flopped on him as though meant for er man.

It k X : :4 D any "Have another," James Cartwright urged. The furbl had been generous with Quick, giving him a room in tv own house and a place at his table. Quick knew he had z ulterior motive. He did not mind.

Even Martin had had adz ulterior motive. <

The trapper caught a harmaid's eye, held up his ers glass. The girl looked bored, but finally nodded and off for a bottle. She was blonde, smooth-skinned, and F Quick could easily imagine sharing a bed with her. C, afterward was something else again.

"Your health," he said to the fur dealer when he had resupplied.

He drank again, sighed contentedly.

"Now, then, Henry," Cartwright said, seeing that la relaxation on the trapper's face, "you really ought tote more about the clearing where your cache of furs is. T. be worth a pretty pile of silver denaires, I dare say."

"So they would, so they would," Quick admitted, drunk or sober, I have nothing to say to you about t You can test it if you like; I'll sponge up as much as yot to buy."

"Worse luck for you, I believe it." But, laughing, the dealer signaled for another round. After it arrives turned serious again.

"Henry, I just can't fathom you're being so pigheaded. It's not as if you could ho get those pelts back for yourself. Moving the way you you needed a special miracle to make the trip out once can't be thinking of going in again for them."

"Oh, I can think about it," Quick said; the urge away would never leave him. But whenever he tried to M even now, he knew long journeys were really behind

"Why, then?" Cartwright persisted.

The liquor had loosened Quick's tongue enough to] him willing to justify himself out loud. "Because o sims," he said. "That band deserves to have men leave alone, instead of flooding in the way they would arte found my trail and took out my furs. Those sims took and saved me, and they've had enough grief for it air

"They're just Sims, Henry," Cartwright said. He by, , rapper's story, as much of it as Quick had tota. no <,Uc . new about Sol; no one knew about the child. No one ever id.

Whey were here first, John," Quick said stubbornly. not their fault they're stupider than we are. Having X work fields and such is one thing; we can make better xf good land than they ever could. But let them keep the woods. Some of them ought to stay free."

Maybe you won't want to go trapping after all," Cart,ht observed.

"You sound like you've got yourself a new 'ion in life."

uick hadn't thought of it in quite those terms. Hexed his chin.

He'd shaved his beard, but wasn't yet used eling smooth skin again. At last he said, "Maybe I do, lot. Sims aren't animals, after all."

A hunter sitting at the next table turned round at his Is. He grinned drunkenly. "You're right there, pal. y give better sport than any damned beasts." He hooked mb under his necklace, drawing Quick's eye to it. The vas strung with dried, rather hairy ears.

took four men to pry Quick's hands from the fellow's at.

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Id . .

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i.l I ! i L. 1 FS Freedom Where can be no doubt that the labor of Sims contributed greatly to the growth of the Federated CommonHe,flths of America. As we have seen, this was true in gi!culture. It was also the case in the huge factories of

:he nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: simple, epetitive tasks proved to be within the capacity of the ative subhumans. Their treatment at the dormitories ext to these factories was all too often worse than lny suffered by human workers, who had both the wit knd she political ability to combine to improve their :ondlHons.

These workers' alliances were early supporters of he sims' justice movement. if factory owners could OF use sims instead of people, rewarding them with no sore than what was frequently inadequate food and If: shelter, then wages for all workers were depressed.

Only the fact that humans greatly outnumbered sims Prevented this problem from being even worse than it Eiyas.

The steady growth of technology, however, did at lit as much to change

conditions for sims as did w 247

r political agitation. Farming grew increasingly mechanized, and machines gradually began taking over many of the simple factory jobs sims had formerly performed. This transformation also affected humans, of course. But most succeeded in changing with the times, and in finding new positions in emerging high technology industries. This option was not open to sims.

Even with improved technology, the Sims' justice movement has continually faced a serious problem: sims, while more than beasts, manifestly are less than men and women. Defining a middle ground, and an appropriate role for Sims in modern society, has never been easy; the movement itself has fragmented several times over attempts to do so. In recent years, though, the area of research has drawn attention from almost all factions of the sims' justice movement.

Because they are so like people in so many ways, sims have since their discovery been used for experiments where humans could not in good conscience be employed. Sometimes this has resulted in glorious successes: witness the sim Abel, who orbited the earth six months before the first man to do so.

Sometimes, as in the case of certain nineteenth-century medical research conducted without benefit of anesthesia, words cannot convey the horror suffered by sims.

And yet, it cannot be denied that much good has accrued to humanity through the testing in sims of new surgical techniques and various methods of immunization. Whether this good outweighs the suffering that sims are intelligent enough to feel but not fully to understand must, in the end, be decided by each person for him- or herself. Society as a whole still feels, that it does; research with sims, under properly controlled conditions, continues. There remains, though, a

vocal minority that cannot in its conscience justify

what it perceives as abuse of intelligent creatures. From The stortr of the Federated Commonwealth

PETER HOWARD stepped to the podium with the strides of a man who did not believe in wasting any time, ever. Yes, I have something to say, his walk proclaimed--I'll say it and get out and get back to work, and once you've heard it you can do what you like with it.

Television lights glared overhead; flashbulbs from news or photographers made even the determined Dr. How blink repeatedly. As soon as he reached the rostrum, he fled on the microphone for quiet.

When he did not get it away, a frown made his long, thin face longer.

He tapped again, louder this time, and said, "I'd like to finish with a short statement, if I could. I don't want to spend more time here in Philadelphia than I have to. I want get down to Terminus and back to work."

The reporters gradually quieted. They still were not fast enough to suit Howard, who began when the room in the Chamber of the Popular Assembly was still buzzing with talk: give some progress to report in our efforts to find a cure for immune deficiency syndrome, more commonly known as

AIDS."

hat got him silence, but only a moment's worth. Then zuzz became a roar. A whole new fusillade of flashbulbs t off. Howard held up his hand, as much to protect his as to ask to be allowed to go on.

finally, he could. "I do not yet have a cure," he said Emly.

Setting off hysteria was the last thing he wanted to Whe reporters who had leaped to their feet sat down i. Good, Howard thought: having ridden an erno P roller coaster in two sentences, maybe they would F le down now and listen.

[e,said, "As you know, the HIV virus that causes AiDS iks the body's immune system, specifically the white ibd cells called T-lymphocytes. Without these cells to hit off infection, the body becomes vulnerable to opportu be diseases it would otherwise repel.

Eventually, one of F proves fatal to the patient.

Kit the Terminus Disease Research Center, we have aped a drug we are calling an HIV inhibitor, or HIVI hort. In the laboratory, HIVI seems to help prevent the

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virw from gaining a foothold in the bodys l-cells, strengthens the effectiveness of the antibodies the immure system produces to fight AIDS. Let me show you what we have achieved."

He gestured in the direction from which he had come, his hands shaping words almost everyone in the chambdw P followed as easily as speech: Out here. Now. A sturdy maim Its sim emerged to join him at the podium. "This is Matzo Howard said.

More flashbulbs popped. Matt lowered his head so they his heavy brow-ridges protected his eyes from the bursts adz intolerable light.

"How do you feel, Matt?" Howard asked S He signed the words as he spoke them, to make sure the sigh would understand. Id Fed good, Matt answered with his hands; like almost all a 2 sims, he found sign-talk much easier than true speech. j l "Matt feels good now," Howard said.

"Sadly, six month ago he was much less well." The doctor waved a handT}i_ lights dimmed; a large screen dropped into place behirZ him and Matt. Howard waved again. At the far end of thin hall, a slide projector came on. l s The hall grew truly quiet at last. Into that silenced 8 Howard said, "This was Matt six months ago." The sim Ofi i l F the slide was sadly different from the one who stood before the reporters in the flesh. The Federated Commonwealths D the world--had seen too many cases of AIDS for them to l

3 mistake this one. The image of the emaciated sim, his once , l thick hair falling out in clumps all over his body, was vivid--and dreadful--illustration of why in Africa AIDES 5

. , was simply called "the slims." ' ' L l ! Howard went on, "Two days after that picture was takS Matt began receiving HIVI. Today, his

T-cells are nearly normal, as are his immune responses. He does not know he still has AIDS." a "Feel good," Matt signed again. My The reporters could not stand it anymore. "Why isn't there a cure, then?"

one of them shouted. "Because--as I was about to say," Howard added pointedly

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"The AIDS virus is still in Matt's bloodstream. He can still transmit it to others--other sims in his case, I suppose, [even in theory to humans as well--through sexual relations. If he stops receiving HIV injections, the symptoms of , will return. Now"--he emphasized the word--"I will not respond to questions." He frantically waving hands reminded him of storm-treetops. He chose one at random. "Yes, you in the row, with the blue ruffled tunic." How many sims have died of AIDS in the course of your experiments?" the man asked. Howard pursed his lips. He had expected questions of that sort. With the demonstrators marching outside the front of the Popular Assembly, he would have been an idiot. But he had hoped not to have to deal with them so he should have listened to his colleagues down in Lunus, and planted a few people to ask the questions he had asked. He had always been headstrong, though. He thought he could deal with anything. Now he'd have to. "My program, to date, has seen the expiration of twenty sims," he answered steadily. "His luck was not all bad. The reporter simply followed asking, "Wouldn't it have been better to use chimps than sims in your research?" "Chimps and men, chimpanzees are the only species in which the AIDS virus will grow," Howard [acknowledged. "But there are several objections to their use in AIDS research. Most obvious, of course, is the fact that fifty percent of them must be caught wild in Africa and then imported to the FCA.

That makes the supply uncertain and expensive, all the more so because of the growing instability in the African states as the AIDS epidemic debilitates in. Sims, being native to America, are easily available.

There are also other reasons for preferring them to chimpanzees.

Biologically, sims are much closer to humans than chimpanzees are: as we all know, mixed births between chimps and humans are perfectly possible."

The reporters muttered in distaste. Everyone knew that, [even

Howard [but it was something seldom mentioned outside of doctor jokes.

Howard suspected there would be shocked gasps in living

living rooms all across the Federated Commonwealth watching talking about sex between people and sims was not standard television fare.

"Also, of course," the doctor finished, "sims have advantage of being able to report symptoms to us, something of which chimpanzees are incapable." He pointed another reporter. "Yes?"

"Isn't that part of the problem, Dr. Howard?" the reporter asked.

"How do you feel about deliberately subjecting twenty-eight intelligent creatures to the grim, lingering death AIDS brings?"

"I had hoped some of you might perhaps be interested in the success--or at least the partial success--of HIV injections, rather than in the failures that

preceded it," Howard said shas ID "I am, Dr.Howard," the reporter said, "but that's not 1 question I asked."

Howard scowled out at the audience, but saw ever nodding along with the reporter. If some of these pea had their way, he thought with sudden hot anger that hr L. his best to conceal, he'd be lucky to be able to work shimpanses, let alone sims.

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_ He chose his words with care; he had not come ul Philadelphia to antagonize the press. "I always re Id any, ah, creatures in the laboratory but, part ri larly in the case of what is, as you say, a grim disease s as AIDS, I feel justified in doing whatever I must to people's lives."

; "But sims--" the reporter persisted.

', Howard cut him off. "--are not people. The law l never regarded them as such. They are different f animals, true, but they are also

very different from us.

1 sims in my research project were purchased with an ap] F!

priation from the Senate for that express purpose. Ev thing I have done has been in accordance with all applicable regulations. And that is all I have to say on that tof it; He looked toward another reporter.

"Yes?"

ah L _

that makes HIVI more effective against AIDS than er drugs?" Ward nodded to her and smiled his thanks. At last, a Xble question. "We're still not entirely sure, Mistress, X h_" teynolds. " distress Reynolds, but we believe that the chief imement has to do with the way HIVI interacts with the lls' outer membranes and strengthens them, making Lenore resistant to penetration by the AIDS virus. HIVI. .

developed from--" d and round, round and round--Ken Dixon was B sick of carrying his picket sign. He also did not like half the greencoats were gathering in front of the Hall rl I Popular Assembly. I Ie could not read their faces, not the mirrored visors on their helmets. But their body age said they were going to break up the demonstra soon.

iilling sims is murder he chanted. He'd been calling for a couple of hours now, since before Dr. Howard's conference convened. His throat felt sore and scratchy.

man walking on the part of the sidewalk the demon .on wasn't using caught his eye. "Not under the law, it's he said. He looked prosperous and well-fed, nothing sim who'd been given AIDS on purpose.

fl Rely a lawyer himself, Dixon thought scornfully; Phil- i thia was lousy with them. While the chant went on l Old the young man, he broke it to say, "The law is g e probable lawyer fell into step beside him.

"Why?" he ' L "Sims aren't people. If using them will help us rid Ives of this terrible disease, why shouldn't we?" ill xon frowned. At the planning meeting for this protest, ['d worried out loud that people would say just what this t [jump fellow was saying, that the threat of AIDS would let le justify the horror of the Terminus labs.

He'd been d down then, and now gave back the reasoning the l l t rest of the steering committee had used against him; "Howard's AIDS research is just a fragment of what we'5 talking about here. If you allow it, you set a precedent fame allowing all the other cruelty that sims have suffered since an i people first came to America: everything from working] \$ them to death on farms and in mines to hunting them arffl 0 killing them for sport." He screwed up his face to shot what he thought of that kind of sport.] Is; "Sims were here," the plump man shrugged. "We usffl i them to do the work we didn't care to do for ourselves. 5 still do. why not?"] to The man's question grated on Dixon all over again,-he thought before he answered; the fellow was not a foiffll t "In the old days we needed them, I admit. I'm not say_ what we did then was right--far from it--but it understandable. It isn't anymore, not with machines to q sim-work, and do it better, Easter, and cheaper than 5

"You'd send them all to the preserves, then?" l s "That would be the

ideal solution," Dixon said, loudly. Most of the people marching with him would have given the plump man a yes at once. Three big tractors--together they were as large as a fair-sized community, wealth--one in the Rockies, one on the plains, and one on the northwest woods, gave wild sims and their way of life a last stronghold in the FCA.

' Trouble was, even a small band of wild sims needed large territory on which to forage. There wasn't enough land to accommodate the subhumans who now lived in civilized country, even assuming they wanted to trade their lives for ones like those of their ancestors. "And in this not-so-ideal world?" the plump man asked Al!

Al raised his eyebrow telling Dixon he knew all the objection is that had popped into the demonstrator's mind. "As much freedom as they can handle," Dixon said. Al jerked his chin at the Hall of the Popular Assembly. "At least freedom from being made into lab animals just because they're too much like us." Al agreed.

Al

' "That eyebrow, damn it, climbed higher. "As much freedom as they can handle," the plump man echoed. "I --imagine a more dangerous gift, for either the sims or --nopeople who give it to them." His eyes followed Dixon's stubborn chin to the portico of the Hall. Someone was handing the greencoat chief a rolled-up piece of paper. The fellow resumed, "I would say, for example, that our constabulary has just been granted all the freedom to handle."

is," Dixon said unhappily. He knew a writ when he saw it. Somebody on the committee had fouled up; the side was supposed to keep the greencoats off people's backs until the protest broke up by itself.

Al turned to say that to the man who'd been walking him. The fellow wasn't there anymore. Dixon spotted him walking purposefully down the street in the direction he'd been going before he fell in with the demonstration. From the plump man's perspective, that made good sense. Al was tempted to disappear himself.

The greencoat chief put a hailer to his mouth. The static belched from it as he turned it on and made everybody look at him who hadn't already. One of his assistants ceremoniously unrolled the writ.

"Oh, trouble," Melody Porter said from in front of Al. They'd been in a lot of the same classes at the Philadelphia Collegium since they were both freshmen-- Al had been there four years now, he thought, bemused. They'd been together of demonstrations together, too. Melody was even more strongly committed to justice for sims than he was. She came by it honestly; she was the great-great-granddaughter of Henry Quick, the trapper who'd really founded the justice movement.

Al had an altogether different vein, Dixon thought, marching with her was one of the things that made protests work.

After a few more seconds of fumbling, the boss greencoat finally got the hailer working. His aide handed him the

paper. "Pro bono publico," he intoned, his amplified voice filling the square with formality. Dixon wondered how many horrors had been perpetrated "for the public good," the greencoat repeated for the sake of the record and for the benefit of everyone.

this side a complete nerve-dead deafness. Then he got down to business: "A court has declared this rally a danger to public order.

Those who do not disperse in the next five minutes will be liable to arrest."

His blunt demand jerked the protesters out of their chant. People shouted back at the greencoat: "We're peaceable! Why aren't you?"

"Can't stand to hear the truth, eh? And a cry that started a new chant: "Justice for Sims, an V for people too!" Even so, Dixon noticed that the marcher picket signs, which had been steady, began to jerk as if pelted by hailstones.

People were having second thoughts. Few were leaving, though.

The officer with the hailer knew his job. He kept the pressure on, loudly announcing each minute as it went by. The greencoats shook themselves out into a skirmish line. "Time's up," the chief announced. The line moved forward. Dixon took off his spectacles and stuck them in the hip pocket of his breeches.

Sometimes these affairs -- stayed polite, sometimes they didn't. The world turned blurry. A greencoat emerged out of the blur. He was carrying a club. His voice conversational, matter-of-fact, he asked Dixon, "You going to take off, kid?"

Before he answered, he heard Melody loudly say "No"

what had to be the same question. That killed the few

shreds of hesitation he had left. "No," he said, trying to sound as firm as Melody had.

The greencoat only shrugged. "I arrest you, then, constituting a danger to public order." Formal language

done, he went on, "Come along quietly?"

"Sure."

"All right, then. Put down your sign--you won't get

an extra trash-strewing charge on account of it." Dixon did not. In a

fit his spectacles back on. The greencoat waited till he was done, then gave him a light shove. "Over that way. Move on." He sounded more bored than anything else he had thought, a little resentfully. Justice for Sims was too important to be handled as part of someone's routine.

Even with his spectacles, Dixon did not see what went wrong. Maybe a protester whacked a greencoat with a picket sign. Maybe a greencoat thought one was going to, and swung first. Maybe a greencoat swung first for the hell of it.

However it happened, it happened fast. What had been a civil process turned ugly all at once. Demonstrators swung greencoats, and pushed them away when they tried to

[rest them. Like the genie in the legend, once violence was of the bottle, it did not want to go back in.

She greencoat who was urging Ken Dixon along suddenly pushed him in the back, hard. He went down to his knees. His carefully replaced spectacles flew off his nose. He heard a crunch as a greencoat running toward the wing fight smashed them with his boot.

Melody screamed as she got the same treatment he just did. "Leave her alone!" he shouted. He tried to get to his feet to go help her.

A club exploded against the side of his head. He went down. He tried to get up again, but his legs didn't want to do what he told them.

He had made it to all fours when a greencoat landed on him, knocking him down again.

"You're not going anywhere!" the greencoat bawled in his ear. It was his greencoat; he recognized the voice. He was irrationally pleased he was able to recognize anything.

The greencoat yanked his arms out from under him. His feet hit the pavement. The greencoat jerked his arms and his back clapped manacles on his wrists. He had fought the roaring pain in his head left him immune to further hurts. The bite of the manacles' metal teeth convinced him otherwise in a hurry.

"Come on, you stinking sim-lover!" the greencoat yelled. He hauled Dixon to his feet, frog-marching him toward a constabulary motorcoach. Two more greencoats were waiting at the steps. They grabbed him, flung him inside.

He almost fell over somebody inside the motorcoach moment later, somebody almost fell over him. Crawls with his hands locked behind him was almost impossible. Because he had to, he managed to lurch his way up or one of the motorcoach's hard, comfortable seats.

"Are you all right, Ken?" He hadn't even seen Melody the seat in front of him. Concern in her voice, she went forward.

"You're bleeding."

"I suppose so," he said vaguely; he felt something was falling and wet trickling down his cheek and jaw. He leaned head against the bar-reinforced glass of the window. Then he looked at Melody again.

Above one ear, blood matted his short, sandy hair. "So are you."

"I know." Despite the blow she'd taken, she still had wits about her, and she was furious. "The bastard growled at me, too when he was wrestling with me to get the manacles on. I caved him pretty good, I think, before he finally managed to."

"Good for you." Dixon leaned against the window again; talking and thinking hurt. Someone sat down beside him. He hardly noticed. He was watching the greens finish off the demonstration.

Protesters outnumbered the constables, but the contest was never in doubt.

The demon's tars hesitated before they fought, and when they did it . . .)

by ones and twos. The greencoats did not hesitate at all, it worked together. A few demonstrators managed to most were seized and hauled off to the motorcoaches.

"Maybe it's for the best," Melody said. "This way our side of the message is sure to reach the television tonight, along with Dr. Howard's rationalizations."

"Maybe," was all Dixon could manage. After a whip crack the greencoats slammed the motorcoach's doors shut. The engine roared to life. It rattled through the streets of Philadelphia toward the lockup.

The two sims separated. Matt lay back on the bed - one two - .s

s

:_ J

*--it was the one called Jane, Dr. Howard saw when turned her face toward the monitor camera--stayed on hands and knees beside him.

After a surprisingly short rest, Matt's vigor returned. He got behind her and fell to rest.

"Don't they ever quite" a technician asked, pointing at screen. A whole bank of monitors let the investigators at Disease Research Center watch the sims they studied out disturbing them.

"What else do they have to do?" Howard asked. "They're likely to sit around reading books, you know."

The technician laughed, but persisted. "This is the third they've been at it today, and it's only"--he glanced at his watch--"a little past two."

Seward shrugged. "Weren't you ever a randy eighteenold? That's what Matt is, or the equivalent. Sims age a faster than we do, so he's probably about at his peak at fourteen. And up until not so long ago he was really ill, so I dare say he's making up for lost time too."

"Ok, maybe," the technician said. Howard walked the row of television screens to check on some of the sims at the DRC. The technician muttered under his breath, "No way I could have gone that hard, even when I was eighteen, especially if my girl was that ugly."

Card knew he was not supposed to hear, but turned anyway. "Jane looks as good to Matt as the lead in as in Love does to you."

"That's his problem," the technician retorted. Howard had a picture of that particular blonde taped above his desk.

"I'm glad he has his urge back," he said.

; the effectiveness of the HIVI in returning him to health."

"Frost," the technician reminded him. "What I'm glad that Jane already carries the AIDS virus too, because matter how good Matt feels, he's still got the virus in him he can still spread it, right?"

Fee," Howard said reluctantly. "That's the main draw

.

-- back to HIVI at the moment: it can let carriers-< transmitting AIDS, giving it to people who will pass it t l in turn."

X L "In some ways, you know, that strikes me as worse thQ q no cure at all," the technician said. a 7 Howard wished the man would shut up and let him gE away. He was putting his finger on just the problem that dL } most worried the doctor. Luckily, it had not occurred to ll of the reporters in Philadelphia, or a triumphant r 0 conference might have turned embarrassing in a burr [who he was, though, Howard could not sir l S shove the comment aside. He paused to pick his words [l care. "It depends. As far as checking the epidemic goes, I suppose you're right. But if my blood test had just c , back positive, I'd scream bloody murder if somebody s 0 couldn't have HIVI."

"I can't argue with you there," the technician admi and the doctor took advantage of the moment of agree 8 A fresh batch of calc printouts was on his desk: ana of the effectiveness of a variant of HIVI at restoring immune system and protecting T-cells. The variant v as good as the basic drug. Howard made a note to a E writing up the new datum to somebody so it could gel E print. Negative information was information too some other lab would not have to waste time checking pi new subtype.

l It wouldn't be the sort of publication a news confe accompanied, though.

Howard put his head in his hands. He wished he'd P called the bloody conference in the first place. That w P iq exactly the word for it: dozens of people had been hurt i w _ what turned into a riot outside the Hall of the Populat --. Assembly. Censor Bryan had called for an investigation 4 the way the constabulary handled it, and Censor ken ! 1 had promptly vetoed the call. It was the worst falling-o l l the two chief executives had had in their term.

. Howard did not care about that; politics meant nc r to him. He cared very much about hurt people, th B --_ l-d he known the protest outside would cause so many of -m, he never would have gone to Philadelphia. -He sat up straight. No, that wasn't true. AIDS hurt more pie than riots ever would. The only way to fight it was h research. Research took denaires, lots of them, and the

_ht way to latch on to them was by shouting every piece of gress, even one as ambiguous as HIVI, to the housetops [he intercom buzzed.

He jumped, and was glad no one s with him to see it. "Mr. Tanaka is here to see you, sir," secretary said.

'Oh, yes, of course. Thank you, Doris. Send him in." I ward ran fingers through his thick brown hair. Joseph Tanaka had no official standing, but he had been friends h Censor Jennings since they were at middle school ether. "Jennings's eyes," the papers called him these

s 1

)oris opened the door for Tanaka. Howard rose to shake hand.

He had a strong grip, and looked a few years nger in person than in

photos--he was, of course lost exactly the censor's age. His sturdy, middle-aged intal features somehow went well with the conservative e velvet jacket and maroon ruffled shirt he wore. I 'Good of you to take time from your busy schedule, Dr. ward." Tanaka's voice was deep, almost gravelly, his mner straightforward."

'A pleasure." Howard waved to a chair. "Won't you sit end" sanaka did not. "I was hoping you'd show me around In."

Certainly." Straightforward indeed, Howard thought. l

['Follow me, then." He gave Tanaka a quick tour of the

> laboratories, ending with the bank of screens that , monitored the infected sims. The technician, fortunately .>had sense enough to keep his mouth shut. l When they were back in Howard's of five, Tanaka did at I ast take a seat. "Most interesting," he said, steeping his rers, "especially the sims' quarters. I must say, you treat jS Fern well." 'Certainly we do," Howard said. "For one example, they [.

I eat the same food as our staff buys at the cafeteria we pa through. " Tanaka gave a wry chuckle. "From what I know ME cafeterias, that's not necessarily a recommendation. Still, l l, see your point. You do well by the sims, as I said already." 7 He turned serious again. "Of course, you've also g , them AIDS." l ll "Mr. Tanaka," Howard said stiffly, "this research I gram operates under laws passed by the Popular Assen with funds appropriated by the Senate.

Neither censor fit to affix his veto to the laws of the appropriation.

I as you, I am conforming to them in every particular."

0 "I do not doubt that for a moment, Dr. Howard," Ha:.

E said. "What I've come to see is the result of that conforming 9,' After all, though they are not human beings, sims do I if] their own smaller measure of intelligence, and they did n consent to be experimented on."

Appalled, Howard burst out, "A sim cannot give In L ll formed consent! That's a fundamental principle of lawns tS, "Not quite what I meant," Tanaka said. "I doubt the M eager to die, though, of a disease they almost certa would not have contracted in the normal course of t ; , lives. Many people not usually supportive of the sim judE l movement--" He paused to let Howard make some unc plimentary remark, but the doctor stayed quiet. Shrugg l Tanaka went on, "--still have qualms at their If infected with AIDS." Id l Howard had dealt with officials for years, and had , trouble translating what they said into what they me PI Tanaka was talking about votes. The doctor took a mon lis to make sure his reply informed without antagoniF "They also have qualms, Mr. Tanakadid at I ast take a seat. "Most interesting," he said, steeping his rers, "especially the sims' quarters. I must say, you treat jS Fern well." 'Certainly we do," Howard said. "For one example, they [.

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Fll Ftees hne. Sims give me my best chance of fighting , in people. How can I do anything but use them?"

Chat would you do if there were no sims?" Tanaka s sked after thinking a few seconds himself.

the best l could," Howard answered. "Muddle along shimpanses and a lot of in vitro work, I suppose. It in't be the same. I think you've seen that here. A lot people would die while I--and a lot of other reers using sims, don't forget--struggled to translate Iswers we eventually got into clinical terms. We don't that problem with sims.

Their biochemistry is almost identical to ours."

[l Tanaka nodded and rose, showing the meeting was done.

tuck out his hand. "Thank you very much, Dr. [rd. You've been most interesting."

ave l? I'm glad. What will you tell Censor Jennings, [Tanaka blinked. "You're very forthright."

lE'I'm concerned about my program, sir."

ductantly, Dr. Howard, I have to say you needn't be. I Fink the Censor will be happy when I tell him that, :)u've made your points well. you also might have me another answer to my question just now, in which

lFse I would have said something different to Censor itnings."

nestly puzzled, Howard asked, "What might I have

'hen I asked what you'd do without sims, you might suggested going on with human defectives."

e doctor felt his face freeze. "Good day, Mr. Tanaka.

fine, E am certain, will show you out." He sat down tly. F Imdentand your reaction, Dr. Howard. As I said, you I the test nicely. The idea revolts me quite as much as

. s you, I assure you. But I had to know."

pod day," Howard repeated, unmollified. Nodding, Wheft. Howard was so filled with Fury that he did not whether he had hurt the DRC politically. He did not think he had- Tanaka plainly felt as he did.

He was also, he realized, furious at himself, and took a long while to figure out why. When he did, he wished he hadn't. If there were no sims, who could say what he might do to take a crack at AIDS? And who could say whether he would be able to look at himself in a mirror afterwards? He was not grateful to Tanaka for showing him a part of himself he would sooner have left unseen.

He got very little work done the rest of the day.

I The air waggon pulled slowly to a stop outside Terminus. When it was not moving anymore, a steward opened the door. Ken Dixon got his shoulder bag out from under his seat, worked his way up the aisle.

"Thanks for breaking thee trail for me," Melody Porter said from behind him.

"My pleasure," he said, adding "Oaf t " a moment later al another passenger stuck an accidental elbow in his belly. He turned his head back toward Melody. "You'll forgive me it I omit the gallant bow."

"This once," she said graciously. He snorted. i

"Have a pleasant stay in Terminus," the steward said if Dixon walked by, and then again to Melody. -i They walked out of the air waggon's cooled air and intZ the furious muggy heat of a Terminus August afternoon "What's the matter?"

Melody asked when Dixon suddenly stopped halfway down the descent ladder. In less polio voices, passengers behind them asked the same thing.

"Sorry. My spectacles just steamed up." Dixon took there off his nose, peered at them in nearsighted wonder, ant stuck them in his hip pocket. Holding tightly to the rasl, hat went carefully down the rest of the ladder. ski 1 Once down on the ground, he was relieved to disOl that the fog dissipated as his spectacles reached the sol sweltering temperature as their surroundings. He put theg back on. When they went inside the cooled station building he let out a blissful sigh.

Melody echoed him, adding, "Philadelphia summer ill bad, but this--" X

r _L S woloc, no llnlslleu. vvalKIng Iwemy yarus naa lett him covered

with a sweaty film. He wiped his forehead with the back of his hand. j
Through the station building's broad sweep of plate glass, he and Melody
watched a human boss supervise the gang of sims that was loading baggage
from the air waggon onto carts. He shook his head. "The seventeenth
century, alive and well in the twentieth," he said scornfully.

"Well," someone with an amused voice said at his elbow, "you sound like
the chap I'm looking for. Look like him too," the young man added.

He looked the way the Philadelphia committee said he idlould: a tall man
with a good many blacks in his ancestry Shho wore a thick mustache.
"You're Patrick?" Dixon asked, as he had been told to do.

"Sorry, no. Stephen's the name," the fellow said. They l nodded at
each other. Amateurs' games, Dixon thought, but good enough--he
hoped--for the moment. Later--later was another matter. He put it
aside.

"Here comes the luggage." Melody had been watching Me sims tossing bags
onto the conveyer belt.

They walked over to it. Stephen nudged Dixon. "Is she ,.

really the one who's his great-granddaughter?" he whist Sered, not
wanting her to hear.

i?"Great-great, yeah." /, "Whoa." The respect in Stephen's voice and
eyes was just l .

this side of awe. Dixon's lingering doubts cleared up. No ,l
infiltrator could be that impressed over her ancestry

He and Melody had boarded the air waggon early; their ags,
naturally, were among the last ones out, having been X [bred beneath
everyone else's. "So much for efficiency," rt iFody sighed when she had
hers. Dixon's finally appeared ouple of minutes after that.

"Come on," Stephen said. He led them to an omnibus with PEACHTREE
STREET on the destination placard. It roared off, a little more than
half full, about ten minutes later. It was, Dixon discovered
thankfully, cooled.

t Stephen rose from his seat at a stop on Peachtree Street, in L _] n
the midst of a neighborhood with many more apartment q blocks than
private houses. Dixon thought himself ready for the blast of heat that
would greet him when he got off S the omnibus, and was almost right. ;
n F "The collegium is over there," Stephen said, pointing west- Dixon
could see a couple of tall buildings over the i -- tops of the
apartments. "In this neighborhood, no one will , pay any attention to
you; everybody will figure you're just .

a couple of new students here for the start of fall term."

"Good," Melody said briskly. She turned around, trying to orient
herself. "Where's the DRC from here? That way?"

Stephen gave her a respectful glance. "Yes, northwest of here, maybe
three or four miles."

Fly she said again. "We'll be staying with you, I gather, until we get

down to business?"

"That's right. People float in and out of my cube all the time; the landlord's used to it. As long as he gets paid on the first of every month and nobody screams too loud, he doesn't care. Half the cubes in his block are like that."

1 Stephen started walking down the street. "Come on. It's this way."

Following, Dixon asked, "How alert are they likely to be at the DRC?"

!"Not very, I hope. Since the word came down from Philadelphia that this was going to happen, Terminus E ll hasn't heard much from us about justice for sims. We've been quiet, just letting everybody relax and think we've ii forgotten what we're for."

"Outstanding," Dixon said. "If they were alert, either t 0 this wouldn't work at all or a lot of people might end up hurt on account of us, which wouldn't do the cause any good."

"Not Stephen agreed. "But we have made the two connections we'll need most: one in the calc department, the other F in food services."

"The calc department I can see, but why food services?" Stephen told him why. He grinned. Melody laughed out [t loud.

V Ri E _

HE

Al _ _ I -- _ I -...:" J _ .

! Stephen turned ott the street, lea tmem into an apartrnenz r block and up three flights of stairs. By the time they got to t the fourth floor, Dixon was sweating for reasons that had v nothing to do with Terminus's climate. "My arms'll be as long as a shimpanse's if I have to carry these bags one more flight," he complained.

"You don't. We're here." Stephen had his key out and opened the door to his cube. "Here, this will help." He turned on the cooler.

Nodding gratefully, Dixon set down his bags and shut the door behind him and Melody.

t The cube was not big; the luggage Dixon had dropped nd the two bedrolls on the floor effectively swallowed the living room. A table covered with what looked like floor Plans was shoved into one corner.

Melody made a beeline for that. Dixon was content just to stand and rest for a minute.

Stephen handed him a glass of iced coffee. He gulped it down fast enough to make his sinuses hurt. "Thanks," he [said, squeezing his eyes shut to try to make the pain go i away.

>"No problem." StepheVs eyes traveled to the bedrolls. He lowered his voice a little. "I don't know what kind of Frangement the two of you have, but I'm not here all the ti'ille. " L Dixon looked at Melody, who was engrossed in architect ural drawings. "I don't quite know either,"

he said, also quietly. "I was sort of hoping this trip would let me find out.!"

"Like that, eh? All right. Like I said, I'll be gone a loss. I expect you'll have the chance to learn."

"Chance to learn what?" Melody looked up from the floor plans, beckoned. "Come over here, the two of you."

Stephen, just how much support can we count on from your people here? If we can put folks in a couple of places at the same time, we may actually bring this off. If I read this right, we can get in and out here pretty fast."

They bent over the plans together.

[K I The night guard's footsteps echoed down the quiet hallway. j Except for him, it was empty. He was sleepy and bored. He turned a corner. Gray light from the bank of monitors lit the corridor ahead. The night technician was leaning back E in his swivel chair, reading a paperback. He looked bored he too.

"Hello, Edward," the guard said. "Slow here tonight."

I "Isn't it, though, Lloyd?" The technician put the book W.

down on his thigh, open, so he could keep his place. "Place is like a morgue when the cales go haywire--everybody _ i packs it in and goes home early."

Lloyd nodded, not quite happily. "Getting so no one can think anymore without the damn gadgets to help 'em." He glanced at the screens. "That's something sims don't have to worry about."

"Just swive and sleep and eat," Edward agreed. "It could be worse." Then, because he was a fair-minded man, he added, "A lot of times it is--especially when the new drugs go thumbs-down."

"AIDS." Like everyone else at the DRC, the guard made it a swear word. "How's he doing?"

Having been-free of symptoms for eight months now on 2 I HIVI, Matt was a being to conjure with in these halls.

2 Everyone worried over him. The technician perfectly understood Lloyd's concern. "He's fine, just worn out from the L 10 females again."

"Good." Lloyd yawned till the hinge of his jaw cracked : like a knuckle. His eyes shifted from the monitors to a coffeepot on a hot plate. "I need another cup of that."

Liz "I'll join you." Edward got up and poured for both of them.

"Thanks." The guard sipped. He made a face. "Give rnei some sugar, will you? It's bitter tonight--tastes like it's. bSen S sitting in the pot for a week." t r "It is viler than usual, isn't it?" The technician aZed cream and sugar to his own brew.

W Lloyd finished, tossed his cup at a trash can under the ii coffeeDot.

He missed, muttered to himself, and bent to pick up

the cup. Then he ambled down the hall. ;

He yawned again, even wider than before. He glared back toward the technician's station. The coffee hadn't done him much good, had it? He put a hand on the wall of the corridor. For some reason, he did not feel very steady on his feet. Before he knew what was happening, he found himself sliding to the tile floor. He opened his mouth to call for help. Only a snore came out.

Just in front of the monitors, the technician lolled in his air, his head thrown back bonelessly. The paperback lay

under the swivel chair's wheels, where it had fallen. Its cover was bent.

That evening night was as hot as Terminus day, with the added nuisance of mosquitoes. Crouched on the wide lawn outside the DRC complex, Dixon was trying to keep his swearing to whispers as he slapped at bugs.

"When do we go?" he asked for the fourth time, like a small child impatient to get out. One of the lighted windows in the big building went dark for a moment, then lit again. "Now," Melody said at last. "Good luck to all of us." Bople rose and ran forward, their feet scuffling softly on the grass. Automatic doors hissed open, leading into a passage that bent sharply. Out of sight from outside was a guard station. A guard slept in the chair; a cup of coffee had spilled on the desk in front of him.

The fluorescent lights overhead made Stephen's teeth gleam whitely as he grinned. "Food services," he said. Also grinning, Dixon nodded and gave him a thumbs-up.

"We split here," Melody declared, refusing to be dissuaded even for a moment. "Stephen, your group goes that way, toward elevator B.

Bring back as much HIVE and as many syringes and needles as you can get your hands on."

Right." He and two other young men dashed away."

"Out here in fifteen minutes, or you get left behind," Melody called after them. Then she turned to Dixon and the young woman with him, whom they knew only as Deli. "Now we head up ourselves and get Matt."

The elevators right across from the guard station went up to the simulator. Dixon thumbed the UP button. A door whooshed open. The three raiders--no, liberators, Dixon thought--crowded in.

He hit 14 a moment before Melody got it on the control panel. The door closed. Acceleration pressed against the soles of his shoes.

The door opened again. "How convenient," Melody said as they tumbled out; the bank of monitor screens was in the same position on floor 14 as the guard station on ground floor. The man in the chair in front of them was solidly out as the guard fell below.

"Good--the screens have room numbers on them. That's the one thing I

wasn't sure of," Dixon said. "Is that Ma it "Let's see," Melody said, coming up beside him following his pointing finger. "Yes, that's him. Root 1427B, is it? Let's go."

NO ENTRY WITHOUT AUTHORIZED ACCOMPANIST : read a large sign above closed double doors. Dixon .t them. They were locked. "Figured as much," he said.

stepped aside. "All yours, Dee."

She didn't speak; she never said much, as far as Di could tell.

she was a locksmith by trade, though, l. carried a set of picks on her belt. Her motions were qa I and sure. In less than a minute, she had the doors q "Come on," she said.

i . They went quietly, not wanting to disturb any of :- sleeping sims but Matt. "1427B," Melody said, stopp Dee took a step toward the door, but Melody was air trying it. Melody raised a hand in triumph, like a cridX after a century.

Matt woke to the sound of the opening door. His l of mouth fell open in surprise when he saw three stra humans coming in. Who? he signed. What?

14 "Henry Quick was my great-great-grandfather," tip hi said, voice hardly above a whisper. Her fingers echdeE

words. am l; i l ---J -no t was tile bUUIIU bl111b vllaue WIICII they wets depressed or interested. Dixon shook his head in wonder; F had lost track of how many times he had seen that Faction when Melody said who she was. Somehow all sims everywhere knew that Henry Quick had been the first man t worked to give them justice.

That? Matt signed again. Why you here? --"To make you free," Dixon said. As Melody had--as the did who communicated with sims--he repeated his en words with sign-talk. "Come with us. Do you want fib spend the rest of your life cooped up in here?"

E u Matt shrugged. Food good. Females here. Feel good now.

sick.

Nixon scowled. That wasn't the answer he was looking FMelody asked quietly, "Do you want to be sick again?"

Mu probably will, if you stay here. Do you remember what is like when you were sick?" z he question was not quite theoretical; like very young --Siren, sims often let the past recede quickly. But Dixon that what Matt had undergone was not something he 5would easily forget. The sims nostrils flared in alarm his brow-ridges, his'eyes went wide. No! he signed r ehemently shook his head. He climbed off the bed. i with you.

Ood," Dee said. she turned and started down the hall. Ly and Matt followed. Dixon came with them a , _t later, after leaving a souvenir on the bed to give Dr. Howard something to think about .

W They hurried out through the double doors. Dee locked t .

gain. This time, riding the elevator made Dixon feel 5l .

light.

It!" Matt said again when they were in the lobby. He let the unconscious guard there, signed, Not to be at's what he thought," Dixon said. Matt looked at I confusion. "Never mind. Come on." y dadled out of the DRC and ran toward one of the rselesses parked on the roadway close to the edge of n. It was not, strictly speaking, a legal place to park, : but traffic regulations were not likely to De elllux wee small hours. s One of the horselesses sped off. As it passed under a streeG lamp, Dixon saw it was crowded with people.

Triumph-flared in him. "They must have got the HIVI! And Welt got Matt!" The driver of the remaining horseless threw open the door across from him. In, Melody signed to Matt. She, Dixon, and Dee came piling after the sim. No sooner had Dee slammed the door than the driver roared away from the Dixon started to say something to the sim, but before he could, Melody leaned over and kissed him for a long time.

When she finally let Dixon go, by some miracle he remembered what he had been about to tell Matt: "free! You're frog at last!" , That got him kissed again, which was, he though dizzily, a long way from bad. I " 'Free,' " Dr. Peter Howard read. It was the last word of the pamphlet on Matt's bed, printed twice as big and black as any of the others. In Howard's mouth, it sounded obscene Normally among the most self-controlled of men, he save I agely crumpled the pamphlet and flung it to the floor.X t The security officer who picked it up gave him amp proachful look. "There might have been useful eviderz 5 there, doctor."

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"Our investigation into that part S the affair is just beginning." l S "Wonderful." Howard turned away. Slowly, clumsily, h l X made his way down the hall. Getting out of the way la other people seemed more trouble than it was worth. It's.

[if I were one of the walking wounded, he thought--al -z. then realized, a moment later, I am.

10: - is it fiat the broad expanse of walnut was a fortress wall to hold Me outside world outside. In a bigger sense, he had used the E whole DRC the same way. Well, the outside world had Unfaded with a vengeance.

And with such stupidity, he thought, filled with rage that was all the more consuming for having no outlet. He had only skimmed the pamphlet the thieves left bopen the door across from him. In, Melody signed to Matt. She, Dixon, and Dee came piling after the sim. No sooner had Dee slammed the door than the driver roared away from the Dixon started to say something to the sim, but before he could, Melody leaned over and kissed him for a long time.

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the thieves left behind to explain their handiwork, but he had seen and
heard the phrases there often enough over the years.

His fists clenched till nails bit into flesh. At the pain, he opened
them again; no matter how furious he was, he stayed careful about his
hands. But it was not, was not, was not his fault that sims were as
they were. In earlier days, he knew, people had thought other races of
people to be inferior breeds. Sims did that much, at least, to stop
man's ..

Humanity to man, by showing what an inferior breed he is

Howard was like. I'll bet the security man stuck his head into the office,
breaking

'Howard's chain of thought. "Outside greencoats are here to see you,
sir," he said. I bet

r "Send them in," Howard sighed. Normally, Terminus's Jugular
constabulary stayed away from the DRC. Normally, Howard thought--he
would not get to use that word again any time soon.

B; No sooner had the greencoat--actually, the fellow was in ordinary
clothes, blue breeches and a yellow tunic--come in than the phone chimed.
"Excuse me," Howard said, thinking, everything happens at once. The
greencoat nodded.

*-Howard picked up the phone. An excited voice said in his ear, "This is
Butler, at the Terminus Constitution.

He had a report that a sim with AIDS has been taken to the Disease
Research Center--Hello? Is that you, Dr. Howard? Are you there?"

"I'm here," Howard said. No point in breaking the news. Like the
greencoat in his office, this Butler was only the first of many.

n Matt was confused. Dealing with people often left him feeling that
way, but he had lived in his old home in the tower for a long time, and
mostly knew what to expect.

With these new people, he had no idea what was coming next.

Shaking his head, he got out of bed--the third new, strange, not quite comfortable bed he'd had in as many nights--and used the toilet.

He had to strain to make the urine go through his penis, which was stiff with a morning erection. Stiffer than usual, even; he missed the females g with whom he'd been living.

He flushed the toilet, sat down on it to comb his red brown hair.

That was another reason he missed the fe I' males: there was a big patch on his back that he could not reach. In the towers, sims by twos and threes would speed a lot of time combing each other all over. It was somethu to do.

He sniffed, and felt his broad nostrils expand wi pleasure.

Breakfast was cooking--sausages today, from t smell. He liked sausages.

He went out to the kitchen. The man and woman wl had taken him from the tower were there, along with t: strange man and woman whose house this was. They we all drinking coffee. They looked up as he came in.

Good morning, he signed.

"Good morning," the people replied, with mouths a hands. "Help yourself," added the woman who lived here. Emily was her name, Matt remembered.

He nodded his thanks. Along with the sausages we sweet rolls and slices of apple. He filled his plate, tool glass of water (he did not care for coffee).

g Behind him, Emily's mate Isaac whistled and said, ' "Certainly nothing wrong with his appetite now."

"We've noticed that," replied Ken, one of the ones w, had taken him away. "Hope it won't put you to too mu trouble. "

"Don't worry," Isaac said.

Matt sat down at the table and started to eat. Erlri In -r --*e're proud to help keep him out of the DRC, folks, and taking him was a grand gesture. But do you know what you'll do with him in the end?"

"We were thinking of getting him to one of the preserves and setting him loose there," Ken said, "but--" His voice wailed away.

"With the AIDS virus still in him, we can't do that, " Melody finished for him. "Not without spreading AIDS among the wild sims."

People often talked around sims as if they could not understand spoken words because they could not say them. Watt put down his fork so he could sign, Feel good.

if "We know you do, Matt," Melody said gently, touching his hand for a moment with her small hairless one. "But no matter how good you feel, you aren't well. The sickness is l inside you."

She and Ken had said that before. It made no sense to Matt. If he did not feel sick, how could he be sick? Feel good, he repeated.

He watched the humans roll their eyes and shrug. He shrugged too.

"There's another problem," Ken added. "He'll feel well only as long as we have HIVI for him." He looked down at his hands. "Maybe we should have thought a little longer about that, for his sake."

"Whine did the best we could," Melody said. "He's out now. Terry can't do any more experimenting on him. He's free, for as long as we can keep him that way."

Matt had heard almost identical talk every day since he left the towers. It was about him, he knew, but it did not fill to connect to him.

[Then Isaac said something new: "I don't think we can keep him free. We can keep him away from the doctors, sure, but only he can make himself free."

Dixon scowled; Melody rose abruptly from the table. "--'ll be taking off soon, I think." Even Matt, who did not use speech himself, could hear the anger in her voice.

It: He ate another sausage. Free was one of the many words Ode used that gave him trouble. Ideas like bread or cat or light green or jump or sideways were easy enough to deal with. He could even count, though sometimes he had trouble remembering which number went with how many things or whether he had attached a number to each of the things in the group he happened to be counting.

But he could not eat free or see it or do it. The closest he could come to it in his own mind was do whatever I want. Right now he was full and felt well. He wouldn't have minded coupling, but Ken and Melody had taken him away from his females and he found human women ugly. Still, he was reasonably content. Did that make him free?

He didn't know. .]

"Come on, Matt," Melody said. "We have to get moving. We've imposed on these good people quite enough, that's obvious." She walked out of the kitchen.

"Don't take it that way, Melody," Emily said. "Isaac just--"

"Never mind," Ken said, before anyone else could talk. "You put us up for the night, and we're grateful. We all share wanting to make things better for sims, and that's enough, isn't it?"

Nobody said anything. Matt wondered what the answer to the question was. In the towers, people had wanted answers to questions all the time, and were upset when they didn't get them. But Ken and Melody and Isaac and Emily were just leaving this one lying around.

Matt shook his head at the vagaries of people. - ,_

Melody came back wearing rubber gloves and carrying razor and a syringe. "Give me your arm, Matt," she said. "Not need, he protested. Feel good. v

He had said the same thing back in the towers, and did the same success with it: none. "Give me your arm," Melody repeated. "You want to keep feeling good, don't you?"

He nodded resignedly and held out his right arm. The hair on its underside had been shaved a few days before he left the tower, but it was growing in again. The razor had scraped it away, leaving a long, narrow stretch of pinkish

skin exposed. Now Melody could see exactly where he put the needle.

Matt's lips skinned back from his teeth in a grimace of pain. The people in the towers were much better at using a syringe. They hardly hurt him at all. Finally, the ordeal was done. Melody left the syringe on the table. "Boil it or put it in a glass full of bleach before you throw it away," she had said to Emily and Isaac. "Make sure you get rid of that virus."

Not sick, nothing wrong, Matt signed, adding a moment later, "But my arm hurts."

"We're glad you feel all right," Melody said, smiling in a way that made her seem more appealing to Matt than she had before, "but the virus is still in your blood. We don't want to take any risk of its spreading."

Matt sighed. The people in the tower had talked that way, but it made no sense to him. Blood is blood, he signed.

"Never mind," Ken said again. "Let's get going."

Matt accompanied him and Melody out to the horseless in front of Emily's and Isaac's house. Isaac stayed behind.

Emily waved from the porch. The morning sun shined off a gold front tooth.

Ken started the horseless. He and Melody shared the front seat; Matt had the back to himself. "Springfield?" Ken asked as he pulled out into traffic.

"Springfield," Melody agreed. "I've got the town map here."

"You won't need that for a few hours," he said. "All I need to worry about now is finding my way to Lexington."

Matt listened to the two people with half an ear at best. As they watched houses, trees, open spaces go by. That wasn't very interesting, either. He'd done too much of it already, in the last few days. After a while, one house, one tree, one open space looked like another. If anything could be more boring for him than traveling in a horseless, he had no idea what it was.

His eyes tried to glaze, but even that was denied him; it was too early in the day for him to fall asleep. He played.

With his fingers for a bit. That soon palled. He started stroking himself, then stopped. For some reason, he knew people did not like anyone doing that out in the open.

He started to sing instead. His song had no words; I tongue and lips could not shape them. But the hoots a grunts he let out in their place had rhythm of a sort, rhythm he made plainer by pounding on his thighs with the palm of his hands. His head bobbed happily. As far he was concerned it was a fine song.

I He was the only one who thought so. Before very long I Ken burst out, "Will you please stop that infernal racket Matt subsided; he was used to obeying people. But he was not pleased about it this time. He held up his hands so K could see them in the mirror. Like my song, he sang grumpily.

"Is that what you call it?" Ken said. "I don't."

Ken Matt held up his hands again. Not free to sing? he asked > Not freed, Ken almost drove off the road. "Watch where you're going," Melody exclaimed. "What's the matter with you?! Ken told her what the matter was; she laughed and laughed. She turned round in her seat so she could sign with Matt

well as speak to him. "sing all you like."

He opened his mouth to begin again, then paused. Melody asked.

"Because--because--" Melody stopped, finally Jesus singing, "Because we do want to help Sims be freer, but it surprised us to have a sim--you--use the word to us."

Matt made an uncertain noise deep in his throat. TE didn't seem very funny to him. He gave up and started singing again. Ken made a noise remarkably similar to his, but he didn't say anything.

They got to Springfield before noon; Ken drove around while, trying to find the next safe house. "Fancier part town than I expected," he observed. The house was bigger than the ones where they had stayed before and the yard had a fence around it, but Matt, who was used to the immense, three-story towers, remained unimpressed. SI

day in a horseless was the way to freedom, he was running to doubt that he wanted any part of it.

His boredom fell away as he walked through the front door. A female sim of about his own age was on her hands and knees in front of the house, weeding in a flower bed. "Wa!" he said enthusiastically.

She looked over her shoulder and smiled at him. "--Hoo!" she said back. Her backside twitched a little.

"Uh-oh," Ken and Melody said at the same time. Matt had little attention to them. Something else was on his

, plump, middle-aged man came out on the front porch of the house.

"Hello, my friends," he said. "I'm glad to see you. I'm Saul. Rhoda is on the phone, but she'll be out in a moment, I'm sure."

Glad to see you, Saul." Ken nodded toward the female. "And who is this?"

. "Lucy?" Saul frowned. Then he looked from her to Matt.

Matt saw that Saul was not looking at his face. He looked down at himself. His enthusiasm was quite visible. "Oh," Saul said.

"I see"

Yes," Ken said. He did not sound happy.

Well," Saul said, and let that hang for a while before coming as if with happy inspiration, "let's go inside and uncle After that we can see what comes up." He looked last again, and broke into a laugh that sounded anything but cheerful.

, ' The prospect of food was almost enough to divert Matt and Lucy.

He went with Ken and Melody to join Saul later. with only a brief sideways glance at the female sim.

Lucy put down the trowel she had been using and started allowing everyone else in. Matt felt a smile spread over his face, a female--maybe this was what Ken and Melody meant by freedom. He had had this much back in the tower, outside, at least, no one did hurtful things to him, save the injection each morning. He'd had that before too, along with much else, none of it pleasant. Getting away

tram those proceedings, pokings, and stings made even the long stretches of riding in a horseless seem not too bad.

But then he heard Saul say, "Lucy, why don't you stay outside and finish what you're doing? Rhoda will bring you something soon, I'm sure."

Matt let out an indignant grunt and sent a look of approval to Ken and Melody. He was surprised and dismayed when they sided with Saul. "Come on, Matt," Ken said. "Lur first. We'll worry about everything else later."

Sulkily, Lucy went back to work. Before she did, though she gave Matt a glance full of promise from beneath her brow-ridges. He let himself be steered into the house, but he noticed about lunch was that there was a lot of it.:

ended up not being hungry anymore, but with no idea what he'd eaten.

After a while, Lucy did come in, to use the toilet. Before she could get into the same room as Matt, Rhoda found something for her to do out in the back yard. Again Ken and Melody failed to interfere.

Matt glowered at them. That did not strike him as anything like freedom.

Finally he had waited as long as he could. He got up and started toward the back of the house. "The toilet is through that door," Ken said sharply.

Matt snorted. Not want toilet, he signed. Want--H. forearm pumped graphically.

"No!" All the people in the room spoke together.

The flat refusal brought Matt up short, and also made . . .

him angry. Yes, he signed, nodding so vigorously that his long, chinless jaw thumped against his chest. Want I couple. Not couple since leave tower. Want to. You, you couple, Yes? He pointed at Saul and Rhoda.

Rhoda was even rounder than her husband. She turned pink at the question, but answered, "Yes, of course we do. Saul nodded.

Matt turned to Ken and Melody. You, you couple, yes?

They both turned pink, and looked away from each other for a moment. "Yes, we do," Ken admitted at last. He still did not look at Melody until she reached out and took his hand in hers. I _ a l l - L _ L --L --L]

If now I couple too, Matt signed. I couple too. He headed for the back door again.

"No!" everyone said again.

Now he stared at them in disbelief. Not free to couple? he signed. Not free? That had worked just this morning; he was sure it would again.

But it failed. "No, Matt," Melody told him. "I'm sorry, but you're not free to couple."

Not free? Matt signed, wondering if he had heard correctly.

Why not free? When his hands had finished signing, they curled of themselves into fists. He saw Melody--and everyone else--look alarmed at that. His fists were stronger than people.

Their fear did not stop them from arguing with him, though. Ken said, "You can't couple with Lucy because you

will have the AIDS virus in you. If you couple with her, you'll give her the same sickness you have."

Not sick, Matt protested. Feel fine. Feel fine long time now.

You give medicine--hurt arm--so I feel fine, yes?

"You feel fine, yes," Melody said, "but what makes you sick is still in you, and can go out when you couple. And we've no medicine for Lucy. I'm sorry, Matt." She spread her hands in a gesture and people shared.

Matt only shook his head in reply. What she said made no sense to him. If he felt well, how could he have anything inside him that made him sick? And when he mated, the AIDS thing that came out of him was AIDS.

AIDS was just AIDS. How could it make a female sick?

AIDS Besides--In tower, he signed, couple with many females.

Why not sick now. Why this female here get sick, if they not sick now? He grinned, pleased at his own cleverness it was AIDS mental effort than he usually made.

The people seemed to understand that too. Ken rolled his eyes--something else that was not part of sign-talk but that Matt understood--and said to no one in particular, "Just at we need, a sim who cites precedent on us."

But Matt did not follow. He did not waste time on it in that case, for Melody was saying to him, "The female sims the network--in the tower--had the AIDS virus in them since WU, St. Louis University 11=1 11 you Couples WOW [nem. they were already ill the same way you are."] They not ill. They feel fine, Matt signed. Feel good. His hips moved involuntarily as he remembered how good the female backs at the tower had felt. He wanted that feeling again. But Melody still would not let him go. "Matt," she persisted. "those females in the tower were getting medicine too, just like you, weren't they?" Yes, and they feel fine, Matt answered. He

"This is getting us nowhere," Saul broke in. "If you're thinking of letting him couple with Lucy, you two, Rhonda and I will have to ask you to leave."

"We never would have come here if we'd known you had a female sim," Ken said. They glared at each other. Hoping he was forgotten, Matt started toward the back of the house again.

"Wait!" Melody said. Resentfully, he turned back. He was tired of her trying to tell him things that obviously weren't so. What she said, though, did not look to have anything to do with his lust for Lucy: "You remember that I'm Henry Quick's great-great-granddaughter, don't you, Matt?" He nodded. That was one reason, and a big one, why Hal gone along when she and Ken and Dee came bursting into his room in the tower. No one connected with Henry Quick could mean harm to a sim. He was sure of that.

"Then please believe me, in Henry Quick's name, when I tell you that you shouldn't couple with Lucy, or with other female sim out here," Melody said earnestly. "Please, Matt."

He looked away from her. He did not think she was eyeing. He wished he did. Not understanding, he signed.

She sighed. "I know, Matt. Will you do as I ask anyway?"

Yes, he signed, giving up with more than a twinged regret--this Lucy was quite a desirable female. Handing rights he asked. "Is that sarcasm?" Saul asked. He asked.

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"--Hush," Melody said. "Of course not." she turned back to Matt. "Yes, of course using your hand is all right.... You might go into another room first."

Matt went, thinking grumpily that people from outside Love towers, even if they were related to Henry Quick, explained about every little thing. Then he thought of

Melody again, and the heat of that thought drove from his mind any

worries about people.

. -. pat evening, Dixon sat up on the guest-room bed he flared with Melody. "Poor miserable bastard," he said as a> peeled off the rubber he was wearing. "I wonder if I if should have offered him one of these."

"That never occurred to me." Melody sat lFngur afterward was not her style. She looked _ _.

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,Mo you think he could have used one?" W Dixon had been half joking, or more than ha _ * gave it some serious thought, and regretfully shook his

head. "I doubt it. I massacred a fair number of them learning how, and I suspect he wouldn't care if he tore one putting it on. Sims aren't careful over details like that."

"No, they aren't," Melody admitted, adding, "A lot of people aren't, either."

"I suppose not," Dixon said. "But if a man didn't like a rubber, he probably wouldn't take it off halfway through and go on without it."

"I'm afraid Matt might. That's the other reason I didn't think I ought to try to give him one."

"I'll tell you why I like rubbers." Melody waited for Dixon to let out a questioning grunt. Then she said, "Because with them, you have to go clean up."

"Harumph" in almost high dudgeon, he did just that.

When he came back to the bed, Melody was wearing a t-shirt and a serious expression. "Ken, why did you get into the sim justice movement in the first place?" - "What brought that on?" he asked, blinking, as he sat beside her.

"I don't know." Rather to his relief, she did not meet his eyes.

But she did go on even so: "I suppose it's just that

we seem to keep emphasizing the ways sims are different up to us, and less than people, not the ways we're the same."

"Melody, they are different from us," he said, as gently as he could.

Her mouth went wide and thin, a sure dam sign. All the same, he

continued, "No matter how much you want justice for sims, that doesn't mean you'll ever elect a censor, or even see one learn to read."

"I've known people--not you," he added hastily, "who sometimes seem to forget that."

"I don't think you answered me. Everything you say sounds as though it ought to put you on the other side. Now she did look at him, in the same way she might stare at a roach on her salad plate. ".* 'S

"Oh, for heaven's sake," he said in some exasperation. "Doesn't my being here count for anything? Look, as far as I can see, we have a responsibility to sims, just because they aren't as smart as we are and can't stand against us with people on their side. That's always been true, I suppose it's especially true now that we have machines to do us instead of sims. We don't need to exploit them all and we shouldn't. All rights do I pass? Can we go to sleep?"

She seemed taken aback at his vehemence, and needed a moment to collect herself and nod. "All right," she said and turned out the light. - I

"Good." He lay down beside her. His outbursts startled him a little, too. He thought about what he'd believed all of it. That was not

the problem.

The problem, he eventually realized, was that he had given Melody all his reasons. One of them was the house being just where he was now, in bed with her.

Would he have worked for Sims' justice without hope? He looked inside himself and decided he would appease his conscience and let him slide toward sleep. More time on the road was coming tomorrow.

Doris dumped the morning's pile of mail on Dr. Jar's desk, then went back to her own station outside high Howard went quickly through the stack, dividing it into things he had to deal with now, things that could wait, and things that could go straight into the trash. The wastebasket gave a resounding metallic clunk as he got rid of the stack.

An instant picture of a smile fell out of an envelope as he opened it.

Swearing, the doctor pulled out the one that accompanied the photo. The lead line shouted, "IS STILL FREE!" Howard jabbed the intercom button with his thumb. "Doris came on, he growled, "Fetch me Coleman. Got another one."

"Yes, Dr. Howard."

While he waited for the security chief to get there, he read through the sheet. It was much like the others that had to the DRC--and the copies that had gone to television and papers all across the Federated Commonwealth. Whoever had Matt knew how to keep reminding himself about it.

Some of the phrases were ones he had seen before: "I'm a victim of experimentation,"

"freed from the world of certain death in the laboratory." Howard's I quirked sourly. That last was an out-and-out lie. He knew it, and he expected that the people who had stolen it too. He hoped they did.

The intercom buzzed. Coleman came in without waiting for him to go through the formalities; he and Howard had been seeing a lot of each other lately. Coleman was in his sixties with red hair going white at the temples.

His movements were quick and jerky, as if he had abundant time seeking some kind, any kind, of outlet.

Howard fairly snatched the picture and sheet out of Howard's hands then made a grab for the envelope still sitting on the doctor's desk. "Posted in Philadelphia," he noted, adding a note later, "Different printer from the one for the text."

Howard finally came to somebody who sent it on to us. Makes it difficult to trace."

"If possible, it would seem a better word," Howard said. He hoped to get a rise out of the security officer, he was disappointed. All Coleman did was nod. "Nothing we do with it," he said gloomily. "I'll pass it on to Terminus greencoats, but no reason to think they'll do anything more on it than on any of the others."

"Meanwhile, of course, all the commentators and referees in the country go right on giving it to us," Howard growled.

"Nothing I can do about that," Coleman said. "Lon these folks care to, they'll feed the newsies whatever I want. "

"Oh, get the hell out of here," the doctor shouted at h Unruffled, Coleman took the photo, the sheet of paper, the envelope and left. The door closed softly behind him Howard stared down at his hands, ashamed of his an outburst. Matt had been gone more than a month now, .

no one was having any luck tracking him down. No even knew what commonwealth he was in. The FCA s just too big, had too many people--and sims--to m finding ones who did not want to be found easy.

The doctor was also aware that Coleman had not b quite right.

Howard knew to the hundredth of a cubic ll how much HIVI the thieves had stolen. He knew almost the day how long that HIVI would hold off the AIDS vi in Matt.

He also knew what would happen when the HIVI s gone. For Matt's sake, he hoped the people who had him d too.

The coughing from the next room went on and on and:, Ken Dixon looked at Melody, who was looking at the do door. Jury had drawn her mouth down, put two deep lit between her eyes and other, fainter ones on her forehe She looked, he thought, the way she would when she was forty. It was not the kind of thought he usually had. T] endless cough, though, left him with mortality on his GC

mind. a s "The antibiotic isn't helping much," he said-In fact, it wasn't helping at all. He and Melody both knefX that. although she had not vet admitted it out loud. 4,5 j :WUX llC WUUIU Iwt dllbWC llllll Ullb 6lllllg, ClUICI. 1 _

wshe did, saying, "No," in a low voice.

it's probably not a bacterial pneumonia, then," he said.

jL'it's the one caused by protozoans. " Yes," Melody said, as low as before.

=Which means Matt's immune system is going south

.n, or he never would have come down with it," Dixon l

. He wished Melody would make things easier by sing with the chain of logic, but after her two one-word ments she went back to moodily staring at the bedroom r. He would have to say it himself, then: "Which means :IDS virus is loose in him again." :Y, Yes," Melody said--whispered, really. As quietly as silk spoken, she began to cry; Dixon did not realize it until xw tear tracks glistening on her cheeks.

"Oh, Ken," she , and then sobbed out loud for the first time, "we I--so--hardl " : know. Oh, how I know." His voice was heavy. He Id have lightened it, but could not. He was tasting It now, for the first time in his life. The young think gs come easily, as if by right, that the world shapes itself e bidding of their will. one by one, generation by ration, they learn how small a part of truth that is, I' the world shapes them far more than they it. H hen me Melody said, "What are we going to do?" he knew ll : he had to answer. Knowing hurt worse than

staying r I would have. E e said, "We're going to give Matt back to the
DRC." 11 What?" She stared at him.

Chat's the only place he can get more HIVI, and DUt it he won't go on
too long. If this round of Imonia doesn't finish him, the next one
will, or some L other infection he won't be able to fight off and we
can't Come on, Melody, is it so or notes ," she said grimly. AIDS was
not a quick or easy way); too many thousands of deaths had left
everyone ting that. "But they'll only go on using him as a lab It "A
live one," Dixon broke in, "at least for a while, and

0: with the HIVI he feels all right, tar as long _ effective."

"However long that is." Melody was still fighting t!

idea. i ;i "Longer than he has with us." i She flinched. "The causeS
"If you think that cause is worth more th happens to one sim in
particular, how are you any diffeit from Dr. Howard?"

"That's a low blow, Ken." But she did not give direct reply. For some
time, she did not give him at all. she finally said, "Let's see what
Matt has to it. If he wants to go back--oh, shit." It was not I
concession, but Dixon knew it was as much as he w 9 They went to the
closed door. Melody, usually impetu L ous, stayed behind Dixon, as if
to say this was not her pla-- He opened the door. They both frowned at
the s_ sickroom smell that met them. _

Matt lay on his back on the bed. He lifted his ha_ couple.of inches
when they came in, then let it fall bacx the pillow, as though the
effort of holding it up was top much For him. For the moment, though,
he was breattjS well. _

He had lost weight, but had no appetite; a bowl of 5--1 almost full,
stood untouched on the nightstand. His eyes ' were the only live things
in his thin face. He looked, Dab thought, like a camp survivor from the
Russo-Pru War. Dixon knew the comparison was a cliché. NonE less, it
fit all too well. 'D3 .it Once inside the bedroom, Melody took the
lead; 'ZxonlX idea might have been her own, once she was with l< "You've
stopped coughing," she said quietly. "Aire:3z feeling any better?" so
Tired, the sim signed. So tired. His arms flopped dowl. On the
mattress as soon as he was done using his If Then one of them came up
again. Medicine? he fl l Medicine that helps? Q .

"I'm sorry, Matt. We have none, and don't know where 11

:;q t l' !!

-- r r Melody said. Dixon winced at Mattes shrug of stion. Melody
went on, "They do have that kind of fine at the towers, Matt, if you
want to go back." low she held her voice steady.

k home? Matt signed, which only made Dixon feel --he had not thought he
could. The sims somber ns brightened. Medicine back home?

He tried to sit up rentually succeeded, though it set off another spasm
of sing, this one fortunately brief. Females too, yes? he I with a
sidelong look at Dixon and Melody. Tired of at set Melody laughing so
hard she had trouble ing Finally, at Dixon's quizzical look, she
explained, read in my great-great-grandfather's diary that the only Eli
he ever came home from a trapping run was that he labored with his

hand."

"Yes," Dixon laughed too, a little, before turning serious. "Matt seems to have made his choice." That brought her up short; after a moment, she gave a reluctant nod. "Now we have to figure out how to give him what he needs without giving ourselves away to the greencoats...."

The phone buzzed. "Yes, Doris?" Dr. Howard said.

"I'm sorry for you, sir," his secretary said. "I won't give a line, won't speak to anyone but you. He says it's about time to put him on," Howard said wearily. He'd had enough of the calls since Matt was taken to last him a lifetime, but was always the off chance.... He picked up the phone. "Yes? This is Dr. Peter Howard. Go ahead."

The man on the other end of the line sounded young and earnest, but what he said made Howard sit straighter in his chair. "If I were a fake, would I have any way of knowing where the last three pamphlets you got were red, green, and blue?"

"Like the doctor said, excitement rising in his chest. "I don't know if you would. This is about Matt, you say? Where is he now? Is he alive?" The stolen HIV test should have been used up some time ago. After it was gone, it might have happened. 7

"No, he's not very well, but he is alive," the caller said. "As a matter of fact, he's sitting on a bench on the corner of Peachtree and Sherman, waiting for somebody to come pick him up. We're giving him back to you." If that was true--I Relief left Howard limp. "Thank you," he whispered. God

"You're anything but welcome," the young man said bitterly. "You made him sick, but you're the only one who can slow down the AIDS in him now, so we don't have any choice but to give him back. I wish we did."

"People will be better because of what we've done to him," Howard said.

"Will Matt have didn't get a choice." 4 A

"You had him some while yourself. Did he make all his own choices?" The silence at the other end of the connection answered that for Howard. "You can't win a sim, can you?" the doctor said. "Believe me, I know that."

"Go to hell," the young man said. "I'm breaking all now. You're probably tracking this call." The connecting went blank. as

"Thank you for giving him back, anyhow," Howard said to the dead line.

Then he gathered himself and called Coleman. He was not surprised to find that the so-called chief had already given orders for picking up Matt, < going after the caller.

Howard found himself hoping the young man won away. That did surprise him. <

"It's no good, Ken," Melody said. They were sitting side by side at the edge of the hotel bed, but he had known before she spoke that they would not be making love tonight. The way she'd sat stiffly, not looking at him, passenger seat of the horseless as he drove away from the DRC had

been plenty to tell him that. Now she went on _! "After today, in fact, we'd probably be better tra separately." fj r r -l -I , S

by?" he said. Down deep he renew wny, tnougI I it to himself by continuing, "You agreed we had to [att back."

:now I did. It was the only thing we could d9, and l it. I don't see how I'll ever do anything but hate it, and being with you just keeps reminding me of it. rry."

ye rewards of being light," he said.

it earned him a glare. "Call it whatever you like. But stay together, I think I'll end up hating you too. I'd r break clean now."

[. 'However you like," he said tonelessly. He suspected she I end up hating him anyway, convincing herself that bing (hat had gone wrong was his fault. It was y too late for him to do anything about that.

and Melody slept with their backs to each other. The space of mattress between them might as well have I chasm.

II 7 E The IV that slowly dripped into Matt's arm tar a while gave IBM familiar pain. He slept again on a familiar bed in a Fmiliar room.

His breakfast came on a familiar tray at a Fniliar time. After so much strangeness, all that was eassuring.

de from the temporary nuisance of the IV, he felt better. The towers had the medicines to cure the Xsses he had come down with on his travels, and the special medicine to help keep him from falling sick so --easily again.

E He had females once more, when he felt well enough for

10 Stem That was good, after doing so long without. When uplings were done, they would ask him in sign-talk his adventures on the outside. He answered as best he . They were curious, and it helped pass the time. in horseless, like on television, he would sign, and to himself. That never failed to draw awed murmurs xcited "Hoo"s from whatever female he was with. ter than here. Here everything the same all the time, - - l Vast Vex -6--> w i torn ' He shrugged and yawned, baring his large yell_ _ After while, going in homeless same all the time too, answered, full of the ennui of the experienced traveler. Is One afternoon, the female called Jane asked, take you from here?

_s People want to help make sims free, he signed q People want to make me free.

"Hoo," Jane said softly. You go outside tower, you fir Matt thought that over. No matter how often Ken; Melody had used the word, he still could not quite gl what they meant by it. Not sure, he signed. Then, slowly shook his head. No, not free. People outside like people h

Say they let sims do what sims want, but really only let s do what sims want when they want that too. ,D "Ah," Jane said, and nodded. She understood that X -. . fectly. After a while, they coupled again. Then a nurse c I My to take Matt away. If More needles? he signed. The nurse nodded. He sig[and went with her.

The afternoon moved on tow twilight. E vvQ [l --E: r 4 l _ 4 ,: l -!
S-- a l a - E = S S N :> L

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