

-JOSEPH CONRAD, The Nigger of the Narcissus

boy and the People still hunted in the western lands. The sea was huge and dark and restless, and when the sunlight struck it in a certain way it gleamed like strange liquid fire. To enter it was death, but to look upon it was wonderful. He would never see it again; that much he knew. The lands bordering the sea were held by the Other Ones now, and the People were in retreat, steadily moving closer and closer each year to the place where the sun is born. And even if the Other Ones were to disappear as suddenly as they had come, Silver Cloud understood that he would have no hope of returning to the coastal territory. He was too old, too lame, too close to his end. It would take half a lifetime for the tribe to retrace its eastward path, perhaps more. Silver Cloud did not have half a lifetime left. Two or three years, if he was lucky: that was more like it.

But that was all right. He had seen the sea once, which was more than anyone else in the tribe could say. He would never forget the scent of it, or its great surging strength. Now he stood on the high ground overlooking the encampment, staring out at the unexpectedly snowy plains—opening his nostrils wide, breathing deeply, letting the musky odor of the sea rise to him from below on the fumes from the melting snow. For just a moment he felt young again.

For just a moment.

way?"

"This is the fifth week of summer, Silver Cloud."

He shrugged. "It can snow in the summertime as well, woman."

"In the fifth week?"

"In any week," said Silver Cloud. "I remember summers when the snow never stopped, when it came day after day after day. You could see the bright summer sun shining through it, and still the snow fell. And that was in the western lands, where the summers are warmer than they are here."

"That was a very long time ago, before I was born. The summers are getting better everywhere, so they all say, and it seems to be true. -You should have let us know that snow was coming, Silver Cloud."

"Is that so very much snow? It's only a light little dusting, She Who Knows."

"We could have put out the sleeping-rugs."

"For such a little dusting? Such a trifle of snow?"

"Yes. Who likes awakening with snow in the face? You ought to have told us."

"It didn't seem important," said Silver Cloud irritably.

"You should have told us anyway. Unless you didn't know it was coming, of course."

Who Knows, and was putting on lofty airs of wisdom as though the Goddess had entered into her soul.

He glared at her.

"I knew that the snow was coming. But I knew also that it wouldn't be worth mentioning. I felt the snow in my thigh, where the old wound is, where I always feel the oncoming snow."

"I wonder if you really did."

"Am I a liar? Is that it?"

"You would have told us, if you knew snow was coming. You would have liked having a sleeping-rug over you as much as anyone else. Even more so, I think."

"So kill me," Silver Cloud said. "I admit everything. I failed to feel the snow on the way. Therefore I failed to give the warning and you woke up with snow on your face. It's a terrible sin. Call the Killing Society, and have them take me behind the hill and hit me twelve times with the ivory club. Do you think I'd care, She Who Knows? I've seen forty winters and a few more. I'm very old and very tired. If you'd like to run the tribe for a while, She Who Knows, I'd be happy to step aside and-"

"Please, Silver Cloud."

"It's true, isn't it? Day by day you grow ever more bright within with great wisdom, and I simply grow old. Take my place. Here. Here." He undid his

place, now or after you're dead, and you know it."

"Then why have you come up here to bother me about this miserable little snowfall?"

"Because it's the fifth week of summer."

"So? We've already discussed this. Snow can come at any time of the year and you're perfectly well aware of that."

"I've looked at the record-sticks. We haven't had snow this late in the year since I was a girl."

"You looked at the record-sticks?" Silver Cloyd asked, taken aback. "This morning, you mean?"

"When else? I woke up, I saw the snow, and it frightened me. So I went to Keeps The Past and asked her to show me the sticks. We counted everything together. Seventeen years ago it snowed in the fifth week of summer. Not since. -Do you know what else happened that summer? Six of our people died in the rhinoceros hunt and four were killed in a stampede of mammoths. Ten deaths in a single summer."

"What are you telling me, She Who Knows?"

"I'm not telling you anything. I'm asking you if you think this snow's an omen."

"I think this snow is snow. Nothing more."

"Not that the Goddess may be angry with us?"

another good day. That's what I see, She Who Knows. If you see the anger of the Goddess, show me where it lies." Indeed everything seemed wonderfully peaceful to him down there. In the main encampment the women and girls were building the morning fire. Boys too young to hunt were wandering about nearby, rummaging through the light covering of snow to gather twigs and bits of withered sod to be used as fuel. Off to the left in the domain of the Mothers he saw the babies being given their morning meal-there was Milky Fountain, that inexhaustible woman, with an infant at each breast, and Deep Water was leading the toddlers in a circle game, pausing now to comfort a small boy-Skyfire Face, it was -who had fallen and barked his knee. Behind the place of the Mothers, the three Goddess Women had built a cairn of rocks to serve as a shrine to Her and were very busy at it: one of the priestesses setting out an offering of berries, another pouring onto the bloodstone the blood of the wolf that had been killed yesterday, a third kindling the day-fire. Over on the other side Mammoth Rider had set up his workshop and was already turning out flint blades, which he still made with perfect workmanship despite the palsy that was steadily overtaking his limbs. Moon Dancer and one of her daughters sat behind him, at work on their usual task of chewing hides to make them soft enough to turn into cloaks. And far off on the horizon Silver Cloud saw the men of the Hunting Society in the field, fanning out over the tundra,

commonplace thing and always would be, all the year round; the Goddess had never promised anyone that the summer would be free from snow, however kindly She had been in that regard in recent years.

Strange that he hadn't felt it coming toward them the night before, though. Or had he, and not paid close attention? There were so many aches and pains these days; it was harder and harder to interpret each one of them.

But all seemed well, nevertheless.

"I'm going down now," he said to She Who Knows.

"I just came up here for a little quiet time alone. But I see that I'm not going to be allowed to have it."

"Let me help you," she said.

Furiously Silver Cloud brushed away the hand she had extended toward him.

"Do I look like a cripple to you, woman? Keep your hands to yourself!"

She shook her shoulders indifferently. "Whatever you say, Silver Cloud."

But the track down from the high ground was rough and troublesome, and the light coating of melting snow hid some of the small treacherous rocks from view and made them slick and slippery beneath his feet. Before he had gone ten paces Silver Cloud found himself wishing his pride had allowed him to take She Who Knows up on her offer. That would have been

anyway.

He was panting a little when he reached the bottom of the hill, and he felt warm and sweat-sticky beneath his cloak of thick gray fur. But the descent hadn't been too bad. He was still strong enough to hold his own.

Cooking smells reached Silver Cloud's nostrils. The laughter of children and the piercing cries of infants drifted through the air. The sun was climbing swiftly. A sense of well-being pervaded his spirit.

In three more days it would be time for the Summer Festival, when he would have to dance in the circle and sacrifice a young bullock and rub its blood on the chosen virgin of the year. And then take her aside and embrace her to insure the success of the autumn hunt. Silver Cloud had been a little uneasy as the time of the Summer Festival approached, thinking that he was getting a bit too lame to do a proper job of dancing, and perhaps might bungle the sacrifice of the bullock as he had once seen another aging chieftain do long ago; and as for the embracing of the virgin, he was a trifle uncertain about that part too. But in the warmth of the morning all those fears dropped away. She Who Knows was becoming a quavering old fool. The snow signified nothing. Nothing! This was a fine bright day. For the People a glorious summer lay ahead, unfolding in ever-increasing warmth.



What was this? Hunters returning so soon? And in such haste?

He shaded his eyes and looked into the sun. Yes, it was Tree Of Wolves and Broken Mountain, running toward the camp with all their might and calling his name as they ran. Tree Of Wolves was waving his spear about in a frantic, almost crazy way; Broken Mountain didn't seem to have his weapons with him at all.

They came staggering into camp and fell practically at Silver Cloud's feet, wheezing, moaning, struggling for breath. They were two of the strongest and swiftest of the men, but they must have run at full tilt all the way back from the hunting field and they were at the end of their endurance.

Silver Cloud felt a great uneasiness coming over him, driving away that all-too-brief moment of joy and peace.

"What is it?" he demanded, giving them no time to catch dieir breath. "Why are you back this early?"

Broken Mountain pointed back behind him. His arm was trembling like an old man's. His teeth were chattering.

"Other Ones!" he blurted.

"What? Where?"

Broken Mountain shook his head. He had no strength left in him for words.

"How many?"

Tree Of Wolves shook his head. He closed his eyes.

"Many," said Broken Mountain, finding his voice again suddenly. He held up both his hands and flashed all his fingers-again, again, again. "More than us. Two, three, four times as many. Marching from south to north."

"And a little west," said Tree Of Wolves somberly.

"Toward us, you mean?"

"Maybe. Not-sure."

"Toward us, I think," said Broken Mountain. "Or us toward them. We might walk right into them if we don't take care."

"Other Ones out here?" Silver Cloud said, as though speaking only to himself. "But they don't like the open plains. This isn't their kind of country. There's nothing for them here. They should be staying closer to the sea. Are you sure about the feet, Tree Of Wolves? Broken Mountain?"

They nodded.

"They are crossing our path, but I think that they won't come toward us," said Tree Of Wolves.

"I think they will," Broken Mountain said.

"I think they don't know we're here."

"I think they do," said Broken Mountain.

after all, hadn't it? And not only had he completely failed to predict its coming, he had also utterly misinterpreted its dire significance. I told you so, She Who Knows should be saying now. We are in great trouble and you are no longer fit to lead.

But to his amazement there was no trace of any such vindictiveness in She Who Knows' expression. Her face was dark with sorrow and silent tears were rolling down her cheeks.

She held her hand out toward him and there was something almost tender in the way she did it.

"Silver Cloud-" she said softly. "Oh, Silver Cloud."

She's not simply weeping for herself, Silver Cloud thought. Or for the danger to the tribe.

She's weeping for me, he realized in astonishment.

had said, smiling, to the guard-who had long since stopped even thinking of questioning her and who waved her cheerfully on through the security barrier.)

And, as always, the ugly little boy knew that she had entered his private world, and he came running to her, crying, "Miss Fellowes-Miss Fellowes-" in his soft, slurring way.

"Timmie," she said, and ran her hand tenderly through die shaggy brown hair on his strangely shaped little head. "What's wrong?"

He said, "Where's Jerry? Will he be back to play with me today?"

"Not today, no."

"I'm sorry about what happened."

"I know you are, Timmie."

"And Jerry-?"

"Never mind about Jerry now, Timmie. Is that why you've been crying? Because you miss Jerry?"

He looked away. "Not just because of that, Miss Fel-lowes. I dreamed again."

"The same dream?" Miss Fellowes' lips set. Of course, the Jerry affair would bring back the dream.

He nodded. "The same dream, yes."

"Was it very bad this time?"

way back inside and there was a black wall all around me, and I couldn't move, I was stuck, I was-

"Oh, how terrible. I'm sorry, Timmie. You know that I am."

His too-large teeth showed as he tried to smile, and his lips stretched wide, making his mouth seem to thrust even farther forward from his face than it actually did.

"When will I be big enough to go out there, Miss Fellowes? To really go outside? Not just in dreams?"

"Soon," she said softly, feeling her heart break. "Soon."

Miss Fellowes let him take her hand. She lovea the warm touch of the thick dry skin of his palm against hers.

He tugged at her, drawing her inward, leading her through the three rooms that made up the whole of Stasis Section One-comfortable enough, yes, but an eternal prison for the ugly little boy all the seven (Was it seven? Who could be sure?) years of his life.

He led her to the one window, looking out onto a scrubby woodland section of the world of is (now hidden by night). There was a fence out there, and a dour glaring notice on a billboard, warning all and sundry to keep out on pain of this or that dire punishment.

Timmie pressed his nose against the window.

"Tell me what's out there again, Miss Fellowes."

bulging bony ridges were beginning to force the skin outward above his eyes. His wide mouth thrust forward more prominently than did his wide and flattened nose and he had no chin to speak of—only a jawbone that curved smoothly down and back. He was small for his years, almost dwarfish despite his already powerful build, and his stumpy legs were bowed. An angry red birthmark, looking for all the world like a jagged streak of lightning, stood out startlingly on his broad, strong-boned cheek.

He was a very ugly little boy and Edith Fellowes loved him more dearly than anything in the world.

She was standing with her own face behind his line of vision, so she allowed her lips the luxury of a tremor.

They wanted to kill him. That was what it amounted to. He was only a child, an unusually helpless one at that, and they were planning to send him to his death.

They would not. She would do anything to prevent it. Anything. Interfering with their plan would be a massive dereliction of duty, she knew, and she had never committed any act in her life that could be construed as going against her duty as she understood it, but that didn't matter now. She had a duty to them, yes, no question of that, but she had a duty to Timmie also, not to mention a duty to herself. And she had no doubt at all about

"Clothes," she said. "Clothes for wearing outside." She beckoned to him.  
"Come here, Timmie."

[2]

She had actually been the third one that Hoskins had interviewed for the job, and the other two had been the preferred choices of the Personnel people. But Gerald Hoskins was a hands-on kind of chief executive who didn't necessarily accept the opinions of those to whom he had delegated authority without taking the trouble to check those opinions out for himself. There were people in the company who thought that that was his biggest fault as a manager. There were times when he agreed with them. All the same, he had insisted on interviewing all three of the women personally.

The first one came with a three-star rating mom Sam Aickman, who was Stasis Technologies' Personnel chief. That in itself made Hoskins a little suspicious, because Aickman had a powerful bias in favor of hard-edge state-of-the-art sorts of people. Which was just the right thing if you happened to be looking for an expert in implosion-field containment, or someone who could deal with a swarm of unruly positrons on a first-name basis. But Hoskins wasn't convinced that one of Sam's high-tech types was exactly the right choice for this particular job.

strands at her throat that didn't strike Hoskins as the sort of jewelry one usually wore to a job interview, especially one of this sort. She looked more like an aggressive youngish executive who had a slot on the board of directors as her ultimate target than like his notion of what a nurse ought to be.

But a nurse was what she was, fundamentally, even if that seemed a very modest designation for someone of her professional affiliations and accomplishments. Her resume was a knockout. Doctorates in heuristic pedagogy and rehabilitative technology. Assistant to the head of Special Services at Houston General's childrens\* clinic. Consultant to the Katzin Commission, the Federal task force on remedial education. Six years' experience in advanced ar-

tificial-intelligence interfacing for autistic kids. Software bibliography a mile long.

Just what Stasis Technologies, Ltd. needed for this job?

So Sam Aickman seemed to think, at any rate.

Hoskins said, "You understand, don't you, that we'll be asking you to give up all your outside projects, the Washington stuff, the Houston affiliation, any consulting work that might require travel. You'll basically be pinned down here on a full-time basis for a period of several years, dealing with a single highly specialized assignment."



essentially isolated kind of existence you'll need to adopt here?"

There was a cold, determined glint in her eyes. "Not only do I think I'll be completely capable of making the transition, I'm quite ready and eager to do so."

Something sounded just a little wrong about that to Hoskins.

He said, "Would you care to expand on that a bit? Perhaps you don't fully grasp how-ah-monastic we tend to be at Stasis Technologies, Ltd. And how demanding your own area of responsibility in particular is likely to be."

"I think I do grasp that, Dr. Hoskins."

"And yet you're ready and eager?"

"Perhaps I'm a trifle less eager to run around from Winnipeg to Melbourne to Sao Paulo than I used to be."

"A little touch of burnout, maybe, is that what you're saying, Dr. Levien?"

A shadow of a smile appeared on her lips, the first sign of any human warmth that Hoskins had seen her display since she had entered his office. But it was gone almost as quickly as it had appeared.

"You might call it that, Dr. Hoskins."

"Yes, but would you?"

She looked startled at his unexpected sally. But then she drew a deep breath and reconstructed her all but imperturbable poise with hardly any show of effort.

extraordinary in every way. But she didn't seem real.

He said, after a little pause, "And what is it, exactly, that led you to apply for this job, other than the aspect of allowing you a single concentration of energy expenditure?"

"The nature of the experiment fascinates me."

"Ah. Tell me."

"As every first-rate author of children's literature knows, the world of the child is very different from the world of adults—an alien world, in fact, whose values and assumptions and realities are entirely other. As we grow older, most of us make the transition from that world to

this one so completely that we forget the nature of the world we've left behind. Throughout my work with children I've attempted to enter into their minds and comprehend the other-worldly nature of them as profoundly as my limitations as an adult will enable me to do."

Hoskins said, trying to keep the surprise out of his voice, "You think children are alien beings?"

"In a metaphorical way, yes. Obviously not literally."

"Obviously." He scanned her resume, frowning. "You've never been married?"

"No, never," she said coolly.

"And I assume you haven't gone in for single parenting, either?"

your experiment that I've been given, it would involve me in caring for a child who quite literally comes from an alien world. Not in space, but in time; nevertheless, the essence of the existential situation is equivalent. I'd welcome a chance to study such a child's fundamental differences from us, by way of obtaining some parallax displacement that might provide additional insights for my own work."

Hoskins stared at her.

No, he thought. Not real at all. A cleverly made android of some sort. A robotic nursoid. Except they hadn't perfected robots of this level of quality yet—he was certain of that. So she had to be a flesh-and-blood human being. But she certainly didn't act like one.

He said, "That may not be so easy. There may be difficulties in communication. The child very likely will have a speech impediment, you know. As a matter of fact there's a good chance that it may be virtually incapable of speech at all."

"It?"

"He, she. We can't tell you which, just yet. You do realize that the child won't be arriving here for another three weeks, give or take a day or two, and until the moment it arrives we'll basically know nothing about its actual nature."

description had produced no reaction in her. She seemed ready to face anything and didn't seem concerned with the whys and wherefores.

It wasn't hard to see why Sam Aickman had been so impressed with her.

Hoskins was silent again for a moment, just long enough to give her an opening. Marianne Levien didn't hesitate to take advantage of it.

She reached into her attache case and drew forth a hand-held computer, no bigger than a large coin. "I've brought with me," she said, "a program that I've been working on since the word came across on the computer network that you were open for applications for this position. It's a variation on some work I did with brain-

damaged children seven years ago in Peru: six algorithms defining and modifying communications flow. Essentially they bypass the normal verbal channels of the mind and-

"Thank you," Hoskins said smoothly, staring at the tiny device in her outstretched hand as though she were offering him a bomb. "But there are all sorts of legal complexities preventing me from looking at your material until you're actually an employee of Stasis Technologies, Ltd. Once you're under contract, naturally, I'll be glad to discuss your prior research with you in detail, but until then-

appropriate I tend to sidestep the customary protocols out of sheer feverish desire to get to the heart of-

Hoskins smiled. Hoskins nodded. Hoskins said, "Of course, Dr. Levien. It's no sin to err on the side of enthusiasm. -And this has been a very valuable conversation. We'll be in touch with you just as soon as we've made our decision."

She gave him an odd look, as though surprised he wasn't hiring her on the spot. She had the good sense not to say anything else except "Thank you very much" and "Goodbye," though.

At the door of his office she paused, turned, flashed one final high-voltage smile. Then she was gone, leaving an incandescent image behind on the retina of Hoskins' mind.

Whew, Hoskins thought.

He pulled out a handkerchief and mopped his forehead.

[3]

The second candidate was different from Marianne Levien in almost every way. She was twenty years older, for one thing; for another, there was nothing in the least elegant, cool, intimidating, incandescent, or androidal about her. Dorothy Newcombe was her name. She was plump, matronly, almost overabundant; she wore no jewelry and her clothing was

civilization, there still were primitive regions here and there on the globe, and Dorothy Newcombe had worked in six or seven of them, in various parts of the world-Africa, South America, Polynesia, Southeast Asia. No wonder she had Sam Aickman's seal of approval. A woman who could have served as a model for a statue of the goddess of motherly love, and who was experienced besides in the handling of children in backward societies-

She seemed exactly right in every way. After the oppressive hyperglossy perfection of the too-awesome Mari-

anne Levien, Hoskins felt so much at ease in this woman's presence that he had to fight back a strong impulse to offer her the position right away, without even bothering to interview her. It wouldn't have been the first time that he had allowed himself the luxury of giving way to a spontaneous feeling.

But he managed to master it.

And then, to his astonishment and dismay, Dorothy Newcombe managed to disqualify herself for the job before the interview had lasted five minutes.

Everything had gone beautifully up to the fatal point. She was warm and personable. She loved children, of course: she had had three of her own, and even before that, as the eldest child in a large family with an ailing

certain to involve.

But then the conversation came around to the subject of why she would be willing to leave her present post-an important and apparently highly rewarding position as head of nursing at a child-care center of one of the Southern states-for the sake of immuring herself in the secretive and closely guarded headquarters of Stasis Technologies. And she said, "I know that I'll be giving up a great deal to come here. Still, I'll be gaining a great deal, too. Not only the chance to do work of the kind I like best in an area that nobody has ever worked in before. But

also it'll give me a chance to get that damned nuisance Bruce Mannheim out of my hair at last."

Hoskins felt a chill run through him.

"Bruce Mannheim? You mean the 'children in crisis' advocate?"

"Is there some other one?"

He drew his breath in deeply and held it. Mannheim! That loudmouth! That troublemaker! How on earth had Dorothy Newcombe gotten herself mixed up with him? This was completely unexpected and not at all welcome.

After a moment he said carefully, "Are you saying that there's sort of a problem between you and Bruce Mannheim, then?"

wouldn't have mentioned it now. But the subject just never came up."

"Well, I'm asking you now, Ms. Newcombe. What's this all about?"

"You know what kind of professional agitator Mannheim is? You know that he takes the most far-fetched positions imaginable by way of showing everybody how concerned he is for the welfare of children?"

It didn't seem wise to get drawn into spouting opinions. Not where Bruce Mannheim was concerned.

Warily Hoskins said, "I know there are people who think of him that way."

"You phrase that in such a diplomatic way, Dr. Hoskins. Do you think he's got your office bugged?"

"Hardly. But I don't necessarily share your obvious distaste for Mannheim and his ideas. As a matter of fact, I don't really have much of a position about him. I haven't been paying a lot of attention to the issues he's been raising." That was a flat lie, and Hoskins felt uncomfortable about it. One of the earliest planning papers dealing with the current project had said: Take every step to make sure that we keep pests like Bruce Mannheim from landing on our backs. But Hoskins was interviewing her, not the other way around. He didn't feel obliged to tell her anything more than seemed appropriate.



physiological addictions, very often arises from some genetic predisposition in that direction?"

"Of course."

"Well, we've been conducting genetic studies on these children, and on their parents and grandparents- when we're able to find them. We're trying to locate and isolate the drug-positive gene, if there is such a thing, in the hope that some day we can get rid of it."

"Sounds like a good idea to me," Hoskins said:

"It does to everyone except Bruce Mannheim, apparently. The way he's come down on us, you'd think we're performing actual gene surgery on those kids, not simply doing a little prowling around in their chromosomes to find out what's there. Purely investigative work, no genetic modification whatsoever. But he's slapped us with sixteen different injunctions tying our hands in every imaginable way. It's enough to make you cry. We've tried to explain, but he won't pay attention. He distorts our own affidavits and uses them as the basis for his next lawsuit. And you know how the courts are when it comes to accusations that children are being used as experimental subjects."

"I'm afraid I do," said Hoskins dolefully. "And so your hospital is spending its energies and resources on legal defense instead of-"

ideally qualified for the job. But how could he hire someone who was already in trouble with the dreaded Bruce Mannheim? There was going to be controversy enough over this project as it was. No doubt Mannheim would be poking his nose into what they were doing before very long in any case, no matter what precautions they took. All the same, to add Dorothy New-combe to the roster would be asking for the worst sort of trouble. He could just imagine the press conference

Mannheim would call. Letting it be known that Stasis Technologies had chosen to hire a woman who was currently defending herself against the accusation of child abuse at another scientific facility-and Mannheim would make accusation sound like indictment-to serve as nurse and guardian of the unfortunate child who was the pathetic victim of this unprecedented new form of kidnapping-No. No. He couldn't possibly take her on.

Somehow he forced himself to go through another five minutes of asking questions. On the surface, everything remained amiable and pleasant. But it was an empty exercise, and Hoskins knew that Dorothy Newcombe knew it. When she left, he thanked her for her frankness and expressed his appreciation of her high qualifications and offered her the usual assurances that he'd be in touch soon, and she smiled and told him how pleased she had been by their conversation-and he had no doubt at all that she realized that she wasn't going to get the job.

"Really. Really," Aickman said, crestfallen. He looked more abashed than amazed now. "Hell, Jerry, I had no idea at all that she was tangled up with that colossal pain in the neck. And we questioned her very thoroughly; let me tell you. -Not dioroughly enough, I guess."

"That's all we'd need, hiring somebody for this job who's already on Mannheim's hit-list."

"She's terrific, though, isn't she? Absolutely the most motherly human being I ever-"

"Yes. Absolutely. And comes with a money-back guarantee that we'll have Mannheim's legal vultures sinking their claws into us as soon as he finds out she's here. Or don't you agree, Sam?"

"Looks like you're going to go for Marianne Levien, then, is that it?"

"I'm not through interviewing yet," Hoskins said, "But Levien looks pretty good."

"Yes, doesn't she," said Aickman, with a grin.

[4]

Edith Fellowes had no way of knowing that she was merely the Number Three candidate for the job, but it wouldn't have surprised her to learn it. She was accustomed to being underestimated. There was nothing flashy about her, nothing very dramatic, nothing that registered immediate top-

from pleasant green lawns studded by occasional small trees. It was a research center very much like a thousand others. But within these buildings, Edith Fellowes knew, strange things were going on

-things beyond her understanding, things virtually beyond her powers of belief. The idea that she might actually be working in one of those buildings soon filled her with wonder.

Like most people, she had only the haziest notion of what the company was or the way it had accomplished the remarkable things it had done. She had heard, of course, about the baby dinosaur that they had managed to bring out of the past. That had seemed pretty miraculous to her, once she overcame her initial reaction of skepticism. But the explanations on television of how Stasis Technologies had reached into the past to bring the extinct reptile into the twenty-first century had been incomprehensible to her. And then the expedition to the moons of Jupiter had pushed Stasis and its dinosaur into the back pages of the newspapers, and she had forgotten all about them both. The dinosaur had been just another nine days' wonder, one of many in what was turning out to be a century of wonders.

But now, apparently, Stasis was planning to bring a child out of the past, a human child, a prehistoric human child. They needed someone to care for that child.

some knowledge of clinical chemistry, and a love for children. Edith Fellowes qualified on all three counts.

The love for children had been built in from the start

-what normal person, she wondered, didn't have a love for children?  
Especially a woman?

The knowledge of physiology had come as part of her basic nursing training. The clinical chemistry had been something of an afterthought-it had seemed a good idea, if she was going to work with sickly children, many of them premature or otherwise starting life under some handicap-to have the best possible understanding of how their troubled little bodies could be made to function more effectively.

Challenging, difficult job involving an unusual child

-yes, it was her kind of thing. The salary they were offering was pretty phenomenal, too, enough to catch her attention even though the pursuit of money had never been much of a factor in her scheme of living. And she was ready for a new challenge. The all-too-familiar routines of children's-hospital life were beginning to pall on her now, even to make her a little resentful. That was a terrible thing, she thought, to resent your own work, particularly work like hers. Maybe she needed a change.

To care for a prehistoric child-

Yes. Yes.

GEKALD A. HOSKINS, Ph.D.

Chief Executive Officer

Miss Fellowes was more amused than impressed by that. Was the company really so large that the C.E.O. had to remind people of the identity of the man in charge by putting a nameplate in front of himself in his own office? And why did he think it was necessary to brag of having a Ph.D.? Didn't everybody here have an advanced degree or two? Was this his way of announcing that he wasn't simply a mere corporate executive, that he was really a scientist himself? She would have assumed that the head of a highly specialized company like Stasis Technologies, Ltd. would be a scientist, without having to have it jammed in her face this way.

But that was all right. It was possible for a man to have worse foibles than a little self-importance.

Hoskins had a sheaf of printouts in front of him. Her resume, she supposed, and the report on her preliminary interview, and things like that. He looked from the printouts to her, and back to the printouts, and to her again. His appraisal was frank and a little too direct. Miss Fellowes automatically stiffened. She felt her cheeks coloring and a muscle twitched briefly in her cheek.

He thinks my eyebrows are too heavy and my nose is a little off center, she told herself.

Being studied this way now was

something she found more unsettling than it should have been.

He said, "Your record is quite an outstanding one, Miss Fellowes."

She smiled but said nothing. What could she possibly say? Agree with him? Disagree?

"And you come with some very high recommendations from your superiors. They all praise you in almost identical words, do you know that? Unswerving dedication to your work-deep devotion to duty-great resourcefulness in moments of crisis-superb technical skills-

"I'm a hard worker, Dr. Hoskins, and I generally know what I'm doing. I think those are just fancy ways of saying those two basic things."

"I suppose." His eyes fixed on hers and she felt, suddenly, the strength of the man, the singlemindedness of him, the dogged determination to carry his tasks through to completion. Those could be fine traits in an administrator. They could also lead him to make life maddening for those who worked with him. Time would tell, she thought. She met his gaze evenly and steadily. He said, finally, "I don't see any serious need to question you about your professional background. That's been very carefully gone over in your previous interviews and you came through with flying colors. I've got only two points to take up with you, really."

She waited.

should not be treated."

"I only know one way children should be treated, which is to do your absolute best to meet the child's needs as you understand them. If that sounds simplistic, I'm sorry, but-

He smiled. "That's not precisely what I mean, either. What I mean is-" He paused and moistened his lips. "The Bruce Mannheim sort of thing is what I mean. Heated debate over the methods by which certain children are handled in public institutions. Do you follow what I'm saying, Miss Fellowes?"

"I've been dealing mainly with weak or handicapped children, Dr. Hoskins. What I attempt to do is keep them alive and help them build up their strength. There isn't much to have a debate over in matters like that, is there?"

"So you've never had any kind of professional encounters with so-called child advocates of the Bruce Mannheim sort?"

"Never. I've read a little about Mr. Mannheim in the papers, I guess. But I haven't ever had any contact with him or anyone like him. I wouldn't know him if I bumped into him in the street. And I don't have any particular opinions about his ideas, pro or con."

Hoskins looked relieved.



disagreeable child?"

"Love? Not merely care for?"

"Love. To stand in loco parentis. To be its mother, more or less, Miss Fellowes. And rather more than less. This will be the most lonely child in the history of the world. It won't just need a nurse, it'll need a mother. Are you prepared to take on such a burden? Are you willing to take on such a burden?"

He was staring at her again, as though trying to stare through her. Once again she met the intensity of his gaze with unwavering strength.

"You say he'll be difficult and strange and- What was the word? -highly disagreeable. In what way, disagreeable?"

"We're talking about a prehistoric child. You know that. He-or she, we don't know which yet-may very well be savage in a way that goes beyond the most savage tribe on Earth today. This child's behavior may be more like that of an animal than a child. A ferocious animal, perhaps. That's what I mean by difficult, Miss Fellowes."

"I haven't only worked with premature infants, Dr. Hoskins. I've had experience with emotionally disturbed children. I've dealt with some pretty tough little customers."

"Not this tough, perhaps."

"We'll see, won't we?"

"The world is at peace now, Dr. Hoskins."

"Of course it is. But this child won't feel much peace. It'll be suffering from the total disruption of its life, a genuine Displaced Person of the most poignant kind. A very small one, at that."

"How small?"

"At present we can bring no more than forty kilograms of mass out of the past with each scoop. That includes not only the living subject but the surrounding inanimate insulation zone. So we're talking about a little child, a very little child."

"An infant, is that it?"

"We can't be sure. We hope to get a child of six or seven years. But it might be considerably younger."

"You don't know? You're just going to make a blind grab?"

Hoskins looked displeased. "Let's talk about love, Miss Fellowes. Loving this child. I guarantee you that it won't be easy. You really do love children, don't you? I don't mean in any trivial sense. And I'm not talking now about proper performance of professional duties. I want you to dig down and examine the assumptions of the word, what love really means, what motherhood really means, what the unconditional love that is motherhood really means."

"I think I know what that love is like."

"Of course, there were all sorts of twenty-first-century ways around the problem-ex utero fetal chambers, implantations, surrogate mothers, and so forth. But my husband wasn't able to come to terms with anything short of the ancient traditional method of sharing genes. It had to be our child all the way, his and mine. And I had to carry the child for the right and proper nine months. But I couldn't do that, and he couldn't bring himself to accept any of the alternatives, and so we came apart."

"I'm sorry. -And you never married again."

She kept her voice steady, unemotional. "The first try was painful enough. I could never be sure that I wouldn't get hurt even worse a second time, and I wasn't able to let myself take the risk. But that doesn't mean I don't know how to love children, Dr. Hoskins. Surely it isn't necessary for me to point out that my choice of profession very likely has something to do with the great emptiness that my marriage created in my-in my soul, if you will. And so instead of loving just one or two children I've loved dozens. Hundreds. As though they were my own."

"Not all of them very nice children."

"Not all of them nice, no."

"Not just nice sweet children with cute little button-noses and gurgly ways? You've taken them as they come, pretty or ugly, gentle or wild? Unconditionally?"

that. He had concentrated entirely on this business of whether she could love some unfortunate wild child- whether she could love any child, maybe- as though that were a real issue. And on the even less relevant matter of whether she had ever done anything that might stir up some sort of political agitation. Obviously he wasn't very interested in her actual qualifications. Obviously he had someone else in mind for the job and was going to offer her some bland, polite dismissal as soon as he had figured out a tactful way to do it.

At length he said, "Well, how soon can you give notice at your present place of employment?"

She gaped at him, flustered.

"You mean you're taking me on? Right here and now?"

Hoskins smiled briefly, and for a moment his broad face had a certain absent-minded charm about it. "Why else would I want you to give notice?"

"Doesn't this have to go to some committee first?"

"Miss Fellowes, I'm the committee. The ultimate committee, the one that gives final approval. And I make quick decisions. I know what sort of person I'm looking for and you seem to be it. -Of course, I could be wrong."

"And if you are?"

"I can reverse myself just as quickly, believe me. This is a project that can't afford any errors. There's a life at stake, a human life, a child's life.

stay in our era. If it becomes apparent that you're not capable of providing that care, you'll be replaced without hesitation, Miss Fellowes. I don't see any delicate way of phrasing that. We aren't sentimental here and we don't like to gamble on anything that's within our power to control, either. So the job is to be considered no more than tentatively yours, at this point. We're asking you to cut yourself loose from your entire present existence with no guarantee that we'll keep you on here past the first week, or possibly even the first day. Do you think you're willing to take the chance?"

"You certainly are blunt, Dr. Hoskins."

"I certainly am. Except when I'm not. Well, Miss Fellowes? What do you say?"

"I don't like to gamble, either," she said.

His face darkened. "Is that a refusal?"

"No, Dr. Hoskins, it's an acceptance. If I doubted for one moment that I was the wrong woman for the job, I wouldn't have come here in the first place. I can do it. I will do it. And you'll have no reason to regret your decision, you can be certain of that. -When do I start?"

"We're bringing the Stasis up to critical level right now. We expect to make the actual scoop two weeks from tonight, on the fifteenth, at half-past seven in the evening sharp. We'll want you here at the moment of arrival, ready to take over at once. You'll have until then to wind down your present

Everything else is secondary. Everything.

## INTERCHAPTER ONE

### She Who Knows

IT WAS THE MIDDLE of the day now and a sense of mounting crisis was affecting the whole encampment. The entire Hunting Society had returned from the plains, without having remained there long enough even to catch sight of game, let alone to do any hunting-and now its seven members sat in a morose huddle, fretting over die possibility of war and how it would affect them. The Goddess Women had unpacked the three holy bear-skulls and had set them up on the stone shelves above the shrine of the Goddess, and were crouching naked in front of them, anointed with bear fat and wolf blood and honey, chanting the special prayers that were supposed to bring wisdom in time of great peril. The Mothers had gathered all the small children under their wings as if they expected the Other Ones to attack at any minute, and the half<sup>1</sup> grown ones lurked at the edge of the circle, fearful and uncertain.

As for the older men, the wise and distinguished elders of the tribe, they had gone off by themselves to the little hill above the camp for a discussion

us. The Goddess means for us to go there and live in peace." The others agreed. Whereupon the Goddess Women had cast the destiny-stones and had come up with a result that supported the opinion of the men.

So the People had migrated to this place. But now the Other Ones had turned up here too, apparently.

What do we do now? She Who Knows wondered.

We could go south to the warm lands, perhaps. But very likely the warm lands are full of Other Ones by now. Should we go up north where the terrible ice fields are, then? Surely the Other Ones are too tender to want to live in a place like that. But so are we, She Who Knows suspected. So are we.

She felt a great sadness. They had come a long way to this place. The strenuous march had left her weary, and she knew that Silver Cloud was tired also, and many of the others. It was time to rest now, and gather meat and nuts to store for the winter ahead, and replenish their strength. But it seemed that they would have to wander again, without any chance to rest, without a moment of peace. Why was that? Was there no place in this broad barren land where they would be allowed to pause for a time to catch their breath?

free-spirited roving life, even going out to the hunting fields with the men sometimes. When in her twentieth year she finally did agree to take the warrior Dark Wind as her mate, a very late age for such a thing, nothing but dead babies came from her womb. And then she lost Dark Wind as well, to a black fever that carried him off in a single afternoon.

She still had much of her beauty then, but after Dark Wind died none of the unmated men of the tribe had wanted to have her-no matter how beautiful she might be. They knew that her womb was a place that killed babies, so what value could she have as a mate? And Dark Wind's early death argued that she was cursed by ill luck, besides. So she would remain forever alone, untouched by men, she who once had had so many lovers. She would never become one of the Mothers.

Nor could she join the Goddess Women, not now; it would be a mockery of the Goddess and all that she stood for that a sterile woman should serve Her, and in any case you had to begin learning the mysteries of the Goddess Women before the first blood came from your loins. It was absurd to have an aging woman of twenty-five who had borne and lost five babies in five years becoming a Goddess Woman.

So She Who Knows was neither a Mother nor a Goddess Woman, and that meant she was nothing at all. She did the ordinary things that any



and sleek. Whereas She Who Knows, eight years younger, was already turning into an old woman. She was starting to think that she was destined to shrivel and fade and die long before Keeps The Past yielded up her record-sticks and went to the Goddess.

It was a sorrowful sort of life. But She Who Knows took care to hide the sorrow that afflicted her from the others. Let them fear her; let them dislike her. She would not have them pitying her.

Now she stood by herself, as usual, looking around at the others in their groups. Each one was as helpless against the threat of the Other Ones as she was. But at least they were together, in the comfort of a group.

"There's the one we need!" Blazing Eye called out. "She Who Knows ought to come out and fight the Other Ones alongside us!"

"She Who Knows! She Who Knows!" the Hunting Society men called raucously.

They were mocking her, of course. Hadn't they always? Hadn't each of these men in his turn rejected her, in the days after Dark Wind's death, when she had hoped to find a new mate?

But she went over to them all the same, and stood grinning fiercely down at them where they huddled in a circle on the frosty ground.

"Yes," she said. "A good idea. I can fight as well as any of you."

"Look, she knows how to hold it, Blazing Eye," Tree Of Wolves said.

"Yes, and I know how to use it, too."

"Give me that."

She prodded him with it again. She thought Blazing Eye was going to have a fit. His face was bright red and sweat poured down his cheeks. Everyone was laughing. He made a swipe at the spear and she pulled it back out of his reach. Furious, he spat at her and made a demon-sign with his clasped hands. She Who Knows grinned.

"Make that sign again and I'll wash it away with your blood," she told him.

"Come on, She Who Knows," Blazing Eye said sourly. He was visibly struggling to control himself. "It isn't right for you to be touching that spear, and you know it. We're in enough danger as it is, without your committing evil acts."

"You invited me to go out and fight with the men," she said. "Well, if I do I'll need a spear, won't I? Yours is a perfectly good one. It will suit me very well. Make yourself another one, if you like,"

The other men laughed again. But there was an odd edge on their laughter now.

She feinted with the spear and Blazing Eye, cursing, dodged it. He came forward stolidly as if to take it from

But he had been the first to refuse her. Milky Fountain was the only mate he wanted, he had said. He liked the sort of woman who knew how to bear children, is what he had told her. And that had been the end of it between Blazing Eye and her.

"Here," She Who Knows said, relenting at last. She leaned forward and jammed the point of Blazing Eye's spear into the ground. Under the midday warmth, the last of the night's snowfall had disappeared and the earth was soft.

Blazing Eye snatched the spear up with a growl.

"I ought to kill you," he muttered, brandishing it in her face.

"Go ahead." She spread her arms wide and pushed her breasts outward. "Strike right here. Kill a woman, Blazing Eye. It'll be a fine achievement."

"It might bring us a little good luck," he said. But he lowered the weapon. "You ever touch my spear again, See Who Knows, and I'll tie you up on a hillside somewhere and leave you for a bear to eat. Do you understand that? Do you?"

"Save your threats for the Other Ones," she replied evenly. "They'll be harder to frighten than I am. And I'm not frightened at all."

"You saw an Other One right up close once, didn't you?" Broken Mountain asked her.

were as small as a child's. He had ridiculous little ears and a tiny nose. And his arms, his legs-" She shuddered. "They were absurd and hideous. Like a spider's, they were. So long, so thin."

They were all looking at her in awe, even Blazing Spear. No one else in the tribe, not Silver Cloud himself, had ever come face-to-face with an Other One, so close that she could have reached out and touched him, the way she had. Some of them had seen Other Ones now and then at a great distance, just fleeting glimpses, back in the days when the tribe had lived in the western lands. But She Who Knows had stumbled right into one in the forest.

That had been years ago, when she was nineteen, still a wild girl then, who went her own way in all things. The men of the Hunting Society had forbidden her, at last, to accompany them on their patrols any more, and she had gone off by herself early one morning in a dark, scowling mood, wandering far from the tribe's encampment. At midday in a little glade of white-barked birch trees she had found a pretty rock-bound pool, and she had stripped off her robe of fur to bathe in its chilly blue water, and when she came out she was astounded to see an Other

One, an unmistakable Other One, staring at her from a distance of no more than twenty paces.

looking color, and his forehead went straight up, no brow ridges whatsoever.

All in all, she thought, he was astonishingly ugly, as ugly as a demon. But he didn't seem dangerous. He carried no weapon that she could see, and he appeared to be smiling at her. At least, she thought that was a smile, that way he had of baring those tiny teeth of his.

She was stark naked and in the full ripeness of her youthful beauty. She stood before him unashamed and the unexpected thought came to her that she wanted this man to beckon to her and call her to his side, and take her in his arms, and make love to her in whatever way it was that the Other Ones made love to their women. Ugly as he was, strange-looking as he was, she wanted him. Why was that? she wondered. And she answered herself that it was because he was different; he was new; he was other. She would give herself to him, yes. And then she would go home with him and live with him and become an Other One herself, because she was weary of the men of her own tribe and ready for something new. Yes. Yes.

What was there to be afraid of? The Other Ones were supposed to be terrifying demons, but this man didn't seem demonic at all, only strange of face and much too tall and thin. And he didn't appear menacing, particularly. Only different.

preened and stretched, letting him see the fullness of her breasts, the strength and solidity of her arms and thighs, the sturdiness of her neck. She took two or three steps toward him, smiling, crooning a little song of desire.

His eyes widened and he shook his head. He held his arm straight out at her with the palm facing her, and began making signs with his fingers, sorcery-signs, no doubt, demon-signs. He backed away from her.

"You aren't afraid of me, are you? I just want to play. Come here, Other One." She grinned at him. -"Listen, stop backing away like that! I won't hurt you. Can't you understand what I'm saying?" She was speaking very loudly, very clearly, putting plenty of space between one word and the next. He was still backing away. She put her hands beneath her breasts and pushed them outward in the universal gesture of offering.

He understood that, at least.

He made a low rumbling sound, like that of an animal at bay. His eyes had the bright sheen of fear in them. His lips drew back in an expression of what-dismay? Disgust?

Yes, disgust, she realized.

I must look as ugly to him as he does to me.

He was turning now, running from her, lurching helter-skelter through the birches.

was, only a boy.

That night she returned to the tribe, resolved to take one of her own kind as a mate at last, and when Dark Wind asked her soon afterward to share his sleeping-rug she accepted without hesitation.

"Yes," she said to the men of the Hunting Society. "Yes, I know all too well what the Other Ones are like. And when we catch up with them I mean to be right there beside you, killing die loathsome beasts like the foul demons that they are."

"Look," Tree Of Wolves said, pointing. "The old men are coming down from the hill."

Indeed, there they came now, Silver Cloud leading the way, limping painfully and all too obviously trying to pretend that he wasn't, and the other three elders creaking along behind him. She Who Knows watched as they paraded into the camp, going straight to the place of the Goddess-shrine. For a long while Silver Cloud conferred with the three priestesses. There was much shaking of heads, then much nodding. And eventually Silver Cloud stepped forward, with the oldest of the priestesses a^ his side, to make an announcement.

The Summer Festival, he said, would be canceled this year-or postponed, at least. The Goddess had shown her displeasure by bringing a party of Other Ones uncomfortably close to their encampment,

the wrong direction entirely! We'll be walking right back into the territory we've just left, where Other Ones are swarming everywhere!"

Silver Cloud gave her an icy glare. "The Goddess promised us this land, free of Other Ones. Now we have come into it and we find Other Ones already here. This is not as it should be. We need to ask Her guidance."

"Let's ask for it down south, then. At least it'll be warmer there, and we may find a decent place to camp, with no Other Ones around to bother us."

"You have our permission to go south, She Who Knows. But the rest of us will set out this afternoon toward the Place of Three Rivers."

"And the Other Ones?" she cried.

"The Other Ones will not dare to approach the shrine of the Goddess," said Silver Cloud. "But if you fear that they will, She Who Knows, why, then-go south! Go south, She Who Knows!"

She heard someone laughing. Blazing Eye, it was. Then the other men of the Hunting Society began to laugh, too, and a few of the Mothers joined in. Within moments they were all laughing and pointing at her.

She wished she still had Blazing Eye's spear in her hands. She would smite them all if she did, and nothing would stop die slaughter.

"Go south, She Who Knows!" they called to her. "Go south, go south, go south."



dark!"

## CHAPTER TWO

### Arriving

[5]

FOR EDITH FELLOWES it was a tremendously busy few weeks.

The hardest part was the winding up of her work at the hospital. Giving only two weeks' notice was not only irregular, it was downright improper; but the administration was reasonably sympathetic once Miss Fellowes let it be known that she was leaving with the greatest reluctance, and only because she had been offered an opportunity to take part in an incredibly exciting new research project.

She mentioned the name of Stasis Technologies, Ltd.

"You're going to be taking care of the baby dinosaur?" they asked her, and everybody chuckled.

"No, not the dinosaur," she said. "Something much closer to what I know."

She didn't give any further details. Dr. Hoskins had forbidden her to go into specifics with anyone. But it wasn't hard for those who knew and

Still, she had to work virtually round the clock for a few days, tying off loose ends, filing her final reports, preparing lists of things for her successors, separating her own equipment and research materials from the hospital's. That part was strenuous but not otherwise burdensome. The really difficult part was saying goodbye to the children. They couldn't believe that she was leaving.

"You'll be back in a week or two, won't you, Miss Fellowes?" they asked her, crowding around. "You'll just be going on vacation, isn't that so? A little holiday? -Where are you going, Miss Fellowes?"

She had known some of these children since the day they were born. Now they were five, six, seven years old: outpatients, most of them, but some were permanent residents and she had worked with them year in, year out.

That was hard, breaking the news to them, very hard.

But she steeled herself to the task. Another child needed her now, an extraordinarily special child, a child whose predicament would be unique in the history of the universe. She knew that she had to go where she would be most needed.

She closed up her small apartment on the south side of town, selecting the few things she would want to take with her to her new home, storing away the rest. That was done quickly enough. She had no houseplants to

role in the project would be unsatisfying, that she might discover very swiftly that it had been a gigantic mistake to have taken the job. She hadn't burned her bridges, not at all: the hospital would be waiting for her return, the children, her apartment.

During those final two weeks, busy as she was, she made several trips across town to the headquarters of Stasis Technologies to help prepare for the arrival of the child from the past. They had given her a procurement staff of three, two young men and a woman, and she provided them with an extensive list of things she would need- medicines, nutritional supplements, even an incubator.

"An incubator?" Hoskins asked.

"An incubator," she said.

"We're not planning to bring back a premature child, Miss Fellowes."

"You don't know what you're bringing back, Dr. Hoskins. You told me so yourself, in just about that many words. You may be bringing a sick child; you may be bringing a weak one; you may be bringing a child who'll fall ill the moment it starts to get modern-day microbes into its system. I want an incubator, at least on a standby basis."

"An incubator. All right."

"And a sterile chamber big enough to contain an active and healthy child, if it turns out that it's too big to live in an incubator."

Hoskins gave her what she had already come to think of as his patented no-nonsense glare. "This is one that I'm going to win, Miss Fellowes. I appreciate your desire to protect the child from all imaginable risks. But you have no understanding of the physical layout of our equipment, and you've simply got to accept the fact that we can't deliver the child instantly into a perfectly pure isolation chamber. We can't."

"And if the child sickens and dies?"

"Our dinosaur is still in fine health."

"There's no reason to believe that reptiles, prehistoric or otherwise, would be subject to infection by the microorganisms that carry the diseases humans contract. But this is a human being you'll be bringing here, Dr. Hoskins, not a little dinosaur. A member of our own species."

"I appreciate that fact, Miss Fellowes."

"And therefore I ask you to-"

"And I tell you the answer is no. Some risks have to be shouldered here, and microbial infection is one of them. We'll be ready with all possible medical assistance if a problem develops. But we're not going to try to create a miraculous magical 100% safe environment. We're not," Then Hoskins' tone softened. -"Miss Fellowes, just let

me say this much. I've got a child myself, a little boy, not even old enough for kindergarten yet. Yes, at my age, and

possibility of resignation was something that she would hold in reserve, but it was pointless to threaten it now. It was the only weapon she had. She had to save it for the right moment, and this didn't seem to be it.

Hoskins was equally adamant about letting her have an advance look at the area where the child would be housed. "That's the Stasis zone," he said, "and we're running a non-stop countdown in there. Nobody can go in there while that's going on. Nobody. Not you, not me, not the President of the United States. And we can't interrupt the countdown for the sake of letting you have a sight-seeing tour."

"But if the accommodations are inadequate-"

"The accommodations are adequate, Miss Fellowes. More than adequate. Trust me."

"I'd still prefer-"

"Yes. Trust me."

Despicable words. Yet somehow she did trust him, more or less,

She still wasn't sure what kind of scientist Hoskins might be, or how good, despite that vague, boastful PH.D. on his nameplate. But one thing was certain. He was a tough administrator. He hadn't come to be the head man of Stasis Technologies, Ltd. by being a pushover.

Miss Fellowes sighed. She could argue, but what was the use?

Let Hoskins win the small victories, she decided. Save your ammunition for the big battles that surely lay ahead.

[7]

A light rain was falling. The evening sky was gray and dreary, and the Stasis Technologies buildings looked uglier than ever, big barn-like structures without the slightest scrap of elegance or grace.

Everything seemed makeshift and hasty. There was a harsh, engineering feel about the place, cheerless and inhumane. She had spent her whole working life in institutional surroundings, but these buildings made even the most somber hospital look like the abode of joy and laughter. And the badged employees, going rigidly about their business, the closed-in faces, the hushed tones, the air of almost military urgency-

What am I doing here? she asked herself. How did I ever get drawn into all of this?

"This way, please, Miss Fellowes," Bryce said.

People began to nod and beckon to her. No announcements of her identity seemed necessary. One after

another, men and women seemed to know her and to know her function. Of course, she was wearing a badge herself now, but no one

black surface.

"Put your badge to the shield," Bryce said.

"Really, is all this necess-"

"Please, Miss Fellowes. Please."

The doorway yielded. More stairs confronted them. Up and up and up, spiraling around the walls of an immense barrel-shaped vault, down a hallway, through another door-did they really need all this?

At last she found herself stepping out onto a balcony that looked down into a large pit. Across from her, down below, was a bewildering array of instruments set into a curving matrix that looked like a cross between the control panel of a spaceship and the working face of a giant computer-or, perhaps, just a movie set for some fantastic and nonsensical "scientific" epic. Technicians, looking ruffled and wild-eyed, were racing around down there in an absurdly theatrical way, making frantic hand signals to each other. People were moving thick black cables from one outlet to another, studying them and shaking their heads, moving them back to their original positions. Lights were flashing, numbers were ticking downward on huge screens.

Dr. Hoskins was on the balcony not far away, but he only looked at her distantly and murmured, "Miss Fel-lowes." He seemed abstracted, preoccupied, hardly present at all.

She could see what seemed to be a microwave cooker and a freezer-space unit in one room and a washroom arrangement off another. There was a small cubicle full of medical equipment of a kind that was very familiar to her -indeed, it appeared to contain all the things she had asked Hoskins' staffers to provide. Including the incubator.

And surely the object she made out in another room could only be part of a bed, a small bed.

Men and women wearing company badges were filing into the room, now, taking the seats alongside her. Miss Fellowes recognized a few of them as Stasis executives to whom she had been introduced on her earlier visits here, though she was unable to remember a single name. Others were completely unknown to her. They all nodded and smiled in her direction as if she had been working here for years.

Then she saw someone whose name and face were familiar to her: a thin, fine-looking man of fifty-five or thereabouts, with a small, fastidiously clipped gray mus-

tache and keen eyes that seemed to busy themselves with everything.

Candide Deveney! The science correspondent for International Telenews!

Miss Fellowes wasn't much of a screen-watcher. An hour or two a week, sometimes even less; there were weeks when she didn't even remember to



course with Earth the year before last. Candide Deveney had been the on-screen face during those events. He was notoriously at the scene of every major scientific breakthrough. That he was here tonight impressed Miss Fellowes despite herself. She felt her heart beating just a little faster at the realization that this must indeed be going to be something of high importance if it was worthy of his being present here, and that she was almost close enough to reach out and touch Candide Deveney himself as the great moment approached.

Then she scowled at her own foolishness. Deveney was only a reporter, after all. Why should she be so awed by him, merely because she had seen him on television?

What was a more fitting reason for awe, she thought, was that they were going to reach into the remoteness of time and bring a little human being forth into the twenty-first century. And she was going to be a vital part of that enterprise. She-not Candide Deveney. If anything,

Candide Deveney ought to feel impressed at being in the same room with Edith Fellowes, not the other way around.

Hoskins had gone over to greet Deveney, and seemed to be explaining the project to him. Miss Fellowes inclined her head to listen.

Deveney was saying, "I've been thinking about what you people have been doing here ever since my last visit here, the day the dinosaur came. -

something from 100 million years ago, you ought to be able to bring something back from last Tuesday with a whole lot less effort. And yet you tell me you can't reach last Tuesday at all, or anything else that's at all close to us in time. Why is that?"

Hoskins said, "I can make it seem less paradoxical, Deveney, if you will allow me to use an analogy."

(He calls him "Deveney"! Miss Fellowes thought. Like a college professor casually explaining something to a student!)

"By all means use an analogy," Deveney said. "Whatever you think will help."

"Well, then: you can't read a book with ordinary-sized print if it's held six feet from your eyes, can you? But you can read it quite easily if you hold it, say, one foot away. So far, the closer the better. If you bring the book

to within an inch of your eyes, though, you've lost it again. The human eye simply can't focus on anything that close. So distance is a determining factor in more than one way. Too close is just as bad as too far, at least where vision is involved."

"Hmm," said Deveney.

"Or take another example. Your right shoulder is about thirty inches from the tip of your right forefinger and you can place your right forefinger on your right shoulder without any difficulty whatsoever. Well, now. Your

(Miss Fellowes found herself admiring Hoskins' calm certainty despite herself. There was strength there.)

Deveney said, "How far out are you planning to reach tonight?"

"Forty thousand years."

Miss Fellowes drew in her breath sharply.

Forty thousand years?

[8]

She had never considered that possibility. She had been too busy with other things, things like breaking off her professional ties with the hospital and getting settled

in here. She became aware now, suddenly, that there was a good deal of fundamental thinking about this project that she had never taken the trouble to do.

She knew, of course, that they were going to be bringing a child from the past into the modern world. She understood-although she wasn't certain exactly where she had picked up the information-that the child would be taken from the prehistoric era.

But "prehistoric" could mean almost anything. Most of Europe could have been considered "prehistoric" only three thousand years ago. There were a few parts of the world still living a sort of prehistoric existence today.

college anthropology courses of long ago, but right at this moment only the merest shreds of information came to the surface of her mind, and those, Miss Fellowes feared, were hopelessly garbled and distorted. Before true human beings had evolved, there had been the Neanderthal people, yes? Primitive brutish creatures. And the even more primitive Pithecanthropus people had roamed the world before them, and something else with an equally intricate name, and probably some odder kinds of pre-men or sub-men, too, shaggy little naked ape-creatures that could more or less be considered to be our distant ancestors. But how far back in time had all these ancestral people lived? Twenty thousand

years ago? Fifty? A hundred thousand? She really knew nothing useful about the time-frame of all this.

Great God in heaven, am I going to be taking care of an ape-child?

She began to tremble. Here she was, fussing over incubators and sterile chambers, and they were preparing to toss something very much like a chimpanzee into her lap, weren't they? Weren't they? Some fierce hairy little wild thing with claws and teeth, something that really belonged in a zoo, if anywhere, not in the care of a specialist

Well, maybe not. Maybe the Neanderthals and the Pithecanthropuses and all those other early forms of human-like life had lived a million years

There was tension in the air. Now the chaotic ballet in the pit below had ceased, and the technicians at the controls were scarcely moving at all. They communicated with one another by means of signals so subtle that it was almost impossible to detect them—a flick of an eyebrow, the tapping of a finger on the back of a wrist.

One man at a microphone spoke into it in a soft monotone, saying things in short phrases that made no sense to Miss Fellowes—numbers, mostly, punctuated by what sounded like phrases in code, cryptic and impenetrable.

Deveney had taken a seat just next to her. Hoskins

was on the other side. Leaning over the balcony railing with an intent stare, the scientific reporter said, "Is there going to be anything for us to see, Dr. Hoskins? Visual effects, I mean."

"What? No. Nothing till the job is done. We detect indirectly, something on the principle of radar, except that we use mesons rather than radiation. We've been running the meson scans for weeks, tuning and retuning. Mesons reach backward—under the proper conditions. Some are reflected and we have to analyze the reflections, and we feed them back in and use them as guides for the next probe, fine-tuning it down until we start approximating the desired level of accuracy."

"Scary?" Deveney said.

"We don't like to fail. I definitely don't. And failure's an ever-present default mode in our operation. We're working in probabilistic areas here. Quantum effects, you understand. The best we can hope for is likeliness, never certainty. That's not good enough, really. But it's the best we can hope for."

"Still, you seem pretty confident."

"Yes," Hoskins said. "We've had the fix on this one particular moment in time for weeks-breaking it, remaking it after factoring in our own temporal movements, checking parallaxes, looking for every imaginable relativistic distortion, constantly seeking assurance that we

can handle time flow with sufficient precision. And we think we can do it. I'd almost be willing to say that we know we can."

But his forehead was glistening.

There was a sudden terrible silence in the room, broken only by the sound of uneasy breathing. Edith Fellowes found herself rising from her seat, leaning forward, gripping the balcony railing.

But there was nothing to see.

"Now," said the man at the microphone quietly.

The silence ascended to a higher level. It was a new kind of silence, total silence, a silence more profound than Miss Fellowes had ever

such overwhelming horror as could barely be believed.

Miss Fellowes' head twisted in the direction of the cry.

And Hoskins' fist pounded on the railing and he said in a tight voice, trembling with triumph, "Did it!"

[10]

They went rushing down the short spiral flight of steps that led to the operations room, Hoskins in the lead, Deveney just behind him, and Miss Fellowes-unmasked- following the journalist. Perhaps it was a terrible breach of

security for her to be going down there now, she thought. But she had heard the cry that child had uttered.

She belonged down there at least as much as Candide Deveney, she told herself.

At the bottom of the staircase Hoskins paused and looked around. He seemed a little surprised that Miss Fellowes had come down after him-but only a little. He said nothing to her.

The mood in the operations room had changed dramatically now. All the frenzy was gone, and most of the tension. The technicians who had been monitoring the time-scoop equipment looked utterly spent. They stood by quietly, appearing almost dazed. Hoskins ignored them too. It was as

He stepped through an open door in mute demonstration. Deveney, smiling stiffly and drawing an obviously deep breath, followed him an instant later.

Hoskins said, "You too, Miss Fellowes. Please!"

He crooked his forefinger impatiently.

Miss Fellowes nodded and stepped across the threshold. She felt the field unmistakably. It was as though a ripple had gone through her, an internal tickle.

But once she was inside she was aware of no unusual sensations. Everything seemed normal. She picked up the clean fresh smell of the newly constructed wooden rooms,

and something else-an earthy smell, the smell of a forest, somehow-

The panicky screaming, she realized, had ended some time ago. Everything was quiet inside the stasis field now. And then she heard the dry shuffling of feet, a scrabbling as of fingers against wood-and, she thought, a low moan.

"Where is the child?" asked Miss Fellowes in distress.

Hoskins was examining some dials and meters just inside the entrance to the dollhouse. Deveney was gaping idiotically at him. Neither one seemed in any hurry to look after the child-the child that this vast and



that. He was naked. His small dirt-smeared chest was heaving raggedly. All around him lay an untidy sprawl of loose earth and pebbles and torn-off tufts of coarse grass, all of it strewn around the floor in a broad arc as though a bushel load of landfill had been casually upended in the room. The rich smell of soil rose up from it, and a touch of something fetid, besides. Miss Fellowes saw some large dark ants and what might have been a couple of furry little spiders moving around slowly near the boy's bare brown feet.

Hoskins followed her horrified glance and said with a sharp thrust of annoyance in his voice, "You can't pluck a boy cleanly out of time, Miss Fellowes. We had to take some of the surroundings with him for safety's sake. Or

would you have preferred to have him arrive here minus one of his legs or with only half a head?"

"Please!" said Miss Fellowes, in an agony of revulsion. "Are we just going to stand here? The poor child is frightened. And it's filthy."

Which was an understatement. She had never seen a child that was quite so disreputable-looking. Perhaps he hadn't been washed in weeks; perhaps not ever. He reeked. His entire body was smeared with a thick layer of encrusted grime and grease, and there was a long scratch on his thigh that looked red and sore, possibly infected.

Miss Fellowes felt a cold shock wave sweeping through her nervous system. This was her new charge? This? This little-animal?

It was as bad as she had feared.

Worse. Worse. He hardly seemed human. He was hideous; he was a little monster.

Hoskins reached out swiftly and seized both of the child's wrists, pulling his arms inward across his body and crossing them over his belly. In the same motion Hoskins lifted him, kicking and writhing and screaming, from the floor.

Ghastly banshee howls came forth from the child. They erupted from the depths of his body with astonishing force. Miss Fellowes realized that she was trembling,

and forced herself to be calm. It was a frightful noise, ear-splitting, repellent, sub-human. It was almost impossible to believe that a boy so small could make sounds so horrendous.

Hoskins held him at arms' length in midair and looked around in obvious distress at Miss Fellowes.

"Yes, hold him, now. Don't put him down. Watch out for his toenails when he kicks. Take him into the bathroom and let's clean him up. That's what he needs before anything else, a good warm bath."

"You, Elliott-get the water running. Mortenson, I want antibiotics for that infection on his leg. In fact, bring the whole antiseptis kit into the bathroom. Stratford, find yourself a cleanup crew and start getting all this trash and filth removed from here!"

They began to snap to it. Now that she was giving the orders, her initial shock and horror were starting to drop away and some degree of professional aplomb returned to her. This was going to be difficult, yes. But she was a specialist in managing difficult cases. And she had been up against plenty of them during the course of her career.

Workmen appeared. Storage canisters were brought in. The workmen began to sweep away the soil and debris and carry the canisters off to a containment area some-

where in back. Hoskins called to them, "Remember, not a scrap goes outside the bubble!"

Miss Fellowes strode after Hoskins into the bathroom and signaled for him to plunge the boy into the tub, which Elliott was rapidly filling with warm water. No longer just one of a group of confused spectators, but now an efficient and experienced nurse swinging into action, she was collected enough to pause and look at the child with a calm, clinical eye, seeing him clearly as though for the first time.

broad in the shoulders. All right; nothing terribly unusual about that, really. But that long oversized skull! That bulging, sloping forehead! That immense potato of a nose, with its dark cavernous nostrils, which opened outward as much as downward. The great staring eyes framed in those huge bony rims! The receding chin, the short neck, the dwarfish limbs!

Forty thousand years, Miss Fellowes told herself numbly.

Not human. Not really.

An animal. Her worst-case scenario had come true. An ape-child; that was what he was. Some kind of chimpanzee, more or less. That was what they were paying her all this money to look after! How could she? What old she know about caring for little savage prehistoric apes?

And yet-yet-

Maybe she was wrong about him. She hoped so most profoundly. There was the glow of unmistakably human intelligence in those huge, gleaming, furious eyes of his. His skin, light brown, almost tawny, was covered only with fine golden down, not the coarse shaggy pelt that one would imagine an animal-child to have. And his face, ugly as it was-it wasn't really the face of any kind of ape. You had to look behind the superficial strangeness, and when you did you saw that he was really just a little boy.

A little boy, yes, an ugly little boy, a strange little boy, a human boy-a dirty little frightened child with bandy legs and a peculiarly shaped head

Fellowes wasn't at all sure that she would be able to do it, despite everything that she had told Dr. Hoskins when he had interviewed her. And that was a deeply troubling thought.

The tub was full now. Elliott, a brawny dark-haired man with huge hands and thick wrists, had taken the boy from Dr. Hoskins and was holding his squirming body half submerged. Mortenson, the other assistant, had wheeled in the medical tray. Miss Fellowes squirted half a tube of antiseptic soap into the bathtub and a yellowish bubbly foam began to churn up. The bubbles seemed to catch the child's attention for a moment and it stopped howling and kicking-but only for a moment. Then it

must have remembered that something horrible was happening to it, and it went back to struggling.

Elliott laughed. "He's a slippery little bugger. Almost got away from me that time."

"Make sure he doesn't," Miss Fellowes said grimly. "My Lord, what filth! Careful-hold him! Hold him!"

It was a brutal job. Even with two men helping her, it was all she could manage to keep the boy under some measure of control. He never stopped squirming, wriggling, kicking, scratching, bellowing. Whether he thought he was defending his life or just his dignity Miss Fellowes had no idea, but she had rarely had such a reluctant patient as this. They were all splashed with

She realized that she had forgotten all about her earlier demand to have the child arrive into a sterile, germ-free environment. Somehow that seemed like mere foolishness to her now. The boy was so strong, so agile, so fierce; and she had imagined a weak, vulnerable little thing-

Well, Miss Fellowes told herself, he was still vulnerable, regardless of the way he fought. They'd have to monitor him very closely in the first few days to make sure that he wasn't coming down with some bacterial infection to which he had no built-in resistance.

"Lift him out of the tub for a minute, Elliott," she said. "Mortenson, let's put some clean water in there. Lord, Lord, what a filthy little child!"

The bath process seemed to go on and on forever.

Miss Fellowes worked in silence and with a sense of rising outrage. Her mood was beginning to swing back the other way, toward annoyance, toward actual anger. She was no longer thinking of how stimulating it was to tackle a difficult challenge. What was uppermost in her mind now, spurred by the continued wild smugglings and outcries of the boy and the way she and everything about her was getting drenched, was the notion that Hoskins had tricked her into accepting an impossible assignment whose true nature she had not really understood.

He had hinted that the child wouldn't be pretty. But that was a long way from saying that it would be repulsively deformed and as intractable as a

her that the work was going to be tough. He had said the child would be difficult, strange, unruly, perhaps highly disagreeable. Those had been his exact words. He had asked her if she was prepared to love the child unconditionally-regardless of the way its chin might recede or its brow might bulge. And she had said yes, yes, yes, she was prepared to deal with all that.

-And there would be the look in Hoskins' eyes, if she walked out now. A cold searching look that would

say, So I was right. You're only interested in looking after pretty children, eh, Miss FeHowes?

She glanced over at him. Hoskins was standing apart from them, watching coolly from a distance with a half-smile on his face. The smile broadened as his eyes met hers, as though he was able to read her mind and could see the feelings of outrage and the sense of betrayal that were churning in it, and was amused by what he saw.

I will quit, she thought, as fury surged up in her all over again.

But not yet. Not until I have things under control here. To quit before then would be demeaning. Let me get this hideous little savage civilized a little first: and then Hoskins can find someone else to cope with him.

Miss Fellowes guessed. Stockily built though he was, he was terribly thin—no spare fat on him at all, arms and legs like pipestems—and he was trembling now as if his dirt had been a useful layer of insulation.

Miss Fellowes said sharply, "Bring me a nightgown for the child!"

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A nightgown appeared at once. It was as though everything were ready and yet nothing were ready unless she

gave orders, as though Hoskins was deliberately standing back and letting her call the tune, to test her.

"I'd better hold him again, Miss Fellowes," the burly Elliott said. "You'll never get it on him all by yourself."

"You're right," Miss Fellowes said. "I won't. Thank you, Elliott."

The boy's eyes widened at the approach of the nightgown as if it were some implement of torture. But the battle this time was shorter and less violent than the one in the tub. Elliott seized each tiny wrist with one of his huge hands and held the short arms upward; and Miss Fellowes deftly drew the pink flannel nightgown down over the gnomish head.

The boy made a soft interrogative sound. He slipped the fingers of one hand inside the collar of the nightgown and gripped the fabric tightly. His strange sloping forehead furrowed in a deep frown.



The splayed, stubby fingers of his hand moved slowly across the thick flannel of the nightgown, feeling the strangeness of it, but he made no second attempt to rip it away.

Miss Fellowes thought desperately: Well, what next?

Everyone seemed in suspended animation, waiting for her—even the ugly little boy.

A long list of things that needed to be done blossomed in her mind, not necessarily in order of importance:

PROPHYLAXIS FOR THAT INFECTED SCRATCH OF HIS. TRIM HIS FINGERNAILS AND TOENAILS. BLOOD TESTS. IMMUNE-SYSTEM VULNERABILITY? VACCINATIONS? A COURSE OF PREVENTIVE ANTIBIOTIC TREATMENTS? HAIRCUT.

STOOL SAMPLES. INTESTINAL PARASITES? DENTAL EXAMINATION. CHEST X RAY. GENERAL SKELETAL X RAY, TOO.

And half a dozen other items of varying degrees of urgency. But then she realized what the top priority of all must be, at least for the ugly little boy.

Briskly she said, "Have you provided food? Milk?"

They had. Ms. Stratford, her third assistant, wheeled in a gleaming mobile unit. In the refrigeration compartment Miss Fellowes found three quarts of milk, with a warming unit and a supply of fortifications in the form

But savages wouldn't know how to handle cups. That much seemed certain. Miss Fellowes poured a little of the

milk into a saucer and popped it into the microwave for a few seconds' worth of warming.

They were all watching her—Hoskins, Candide Deveney, the three orderlies, and everyone else who had managed to crowd into the Stasis area. The boy was staring at her too.

"Yes, look at me," she said to the boy. "There's a good fellow."

She held the saucer carefully in her hands, brought it to her mouth, and pantomimed the act of lapping up the milk.

The boy's eyes followed. But did he understand?

"Drink," she said. "This is how to drink."

Miss Fellowes pantomimed the lapping again. She felt a little absurd. But she brushed the feeling away. She would do whatever felt right to do. The boy had to be taught how to drink.

"Now you," she said.

She offered him the saucer, holding it out toward him so that all he had to do was move his head forward slightly and lick up the milk. He looked at it solemnly, without the slightest sign of comprehension.

"Drink," she said. "Drink." She let her tongue flick out again as though to show him once more.

before. He looked baffled and dis-

pleased. Then his tongue slowly moved over his wetted lips. He frowned. Tasted. The tongue licked out again.

Was that a smile?

Yes. Yes. A sort of smile, anyway. Miss Fellowes stepped back.

"Milk," she said. "That's milk. Go on. Have a little more of it."

Tentatively the boy approached the saucer. He bent toward it, then looked up and over his shoulder sharply as though expecting to find some enemy crouching behind him. But there was nothing behind him. He bent again, stiffly, clumsily, pushed his head forward, licked at the milk, first in a cautious way and then with increasing eagerness. He lapped it the way a cat would. He made a slurping noise. He showed no interest in using his hands to raise the saucer to his face. He was like a little animal, squatting on the floor lapping up the milk.

Miss Fellowes felt a sudden surge of revulsion, even though she knew that she was the one who had pantomimed the lapping in the first place. She wanted to think of him as a child, a human child, but he kept reverting to some animal level, and she hated that. She hated it. She knew that her reaction must be apparent on her face. But she couldn't help it. Why was the child so bestial? It was prehistoric, yes-forty thousand years!-but did

"What's all this mystery?" she asked. "Come on, tell me, if there's some secret I'm supposed to find out about!"

Deveney turned to her. "I just was wondering, Miss -whether you're actually aware that you happen to be the first civilized woman in history ever to be asked to take care of a young Neanderthal?"

## INTERCHAPTER TWO

### Goddess Woman

THIS WAS THE FOURTH MORNING of the westward march, the pilgrimage back to the Place of Three Rivers. A dry cold wind had been blowing steadily out of the north ever since Silver Cloud had given the order to turn around and retrace their long path across the barren plains. Sometimes new gusts of thin, hard snow came whistling by, dancing in wild milky swirls overhead-and this in mid-summer! Truly, the Goddess must be angered. But why? What had they done?

By night the People huddled in crannies and crevices under a white moon that drenched the sky with rivers of chilly light. There were no caves here to crawl into. Some of the most enterprising ones found twigs and branches and flung little lean-tos together for themselves, but most were too weary after a day's marching and foraging to make the effort.

"We're simply postponing it until we can seek the guidance of the Goddess."

Goddess Woman spat. "The guidance of the Goddess! The guidance of the Goddess! What does Silver Cloud think he's up to? I am the one who provides the guidance of the Goddess. And I don't need to return to the Place of the Three Rivers in order to provide it."

"Silver Cloud does," said Keeps The Past.

"Purely out of cowardice. He's become afraid of the Other Ones and he wants to run away from them, now that he knows that they're ahead of us."

"Ahead of us and behind us both. We can't hide from them any longer. They're all around us. And there aren't enough of us to fight them. What are we to do? The Goddess must tell us how to deal with them."

"Yes," Goddess Woman conceded sullenly. "I suppose that's true."

"So unless you can advise us yourself, in the name of the Goddess, concerning the tactics we ought to follow-

"Enough, Keeps The Past. I see your point."

"Good. Try to keep it in mind, dien."

Goddess Woman uttered a sulky sniff and walked away by herself, over to the fire. She stood close, arms huddled against her sides.

She and Keeps The Past had been bickering for more years than Goddess Woman cared to think about, and they were not coming to like

the warm pink glow of the fire to rise up and around her lean, stocky body, Keeps The Past did have a point. The Other Ones were a tremendous problem-those tall, agile, maddening flat-faced people who had come out of nowhere and seemed to be spreading everywhere, appropriating the best caves for themselves, the finest hunting grounds, the sweetest springs. Goddess Woman had heard horrifying tales occasionally from tribeless wanderers who had crossed the People's path, tales of clashes between the Other Ones and bands of the People, of hideous massacres, of horrifying routs. The Other Ones had better weapons, which they seemed to be able to manufacture in incredible quantities, and they were more swift afoot in battle too, it appeared: they moved like shadows, so it was said, and when they fought you it was as though they were on all sides of you at once. So far Silver Cloud had been able to avoid any of that, deftly steering the tribe this way and that across the great open plains to keep them away from collisions with the dangerous newcomers. But how long could he go on managing to do that?

Yes, best to make this pilgrimage and see if the Goddess had any advice, Goddess Woman told herself.

Besides, Silver Cloud had been very persuasive when it came to the religious side of the argument. The Summer Festival marked the high point of the year, when the sun was warm and the day was long. It was a

the tribe at that. It was he who had to dance the dance of gratitude before the shrine of the Goddess. It was he who had to carry out the sacrifice of the bullock, he who had to take the chosen virgin in his arms and initiate her into the mysteries of the Great Mother. The other holy festivals of the tribe were the responsibility of the three Goddess Women; but there was no way they could carry out this one. The chief had to do it. If Silver Cloud refused to take part, the Summer Festival could not be held. That was all there was to it. Goddess Woman felt uneasy about that; but the decision belonged to Silver Cloud.

Goddess Woman turned away from the fire. It was time to set up the shrine for the morning rites.

"Goddess Women!" Goddess Woman called. "Both of you! Let's get to work!"

They had all had individual names, once. But now each one of the three priestesses was simply known as Goddess Woman. You gave up your name when you entered Her service. The Goddess had no name, and Her servants had no names either.

Goddess Woman was still able to remember the name of the youngest Goddess Woman, for she was Goddess Woman's own daughter, and Goddess Woman had named her herself: Bright Sky At Dawn. But it was years since she had spoken that name out loud. To her, and to everyone

As for her own birth-name, Goddess Woman no longer had any idea what it might have been. She had forgotten it years ago and she rarely gave it any thought now. She was Goddess Woman and nothing but Goddess Woman. Sometimes as she lay waiting for sleep she found herself wondering despite herself what her old name could have been. Something with sunlight in it? Or golden wings? Or shining water? There was brightness in it somewhere, she was fairly sure of that. But the name itself had slipped away forever. She felt guilty for even trying to think of it. Certainly there was no one that she could ask. It was a sin, a Goddess Woman using her birth-name in any way. Whenever she started to think about it she immediately made a sign of purification and asked forgiveness.

She was the second-oldest woman in the tribe. This was her fortieth summer. Only Keeps The Past was older, and by no more than a season or two. But Goddess Woman was strong and healthy; she expected to live another ten years, perhaps fifteen, maybe as many as twenty if she was lucky. Her mother had lived to a great old age, even beyond her sixtieth year, and her grandmother as well. Long life was a characteristic of her family.

"Will we do the full rite this morning?" the youngest Goddess Woman asked her, as they moved the stones about, assembling the shrine.



She lit the Goddess-fire. The second Goddess Woman produced her little wolfskin packet of aromatic herbs and sprinkled them on the blaze. Colored flames flared high. The youngest Goddess Woman brought the stone bowl of blood from yesterday's kill and poured a little onto the offering-altar.

From the furry bear-skin in which they were stored, Goddess Woman brought forth the three holy bear-skulls that were the tribe's most sacred possession, and put them out on three flat stones to shield them from contact with the ground.

The skulls had been in the tribe's possession for more generations than even Keeps The Past could say. Great heroes of long ago had slain those bears in single combat, and they had been handed down in the tribe from one Goddess Woman to the next. The bear was the Father-animal, the great kindling force that brought forth life from the Great Mother. That was why Goddess Woman had to take care not to allow the skulls to touch bare soil, for then they would fructify the Mother, and this was not the season for doing that. Any children who were kindled into life now, in mid-summer, would be born in the dark days of late winter, when food was at its scarcest. The rime to kindle young ones was in autumn, so that they would come forth in the spring.

her soul. One force necessarily led to the other; one could not invoke one without feeling the presence of the other.

"Goddess, we thank Thee," murmured Goddess Woman. "We thank Thee for the fruit of the earth and for the flesh of the beasts and most deeply do we thank Thee for the fruit of our wombs." Briefly she touched her breasts, her belly, her loins. She crouched and dug her fingertips into the hard frosty soil. Cold as it might be today, it was still the breast of the Mother, and she fondled it with love. Beside her, the other two Goddess Women were doing the same.

She closed her eyes. She saw the great arc of the Mother's breast stretching out before her to the horizon. She filled her soul with awareness of Goddess-presence, of Mother-force.

Bless us, Goddess Woman prayed. Preserve us. Give us the grace of Thy love.

She was pulled harshly from her meditations by the sound of raucous screeching laughter somewhere behind her. The boys of the tribe, playing their rough games. She forced herself to ignore them. They were of the Goddess too, however crude and cruel and foolish they might be.

The Goddess had created women for bearing children and giving nurture and love, and men for hunting and providing and fighting, and each had a role to play that the other could not venture to perform. That was the

mantles of fur.

She caught sight of Silver Cloud standing at a great distance, arms folded impatiently as though he had been waiting in an ill-tempered way for her to get done with it. Closer at hand, Goddess Woman saw She Who Knows leading a band of the littlest children around in a circle, teaching them a song.

How pathetic, she told herself. She Who Knows, that barren woman, pretending to be one of the Mothers. The Goddess has dealt harshly with She Who Knows, Goddess Woman thought.

"Are you done finally?" Silver Cloud shouted. "Can we get going now, Goddess Woman?"

"We can get going, yes."

She Who Knows came over to her. A little gaggle of the smaller children tagged along behind her-Sweet Flower, Skyfire Face, and a couple of the others.

"Can I talk to you for a moment, Goddess Woman?" She Who Knows asked.

"Silver Cloud wants us to pack up and get on our way."

"A moment, that's all."

"A moment, then."

She Who Knows said quietly, "Is it true what I hear, that there's going to be a special sacrifice when we get to the Place of Three Rivers?"

"There'll be a sacrifice, yes," Goddess Woman said. "How can we have a pilgrimage if we don't make an offering when we get to the Pilgrimage-place?"

"A special sacrifice."

What was left of Goddess Woman's patience was rapidly wearing thin. "Special how, She Who Knows? Special in what way? I have no time for riddles now."

"The sacrifice of a child," said She Who Knows.

Goddess Woman would not have been more startled if She Who Knows had thrown a handful of snow in her face.

"What? Who says such a thing?"

"I heard the men talking. We'll give a child to the Goddess at the Place of Three Rivers so that She will make the Other Ones keep away from us. Silver Cloud has already decided it. Presumably after discussing it with you. Is that true, Goddess Woman?"

Goddess Woman felt a pounding in her breast and heard a sound like diunder drumming in her ears. She felt weak and dizzy and she had to force herself with difficulty to remain upright and to keep her eyes level with

thing has never been done."

"The Other Ones have never been a serious danger to us before, either."

"Sacrificing children isn't going to protect us from the Other Ones."

"They say diat you and Silver Cloud have decided that it will."

"They're lying, whoever they are," Goddess Woman said hotly. "I don't know anything about this plan. Nothing! -All this is nonsense, She Who Knows. It won't happen. I promise you that. There'll be no sacrifices of children around here. You can be completely sure of that."

"Swear it. Swear by the Goddess. -No." She Who Knows reached out and took Skyfire Face by one hand and Sweet Flower by the other. "Swear by the souls of this little boy and this little girl."

"My word should be enough," Goddess Woman said.

"You won't swear?"

"My word is sufficient," said Goddess Woman. "I don't owe you any oaths. Not by the Goddess, not by Sweet Flower's little backside, not by anything. We're civilized people, She Who Knows. We don't kill children. That should be good enough for you."

She Who Knows looked skeptical. But she gave ground and went away.

Goddess Woman stood by herself, thinking.

Where was Silver Cloud? Ah, over there, looking through Mammoth Rider's new batch of arrow points. Goddess Woman went over to him and drew him aside. In a low voice she said, "Tell me something, and tell me honestly. Are you planning to sacrifice a child when we get to the Place of Three Rivers?"

"Have you lost your mind, Goddess Woman?"

"She Who Knows says that some of the men are talking about it. That you've already decided on it and that I've given my agreement."

"And have you given your agreement?" Silver Cloud asked.

"Of course not."

"Well, the rest of the story is just as true. Sacrifice a child, Goddess Woman? You couldn't possibly have believed that I would ever-"

"I wasn't certain."

"How can you say that?"

"You canceled the Summer Festival, didn't you?"

"What's wrong with you, Goddess Woman? You don't see any difference between putting off a festival and killing a child?"

"There are those who'd say that one is just as wrong as the other."

"Well, anyone who says something like that is crazy,"

Silver Cloud retorted. "I have no such intentions, and you can tell She Who Knows that I-" He paused. His expression altered strangely. -"You

seemed to have softened and he had turned inward upon himself, somehow. Goddess Woman wasn't sure how to interpret that inward look. What could he be thinking of?

Goddess above, he couldn't seriously be considering the idea of sacrificing a child all of a sudden, could he? Did I put something monstrous into his mind just now?

No, she decided. No. That couldn't be it. She knew Silver Cloud well. He was tough, he was unswerving, he could be brutal-but not this. Not a child.

"I want you to understand my position very clearly," Goddess Woman said with all the force she could muster. "There may very well be some men in this tribe who think it could be useful to offer a child to the Goddess, and for all I know, Silver Cloud, they might be able to succeed in talking you into it before we reach the Place of Three Rivers. But I won't allow it. I'm prepared to bring the heaviest curse of the Goddess down on any man who even proposes such a thing. It'll be the bear-curse, the darkest one of all. I'll cut him off from every shred of Her mercy without any hesitation. I'll-"

"Easy, Goddess Woman. You're getting all worked up over nothing. Nobody's talking about sacrificing children.

Nobody. When we get to the Place of Three Rivers we'll catch ourselves an ibex or a chamois or a good red elk, and we'll give its meat to the Goddess as we always do, and that will be that. So calm yourself. Calm

against her aching forehead.

Later in the morning, when the tribe had resumed its march, Goddess Woman came up alongside She Who Knows and said, "I had a talk with Silver Cloud. He knew no more about this child-sacrifice scheme than I did. And he feels the same way about it that I do. That you do. He wouldn't ever allow it."

"There are those here who think otherwise."

"Who, for instance?"

She Who Knows shook her head vaguely. "I won't name names. But they think the Goddess won't be satisfied unless we give Her one of our children."

"If they think that, they don't understand the Goddess at all. Forget all of this, will you, She Who Knows? It's just so much empty talk. The talk of fools."

"Let's hope so," said She Who Knows, her voice dark with foreboding.

They marched onward. Gradually Goddess Woman put the matter from her mind. She Who Knows' refusal to name names had aroused her suspicions. Very probably there was nothing to the story at all, and never had been.

Perhaps the woman had invented the whole thing; perhaps she was sick in the mind; perhaps it might be a good idea to send She Who Knows off



down below, in the misty valley, they could see the shining glint that the water of the Three Rivers made.

It was late in the day, and the People were starting to consider making camp for the evening. And then a strange thing happened.

Goddess Woman was near the front of the file, with Tree Of Wolves on one side of her and Blazing Eye on the other, to help her carry the packets of Goddess-things. Suddenly the air turned intensely bright just beside the path. There was a sparkling. Goddess Woman saw brilliant red and green flashes, glossy loops, a fiery whiteness at the core. The white light moved. It went up and down in the air, whirling as it traveled.

Looking at it was painful. She flung up one hand to shield her eyes. People were crying out in fear all around her.

Then it vanished-as abruptly as it had come. The air beside the path seemed empty. Goddess Woman stood blinking, her eyes aching, her mind aswirl with confusions.

"What was it?" someone asked.

"What will happen next?"

"Save us. Silver Cloud!"

"Goddess Woman? Goddess Woman, tell us what that thing was!"

Goddess Woman moistened her lips. "It was-the Goddess passing by," she improvised desperately. "The edge of Her robe; that was what it was."

gone."

"Gone? Where? How?"

"Look for him!" someone screamed. "Find him! Skyfire Face! Skyfire Face!"

There was a tremendous hubbub. People were scrabbling about, moving without purpose in every direction, movement just for the sake of movement. Goddess Woman heard Silver Cloud calling out for quiet, for calmness. The Mothers were the most excited: their shrill cries rose above everything else, and they ran about weeping and flailing their arms in the air.

For a moment Goddess Woman wasn't able to remember who the actual mother of Skyfire Face was; then she recalled that it was Red Smoke At Sunrise who had given birth to the little boy with the jagged lightning-bolt birthmark, four summers back. But the Mothers raised all the children of the tribe in common, and it made very little difference to them which one of them had brought a particular child into the world; Milky Fountain and Beautiful Snow and Lake Of Green Ice were just as troubled by

his bewildering disappearance as was Red Smoke At Sunrise.

"He must have wandered off the path," Broken Mountain said. "I'll go look for him."

dark.

"We have to move on," Silver Cloud said. "There's no place here for camping."

"But Skyfire Face-

"Gone," Silver Cloud said inexorably. "Vanished into the Goddess-light."

"The Goddess-light! The Goddess-light!"

They moved along. Goddess Woman felt numb. She had looked right into the shimmering light, and there was still an ache behind her eyes, and when she closed them she saw patterns of floating purple spots. But had it been the Goddess? She couldn't say. She had never seen anything like that light before. She hoped she never saw it again.

"So the Goddess wanted one of our children after all," She Who Knows said. "Well, well, well."

"You know nothing about these matters!" Goddess Woman told her furiously. "Nothing!"

But what if she was right? Goddess Woman wondered. It was altogether possible that she was. Likely,

even. So powerful a light could only have been a manifestation of the Goddess.

The Goddess had claimed a child? Why? What sense did that make?

Goddess Woman hoped that She would be content with that. There were not so many children in the tribe that they could afford to let Her have another one just now.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Discovering

[12]

A NEANDERTHAL? A sub-human Neanderthal? Miss Fellowes thought in disbelief and bewilderment, with anger and a keen sense of betrayal rising right afterward. Was that really what the child was? If what Deveney had said was true, her worst fear had been confirmed.

She turned on Hoskins, glaring at him with a kind of controlled ferocity.

"You might have told me, doctor."

"Why? What difference does it make?"

"You said a child, not an animal."

"This is a child, Miss Fellowes. Don't you think so?"

"A Neanderthal child."

Hoskins looked puzzled. "Yes, yes, of course. You know what sort of experimentation Stasis Technologies has been involved in. Certainly you

Deveney said, "Well, according to the thinking of most paleoanthropologists over the past sixty or seventy years, the Neanderthals certainly must be considered to be a form of Homo sapiens, Miss Fellowes-an archaic branch of the species, perhaps, or a subspecies, a kind of backwoods cousin, so to speak, but definitely close kin, definitely to be considered human-"

Impatiently Hoskins cut in. "Let that point go for a moment, Deveney. There's another issue to address here. -Miss Fellowes, have you ever had a puppy or a kitten?"

"When I was a young girl, yes. But what does that have to do with-"

"Back when you had this puppy of yours, this kitten, did you care for it? Did you love it?"

"Of course. But-"

"Was it human, Miss Fellowes?"

"It was a pet, doctor. We're not talking about pets now. This is a professional matter. You're asking a highly trained nurse with a considerable background in advanced pediatric medicine to take care of-of-"

"Suppose this child here were a baby chimpanzee," Hoskins asked. "Would you be repelled? If I asked you to care for it, would you do so or

Miss Fellowes felt her argument slipping away. She said, with much less vehemence, "You might have told me."

"And you would have refused the position, is that it?"

"Well-"

"You knew we were dealing with a range of thousands of years here."

" 'Thousands' could mean three thousand. It wasn't until this evening, when you and Mr. Deveney were discussing the project and the phrase 'forty thousand years' suddenly entered it, that I began to realize what was really going on here. And even then I didn't fully understand that a Neanderthal would be involved. I'm no expert in- in- What was it you said, paleoanthropology, Mr. Deveney? I'm not familiar with the time-scale of human evolution the way you people are."

"You haven't answered my question," said Hoskins. "If you had known all the data ahead of time, would you have refused the position or wouldn't you?"

"I'm not sure."

"Do you want to refuse it now? There were other qualified candidates, you know. Is this a resignation?"

Hoskins gazed at her coolly, while Deveney watched from the other side of the room, and the Neanderthal child, having finished the milk and licked the plate dry, looked up at her with a wet face and wide longing eyes.

of course."

"No-no, he was talking," said Miss Fellowes.

"That's yet to be determined. There's plenty of controversy over whether Neanderthals were capable of true speech. That's one of the things we hope we're going to be able to settle during the span of this experiment."

The child made the clicking, gargling sounds again. Looked at Miss Fellowes. Looked at the milk, and at the empty plate.

"There's your answer," she said. "He's definitely talking!"

"If that's so, then he's human, wouldn't you say, Miss Fellowes?"

She let the question pass without responding. The issue was too complex to consider just now. A hungry child was calling to her. She reached for the milk.

Hoskins caught her by the wrist and pulled her upward so that she was facing him. "Wait a moment, Miss Fellowes. Before we go any further, I have to know whether you're planning to stay on the job."

She shook free of him in annoyance. "Will you starve him if I don't? He's asking for more milk, and you're preventing me from giving it to him."

"Go ahead. But I need to know your answer."

"I'll stay with him-for a while."

He's been through a considerable ordeal and it's best to clear everyone out of here and allow you to try to settle him down for some rest."

"I agree."

He gestured toward the oval metal doorway, much like the hatch of a submarine, that stood open at the entrance to the dollhouse. "This is the only door to Stasis Section One, and it's going to be elaborately locked and guarded at all times. We'll seal it when we leave here. Tomorrow I'll want you to learn the details of operating the lock, which will, of course, be keyed to your fingerprints as they are already keyed to mine. The spaces overhead"-he looked upward toward the open ceilings of the dollhouse-"are also guarded by a network of sensors, and we'll be warned immediately if anything untoward takes place in here."

"Untoward?"

"An intrusion."

"Why should there be-"

"We have a Neanderthal child from the year 40,000 B.C. in these chambers," Hoskins said, with barely concealed impatience. "It may sound unlikely to you, but there are all sorts of possibilities for intrusion here, anyone ranging from Hollywood producers to rival scientific groups to one of those self-styled advocates for children's rights that you and I were discussing at our first meeting."



she asked indignantly.

"No, no," said Hoskins. He smiled. A benign smile, perhaps a little condescending, she thought. The prudish spinster lady is worried about Peeping Toms, But there was no reason why she should have to dress and undress under the scrutiny of strangers. "Your privacy will be respected completely, Miss Fellowes. I assure you of that. Trust me. Miss Fellowes."

There he went. Trust me again. He liked to use that phrase; he probably used it all the time, with everyone he dealt with. It wasn't a phrase that inspired much trust. The more often he used it, the less she trusted him.

"If anybody at all can walk onto that balcony and look down into these rooms, I fail to see how-

"Access to the balcony is going to be strictly restricted -strictly," Hoskins said. "The only ones going up there will be technicians who may have to work on the power core, and you'll be given ample notice if they do. The sensors that I spoke about will be conducting purely electronic surveillance, which only a computer will deal with. We won't be spying on you. -You'll stay with him tonight, Miss Fellowes, is that understood? And every night thereafter, until further notice."

"Very well."

"You'll be relieved during the day according to whatever schedule you find convenient. We'll arrange that with you tomorrow. Mortenson, Elliott,

involved that I can explain to you if you like, but I think you have more important things to deal with just now. The point to bear in mind is simply that he must never be allowed to leave these rooms. Never. Not for an instant. Not for any reason. Not to save his life. Not even to save your life, Miss Fellowes. -Is that clear?"

Miss Fellowes raised her chin in something of a theatrical way. "I'm not sure what you mean by a conservation law, but I do understand the orders, Dr. Hoskins. The boy stays in his rooms, if there's some good and sufficient reason for it, and evidently there is. Even if my own life is at stake, melodramatic as that sounds, I'm prepared to abide by that. -The nursing profession is accustomed to placing its duties ahead of self-preservation."

"Good. You can always signal via the intercom system if you need anyone. Good night, Miss Fellowes."

And the two men left. Everyone else had already gone out. The hatch swung shut and Miss Fellowes thought she heard the sound of electronic devices clicking into place.

She was locked in. With a wild child from the year 40,000 B.C.

She turned to the boy. He was watching her warily and there was still milk in the saucer. Laboriously Miss Fellowes tried to show him in pantomimed gestures how to lift the saucer and place it to his lips. The pantomime had no effect. He simply stared but made no attempt to imitate

Dr. Hoskins had seized him by the wrists only a little while ago. And had pulled his arms together across his body and dangled him in mid-air. No doubt the boy still could remember the sensation of those big male hands roughly grasping his wrists.

"No," Miss Fellowes said, in her softest tone. "I'm not trying to hurt you. I just want to show you how to hold your milk saucer."

His frightened eyes were on her, watching, watching for any false move. Slowly she reached for his wrists again, but he shook his head and jerked them out of her reach. "All right," she said. "I'll hold the saucer. You just lick from it. But at least you won't be crouching on the floor like a little animal."

She poured a little more milk into the plate, lifted it, held it out to him at his own level. And waited. Waited.

He made the clicking sounds and the guttural gurgles that meant hunger. But he didn't move toward the plate. He looked up at her, big-eyed. He made a sound, one which she didn't think that she had heard him make before.

What did this one mean? Put the plate down, you stupid old creature, so I can lick some milk! Was that it?

"Come on, child. Drink it without going down on the floor, the way a decent little human child should."

He stared. Clicked again, a little mournfully.

He moved forward. Kept his hands at his sides, so that she had to continue to hold the plate; but he let his tongue flicker out tentatively, then with more enthusiasm, and began to drink, still standing.

Miss Fellowes started to lower the plate toward the floor.

He grunted in displeasure as it descended and brought his own hands up to maintain it at his level. She took hers quickly away. Now the boy was holding the saucer all by himself. Lapping eagerly.

(Well done, child. Magnificent!)

The plate was empty. Now that he was through drinking, he casually let it drop to the floor, and it smashed into half a dozen pieces. The boy looked up at her in what seemed almost certainly an expression registering dismay, chagrin, maybe even fear. Something like a whimper came from him.

Miss Fellowes smiled.

"It's only a plate, boy. Plates are of no importance. There are plenty more where that one came from. And plenty more milk, too."

She shoved the broken pieces aside with her foot-it would be important to get them picked up in a moment,

because they were sharp, but let that wait for now-and drew another plate, identical to the first, from the cabinet at the base of the food cart. She held it up to him. The whimpering stopped. He smiled at her.

He trembled. But he remained where he was, looking up at her. For a moment she succeeded in stroking his hair; and then he pulled back, bucking timidly away, she thought, like some frightened little-beast.

Miss Fellowes' face flamed at the thought.

(Stop it. You mustn't think of him that way. He's not an animal, no matter how he may look. He's a boy, a little boy, a frightened little boy, a frightened little human boy.)

But his hair-how coarse it had felt, in that one moment when he had allowed her to touch it! How tangled, how rough, how thick!

What strange hair it was. What very, very, very strange hair indeed.

[14]

She said, "I'm going to have to show you how to use the bathroom. Do you think you can learn?"

She spoke quietly, kindly, knowing quite well that he wouldn't understand her words, but hoping that he would respond to the calmness of the tone.

The boy launched into a clicking phrase again. More milk, was that what he wanted? Or was this something new he was saying? Miss Fellowes hoped that they were recording every sound he made. Very likely

done a few things almost as odd in her time, for the sake of making contact with difficult children.

"May I take your hand?" she said.

Miss Fellowes held hers out and the boy looked at it as though he had never seen a hand before. She left it outstretched and waited. The boy frowned. After a moment his own hand rose uncertainly and crept forward, quivering a little, toward hers.

"That's right," she said. "Take my hand."

The trembling hand approached within an inch of hers and then the boy's courage failed him. He snatched it back as though fire were coming from her fingertips.

"Well," said Miss Fellowes calmly, "we'll try again later. Would you like to sit down here?"

She patted the mattress of the bed.

No response.

She pantomimed sitting down.

Nothing. A blank stare.

She sat down herself-not easy, on a small bed so close to the ground-and patted the space beside her.

"Here," she said, giving him her warmest, most reassuring smile. "Sit down next to me, won't you?"

Clicks. She listened and tried to imitate them, but they came clumsily off her tongue, with none of his rapid-fire crispness of delivery. He looked at her in- wonder? Amusement? His expressions were so hard to read. But he seemed fascinated by the idea that she was making clicks at him. For all she knew, she was saying something vile and dreadful in his language. Speaking the unspeakable. But it was much more likely that the sounds she was making were just so much incomprehensible gibberish to him. Perhaps he thought she was deranged.

He clicked and growled, in a low, quiet, almost reflective way.

She clicked back at him. She mimicked his growls. They were easier to imitate than the clicks. He stared again. His expression was grave, pensive, very much the way a child who has been confronted by a crazy adult might look.

This is completely ridiculous, Miss Fellowes told herself. I need to stick to English. He'll never learn anything

if I make idiotic mumbo-jumbo noises at him in what I imagine is his own language.

"Sit," she said, the way she would have said it to a puppy. "Sit! -No? Well, no, then. Bathroom? Take my hand and I'll show you how to use the bathroom. -No again, is it? You can't just go on the floor, you know. This isn't 40,000 B.C., and even if you're accustomed to digging a hole in the

great goggling eyes how to drink milk from a saucer, how to go to the bathroom, how to sit down on a little bed.

No, she thought severely. Not an ape-child.

Never call him that-not even to yourself!

"Take my hand?" Miss Fellowes said again.

He almost did. Almost.

The hours were crawling slowly along, and there had been scarcely any progress. She wasn't going to succeed either with the bathroom or with the bed, that was obvious. And now he too was showing signs of fatigue. He yawned. His eyes looked glazed; his lids were drooping. Suddenly he folded himself up and lay down on the bare floor and then, with a quick movement, rolled beneath the bed.

Miss Fellowes, on her knees, stared down underneath at him. His eyes gleamed out at her and he chattered at her in tongue-clicks.

"All right," she told him. "If you feel safer there, you sleep there."

She waited a little while, until she heard the sound of steady, regular breathing. How tired he must be! Forty thousand years from home, thrust into a baffling alien place full of bright lights and hard floors and strange people who looked nothing at all like anyone he had ever known, and even so he was capable of curling up and falling asleep. Miss Fellowes envied



watching her were those of a bunch of electronic sensors. But still-to have no privacy at all- They were filming everything, very likely. Making a complete visual record of all that took place in the Stasis zone. She should never have taken on this job without insisting that Hoskins let her inspect the sort of place where she was going to have to live. Trust me, he had said. Right. Certainly.

Well, she'd make do for tonight. But tomorrow they were going to have to put a roof over her living quarters, at least. And also, she thought, those stupid men will have to place a mirror in this room and a larger chest of drawers and a separate washroom if they expect me to spend my nights in here.

[15]

It was difficult to sleep. Tired as she was, she lay with her eyes open, in the kind of absolute wakefulness dial one reaches only in a state of die most extreme fatigue. She strained to hear any sounds that might come from the next room.

He couldn't get out, could he? Could he?

The walls were sheer and impossibly high, but suppose the child could climb like a monkey?

thought.)

And then suddenly she found herself asking herself: Can he be dangerous? Physically dangerous?

She considered how much trouble it had been to give him his bath. She had watched first Hoskins and then Elliott battling to hold him in place. Just a little child, and how strong he was! The scratch he had given Elliott!

What if he came in here and-

No, Miss Fellowes told herself. He won't hurt me.

Beyond any doubt Hoskins wouldn't have left her in here alone, overhead sensors or no overhead sensors, if he felt there was any risk that-

She tried to laugh at her own fears. He was only a three-year-old child, perhaps four at most. Still, she

hadn't managed to get his nails trimmed yet. If he should attack her with nails and teeth while she slept-

Her breath came quickly. Oh, how ridiculous, how completely ridiculous, and yet-

She was endlessly going back and forth, she knew, unable to take a consistent position and hold it for long. Was he a dangerous nasty litde ape, or was he a miserably frightened litde child far from his loved ones? One or the other, she told herself. But why not some of both? Even a frightened litde child can hurt you if he strikes out with enough force. She

Not shrieking in fear or anger; not yelling or screaming. It was crying softly, and the cry was the heartbroken sobbing of a lonely, lonely child.

All her ambivalence dissolved at once. For the first time, Miss Fellowes thought with a pang: Poor thing! Poor terrified child!

Of course it was a child. What did the shape of its head matter, or the texture of its hair? It was a child that had been orphaned as no child had ever been orphaned before. Hoskins had said it, and said it accurately, at their first meeting: "This will be the most lonely child in the history of the world." Not just its mother and father were gone, but all its species, every last one. Snatched callously out of its proper time, it was now the only creature of its kind in the world.

The last. The only.

She felt her pity for it strengthen and deepen, and with that came shame at her own callousness: the repugnance she had allowed herself to feel for the child, the irritation she had let herself show at its wild ways. How, she wondered, could she have been so cruel? So unprofessional. Bad enough to be kidnapped like this; worse to be looked upon with disdain by the very person who was supposed to care for you and teach you to find your way in your bewildering new life.

The poor thing was huddled miserably in the corner, knees up against his chin, looking up at her with blurred and apprehensive eyes.

In the dim light she was able to ignore his repulsive-ness, the thick blunt features, the big misshapen head.

"Poor litde boy," she murmured. "Poor frightened litde boy."

Miss Fellowes stroked his hair, that harsh tangled bristly hair that had felt so disagreeable to her a few hours before. Now it merely seemed unusual. He stiffened at the first touch of her hand, but then she saw him relax.

"Poor child," she said. "Let me hold you."

He made a soft clicking sound. Then a little low growl, a kind of gentle unhappy rumbling.

She sat down on the floor next to him and stroked his hair again, slowly, rhythmically. The tension was visibly

going from his body. Perhaps no one had ever stroked his hair before, back in whatever ferocious prehistoric life it was that he had left behind. He seemed to like it. Gently, tenderly, she played with his hair, smoothing it, straightening it, picking a few burrs out of it, but mainly just running her hand along the top of his head, slowly, slowly, almost hypnotically.

She stroked his cheek, his arm. He allowed it. Softly she began to sing a slow and gentle song, a wordless repetitive one, a tune that she had known

him into her lap.

She continued singing, the same quiet, sinuous musical phrase over and over, while she rocked back and forth, back and forth, back and forth.

He had stopped crying, somewhere along the way. After a while the smooth, even purr of his breathing told Miss Fellowes that he was asleep.

With infinite care she nudged his bed back against the wall, pushing it into place with her knee, and laid him down on it. She pulled the covers over him-had he ever known a coverlet before? Certainly not a bed!-and tucked them in and stood over him for a time, staring down at him. His face looked wondrously peaceful as he slept.

Somehow it didn't matter so much now that it was so ugly. Really.

She made her way out of the room on tiptoes. But as she reached the door she paused and halted, thinking: What if he wakes up!

He might be even more troubled than before, expecting to find her comforting presence close at hand and not knowing where she had gone. He might panic; he might run amok.

Miss Fellowes hesitated, battling irresolutely with herself. She stood above the bed again, studying him as he slept. Then she sighed. There was only one thing to do. Slowly she lowered herself to the bed and ky down beside him.

She felt a touch against her hand. The child's fingers, grazing her palm. He was reaching for her in his sleep. The rough little hand crept into hers.

Miss Fellowes smiled.

[16]

She awoke with a start, wondering where she was, why she felt so stiff and sore. There was the unfamiliar smell of another person in her nostrils and the unfamiliar sense of someone's body pressing against hers.

She had to fight back a wild impulse to scream. She was able just barely to suppress it into a gurgle.

The boy was sitting up, looking at her wide-eyed. The ugly little boy, the child snatched from time. The little Neanderthal child.

It took a long moment for Miss Fellowes to remember getting into bed with him. Then it all came back. She realized that she had managed somehow to fall asleep, despite everything. And now it was morning.

Slowly, without unfixing her eyes from his, she stretched one leg carefully and let it touch the floor, and then the other. Her muscles were tensed for quick disengagement in case the boy should go into a panic.

She cast a quick and apprehensive glance toward the open ceiling. Were they watching, up there? Cameras grinding away as she made her bleary-eyed entry into the new day?

"Do you want me to sing again? Is that it?"

The boy said nothing, but he was staring at her mouth.

In a voice that was quavering and slightly off-key with tension, Miss Fellowes began the little song that she had sung the night before. The ugly little boy smiled. He seemed to recognize the melody, and he swayed clumsily in rough time to it, waving his arms about. He made a

little gurgly sound that might have been the beginnings of a laugh.

Miss Fellowes sighed inwardly. Music hath charms to soothe the savage breast. Well, whatever would help-

She said, "You wait. Let me get myself fixed up. It'll just take a minute. Then I'll make breakfast for you."

She rinsed her face and brushed out her hair, maddeningly conscious the whole time of the lack of ceiling covering, the invisible staring electronic eyes. Perhaps not only electronic ones, she thought.

The boy remained in bed, looking toward her. He seemed calm. The fierce frenzied wildness of his first few hours in the twenty-first century seemed long ago, now. Whenever she turned his way, Miss Fellowes waved at him. Eventually he waved back, an awkward but charming gesture that sent a little chill of surprise and delight down her spine.

When she was done she said, "You could use something solid, I suspect. What about some oatmeal with your milk?"

going to set the bowl of oatmeal in front of him down there for him to lick.

"No," she said. "You're a civilized little boy now. Or at least you're going to be one. Civilized little boys don't eat on the floor."

Clicks. Growls.

"I know you don't understand anything I'm saying. But you will, sooner or later. I don't think I can learn your language, but I'm pretty certain you're capable of learning mine."

She took a spoon from the drawer and showed it to him.

"Spoon."

He looked at it stolidly, without interest.

"To eat with. Spoon."

She dipped it into the oatmeal and carried it to her mouth. His eyes widened and his broad nostrils flared even wider and he made a strange uneasy drawn-out noise, like a very quiet howl: the sound, Miss Fellowes suspected, of a hungry creature that thinks some other creature is going to steal its breakfast.

She pantomimed putting the spoon into her mouth, swallowing the oatmeal, licking her lips in pleasure. Round-eyed, unhappy-looking, he watched the process, all too obviously failing to comprehend.



No. Hungry as he was, he didn't want to know anything about the spoon. Well, time enough for that, Miss Fellowes thought. She put the spoon away.

"But you're going to have to hold the bowl in your hands. You know how to do that. There's going to be no crouching on the floor to eat around here."

She offered him the bowl. He glanced at it and looked down at the floor.

"Hold it in your hands."

Clicks. She thought she recognized them as a familiar pattern, but she couldn't be certain. By God, Hoskins would have to tape those sounds! If he wasn't already doing so.

"In your hands," Miss Fellowes said again, firmly. "Here."

He understood. He took the bowl into his hands, with his thumbs sticking into the oatmeal, and lifted it to his face. He did it clumsily enough and it was incredibly messy but most of it did get into him.

So he was a quick learner-when he wasn't numbed by fear. Miss Fellowes doubted that there'd be much more animal-like lapping of food on the floor.

She watched him closely as he ate. He seemed to be in good health, sturdy and strong. His eyes were bright, his color was high, there were no

he had lived, back there in the Stone Age world. (Stone Age? Yes, of course. Neanderthals must be Stone Age. She was reason-

ably certain of that. There was so much that she needed to learn, when she had the chance.)

She tried having him drink his milk in a glass this time. He seemed to catch on swiftly to the idea of holding the glass in his hands—he needed both hands to do it, but that was the way most children his age held glasses, and at least he didn't find the glass as threatening as the spoon appeared to have been. But he had trouble with the opening, which was too small for him to get his face into conveniently, and he began to whine, a high-pitched keening sound of frustration that was starting to edge upward into anger. Miss Fellowes put her own hand over the little boy's, making him tip the glass, forcing his mouth to the rim.

Again a mess, but again most went into him. And she was used to messes.

The washroom, to her surprise and immense relief, was a less difficult matter. At first he appeared to think that the toilet bowl was some sort of fountain that might be fun to splash around in, and she was afraid that he was going to climb into it. But Miss Fellowes held him back and stood him in front of it and opened his robe, and he understood right away what it was she expected him to do.

smiled again. It was a very normal smile, the smile of a child who has seen that his smile has brought a pleasing response.

He wasn't at all a normal child, she reminded herself. It would be a serious mistake to allow herself any illusions about that.

But when he smiles, she thought, he's quite bearable. Really.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Studying

[17]

MID-MORNING. She had bathed him again-far less of a battle than it had been yesterday-and given him a fairly close physical inspection-he showed some bruises and scratches of the sort you would expect a boy who had been living under primitive conditions to have, but no obvious signs of disease or serious injury- and had even succeeded, with a great deal of patience and an endless amount of singing to lull him into a peaceful mood, in trimming his fingernails. The toenails would have to wait until later. Neither she nor the boy had sufficient endurance to tackle any further manicure chores today.

"I was busy. You may need to speak louder. But come in, come in!"

The boy drew back as Hoskins entered. He gave Hoskins an uneasy look and seemed about to bolt into the rear room. Miss Fellowes smiled and beckoned to him and he came forward instead and clung to her, curling his little bandy legs-so thin, so very thin-about her.

A look of something close to awe blossomed on Hoskins' face.

"You've made great progress, Miss Fellowes!"

"A little warm oatmeal can work wonders."

"He seems very attached to you already."

"I know how to do the things I'm supposed to do, Dr. Hoskins. Is that so astonishing?"

He reddened. "I didn't mean to imply-"

"No, of course not. I understand. He was a wild little animal when you last saw him yesterday, and now-"

"Not an animal at all."

"No," Miss Fellowes said. "Not an animal at all." She hesitated just a moment. Then she said, "I had some doubts about that at first."

"How could I forget it? You were quite indignant."

"But no longer. I over-reacted. At first glance I suppose I really did think he was an ape-boy, and I wasn't prepared to be taking on anything like

appreciate what a tremendous effort has gone into this project, and how much we've had riding on its success. And now that it is a success, an overwhelming success, we can't help but feel somewhat stunned. Like a man who has gathered up all his strength to go charging through a door that's barring his way. Suddenly he makes his mighty charge, and the door gives way under the onslaught with hardly any of the resistance he'd expected, and he bursts into the place that he's been wanting so hard to reach; and now that he's there, he stops and looks around, a little contused, and says to himself, All right, I'm finally here, and now what?"

"A good question, Dr. Hoskins. Now what? You'll be bringing all sorts of experts in to examine the boy, won't you? Specialists in prehistoric life, and people like that?"

"Of course."

"You'll have someone here soon to give him a thorough medical exam, I assume."

"Yes, naturally. -He's all right, though, wouldn't you say? Basically?"

"Basically, yes. He's a rugged little fellow. But I'm not a doctor and he hasn't had any sort of internal examination whatever. There's a difference between seeming healthy and being healthy. He could be carrying a load of parasites around: amoebas, protozoan infestations, all kinds of things.

That caught her short. "The media? What media? Who? When?"

"Why-they'll want to see the boy as soon as they can, Miss Fellowes. Candide Deveney's already broken the story. We'll have every newspaper and television network in the world banging on our doors by the end of the day."

Miss Fellowes looked down at the child and put her arm protectively to his shoulder. He quivered, just the tiniest of flinches, but made no move to escape her touch.

"You're going to fill this Utde place with journalists and cameras? On his first full day here?"

"Well, we hadn't thought about-"

"No," she said, "you hadn't thought. That much is obvious. Listen, Dr. Hoskins, he's your little Neanderthal and you can do whatever you want with him. But there'll be no media people in here until he's had his medical checkup and come out with a clean bill of health, at the very minimum. And preferably not until he's had more time to adapt to being here. You do understand what I'm saying, don't you?"

"Miss Fellowes, surely you know that publicity is an essential part of--"

"Yes. Publicity is an essential part of everything, these days. Imagine the publicity you'll get if this child dies of a panic attack right on camera!"

"Miss Fellowes!"

"I want to be completely sure that I have. Let your media wait, is what I'm saying. He needs all sorts of protective inoculation first. It's bad enough that he's been exposed to as many people as he was last night; but I'm not going to let a whole mob of reporters in here, not today and not tomorrow, either. If they like, they can photograph him from upstairs, for the time being, outside the Stasis zone entirely, just as though we had a newborn infant in here, and I want them to be quiet about it, too. We can work out a video schedule later in the day. -Oh, and speaking of upstairs. I'm still not happy about the degree of exposure here. I want my quarters roofed over - a tarpaulin of some sort will do for the moment; I don't want workmen clattering around here with construction equipment just yet-and I think the rest of the dollhouse could safely be given a ceiling, too."

Hoskins smiled. "You mince no words. You're a very forceful woman, Miss Fellowes." His tone seemed to have as much admiration as annoyance in it.

"Forceful?" she said. "I suppose I am. At least where my children are concerned."

[18]

Jacobs was a burly, blunt-faced man of about sixty, with thick white hair cropped close to his skull, military-fashion. He had an efficient, no-

Miss Fellowes wondered what kind of doctors had ministered to the needs of the little boy's tribe back there in 40,000 B.C. Witch-doctors, no doubt. Terrifying figures with bones through their noses and painted red circles around their eyes, who performed their diagnoses by leaping and cavorting around campfires that burned blue and green and scarlet. How would Dr. Jacobs look with a bone through his nose? she wondered. With a bear-skin around his shoulders instead of that prosaic white coat?

He offered her a quick, uncondescending handshake. "I've heard good things about you, Fellowes."

"So I would hope."

"You worked under Gallagher at Valley General, didn't you? Or so Hoskins said. Fine man, Gallagher. Dogmatic son of a bitch, but at least he swore by the right dogmas. How long were you in his department?"

"Three and a half years."

"You like him?"

Miss Fellowes shrugged. "Not particularly. I heard him say some things once to a young nurse that I thought were out of line. But he and I worked well together. I learned a great deal from him."

"A shrewd man, yes." Jacobs shook his head. "Pity about the way he handled his nurses. In more than one sense of the word. -You didn't happen to have any sort of run-in with him yourself, did you?"



of heads of nursing and boards of directors. Plainly he had been around. All she knew of Dr. Jacobs, on the other hand, was that he was something big at the state medical institute and had a considerable private practice on the side. Their paths had never crossed professionally. If Hoskins had seen fit to let him see her resume, he might have thought of letting her see his. But Miss Fellowes let that point pass, too.

"And I suppose that now it's about time that we had a look at this little Neanderthal of yours," Jacobs said. "Where's he hiding?"

She gestured toward the other room. The boy was lurking uneasily in there, now and again peeping out, with a lock of his matted hair showing behind the barrier of the door and, occasionally, the corner of an eye.

"Shy, is he? That's not what I heard from the orderlies. They said he's as wild as a little ape."

"Not any more. His initial terror has worn off, and now he simply feels lost and frightened."

"As well he should, poor little critter. But we've got to get down to this. Call him out here, please. Or will you have to go in there and get him?"

"Maybe I can call him," Miss Fellowes said.

She turned to face the boy. "You can come out, Tim-mie. This is Dr. Jacobs. He won't hurt you."

Timmie?

Neanderthal," "the ugly little boy." He was Timmie. He was a person. He had a name.

And as she approached the other room Timmie slipped back behind the door, out of sight.

"All right," Jacobs said, with some impatience. "We can't spend all day at this. Go in there and bring him out, will you, Fellowes?"

He slipped a surgical mask over his face-as much for his protection, Miss Fellowes guessed, as for Timmie's.

But the mask was a mistake. Timmie peeked out and saw it and let out a shrill piercing howl as though he had seen some demon out of his Stone Age nightmares. As Miss Fellowes reached the door, he flung himself violently against the wall on the far side of the room, like a caged creature fleeing its keeper, and pressed up against it, shivering fearfully.

"Timmie- Timmie-"

No use. He wouldn't let her near him, not with Jacobs anywhere about. The boy had tolerated Hoskins' presence well enough, but Jacobs seemed to scare the daylights out of him. So much for her theory that children wanted their doctors to be brusque no-nonsense military types. Not this child, at any rate.

She rang the bell and summoned Mortenson and Elliot.

"We're going to need a little help, I think," Miss Fellowes told them.

the room with truly anthropoid agility, and they were hard put to get a grip on him. Finally Mortenson, with a lunge, caught him by the midsection and spun him up off the ground. Elliott cautiously took hold of him by the ankles and tried to prevent him from kicking.

Miss Fellowes went over to him. Softly she said, "It's all right, Timmie-no one will hurt you-"

She might just as well have said, "Trust me." The boy struggled furiously, with nearly as much enterprise as he had shown the day before when they were trying to give him a bath.

Feeling preposterous. Miss Fellowes tried crooning the litde tune of the night before at him in an attempt to lull him into cooperating. That was useless, too.

Dr. Jacobs leaned close. "We'll have to sedate him, I guess. -God, he's an ugly little thing!"

Miss Fellowes felt a sharp stab of fury, almost as though Timmie were her own child. How dare he say anything like that! How dare he!

Crisply she retorted, "It's a classic Neanderthal face. He's very handsome, by Neanderthal standards." She wondered where she had gotten that from. She knew practically nothing about what a classic Neanderthal face was supposed to be like, and nothing whatever about

control thermocouple relay. Reluctantly she nodded.

Jacobs produced an ultrasonic tranquilizer ampoule from his kit and started to activate it.

"You don't know anything about the appropriate dose," Miss Fellowes said.

The doctor looked at her in surprise. "These doses are calibrated for a body weight of up to thirty kilograms. This should be well within tolerance."

"Calibrated for a human body weight of up to thirty kilograms, doctor. This is a Neanderthal child. We don't have any data on their circulatory systems at all."

Her own line of reasoning startled her. In some chagrin she realized that she had drawn a distinction between Neanderthals and humans once again. She didn't seem able to maintain a consistent philosophy about the boy. He is human, she told herself vehemently. Human, human, human. He's Timmie and he's human.

But to Jacobs it was an issue not even worth discussing, apparently.

"Even if he were a young gorilla or orangutan, Fellowes, I'd regard this as an appropriate dose. Human, Neanderthal, what does his circulatory system have to do with it? It's body mass that matters. -All right, a half dose this time. Just to take no risks with Hoskins' precious little creature."

"He hasn't moved his bowels since he's been here, Dr. Jacobs. The dislocation of the trip through time-

"Well, when he does, suppose you scrape some up off the floor and let me know, will you?"

"He uses the toilet, doctor," Miss Fellowes said in a tone of ringing indignation.

Jacobs looked up at her. Surprise and what could have been anger were evident in his expression; but then he laughed. "You're very quick to defend him, I see."

"Yes. Yes, I am. Is there anything wrong with that?"

"I suppose there isn't. -All right, when the boy next uses the toilet, I want that sample if he happens to move his bowels. I take it he doesn't flush afterward yet, eh, Fellowes?"

This time both Elliott and Mortenson laughed also. Miss Fellowes didn't share in the general amusement.

Timmie seemed asleep-passive, at any rate, quiescent, tolerant. Jacobs had no difficulty opening his mouth to study his dentition. Miss Fellowes, who hadn't had an opportunity of seeing Timmie's teeth before, stared over Jacobs' shoulder, afraid that she was going to behold fierce, savage, ape-like fangs. But no, no: his teeth were nothing like that. They were somewhat large, larger than a modern child's, and they looked strong, but

"A little powerhouse is what he is. As you've already had reason to discover. Small for his age and slightly on the thin side but there's no indication of malnutrition. Once we get that stool sample I'll have some idea of what sorts of things he'd been eating, but the most probable guess is a high-protein low-starch diet, pretty much what you'd expect among hunters and gatherers living in a time of adverse climate."

"Adverse?" Miss Fellowes asked.

"An ice age," Jacobs said, a Hide patronizingly. "That's what was going on most of the time during the Neanderthal era—a glacial period."

How would you know? she thought belligerently. Were you there? Are you an anthropologist?

But she held her tongue. Dr. Jacobs was doing everything possible to rub her the wrong way; but nevertheless he was her colleague now, and they would have to maintain a civil relationship. For Timmie's sake, if for no other reason.

[19]

Timmie stirred and became restless by the time the medical exam was half over, and a little while later it was obvious that the tranquilizer had all but worn off. Which meant that a normal dose for an ordinary child of his size would have been the correct one, as Jacobs had insisted, and that

"Do you want us to stay?" Mortenson asked.

"No need. Leave me with the boy."

Timmie grew calm as soon as they were gone. Evidently he had already adapted to Miss Fellowes' company; it was others who still made him nervous. But time would take care of that, Miss Fellowes thought.

"That wasn't so bad, was it, Timmie? A little poking, a little prodding-but we have to find out a lot of things about you, don't you see?"

He gazed solemnly at her, saying nothing. \_ "You do see, don't you, Timmie?"

He made a little growling sound, two syllables. To her astounded ears, it sounded like Timmie.

Could it be? Did he know his own name already?

"Say it again! Timmie. Timmie."

He uttered the two muffled syllables again. This time she wasn't so sure that he was saying Timmie at all. That could have been her own over-eager imagination. But the possibility was worth following up.

She pointed at him. "Timmie-that's you. Timmie. Timmie. Timmie."

He was staring in silence again.

"And I am-" She pointed to herself, momentarily stymied. Miss Fellowes seemed like too much of a mouthful. But Edith didn't sound right. Nurse? No, not right, either. Miss Fellowes it would have to be. "I-Miss Fellowes.

measure.

"Hungry, yes. Time for some high-protein low-starch food. The Ice Age special, right, Timmie? Well, let's see what we have here, now-"

[20]

Dr. McIntyre of the Smithsonian's Department of Anthropology arrived in early afternoon. Hoskins took the precaution of calling in on the intercom to ask Miss Fellowes if she thought the boy would be able to handle another visitor so soon after the last one. She looked across the room. Timmie had eaten ravenously-an entire flask of some synthetic vitamin drink that Dr. Jacobs had recommended, plus another bowl of oatmeal and a small piece of toast, the first solid food she had risked letting him have. Now he was sitting on the edge of his bed, looking relaxed and contented, kicking his heels rhythmically back against the underside of the mattress, seeming for all the world like an ordinary little boy amusing himself after lunch.

"What do you say, Timmie? You think you can stand another examination?"

She didn't seriously expect a reply from him, and the clicking sounds that he made didn't seem to constitute one. The boy wasn't looking in her direction and went on kicking his heels. Just talking to himself, no doubt. But he definitely appeared to be in a good mood.



"I have to call him something, Dr. Hoskins."

"Ah. Yes. Yes. 'Timmie.' "

" 'Timmie,' " Miss Fellowes said firmly.

" Timmie.' Yes. Very well. -I'll send Dr. McIntyre in now, if that's all right, Miss Fellowes. To see Timmie."

Dr. McIntyre turned out to be slender and dapper and very much younger than Miss Fellowes had been expecting-no more than thirty or thirty-five, she guessed. He was a small man, delicately built, with fine gleaming golden hair and eyebrows so pale and soft that they were virtually invisible, who moved in a precise, fastidious, elaborately mannered way, as if following some mysterious inner choreography. Miss Fellowes was taken aback by his elegance and daintiness: that wasn't at all how she had expected a paleoanthropologist to look. Even Timmie seemed mystified by his appearance, so very different from that of any of the other men he had encountered since his arrival. Eyes wide with wonder, he stared at McIntyre as though he were some glittering godlike creature from another star.

As for McIntyre, he appeared so overwhelmed by the sight of Timmie that he was barely able to speak. For a long moment he stood frozen just within the door, staring at the boy just as intently as Timmie was staring at him; then he took a few steps to his left, halted, stared again; and then he

Neanderthal! -Forgive me, Miss Fellowes. You have to understand-this is something completely staggering for me, so utterly phenomenal, so totally astounding-"

He was virtually in tears. It was an embarrassing display, all this effusiveness. Miss Fellowes found it a little irksome. But then, abruptly, her annoyance dissolved and empathy took its place. She imagined how a historian would feel if he were to walk into a room and find himself offered a chance to hold a conversation with Abraham Lincoln or Julius Caesar or Alexander the Great: or how a Biblical scholar would react if confronted with the authentic stone tablets of the Law that Moses had carried down from the summit of Mount Sinai. Of course he'd be overwhelmed. Of course. To have spent years studying something that was known only from the sketchiest of ancient relics, trying to understand it, painstakingly recreating the lost reality of it in your mind, and then unexpectedly to encounter the thing itself, the actual genuine item-

But McIntyre made a swift recovery. In that deft graceful manner of his he moved quickly across the room and knelt just in front of Timmie, his face just a short distance from the boy's. Timmie showed no sign of fear. It was the first time he had reacted so calmly to anyone new. The boy was smiling and humming tunelessly and rocking lightly from side to side as though enjoying a visit from a favorite uncle. That bright glow of wonder still

-May I touch his face, Miss Fellowes? I'll be gentle. I don't want to frighten him, but I'd like to check a few points of the bony structure-

"It looks as though he'd like to touch yours," Miss Fellowes said.

Indeed, Timmie's hand was outstretched toward Mc-Intyre's forehead. The man from the Smithsonian leaned a little closer and Timmie's fingers began to explore Mc-Intyre's brilliant golden hair. The boy stroked it as though he had never seen anything so wondrous in his life. Then, suddenly, he twined a few strands of it around his middle finger and tugged. It was a good hard tug.

McIntyre yelped and backed away, his face reddening.

"I think he wants some of it," Miss Fellowes said.

"Not that way. -Here, let me have a scissors." McIntyre, grinning now, snipped a bit of hair from his forehead and passed the shining strands to Timmie, who beamed and gurgled with pleasure. -"Tell me, Miss Fellowes, has anyone else who's been in here had blond hair?"

She thought a moment. Hoskins-Deveney-Elliott

-Mortenson-Stratford-Dr. Jacobs-all of them had brown hair or black or gray. Her own was brown shading into gray.

"No. Not that I recall. You must be the first." "The first ever, I wonder? We have no idea, of course,

"And yet his reaction to your hair, Dr. McIntyre-"

"Yes. No doubt about it, the sight of it does something special for him. - Well, maybe the tribe he came from was entirely dark-haired, or perhaps the entire population in his part of the world. Certainly there's nothing very Nordic about this dusky skin of his. But we can't draw much that's conclusive from a sample consisting of just one child. At least we have that one child, though! And how wonderful that is, Miss Fellowes! I can't believe - I absolutely can't believe-" For an instant she feared that McIntyre was going to allow himself to be overcome by awe all over again. But he seemed to be keeping himself under control. With great delicacy he pressed the tips of his fingers to Timmie's cheeks, his sloping forehead, his little receding chin. As he worked he muttered things under his breath, technical comments, apparently, words plainly meant for himself alone.

Timmie endured the examination with great patience.

Then, after a time, the boy launched into an extended monolog of clicks and growls, the first time he had spoken since the paleoanthropologist had entered the room.

McIntyre looked up at Miss Fellowes, his face crimsoning with excitement.

"Did you hear those sounds? Has he made any sounds like that before?"

but so far no luck."

"What kind of patterns, Miss Fellowes?"

"Patterns of clicks and growls. I'm starting to recognize them. There's one set of sounds to tell me that he's hungry. Another to show impatience or restlessness. One that indicates fear. -I know these are only my own interpretations, and not very scientific. But I've been in here with this boy around the clock since the moment of his arrival, and I've had some experience in dealing with speech-impaired children, Dr. McIntyre. I listen to them very carefully."

"Yes, I'm sure you do." McIntyre gave her a skeptical glance. "This is important, Miss Fellowes. Has anyone been taping these clicks and growls of his?"

"I hope so. I don't know." (She realized that she had been going to ask Dr. Hoskins about that. But she had forgotten all about it.)

Timmie said something again, this time with a different intonation, more melodic, almost plaintive.

"You see, Dr. McIntyre? That was nothing like what he said before. -I think he wants to play with your hair again."

"You're only guessing about that, aren't you?"

"Of course I am. I don't speak Neanderthal very flu-

He looked flustered. "It does sound like formal speech! Definite formal speech. -How old do you think this child is?"

"Somewhere between three and four. Closer to four, is my guess. There's no reason to be so surprised that he can speak so well. Four-year-olds are quite articulate, Dr. McIntyre. If you have any children yourself-"

"I do, as a matter of fact. She's almost three and she has quite a lot to say. But this is a Neanderthal child."

"Why should that matter? Wouldn't you expect a Neanderthal child of his age to know how to speak?"

"At this point we have no real reason, Miss Fellowes, to assume that any Neanderthals of any age were capable of speech as we understand the concept. That's why the sounds this child is making are of such immense importance to our knowledge of prehistoric man. If they represent speech, actual organized patterns of sound with distinct grammatical structure-"

"But of course that's what they represent!" Miss Fellowes burst out. "Speech is the one thing that distinguishes human beings from animals, isn't it? And if you think that you can get me to believe for one moment that this little boy isn't a human being, you-"

"Certainly the Neanderthals were human, Miss Fellowes. I'd be the last person to dispute that. But that doesn't mean they had a spoken language."

expression of studious interest.

"Miss Fellowes," McIntyre began, in an unmistakable here-comes-the-lecture tone, "in order for a creature to be able to speak, it needs not only a certain degree of intelligence but also the physical capacity to produce complex sounds. Dogs are quite intelligent, and have considerable vocabularies-but there's a difference between knowing what 'sit' and 'fetch' mean and being able to say 'sit' and 'fetch' yourself, and no dog since time began has ever been able to manage anything better than 'woof And surely you know that chimpanzees and gorillas can be taught to communicate quite well, through signs and gestures-but they can't shape words any more than dogs can. They simply don't have the anatomical equipment for it."

"I wasn't aware of that."

"Human speech is a very complicated thing," said McIntyre. He tapped his throat. "The key to it is a tiny U-shaped bone called the hyoid, at the base of the tongue. It controls eleven small muscles that move the tongue and the lower jaw and also are capable of lifting and depressing the larynx to bring forth the vowels and consonants that make up speech. The hyoid bone isn't

present in apes. Therefore all they can do is grunt and hiss."

"All right. And Neanderthals-don't they have hyoid bones? If they're considered human beings, they must."

"We haven't been sure that they do," McIntyre said. "You need to bear in mind, first, that the total number of Neanderthal skeletons ever discovered, since the first one came to light in 1856, is not quite two hundred, and a lot of those are fragmentary or otherwise badly damaged. And, second, that the hyoid bone is very small and isn't connected to any other bones of the body, only to the muscles of the larynx. When a body decays, the hyoid falls away and can easily be separated from the rest of the skeleton. Of all the Neanderthal fossils we've examined, Miss Fellowes, a total of one-one-still had a hyoid bone in place."

"But if one of them had it, all of them must have!"

McIntyre nodded. "Very likely so. But we've never seen a Neanderthal larynx. Soft tissues don't survive, of course. And so we don't know what function the hyoid served in the Neanderthal. Hyoid or not, we've had no way of being certain that the Neanderthals actually were capable of speech. All we can say is that the anatomy of the vocal apparatus was probably the same in Neanderthals as it is in modern humans. Probably. But whether it was developed sufficiently to allow them to

articulate understandable words-or whether their brains were advanced enough to handle the concept of speech-



McIntyre seemed to want to solve all the Neanderthal riddles at once. He made clicking sounds at Timmie in the hope of eliciting clicks in return; he produced colored plastic blocks from his briefcase, some sort of intelligence test, no doubt, and tried to get Timmie to arrange them in sequences of size and color; he offered the boy crayons and paper and stood back waiting for him to draw something, which Timmie seemed to have no interest in doing; he had Miss Fellowes lead Timmie around the room by the hand, and photographed him as he moved. There were other tests he wanted to carry out on Timmie, too; but Timmie had his own thoughts about that. Just as McIntyre began to set up some arrangement of spools and spindles, which looked like a toy but was actually a device to measure the boy's coordination, Timmie sat down in the middle of the floor and began to cry. Loudly.

It was the first time he had really cried-as opposed to sobbing or whimpering or moaning-since the night he had arrived. It was the very familiar cranky bawling of a very tired child who had been pushed too far. Miss Fef-lowes was glad to hear it, though she was astonished at

how wide his mouth could get when he opened it to its full extent, how his nose suddenly seemed even bigger than it already was, how far those strange heavy ridges of bone over his eyes protruded when he scrunched

wore out your welcome. He's only a little boy, Dr. McIntyre. He can't be expected to put up with an endless amount of chivvying and probing. -A little boy who's very recently been through a highly traumatic separation from anything and everything that he can understand, I ought to remind you."

"But I wasn't chivvying and-well, perhaps I was. I'm sorry about that. - Here, Timmie-here, see the hair? See the bright hair? Do you want to play with my hair? Do you want to pull my hair?"

McIntyre was dangling his golden forelock practically in Timmie's face. Timmie took no notice. His screaming grew even louder.

Disgustedly Miss Fellowes said, "He doesn't want to play with your hair right now, Dr. McIntyre. And if he does decide to pull it, I think you'll regret it. Best to let him be. There'll be plenty of other opportunities to examine him."

"Yes. So there will." The paleoanthropologist stood up, looking abashed. "You understand, Miss Fellowes, this

is like being handed a sealed book containing the answers to all the mysteries of the ages. I want to open it and read it right away. Every page of it."

"I understand. But I'm afraid that your book is hungry and cranky and I think he'd like to go to the bathroom, besides."

Color came to McIntyre's cheeks once again. He seemed to blush very readily, Miss Fellowes thought.

"Of course. Here."

"And-speaking of open books, Dr. McIntyre, do you think you could arrange to get me some material about Neanderthal Man? Two or three basic texts, something that might provide me with a little of the fundamental information that nobody has bothered to supply me with up till now? -They can be fairly technical. I'm quite capable of reading scientific prose. I need to know things about the Neanderthal anatomy, their way of life, the sort of foods they ate, whatever has been discovered up to this point. Could you do that for me?"

"I'll have everything you'll need sent over first thing tomorrow. Though I warn you, Miss Fellowes, that what we know about Neanderthals now is next to nothing, compared with what we're going to find out from Tim-mie as this project unfolds."

"All in due course." She grinned. "You are eager to get at him, aren't you?"

"Obviously."

"Well, you'll have to be patient about it, I'm afraid. I won't let you wear the boy out. We've subjected him to too much intrusion today, and that isn't going to happen again."

him fiercely. -"They are humans, aren't they, Dr. McIntyre? A little different from us, but not all that much. Isn't that so?"

"That's essentially so, yes. But of course-"

"No," she said. "No 'but of courses.' We're not dealing with some sort of ape, here, that much I already know. Timmie's not any kind of missing link. He's a little boy, a little human boy. --Just get me some books, Dr. McIntyre, and thank you very much. I'll see you again soon."

The paleontologist went out. The moment he was gone, Timmie's wailing tapered off into a querulous uncertain sobbing, and then, swiftly, to silence.

Miss Fellowes scooped him into her arms. He clung tightly to her, shivering.

"Yes," she said soothingly. "Yes, yes, yes, it's been a busy day. Much too busy. And you an? just a little boy. A little lost boy."

Far from home, far from anything you ever knew.

"Did you have brothers and sisters?" she asked him,

speaking more to herself than to him. Not expecting an answer; simply offering the comfort of a soft voice close to his ear. "What was your mother like? Your father? And your friends, your playmates. All gone. All gone. They must already seem like something out of a dream to you. How long will you remember anything about them at all, I wonder?"

He was young again, in his dream. He dreamed that he was only a boy, just a summer or two older than the boy Skyfire Face who had been taken by the Goddess in a whirl of light. He stood by the edge of the sea, feeling the strange wet wind blowing against his lips. His father and mother were with him, Tall Tree and Sweet As A Flower, and they were holding his hands and leading him gently toward the water.

"No," he said. "It's cold. I'm afraid to go into it."

"It can't hurt you," Tall Tree said.

But that wasn't true. No one went into the sea, no one, not ever. Every child learned that as soon as he was old enough to learn anything. The sea killed. The sea would drain your life away in an instant, and cast you back up on the shore, empty and still. Only last year the warrior Speared Five Mammoths had slipped on a snowy cliff and fallen into the sea, and when he washed ashore a little while later he was dead, and they had had to bury him in a little cavern in the rock near the place where he fell, chanting all night and burning a strange-colored fire.

Now here were his own father and mother urging him toward the sea. Did they want him to die the way Speared Five Mammoths had died? Were they tired of him? What kind of betrayal was this?

"The sea will make you strong," Sweet As A Flower told him. "The sea will make you a man."

lived in the coastal plain, wandering up and down along the shore following the game animals. Now he stared at the water in wonder and fear. It was like a great powerful flat beast lying before him, dark and shining. A roaring sound came from it, and along its edges a part of it was rippling and surging with white foam. Here and there a piece of the sea would rise up high into the air and come crashing down against the rocks along the edge. Sometimes, standing on cliffs much like the one where Speared Five Mammoths had fallen to his death, Silver Cloud had looked far out into the sea and had seen graceful animals moving about in it, moving among the floating blocks of ice. They were different animals from the mammoths and niusk oxen and rhinos of the land- slim, sleek, shining things that moved through the sea as though they were flying through air.

Last spring one of those sea animals had come ashore, and the Hunting Society had fallen on it and killed it, Aid the tribe had enjoyed a great feast. How tender its meat

had been! How strange! And its thick beautiful fur-how soft, how wonderfully soft. Tall Tree had made a mantle for Sweet As A Flower from the sea-creature's dark rich fur, and she wore it proudly on the special days of the year.

Were they going to give him to the sea in return for the fur of the sea-creature? Was that it?

Tall Tree and Sweet As A Flower walked farther out into it, taking him with them. The ground on the floor of the sea was very soft, as soft as the sea animal's fur, and it seemed to move about under his feet as he walked.

He was chest-deep in the sea, now. It wrapped itself around him like a warm blanket.

"Are your feet still touching the bottom?" Tall Tree asked him.

"Yes. Yes."

"Good. Bend forward. Put your head in the sea. Cover your face with the sea."

He did as he was told. The sea swept up and over him, and it was like being covered by a blanket made of snow. Snow too ceased to be cold, when you got deep down into it. It became warm, like fire, and if you stayed in it long enough you would fall asleep as if you were wrapped in a rug. That was what an older girl had told him: she had watched, once, as an old woman of the tribe whose

bones were bent and whose eyes were dim was taken out and put into the snow; she had closed her eyes and gone to sleep, very peacefully indeed.

So now I will go to sleep in the sea, Silver Cloud thought, and that will be the end of me. And somehow dying no longer seemed to matter. He raised his head to see whether his father and mother had their faces

were becoming broad, his chest was deepening, his thighs had become thick and strong. By the time he stepped out onto the rocky shore he was a warrior in the prime of his life. He looked down at his naked body and it was a man's body, dark and hairy. He laughed. He rubbed his chest and slapped his hands against his thighs. In the distance he saw the fires of the encampment, and he began to sprint toward it to tell everyone of the strange thing that had happened to him.

As he ran, though, another strangeness overtook him: for he realized that he was continuing to grow older every moment. Age had him in its grip and would not release him. He had left his childhood in the sea. Then, coming out of the sea, he had been full of the jubilant strength of young manhood. But now he was panting a little, then gasping for breath, slowing down from a sprint to a (rot, and then to a walk. And then he was limping along, hob-

bling, for something had happened to his left thigh and his whole leg was stiff and sore. He looked down at it. There was blood all over it, as though an animal had raked it with its claws. And he remembered, yes, yes, he had been hunting with the Hunting Society, and the snow-leopard had come down suddenly on him from above-



about him. Where was Tall Tree, where was Sweet As A Flower-where was Silver Cloud?

"Help me," he called, sitting up in his sleep. "The sea has killed me! The sea-the sea-"

"Silver Cloud?"

Someone was at his side. He blinked and peered. She Who Knows, it was, kneeling next to him, staring at him anxiously. He struggled to regain control of himself. He was trembling like a sick old woman and his chest was heaving wildly. No one must see him like this-no one. He fumbled about for his staff, caught its end, levered himself awkwardly to a standing position.

"A dream," he muttered. "Bad omens. I'll need to make a sacrifice right away. Where's Goddess Woman? Get me Goddess Woman!"

"She's gone down there," She Who Knows said. "She's cleansing the shrine."

"Shrine? What? Where?"

"At the Three Rivers. -What's wrong with you, Sil-ver Cloud? You seem all confused!"

"The dream," he said. "Very bad."

swifter ones merging at sharp angles out of the east and west.

Last year-it seemed like ages ago-they had paused in this very place for many weeks, hungry weeks at that, until the Goddess had miraculously sent them a herd of reindeer, so dazed with hunger themselves that the Hunting Society was easily able to drive a dozen of the bewildered beasts over the edge of a cliff. What a fine harvest of meat that had been! In gratitude they had built a wonderful shrine to the Goddess at the place where the rivers met, using the heaviest blocks of stone they could lift, and decorating them with a curious shining rock that they had been able to pry out of the side of the cliff in thin glittering sheets; and then they had moved onward, continuing their long eastward migration.

And now they had returned.

"I don't see Goddess Woman down there," Silver Cloud said to She Who Knows.

"She should be at the shrine."

"I see the shrine. I don't see Goddess Woman."

"Your eyes are no good any more. Silver Cloud. Here, let me look."

She stepped in front of him and looked into the misty valley. After a moment she said, sounding perplexed, "No, you're right, she's not there. She must be on her way back already. But she said she was going to stay down there all morning, saying the prayers and purifying the shrine."

"All around the shrine. I didn't see them, but their footprints were everywhere. The long feet-I know those feet. The prints everywhere in the wet ground. Fresh prints, Silver Cloud. They're all over the place, down there. We've walked right into their midst!"

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Misjudging

[22]

HOSKINS SAID, "And how's our boy doing this morning, Miss Fellowes?"

"Why don't you see for yourself, doctor?"

Hoskins' face registered a mixture of amusement and annoyance. "Why do you call me 'doctor' all the time?" he asked.

"Because you are one, or so I believe," she said, thinking of that "Ph.D." label so proudly engraved on the name-plate in his office.

"A doctorate in physics; that's all."

"A doctorate is a doctorate."

regarded as her superior.

Her husband had been a doctor, too-with a Ph.D. in physics, like Hoskins. Miss Fellowes wondered strangely whether she would be calling him "doctor" too, as she did Hoskins, if they had managed to stay married all these years. A curious thought. She rarely thought of him at all any more; the whole notion of being married, of having a husband, had come to seem remote and implausible to her. She had been married for such a short time, such a long time ago.

"What would you prefer?" she asked. "Should I call you 'Mr. Hoskins,' then?"

"Most people around here call me 'Jerry.\* "

Miss Fellowes looked at him strangely. "I couldn't do that!"

"You couldn't?"

"It-wouldn't feel right."

"Wouldn't feel right," Hoskins repeated, musingly. "To call me 'Jerry.' "

He studied her closely, as though seeing her for the first time. His wide, fleshy face broke into a warm smile. "You really are a very formal person. I hadn't realized quite how formal, I guess. All right, then: you can go on calling me 'Dr. Hoskins,' if that's what you're most comfortable with. And I'll go on calling you 'Miss Fellowes.' "

What did he mean by that? she wondered.

Hoskins was still looking steadily at her, still smiling.

There was something very warm about the man, she realized suddenly, very likable. That too was a fact she hadn't noticed before. In their earlier meetings he had struck her mainly as someone who presented himself to the world as taut, guarded, inflexible, with only occasional moments when a little humanity showed through. But possibly the tensions of the final days before the Stasis experiment had made him seem that way; and now that the time-scoop had done its work and the success of the project was confirmed, he was more relaxed, more human, more himself. And quite a nice man indeed.

Miss Fellowes found herself wondering for an idle moment if Hoskins was married.

The speculation astonished and embarrassed her. He had told her a couple of weeks back that he had a son, hadn't he? A small son, barely old enough to know how to walk. Of course he was married. Of course. What could she be thinking of? She thrust the whole line of inquiry aside in horror.

"Timmie!" she called. "Come here, Timmie!"

Like Hoskins, the boy also appeared to be in a cheerful, outgoing mood this morning. He had slept well; he had eaten well; now he came hustling

"Dr. McIntyre's extremely conservative. He doesn't believe in jumping to conclusions."

"Well, neither do I. But that's a genuine language or I'm not speaking one myself."

"Let's hope so, Miss Fellowes. Let's certainly hope so. If we can't develop any way of communicating with Timmie, then much of the value of having brought him here will be lost. Naturally we want him to tell us things about the world he came from. All manner of things."

"He will, doctor. Either in his language or in ours. And my guess is that he'll learn to speak ours long before we've found out anything about his."

"You may be right, Miss Fellowes. Time will tell, won't it? Time will tell."

Hoskins crouched down so that his face was on the same level as Timmie's and let his hands rest lightly on the boy's rib-cage, fingers outspread. Timmie remained calm. Miss Fellowes realized after a moment that Hoskins was ever so gently tickling the boy, working his fingertips lightly around in an easy, playful way that bespoke more than a little knowledge of how to handle small boys. And Timmie liked being tickled.

"What a sturdy little fellow," Hoskins said. "Tough as they come. -So you're going to learn English, are you, Timmie? And then you'll dictate a book to us all about life in the Paleolithic Era, and everybody will want to read it and it'll be a big bestseller, and we'll start to see a little return on our

even for a moment- enough to power up a whole city for days-and the energy's only one part of the overhead we run here. We've been right on the edge of going under at least half a dozen times. We had to shoot the works on one big show to save ourselves. It was everything-or nothing. And when I say the works, I mean it. But Timmie here has saved us. He's going to put Stasis Technologies, Ltd. on the map. We're in, Miss Fellowes, we're in!"

"I would have thought bringing back a live dinosaur would have sufficed to achieve that, Dr. Hoskins."

"We thought so, too. But somehow that never captured the public's imagination."

"A dinosaur didn't?"

Hoskins laughed. "Oh, if we had brought back a full-grown brontosaurus, I suppose, or a rip-snorting tyrannosaurus, something on that order. But we had our mass limitations to deal with, you know, and they tied our hands considerably. Not that we would have known how to keep a tyrannosaurus under control, even if we'd been able to bring one back. -I should take you across the way one of these days and let you see our dinosaur, I guess."

"You should, yes."

"He's very cute."

looking but nevertheless something everyone can identify with and care deeply about-that'll be our salvation. -Do you hear that, Timmie? You're our salvation." To Miss Fellowes again Hoskins said, "If this hadn't worked out, I'd have been through. No doubt about it. This whole corporation would have been through."

"But we're all right now. We'll have plenty of money soon. Funds have been promised from every source. This is all wonderful, Miss Fellowes. So long as we can keep Timmie healthy and happy, and maybe get him to speak a few words of English-'Hello, everybody out there, this is Timmie from the Stone Age'-"

"Or some such thing," Miss Fellowes said drily.

"Yes. Some such thing. -Healthy and happy, that's the key to it all. If anything happens to him, our name is mud, and worse than mud, Miss Fellowes. Which makes you the central figure in our whole operation, do you realize that? We depend on you to provide a supportive, nourishing environment for our boy. .Your word will be law: whatever Timmie needs, Timmie gets. You were absolutely right yesterday when you refused to let the media have a whack at him so soon."

"Thank you."



"Well, If you thought he was ready for-"

"I don't. Not yet."

Hoskins moistened his lips. "Your word is law. Just tell us when."

"I will."

"I mean, can you give us an estimate now? What about our having the press conference tomorrow? -The day after tomorrow?"

"Let's just put it on hold, doctor. All right? I simply don't want to commit Timmie to anything as stressful as a press conference at this point. He's still catching his breath, so to speak, still getting his feet on the ground- whatever metaphor you want to use. He's made fine progress after those first terrified moments. But he could revert in a second to the wild, frightened child you saw that night. Even Dr. McIntyre yesterday managed to get him upset, after a while."

Hoskins looked troubled. "We can't keep the press out indefinitely, Miss Fellowes."

"I'm not talking about indefinitely. I'm talking about a few days. Two, three, four-let me be the judge of it, yes, Dr. Hoskins? My word is law?"

"Your word is law," Hoskins said, not sounding terribly pleased. He was silent for a moment. Then he said, "You haven't been out of the Stasis zone since the night of the experiment, have you, Miss Fellowes? Not even for a moment."

duty constantly in the beginning, at least. But Timmie seems to be stabilizing very nicely now. You'll need to work out a schedule of time off for recreation and relaxation. Ms. Stratford can fill in for you for an hour or so at first, and then perhaps you can have whole afternoons off, later on."

"Whatever you say."

"You don't sound very enthusiastic. I didn't realize you were such a workaholic, Miss Fellowes."

"That's not quite the right word. It's simply that- well, Timmie's in such a frighteningly vulnerable position. Disoriented, isolated, far from home-so much in need of love and protection as he comes to terms with what's happened to him. I haven't wanted to leave him even for a short while."

"Very commendable of you. But now that the worst of the transition is over, you've got to start coming out of here, if only for short breaks."

"If that's what you want, doctor."

"I think it's best. For your own good, Miss Fellowes. You're entitled to a little respite from your work. And I wouldn't want Timmie to become totally dependent on having you right here at hand, either. There's no telling what sort of intense bonding might develop if this full-time nursing goes on very much longer. And then, if for some reason you have to leave the Stasis zone, Timmie might not be able to handle that. The situation wouldn't be entirely healthy. Do you follow me?"

you back inside here in five minutes, okay? Trust me."

"All right," Miss Fellowes said, less grudgingly than before. She had to admit the validity of Hoskins' reasoning. Now that she had eased Timmie through the first two days, it probably would be wise to test the boy's ability to withstand her absence for a short while. "I'm willing to give it a try. Take me to see your dinosaur."

"I'll show you everything," said Hoskins. "Animal, vegetable, and mineral in equal parts." He looked at his watch. "Suppose I give you-ah-ninety minutes to finish up whatever you were doing when I arrived this morning, and to brief Ms. Stratford on what she needs to watch out for. Then I'll come back here and pick you up for a personal tour."

Miss Fellowes thought for a moment. "Make it two hours, I think."

"Two hours? Fine. I'll be back at eleven sharp. See you then. -You don't have any problems about this, do you?"

She smiled happily. "Actually, I'm looking forward to it. -You can spare me for a little while, can't you, Timmie?"

The boy made clicking sounds.

"You see, doctor? He knows when I'm asking him a question, and he responds, even if he doesn't know what I'm actually saying to him. There's a real intelligence inside that head of his."

like making a date.

He has a young son, she told herself again, very sternly. Which means he's almost certainly got a wife. A young and pretty wife.

Even so, Miss Fellowes had changed from her nurse's uniform into a dress when Hoskins returned at eleven to get her. A dress of conservative cut, to be sure-she had no other kind-but she hadn't felt so feminine in years.

He complimented her on her appearance with staid formality and she accepted with equally formal grace. It was really a perfect prelude, she thought. And then the next thought came inexorably. Prelude to what?

[23]

She said goodbye to Timmie and assured him that she'd be coming back soon. She made sure Ms. Stratford knew what to give him for lunch, and when. The young orderly seemed a little uneasy about taking on the responsibility of being alone with Timmie, Miss Fellowes thought. But then Ms. Stratford remarked that Mortenson would be nearby in case Timmie turned difficult, and Miss Fellowes realized that the woman was more worried about finding herself with a wild battle on her hands than she was about any harm that might come to Timmie while he was in her care.

boy, for her.

Hoskins led her upward through the maze of harshly lit hallways and echoing vaults and gloomy metal staircases that they had traversed on the night of Timmie's arrival, a night which to Miss Fellowes now seemed so long ago that it felt more like the memory of a dream than an actual event. For a brief while they were outside the building entirely, blinking into the midday brilliance of a clear, golden day; and then they plunged into another bleak, barn-like building very much like the one where Timmie's Stasis bubble had been formed.

"This is the old Stasis lab," Hoskins told her. "Where it all began."

Again, security checks; again, clattering staircases and musty passageways and dismal cavernous vaults. At last they were in the heart of a bustling research zone, far busier than the other. Men and women in laboratory coats were going this way and that, carrying stacks of reports, files, computer cubes. Hoskins greeted many of them by first name, and they hailed him the same way. Miss Fellowes found the informality jarring.

But this is not a hospital, she told herself. These people simply work here. There's a difference.

"Animal, vegetable, mineral," Hoskins said. "Just as I promised. Animal right down there: our most spectacular exhibits. Before Timmie, I mean."

two small dangling arms terminating in handlike paws, which clenched and unclenched constantly. Its narrow head was delicate and birdlike, with weirdly glittering scarlet eyes. Its skull was surmounted by a bony keel a little like the comb of a rooster, but bright blue in color. Its body was green with darker stripes, and there was a gleaming reptilian sheen to it. The thin serpentine tail lashed nervously from side to side.

Hoskins said, "There's our dinosaur. Our pride and joy-until Timmie came here."

"Dinosaur? That?"

"I told you it was small. You want it to be a giant, don't you, Miss Fellowes?"

She dimpled. "I do, I suppose. It's only natural. The first thing anyone thinks of when dinosaurs are mentioned is their enormous size. And this one is, well, so tiny."

"A small one is all we aimed for, believe me. You can imagine what would happen here if a full-grown stego-saurus, say, suddenly came thundering into Stasis and started lumbering around the laboratory. But of course there isn't enough electrical energy in six counties to create a Stasis field big enough to handle something that size. And the technology itself isn't developed enough yet to allow for significant mass transfer, even if we could get the power we'd need to do it."

lizard. More of a waddle than a stride, wouldn't you say? There aren't any upright crocodiles walking around on their hind legs. But the dinosaurs had bird-like pelvises. As everyone knows, many of them were able to walk upright as modern two-legged creatures do. Think of an ostrich; think of long-legged wading birds; think of the way our own legs are attached. Even the dinosaurs who stayed closer to the ground on all four legs had the sort of pelvis that allowed the legs to descend straight instead of sticking out to the sides the way a lizard's do. It's an entirely different evolutionary model, a line one which led down from dmosau-rian reptiles through birds to mammals. And the saurian end of it died out. The only reptiles that survived the Great Extinction at the end of the Mesozoic were the ones with the other kind of pelvic arrangement."

"I see. And there were small dinosaurs as well as big ones. It just happens that the big ones are the ones that captured our imaginations."

"Right. Those are the famous ones that everybody goggles at in the museums. But plenty of species were only a few feet high. This one, for instance."

"I can understand now why people lost interest in it so fast. It isn't scary. It isn't awesome."

"Laymen may have lost interest, Miss Fellowes. But I assure you that this Httle fellow has been a revelation to scientists. It's being studied day

toward birds and mammals. The creature that you're looking at is one of our own most distant ancestors, Miss Fellowes."

"If it is, aren't you messing up evolutionary history by pulling it out of its own era? Suppose this one dinosaur was the key link in the whole evolutionary chain?"

Hoskins laughed. "I'm afraid evolution doesn't work as simply as that. No, there's no risk here of changing evolutionary history. The fact that we're all still here, after this fellow has been transported a hundred million years across time, should be proof enough of that."

"I suppose so. -Is it a male or a female dinosaur?"

"Male," said Hoskins. "Unfortunately. Ever since we brought it in, we've been trying to get a fix on another of the same species that might be female. But doing that makes looking for a needle in a haystack seem like a cinch."

"Why get a female?"

He looked at her quizzically. "So that we might have a fighting chance to obtain some fertile eggs, and breed a line of baby dinosaurs here in the laboratory."

She felt foolish. "Of course."

"Come over here," Hoskins said. "The trilobite section. You know what trilobites are, Miss Fellowes?"



"I said, Miss Fellowes, do you know what trilobites are?"

"What? Oh-yes. Yes. Some sort of extinct kind of lobster, isn't that so?"

"Well, not exactly. A crustacean and extinct, but not at all like a lobster. Not much like anything now living, as a matter of fact. Once they were the dominant life-form of the Earth, the crown of creation. That was half a billion years ago. There were trilobites wherever you looked, then. Crawling around on the floor of every ocean by the millions. And then they all died out: we can't yet say why. Leaving no descendants, no genetic heritage whatever. They were here, they were fruitful and multiplied, and then they vanished as though they had never been. Leaving fossils of themselves behind in enormous quantities."

Miss Fellowes peered into the trilobite tank. She saw six or seven sluggish gray-green creatures three or four inches long, sitting on a bed of gray ooze. They looked like something you might see at the seashore in a tide-pool. Their narrow, oval, hard-looking bodies were divided the long way into three ridged sections, a raised central one and two smaller side lobes fringed with little spikes. Huge dark eyes were visible at one end, faceted like the eyes of insects. As Miss Fellowes watched, one of the trilobites pushed an array of tiny jointed legs outward from its sides and began to crawl-slowly, very slowly- across the bottom of the tank.

The crown of creation. The dominant life-form oTits time.

"A great honor to meet you, Dr. Fellowes. You've got a tremendous job on your hands."

"Miss Fellowes will do," she said, trying not to sound too stuffy about it. - "What does a nuclear chemist have to do with trilobites, if you don't mind my asking?"

"Well, actually I'm not studying the trilobites per se," Dwayne said. "I'm studying the chemistry of the water that came here with them."

"Tom's taking isotope ratios on the oxygen contained in the water," said Hoskins.

"And why is that?"

Dwayne replied, "What we have here is primeval water, at least half a billion years old, maybe as much as six hundred million. The isotope ratio gives us the prevailing temperature of the ocean at that time-I could explain in detail, if you like-and when we know the ocean temperature, we can work out all sorts of other things about the ancient planetary climate. The world was mostly ocean at the time the trilobites flourished."

"So you see, Miss Fellowes, Tom doesn't really care about the trilobites at all. They're just ugly little annoyances, crawling around in his precious primeval water: The ones who study the trilobites themselves have a much easier time of it, because all they have to do is dissect the critters, and they don't need anything but a

"An energy-conservation problem. What comes across time is traveling across lines of temporal force. It builds up potential as it moves. We've got that neutralized inside Stasis and we need to keep it that way."

"Ah," said Miss Fellowes. Her scientific training had never included much physics. Its concepts were largely lost on her. It was a reaction, perhaps, to the unhappy memories of her marriage. Her former husband had liked to go on and on about the "poetry" inherent in physics, the mystery and magic and beauty of it. Maybe it actually had some. But anything that could be associated with her former husband was something that Miss Fellowes didn't care to think about very deeply.

Hoskins said, "Shall we move along and leave Tom here to his trilobites?"

There were samples of primordial plant life in sealed chambers-odd scaly little plants, eerie and unbeautiful- and chunks of rock formations, looking no different from twenty-first-century rocks so far as Miss Fellowes could see. Those were the vegetable and mineral parts of the collection. Animal, vegetable, mineral, yes, just as Hoskins had said-a comprehensive raid on the natural history of the past had been carried out here. And every specimen had its investigator. The place was like a museum: a museum that had been brought to life and was serving as a superactive center of research.

theoretical side. My doctorate dealt with the nature of time, the technique of mesonic inter-temporal detection, and so on. When we formed the company, I didn't have the slightest idea that I'd be anything other than head of theoretical research. But then there were-well, problems. I don't mean technical ones. I mean the bankers came in and gave us a good talking-to about the way we were going about our business. After that there were personnel changes at the highest levels of the corporation and one thing led to another and next thing I knew they were turning to me and saying, 'You have to be C.E.O., Jerry, you're the only one who can steady the place down,' and I was fool enough to believe them, and then, well-well-

" He grinned. "There I am with a fine mahogany desk and all. Shuffling papers, initialling reports, holding meetings. Telling people what to do. With maybe ten minutes left here and there in the day to think about anything like my own actual scientific research."

Miss Fellowes felt an unexpectedly powerful burst of sympathy. At last she understood why there was that "Ph.D." tag on the nameplate on Hoskins' desk. He wasn't boasting. He had it there simply to remind himself of who and what he really was. How sad, she thought.

"If you could step aside from the business end of things," she said, "what sort of research do you think you'd want to do?"

Greece or-"

He broke off in mid-sentence. Miss Fellowes could hear a commotion coming from one of the distant booths, a thin voice raised querulously. Hoskins frowned, muttered a hasty "Excuse me," and went rushing off.

Miss Fellowes followed as best she could without actually running. She didn't feel much like being left here by herself in the midst of all this hubbub of bygone ages. An elderly man in street clothes with a thin gray beard and an angry, reddened face was arguing with a much younger uniformed technician who wore the red and gold Stasis Technologies, Ltd. monogram on his lab coat. The irate older man was saying, "I had vital aspects of my investigations to complete. Don't you understand that?" "What's going on?" Hoskins asked, hastily coming between them.

The technician said, "Attempted removal of a specimen, Dr. Hoskins."

"Removal from Stasis?" Hoskins said, eyebrows rising. "Are you serious?" He turned to the older man. -"I can't believe this is true, Dr. Adamewski."

The older man pointed into the nearest Stasis bubble.

Miss Fellowes followed his pointing hand. All she saw was a small gray lab table on which a totally undistinguished sample of rock was sitting, along with some vials of what she supposed were testing reagents.

Adamewski said, "I still have extensive work to do in order to ascertain-"

technician. "He knew that."

"What of it? I wasn't able to guarantee I'd be able to finish my work in so short a time. I can't see the future, Dr. Hoskins. Two weeks, three weeks, four-what matters is solving the problem, is it not?"

"The problem, professor," Hoskins said, "is that our facilities are limited here. We've got only so many Stasis bubbles and there's an infinite amount of work to be done. So we have to keep specimens rotating. That piece of chalcopyrite has to go back where it came from. There's a long list of people waiting to use this bubble."

"So let them use it," said Adamewski heatedly. "And I'll take the specimen out of there and finish working on it at my university. You can have it back whenever I'm done."

"You know that isn't possible."

"A piece of chalcopyrite! A miserable three-kilogram chunk of rock with no commercial value! Why not?"

"We can't afford the energy expense!" Hoskins said.

"You know that. None of this comes as any news to you, and please don't try to pretend otherwise."

The technician said, "The point is, Dr. Hoskins, that he tried to remove the rock against the rules and while he was in there I almost punctured Stasis, not realizing he was still inside the bubble."

specimen. A nylon cord ran from the end of it, through the wall, into the chamber. Hoskins reached up unhesitatingly and jerked down on the lever.

Miss Fellowes, looking into the Stasis bubble, drew in her breath sharply as a quick burst of brilliant light flickered around the chunk of rock, surrounding it for the briefest of moments with a dazzling halo of red and green. Before she even had time to close her eyes against the brightness of the flare the light was gone. And so, too, was the chunk of rock. Its existence had flickered out. The gray lab table was bare.

Adamewski stood gasping in outrage and frustration. "What have you-"

Hoskins cut him off brusquely. "You can clear out your cubicle, professor. Your permit to investigate material in Stasis is permanently voided, as of this moment."

"Wait. You can't-"

"I'm sorry. I can, professor. And I have. You've violated one of our most stringent rules."

"I will appeal this to the International Association of-"

"Appeal away," Hoskins said. "In a case like this, you'll find I can't be overruled."

He turned away deliberately, leaving the professor still protesting, and swung around toward Miss Fellowes. She had watched the entire episode

"But you've only been out of your chamber for-"

"Perhaps I should, anyway."

Hoskins' lips moved silently for a moment. He seemed to be framing some sort of appeal. At length he said, "Suppose you check with Ms. Stratford and see how Timmie's doing. And if everything's all right with the boy, maybe you can allow yourself a little more free time. I'd like to invite you to have lunch with me, Miss Fellowes."

[24]

They went into the small executive alcove of the company cafeteria. Hoskins greeted people on all sides and introduced Miss Fellowes with complete ease, although she herself felt painfully self-conscious.

What must they think, seeing us together? she wondered, and tried desperately to look businesslike. She wished now that she hadn't changed out of her nurse's uniform. The uniform served as a kind of armor for her. It allowed her to face the world in the guise of a function rather than as a person.

There was nothing fancy about the cafeteria fare. Salads, sandwiches, fruit plates, roils-that was about it. Just as well: she had never been much for elaborate dining, especially in the middle of the day. And her years of hospital life had left her not only accustomed to cafeteria food but actually



this is the first time one actually has tried to do it."

"Which would have created some terrible problem with-ah-the balance of temporal potential?"

"Exactly," said Hoskins, looking pleased at her use of the phrase. "Of course, we've tried to take such possibilities into account. Accidents will happen and so we've got special power sources designed to compensate for the drain of accidental removals from Stasis. But that doesn't mean we want to see a year's supply of energy gone in half a second. We couldn't afford any such thing, not without having to cut back on our operations for months to come in order to make up the costs. -And on top of everything else, there's the angle that the professor would

have been in the room at the moment Stasis was being punctured."

"What would have happened to him if he had been?"

"Well, we've experimented with inanimate objects- and with mice, for that matter-and whatever we've had in the bubble at the time of puncture has disappeared."

"Gone back in time, you mean?"

"Presumably. Carried along, so to speak, by the pull of the object that's simultaneously snapping back into its natural time. That's the theory, anyway, and we don't have any reason to doubt it: an object returning to its place in the space-time matrix generates such powerful forces in its

it doesn't seem to be strong enough to sweep objects backward in time that are fixed in place. It just scoops up the loose things nearby. And so we anchor anything within Stasis that's in proximity to the transit object that we don't want to move, which is a fairly complicated procedure."

"But the professor wouldn't have been anchored."

"No," Hoskins said. "The idiot would have gone right along with the rock, straight back to the place where it came from in the Pliocene."

"How dreadful it would have been for him."

"I suppose it would. Not that I'd weep a lot, I assure you. If he was fool enough to break the rules, and as a

result he happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time and something nasty happened to him, it would have served him right. But ultimately we'd have been the ones to suffer. Can you imagine the lawsuit we'd be hit with?"

"But if he died as a result of his own negligence-"

"Don't be naive, Miss Fellowes. For decades now all sorts of damned idiots in this country have been doing negligent things and the lawyers for their estates have been nailing the responsibility to other people's hides. The drunk who falls in front of the subway train-the burglar who drops through a skylight and cracks his skull -the schoolboy who climbs on the back of the bus and falls off-don't you think they've all been able to come

knows, perhaps Stasis can be used to generate some kind of death-ray field! What kind of deadly experiments are actually going on behind those gates? Shut them down! Shut them down! -Do you see? Overnight we'd be turned into some sort of monsters and funds would be choked off like that," Hoskins said, snapping his fingers. He scowled, looked down into his plate, played moodily with his food.

Miss Fellowes said, "Couldn't you get him back? The way you got the rock in the first place?"

"No, because once an object is returned, the original fix will be lost unless we take steps ahead of time to retain

it-and we wouldn't have done that in this case. As a matter of fact, we never take such steps in any case. There's no reason for it. Finding the professor again would mean relocating a specific fix across five million years or thereabouts and that would be like dropping a line into the oceanic abyss for the purpose of dredging up one particular fish. -My God, when I think of the precautions we take to prevent accidents, it makes me furious. We have every individual Stasis unit set up with its own puncturing device-we have to, since each unit has its own separate fix and needs to be independently collapsible. The point is, though, none of the puncturing devices is ever activated until the last minute. And then we deliberately make activation impossible except by- you saw me do it, didn't you?-by the

something like eight million years. But that particular rock came from five million years back."

"Would the professor have been able to survive there very long, do you think?"

Hoskins turned his hands upward in a gesture of uncertainty. "Well, the climate probably wouldn't be as rough as it would get later on in the glacial period your Timmie comes from, and the atmosphere he'd find himself in would be more or less identical to the stuff we breathe today-minus a lot of the garbage that we've pumped into it in the past couple of hundred years, of

course. So if Adamewski knew anything about hunting and finding edible plants, which I would say is highly doubtful, he'd have been able to cope for a while. Anywhere between two weeks and two months, is my guess." "Well, what if he met some Pliocene woman during that rime, and she took a liking to him and taught him how to gather food?" Then an even wilder idea occurred to Miss Fellowes. -"And he might even mate with her back there and they would have children, a whole new genetic line, a modern man's genes combining with those of a prehistoric woman. Wouldn't that change all of history to come? That would be the biggest risk of having the professor go back in time, wouldn't it?"

but I can tell you quite confidently that Adamewski wouldn't have found anything that looked like Homo sapiens back there. The best he could hope for would be some primitive form of australo-pithecine, maybe four feet tall and covered with hair from head to toe. The human race as we understand it simply hadn't evolved at such an early date. And I doubt that even a passionate man like Dr. Adamewski"-Hoskins smothered another burst of giggles-"would find himself so enamored of your average Pliocene hominid ferrtale that he'd want to have sexual relations with her. Of

course, if he ran into the Pliocene equivalent of Helen of Troy-the ape that launched a thousand ships, so to speak-"

"I think I get the point," Miss Fellowes said primly, regretting now that she had led the discussion in this direction in the first place. "But I asked you before, when you showed me the dinosaur, why it was that moving something in and out of time doesn't change history. I understand now that the professor wouldn't have been able to start a family in the Pliocene, but if you sent someone back in time to an era when there were actual human beings-say, twenty thousand years ago-"

Hoskins looked thoughtful. "Well, then, there'd be some minor disruption of the time-line, I suppose. But I don't think there'd be anything big."

"So you simply can't change history using Stasis?"

the time-line, I imagine. But the mathematics of Stasis indicates that it would be a converging series. The amount of change tends to diminish with time and eventually things return to the track they would have followed all along."

"You mean, reality heals itself?"

"\*In a manner of speaking. Yank a human being out of the past, or send one back, and you make a larger wound. If the individual is an ordinary one, that wound would

still heal itself-that's what the calculations show. Naturally there are a great many people who write to us every day and want us to bring Abraham Lincoln into the present, or Mohammed, or Alexander the Great. Well, we don't have the technical ability to do that just yet, not that we'd be likely to if we could. But even if we could cast our net such a short distance into the past, and were able to locate a specific human being such as the three I named, the change in reality involved in moving one of the great molders of history would be too huge to be healed. There are ways of calculating when a change is likely to be too great, and we make sure that we don't come anywhere near that limit."

Miss Fellowes said, "Then Timmie-" "No, he doesn't present any problems of that sort. One small boy who belonged to a human subspecies that was destined to die out in another five or ten thousand years is hardly

"Of course. But one is all we'll need, I imagine. If Timmie helps us learn everything that we want to-"

"I don't mean to bring another one here for purposes of research. I mean as a playmate for Timmie." "What?"

It was a concept that had burst into her mind as suddenly and unexpectedly as the name "Timmie" itself

had-an impulse, a spontaneous thing. Miss Fellowes was astonished at herself for having brought it up.

But she pursued it, now that it was here.

"He's a normal, healthy child in every way, so far as I can see. A child of his time, of course. But in his own way I think he's outstanding."

"I certainly think so too, Miss Fellowes."

"His development from here on, though, may not continue normally."

"Why not?" Hoskins asked.

"Any child needs stimulation and this one lives a life of solitary confinement. I intend to do what I can, but I can't replace an entire cultural matrix. What I'm saying, Dr. Hoskins, is that he needs another boy to play with."

Hoskins nodded slowly. "Unfortunately, there's only one of him, isn't there? Poor child."

We couldn't possibly expect to find another Neanderthal close to his age without incredible luck-it was a very sparsely populated era, Miss Fellowes; we can't just dip casually into the Neanderthal equivalent of a big city and snatch a child-and even if we could, it wouldn't be fair to multiply risks by having another human being in Stasis."

Miss Fellowes put down her spoon. Heady new ideas were flooding into her mind. She said energetically, "In that case, Dr. Hoskins, let me take a different tack. If it's impossible to bring another Neanderthal child into the present, so be it. I'm not even sure I could cope with a second one, anyway. But what if- a little later, once Timmie is better adapted to modern life - what if we were to bring another child in from the outside to play with him?"

Hoskins stared at her in concern. "A human child?"

"Another child," said Miss Fellowes, with an angry glare. "Timmie is human."

"Of course. You know what I meant. - But I couldn't dream of such a thing."

"Why not? Why couldn't you? I don't see anything wrong with the idea. You pulled that child out of time and made him an eternal prisoner. Don't you owe him something? Dr. Hoskins, if there is any man who, in this



As he had promised, McIntyre sent over a stack of reference works that dealt with Neanderthals. Miss Fellowes plunged into them as if she were back at nursing school and a critical exam was coming up in a couple of days.

She learned that the first Neanderthal fossils had been discovered in the middle of the nineteenth century by workmen digging in a limestone quarry near Diisseldorf, Germany, at a place called the Neander Valley - Neandtrthal, in German. While cleaning away the mud that cov-

ered a limestone deposit in a grotto sixty feet above the valley floor, they came across a human skull embedded in the grotto floor, and other bones not far away.

The workmen gave the skull and a few of the other bones to a local high school teacher, who took them to Dr. Hermann Schaafhausen of Bonn, a well-known anatomist. Schaafhausen was startled by their strangeness. The skull had many human features, but it was curiously primitive in appearance, long and narrow, with a sloping forehead and an enormous bony ridge bulging above the brows. The thighbones that accompanied the skull were so thick and heavy that they scarcely looked human at all.

But Schaafhausen did think the Neanderthal bones were human relics-extremely ancient ones. In a paper he read at a scientific meeting early in

went back to his game.

Miss Fellowes read on. And quickly the book confirmed what she already vaguely knew: that the Neanderthal people, while certainly ancient inhabitants of Europe, were far from being the most ancient ones.

The discovery of the original Neanderthal fossils had been followed, later in the nineteenth century, by similar discoveries in many other parts of Europe—more fossilized bones of prehistoric human-like creatures with sloping foreheads, huge beetling brows, and—another typical characteristic—receding chins. Scientists debated the meaning of these fossils, and, as Darwin's theories of

evolution came to gain wide acceptance, general agreement developed that the Neanderthal-type specimens were the remains of a brutish-looking prehistoric kind of human being, ancestral to modern humanity, perhaps midway on the evolutionary scale between apes and humans.

" 'Brutish-looking.' " Miss Fellowes sniffed. "All in the eye of the beholder, eh, Timmie?"

But then had come the discovery of other types of fossil humans—in Java, in China, elsewhere in Europe— that seemed even more primitive in form than the Neanderthals. And in the twentieth century, when reliable methods of dating ancient sites were developed, it became clear that the Neanderthal people must have lived relatively recently on the time-scale of

humans of the modern type had lived alongside the Neanderthals, peacefully or otherwise, for thousands of years before undergoing a sudden population explosion and completely displacing the other human form.

There seemed to be several different theories to explain why the Neanderthals had suddenly become extinct. But one thing all the experts agreed on was that they had vanished from the Earth late in the period of the ice ages.

The Neanderthals, then, hadn't been some brutish' ape-like ancestor of modern man. They weren't ancestral

at all. They were simply humans of another form, different in various ways from their contemporaries, who were the kind of human that had survived into modern times. Distant cousins, perhaps. The two races had had a parallel existence in Ice Age times, an uneasy coexistence. But only one of the two forms had lasted beyond the time when the great glaciers had covered Europe.

"So you are human, Timmie. I never really doubted it-" (though she had, for a bad moment right at the beginning, for which she still felt shame) "-but here it is in black and white. You're just a little unusual-looking, that's all. But you're as human as I am. As human as anybody here."

Clicks and murmurs came from Timmie.

more skeletal evidence was uncovered, a generally accepted picture of the Neanderthal people had emerged.

They had been shorter than modern humans-the tallest of the men were probably no more than about five-feet-four in height-and very stocky, with wide shoulders and deep barrel-chests. Their foreheads sloped backward, their brow ridges were enormous, they had rounded lower jaws instead of chins. Their noses were big and broad and low-bridged, and their mouths jutted forward like muzzles. Their feet were flat and very wide, with

short stubby toes. Their bones were heavy, thick, and large-jointed and their muscles probably were extremely well developed. Their legs were short in proportion to their torsos and possibly were naturally bowed, with permanently flexed knees, so that they might have walked in a sort of shuffle.

Not pretty, no. Not by modern standards.

But human. Unquestionably human. Give a Neanderthal man a shave and a haircut and put him into a shirt and a pair of jeans and he could probably walk down a street in any city of the world without attracting anyone's attention.

"And listen to this part, Timmie!" Miss Fellowes ran her finger across the page and read out loud to him. " 'He had a big brain. The brains of skeletons are measured by cranial capacities-that is, how much volume, in

Fellowes knew there was no chance of that.

"Of course," she said, "it isn't really the size of the skull that counts, it's the quality of the brain inside it. Elephants have bigger skulls than just about anybody, but they can't do algebra. Nor can I, for that matter, but I can read a book and drive a car, and show me the elephant that can do those things! -Do you think I'm silly, Timmie? Talking to you this way?" The boy's face was sol-<sup>\*</sup>1 emn; he offered her a click or two. "But you need

someone to talk to in here. And so do I. Come over here for a moment, will you?" Miss Fellowes beckoned to him. He stared blankly but stayed where he was. "Come over here to me, Timmie. I want to show you something."

But he didn't budge. It was a pretty fantasy, imagining that he was beginning to understand her words; but she knew very well that there was no substance to it.

She went to him instead, sitting down beside him and holding out the book she had been reading. There was a painting on the left-hand side of the page, an artist's reconstruction of a Neanderthal man's face, massive and grizzled, with the typical jutting mouth and great flattened nose and fierce tangled beard. His head was thrust forward from his shoulders. His lips were drawn back a little, baring his teeth. A savage countenance, yes. Brutish, one might even say: there was no getting away from that.

Timmie made a few clicks. He glanced at the book without apparent interest.

Miss Fellowes tapped the picture a couple of times. Then she took his hand and put it on the page to direct his attention toward the plate.

He just didn't understand. The image on the page seemed to mean nothing to him at all.

He ran his hand over the page in a remote, uninterested way, as though the smooth texture of the paper was

the only aspect of the book that had caught his attention. Then the boy turned the lower corner of the page upward and began idly to pull on it, so that the page started to rip from the binding.

"No!" Miss Fellowes cried, and in a quick reflexive gesture she pulled his hand away and slapped it, all at once—a light slap, but an unmistakable reprimand.

Timmie glared at her. His eyes were bright with fury. He made a ghastly snarling sound and his hand became a claw; and he reached for the book again.

She pulled it out of his reach.

He dropped down on his knees and growled at her. A terrifying growl, a deep eerie rumbling, eyes turned upward, lips drawn back, teeth bared in a frightful grimace of rage.

four years old at most and came out of some primitive tribal culture and he had never seen a book before in his life. Was he supposed to look at it with respect and awe, and thank her politely for having made this valuable source of information available to his eager young mind?

Even modern four-year-olds from nice educated households, she reminded herself, have been known to tear pages out of books. And also sometimes to growl and snarl and look angry when you slap their hands for doing

it. Nobody thinks that they're little savage beasts, just because they do things like that. Not at that age. And Timmie isn't a beast either, just a small boy, a small wild boy who finds himself a prisoner in a world he can't begin to understand.

Carefully Miss Fellowes put the books McIntyre had given her away in one of her lockers. When she returned to the other room she found Timmie calm again, playing with his toy as though nothing unusual had taken place.

Her heart flooded with love for the boy. She yearned to beg his forgiveness for having seemed once again to give up on him so quickly. But what good would that do? He couldn't begin to understand.

Well, there was another way.

"I think it's time for some oatmeal, Timmie. Don't you?"

homework very thoroughly."

McIntyre smiled his small, precise, not very radiant smile. "I'm pleased to have been of some help, Miss Pel-lowes."

"But there's still more I'd like to know. I mean to keep reading, but since you're here, I thought I'd ask you-"

The paleoanthropologist smiled again, even less glowingly. He was all too evidently eager to get down to his session with the Neanderthal child, and not at all enthusiastic about stopping to answer a nurse's unimportant questions. But after the fiasco of the last visit, Miss Pel-lowes was determined not to allow McIntyre to drive Timmie into tears with the intensity of his scientific curiosity. The session would proceed slowly, at the pace Miss Fellowes intended to set, or it wouldn't proceed at all.

Her word was going to be law: that was Hoskins' phrase, but she had adopted it as her own.

"If I can help you, Miss Fellowes-something you weren't able to discover in the books-"

"It's the one central question that has troubled me since i came to work with Timmie. We all agree that Neanderthals were human. What I'm trying to find out is how human they were. How close they are to us-where the similarities are, and where the differences. I don't mean the physical differences, particularly-those are obvious enough and I've studied the texts



"What in particular?"

"I learned today that the two different races, the Neanderthal race and the modern human one-is that correct, calling them races?-lived side by side in Europe and the Near East for perhaps a hundred thousand years during the glacial periods."

" 'Races' isn't quite the proper word, Miss Fellowes. The various 'races' of mankind, as we employ the term nowadays, are much more closely related to each other than we are to the Neanderthals. 'Subspecies' might be more accurate when talking about ourselves and the Neanderthals. They belonged to the subspecies *Homo sapiens neanderthalensis* and we're classed as *Homo sapiens sapiens*"

"All right. But they did live side by side."

"Apparently they did, at least in some areas. In the warmer places, that is-the Neanderthals probably had the colder regions all to themselves, because they were better adapted to deal with the conditions there. Of course, we're talking about very small populations, widely scattered bands. It's altogether possible that an individual Neanderthal tribe could have persisted for centuries without ever once encountering *Homo sapiens sapiens*. On the other hand, they might have been next-door neighbors in some places, especially as the last glacial

conserved their own gene pool, contributed very little if anything at all to the modern-day human genetic mix."

"Backwoodsmen. Country cousins."

"That's not a bad description," McIntyre said.

"Thank you. -And were they less intelligent than Homo sapiens sapiens"?"

He looked impatient again. "That's something I really can't say, Miss Fellowes, until you let me get down to some serious testing of Timmie's mental capacity and ability to-

"What's your guess, as of this afternoon?"

"Less intelligent."

"Based on what, Dr. McIntyre? Pro-sapiens prejudice?"

McIntyre's delicate complexion flooded with color\*. "You asked me to offer an opinion before I've had a

chance to examine the only real evidence that's ever been available to science. What else can my answer be except an expression of prejudice? By definition that's what it is."

"Yes, yes, I understand that. But it must be based on something concrete. What?"

Controlling himself, McIntyre said, "The Mousterian cultural level-that's our technical term for Neanderthal culture, Mousterian-wasn't very

decoration that we could consider to be religious in nature. We assume that they must have had a religion of some sort, because we've found Neanderthal graves, and a species that buries its dead almost certainly has to have some kind of belief in an afterlife, and therefore in higher spiritual entities. But those few Neanderthal dwelling sites that we've examined don't give us evidence of anything but the simplest, most basic sort of hunting-and-gathering tribal life. And as I mentioned the other day, we haven't even been altogether certain they were physiologically capable of using language. Or that they had the intellectual capacity to do so even if their larynxes and tongues were able to shape sounds."

Miss Fellowes felt herself bogging down in gloom. She looked over at Timmie, glad that he could understand nothing of what McIntyre was telling her.

"So you think that they were an intellectually inferior race, then? Compared to *Homo sapiens sapiens*, I mean?" "Certainly we have to think so on the basis of what we know as of now," McIntyre said. "On the other hand, that's not being entirely fair to them. The Neanderthals may not have needed the sorts of cultural frills and fol-de-rols that the *sapiens sapiens* subspecies thought were important. Mousterian tools, simple as they were, were perfectly well suited for the tasks they had to perform- killing small game, chopping up meat, scraping hides, felling trees, things like that. And

case out for the Neanderthals, but the fact remains that I basically see them as a slow-witted unprogressive form of humanity that was outmaneuvered and eventually obliterated by our own people. -Of course, when we talk about physical superiority, that's a different matter. In terms of the living conditions that existed in their time, the Neanderthals could well be considered the superior form. The very features that make us think of them as ugly brutes may have been marks of that superiority." "Give me an example."

"The nose," McIntyre said. He pointed toward Tim-mie. "His nose is a lot larger than a modern child's." "Yes. It is."

"And some might say it's ugly, because it's so wide and thick and protrudes so much."

"Some might say so," Miss Fellowes agreed coolly.

"But then consider the climate that Paleolithic man had to deal with. Much of Europe was covered by permafrost. A constant cold, dry wind blew across the central plains. Snow might fall in any season of the year. You know what it feels like to breathe really cold air. But one purpose that the human nose serves is the warming and moistening of inhaled air on its way to the lungs. The bigger the nose, the more effective the warming capacity."

"Serving as a kind of radiator, you mean?"

"So the so-called 'brutish' look of the Neanderthals may have been nothing more than natural selection at work, a specialized evolutionary response to the harsh conditions with which man had to cope in ice-age Europe."

"Quite so."

"If they were so well designed to survive," Miss Fellowes said, "then why did they become extinct? A change in the climate making their specializations no longer advantageous?"

McIntyre sighed heavily. "The question of Neanderthai extinction. Miss Fellowes, is such a vexed one, so fraught with controversy-"

"Well, what's your view? Were they simply exterminated, because they were as slow-witted as you seem to think? Did their special genetic characteristics disappear through intermarriage with the other line? Or was it some combination of--"

"May I remind you, Miss Fellowes, diat I have work to do here today?" McIntyre said. Exasperation was beginning to show in his eyes. "Much as I'd like to discuss Neanderthals with you, the fact remains that we have an actual living Neanderthal right in this room awaiting study, and I have only a limited amount of time in which

essential to the financing of the project. Now that it was undeniably clear that the boy was in good physical shape, that he apparently wasn't going to come down with any twenty-first-century bacterial infection, that he was capable of withstanding the stress of a meeting with the media, it simply had to happen. Miss Fellowes' word might be law,

but it was clear that there was one word she didn't have the leeway to utter. This time Hoskins wasn't going to take "no" for an answer.

"I want to limit the public viewing to five minutes, then," she said.

"They've asked for fifteen."

"They could ask for a day and a half. Dr. Hoskins. But five minutes is all that I consider to be acceptable."

"Ten, Miss Fellowes."

She could see the determination in his face.

"Ten at the absolute limit. Less if the boy shows any sign of distress."

"You know he'll show signs of distress," said Hoskins. "I can't simply let a little whimpering be the signal to throw the reporters out."

"I'm not talking about a little whimpering, doctor. I'm talking about hysteria, profound psychosomatic reactions, potentially life-threatening responses to a massive invasion of his living space. You remember how wild the boy was the night he arrived here."

"He was frightened out of his wits that night."

"The Stasis bubble is small. It's Timmie's sanctuary. If you let it be invaded by a vast pack of baboons-

"They'll be science reporters like Candide Deveney."

"Fine. Three reporters."

"You really are determined to be difficult, aren't you?"

"I have a child to care for. That's what you're paying me for and what I intend to do. If I'm too difficult to work with, you can always give me notice, you know."

The words slipped out unexpectedly. Miss Fellowes felt a sudden stab of alarm. What if Hoskins decided to call her bluff? Sent her away, called in one of the rejected applicants-there must surely have been rejected applicants-to take charge of Timmie?

But the idea of dismissing her seemed to alarm Hoskins as much as it did her.

"I don't want to do that, Miss Fellowes. You know that very well."

"Then listen to me. The concept of a press pool isn't unknown around here, is it? Let your precious media people choose diree representatives to come in here and inspect Timmie. Or, rather, to stand outside the Stasis bubble's door while I show him to them. They can share the information with the others. Tell them that any more than three would endanger die boy's health and mental stability."

[28]

Later in the day the gentlemen of the press arrive. Two gentlemen and a lady, more accurately: John Un-

derhill of the Times, Stan Washington of Globe-Net Cable News, Margaret Anne Crawford of Reuters.

Miss Fellowes held Timmie in her arms just at the perimeter of Stasis and he clung to her wildly while they set their cameras to work and called requests to her through the open door from their places just outside the bubble. She did her best to cope, turning Timmie this way and that so they could see his face and head from various angles.

"Is it a boy or a girl?" the Reuters woman asked.

"Boy," said Miss Fellowes brusquely.

"He looks almost human," said Underbill of the Times.

"He is human."

"We were told he was a Neanderthal. If you tell us now that he's human-"  
"

"I assure you," said Hoskins' voice suddenly, from behind her, "that no deception has been practiced here. That child is authentic Homo sapiens neanderthalensis."



uttering soft little clicks of fear. "He is not an ape-boy in any sense. His facial features are those of the Neanderthal branch of the human race. His behavior is that of a completely normal human child. He's intelligent and responsive when he isn't being terrified by a bunch of noisy

strangers. His name is-is Timothy-Timmie-and it's an absolute error to regard him as-

"Timothy?" said the man from the Times. "What's the significance of calling him that?"

Miss Fellowes colored. "There's no particular significance. It's simply his name."

"Tied to his sleeve when he got here?" asked Globe-Net Cable News.

"I gave him the name."

"Timmie the ape-boy," Globe-Net said.

The three reporters laughed. Miss Fellowes felt her anger rising to the point where she feared she was going to have trouble holding it in check.

"Put it down, can't you?" the woman from Reuters called. "Let's see how it walks."

"The child's too frightened for that," Miss Fellowes replied, wondering if they expected Timmie to walk about the room with his knuckles dragging against the floor. "Much too frightened. Can't you see? Isn't that obvious?"

She spun around, holding Timmie tightly, and headed back into the inner room. On the way she strode past Hoskins, whose face was tight with consternation but who gave her a quick, tense nod and a small smile of approval.

It took her a couple of minutes to calm the boy down. Gradually the tension left his small quivering body; gradually the fear ebbed from his face.

A press conference! Miss Fellowes thought bitterly. For a four-year-old. The poor suffering child! What will they do to him next?

After a time she went out of the room again, Bushed with indignation, closing Timmie's door behind her. The three reporters were still there, huddling in the space just outside the bubble. She stepped through the Stasis boundary and confronted them out there.

"Haven't you had enough?" she demanded. "It's going to take me all afternoon to repair the damage to the boy's peace of mind that you've done here today. Why don't you go away?"

"We have just a few more questions, Miss Fellowes. If you don't mind-"

She looked toward Hoskins in appeal. He shrugged and gave her a weak smile as though to counsel patience.

"If we could know a little about your own background, Miss Fellowes-" said the woman from Reuters.

Times, "now that you have him?"

"Well," Hoskins said, "from my point of view the chief purpose of the Neanderthal project was simply to find out whether we could aim our scoop at the relatively short-range target of the Paleolithic era with sufficient

accuracy to bring back a living organism. Our previous successes, as you know, have all involved a target zone in the millions of years, rather than a mere forty thousand. That has now been accomplished, and we are continuing to work on ever narrower refinements of our process with the goal of even shorter-range targeting. -But of course we also now have a live Neanderthal child in our midst, a creature which is at the edge of being human or indeed must actually be considered to be human. The anthropologists and the physiologists are naturally very much interested in him and he'll be the subject of intensive study."

"How long will you keep him?"

"Until such a time as we need the space more than we need him. Quite a while, perhaps."

The man from Globe-Net Cable said, "Can you bring him out into the open so we can set up a sub-etheric transmission and give our viewers a real show?"

Miss Fellowes cleared her throat loudly.

one might say. That's why the child could be plucked out of time the way it was."

"Wait a minute, now," Underbill of the Times objected. "Self-contained? Inviolable? The nurse goes into the room and out of it."

"And so could any of you," said Hoskins matter-of-factly. "You would be moving parallel to the lines of temporal force and no great energy gain or loss would be involved. The child, however, was taken from the far past. It moved across the time lines and gained temporal potential. To move it into the universe-our universe, and into our own time-would absorb enough energy to burn out every line in the place and probably to knock out power in the entire city. When he arrived, all sorts of trash came with him-dirt and twigs and pebbles and things-and we've got every crumb of it all stored out back of this area. When we get a chance we'll ship it back where it came from. But we don't dare let it out of the Stasis zone."

The media people were busily jotting down notes as Hoskins spoke to them. Miss Fellowes suspected that they didn't understand very much and that they were sure that their audience wouldn't either. But it sounded scientific and that was what counted.

The Globe-Net man said, "Would you be available for an all-circuit interview tonight, Dr. Hoskins?"

surges, of the fear of removing anything from Stasis that had come forward in time, had come up. She remembered how agitated Dr. Hoskins had been when Professor Adamewski was caught trying to sneak a rock sample out of his research area, and the ex-

planations he had given her then. Much of that had quickly become hazy to her; but, reminded of it now, Miss Fellowes saw one thing with terrible clarity, a conclusion to which she had given no serious thought when she had brushed against it earlier.

Timmie was doomed never to see anything of the world into which he had-without his comprehension or consent-been thrust. The bubble would be his entire universe so long as he remained in modern time.

He was a prisoner and always would be. Not by the arbitrary fiat of Dr. Hoskins, but by the inexorable laws of the process by which he had been snatched out of his own time. It wasn't that Hoskins would not ever let him out of the Stasis bubble. Hoskins could not let him out.

Words came back to her from her conversation with Hoskins on the night of Timmie's arrival.

The point to bear in mind is simply that he must never be allowed to leave these rooms. Never. Not for an instant. Not for any reason. Not to save his life. Not even to save your life, Miss Fellowes.

the bedroom to console him.

[29]

Hoskins was getting ready to call the meeting of the board of directors to order when his telephone rang. He stared at it in irritation. What now?

It went on ringing.

"Excuse me, will you?" he said, looking around the room. He switched it to audio-only and said, "Hoskins."

"Dr. Hoskins, this is Bruce Mannheim. Of the Children's Advocacy Council, as I think you know."

Hoskins choked back a cough.

"Yes, Mr. Mannheim. What can I do for you?"

"I saw your telecast last night, of course. The little Neanderthal boy. Fascinating, fascinating, an absolutely miraculous scientific achievement!"

"Why, thank you. And-"

"But of course, the situation raises some moral and ethical problems. As I think you know. To have taken a child of an alien culture from his own nurturing family situation, and to bring him into our own era-" Mannheim paused. "I think we need to talk about this. Dr. Hoskins."

"Perhaps we do. But right at this moment-"

Hoskins put the telephone down. He stared bleakly around the room.

"Brace Mannheim," he said dolefully. "The famous children's advocate. Wants to talk to me about the boy. -My God, my God! It was inevitable, wasn't it? And now here it all comes."

[30]

In the weeks that followed, Miss Fellowes felt herself grow to be an integral part of Stasis Technologies, Ltd. She was given a small office of her own with her name on the door, an office quite close to the dollhouse (as she never stopped calling Timmie's Stasis bubble). Her original contract was torn up and Hoskins offered her a new one providing for a substantial raise. She and Hoskins might be destined to be adversaries now and again but she had clearly won his respect. The dollhouse was covered with the ceiling she had requested at the outset; its furnishings were elaborated and improved; a second washroom was added, and better storage facilities for Miss Fellowes' belongings.

Hoskins told her that an apartment of her own could be made available on the company grounds, so she could get away from having to be on duty twenty-four hours a day. But she refused. "I want to stay close to Timmie while he's sleeping," she explained. "He wakes up crying almost every

She had never really noticed, in the years when she had worked at the hospital, how totally her life was centered around her work, how sparse were her connections to the world outside. Now that she actually lived at the place where she worked, it was exceedingly clear. She desired little contact with the outside, not even to see her few friends, most of them nurses like herself. It was sufficient to speak with them by telephone; she felt little impulse to visit them.

It was on one of these forays into the city that Miss Fellowes began to realize just how thoroughly accustomed to Timmie she had become. One day she found herself staring at an ordinary boy in the street and finding something bulgy and unattractive about his high domed forehead and jutting chin, his flat brows, his insignificant little nub of a nose. She had to shake herself to break the spell.

Just as she had come to accept Timmie as he was, and no longer saw anything especially strange or unusual about him, Timmie, too, seemed to be settling fairly quickly into his new life. He was becoming less timid with strangers; his dreams appeared not to be as harrowing as they had been; he was as comfortable with Miss Fellowes now as though she were his actual mother. He dressed and undressed himself, now, climbing in and out of the overalls that he usually wore with distinct signs of pleasure in the



sounds when he was hungry, certain sounds when he was tired, certain sounds when he was frightened. But, as Hoskins had pointed out long ago, even cats and dogs made recognizable sorts of sounds in response to particular situations, but no one had ever identified specific "words" in any cat or dog "language."

Perhaps she was just failing to hear the linguistic patterns. Perhaps they all were. She still was sure that there was a language there-one so remote in its structure from modern tongues that no one alive today could begin to comprehend how it was organized. But in darker moments Miss Fellowes feared that Timmie simply wasn't going to turn out to be capable of learning true language at all-either because Neanderthals were too far back along the evolutionary path to have the intellectual capacity for speech, or else because, having passed his formative years among people who spoke only the simplest, most primitive of languages, it was too late now for Timmie to master anything more complex.

She did some research on the subject of feral children -children who had spent prolonged periods living wild, virtually animal lives, on their own in primitive regions- and discovered that even after these children had been found and brought back into civilization, they usually never did develop the knack of uttering more than a few crude grunts. It appeared that even where the physiological and intellectual capability for speech existed, the

"Yes. Hungry. Do you want some milk?"

No response.

She tried a different tack.

"Timmie-you. You-Timmie." Pointing.

He stared at her finger but said nothing.

"Walk."

"Eat."

"Laugh."

"Me-Miss Fellowes. You-Timmie."

Nothing each time.

Hopeless, Miss Fellowes thought bitterly. Hopeless, hopeless, hopeless!

"Talk?"

"Drink?"

"Eat?"

"Laugh?"

"Eat," Timmie said suddenly.

She was so astounded that she nearly dropped the plate of food she had just prepared for him.

"Say that again!"

"Eat."

"Eehh," he said in satisfaction, and seized his fork and fell to vigorously.

"Was it good?" she asked him afterward. "Did you like your lunch?"

But that was expecting too much of him. Even so, she wasn't going to give up now. Where there was one word there might be others. Had to be others.

She pointed to him. "Timmie."

"Mmm-mmm," he said.

Was that his way of saying "Timmie"?

"Does Timmie want to eat some more? Eat?"

She pointed to him, then to her mouth, and made eating motions. He looked at her and said nothing. Well, why should he? He wasn't hungry any longer.

But he knew that he was Timmie. Didn't he?

"Timmie," she said again, and pointed to him.

"Mmm-mmm," he said, and tapped his chest.

There could be no mistake about that. A stunning surge of—was it pride? Joy? Astonishment?—ran through her. All three. Miss Fellowes thought for a moment that she was going to burst into tears.

Then she ran for the intercom. "Dr. Hoskins! Will you come in here, please? And you'd better send for Dr. McIntyre, too!"

results of my very amiable conversation with you last week with my board of advisers."

"Yes?" Hoskins said, not so jovially. He hadn't found the last conversation quite as amiable as Mannheim apparently had. He had found it prying and intrusive and generally outrageous.

"I told them that you had answered my preliminary queries very satisfactorily."

"I'm glad to hear that."

"And the general feeling around here is that we don't intend to take action at this time concerning the Neanderthal boy, but that we'll need to monitor the situation closely while we complete our studies of the entire question. I'll be calling you next week with a further list of points that need to be satisfied. I thought you'd like to know that."

"Ah-yes," Hoskins said. "Thank you very much for telling me, Mr. Mannheim."

He closed his eyes and forced himself to breathe slowly in and out.

Thank you very much, Mr. Mannheim. How kind of you to allow us to continue our work for the time being. While you complete your studies of the entire question, that is. Thank you. Very much. Very, very, very, much.

Jacobs and McIntyre were still very much in evidence, of course. They had been lucky enough to have first shot at Timmie, and they still had the inside track with him because of their priority status. But they were aware that they could not have a monopoly on him. A horde of anthropologists, physiologists, cultural historians, and specialists of a dozen other sorts was at the door, knocking to get in. And each one had his own agenda for the little Neanderthal boy.

The fact that Timmie could speak English now made them all the more eager. Some of them acted as if they could simply sit down with the boy and start asking him questions about life in the Paleolithic Era as he remembered it:

"What species of animals did your tribe hunt?"

"What were your people's religious beliefs like?"

"Did you migrate with the seasons?"

"Was there warfare between tribes?"

"What about warfare between your subspecies and the other one?"

He was the only possible source. Their minds bubbled with queries that Timmie alone could answer. Tell us, tell us, tell us, tell us! We want to know all that there is to know about your people's-

kinship structures- totemic animals- linguistic groups- astronomical concepts- technological skills-

the original speculations about Neanderthal linguistic ability were correct, at least in part: though the Neanderthals obviously did have the intellectual capacity for speech, and the anatomical ability to produce intelligible words, their tongues and larynxes were apparently unable to create sounds with the degree of articulation required by modern-day languages. At least, Timmie couldn't manage it. Even Miss Fellowes had to strain much of the time to figure out what he was trying to say.

It was a frustrating business for everyone-for Timmie, for Miss Fellowes, and especially for the scientists who were so anxious to question the boy. And it reinforced the poignancy of Timmie's isolation. Even now that he was beginning to learn how to communicate with his captors-and that's what we are, Miss Fellowes found herself thinking again and again, his captors-it was a terrible struggle for him to get even the simplest of concepts across to the one person who could at least partially understand him.

How lonely he must be! she thought.

And how baffled and frightened by all the hubbub that went on constantly around him!

She did her best to protect him. She could not and would not allow herself to accept the fact that what she was engaged in was simply a scientific experiment. It certainly was that; but there was a small unhappy

stroking him until he was calm again.

They demanded more and more of his time.

She insisted on strict limits to the daily inquisitions. Most of the time her wishes prevailed, though not always. The visiting scientists undoubtedly thought she was an ogre, an impediment to knowledge, a stubborn and irrational woman. Miss Fellowes didn't care. Let them think whatever they wanted; it was Timmie's interests that concerned her, not theirs.

The closest thing to an ally she had was Hoskins. He came to visit the dollhouse virtually every day. It was obvious to Miss Fellowes that Hoskins welcomed any chance to escape from his increasingly difficult role as head of Stasis Technologies, Ltd., and that he took a sentimental interest in the child who had caused all this furor; but it seemed to her also that he enjoyed talking to her.

(She had learned a few things about him by this time. He had invented the method of analyzing the reflections cast by the past-penetrating mesonic beam; he had been one of the inventors of the method of establishing Stasis; his often chilly, exceedingly businesslike manner was only an effort to hide a kindly nature that was sometimes too easy for others to take advantage of; and, oh yes, he was married, very definitely and happily so.)

against cold metal rods. Miss Fellowes, watching them manipulating him as though he were some sort of laboratory animal, found herself being swept by the hot urge to kill.

"Enough!" she cried, finally. "Out! Out!"

They gaped and gawped at her.

"I said, Out! Session's over! The boy is tired. You're twisting his legs and straining his back. Don't you see that he's crying? Out! Out!"

"But, Miss Fellowes—"

She began to gather up their instruments. They snatched them hastily from her. She pointed to the door. Muttering among themselves, they scuttled out.

She was staring after them in a blind fury, looking out the open door and wondering what kind of intolerable intrusion was next on the schedule, while Timmie stood sobbing behind her. And then she realized that Hoskins was there.

He said, "Is there a problem?"

She glowered at him. "I'll say there is!"

Turning to Timmie, she gestured and he came running to her, clinging to her, twining his legs around her. She heard the boy murmur something, very low, words she couldn't quite make out. She held him close.

Hoskins said gravely, "He doesn't seem happy."



"Withstand what? Even more testing?"

"You have to bear in mind, Miss Fellowes, that the primary purpose of this experiment is to learn as much as can be learned about-"

"I do bear that in mind, doctor. And you bear in mind that what we have here isn't a hamster or a guinea pig or even a chimpanzee-but an actual human being."

"No one denies that," Hoskins said. "But-"

She cut him off yet again. "But you're all ignoring the fact that that's what he is: a human being, a human child. I suppose you see him as nothing more than some kind of little ape wearing overalls, and you think that you can-"

"We do not see him as-"

"You do! You do! Dr. Hoskins, I insist. You told me it was Timmie's coming that put your company on the map. If you have any gratitude for that at all, you've got to keep them away from the poor child at least until he's old enough to understand a little more of what's being asked of him. After he's had a bad session with them, he has nightmares, he can't sleep, he screams for hours sometimes. Now I warn you" (and she reached a sudden peak of fury) "I'm not letting them in here any more. Not!"

(She realized that her voice had been grow louder and louder as she spoke and now she was screaming. But she couldn't help it.)

have a different view," Miss Fellowes said. She saw a startled look come into Hoskins' eyes and her face blossomed with embarrassment at the unintended, implausible other meaning of what she had just said. -\*To listen to him crying in the dark. To watch me have to go into his bedroom and hold him and sing lullabies to him. Not impaired, Dr. Hoskins? If he hasn't been impaired by all this, it's because he spent the first few years of his life under the most dreadful conditions imaginable and somehow survived them. If a child can survive an ice-age winter, he can probably survive a lot of poking and testing by a pack of people in white coats. But that doesn't mean it's good for him."

"We'll need to discuss the research schedule at the next staff meeting."

"Yes. We will. Everyone is to be reminded that Tim-mie has a right to humane treatment. To human treatment."

Hoskins smiled. She gave him an interrogative look.

He said, "I was just thinking how you've changed since the first day, when you were so angry because I had foisted a Neanderthal on you. You were ready to quit, do you remember?"

"I would never have quit," Miss Fellowes said softly.

" 'Til stay with him-for a while,' you said. Those were your exact words. You seemed quite distraught. I had to convince you that you really would

smiled briefly at the display of toys that could be seen in there.

"Quite an array," he said.

"The poor child deserves them. They're all that he has and he earns them with what he goes through."

"Of course. Of course. We ought to get him even more. I'll send you a requisition form. Anything that you think he'd like to have-

Miss Fellowes smiled warmly. "You do like Timmie, don't you?"

"How could I not like him? He's such a sturdy little fellow! He's so brave."

"Brave, yes."

"And so are you, Miss Fellowes."

She didn't know what to make of that. They stood facing each other in silence for a moment. Hoskins seemed to have his guard down: Miss Fellowes could see deep weariness in his eyes.

She said, with real concern, "You look worn out, Dr. Hoskins."

"Do I, Miss Fellowes?" He laughed, not very convincingly. "I'll have to practice looking more lifelike, then."

"Has some problem come up that I ought to know about?"

"Problem?" He seemed surprised. "No, no problem! Why would you think that? -I have a demanding job; that's all. Not because it's so complex, you understand. I don't mind complexity. But it's not the thing I'd be hap-

## INTERCHAPTER FOUR

### The War Society

IT WAS DAWN, and the sky was a dead-looking gray, with a hard wind blowing from two directions at once. A little white piece of the moon was still showing, like a bone knife hanging in the sky. The men of the War Society were getting themselves ready to go down the sloping hill to the shrine of the shining rocks at the place where the three rivers met.

She Who Knows stood apart, watching them from a distance, wishing she could go down there with them.

It was always the men who got to do everything interesting, and always the same ones, the young ones full of juice. The old men like Silver Cloud and Stinking Musk Ox and Fights Like A Lion made the pronouncements and issued the orders, but it was the young ones, Tree Of Wolves and Broken Mountain and Blazing Eye and Caught Bird In Bush and three or four others, who actually did things. They were the ones who were truly alive, She Who Knows thought, envying them fiercely.

When there was game in the plains, they were the Hunting Society. They sharpened the tips of their spears and wrapped dark strips of wolf fur around their ankles to give them speed and ferocity, and they went out and

end of his days and had to be sent to the next world, they became the Killing Society and donned the masks made of bearskin and brought forth the ivory club of death, and they went off with their victim out of the sight of the tribe and did what had to be done. And then solemnly returned, walking in line one by one and singing die Song of the Next World, which only the men of the Killing Society were permitted to sing.

And when there were enemies lurking nearby, it was time for the men, these very same men, to become the War Society and paint themselves with the blue stripes across their shoulders and the red stripes around their loins, and wrap the yellow lion-mantles around their shoulders. That was what they were doing now, and She Who Knows was bitterly envious. The men were standing naked in a circle, edgily joking and laughing, while the old craftsman Mammoth Rider finished mixing the pigments. War was the only occasion on which the men of the tribe ever painted their bodies; and it had been a long time now since the last such occasion, so the pigments had to be mixed fresh. That took time. But Mammoth Rider knew how to grind the rocks and how to mix the antelope fat with the powder so that it would stick to the skin. He sat crosslegged, bending over his work. And the men of the Killing Society waited for him to be done.

He had brought forth the tubes of bone in which the pigments were stored and he was stirring the fat into the powder in a stone bowl. And now

across the chest, and then a blue Goddess-dab right on the throat in the place where the hard part of the throat sticks out, and another one over the heart. It was painting the lower parts that caused all the amusement. First came a thick red stripe across the base of the belly just above the place where the man-parts are, going all the way around back and across the top of the buttocks; then a thin stripe encircling each diigh just below the man-parts; and then, what always made them laugh, the Goddess-stripe running the length of the man-organ and two more dots of red on the round parts that dangled below it. Broken Mountain put the paint down there on with a great flourish and the men made a pretense of rinding it unendurably ticklish. Or perhaps they weren't pretending.

Go on, She Who Knows thought. Paint me also! I have no man-parts but you can put the red stripes around my loins and on the tips of my breasts, and it will be just as good when the time of batde conies. Because I am every bit as much of a warrior as any of you. Every bit as much.

They were almost finished now. All die men were done except the two painters themselves. Now Broken

Mountain put the lower stripes on Young Antelope and Young Antelope put the upper stripes on Broken Mountain; and then they exchanged paint-bowls, and Young Antelope put the red on Broken Mountain, and Broken Mountain put the blue on Young Antelope. And they all tied their loincloths

at the place where the rivers met. There was no one down there.

All this would be for nothing if the Other Ones had gone off somewhere else. Goddess Woman had reported that the footprints of the Other Ones around the shrine were fresh ones, but what did Goddess Woman know? She was no hunter. The footprints she had seen could have been three days old. The Other Ones might be far from here by now.

All that needed to be done was to go quickly down to the shrine and perform the rites that Silver Cloud seemed to think were necessary; and then the People could turn east again-getting away from this place and heading back into the flat cold empty country where the Other Ones rarely went-and go on with their lives. If there was in fact no need of sending the War Society down there first to sniff out the territory and make sure no Other Ones were skulking near the shrine, then Silver Cloud was wasting valuable time. The year was moving along. The

days were shorter now. It would be snowing every day, soon. The People needed quickly to finish what they had come here to do, and find some safe place where they could settle in during the bad months that were coming.

But most likely Goddess Woman was right, and Other Ones uvre someplace nearby. And there would be war; and men would die, and perhaps not only men.

"How do you know?"

"I dreamed it," said Keeps The Past. "They were invisible, like creatures of mist, and then they became half-solid like shadows, and then they were springing up out of the earth all around us and they began to kill us."

She Who Knows laughed harshly. "Another dark dream."

"Another?"

"The night before last, Silver Cloud dreamed that he was a boy again and he went into the sea and when he came out of it he began to grow older with every step he took, until within a few moments he was withered and crooked and feeble. A dream of death, is what that was. And now you dream Other Ones waiting for us at the shrine."

Keeps the Past nodded. "And the Goddess has taken the boy Skyfire Face without giving us any sign of Her pleasure in return. We should leave this place, I think,

without staying to perform any ceremonies at that shrine down there."

"But Silver Cloud says we must."

"Silver Cloud grows timid and weak with age," said Keeps The Past.

She Who Knows turned furiously to the chronicler. "Would you like to be chieftain in his place?"

"Me?" Keeps The Past smiled. "Not I, She Who Knows. I want no part of being chieftain. If there's any woman in the world who yearns in her heart to



"Go easy, woman. If you hit me, I'll have you thrown down the hill."

"You called me a liar."

"I told you that you said that which isn't true."

"It's the same thing."

"A liar who lies even to herself is no true liar, but a fool. You know and I know and Goddess Woman knows that Silver Cloud is no longer fit to be chieftain. Each of us has thought it and said it in her own way. -And when the men begin to realize that too, the Killing Society will have to do its work."

"Perhaps so," said She Who Knows uneasily.

"Then why do you defend him?"

"I feel sorry for him. I don't want him to have to die."

"How tender of you. But the chieftain knows how things are done. Do you remember the days when Black Snow was chieftain, and he fell sick with the green bile and norfring could heal him, and he stood up before us all and said his time had come? Did he hesitate even a moment? And it was the same with Tall Tree before him, Silver Cloud's father, when I was a girl. You weren't born then. Tall Tree was a great chieftain; but one day he said, I am too old, I can no longer be chieftain, and by nightfall he was dead. As must happen to Silver Cloud."

"Not yet. Not yet."

beneath the spears of the Other Ones than have to live another ten years with Blazing Eye as chieftain of this tribe!"

"Ah," said Keeps The Past. "Aha! Now I understand. You put your own little personal resentments ahead of common sense-even ahead of life itself, She Who Knows. How absurd you are! How foolish!"

"You're going to make me hit you, after all."

"But don't you see-"

"No," said She Who Knows. "No, I don't see at all. -But enough of this. Look, look, down there!"

While the two women had been talking, Goddess Woman had finished performing the War Society blessing and the men of the War Society, properly painted and outfitted, had descended the hill to take up positions around the shrine of the shining rocks. There they stood now in front of it, shoulder to shoulder, brandishing their spears and glaring defiantly in all directions.

And there were the Other Ones, materializing out of nowhere like the creatures of mist who had turned solid in Keeps The Past's dream.

Where had they come from? They must have been crouching in the dense bushes alongside one of the three rivers, down out of sight, perhaps hiding themselves in some magical way so that they had looked like bushes themselves until the time came for them to emerge.

Like nightmare things! When I saw them in my dream they were nothing as disgusting as this!"

"They look just like themselves," said She Who Knows- "That is how the Other Ones look."

"You've seen them before. I haven't. Foh, die flat faces of diem! Their skinny necks. Their arms, their legs -so long. Like spider legs!"

"Like spiders, yes."

"Look. Look."

Everyone in the tribe was clustering together now at the little overlook point above the shrine of the three rivers. All eyes were on the scene below. She Who Knows heard Silver Cloud's rough, heavy breathing nearby. A child was crying. A couple of the Mothers seemed to be crying too.

A strange thing was happening down below. It was almost like a dance.

The men of the War Society were still standing shoulder-to-shoulder, in a straight line in front of the shrine. They looked uneasy, but they were holding their ground, however eager they might be inside to bolt and run.

The Other Ones had formed a line facing them, perhaps twenty paces away. They too stood shoulder to shoulder: tall strange-looking flat-faced men, holding long spears.

But there was no attack.

It was Blazing Eye who made the first attempt to break the impasse. He stepped forward one pace. A moment later everyone in the War Society line stepped forward one pace also. v

Blazing Eye shook his spear menacingly and glared across toward the Other Ones and uttered a sound, long

and low, that came floating up the hill to the watchers above:

"Hooooo."

The Other Ones exchanged glances and frowns. They looked confused, uncertain, troubled.

One of their men stepped forward also; and his whole line followed him. He too shook his spear.

"Hoooooo."

"Hooooooo,"

"Hooooooooo."

She Who Knows and Keeps The Past looked at each other in wonder. All they were doing on both sides was making foolish noises at each other down there! Was this how a battle was supposed to begin? Perhaps it was: she couldn't be sure. But it was a silly way to go about things, if it was.

Maybe the men down there weren't sure of what they were supposed to do, either. These warriors, She Who Knows realized, had never fought against the Other Ones before, had never even encountered them until this

"Hooooo."

"Hooooo."

"Hooooo."

"Hooooo,"

"Listen to them," She Who Knows said, snickering. "Like owls, they sound."

Just then there was a litde movement down below. The entire line of War Society men had turned ever so slightly, so that it was now at a little angle from the front of the shrine. And the Other Ones had turned also at the same angle, still staying in formation, continuing to face die War Society men.

There was more hooting. The lines moved a litde more, without actually going anywhere. Then diey moved back. Spears were raised and shaken, but were not thrown.

"They're afraid of each other!" Keeps The Past said, in astonishment.

"Hoooo."

"Hoooo."

"We should just charge at them," She Who Knows muttered. "They'd turn and run in a moment!"

"Hoooo."

"Hoooo."

"I can."

She bent and quickly snatched up the bowl of blue pigment, and splattered some carelessly on each of her breasts. Then she took up die red, and drew a big triangje on her middle, across die base of her belly and up both her thighs, and one splash on the dark hair at her loins.

Everyone was staring at her now. She didn't bother asking Mammoth Rider to put stripes of warpaint on her back; she doubted that he would do it, and she didn't want to waste time discussing it with him. It didn't matter. She wasn't planning to turn her back on any of the enemy down there.

Other Ones! she thought fiercely. Cowards, all of them!

Silver Cloud was coming toward her now, moving hesitantly, favoring his sore leg.

"What are you doing, She Who Knows?"

"Getting ready to fight your war for you," she said. And put her robe back on and started down the hill toward the place of the shrine of the shining rocks.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Resisting

knowledge and permission of the caller.

Mannheim was a youngish, full-faced man with dense waves of thick red hair clinging close to his scalp and a ruddy, florid complexion. Though beards had been out of fashion for some years except among extremely young men and very old ones, he wore a short, neatly trimmed goatee and a bushy little mustache.

The well-known advocate for the rights of children looked very sincere, very earnest, very serious.

To Hoskins he also looked very annoying.

On-screen, Mannheim said, "The situation is, Dr. Hoskins, dial our most recent discussion was not at all

fruitful, and I simply can't take your word any longer that the boy is being held under acceptable conditions."

"Why?" die Hoskins on the screen replied. "Has my word suddenly become untrustworthy?"

"That's not the point, doctor. We have no reason to doubt your word. But we have no reason to take it at face value, either, and some members of my advisory board have begun to feel that I've been too willing up to now to accept your own evaluations of the boy's status. The point is that diere's been no on-site inspection."

subjected to cruel and inhuman punishment."

"You and I have been through all this more than once," said Hoskins. "The child is receiving the best care in the world, and you know it. He has twenty-four-hour-a-day nursing attention and daily medical checkups and he's on a perfectly balanced diet that has already done wonders for his physical condition. We'd be crazy to do things any other way, and whatever else we may be, we aren't crazy."

"I grant you that you've told me all that. But you still aren't allowing any outside confirmation of the things you claim. And the letters and calls that I'm receiving daily- the outcries, the pressure from concerned individuals-"

"If you're under pressure, Mr. Mannheim," said Hoskins unceremoniously, "may I suggest that it's because you've stirred this matter up by yourself in the first place, and now your own people are turning on you a little of the heat that you singlehandedly chose to generate?"

"That's the way to talk to him, Jerry-boy!" said Charlie McDermott, the comptroller.

"Maybe a bit on the blunt side, seems to me," Ned Cassidy said. He was the head of Legal: it was his job to err on the side of prudence.

The recorded conversation was proceeding on the screen.



existence-much more likely, I'd say, than the picture you offer of our callously yanking him out of his idyllic little Christmas-card family life back there in the Pleistocene."

"Are you telling me that Neanderthals are no more than animals?" Mannheim asked. "That the child you've brought back from the Pleistocene is actually just some kind of ape that walks on his hind legs?"

"Certainly not. We aren't trying to pretend anything of the sort. Neanderthals were primitive but they were unquestionably human."

"-Because if you're going to try to claim that your captive has no human rights because he isn't human, Dr. Hoskins, then I must point out that scientists are completely unanimous in their belief that Homo neanderthaten-

sis is in fact simply a subspecies of our own race, Homo sapiens, and therefore-

"Jesus Suffering Christ," Hoskins exploded, "aren't you listening to me at all? I just got through saying that we concede the point that Timmie is human."

"Timmie?" Mannheim said.

"The child has been nicknamed Timmie around here, yes. It's been in all the news reports."

on another basic point, which as I said a few moments back is that you've taken custody of this child by your own decision and you have no legal claim to him. You've essentially kidnapped this child, I could quite accurately say."

"Legal claim? What legality? Where? Tell me what laws I've broken. Show me the Pleistocene court where I can be brought to justice!"

"The fact that Pleistocene people have no courts doesn't mean that they have no rights," said Mannheim smoothly. "You'll notice that I use the present tense to refer to these extinct people. Now that time travel has become a working reality, everything is present tense. If we are capable of intruding on the lives of people who lived 40,000 years ago, then we must of necessity extend to those people the same human rights and courtesies that we regard as inalienable in our own society. You certainly wouldn't try to tell me that Stasis Technologies, Ltd.

would have the right to reach into some village in contemporary Brazil or Zaire or Indonesia and simply seize any child it felt like seizing, purely for the sake of--"

"This is a unique experiment of immense scientific importance, Mr. Mannheim!" Hoskins sputtered.

"Now I think you're failing to listen to me, Dr. Hoskins. I'm not discussing motive; I'm discussing simple legalities. Even for the sake of scientific

Ned Cassiday let out a gasp and began to shake his head violently. It struck Hoskins that Cassiday must see novel and disturbing legal ramifications here that probably should never have been allowed into the discussion.

Mannheim said, "I see. The child is dead, but he receives round-the-clock nursing care? Come off it, Dr. Hoskins. Your reasoning's absurd. In the era of time travel the old distinctions between 'dead' and 'alive' no longer have the same validity. You've opened the closed book that you just spoke of, and you can't just close it again by your own say-so. Like it or not, we live in an age of paradox now. The child's as alive as you and I, now that you've moved him from his proper era to our own, and we both agree that he's human and deserving of the sort of treatment that any child is entitled to. And that brings us right back to the question of the care he's receiving while he's here among us. Call him a kidnap victim, call

him the subject of a unique scientific experiment, call him an involuntary guest in our era, whatever semantic spin you want to put on things—all that really matters is that you've arbitrarily removed a child from his native environment without the consent of anybody concerned and you're keeping him locked up in some kind of containment unit. Must we continue to go around in circles? There's only one issue here. You know what it is. I represent a large body of concerned opinion and I've been asked to

"I've told you. On-site inspection, so that we can see the child's condition and attitude for ourselves."

The on-screen Hoskins closed his eyes a moment. "You're very persistent, aren't you? Nothing will please you short of coming in here and checking things out in person?"

"You know the answer to that."

"Well, I'll have to get back to you, Mr. Mannheim. We've been allowing only qualified scientific investigators to see Timmie up till this point, and I'm not sure you fit that category. I'll need to convene a meeting of my advisory board to discuss all this. Thank you very much for calling, Mr. Mannheim. It's been a pleasure speaking with you."

The screen went dark.

Hoskins looked around the room.

"Well? There it is. You see the problem. He's like a bulldog who's got his teeth in the cuff of my pants. He won't let go no matter how I try to shake him off."

Ned Cassidy said, "And if you do manage somehow to shake the bulldog off, he'll come right at you again, and this time the teeth very likely will clamp onto your leg, Jerry, not just your pants cuff."

"What are you telling me, Ned?"

cause, and in your case it looks like willful obstructionism. -This is the first time he's actually asked to set foot on the premises, isn't it?"

"Right," Hoskins said.

"You see? He can always keep coming up with new maneuvers. And you can't counter this one with more press releases, or another interview with Candide Deveney on the sub-etheric. Mannheim'11 go public right away with claims that there's a cover-up going on here, that we have something terrible to hide. -Let him come and see the little boy. It might just shut him up long enough for us to get our work on this project finished."

Sam Aickman shook his head. "I don't think there's a reason in the world why we need to cave in to that colossal pain in the neck, Ned. If we were keeping the kid chained up in a closet, maybe-if he was just a miserable sickly bag of bones with pimples and scurvy, who cries bloody murder all day and all night-but the kid is flourishing, according to Jerry. He's putting on a little weight,

I hear that he's even learning to speak some English-he's never had it so good and that ought to be obvious, even to Bruce Mannheim."

"Exacdy," Cassiday said. "We don't have anything to hide. So why should we give Mannheim the chance to make it seem as though we do?"

telling what further issues he'll raise. As Ned says, there's always some new maneuver. Allowing him to visit the boy won't get him off our backs and might just make the situation worse for us. I say no."

"What about you, Elena?" Hoskins said, turning toward Elena Saddler, who ran materials procurement.

"I vote for letting him come. As Ned says, we've got nothing to hide. We can't let this man go on smearing us the way he's done. Once he's been here, it's simply his word against ours, and we've got our televised glimpses of Timmie to show the world that we're right and he's wrong."

Hoskins nodded glumly. "Two for it, two against. So I get to cast the deciding vote. -Okay. So be it. I'll tell Mannheim he can come."

Aickman said, "Jerry, are you sure you want to-"

"Yes," said Hoskins. "I don't like him any more than you do, Sam. Or want him sniffing around this place for so much as two minutes. He's a pest, just as you say. And it's precisely because he is such a pest that I've come

around to thinking we'd better give him his way. Let him see Timmie, thriving and flourishing. Let him meet Miss Fellowes and find out for himself whether there's any sort of child abuse going on around here. I agree with Ned that the visit might just shut him up. If it doesn't, well, we're no worse off" than we are now: he'll continue to agitate and howl, and we'll continue

Miss Fellowes was giving Timmie his bath when the intercom sounded in the next room. The interruption drew a scowl from her. She looked at the boy in the tub. Bath-time was no longer an ordeal for him. It was more like sport: he looked forward to it every day. The sensation of lying half submerged in warm water no longer was threatening to him. Plainly it was a wondrous luxurious treat for him, not only the feel of the warm water itself, but the delight of coming forth pink, clean, sweet-smelling. And of course there was the fun of doing a litde splashing around. The longer he lived here, the more like an ordinary little boy Timmie was coming to seem. Miss Fellowes thought.

But she didn't like the idea of leaving him in the tub for long, unattended. Not that she worried much about his drowning. Litde boys his age didn't generally drown in their tubs, and this one seemed to have a healthy enough

sense of self-preservation. But if he decided to get out on his own, and somehow slipped and fell-

She said, "I'll be right back, Timmie. You stay in the tub by yourself, all right?"

He nodded.

"Stay in the tub. In the tub. You understand?"

"Yes, Miss Fellowes."

"Yes, I know. This is a special case."

Miss Fellowes listened for sounds from the bathroom. Timmie was splashing around vociferously, and obviously having a wonderful time. She heard the boy's peeling laughter.

She said reproachfully, "They're all special cases, aren't they, Dr. Hoskins? If I let everybody in here who was some sort of special case, the boy would be on display to special cases all day and all night too."

"This one is really special, Miss Fellowes."

"I'd still rather not. Timmie's entitled to some time off, just like anyone else. And if you don't mind, Dr. Hoskins, I'd like to get back to his bath before-"

"This visitor is Bruce Mannheim, Miss Fellowes."

"What?"

"You're aware that Mannheim's been plaguing us with his standard sort of trumped-up charges and inflam-

matory nonsense practkally from the moment we announced that Timmie was here, aren't you?"

"I suppose so," Miss Fellowes said. She hadn't actually been paying much attention.

"Well, he's been calling here about every third day to register this or that expression of outrage. And finally 1 asked him what he wants from us and



Miss Fellowes. But Mannheim caught me by surprise when I called him to say we'd let him in. He told me he'd be right over; and when I said I wasn't sure that was workable, he started in again on all his suspicions and accusations. I think he was implying that we were playing for time so we'd be able to cover up all of the bruises Timmie has from the whippings we give him, or some such crazy thing. In any case, he also said that he'd be going before the monthly meeting of his board of directors tomorrow, and that this would be a fine chance for him to report to them on Timmie's condition, and therefore-" Hoskins let his voice trail off. "I know it's short notice, Miss Fellowes. Please don't put up a fuss, all right? Please."

She felt a burst of pity for him. Caught between the tireless political agitator on the one hand and the ill-tempered gorgon of a nurse on the other-the poor weary man.

"All right, Dr. Hoskins," she said. "Just this once. - I'll see what I can do about having all the bruises covered over with makeup before he gets here."

She went back to the bathroom while Hoskins' gratitude was still coming out of the intercom. Timmie was busy conducting a naval battle between a green plastic duck and a purple plastic sea monster. The duck seemed to be winning.

Timmie nodded. "Nice visitor?"

"Let's hope so. -Come on, now, it's time to get you out of the tub and dry you off."

"More bath! More bath!"

"More bath tomorrow. Come on, now, Timmie!"

Reluctantly he clambered out of the tub. Miss Fellowes toweled him off and gave him a quick inspection. No, no whip marks showing. No sign of damage at all. The boy was in fine shape. Especially when she compared him with the filthy, scruffy, bruised and scratched child who had tumbled out of the Stasis scoop amidst a mass of dirt and pebbles and ants and chunks of grass on that first strange, frightening night. Timmie was glowing with good health. He had gained several pounds since then; his scratches had healed and his assortment of bruises had vanished long ago. His hair was neatly cut; his fingernails

were trimmed. Let Bruce Mannheim try to find something to complain about. Let him try!

Ordinarily she would have put Timmie into his pajamas after the bath; but everything was changed now, because of the visitor who was coming, the very special visitor. That called for formal dress: the purple overalls with the red buttons, Miss Fellowes thought.

Timmie grinned when he saw them. They were his favorite overalls, too.

Hoskins' voice was coming through on the intercom again.

"What is it, doctor? Mr. Mannheim isn't due here for another half an hour, I thought."

"He's early," Hoskins said. "That's the sort of person he is, I'm afraid." There was something strangely sheepish about his voice. -"And I'm afraid that he's brought someone with him, too, without telling us he was going to."

"Two visitors is too many," Miss Fellowes said adamantly.

"I know. I know. Please, Miss Fellowes. I had no idea he was bringing someone else. But Mannheim's pretty insistent on having her see Timmie with him. And now that we've gone this far-the risk of offending him-you see? You see?"

So he was begging again. This Mannheim really had him terrified. Where was the strong and indomitable Dr. Gerald Hoskins she once had known?

"And who's this other person?" she asked, after a moment. "This unexpected guest?"

"An associate of his, a consultant to his organization. You may even know her. You probably do. She's an expert on troubled children, someone mixed up with all sorts of governmental commissions and institutions, a very high-profile individual. She was even under consideration for a while, I

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The oval door to the dollhouse opened and Hoskins came in, with two figures close behind him. Hoskins looked dreadful. His fleshy face seemed to be sagging, so that he appeared to have aged ten years in a day. His skin was leaden. His eyes had an oddly defeated, almost cowed expression that Miss Fellowes found strange and frightening.

She scarcely recognized him. What was going on?

He said, in a low, uneasy tone, "This is Edith Fellowes, Timmie's nurse.  
-Bruce Mannheim, Miss Fellowes. Marianne Levien."

"And this is Timmie?" Mannheim asked.

"Yes," Miss Fellowes said, booming the word out to make up for Hoskins' sudden diffidence. "This is Tim-mie!"

The boy had been in the back room, his bedroom and playroom, but he had tentatively poked forward when he had heard the visitors entering. Now he came toward them in a steady, bouncy, outgoing stride that drew a silent cheer from Miss Fellowes.

You show them, Timmie! Are we mistreating you? Are you hiding under your bed, quivering with fear and misery?

Resplendent in his finest overalls, the boy marched up to the newcomers and stared up at them in frank curiosity.

continuing to strain upward as far as he could. Mannheim seemed puzzled.

"Your hair," Miss Fellowes said. "I suspect he's never seen anyone with red hair before. They must not have had it in Neanderthal times and no redheads have visited him here. Fair hair of any sort appears to fascinate him tremendously."

"Ah," Mannheim said. "So that's it."

He grinned and knelt and Timmie immediately dug his fingers into Mannheim's thick, springy crop of hay-. Not only the color but also the coiling texture of it must have been new to him, and he explored it thoughtfully.

Mannheim tolerated it with great good humor. He was, Miss Fellowes found herself conceding, not at all what she had imagined. She had expected him to be some sort of wild-eyed fire-breathing radical who would immediately begin issuing denunciations, manifestos, and uncompromising demands for reform. But he was turning out in fact to be rather pleasant and gentle, a thoughtful and serious-looking man, younger than she had expected, who seemed to be losing no time making friends with Timmie.

Marianne Levien, though, was a very different sort of item. Even Timmie, when he had grown tired of examining Bruce Mannheim's hair and had turned to get a look at the other visitor, seemed hard-pressed to know what to make of her.

and the steady advancement of her career. Miss Fellowes had never actually come face to face with her before; but, as the nurse looked at her now, Levien appeared every bit as formidable and disagreeable as her reputation suggested.

She seemed more like an actress-or a businesswoman -or like an actress playing the role of a businesswoman- than any sort of child-care specialist. She was wearing some slinky shimmering dress made from close-woven strands of metallic fabric, with a huge blazing golden pendant in the form of a sun on her breast and a band of

intricately woven gold around her broad forehead. Her hair was dark and shining, pulled back tight to make her look all the more dramatic. Her lips were bright red, her eyes were flamboyantly encircled with makeup. An invisible cloud of perfume surrounded her,

Miss Fellowes stared at her in distaste. It was hard to imagine how Dr. Hoskins could have considered this woman even for a fraction of a second as a potential nurse for Timmie. She was Miss Fellowes' antithesis in every respect. And why, Miss Fellowes wondered, had Marianne Levien been interested in the job in the first place? It required seclusion and total dedication. Whereas Levien, Miss Fellowes knew, was forever on the go, constantly buzzing all around the world to scientific meetings, standing up and offering firmly held opinions that other people of greater experience

visible person, rising like a rocket in her profession. If she had wanted the job here that Miss Fellowes ultimately had gained, it must only have been because she saw it, somehow, as the springboard to very much bigger things.

I must be very old fashioned, Miss Fellowes thought. All I saw was a chance to do some good for an unusual little boy who needed an unusual amount of loving care.

Timmie put his hand out toward Marianne Levien's shimmering metallic dress. His eyes were glowing with delight.

"Pretty," he said.

Levien stepped back quickly, out of his reach. "What did he say?"

"He admires your dress," Miss Fellowes said. "He just wants to touch it."

"I'd rather he didn't. It's easily damaged."

"You'd better watch out, then. He's very quick."

"Pretty," Timmie said again. "Want!"

"No, Timmie. No. Mustn't touch."

"Want!"

"I'm sorry. No. N-O."

Timmie gave her an unhappy look. But he made no second move toward Marianne Levien.

"Does he understand you?" Mannheim asked.

"His articulation isn't good, probably for some physiological reason. But I can understand him. He's got a vocabulary of-oh, about a hundred English words, I'd say, maybe a little more. He learns a few every day. He picks them up on his own by this time. He's probably about four years old, you realize. Even though he's getting such a late start, he's got the normal linguistic ability that you'd expect in a child of his age, and he's catching up in a hurry."

"You say that a Neanderthal child has the same linguistic ability as a human child?" Marianne Levien asked.

"He is a human child."

"Yes. Yes, of course. But different. A separate subspecies, isn't that so? And therefore it would be reasonable to expect differences in mental aptitude that could be as considerable as the differences in physical appearance. His extremely primitive facial structure-

Miss Fellowes said sharply, "It's not all that primitive, Ms. Levien. Go look at a chimpanzee sometime if you want to see what a truly subhuman face is like. Timmie has some unusual anatomical features, but-

"You used the word subhuman, not me," Levien said.

"But you were thinking it."

"Miss Fellowes! Dr. Levien! Please! There's no need for such rancor!"



"No," Miss Fellowes said. "This is the Stasis bubble. He doesn't leave the bubble, not ever."

"A very confining sort of life, wouldn't you agree?"

Hoskins said quickly, too quickly, "It's an absolutely necessary confinement. There are technical reasons for it, having to do with the buildup of temporal potential involved in bringing the boy across time, that I could explain in detail if you wanted the full background. But what it comes down to is that the energy cost of allowing

the boy to cross the Stasis boundary would be prohibitive."

"So to save a little money, you plan to keep him cooped up in these few small rooms indefinitely?" Levien asked.

"Not just a little money, Dr. Levien," Hoskins said, looking more harried than ever. "I said that the cost would be prohibitive. It goes even beyond cost. The available metropolitan energy supply would have to be diverted in a way that I think would cause insuperable problems for the entire utility district. There's no problem when you or I or Miss Fellowes cross the Stasis line, but for Timmie to do it would be, well, simply not possible. Simply not possible."

"If science can find a way to bring a child across forty thousand years of time," Marianne Levien said grandly, "science can find a way to make it possible for him to walk down that hallway if he wanted to."

technical analysis, if you want to check it over."

Mannheim nodded. He seemed to be checking something off on some list he kept in his mind.

Levien said, "What sort of diet is the boy on?"

"Would you like to examine the pantry?" Miss Fellowes asked, in no very friendly way.

"Yes, as a matter of fact. Yes, I would."

Miss Fellowes made a sweeping gesture toward the refrigeration cabinets.

Take a good look, she thought. I think you'll be happy when you do.

Indeed Levien seemed pleased by what she found—a bunch of vials and ampoules and drip-globes and mixa-tion pods. The entire inhuman assortment of synthetic diets, so remote from anything that Miss Fellowes thought of as wholesome food, that Dr. Jacobs and his associates had insisted Timmie had to eat against Miss Fellowes\* vehement objections. Levien prowled through the racks of high-tech foodstuffs with evident approval. It was just the kind of superfuturistic stuff she'd be likely to go for, Miss Fellowes thought angrily. She probably ate nothing but synthetics herself. If she ate anything at all.

"No complaints there," Levien said after a time. "Your nutrition people seem to know what they're doing."

with some asperity. "I'm with him virtually all the time, you know."

"I was referring to the need for someone close to his own age. A playmate. This experiment is planned to run for a considerable length of time, Dr. Hoskins, is it not?"

"There's a great deal we hope to learn from Timmie about the era from which he comes. As his command of English improves—and Miss Fellowes assures me that he's becoming quite fluent, even though it's not easy for some of us to make out exactly what he's saying—"

"In other words, you intend to keep him here for a period of some years, Dr. Hoskins?" Marianne Levien said.

"That could be, yes."

Mannheim said, "Perpetually penned up in a few small rooms? And never being exposed to contact with children of his own age? Is that any kind of life for a healthy young boy like Timmie, do you think?"

Hoskins' eyes moved quickly from one to the other. He looked outnumbered and beleaguered.

He said, "Miss Fellowes has already brought up the issue of getting a playmate for Timmie. I assure you that we've got no desire whatever to cripple the boy's emotional development or any other aspect of his existence."

look ahead, thinking that Timmie's adaptation to modern life was proceeding so quickly that the moment to raise the point again with Hoskins was approaching.

And now Mannheim was raising it first, for which Miss Fellowes was immensely grateful. The children's advocate was absolutely right. Timmie couldn't be kept in

here all by himself like an ape in a cage. Timmie wasn't an ape. And even a gorilla or a chimpanzee wouldn't do well cut off indefinitely from the society of his peers.

Mannheim said, "Well, then, if you've already been working on getting a companion for him, I'd like to know what progress has been made along those lines."

Suddenly his tone was no longer so amiable.

Sounding flustered, Hoskins said, "So far as bringing a second Neanderthal back to the present time to put in here with Timmie goes, which was Miss Fellowes' original suggestion, I have to tell you that we simply don't intend-"

"A second Neanderthal? Oh, no, Dr. Hoskins," said Mannheim. "We wouldn't want that at all."

Fellowes brought it up the first time, I told her-"

Mannheim and Levien exchanged glances. They appeared bothered by Hoskins' sudden vehemence. Even Timmie began to seem a little alarmed, and moved up close against Miss Fellowes' side as though seeking protection.

Smoothly Mannheim said, "We're all agreed, Dr. Hoskins, that a second Neanderthal would be a bad idea. That's not the point at all. What we want to know is whether it would be possible for Timmie to be given a- well, what word do I want? Not human, because Timmie

is human. But modern. A modern playmate. A child of this era."

"A child who could visit Timmie on a regular basis," said Marianne Levien, "and provide him with the kind of developmental stimuli that would tend to further the healthy sociocultural assimilation which we all agree is necessary."

"Just a minute," Hoskins snapped. "What assimilation? Are you imagining a pleasant future life in some cozy little suburb for Timmie? Applying for American citizenship, joining a church, settling down and getting married? May I remind you that what we have here is a prehistoric child from an era so remote that we can't even call it barbaric-a Stone Age child, a visitor from what you yourself, Dr. Levien, once described with some accuracy as an alien society. And you think he's going to become-"

and parameters may be from ours, assures its children the right to a nurturing integration into its social matrix. There's no way that we can regard Timmie's present living conditions as providing him with that sort of adequately nurturant social matrix."

Acidly Hoskins said, "Which means in words of one syllable comprehensible by a mere physicist like myself,

Dr. Levien, that you think Timmie ought to have a playmate."

"Not merely 'ought to,' " Levien said. "Must."

"I'm afraid we're going to take the position that companionship for the child is essential," said Mannheim in a less belligerent tone than Levien's.

"Essential," Hoskins repeated bleakly.

"A minimum first step," Levien said. "This is not to say that we are prepared to regard the boy's incarceration in our era for a prolonged period as acceptable or permissible. But for the moment, at least, we think we can waive our other outstanding objections and therefore the experiment can be permitted to continue-is that not so, Mr. Mannheim?"

"Permitted!" Hoskins cried.

"Provided," Marianne Levien continued serenely, "that Timmie be allowed the opportunity to enjoy regular and emotionally nourishing contact with other children of his chronological peer group."

Hoskins turned to her as if to say, You're against me too?

There was silence for a moment in the room. Timmie, who seemed increasingly disturbed by the vociferousness of the discussion, clung ever tighter to Miss Fellowes.

At length Hoskins said, "Those are your terms, Mr. Mannheim? Dr. Levien? A playmate for Timmie or you'll bring your hordes of protesters down on my head?"

Mannheim said, "No threats are being made, Dr. Hoskins. But even your own Miss Fellowes sees the need for implementing our recommendation."

"Right. And you think it'll be easy to find people who'll cheerfully let their young children come in here and play with a little Neanderthal? With all those fantastic notions circulating out there about how savage and ferocious and primitive Neanderthal Man must have been?"

"It should be no harder," Mannheim said, "than being able to bring a little Neanderthal child into the twenty-first century in the first place. A good deal easier, I'd like to think."

"I can imagine what our counsel would have to say about that. The cost of liability insurance alone—assuming we can find anyone crazy enough to allow their child inside the Stasis bubble with Timmie—"

children, do you, Dr. Levien? No, of course you don't. -What about you, Mannheim? Do you have a little boy you'd like to volunteer for us?"

Mannheim looked stung. Stiffly he said, "That's neither here nor there, Dr. Hoskins. I assure you that if I had been fortunate enough to have children, I wouldn't hesi-

tate to offer to help. -I understand your resentment at what you see as outside interference, doctor. But by transporting Timmie to our era, you've taken the law into your own hands. It's time now to consider the full implications of what you've done. You can't keep the boy in solitary confinement simply because there's a scientific experiment going on here. You can't, Dr. Hoskins."

Hoskins closed his eyes and took several deep breaths.

"All right," he said finally. "Enough of this. I concede the point. We'll get a playmate for Timmie. Somewhere. Somehow." His eyes blazed with sudden fury. "Unlike either of you, I do have a child. And if necessary, I'll bring him in to be Timmie's friend. My own son, if I have to. Is that enough of a guarantee for you? Timmie won't be left lonely and miserable any longer. All right? All right?" Hoskins glowered at them. -"Now that that's settled, do you have any further requests to make? Or can we be permitted to continue with our scientific work in peace?"



man; and that if they did not choose to strike a blow against the enemy, she was capable of doing it for them.

But of course she couldn't go down the hill that way. A woman covered her lower parts except when she was offering herself in the coupling-rites: that was the rule. If she were wearing a loincloth the way the men did, she could at least go bare-chested to the battle, as they did, and let the enemy see the paint that was on her breasts. But she had no loincloth. All she had was a robe, and that covered everything. Well, she would open it in front when she came before the Other Ones, and they would know from the color that was on her skin that they were facing a warrior, even if she was a warrior who had breasts.

She heard Silver Cloud shouting at her, far behind her on the path into the valley. She ignored him.

And now the men of the War Society could see her approaching them. They were still locked in their absurd stalemate, face-to-face with the row of the Other Ones; but they turned their heads and stared at her in amazement as they drew near.

"Go back, She Who Knows," Blazing Eye called to her. "This is no place for a woman."

"You call me a woman. Blazing Eye? Woman yourself! Women, all of you! I see no warriors here. You go back, if you're afraid to fight."

must be water running under the earth, she thought. With every step her bare toes dug deep into the cold, moist, yielding soil.

Behind her the sun was getting higher, rising now over the crest of the hill on which the People were camped. The little white sliver of the moon that had been showing before was no longer visible. The wind was in her face, brisk and hard, like a slap. She came forward until she was close to the line of War Society men.

Nobody was moving. The Other Ones warriors were frozen like statues.

Caught Bird In Bush was standing at the end of the row nearest to her. "Give me your spear," She Who Knows said to him.

"Go away," said Caught Bird In Bush, sounding as if he was being strangled.

"I need a spear. Do you want me to face the Other Ones warriors without a spear?"

"Go-away."

"Look! I have the war paint on!" She opened her robe in front and let her breasts show through, boldly splattered with the blue pigment. "I'm a warrior today. A warrior needs to have a spear!"

"Make one yourself, then."

She Who Knows spat and stepped past him. "You, Young Antelope! Let me have yours. You don't have any need of it."

"No. No, I suppose that I don't."

But it was pointless to ask any of them for a spear. They didn't intend to let her have one; and they were all holding tight to their weapons, no doubt remembering how she once had grabbed up Blazing Eye's spear and threatened him with it. That had been a defilement. Blazing Eye had had to make a new spear afterward. Stinking Musk Ox had told him that he couldn't go into battle carrying a spear that had been handled by a woman, and he had burned the old one and carved another, cursing and muttering all the while. But what good was the new one, She Who Knows asked herself, if Blazing Eye was too timid to use it?

"Very well. I'll do without one."

She swung around and stepped forward, taking two or three steps toward the line of Other Ones, who were watching her as though she were a demon with three heads and six tusks.

"You! You Other Ones! Look here, look at me!"

They gaped at her. She opened her robe again and let them see her painted breasts.

"I'm the warrior of the Goddess," she told them. "That's what this paint means. And the Goddess orders you to leave this place. This is Her shrine. We built it for Her. You have no business being here."

They were still staring, astounded.

thin, lanky Other One whom she had encountered beside that little rock-rimmed pool, long ago when she had been a girl. These men looked just like him. She couldn't tell one from another, or any of them from the one she had once met. For all she knew, he was here today, that one from the pool. And then she realized it was impossible, for these men all looked young, and he would have to be old by now, nearly as old as she was herself.

"How ugly you are," she told them. "What pale simpering monstrosities you are! Why are you sniffing around at a shrine of the Goddess? The Goddess never made you!

You were made out of rhinoceros dung by some passing hyena!"

The Other Ones continued to look at her in a blankfaced bewildered way.

She Who Knows took another step forward. She gestured at them, making a chopping movement with her hand, as though to sweep them away from the vicinity of the shrine.

One of the Other Ones spoke.

At least she assumed that that was what he was doing. He uttered a long series of thick, furry sounds that came out of his mouth as though his tongue were attached the wrong way around. It was mere noise. None of it made the slightest sense.

that one?"

She pointed at him and clapped her hands. His eyes went wide and he made a kind of dull mumbling sound.

"Use words!" She Who Knows ordered him. "Don't just make idiotic noises! -Pah! Are all of you foolish in the head?" She pointed to the man again. "Speak! With words! Didn't any of you ever learn how to speak words?"

The Other One made the same sound again.

"Stupid as well as ugly," said She Who Knows, shaking her head. "The work of hyenas, is what you are! Made out of rhinoceros dung."

The men were baffled by her. No one moved.

She walked past them, to the shrine itself. The waters of the three rivers came pouring in from all sides, splashing high. The People had built the shrine right at the meeting place of the rivers, against an outcropping of rock that rose above the water. Goddess Woman had gone crawling out amidst the icy spray to place the rocks in the proper pattern and to pile the sheets of the special shining rock between them. Approaching now, She Who Knows saw the Goddess-lines that the priestesses had scratched in the stone: five this way, three that, three the other way. But something had been done to them. Someone not of the People had drawn a circle around each group of the Goddess-lines, digging deep into the rock, and had

animals you were painting, and you would never have success at hunting such animals again.

"What have you done, you filthy beasts? This is a shrine of the Goddess that you've defiled. A shrine of the Goddess." And she said again, louder, since they showed no sign of having understood: "A shrine of the Goddess."

Blank looks. Shrugs.

She Who Knows pointed to the earth, and to the sky: the universal signs of the Goddess. She touched her own breasts, her womb, her loins; she was made in the image

of the Goddess, and surely they would understand the gesture. Surely.

But they just went on staring.

"You don't have any intelligence at all, do you?" she cried. "Stupid! Stupid! You're a bunch of stupid animals!"

She clambered up onto the rocks, slipping and sliding on the wet surface, nearly falling at one point into the rushing river. That would be the end of her, falling in the river; but she caught a jutting fang of the rock and steadied herself. When she came close to the shrine she reached out and tapped her finger against the painting of the mammoth.

"Wrong!" she shouted. "Evil! Sacrilege!"

messy ruin. She reached for the others then, but she wasn't able to reach them: her arms were too short. Only the spider-like arms of Other Ones could reach that far up the rock.

But she was satisfied that she had made her point. She scrambled down from the rocks and walked back to the place where the two groups of warriors still faced each other.

"You understand?" she asked the Other Ones. "This is our shrine! Ours!" She went toward them, right up to them, fearlessly. They stirred uneasily, but none lifted his spear. They were afraid of her, she knew. A holy woman,

a woman with the Goddess within her: they didn't dare offer any resistance.

She glared up into their faces. They towered above her, tall as trees, tall as mountains. She pointed toward the west.

"Go back there, to your own country," she said. "Leave us alone. Let us make our offering in peace, you ugly bad-smelling animals! You blockheads! You stupid beasts!"

She caught hold of the Other One closest to her and pushed him in the direction she had been pointing. He drew back from her touch, taking a few steps away. She made a shooing gesture at him.

"Keep going! All of you, get moving!"

there was an encampment of Other Ones back there, a cluster of women and children and old people, hidden away in a bushy gully.

All right, She Who Knows thought. They have been driven away from the shrine; that was as much as she could hope to accomplish. But it was no small thing, and she had done it all by herself-though the fire of the Goddess had been burning within her all the while, or she never would have succeeded.

She went back to the men of the War Society.

"Without even a spear," she said to them triumphantly.

Young Antelope shook his head. "What a crazy woman you are!" But his eyes were shining with admiration.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### Dreaming

[36]

LATE IN THE AFTERNOON, long after Bruce Mannheim and Marianne Levien had left, Hoskins returned to the dollhouse. He looked haggard and grim.

"Is Timmie sleeping?" he asked.



is going to drive me crazy."

"Actually, he didn't seem as awful as I had expected. I think he's genuinely got Timmie's welfare at heart."

"No doubt he does. But to come butting in here uninvited, telling us what to do-"

"The boy does need a playmate."

Hoskins gave her a despondent look, as though he thought the debate was going to get started all over again. But he managed to master himself in time.

"Yes," he said quietly. "So he does. I won't argue with you about that. But where are we going to get one? The problems are enormous."

"You weren't serious about bringing your own son in here if ail else failed, then?"

Hoskins seemed startled. Perhaps she might be pushing him too far. But she hadn't asked him to come back here a second time today.

"Serious? -Yes, yes, of course I was serious. If we can't find anybody else. Do you think I'm afraid my boy would come to some harm at Timmie's hands? But my wife would have some objections, I suspect. She'd see risks. A lot of people on the outside seem to think Timmie's some kind of wild ape-boy. A savage creature that lived in caves and ate raw meat."

She was indignant at once. "What do you mean? He's got an amazing vocabulary, considering the point that he started from. And learning more words every day."

Hoskins' eyes seemed very weary. "You're the only one who can understand him. To the rest of us the things he says might just as well be Neanderthal words. They're practically unintelligible."

"You aren't listening carefully to him, then."

"No," Hoskins said without much vigor. "Perhaps not."

He shrugged and looked away and seemed to sink into some sort of reverie. Miss Fellowes picked up her book again and opened it to the page she had been on, without looking down at it, hoping that he would take the hint. But Hoskins sat where he was.

"-If only that miserable woman hadn't become involved in this thing!" he burst out suddenly, after a time.

"Marianne Levien?"

"That robot, yes."

"Surely she isn't!"

"No, not really," Hoskins said, with a tired little smile. "She just seems like one to me. Here we have a boy out of the past in the next room, and a woman who seems like something out of the future comes around to make trouble for me. I wish I'd never met her in the first place. Mannheim by

was once actually being considered for the job of looking after Timmie."

"One of the first to apply. Eager for the job. Hungry for it, as a matter of fact."

"She seems so-unsuitable."

"Her credentials were terrific. It was her personality that turned me off. She was very surprised not to be hired. -Well, somehow she's gotten herself entangled with Mannheim's crowd now, more's the pity. Probably deliberately, by way of paying me back for not giving her the job. Her way of getting revenge. Hell hath no fury, and so forth. She'll stir him up and stir him up and stir him up-she'll fill his head with her silly jargon, as though he doesn't have enough goofy psychobabble of his own stirring around in there-she'll keep him coming after me, fire him up to persecute me steadily-"

His voice was starting to rise.

Firmly Miss Fellowes said, "I don't think you can call it persecution when someone suggests that Timmie is a very lonely child and that something needs to be done about it."

"Something will be done about it."

"But why do you think she's being vengeful, when it seems to me she's simply pointing out-"

she's calling the tune for him, and she'll want results. Changes. Things that'll keep us in turmoil all the time. She'll want Timmie to have psychotherapy next, or orthodontia, or plastic surgery to give him a nice cheerful Homo sapiens face-she'll meddle and meddle and meddle, one damned intrusion after another, making use of Mannheim's publicity machine to smear us, to make us look like evil mad scientists cold-

bloodedly tormenting an innocent child-" He turned away and stared at Timmie's closed bedroom door. Morosely Hoskins said, "Mannheim's helpless in the power of a woman like that. She's probably sleeping with him, too. She must own him by now. He doesn't stand a chance against her."

Miss Fellowes' eyes widened. "What a thing to say!"

"Which?"

"That she and he-that she would use her- You have no proof of that. The whole suggestion's out of line, Dr. Hoskins. Absolutely out of line."

"Is it?" Hoskins' anger seemed to dissolve in an instant. He looked toward her and grinned shamefacedly. "-Yes, I suppose it is. You're right. I don't know anything about who Mannheim may be sleeping with, if anybody, and I don't care. Or Levien. I just want them to get out of our hair so we can do our research, Miss Fellowes. You know that. You also know

"Maybe that's the problem."

"I can't. I simply can't. I turn my back for a minute, Miss Fellowes, and anything will happen here. A dozen different Adamewskis trying to steal scientific specimens out of Stasis. People running strange new experiments without authorization, doing God knows what at God knows what cost. Equipment that we can't afford purchased to set up projects that don't have a chance of

working. We've got a lot of wild characters around this place, and I'm the only policeman. Until we've finished this phase of our work I don't dare take time off."

"A long weekend, at least? You need some rest."

"I know that. God, do I know that! -Thank you for caring so much, Miss Fellowes. Thank you for everything. In this whole madhouse of a research institute you've been one of the few pillars of sanity and dependability."

"And will you try to get a little rest?"

"I'll try, yes."

"Starting now?" she asked. "It's getting toward six o'clock. Your wife's expecting you at home. Your litde boy."

"Yes," Hoskins said. "I'd better be heading out of here. And once again: thank you for everything, Miss Fellowes. Thank you. Thank you."

was his kind of sobbing. But he didn't seem to see her. He took no notice of her at all as she entered the room, and the sobbing went on and on.

"Timmie, it's me. Miss Fellowes." She sat down beside him and slipped her arm around his shoulders. "It's all right, Timmie. It's all right!"

Slowly the sobbing stopped.

He looked at her as though he had never seen her before in his life. His eyes had a weirdly glassy look and his lips were drawn back in a bizarre way. In the half-darkness the lightning-bolt birthmark stood out fiercely on his cheek. She had virtually stopped noticing it but his face seemed pallid, almost bloodless, just now and the birthmark looked brighter than it had ever been before.

He's still asleep, she thought.

"Timmie?"

He made clicking sounds at her, Neanderthal speech. He seemed to be talking not so much to her as through her, to some invisible entity standing behind her.

Miss Fellowes hugged him and rocked him lightly from side to side, murmuring his name, crooning to him. His small body was rigid. He might almost have been under some kind of a spell. The clicking went on and on, interspersed with the sort of feral growls he had uttered in the early weeks

"Milk. Yes. Want milk."

"Come," she said, and swooped him up out of the bed, carrying him into the kitchen. It didn't strike her as a good idea to leave him alone just now. She perched him on the stool next to the refrigeration unit, got out a flask of milk, popped it in the heater for a moment. \*

"What was it?" she asked him, as he drank. "A dream? A bad dream, Timmie?"

He nodded, busy with the milk. Miss Fellowes waited for him to finish.

"Dream," he said. It was one of his newest words. "Bad. Bad dream."

"Dreams aren't real." Did he understand that? "You don't have to be afraid of dreams, Timmie."

"Bad-dream-"

His face was solemn. He seemed to be shivering, though the dollhouse was as warm as ever.

"Come back to bed now," she told him, scooping him up again. She tucked him in. -"What did you dream, Timmie? Can you tell me what it was?"

He made clicks again, a long series of them, interrupted by two short, soft growls.

Reverting to the old ways in the stress of the night? Or was it simply that he lacked the vocabulary to describe the dream in English?

Vigorous nodding. "Yes."

"And what did you see out there?"

He made clicks.

"I can't understand you."

The clicks became more insistent.

"No, Timmie. It's no good. You have to speak my kind of words. I don't understand yours. When you dreamed you were outside-what did you see?"

"Nothing," he said. "Empty."

Empty, yes. No wonder. He had no idea what was out there. The dollhouse's single window showed him only a little grassy patch, a fence, a meaningless sign.

"Big-empty," he said.

"You didn't see anything at all out there?"

Clicks.

Perhaps in his sleep he had been back in his Neanderthal world, and he had seen Ice Age scenes, drifts of snow, great shambling hairy animals wandering across the land, people clad in robes made of fur. But he had no words in English to describe any of that to her; and so he used the only sounds he did know.

"Outside," he said again. "Big-empty-"



prehistoric man had been in any way a contemporary of the dinosaurs—a common popular error, he said, but in fact the Mesozoic Era had ended many millions of years before the appearance on the evolutionary scene of the first manlike primates. Yes, Miss Fellowes said, I know all that. But Timmie doesn't, and he loves his dinosaur very much. The boy hugged it now; and Miss Fellowes stood beside his bed until he had fallen asleep again.

No more bad dreams, she told him silently. £Jo dreams of the great empty place outside where Timmie is all alone.

She went back to her own bed. A glance at the clock on the dresser told her that the rime was a quarter to five. Too close to morning; she doubted that she would get back to sleep. More likely she'd simply lie awake, vigilantly listening for sounds from Timmie's room, and before long it would be dawn.

But she was wrong. Sleep took her quickly; and this time she was the one who dreamed.

She was in her bed, not here in the dollhouse but in her little apartment on the other side of town, which she hadn't seen in so many months. Someone was knocking on her door: eagerly, urgently, impatiently. She rose, slipping on a bathrobe, and activated the security screen. A man

And then she was in his arms. Right there in the hall, heedless of the staring neighbors, who stood in their doorways, pointing and murmuring. He swept her up as she had swept Timmie up not long before-carried her into her own apartment-whispering her name all the while-

"Bruce," she said. And realized that she had spoken the name aloud. She was awake. She sat up quickly and pressed both her hands over her mouth. Her cheeks were hot and stinging with embarrassment. Fragments of the dream whirled in her astounded mind. The absurdity of it -and its blatant schoolgirlish eroticism-stunned and

dismayed her. She couldn't remember when she had last had any such sort of dream.

And to pick Bruce Mannheim as her dashing romantic hero-of all people!

She began to laugh.

Dr. Hoskins would be appalled, if he knew! His reliable, dependable Miss Fellowes-consorting intimately with the enemy, even if only in her dreams!

How ridiculous-how preposterous-

How pathetic, she told herself abruptly.

The aura of the dream still hovered about her. Some of the details were already gone from her mind. Others burned as vividly as though she were

a spinster's life. Strictly speaking, she was neither, for she had been married, after all-if only for a handful of months. But that chapter was closed. She had lived as an island, entire of herself, for years-for decades. Devoted to her work, to her children. And now this-

It was only a dream, she told herself. And dreams aren't real. She had told Timmie the same thing just a little while before.

Only a dream. Only. The sleeping mind is capable of liberating any kind of thought at all. Strange things drift around randomly in there, floating on the tides of the unconscious. It meant nothing, nothing at all, other than

that Bruce Mannheim had come here today and he had left some kind of impression on her that her sleeping mind had rearranged into a startling and improbable little scenario. But Mannheim was at least ten years younger than she was. And, pleasant-looking though he was, she didn't find him particularly attractive-not even in fantasy. He was just a man: someone she had met that day. Sometimes, despite everything, she did feel attracted to men. She had felt attracted to Hoskins, after all-a pointless, useless, meaningless attraction to a happily married man with whom she happened to work. There was some slight reality to the feeling she had for Hoskins, at least. There was none here. Only a dream, Miss Fellowes told herself again, only a dream, only a dream.

[38]

After all the talk of the need to get a playmate for Timmie, Miss Fellowes expected that Hoskins would produce one almost immediately, if only to pacify the powerful political forces that Mannheim and Marianne Levien represented. But to her surprise weeks went by and nothing seemed to happen. Evidently Hoskins was having just as much difficulty arranging for someone's child to be brought into the Stasis bubble as he had anticipated. How

he was managing to stall Mannheim off, Miss Fellowes didn't know.

Indeed she saw almost nothing of Hoskins in this period. Evidently he was preoccupied with other activities of Stasis Technologies, Ltd., and she caught no more than an occasional glimpse of him in passing. Running the company was obviously a full time job for him, and then some. Miss Fellowes had already gotten the impression, from little bits and snatches of comment that she had picked up from other people, that Hoskins was constantly struggling to cope with a staff of talented but high strung prima donnas hungry for Nobel prizes while he presided in his harried way over one of the most complex scientific ventures in history.

Be that as it may. He had his problems; she had hers.

to tell whether the big empty place represented the lost Ice Age world to him or his imagined fantasy of the strange new era into which he had been brought. Either way, it was a frightening place to him, and he often awoke in tears. It wasn't necessary to have a degree in psychiatry to know that the dream was a powerful symptom of Timmie's isolation, his deepening sadness.

During the daytime he went through long woebegone periods when he was aimless and withdrawn, or

when he spent silent hours at the dollhouse window with its prospect of little more than nothing-staring out into the big empty of his dream, perhaps thinking nostalgically of the bleak ice-swept plateaus of his now distant childhood, perhaps simply wondering what lay beyond the walls of the rooms in which his existence was confined. And she thought furiously: Why don't they bring someone here to keep him company? Why?

Miss Fellowes wondered if she ought to get in touch with Mannheim herself and tell him that nothing was being done, urge him to bring more pressure on Hoskins. But that seemed too much like treachery to her. Devoted as she was to Timmie, she still couldn't bring herself to go behind Hoskins' back that way. Yet her anger mounted.

The physiologists by now had learned about all they could from the boy, short of dissecting him, and that didn't appear to be part of the research

the heat. Miss Fellowes found the new group just as bothersome as the first, sometimes a good deal more so. Now Timmie was made to overcome barriers to reach food and water. He had to lift panels, move bars, reach for cords. And the mild electric shocks made him whimper with surprise and fear-or else to snarl in a highly primordial way. All of it drove Miss Fellowes to distraction.

She didn't want to appeal to Hoskins, though. She didn't wish to go to Hoskins at all. He was keeping his distance, for whatever reason; and Miss Fellowes was afraid that if she carried new demands to him now, she'd lose her temper at the slightest sign of resistance, might even quit altogether. That was a step she didn't want to find herself taking. For Timmie's sake she had to stay here.

Why had the man backed off from the Timmie project, though? Why this indifference? Was this his way of insulating himself from Bruce Mannheim's complaints and requests? It was stupid, she thought. Timmie was the only victim of his remoteness. Stupid, stupid, stupid.

She did what she could to limit access to Timmie by the scientists. But she couldn't seal the boy off from them entirely. This was a scientific experiment, after all. So the probing and the poking and the mild electrical shocks went on.

Timmie's speech had grown constandy better and more precise. It never entirely lost a certain soft slurriness that Miss Fellowes found rather endearing, but his comprehension of English was now practically the equal of that of a modern child of his age. In times of excitement, he did tend to fall back into bursts of tongue-clicking and occasional primordial growling, but those

times were becoming fewer. He must be forgetting the life he had known in the days before he came into the twenty-first century-except in his private world of dreams, where Miss Fellowes could not enter. Who knew what huge shambling mammoths and mastodons cavorted there, what dark scenes of prehistoric mystery were enacted on the screen of the Neanderthal boy's mind?

But to Miss Fellowes' surprise, she was still the only one who could understand Timmie's words with any degree of assurance. Some of the others who worked frequently inside the Stasis bubble-her assistants Morten-son, Elliott, and Stratford, Dr. McIntyre, Dr. Jacobs- seemed able to pick out a phrase or two, but it was always a great effort and they usually misconstrued at least half of what Timmie was saying. Miss Fellowes was puzzled by that. In the beginning, yes, the boy had had a little difficulty in shaping words intelligibly; but time had gone by and he was quite fluent now. Or so it seemed to her. But gradually she had to admit that it was only

first-century English language, and what came out was thick with distortions.

She defended him to the others. "Have you ever heard a Frenchman trying to say a simple word like 'the'? Or an Englishman trying to speak French? And there are letters in the Russian alphabet that we have to break our

jaws to pronounce. Each linguistic group gets a different sort of training of the linguistic muscles from birth and for most people it's just about impossible to change. That's why there's such a thing as accents. Well, Timmie has a very pronounced Neanderthal accent. But it'll diminish with time."

Until that happened, Miss Fellowes realized, her own position would be one of unanticipated power and authority. She was not only Timmie's nurse, she was also his interpreter: the conduit through which his memories of the prehistoric world were transmitted to the anthropologists who came to interrogate him. Without her as an intermediary, they would find it impossible to get coherent answers to the questions they wanted to put to the boy. Her help was necessary if the project was to achieve its full scientific value. And so Miss Fellowes became essential, in a way that no one including herself had expected, to the ongoing work of exploring the nature of human life in the remote past.



planted in the boy's mind by the very nature of the questions which they had Miss Fellowes put to him.

"Ask him how big his tribe was," they would say."

"I don't think he has any word for tribe."

"How many people there were in the group that he lived with, then."

She asked him. She had begun teaching him recently how to count. He looked confused.

"Many," he said.

"Many," in Timmie's vocabulary, could be anything more than about three. It all seemed to be the same to him, beyond that point.

"How many?" she asked. She lifted his hand and ran her finger across the tips of his. "This many?"

"More."

"How many more?"

He made an effort. He closed his eyes for a moment as if staring into another world, and held out his hands, wriggling his fingers at her in rapid in-out gestures.

"Is he indicating numbers, Miss Fellowes?"

"I think so. Each hand movement is probably a five."

"I counted three movements of each hand. So the tribe was thirty people?"

Then after a time he stared at his hands, and thrust his fingers out again, the same quick fluttery gesture, which might have been counting or might have been something else entirely. It was impossible to tell how many times he did it: perhaps eight, perhaps ten.

"Did you see?" Miss Fellowes asked. "Eighty, ninety, a hundred people, I think he's saying this time. If he's really answering the question at all." "The number was smaller before." "I know. This is what he's saying now." "It's impossible. A tribe that primitive couldn't have more than thirty! At most."

Miss Fellowes shrugged. If they wanted to taint the evidence with their own preconceptions, that wasn't her problem. "Then put down thirty. You're asking a child who was only around three years old to give you a census report. He's only guessing, and the amazing thing is that he can even guess what we're trying to get him to tell us. And he may not be. What makes you think he knows how to count? That he even understands the concept of number?"

"But he does understand it, doesn't he?" "About as well as any five-year-old does. Ask the next five-year-old how many people he thinks live on his street, and see what he tells you." "Well- "

The other questions produced results nearly as uncertain. Tribal structure? Miss Fellowes managed to extract from Timmie, after a lot of

to know. Timmie didn't know what a wife was.

- How was the chief chosen? Timmie couldn't understand the question. -

What about religious beliefs and practices?

Miss Fellowes was able, by dint of giving Timmie all sorts of scientifically dubious prompting, to get some sort of description from the boy of a holy place made of rocks, which he had been forbidden to go near, and a cult which might or might not have been run by a high priestess. She was sure it was a priestess, not a priest, because he kept pointing to her as he spoke; but whether he really understood what she was trying to learn from him was something not at all certain to her.

"If only they had managed to bring a child who was older than this across time!" the anthropologists kept lamenting. "Or a full-grown Neanderthal, for God's sake! If only! If only! How maddening, to have nothing but an ignorant little boy as our one source of information."

"I'm sure it is," Miss Fellowes agreed, without much compassion in her tone of voice. "But that ignorant little boy is one more Neanderthal than any of you ever expected to have a chance to interrogate. Never in your wildest dreams did you think you'd have any Neanderthals at all to talk to."

"Even so! If only! If only!"

"If only, yes," said Miss Fellowes, and told them that their time for interviewing Timmie was over for that day.

confusion. Hoskins wasn't alone. A pale woman, slender and of middle height, was with him,

hovering at the threshold of the Stasis zone. Her fair hair and complexion gave her an appearance of fragility. Her eyes, a very light blue in color, were searching worriedly over Miss Fellowes' shoulders, looking diligently for something, flickering uneasily around the room as though she expected a savage gorilla to jump out from behind the door to Timmie's playroom.

Hoskins said, "Miss Fellowes, this is my wife, Annette. Dear, you can step inside. It's perfectly safe. You'll feel a trifling discomfort at the threshold, but it passes. -1 want you to meet Miss Fellowes, who has been in charge of the boy since the night he came here."

(So this was his wife? She wasn't much like what Miss Fellowes would have expected Hoskins' wife to be; but then, she considered, she had never really had any clear expectations of what Hoskins' wife ought to be like. Someone more substantial, a little less fidgety, than this all too obviously ill-at-ease woman, at any rate. But, then, why? A strong-willed man like Hoskins might have preferred to choose a weak thing as his foil. Well, if that was what he wanted, so be it. On the other hand, Miss Fellowes had imagined Hoskins' wife would be young, young and sleek and glamorous, the usual sort of second wife that she had been told successful

"Call me Annette, Miss Fellowes. Everyone does. And your name is-"

Hoskins cut in quickly. "What's Timmie doing, Miss Fellowes? Taking a nap? I'd like my wife to meet him."

"He's in his room," Miss Fellowes said. "Reading."

Annette Hoskins gave a short, sharp, almost derisive-sounding laugh. "He can read?"

"Simple picture books, Mrs. Hoskins. With short captions. He's not quite ready for real reading yet. But he does like to look at books. This one's about life in the far north. Eskimos, walrus-hunting, igloos, that sort of thing. He reads it at least once a day."

(Reading wasn't exactly the most accurate description of what Timmie did, Miss Fellowes knew. In fact it was something of a fib. Timmie wasn't reading at all. As far as she could tell, Timmie only looked at the pictures; the words printed under them seemed to have no more than a decorative value to him, mere strange little marks. He had showed no curiosity about them at any time thus far. Perhaps he never would. But he was looking at books, and apparently understanding their content. That was the next best thing to actual reading. For the purpose of this conversation it might just be a good idea to let Hoskins' wife jump to the conclusion that Timmie really could read, though surely Hoskins himself was aware of the truth.)

Miss Fellowes studied Hoskins suspiciously. There was something odd and unreal about this suddenly grandiose oratorical tone of his. What was he up to? He knew Tim-mie wasn't really able to read. And why bring his wife here after all this time, why be making all this insincere-sounding noise about Timmie's wonderful progress?

And then she understood.

In a more normal voice Hoskins said, "I have to apologize for stopping by so infrequently of late, Miss Fellowes. But as you can guess I've been tied up having to deal with all manner of peripheral distractions. Not the least of which is our friend Mr. Bruce Mannheim."

"I imagine you have been."

"He's called me just about every week since the day he was here. Asking me this, asking me that, fretting about Timmie as if the boy was his own son and I was the headmaster of some school he had sent him away to. -Some ghastly school out of a novel by Charles Dickens, one would think."

"Asking you particularly about what you've been doing to get Timmie a companion?" Miss Fellowes said.

"Especially that."

"And what actually have you been doing along those lines, Dr. Hoskins?"

here for a trial visit with Timmie, but at the last

moment it was conditions and objections again; the parents brought in a lawyer who wanted us to post bond, tie ourselves up in some very elaborate contractual guarantees, and commit ourselves to various other things that our lawyers thought were unwise. As for the rest of the children we saw, the question of liability didn't arise, because their parents seemed only interested in the fee we were offering. But the kids all struck us as wild little roughnecks who'd do Timmie more harm than good. Naturally we turned them down."

"So you don't have anyone, is what you're saying."

Hoskins moistened his lips. "We decided finally that we'd stay in~house for this-that we'd use the child of a staff member. This particular staff member standing here in front of you. Me."

"Your own son?" Miss Fellowes asked.

"You recall, don't you, that when Mannheim and Dr. Levien were here I said, more in anger than otherwise, that if necessary I'd make my own boy available? Well, it's come down to that. I'm a man of my word, Miss Fellowes, as I think you realize. I'm not going to ask anyone else in the company to do something that I'm not prepared to do. I've decided to put my boy Jerry forth as the playmate that Timmie needs so badly. -But of course that can't be my unilateral decision alone."

gorilla. A chimpanzee. Who will instandy

leap on her precious little baby and rend him limb from limb.

Icily Miss Fellowes said, "Well, shall I bring him out and show him to her now?"

Mrs. Hoskins tensed visibly, and she had been tense to begin with. "I suppose you should-Miss Fellowes."

The nurse nodded.

"Timmie?" she called. "Timrnie, will you come out here for a moment? We have visitors."

Timmie peered shyly around the edge of the door.

"It's all right, Timmie. It's Dr. Hoskins and his wife. Come on out."

The boy stepped forward. He looked quite presentable, Miss Fellowes thought, uttering a little prayer of gratitude. He was wearing the blue overalls with the big green circles on them, his second-favorite pair, and his hair, which Miss Fellowes had brushed out thoroughly an hour ago, was still relatively unmussed and unsnarled. The slender book he had been looking at dangled from his left hand.

He peered up expectantly at the visitors. His eyes were very wide. Plainly Timmie recognized Hoskins, even after all this time, but he didn't seem sure what to make of Hoskins' wife. No doubt something in her body language, something tightly strung and wary about her, had put the boy on



nursery to greet the company. How could Annette Hoskins possibly resist that smile?

"Oh," the woman said, as though she had just found a beetle in her soup. "I didn't realize he'd look so- strange."

Miss Fellowes gave her a baleful scowl.

Hoskins said, "It's mostly his facial features, you know. From the neck down he just looks like a very muscular little boy. More or less."

"But his face, Gerald-that huge mouth-that enormous nose-the eyebrows bulging like that-the chin- he's so ugly, Gerald. So weird."

"He can understand much of what you're saying," Miss Fellowes warned in a low, frosty voice.

Mrs. Hoskins nodded. But she still wasn't able to stop herself. "He looks very different in person from the way he looks on television. He definitely seems much more human when you see him on-"

"He is human, Mrs. Hoskins," Miss Fellowes said curtly. She was very tired of having to tell people that. "He's simply from a different branch of the human race, that's all. One that happens to be extinct."

Hoskins, as though sensing the barely suppressed rage in Miss Fellowes' tone, turned to his wife and said with some urgency, "Why don't you talk to Timmie, dear? Get to know him a little. That's why you came here today, after all."

toward the ceiling and nodded.

She reached out uncertainly and took Timmie's hand as though she were shaking hands with a trained chimpanzee at the circus. She gave it a quick unenthusiastic shake and let go of it in a hurry.

Timmie said, "Hello, Mrs. Hoskins. Pleased to meet you."

"What did he say?" Annette Hoskins asked. "Was he saying something to me?"

"He said hello," Miss Fellowes told her. "He said he was pleased to meet you."

"He speaks"? English?"

"He speaks, yes. He can understand easy books. He eats with a knife and a fork. He can dress and undress himself. It shouldn't be any surprise that he can do all those things. He's a normal little boy, Mrs. Hoskins, and he's something more than five years old. Maybe five and a half."

"You don't know?"

"We can only guess," Miss Fellowes said. "He didn't have his birth certificate in his pocket when he came here."

Mrs. Hoskins looked at her husband again. "Gerald, I'm not so sure about this. Jerry isn't quite five yet."

(The ape-boy label from the media, again! Didn't people ever think for themselves?)

Miss Fellowes said emphatically, "He is not a savage, not in the slightest. Does a savage come out of his room carrying his book, and put out his hand for a handshake? Does a savage smile like that and say hello and tell you that he's pleased to meet you? You see him right in front of you. What does he really look like to you, Mrs. Hoskins?"

"I can't get used to his face. It's not a human face."

Miss Fellowes would not let herself explode in wrath. Tautly she said, "As I've already explained, he's as human as any of us. And not a savage at all. He is just as quiet and reasonable as you can possibly expect a five-and-some-months-year-old boy to be. It's very generous of you, Mrs. Hoskins, to agree to allow your son to come here to play with Timmie, but please don't have any fears about it."

"I haven't said that I've agreed," Mrs. Hoskins replied with some mild heat in her voice.

Hoskins gave her a desperate glare. "Annette-

"I haven't!"

(Then why don't you get out of here and let Timmie go back to his book?)

Miss Fellowes struggled to keep her temper.

are you, Timmie?"

"He's not very good at counting," Miss Fellowes said quietly.

But to her astonishment Timmie held up the five fingers of his left hand, splayed out distinctly.

"Five!" the boy cried.

"He put up five fingers and he said five," Miss Fellowes said, amazed.

"You heard him, didn't you?"

"I heard it," said Hoskins. -"I think."

"Five," Mrs. Hoskins said, grimly continuing. She was working at making contact with Timmie now. "That's a very nice age. My boy Jerry is almost five himself. If I bring Jerry here, will you be nice to him?"

"Nice," Timmie said.

"Nice," Miss Fellowes translated. "He understood you. He promised to be nice."

Mrs. Hoskins nodded. Under her breath she said, "He's small, but he looks so strong."

"He's never tried to hurt anyone," Miss Fellowes said, conveniently allowing herself to overlook the frantic battles of the long-ago first night. "He's extremely gentle. Extremely. You've got to believe that, Mrs. Hoskins." To Timmie she said, "Take Mrs. Hoskins into your room. Show her your toys and your books. And your clothes closet." Make her see that

the moment his wife was gone. "He's winning her over." "Of course he is."

"She's not an unreasonable woman. Trust me on that. Or an irrational one. But Jerry's very precious to her."

"Naturally so."

"Our only child. We'd been married for several years, and there were fertility problems in the beginning, and then we managed-we were finally able-"

"Yes," Miss Fellowes said. "I understand." She wasn't enormously interested in hearing about the fertility problems of Dr. and Mrs. Hoskins. Or how they had finally been able to overcome them.

"So you see-even though I've been over this thoroughly with her, even though she understands the problems that Mannheim and his crowd has been making for me and the importance of ending Timmie's isolation, she's still somewhat hesitant about exposing Jerry to the risk that-"

"There is no risk, Dr. Hoskins."

"I know that. You know that. But until Annette knows that, too-"

The door of Timmie's playroom opened. Mrs. Hoskins emerged. Miss Fellowes saw Timmie hanging back, peering out in that wary way he sometimes adopted. Her breath stopped. Something must have gone wrong in there, she thought.

But no. Annette Hoskins was smiling.

## Stalemate

SMOKE WAS RISING above the camp of the Other Ones by the bank of the smallest river, off to the west of the Goddess-shrine. When Silver Cloud looked the other way he saw the white smoke of his own people's fire rising from their campfire, back against the gently sloping hill that they had descended when they emerged out of the mountains of the east. There was no one in front of the shrine itself. During this interminable time of stalemate a tacit agreement had sprung up between the two tribes: the shrine was neutral territory. Nobody from either party could go close to it. Each side kept sentries posted day and night at the edge of the shrine area to make sure there were no transgressions.

Silver Cloud stood by himself, leaning on his spear. Darkness was falling already, though it seemed to him that the day had only just begun. The year was gliding quickly along. Night came sooner and sooner all the time. Morning arrived later and later. The daylight hours were being squeezed from both sides. Soon it would be the season of the long snows, when only a fool would go outside: time to hunker down in some sheltered place, living on the autumn's stored food and waiting for spring.

women, full of Goddess-strength. They made him uneasy. And yet he knew how important they were, each in her own way, to the life of the tribe.

"Will it snow, Silver Cloud? Tell us!"

He shrugged. Then he tapped his knee and nodded.

The old wound in his leg was aching fiercely. It always did, when a snowy time was coming on. But now it was throbbing worse than ever.

Yesterday snow had fallen for nearly an hour, and there had been snow the day before yesterday also, for just a little while. Now it would do it again. That was bad, when the snow started to come every day. Much of yesterday's snow was still on the ground. The wind-it was blowing from the north, the demon-wind-scooped it up and whipped it around, throwing it in Silver Cloud's face.

We should leave here, he thought. We should be finding our winter camp.

She Who Knows had turned away from Keeps The Past now, and was coming over to talk with him. That meant trouble, most likely. Since her bold exploit before the shrine, She Who Knows had moved with such self-assurance and majesty that it almost seemed as though she were chieftain in his place. No one dared jeer at her, no one dared so much as look at her the wrong way, since that remarkable day when she had covered her body with

"They are too many for us," Silver Cloud told her. "You know that." This was not the first time that they had had this discussion.

"Not that many. We could handle them. But instead we simply sit here. They're afraid of us and we're afraid of them and nobody budges. How much longer will you keep us here?"

"Until we've gone before the Goddess at Her shrine and learned Her will."

"Then we have to attack," She Who Knows said.

Silver Cloud stared steadily at her. Her eyes were frightening, not a woman's eyes at all, not even a warrior's eyes. They were like eyes of polished stone.

"You were down there with the men," Silver Cloud said. "You saw that the men would not attack. Do you want to fight the Other Ones all alone, She Who Knows?"

"You're the chieftain. Order them to fight. I'll fight alongside them."

"Everyone will die."

"And if we stay here and wait for winter? Everyone will die in that case too, Silver Cloud."

He nodded gloomily. True enough: they couldn't stay here much longer. He realized dial as well as she did.

It was probably a mistake to have come here at all,



you announced that the Summer Festival was going to be canceled, I told you that."

"I remember that, She Who Knows. But we are here. And here we stay, until we perform the rite that we have come here for. We can't simply walk away without having heard the voice of the Goddess."

"No," She Who Knows said. "I agree with you about that. I didn't want to come here; but now that we're here, we must go before the Goddess, just as you say. I have no quarrel with you on that point."

He was grateful for that much.

"But if we can't stay here much longer because of the snow, and we can't go without performing the rite, and the Other Ones prevent us from performing the rite because they are here and defile the shrine by their presence, then we have to drive them away," said She Who Knows. "It's as simple as that."

"They'll kill us if we attack them."

"Winter will kill us if we don't."

"This goes in circles," Silver Cloud said. "This brings us to no place at all."

He looked at her somberly. Her face was inexorable. But She Who Knows was offering him no answers except the answer of certain death at the hands of the enemy.

in danger of being removed from office if he didn't repair matters soon. And there was no such thing as a living ex-chieftain, among the People. The custom was very clearly understood by all. To give up the chieftainship meant saying goodbye to life itself.

There was hot fire running along the wounded part of his leg. Perhaps it wouldn't be such a bad thing, Silver Cloud thought, to step aside and let someone else bear the burden. And make an end to this pain and weariness forever.

Goddess Woman joined them now. "Has She Who Knows convinced you that we should attack?"

"No."

"Are you so much afraid to die?"

Silver Cloud laughed. "The question is more foolish than you realize, Goddess Woman. What I'm afraid of is that you will die, and Milky Fountain and Fights Like A Lion and Beautiful Snow and everyone else. My task is to keep the People alive, not to lead them into certain death."

"The snowy rime is coming. That will kill us also, if we stay out here in the open."

With a sigh he said, "Yes, yes, I know that, too."

"I didn't want to make this pilgrimage," Goddess Woman said. "Do you remember? I said there was no need to come all the way back here to learn

to die standing here, endlessly talking to one another while the snow piles up around us. Or perhaps you think-

"Look," She Who Knows broke in. "One of the Other Ones is coming to talk to us!"

Silver Cloud swung around, startled. Yes, it was so: a tall young warrior carrying a spear that had a strip of red fur tied around its point had left the other camp and was heading toward them. As the envoy passed the area in front of the shrine, Broken Mountain, who was on sentry duty, bristled at him and presented his weapon. The Other One made an Other One sound at Broken Mountain and kept on going, striding past him without pausing.

Blazing Eye and Tree Of Wolves came out of the encampment and pointed to the Other One as if they thought Silver Cloud had not noticed him. They brandished their spears and indicated that they were ready to jump forward and attack. Silver Cloud angrily gestured at them to get back. What did they think, that this was a one-man war party? Obviously the man was coming here to talk. Obviously.

But how am I supposed to talk with an Other One? Silver Cloud wondered.

The envoy took a zigzag path over the snowy ground, going around the places where underground water made the surface marshy, and came across to the place along the riverbank where Silver Cloud was standing

"Do you think there's something wrong with him?" he asked She Who Knows.

"He's saying something. That's how they speak."

"That? Speaking? It's just noise."

"It's the way they speak," She Who Knows said, "I'm certain of that."

"All right," said Silver Cloud. "Tell me what he's trying to say, then."

"Ah. Ah. How can I do that?"

"You are She Who Knows. You say so yourself."

"I only know what I know. The language of the Other Ones is not something I know."

"Ah," said Silver Cloud. "So there's something you don't know! I've never heard you say a diing like that before, She Who Knows."

She gave him a sour smile and did not reply.

The Other One was speaking again. His voice was pitched very high, and he seemed to be straining as he spoke, pushing the sounds out, working hard to make his meaning clear, as though he were speaking to children. But there was no meaning. Silver Cloud stared intently, watching the man's mouth, and he could not make out a single intelligible word. The sounds that the Other One was making were not the sounds of speech.

Silver Cloud said, "Can't you speak properly? I can't understand you if you moan like that."

And the ugliness of him-that pale skin, like a ghost's-the way his face jutted out below his mouth, and the weird tininess of his features-

"I said, can't you speak properly? Speak in words if you want to talk to me!"

"Those are his words," She Who Knows said suddenly. "He has his own words." She had an odd look on her face, the look of one who has been struck by a strange new truth. "The Other Ones have a language of their own, different from ours."

"What?" Silver Cloud said, mystified. "What does that mean? There's only one language, She Who Knows. There are words that can be understood, and there are noises that can't. We can't understand what he's saying, and therefore his sounds are only noises. How can there be more than one language? The sky is the sky. A mountain is a mountain. Water is water, snow is snow. Everybody knows that. How can anyone call them by other names?"

"Two peoples-two languages. One language for us -a different one for them-"

The thought made Silver Cloud's head ache. There might actually be some sense to it, he had to admit-two peoples, two languages, why not? - but it was very difficult to think about such a thing now. Ideas like that

belonged entirely to the Other Ones. He pointed to the shrine again. He pointed to Silver Cloud; he pointed to himself. He pointed to the shrine.

"Goddess Woman?" Silver Cloud said. "Do you make any sense of this?"

"He wants us to leave, so they can have the shrine!" Goddess Woman said immediately.

Silver Cloud wasn't so sure of that. There was too much back-and-forth pointing. If he were the one who had gone to the Other Ones to tell them to leave, he would simply have pointed to the shrine and to the Other Ones, and then to the western lands, and made a nicking gesture with his hand to tell them that they should go back where they had come. Anyone with any intelligence ought to be able to understand that.

In fact, why not try it now? And he did.

The Other One watched him with the sort of look on his face that one might give a child who was stammering through some long-winded interruption of a perfectly sensible adult conversation. When Silver Cloud was done, the Other One responded by going through his whole point-at-this-point-at-that routine all over again.

She Who Knows said, "I think he's trying to tell us that we can share the shrine, his people and ours worshipping at it together."

"Share a shrine with filth?" Goddess Woman crkd. "The shrine is ours!"

understand you and you don't understand me. No question about that. She Who Knows and Goddess Woman think they understand you, but they don't, not really. They're both just hearing the things they want to think you're saying."

"I could sit down with him and try to teach him our language," She Who Knows offered. "Or maybe I could learn how to speak his."

"Keep away from him," Goddess Woman said. "He's unclean, and this is holy land."

"But if we were able to speak with-"

"It's no use," said Silver Cloud. "Even if those noises of his are a language, you'd never learn it. How could you? It's like sitting down with a bear and trying to learn bear-noises. Or to teach a bear to speak. It can't be done."

"Old men always say that things can't be done," She Who Knows retorted.

"Old? Old?" Silver Cloud cried.

But now the Other One was gesturing again with his spear, and making his sounds again. One last attempt, perhaps, to get his message across to Silver Cloud. It was as incomprehensible, though, as it had been before. Silver Cloud felt a great sadness coming over him, and not only because She Who Knows had called him old, or because

that I don't speak your language. And I guess you don't speak mine."

"So you agree it's a language, then!" She Who Knows said in triumph.

"Yes," said Silver Cloud glumly. "For whatever good that does."

The parley was over. The Other One, looking irritated and morose, swung around and walked quickly away, back toward his own encampment. Silver Cloud watched, astonished by the loose-jointed free-wheeling stride of the man. It seemed a wonder that his arms and legs didn't fall off as he walked, so poorly strung together was he, so badly designed. Or that his head didn't roll right off his flimsy neck. Silver Cloud felt grateful for his own sturdy, compact body, weary and aching though it had become of late. It had served him well for a great many years. It was the work of the Goddess, that body. He pitied the Other Ones for their fragility and their ugliness.

As the envoy of the Other Ones passed the sentry zone again, Broken Mountain once more shook his spear at him and made a hissing sound of defiance. The Odjer One took no notice. Broken Mountain looked to Silver Cloud for instruction, but Silver Cloud shook his head

and told him to hold his peace. The Other One disappeared into the distant encampment of his people.

So that was that. Nothing accomplished.



Blazing Eye would be chieftain in his place. Let Blazing Eye worry about what to do next.

But even as the thought crossed his mind, Silver Cloud was angered by it. Blazing Eye? A fool. He would do foolish things, as fools can be expected to do. It would be a sin to hand the tribe over to Blazing Eye.

Who, then? Broken Mountain? Tree Of Wolves? Young Antelope?

All fools. He couldn't give the tribe to any one of them. Maybe they would outgrow their foolishness someday; but he wasn't very confident of that.

Then who will be chieftain after me?

Let the Goddess decide, Silver Cloud told himself. After I'm gone. It'll be Her problem then, not mine.

He would not resign. He would wait for death to claim him. He knew that he was a fool, too-or else they would not be here in this useless deadlock now-but at least he was less foolish than the younger men, and he might just as well keep his chieftainship a little while longer.

"What are you going to do now, Silver Cloud?" She Who Knows asked.

"Nothing," he said. "What is there to do?" He went back to the camp and sat down by the fire. Some child came over to him-he couldn't remember her name-and he drew her close against his side, and they sat there staring at the leaping flames for a long while. The presence of the child lifted a little

## CHAPTER NINE

### Becoming

[40]

THREE DAYS LATER Hoskins stopped by to see Miss Fellowes and said, "It's all been worked out. My wife has no further problem about letting Jerry come here to play with Timmie, and Ned Cassiday has drafted a liability agreement that he thinks will stand legal muster."

"Liability? Liability for what, Dr. Hoskins?"

"Why, any sort of injury that might be inflicted."

"By Timmie on Jerry, you mean."

"Yes," Hoskins said, in that sheepish voice of his once again.

Miss Fellowes instantly began to bristle. "Tell me: do you seriously think there's any chance of that happening? Does your wife?"

"If we were really worried about that, we wouldn't be volunteering Jerry to be Timmie's playmate. My wife had her doubts at first, as you know, but it didn't take long for Timmie to win her over. Still, there's always the chance, when you bring two small boys together who don't know each other, that one of them will take a swing at the other, Miss Fellowes. I surely don't have to remind you of that."

Jerry here, then?"

"Tomorrow morning? How would that be?"

[41]

Miss Fellowes waited until breakfast time to tell him. She hadn't wanted to say anything the night before, thinking that the excitement of anticipation might unsettle Timmie's sleep, making him edgy and unpredictable when Jerry arrived.

"You'll be getting a friend today, Timmie."

"A friend?"

"Another little boy. To play with you."

"A little boy just like me?"

"Just like you, yes." In every way that really mattered, Miss Fellowes told herself fiercely. "His name is Jerry. He's Dr. Hoskins' son."

"Son?" He gave her a puzzled look.

"Dr. Hoskins is his father," she said, as though that would help.

"Father."

"Father-son." She held her hand high in the air, then lower down. "The father is the big man. The son is the little boy."

He still looked baffled. There were so many basic as-

Rummaging in Timmie's pile of storybooks, Miss Fellowes found one of his favorites, a retelling of the story of William Tell. What meaning the story itself had for him was something she couldn't even begin to guess, but the book was boldly and vividly illustrated and he pored over it again and again, lightly rubbing his fingers over the bright pictures. She opened it now to the two-page spread showing William Tell shooting the apple off his son's head with a bolt from his crossbow, and indicated, first the archer in his medieval costume, then his son.

"Father-son-father-son-"

Timmie nodded gravely.

What, she wondered, was he thinking? That Dr. Hoskins was really a handsome man with long blond hair who wore strange clothing and carried a curious machine under his arm? Or that someone was going to come here to shoot apples off his head? Perhaps it had been an error to muddle the moment with abstract concepts like "father" and "son."

Well, all that was really important was that Timmie would have a friend soon.

"He'll be coming after we've finished breakfast," Miss Fellowes told him. "He's a very nice boy." She pro-

foundly hoped that he was. "And you'll show him what a nice boy you are too, won't you?" "Nice boy. Yes."

(You've wanted this for Timmie for months. And now it's happening. There's nothing to worry about. Nothing.)

"Miss Fellowes?"

Hoskins' voice, on the intercom.

"Here they are," she said to Timmie. "Jerry's coming!"

To her surprise, Timmie went scuttling into his playroom and closed the door partway. He peered out uneasily. Not a good sign, she thought.

"Timmie-" she began.

And then the whole Hoskins family was at the threshold of the Stasis bubble.

Hoskins said, "This is my boy Jerry. Say hello to Miss Fellowes, Jerry."

She saw a round-faced, large-eyed child, with pale cheeks and loose, unruly brown hair, clutching at Annette Hoskins' skirt. He looked very much like his father: a five-year-old version of Gerald Hoskins, yes.

"Say hello," Hoskins said to the boy, a little ominously this time.

"Hello." It was barely audible. Jerry receded a bit farther into the folds of the maternal skirt.

Miss Fellowes gave him her warmest, most inviting smile. "Hello, Jerry. Would you like to come in? This is where Timmie lives. -Timmie's going to be your friend."

Jerry stared. He looked as though he would much rather bolt and run.

tensed visibly. However much she might have been won over by Timmie on her earlier visit, she seemed more than a little apprehensive now. Her precious little child, turned loose in the cage of this ape-boy-

"Put him down, Annette."

She nodded. The boy backed up against her, staring worriedly at the pair of eyes which were staring back at him from the next room.

"Come out here, Timmie," Miss Fellowes said. "This is your new friend, Jerry. Jerry wants very much to meet you. Don't be afraid."

Slowly Timmie stepped into the room. Jerry squirmed. Hoskins bent to disengage Jerry's fingers from his mother's skirt. In a stage whisper he said, "Step back, Annette. For God's sake, give the children a chance."

The youngsters faced one another, standing virtually nose to nose. Although Jerry was almost certainly some months younger than Timmie, nevertheless he was an inch taller. And in the presence of Jerry's straightness and his high-held well-proportioned head, Timmie's gro-

tesqueries of appearance were suddenly almost as pronounced in Miss Fellowes' eyes as they had been in the earliest days.

Miss Fellowes' lips quivered.

There was a long silent awkward moment of mutual staring. It was the little Neanderthal who spoke first, finally, in childish treble. "My name is Timmie."

Jerry; Jerry had defended himself in the only way he knew. Nothing out of the ordinary had taken place. Something like this was exactly what they should have expected at the outset, Miss Fellowes told herself.

"Well," Hoskins said. "Well!"

Annette Hoskins said, "I knew this wasn't a good idea. They just instinctively don't like each other." "It isn't instinctive," Miss Fellowes said firmly. "No," Hoskins said. "It's not instinctive at all. Any more than when any two children dislike each other on first sight. Put Jerry down and let him get used to the situation."

"What if that cave-boy hits Jerry back?" "It won't be at all amazing if he does," said Hoskins. "But he can take care of himself. And if he can't, it's time he started learning how. We just have to let him get accustomed to this by himself."

Annette Hoskins still looked uncertain.

"In fact," her husband went on, "I think the best thing is for you and me to leave. If there are any problems, Miss Fellowes will know how to handle them. And after an hour or so she can bring Jerry to my office and I'll have him taken home."

aware that she risked upsetting Timmie even further, went to him and tried to reassure him that his mother was nearby, that he hadn't been abandoned at all, that he'd be seeing her again in just a short while.

"Want her now!" Jerry said.

(You probably think you've been left here to live in this room forever, don't you, child? Just you and Timmie, locked up in this little dollhouse with each other. And you hate the idea. Of course you do. Just as Timmie must.)

"Home!" Jerry said. "Now!"

"You'll be going home soon, Jerry," she told the boy. "This is only a little visit."

He struck out at her with his clenched fists.

"No," Miss Fellowes said, catching him deftly by his

belt and holding him at arm's length while he flailed unsuccessfully at her. "No, Jerry! No, don't hit. -How would you like a lollipop, Jerry?" "No! No! No!"

Miss Fellowes laughed. "I think you would, though. You stay right where you are and I'll get one for you."

She unlocked the hidden lollipop cache-Timmie had already proved he couldn't be trusted to keep away from the supply she kept on hand-and



him. Timmie grabbed at it with the ferocity of a caged animal, pulling it from her hand.

Miss Fellowes gave him a troubled look. She hadn't expected this visit to go serenely; but this was disturbing, these signs of reversion to savagery in Timmie.

Savagery? No, she thought. That was too harsh an interpretation of Timmie's behavior. It had been Jerry who struck the first blow, Miss Fellowes reminded herself. Timmie had come over and introduced himself to Jerry in a polite, civilized way, after all. And Jerry had pushed him. Quite probably Timmie reasoned that savage growls and snarls were the only sensible response to that sort of behavior.

The children glared at each other now over their lollipops across the whole width of the room.

The first hour wasn't going to be a lot of fun for anyone, Miss Fellowes realized.

But this sort of thing was nothing new to her, and not all that intimidating. She had presided over many a pitched battle between angered children-and had seen many a truce come into being eventually, and then friendships. Patience was the answer. In dealing with children, it almost always was. Problems like this had a way of solving themselves, given time.

colored faces into contact. Miss Fellowes laid them out in the middle of the floor. -"And is it all right if Jerry plays with your blocks too, Timmie?"

Timmie made a grumbling sound.

"It 15 all right," she said. "Good boy! I knew you wouldn't mind. -Come on over here, Jerry. Timmie's going to let you play with his blocks."

Hesitandy Jerry approached. Timmie was down on the floor already, picking through the blocks for the ones he considered his favorites. Jerry watched in a gingerly way from a comfortable distance. Miss Fellowes came up behind him and gendy but forcefully nudged him downward toward the blocks.

"Play with the blocks, Jerry. Go ahead. It's all right. Timmie doesn't mind."

He looked back and up at her, very doubtfully.

Then he cautiously selected a block. Timmie made a louder grumbling noise, but stayed where he was when Miss Fellowes shot him a swift warning look. Jerry took another block. Another. Timmie snatched up two of them, and moved them around in back of himself. Jerry took a third block.

In hardly any time at all the pile of blocks had been divided roughly in half, and Timmie was playing with one group of them on one side of the room and Jerry was studiously playing with the others at the opposite end, close to the door. The two children ignored each other as thoroughly as

were working so hard at paying no attention to each other that it must have been tiring for them. Timmie had matched all his blocks and had arranged them in a ragged square, with its ends open at two corners. Jerry had put his blocks together in a much more intricate way, forming them into a perfect pyramid after making some minor trial-and-error adjustments.

Miss Fellowes found herself a little disheartened by the greater complexity of Jerry's arrangement of the blocks. Another example of the superiority of the Homo sapiens sapiens mind over that of Homo sapiens neanderthalensis'? Maybe so. But it was just as plausible to think that Jerry had a set of blocks just like these at home, and that his

father-the scientist, the physicist-had taught him all about piling them up in a neat little pyramid like that. Poor fatherless Timmie had had no such advantage; Miss Fellowes had made no attempt to give Timmie instruction in the art of piling up blocks. That had never occurred to her at all. She had been pleased enough that Timmie had been able to figure out how to play with the blocks on his own, almost as if by instinct. Now, feeling abashed by Timmie's relative lack of intellectual prowess, she wanted to think that Dr. Hoskins must have devoted great effort to expanding Jerry's mastery of block-pile construction. She certainly hoped he had.

"Would you boys like some milk?" Miss Fellowes asked, as the hour was coming to its end.

Even so, she couldn't quite succeed in fighting off a mood of mild dejection when she took Jerry back to Hoskins' office at the end of the first hour.

"Well, how did it go?" Hoskins asked.

"We made a beginning," Miss Fellowes said. "Only a beginning, but you have to start somewhere."

"No more hitting?"

"No." She told him about the blocks, leaving out any description of Jerry's apparent superiority as an architect. "They tolerated each other. That's the best way I can put it. Timmie stayed in one zone and Jerry in the other. It's

going to take some time for them to warm up to one another."

"Yes, I'm sure that's true," Hoskins said. He sounded utterly indifferent, almost impatient to have her leave. She noted that he hadn't said a word to his own son since the boy had entered the office.

There were papers strewn all over Hoskins' desk: printouts, strips of visual tape, a stack of data wheels. "A new experiment?" Miss Fellowes ventured. "Yes, as a matter of fact. Or rather, a breakthrough of sorts in an older one. We're closing in on short-range scooping. We're on the verge of attaining intertemporal detection at extremely close range." "Intertemp-"

The old forty-kilogram limit is about to become a thing of the past. We think eighty, even one hundred kilograms is well within possibility now."

"I'm very happy for you, Dr. Hoskins." She said it with no warmth whatsoever in her voice, but Hoskins didn't appear to observe that.

"Yes. Thank you, Miss Fellowes." Hoskins glanced at his son as though noticing him for the first time, and gathered him in against him with a casual sweep of his arm. -"Well, we'll have to bring Jerry back here in an-

other couple of days and see if things work out a little better between them the next time, eh, Miss Fellowes?"

"Yes. Yes, of course."

She hesitated.

"Is there anything else?" Hoskins asked.

Yes, there was. She wanted to tell him how grateful to him she was for having allowed Jerry to come to visit Timmie at all. Even though it hadn't gone particularly well. She knew that the initial tensions would ebb, that fears and uncertainties would vanish over the course of time, that the boys would eventually become friends. Timmie's willingness to share the blocks, however tepid it had been, told her that much. And a friend was what Timmie needed more than anything. As time went along, Jerry's presence would cause wonderful changes in Timmie: opening him up, allowing him to reach out to someone who was his peer, enabling him to become the boy

they had had lunch together-when she had spoken of him as though he were Timmie's father, in every sense but the biological, and said that he was being cruel by denying Timmie a companion, that he owed it to the boy. So he had brought in his own real son. Perhaps bringing Jerry here had been an attempt, after all, to prove himself both a kind father to Timmie and, also, not his father at

all. Both at the same time! And with all manner of buried resentments involved.

So all she could say was, "I'm very pleased you've allowed your boy to come here. Thank you. Thank you very much, Dr. Hoskins."

And all he could say was, "That's all right. Don't mention it, Miss Fellowes."

[43]

It became a settled routine. Jerry returned three days later, and four days after that. The second visit lasted as long as the first; the third one was extended to two hours, and that remained the rule thereafter.

There was no repetition of the staring and shoving of the first visit. The two boys eyed each other a little fretfully when Jerry-without either of his parents-was brought through the Stasis barrier the second time; but Miss Fellowes quickly said, "Here's your friend Jerry again, Timmie," and Timmie

A pause. "Hello, Jerry."

"Hello, Timmie."

"Hello, Jerry." v

"Hello, Timmie."

"Hello, Jerry-"

They wouldn't stop. It had become a game. They were both laughing. Miss Fellowes felt relief flooding her spirit. Children who could be silly together were children who weren't likely to start punching each other the moment she turned her back on them. Children who made each other laugh weren't going to hate each other.

"Hello, Timmie."

"Hello, Jerry."

"Hello-"

And another thing. Jerry didn't seem to be having any trouble understanding what Timmie was saying. Not that "Hello, Jerry" was a particularly complicated series of sounds, but plenty of adult visitors to the dollhouse had failed completely to comprehend even a syllable of Timmie's speech. Jerry didn't have an adult's preconceptions about enunciation and pronunciation, though. Timmie's thick-tongued manner of speaking apparently held no mysteries for him.

"Would you like to play with the blocks again?" Miss Fellowes asked.

What wasn't so good was the fact that the division of the blocks hadn't been quite as equal as Miss Fellowes had thought at first glance. Jerry had appropriated considerably more than half of them—close to two thirds, as a matter of fact. He was rapidly arranging them into the

pyramid shape again, carrying out the construction more easily now that he had a greater supply of building material.

As for Timmie, he was working on some kind of X-shaped pattern, but he didn't quite have enough blocks to make his design turn out properly. Miss Fellowes saw him glance thoughtfully at Jerry's pile of blocks, and got herself ready to intervene in case a squabble began. But Timmie didn't actually reach across to help himself to any of Jerry's blocks; he contented himself simply with staring at them.

A laudable sign of self-restraint? The politeness of the well-bred child toward his guest?

Or was there something more worrisome in Timmie's reluctance to take blocks away from Jerry? One thing that Timmie wasn't was well-bred. Miss Fellowes had no illusions about that. She had trained him with all her skill and diligence to be courteous and deferential; but nevertheless it was folly to believe that Timmie was any model of deportment. What he was was the child of a primitive society where manners as they were understood today were probably unknown, and after being taken from his own tribe he had



Had that single shove at the first visit so cowed Timmie?

Or was it something else-something deeper, something darker, something lost in the forgotten history of the human race's earliest days?

[44]

Early one evening after Timmie had gone to his room, the telephone rang and the switchboard voice said, "Miss Fellowes, I have a call for you from Bruce Mannheim."

She raised her eyebrows. Mannheim calling her? Nobody called her here, not ever. By her own choice she lived almost completely cut off from the outside world, lest she be bothered by the media, by curious-minded people of all sorts, by crackpots and fanatics, and by people like-Bruce Mannheim. But here he was on the telephone. How had he managed to get through to her behind Hoskins' back? He must be calling with Hoskins' knowledge and permission, she decided.

"Yes, Mr. Mannheim. How are you?"

"Fine, Miss Fellowes, just fine. -Dr. Hoskins tells me that Timmie finally has the playmate he needs."

"So he does. Dr. Hoskins' own son, as a matter of fact."

"Yes. I know that. We all think it was perfectly splendid of Dr. Hoskins to do that. -And how is everything working out, would you say?"

reaction, without any special anthropological undertones, is what I'd call it. Push came to shove-it could have happened between any two. But it's not like that now. They're very peaceful with each other."

"Glad to hear it," Mannheim said. "And Timmie is thriving?"

"He's doing very well, yes."

There was a pause. She hoped the children's advocate wasn't leading up to telling her that he had wangled permission to pay another call on the dollhouse so that he could check up on Timmie's new friendship. Timmie didn't need any more visitors than he already had; and Miss Fellowes was wary of having an outsider like Mannheim on hand while Timmie and Jerry were together. Their developing relationship, while it was just as peaceful as she had told Mannheim it was, had a subtext of potential volatility that was all too likely to turn into something troublesome in the presence of a stranger.

But Mannheim wasn't planning to visit, it seemed. He said, after a moment, "I just want to tell you, Miss Fellows, how pleased we all are that a capable nurse like you is looking after Timmie."

"That's very kind of you."

"The boy's been put through a very frightening experience and he's made a wonderful adaptation-so far. Much of the credit for that must go to you."

"That's very kind of you," Miss Fellowes said again, more lamely than before. She had never cared much for praise; and Mannheim was laying it on pretty thickly.

"And Dr. Levien feels the same way that I do."

"Ah," said Miss Fellowes. "Yes." And, coolly, stiffly: "That's-very good to hear."

"I'd like to give you my number," Mannheim said.

(Why?)

"I can always reach you through Dr. Hoskins," Miss Fellowes replied.

"Yes, of course. But a time might come when you'd want to reach me more directly."

(Why? Why? What is this all about?)

"Well, perhaps-"

"I feel that you and I are natural allies in this enterprise, Miss Fellowes. The one thing we have at heart, above all else, is Timmie's welfare. However we may feel about child-care techniques, about politics, about anything in the world, we both are concerned with Timmie. Deeply so. And therefore if you need to talk to me about Timmie's welfare, if any changes take place in the setup at Stasis Technologies that might have an unfavorable impact on Timmie's existence there-"

(Ah. You want me to be a spy for you.)

"Is Jerry coining again today, Miss Fellowes?" Tim-mie asked.

"Tomorrow."

The boy's disappointment was all too obvious. His round face dissolved into wrinkles, his jutting brow knotted in a frown. "Why not today?"

"Today isn't Jerry's day, Timmie. Jerry has-a place to go today."

"What place?"

"A place," she said, being deliberately vague. How could she describe kindergarten to him? What would Timmie think, knowing that other children, many of them, came together to play games, to chase each other in laughter around a schoolyard, to daub pieces of paper with gloriously gooey fingerpaints. "Jerry'11 be here tomorrow,"

"I wish he could come every day."

"So do I," Miss Fellowes said.

(But do I? Really?)

[46]

The problem was not that Timmie had a friend, but that the friend was becoming too confident, too aggressive, as time went along. Jerry had overcome his initial timidity entirely by now, and he was very much the dominant member of the pair.

designs and shapes, while Timmie simply made messes. Timmie appeared to have no artistic aptitude at all, not even the minimal skills one would expect from any reasonably intelligent child his age.

Of course, she argued, Jerry goes to kindergarten every day. He's learned all about how to use crayons and paints and clay there.

But Timmie had had them too, long before Jerry had first come here. He had never managed to master them, but that hadn't troubled Miss Fellowes at the time; she hadn't been comparing Timmie with any other children then, and she was making allowances for the blankness of his first few years.

Now she remembered what she had read in the books Dr. McIntyre had given her. About the total absence of any known examples of Neanderthal art. No cave paintings, no statuettes, no designs carved on walls.

(What if they really were inferior? And that was why they died out when we came along.)

Miss Fellowes didn't want to think about that.

Yet here was Jerry, swaggering in here now twice a week as if he owned the place. "Let's play with the blocks," he would say to Timmie. Or "let's paint" or "let's watch the whirloscreen." And Timmie would go along with it, never suggesting some preference of his own, always blandly following Jerry's agenda. Jerry had forced Timmie into a completely

ashamed: I'm jealous!

## CHAPTER TEN

### Reaching

[47]

Miss FELLOWES," Timmie said, "when will I be starting to go to school?"

The question, coming out of nowhere, hit her with the force of a thunderbolt.

She looked down at those eager brown eyes turned up to hers and passed her hand softly through his thick, coarse hair, automatically picking through the rough tangles of it and trying to straighten them. Timmie's hair was always disheveled. Miss Fellowes cut it herself while he squirmed restlessly under the scissors. The idea of having a barber in here for Timmie displeased her; and in any case the very clumsiness of the cut she gave him served to mask the retreating fore part of his skull and the bulging hinder part.

Carefully Miss Fellowes said, "Where did you hear about school, Timmie?"

It was inevitable, she knew, that Jerry would talk about the outside world with Timmie. They communicated freely and easily-two small boys who understood each other without difficulty. And Jerry, the emissary from the mysterious and forbidden world beyond the door of the Stasis bubble, would certainly want to tell Timmie all about it. There was no way of avoiding that.

But it was a world that Timmie could never enter.

Miss Fellowes said, with a studied gaiety that was her best attempt at distracting him from the anguish he must surely feel, "Why, whatever would you do out there, Timmie? Why would you want to go there? Do you know how cold it gets out there in the winter?"

"Cold?"

A blank look. He didn't know the word.

(But why would cold bother him, this boy who had learned how to walk in the snowfields of Ice Age Europe?)

"Cold is like the way it is in die refrigerator. You go outside and in a minute or two your nose begins to hurt from it, and your ears. But that's only in the winter. In the summer, outside gets very hot. It feels like an oven. Everyone sweats and complains about how hot it is outside. And then there's rain, too. Water falling down on you out of the sky, soaking your clothes, getting you all damp and nasty-"

"Jerry says that at school they can play all kinds of games that I don't have here. They have picture tapes and music. He says there are lots of children in the kin-der-gar-ten. He says-he says-" A moment of thought, then a triumphant upholding of both small hands with the fingers splayed apart. "He says this many."

Miss Fellowes said, "You have picture tapes."

"Just a few. Jerry says he sees more picture tapes in a day than I see all the time."

"We can get you more picture tapes. Very nice ones. And music tapes, too."

"Can you?"

"I'll get some this afternoon."

"Will you get me the Forty Thieves?"

"Is that a story Jerry heard in kindergarten?"

"There are these thieves in a cave, and these jars-" He paused. "Big jars. What are thieves?"

"Thieves are-people who take things that belong to other people."

"Oh."

"I can get you the Forty Thieves picture tape," Miss Fellowes told him. "It's a very famous story. And there are others like it. Sinbad the Sailor, who traveled everywhere in the world, who saw-everything." Her voice faltered



afterward trying to find his way home to his family." Again a pang. Her heart went out to the boy. Like Gulliver, like Sinbad, like Odysseus, Timmie too was a stranger in a strange land, and she could never forget that. Were all the great stories of the world about wanderers carried to strange places who were striving to reach their homes?

Timmie's eyes were glowing, though. "Will you get them right now? Will you?"

And so he was temporarily comforted.

[48]

She ordered all the picture tapes of myth and fable that were in the catalog. They stacked up higher than Timmie in the playroom. On days when Jerry wasn't there he pored over them hour after hour.

How much he actually understood was hard to say. Certainly they were full of concepts, images, locales, that could make very little sense to him. But how much did any child of five or six understand of those stories? There was no way for an adult to enter a child's mind and know for sure. Miss Fellowes had loved those stories herself without fully understanding them when she was a child, though, and so had children before her for hundreds, even thousands of years; and whatever they might have lacked

harm. No child had ever died of fright while hearing the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears, even though it was, on its most literal level, a horrifying tale. None of the slavering wolves and shambling bogeymen and terrible trolls of childhood fable had left any lasting scars. Children loved to hear about such things.

Was the bogeyman of myth-beetle-browed, shaggy, glowering-a vestige of the racial memory of the time when Neanderthals roamed Europe? Miss Fellowes had seen a reference to that theory in one of the books she had borrowed from Dr. McIntyre. Would Timmie be upset by the thought that he was a member of a tribe that had survived in folk tale as something to fear and loathe? No, no, she thought: it would never occur to him. Only overeducated adults would worry about such contingencies. Timmie would be as fascinated by bogeymen as any child, and would huddle under his coverlet in delicious terror, seeing shapes in the dark-and there wasn't a chance in a billion that he would draw any dire conclusions about his own genetic status from those scary stories.

So the tapes came flooding in, and the boy watched them one after another after another: as though a dam had been breached and the whole glorious river of the human imagination was rushing into Timmie's soul. Theseus and the Minotaur, Perseus and the Gorgon, King Midas and his golden touch, the Pied Piper of Hamelin, the labors of Hercules,

try to find out. For the moment, she was concerned only with allowing him to immerse himself in this tremendous torrent of story-of filling his mind with it-of reaching out toward the magical world of myth, since the real world of houses and airplanes and highways and people must forever remain beyond his grasp.

When he tired of watching tapes, she read to him out of ordinary books. The tales were the same; but now he created the pictures in his own mind as she read the words.

There had to be some impact. More than once she heard him telling some wildly garbled version of one of his picture tapes to Jerry-Sinbad traveling by submarine, or Hercules tied down by Lilliputians-and Jerry would listen solemnly, enjoying the story as much as Timmie enjoyed telling it.

Miss Fellowes made sure that everything the boy said was being recorded. It was vital evidence of his intelligence. Let anyone who imagined that the Neanderthals had been mere bestial shaggy half-men listen to Timmie retelling the story of Theseus in the Labyrinth! Even if he did seem to think that the Minotaur was the hero of the story.

descriptions half-understood, or out of distant Neanderthal memories half-recalled.

But the children ignored him and the objects eluded him when he tried to touch them. Though he was in the world, he was never part of it. He wandered through the big empty place of his dreams in a solitude just as absolute as that of his own room. And would wake up crying more often than not.

Miss Fellowes wasn't always there to hear him when he cried out in the night. She had begun sleeping three or four nights a week in the apartment elsewhere on the grounds that Hoskins had offered her long ago. It seemed wise to begin weaning Timmie from his dependence on her perpetual presence. The first few nights she tried it, she felt so guilty over abandoning him that she could scarcely sleep; but Timmie said nothing in the morning about her absence. Perhaps he expected to be left on his own, sooner or later. She allowed herself to feel more comfortable about sleeping away from the dollhouse, after a time. She realized that Timmie wasn't the only one being weaned from a dependence.

She took elaborate notes every morning about his dreams and tried to regard them as nothing more than useful material for the psychological study of Timmie's mind that would ultimately be one of the most valuable

do you always know how to say it the same way, Miss Fellowes?"

"Why, I'm reading it right from this page!"

"Yes, I know. But what does that mean, reading?"

"Why-why-" The question was so basic that she scarcely knew at first how to tackle it. Ordinarily, when children learned to read, they seemed somehow intuitively to divine the nature of the process by themselves, and then went on to the next step of learning the meaning of the coded symbols on the page. But Timmie's ignorance seemed to be more deeply rooted than that of the usual four-or-five-year-old who was just beginning to discover that there was such a thing as reading which perhaps he or she might actually be able someday to master. The essential concept was foreign to him.

She said, "You know how, in your picture books- not the tapes, the books-there are marks along the bottoms of the pages?"

"Yes," he said. "Words."

"The book I'm reading is all words. No pictures, just words. These marks are the words. I look at the marks and I hear words in my mind. That's what reading is-turning the marks on the page into words."

"Let me see."

She handed him the book. He swung it around sideways and then upside down. Miss Fellowes laughed and turned it right side up again.

they are, Timmie!"

"But how do you know which marks mean what word?"

"You have to learn."

"There are so many words, though! How could anyone learn all that many marks?"

"Little marks are used to make the big marks. The big marks are the words; the little marks are called letters. And actually there aren't that many little marks," she said. "Only twenty-six." She held up her hand and flashed her fingers five times, and then one finger more. "All the words are made up out of those few little letter-marks, arranged in different ways."

"Show me."

"Here. Look." She pointed to Sinbad on the page. "Do you see these six little marks here, between the two blank spaces? Those are the marks that mean Sinbad. This one is the Y sound. This is the \*f and this is the 'n'." She spoke the letters phonetically instead of pronouncing their names. "You read them one by one and you put all the sounds together-Ess-ih-nnn-bbb-aaah-ddd. Sinbad,"

Did the boy even begin to understand?

"Sinbad," Timmie said softly, and traced the name on the page with his fingertip.

He settled down beside her. She drew an a, a b, a c, and right on through the alphabet, in two long columns. Timmie, clutching the crayon clumsily in his fist, drew something that he must have thought was an imitation of her a, but it had long wobbly legs that wandered all over the page and left no room for any other letters.

"Now," she said, "let's look at the first mark-"

To her shame, it had never occurred to her before this that it might actually be possible for him to learn to read. For all the boy's vast hunger for picture books and picture tapes, this was the first time that he had shown any real interest in the printed symbols that accompanied them. Something else that Jerry had inspired in him? She made a mental note to ask Jerry, the next time he was here, whether he had begun to learn how to read. But in any event Miss Fellowes had simply dismissed a priori the idea that Timmie someday might.

Racial prejudice, she realized. Even now, after having lived with him for so long, having seen his mind grow and flower and develop, she still thought of him on some level as not quite human. Or at least too primitive, too backward, to master so sophisticated a skill as reading.

And while she was showing him the letters, pointing them out on her chart and pronouncing them and teaching him how in his clumsy way to draw them himself, she

Miss Fellowes was feeling drowsy and was barely paying attention.

"What did you say, Timmie?"

"The cat-ran up-the tree."

"That wasn't what you said before."

"No. Before I said, 'The dog began to chase the cat.' Just like it says here."

"What? What?" Miss Fellowes' eyes were wide open now. She glanced down at the slim book that the child in her lap was holding.

The caption on the left-hand page said: The dog began to chase the cat.

And the caption on the facing page was: The cat ran up the tree.

He was following the printing in the book, word by word. He was reading to her!

In amazement Miss Fellowes got to her feet so quickly that the boy went tumbling to the floor. He seemed to think it was some new game, and looked up at her, grinning. But she pulled him quickly to his feet and set him upright.

"How long have you been able to read?"

He shrugged. "Always?"

"No-really."

"I don't know. I looked at the marks and heard the words, the way you said."



Excited nearly to frenzy, she swung him up into her arms and danced him around the room while he stared at her in huge-eyed amazement.

"You can read! You can read!"

(Ape-boy, was he? Cave-boy? Some lesser form of human life? The cat ran up the tree. The train blew its whistle. Show me the chimp that can read those lines! Show me the gorilla that can! The train blew its whistle. Oh, Timmie, Timmie-)

"Miss Fellowes?" he said, sounding a little startled, as she swung him wildly around.

She laughed and put him down.

This was a breakthrough that she had to share. The answer to Timmie's unhappiness was in her hand. Picture tapes might keep him amused for a time, but he was bound to outgrow them. Now, though, as he grew older, he would have access to the full, rich world of books. If Timmie couldn't leave the Stasis bubble to enter the world, the world could be brought into these three rooms to Timmie-the whole world in books. He must be educated to his full capacity. That much was owed to him.

"You stay here with your books," she told him. "I'll be back in a little while. I have to see Dr. Hoskins."

She made her way along the catwalks and through the tortuous passageways that led out of the Stasis zone, and

The receptionist pressed a button. "Miss Fellowes to see you, Dr. Hoskins. She has no appointment."

(Since when do I need-?)

There was an uncomfortable pause. Miss Fellowes wondered if she was going to have to make a scene in order to be admitted to Hoskins' presence. Whatever he might be doing in there, it couldn't be as important as what she had to tell him.

Hoskins' voice out of the intercom said, "Tell her to come in."

The door rolled open. Hoskins rose from behind the desk with its GERALD A. HOSKINS, PH.D. nameplate to greet her.

He looked flushed and excited himself, as though his mood was precisely analogous to hers: a kind of triumph and glory. "So you've heard?" he said at once. "No, of course, you couldn't have. We've done it. We've actually done it."

"Done what?"

"We have intertemporal detection at close range."

He was so mil of his own success that for a moment Miss Fellowes allowed it to shove her own spectacular news into the background.

"You can reach historical times, you mean?" she said.

"That's exactly what I mean. We have a fix on a fourteenth-century individual right now. Imagine. Imagine!

ask for it."

Miss Fellowes smiled. "I'm glad to hear it. Because I wonder if we can start bringing in tutors for Timmie."

"Tutors?"

"To give him instruction. I can teach him only so much, and then I ought to step aside in favor of someone who has the proper training for it."

"Instruction? In what?"

"Well, in everything. History, geography, science, arithmetic, grammar, the whole elementary school curriculum. We have to set up a kind of school in here for Timmie. So that he'll be able to learn all that he needs to know."

Hoskins stared at her as though she were speaking some alien language.

"You want to teach him long division? The story of the Pilgrims? The history of the American Revolution?"

"Why not?"

"We can try to teach him, yes. And trigonometry and calculus, too, if you like. But how much can he learn, Miss Fellowes? He's a great little boy, no question of it. But we must never lose sight of the fact that he's only a Neanderthal."

"Only?"

"He can read?" said Hoskins in wonder. "Really?"

"I showed him how the letters were shaped, and how they were put together in words. And he did the rest. He's learned it in an astonishingly short span of time. I can't wait for Dr. McIntyre and the rest of the crew to find out about it. So much for the very limited intellectual capacity of the Neanderthals, eh, Dr. Hoskins? He can read a storybook. And as time goes along you'll see him reading books without any pictures at all, reading newspapers, magazines, textbooks-

Hoskins sat there, seemingly suddenly depressed. "I don't know, Miss Fellowes."

She said, "You just told me that anything I wanted-

"I know, and I shouldn't have said that."

"A tutor for Timmie? Is that such a big expense?"

"It isn't the expense I'm concerned with," said Hoskins. "And it's a wonderful thing that Timmie can read. Astonishing. I mean that. I want to see a demonstration of it right away. But you talk about setting up a school for him. You talk about all the things he'll learn as time goes along. -Miss Fellowes, there isn't much more time."

She blinked. "There isn't?"

"I'm sure you must be aware that we aren't able to maintain the Timmie experiment indefinitely."

"You're going to send him back?" she said in a tiny voice.

"I'm afraid so."

"But you're talking about a boy, Dr. Hoskins. Not about a rock."

Uneasily Hoskins said, "Even so. He can't be given undue importance, you know. We've learned just about as much from him as we're likely to. He doesn't remember anything about his life in the Neanderthal era that's of any real scientific value. The anthropologists can't make much sense out of what he says, and the questions they've put to him with you as the interpreter haven't yielded a lot of worthwhile data, and so--"

"I don't believe this," Miss Fellowes said numbly.

"Please, Miss Fellowes. It's not going to happen today, you know. But there's no escaping the necessity of it." He indicated the research materials on his desk. "Now that we expect to be bringing back individuals out of historical time, we'll need Stasis space--all we can get."

She couldn't grasp it.

"But you can't. Timmie-Timmie--"

"Please don't get so upset, Miss Fellowes."

"The world's only living Neanderthal, and you're talking about sending him back?"

"As I've said. We've learned all we can. Now we have to move along."

"No."

"Let me get you something, Miss Fellowes."

"No," she whispered. "I don't need anything."

She was trembling. She rose and stumbled across the room in a kind of nightmare and waited for the door to open, and walked through the antechamber without looking either to the right or to the left.

Send him back?

Send him back?

Were they out of their minds? He wasn't a Neanderthal any more, except on the outside. He was a gentle good-natured little boy who wore green overalls and liked to look at picture tapes and books that told tales out of the Arabian Nights. A boy who tidied up his room at the end of the day. A boy who could use a knife and a fork and a spoon. A boy who could read.

And they were going to send him back to the Ice Age and let him shift for himself in some Godforsaken tundra?

They couldn't mean it. He didn't stand a chance, back in the world he had come from. He was no longer fitted for it. He no longer had any of the skills that a Neanderthal needed to have, and in their place he had acquired a great many new skills that were absolutely worthless in the Neanderthal world.

He would die there, she thought.

jeopardize Timmie. He had seen it, and she hadn't. She had simply blinded herself to the possibility. She had carefully ignored every obvious clue that pointed to the blunt realities Hoskins had just been explaining to her. She had allowed herself to assume, against all the evidence, against all reason—that Timmie was going to be spending the rest of his life in the twenty-first century.

But Mannheim knew it wasn't so.

And he had been waiting all this time for her to call him.

"I need to see you right away," she told him.

"At the Stasis headquarters?"

"No," she said. "Somewhere else. Anywhere. In the city somewhere. You pick the place."

They met at a small restaurant near the river, where Mannheim said no one would bother them, on a rainy midweek afternoon. Mannheim was waiting for her when she arrived. It all seemed terribly clandestine to Miss Fellowes, vaguely scandalous: lunch with a man who had made all sorts of trouble for her employer. And—for that matter—lunch with a man. A man she scarcely knew, a young attractive man. Not like Edith Fellowes at all to be doing things like this, she told herself. Especially when she thought of that dream she had once had, Mannheim

knocking at her door, swooping her off her feet when she answered—

"Every day. And now he can read."

"Really!" Mannheim's eyes twinkled. He has a very nice smile, Miss Fellowes thought. How could Dr. Hoskins have thought he was such a monster? "That's an amazing step forward, isn't it? I bet the anthropology boys were startled when they found out about it."

She nodded. She turned the pages of the menu as though she had no idea what it was. The rain intensified outside; it drummed against the window of the little restaurant with almost malevolent force. They were practically the only customers.

Mannheim said, "I like the chicken in red wine sauce here, particularly. And they do some fine lasagna. Or maybe you'd like the veal."

"It doesn't matter. I'll have whatever you're having, Mr. Mannheim."

He gave her an odd look. "Call me Bruce. Please. Shall we get a bottle of wine?"

"Wine? I never drink wine, I'm afraid. But if you'd like to get some for yourself-"

He was still looking at her.

Over the drumbeat of the rain he said, "What's the trouble, Edith?"

(Edith?)

For a moment she was unable to say anything.



"I understand that that sad little captive child is finally going to be returned to his proper people, to his mother and father and sisters and brothers, to the world he belonged to and loved. That's something to celebrate. Waiter! Waiter! I'd like a bottle of Chianti-make it a half-bottle, I guess, my friend won't be having any-"

Miss Fellowes stared at him in dismay.

Mannheim said, "But you look so troubled, Miss Fellowes. Edith. Don't you want Timmie to return to his people?"

"Yes, but-but-" She waved her hands in a helpless gesture.

"I think I see." Mannheim leaned across the table toward her. He glowed with sympathy and concern. "You've cared for him so long that you find it hard to let go of him now. The bond between you and Timmie has become so strong that it's a real shock to you to hear that he's being sent back. I can certainly understand how you feel."

"That's part of it," Miss Fellowes replied. "But only a very small part."

"What's the real problem, then?"

At that moment the waiter arrived with the wine. He made a great show of displaying its label to Mannheim and of pulling the cork, and poured a little into Mannheim's glass to taste. Mannheim nodded. To Miss Fellowes he said, "Are you sure you don't want any, Edith? On a foul rainy day like this-"

"No, that isn't it. Not as far as I know, and I don't think it would be. But it would be fatal for Timmie. Look, he's civilized now. He can tie his shoelaces and cut a piece of meat with a knife and a fork. He brushes his teeth morning and night. He sleeps in a bed and takes a shower every day. He watches picture tapes and now he can read simple little books. What good are any of those skills in the Paleolithic era?"

Suddenly solemn, Mannheim said, "I think I see what you're getting at."

"And meanwhile," she went on, "he's probably forgotten whatever he knew about how to live under Paleolithic conditions-and very likely he didn't know a lot to begin with. He was only a little child when he came to us. His parents, his tribal guardians, whoever, must have still been taking care of him. Even Neanderthals wouldn't have expected a boy of three or four to know how to hunt and forage for himself. And even if he did know a little bit at that age, it's been several years since he was

exposed to those conditions. He won't remember a thing."

"But surely if he's returned to his own tribe, they'll take him in, they'll re-educate him in tribal ways-"

"Would they? He can't speak their language very well any more; he doesn't think the way they do; he smells funny because he's so clean. - They might just as readily kill him, wouldn't you say?"

left? If that's how it works, then his tribe will have moved on to some other region long ago. Surely they were nomads then. When he arrives in the past, there'll be no one around to take him in. He'll be completely on his own in a rugged, hostile, bitterly cold environment. A little boy facing the Ice Age by himself. Do you see, Mr. Mannheim? Do you see?"

"Yes," Mannheim said. "I do."

He was quiet a long while. He seemed to be working out some profound calculation in his mind.

Finally he said, "When is he supposed to be shipped back? Do you know?"

"Perhaps not for months, Dr. Hoskins told me. I can't say whether that means two months or six."

"Not much time, either way. We'd have to organize a campaign, a Save Timmie campaign-letters to the newspapers, demonstrations, an injunction, maybe a Congressional investigation into the whole Stasis Technologies operation. -Of course, it would be useful if you'd take part by testifying to Timmie's essential humanity, by providing us with videos showing how he reads and looks after himself. But you'd probably have to resign your post there if you were to do that, and that would cut you off from Timmie, which you wouldn't want, and which wouldn't be useful to us, either. A problem. On the other hand, suppose-

wouldn't dare."

"Wouldn't they? They've already decided the Timmie experiment is over. They need his Stasis facility for something else. You don't know them. They're not sentimental people, not really. Hoskins is basically a decent man, but if it's a choice between Timmie and the future of Stasis Technologies, Ltd., he wouldn't have any problem choosing at all. And once Timmie's gone, there's no bringing him back. It'll be a fait accompli. They could never find him in the past a second time. Your injunction would be worthless. And somebody who lived forty thousand years ago and died before civilization was ever imagined wouldn't have any recourse in our courts." Mannheim nodded slowly. He took a long, reflective

    sip of his wine. The waiter came by, hovering with his order pad at the ready, but Mannheim waved him away.

    "There's only one thing to do," he said.

    "And that is?"

    "We have people in Canada who'd be glad to raise Timmie. In England, in New Zealand also. Concerned, loving people. Our organization could provide a grant that would cover the cost of employing you as his full-time nurse. Of course, you'd have to make a total break with your present existence and start all over again in some other country, but my reading of you is that for Timmie's sake you'd have no problem with-

to do to save Timmie. I'd do whatever I could and go wherever I had to, for Timmie's sake. It's smuggling him out of the Stasis facility that isn't possible."

"Is it as tightly guarded as all that? I assure you, we'd find ways of infiltrating the security staff, of working out a completely foolproof plan for taking Timmie from you and getting him out of that building."

"It can't be done. Scientifically, it can't."

"Scientifically?"

"There's something about temporal potential, an energy build-up, lines of temporal force. If we moved a mass the size of Timmie out of Stasis it would blow out every

power line in the city. Hoskins told me that and I don't question the truth of it. They've got a bunch of pebbles and dirt and twigs that they brought here when they scooped Timmie out of the past, and they don't even dare take that stuff out and throw it away. It's all stored in the back of the Stasis bubble. -Besides all that, I'm not even sure whether moving Timmie outside of Stasis would be safe for him. I'm not certain about that part, but maybe it could be dangerous for him. I'm only guessing at this part. For all I know, he might undergo some kind of temporal-force effect too if he was brought out of the bubble into our universe. The bubble isn't in our universe, you know. It's in some special place of its own. You can feel the change when

jurisdiction and you tell me we can't do that either, because of some problem in the physics of it. All right. I want to help, Edith, but you've got me stymied and right now I don't have any further ideas."

"Neither do I," Miss Fellowes said miserably.

They sat there in silence as the rain hammered at the windows of the restaurant.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### Going

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PROJECT MIDDLE AGES-that was all that anyone was talking about at Stasis Technologies, Ltd. now. It was the beginning of an amazing new phase for the time-travel operation, everyone agreed. The unique process that Stasis Technologies controlled would open the gateway to the historical past-would bring new and astounding knowledge of antiquity pouring into the twenty-first century, an incredible intellectual treasure. And perhaps treasure of another kind, some said: if they could reach back into any century of historic times and bring people back, why not scoop up works of art, rare books and manuscripts, valuable objects of all sorts?

not die. If the attempt to bring a man forward from the fourteenth century turned out to be a flop, there'd be no need to vacate the Stasis bubble that Timmie occupied. Then everything could go on as before.

So she hoped for the failure of the project; but the rest of the world hoped for its success. And, irrationally, Miss Fellowes hated the world for it. Project Middle Ages was reaching a climax of white-hot publicity now. The media and the public both were obsessed with it. It was a long time since Stasis Technologies, Ltd. had had anything to catch their attention. A new rock or another ancient fish would hardly stir them. The little dinosaur had caused a ripple in its time, but then they had forgotten about it. As for Timmie the Neanderthal, little Timmie the cave-boy, well, he might have held the public fancy for a while longer if he had been anything like the ferocious ape-child that some people had anticipated. But Stasis Technologies' Neanderthal had turned out not to be an ape-child at all, just an ugly little boy. An ugly little boy who wore overalls and had learned to read picture-books -what was exciting about that? There was nothing very prehistoric about him any longer. Maybe if he bellowed in anger and hammered his fists against his chest, yes, and roared some savage primordial gibberish, that might have held their interest a little longer. But that wasn't Timmie's style.

before. This time it wouldn't be a matter of a handful of onlookers on a balcony. This time the technicians of Stasis Technologies, Ltd., would play out their role before nearly all of mankind.

Miss Fellowes herself was all but savage with anticipation. She wanted the suspense to be over; she wanted to know whether the project would succeed or fail. She meant to be there in the assembly hall as the final switches were being thrown. If only the new relief orderly would show up so that she would be free to go over there- Mandy Terris was her name, she had been taken on last week, a replacement for Ms. Stratford, who had gone on to a better-paying job in another state-

"Miss Fellowes?"

She whirled, hoping it was Mandy Terris at last. But no, it was just Dr. Hoskins' secretary, bringing Jerry Hoskins for his scheduled playtime with Timmie. The woman dropped Jerry off and hurried away. She, too, was rushing for a good place from which to watch the climax of Project Middle Ages.

Jerry sidled toward Miss Fellowes, looking embarrassed.

"Miss Fellowes?"

"What is it, Jerry?"

The boy took a ragged news-strip cutting from his pocket and held it out to her.



"birthday" presents, a shining robot toy.

"What about it?" Miss Fellowes asked.

Jerry watched her narrowly. "It says Timmie is an ape-boy. They aren't supposed to say that, are they?"

"What?"

She snatched the clipping from young Hoskins' hand and stared at it. There was 3 caption that she had not bothered to read before:

PREHISTORIC APE-BOY GETS TOY ROBOT FOR HIS BIRTHDAY

Ape-boy, Ape-boy, Prehistoric ape-boy. Miss Fellowes' eyes brimmed with hot tears of rage. With a vicious twist of the wrist, she tore the news-strip into a dozen pieces and threw them on the floor.

"Why'd you do that, Miss Fellowes? Because it said Timmie was an ape-boy? He isn't an ape-boy, is he? Or is he?"

She caught the youngster's wrist and repressed the impulse to shake him. "No, he isn't an ape-boy! And I don't want you ever to say those words again. Never, do you understand? It's a nasty thing to say and you mustn't do it."

Jerry struggled out of her grip, looking frightened.

Her heart was pounding. Miss Fellowes fought to get control of herself.

"Go inside and play with Timmie," she said. "He's got a new book to show you." "You hurt me." "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to." "I'll tell my fa-

everywhere. There's just so much excitement."

"I know. Now, I want you-" Mandy said, "I guess you're in a rush to go off and watch, aren't you?" Her thin, vacuously pretty face filled with envy. "Of all times for me to have to be on duty-" "You can watch it on the evening news," Miss Fellowes said curtly. "Let's go inside, shall we?" It would be the first time she had left Mandy Terris alone with Timmie. "The boys won't give you any trouble. They've got milk handy and all the toys they'll need. In fact, it'll be better if you leave them alone as much as possible."

"I understand. And I'll be sure not to let him get out, either. I know how important that is." "Good. Now come in."

Miss Fellowes opened the Stasis door for her and showed her in. Timmie and Jerry were busy with their games in the back room and paid no attention. She showed Mandy Terris what needed to be done in the next couple of hours, the requisition forms to fill out, the record-keeping. v

As Miss Fellowes was about to leave, the girl called after her, "I hope you get a good seat! And, golly, I sure hope it works!"

Miss Fellowes did not trust herself to make a reasonable response. She hurried on without looking back.

But the delay meant that she did not get a good seat. She got no nearer than the wall-viewing-plate in the assembly hall. She regretted that bitterly.

Nothing would help.

Nothing but the failure of the experiment itself-its irretrievable breakdown, its fundamental impossibility- something of that sort.

So she waited through the countdown, watching every move on the giant screen, scanning the faces of the technicians as the focus shifted from one to the other, watching for the look of worry and uncertainty that would tell her that something had unexpectedly gone wrong.

Watching-watching-

Nobody looked uncertain. No one seemed particularly worried. They had tested the equipment many times. They had run a thousand simulations; they had

already satisfied themselves that a close-range temporal fix was feasible.

The count ran all the way out, down to zero.

And-very quietly, very unspectacularly-the experiment succeeded.

In the new Stasis that had been established there stood a bearded, stoop-shouldered peasant of indeterminate age, in ragged dirty clothing and wooden shoes, staring in dull horror at the sudden mad change that had flung itself over him.

"Let me through!" she cried, while the loudspeaker continued its repetitions without pause. With wild energy she cut a path for herself through the crowds, beating at the people in her way, striking out with closed fists, flailing desperately, moving toward the door in a nightmare slowness.

"Miss Fellowes, please-Miss Fellowes-urgent-"

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Mandy Terris was in tears in the corridor outside the bubble. "I don't know how it happened. I just went down to the edge of the corridor to watch a pocket view-ing-plate they had set up. Just for a minute. And then before I could move or do anything-" She cried out in

sudden accusation, "You said they wouldn't make any trouble; you said I should leave them alone-"

Miss Fellowes, disheveled and trembling uncontrollably, glared at her. "Where's Timmie?"

Mortenson had appeared from somewhere and was swabbing the arm of a wailing Jerry with disinfectant. Elliott was there, too, preparing an anti-tetanus shot. There was a bright bloodstain on Jerry's clothes.

"He bit me, Miss Fellowes," Jerry screamed in rage. "He bit me!"

But Miss Fellowes looked right through him.

"Don't whip me, Miss Fellowes," Timmie said huskily. His eyes were red. His lips were quivering. "I didn't mean to hurt him. You aren't going to whip me, are you?"

"Oh, Timmie, who told you about whips?" She drew him to her, hugging him wildly.

He said tremulously, "She did. The new one. She said you'd hit me with a long whip, that you would hit me and hit me."

"She was wicked to say that. You won't be whipped. -But what happened? What happened, Timmie?"

He stared up at her. His eyes looked enormous.

In a low voice he said, "He called me an ape-boy."

"What!"

"He said I wasn't a real boy. That he read it in the newspaper. He said I was just an animal." Timmie was fighting to hold back tears; and when they came, a flood of them. His words grew indistinct as he snuffled, and yet she could make out every syllable all too clearly. "He said he wasn't going to play with a monkey any more. I said I wasn't a monkey. I'm not a monkey. I know what a monkey is."

"Timmie-Timmie-"

"He said I was all funny-looking. He said I was horrible and ugly. He kept saying and saying and I bit him." They were both crying now.

They nodded. They backed away from her as if she had begun to breathe fire.

She turned and went back inside, to Timmie.

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Her mind was made up, now. It had been very easy: the sudden awareness of what had to be done, the sudden resolve to do it right away, quickly, no hesitation possible. Maybe there were dangers in it that she didn't understand, but she had to take that chance. If she didn't act at all, Timmie would surely be sent back across time to die. If

she did what she planned now to do, there was at least the hope that things would work out. On the one hand, the certainty of death-on the other, hope. An easy choice, that one. And there wasn't any time for considering and reconsidering, not now, not when Hoskins' own son had been mangled like this.

No, it would have to be done this night, this night, while the celebration over the success of Project Middle Ages still had everyone distracted.

She wished she could call Bruce Mannheim to let him know. But she didn't dare risk it. The switchboard computers might have some kind of security program in them; they might listen in and report what she was intending to do. She would have to get in touch with him after it was done.

rehearsed the noncommittal phrase, "Some games for the boy," and the calm smile.

Games for the boy? Bringing them in at midnight?

But why should anyone doubt her? She lived only for Timmie. Everyone around here knew that. If she was bringing games for him in the middle of the night, well, that was the way she was. Why should he take any notice?

He didn't.

"Evening, Miss Fellowes. Big day today, wasn't it?"

"Very big, yes. -Some games for the boy," she said, waving the suitcase and smiling.

And went on past the security barrier.

Timmie was still awake when she entered the doll-house.

"Miss Fellowes-Miss Fellowes-"

She maintained a desperate pretense of normality to avoid frightening him. Had he been sleeping? A little, he said. He had had the dream again, and it had awakened him. So she sat with him for a rime, talking about his dreams with him, and listened to him ask wistfully about Jerry. She was as patient as she could force herself to be. There's no hurry, she told herself. Why should anyone be suspicious? I have every right to be in here.

And there would be few to see her when she left, no one to question the bundle she would be carrying. Timmie would be very quiet and then the

voice, "Why are you putting all these clothes on me, Miss Fellowes?"

She said, "I'm going to take you outside, Timmie. To where your dreams are."

"My dreams?" His face twisted in sudden yearning, yet fear was there, too.

"You don't need to be afraid. You'll be with me. You won't be afraid if you're with me, will you, Timmie?"

"No, Miss Fellowes." He buried his little misshapen head against her side, and under her enclosing arm she could feel his small heart thud.

She lifted him into her arms. She disconnected the alarm and opened the door softly.

And screamed.

Gerald Hoskins was standing there, facing her across the open door.

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There were two men with Hoskins and he stared at her, looking as astonished as she was.

Miss Fellowes recovered first by a second, and made a quick attempt to push past him into the corridor; but even with the second's delay Hoskins had enough time to stop her. He caught her roughly and hurled her back



of a human life."

Hoskins nodded to the others, and they stepped in alongside her, looking ready to restrain her if it turned out to be necessary. Hoskins himself reached forward and took Timmie out of her arms.

He said, "A power surge of the size that doing what you were about to do would black out an immense area. It would cripple the whole city all the next day. Computers would be down, alarms wouldn't function, data would be lost, all kinds of trouble. There'd be a thousand lawsuits and we'd be on the receiving end of all of them.

The costs would run into the millions for us. Way up in the millions. We might even find ourselves facing bankruptcy. At the very minimum it would mean a terrible financial setback for Stasis Technologies, and a colossal public-relations fiasco. Imagine what people will say when they find out that all that trouble was caused by a sentimental nurse acting irrationally for the sake of an ape-boy."

"Ape-boy!" said Miss Fellowes, in helpless fury. "You know that that's what the reporters like to call him," said Hoskins. "And ordinary people all think of him that way. They still don't understand what a Neanderthal actually is. And I don't think they ever will."

One of the other men had gone out of the bubble. He returned now, looping a nylon rope through eyelets along the upper portion of the wall.

was beyond resistance. Dully she noticed the red-handled pull-lever being adjusted in the hallway outside. Odd how she had never paid attention to it before, never let it enter her consciousness.

The sword of the executioner, she thought. "I'm sorry, Miss Fellowes," Hoskins said. "I would have spared you this if I could. I planned it for midnight so that you'd find out only when it was over."

She said in a weary whisper, "You're doing this because your son was hurt. Don't you realize that Jerry tormented this child into striking out at him?"

"This has nothing to do with what happened to Jerry."

"I'm sure it doesn't," Miss Fellowes said acidly.

"No. Believe me. I understand about the incident today and I know it was Jerry's fault. -Well, I suppose what happened today has speeded things up a little. The story has leaked out. No way that it wouldn't have, with the media crawling all over the lab today because of Project Middle Ages. And we'll be hearing stuff about 'negligence,' 'savage Neanderthals,' all that nonsense, getting into the news, spoiling the coverage of today's successful experiment. Better to end the Timmie experiment right here and now. Timmie would have had to leave soon anyway. Better to send him back tonight and give the sensationalists as small a peg as possible on which they can hang their trash."

He'll have a chance at a free life."

"What chance? He's seven years old at best, accustomed to be taken care of, fed, clothed, sheltered. Now he'll be alone in an ice age. Don't you think his tribe may have wandered off somewhere else in ten weeks\* time? They don't simply sit still-they follow the game, they

move along the trail. And even if by some miracle they were still there, do you think they'll recognize him? Three years older in ten weeks? They'd run screaming away. He'd be alone and he'd have to look after himself. How will he know how to do it?"

Hoskins shook his head. His expression was bleak, stony, implacable.

"He'll find his tribe again, and they'll take him in and welcome him back. I'm completely certain of it. Trust me, Miss Fellowes."

She looked at him in anguish.

"Trust you?"

"Please," he said, and suddenly there was anguish in his eyes too. "There's no way around this. I'm sorry, Miss Fellowes. Believe me, I am sorrier than you'll ever give me credit for. But the boy has to go, and that's all there is to it. Don't make it any harder for me than it already is."

Her eyes were fixed on his. She stared steadily, in silence, for a long terrible moment.

For a moment, she hugged him blindly. She caught at a chair with the toe of one foot, moved it against the wall, set it down.

"Don't be afraid, Timmie." ^

"I'm not afraid if you're here, Miss Fellowes. -Is that man mad at me, the man out there?"

"No, he isn't. He just doesn't understand about us. -Timmie, do you know what a mother is?"

"Like Jerry's mother?"

"Well-yes. Like Jerry's mother. Do you know what a mother does?"

"A mother is a lady who takes care of you and who's very nice to you and who does good things."

"That's right. That's what a mother does. Have you ever wanted a mother, Timmie?"

Timmie pulled his head away from her so that he could look into her face. Slowly, he put his hand to her cheek and hair and stroked her, just as long, long ago she had stroked him.

He said, "Aren't you my mother?"

"Oh, Timmie."

"Are you angry because I said that?"

"No. Of course not."

She remembered what Hoskins had said, about objects that weren't anchored being swept along in time with the transit object. A lot of the things in the room were anchored; some were not. Such as the chair she was standing on. Well, so be it: the chair would go. That wasn't important. Other things might go, too. She didn't

know which would be caught in the time field and which would not. She didn't care. It was no problem of hers.

"Hey!" Hoskins shouted, from outside the bubble.

She smiled. She clutched Timmie tightly and reached up with her free hand, and yanked with all her weight at the cord where it hung suspended between two eyelets.

And Stasis was punctured and the room was empty.

## EPILOGUE

### Skyfire Face

SILVER CLOUD walked over to Goddess Woman where she squatted drawing magical circles in the snow and said, "I need to talk to you."

She went on doing what she was doing. "Talk, then."

"Can you stop drawing the circles for a moment?"

"Well?" Goddess Woman said. "Talk."

"We have to leave this place," said Silver Cloud.

"Of course we do. Everyone's known that for a long time."

"We're going to leave this place, is what I mean. Today."

Goddess Woman scratched her rump thoughtfully. "We still haven't been able to worship at the shrine."

"No. We haven't."

"We came here to do that. If we leave without doing it-after having failed to hold the Summer Festival-the Goddess will be angry at us."

Silver Cloud said, in irritation, "The Goddess is angry at us. We know that already. She sent the Other Ones to occupy the riverbank and keep us from using the shrine. All right, then we can't use the shrine. But we can't stay any longer, either. We have no real shelter here and not much food and we're right on the edge of winter."

"You should have admitted these things to yourself a long time ago, Silver Cloud."

"Yes. I should have. But at least I'm admitting them now. When we are finished talking, I will give the order to break camp, and you will perform the rites of departure, and we will leave. Is that understood?"

Goddess Woman stood staring at him for a time.

"Whoever wants to be," said Silver Cloud.

"And if more than one wants to be?"

He shrugged. "They can fight it out, then."

"But this is wrong. You should make a choice."

"No," he said. "My wisdom is used up. My day is over. Go, get yourself ready for what happens next, Goddess Woman. I am done talking with you."

He walked away. She called his name, but he paid no attention. She hurled a snowball after him, and it struck

his shoulder and snow ran down his back, but still he kept walking. He had no wish to talk with anyone now. This was his last day of life and he simply wanted to be calm, to be quiet, to pass the time peacefully until the Killing Society came for him with the ivory club. Tomorrow his leg would no longer hurt and someone else would bear his burdens of power.

He stood by himself, looking across the way to the shrine that his people had never been able to use.

Some Other Ones were stirring about down there, by the edge of the river. Warriors, they were, and armed. What were they up to? Young Antelope was on sentry duty near the shrine, and he was pacing back and forth in an uneasy way. An attack? Was that what they had in mind? Taking the shrine by force?

The men came jogging over. Silver Cloud indicated what was going on down by the shrine.

"Are they going to start a fight?" Tree Of Wolves asked.

"The Goddess only knows, boy. But you'd better get yourselves ready, just in case. Tell the others. Tell everyone. Even the old ones." Silver Cloud held up his own spear. "I'll be fighting right alongside you, if they attack."

Blazing Eye looked at him incredulously. "You, Silver Cloud?"

"Why not? You think I've forgotten how?" Better to die in battle, he told himself, than to have to face the ivory club of the Killing Society. Though he would prefer no battle, and the peaceful departure of the People from this place.

Blazing Eye and Tree Of Wolves ran off to sound the alarm.

Then, suddenly, the woman She Who Knows came leaping forward out of nowhere, as though she had been stung. She had gone off by herself this morning, as she often did: wandering back up the trail along the hill that led to the east. She grew stranger and stranger every day, that one did.

"Silver Cloud! Silver Cloud! Look!"

He turned toward her. "Look at what?"

"On the hill! The light!" She whirled, pointing back behind herself. "Do you see it?"

"What? -Where?"



like shape. And at the center of it was a zone of fierce white light so brilliant he could barely stand to look straight at it.

There had been light like that when they had descended the hill into this place many weeks before. On the day when the Goddess had seized the boy Skyfi^e Face.

He muttered a hoarse prayer. He heard Goddess

Woman chanting something behind him, and then the other two Goddess Women taking up the chant as well.

"What is that light, Silver Cloud?" someone asked him. "Tell us. Tell us!"

He shook the questioners off. Slowly, numbly, like a man who has walked too long in the snow and whose feet have turned to stone, he began to move toward the path that led up the hill. He had to get closer. He had to see.

"The Goddess is here again," a woman's voice whispered behind him.

He kept walking. He could hear the others following at his back. And, glancing down toward the shrine, Silver Cloud saw that the Other Ones too were aware of the apparition on the hillside, that they had halted whatever it was they were doing by the riverbank and were moving slowly toward it, drawn as irresistibly as he was by the urge to have a closer look.

"The Goddess is up there!" some woman moaned. "I see Her. I see Her!"

had glowed. She was of the Other Ones' kind, yes, very tall, very slender. Her skin was pale and her hair seemed fair and her lips were red, and her brow rose steeply and smoothly. She was wearing white robes of a kind that Silver Cloud had never seen before.

And she held a child in her arms. A child of the People.

Slowly, calmly, the Goddess descended the trail, coming down the hill to the group gathered at the base. Silver Cloud continued to go toward her. She Who Knows was at his left hand now, and Goddess Woman on his right, and Keeps The Past just behind him. They clustered close to him, as if they were as mystified as he was and wanted the protection of the chieftain's sacred presence as they went toward Her.

She was very near, now.

How strange her face was! And-though it was an Other One face, unquestionably an Other One face- how beautiful, how tranquil! She was smiling and her eyes were shining with joy.

And the boy she was holding-half-grown, he was, and dressed in a strange kind of robe-his eyes were shining, too.

"The mark on his face-" She Who Knows said. "Do you see? The skyfire sign! You know who that child is. Where is Red Smoke At Sunrise? Look, Red Smoke At Sunrise, the Goddess has brought back your lost son Skyfire Face!"

brought back now? Who could say? It was all some great and wondrous deed of the Goddess.

"Look," Keeps The Past whispered. "The Other Ones are coming."

Silver Cloud glanced around. Yes: the enemy was practically upon them, he saw. But not to make war: he could see that in their faces. Not only the warriors of the Other Ones were advancing up the hill, but all of them, the women and children and the old ones, too. And they all seemed as stunned by the appearance of the Goddess as were the People themselves--just as awed, just as humbled by this divine vision.

The Goddess stood waiting, holding the boy Skyfire Face still in her arms, and smiling. A golden light seemed to stream from them both.

Silver Cloud fell to his knees before them. Joy flooded from them in waves, bringing strange tears to his eyes, and he had to kneel to give thanks. Goddess Woman knelt also, and She Who Knows; and then he looked around and saw that the others too were dropping down to worship Her, both the People and the Other Ones. Everybody side by side, all thoughts of warfare forgotten, one by one kneeling in the snow, looking up with wondering eyes to pay homage to the shining figure with the smiling child in her arms who stood in their midst like a harbinger of springtime and peace.

